

## 16 BRITISH COAL INDUSTRY

some magnitude which took place in Durham in 1765. The men complained that although they had bound themselves for a year beginning in August "the honourable gentlemen in the coal trade will not let us be free till the 11th of November of the ensuing year, . . . so the said pitmen are resolved not to work for or serve the said gentlemen in any of the collieries." The strike lasted for several weeks and, in the course of the disturbances resulting, the miners set fire to one of the Pelton Colliery pits.

It is of interest to note that throughout the above dispute the men at Hartley Colliery, having been well treated by the owner, Thomas Delavel, remained at work in appreciation of his kindness. It should be added that at that time in virtue of an Act passed in 1736 it was capital felony to set fire to a mine.

Even after the passing of the Factory Acts had protected to some slight extent the operatives in factories, the coal miner, the least of labourers it would seem in the estimation of the Legislature in those days, remained in the same desperate circumstances as had characterized his life in preceding centuries. Under-paid, degraded, heathen, they were of the lowly the lowest. In the words of Lord Bolingbroke: "These unhappy wretches scarce ever see the light of the sun; they are buried in the bowels of the earth, where they work at a severe and dismal task, without the least prospect of being delivered from it. They subsist