

The three men selected to undertake this task are authorities of the highest standing. They fill respectively the offices of Inspector-General of Mines, Belgium; Councillor of Mines, Germany; and H. M. Inspector of Explosives, England.

The report marks a turning point in the history of coal mining in the United States. Heretofore the most frightful accidents have created but a temporary stir. The authorities at Washington have been apathetic, and their apathy has cost the nation thousands of useful lives. Now that the awakening has come, there is little doubt that complete measures will be adopted for the prevention of coal mine accidents.

The first step to be taken is the close inspection of explosives. Without this preliminary, all precautions are meaningless. Not only should permitted explosives be limited to those that pass satisfactory tests as to safety, but the maximum charge should be fixed by law, and uniform regulations as to handling, loading, and firing of explosives should be enforced at every colliery.

The second important measure is the universal introduction of safety lamps. There is little doubt that this will meet with opposition, especially from the workmen whose safety is being considered. There is no doubt that safety lamps are essential to the prevention of explosions.

Thirdly, it is of the most urgent importance that rescue apparatus be installed at all coal mining centres. We need not reiterate the arguments that justify this recommendation. The history of the great coal mining disasters of the past few years is conclusive proof of the justice of this statement.

Fourthly, there is much misapprehension as to the applicability and efficacy of mine-watering as a preventive of coal-dust explosions. We have referred more than once to the strong position taken by Mr. James Ashworth, who has condemned the belief that watering is a universal remedy. The question is one that requires full and searching inquiry.

Lastly, the prevention of mine explosions is a subject of international importance. Difficulties will not be solved, dangers will not be removed unless there is earnest co-operation between governments, operators, and employees.

The recommendations of Messrs. Desborough, Meissner, and Watteyne are timely. They will serve as a nucleus for further work. But we are disappointed at their lack of completeness. The omission of all mention of rescue apparatus is a serious oversight.

Before leaving this subject we desire to impress upon Canadian coal mine operators the need of keeping pace with this praiseworthy movement. And it is to be hoped that our Federal Department of Mines will give the matter attention at the earliest possible opportunity. Canada must not be last in adopting measures for the preservation of life.

THE COBALT BOOM.

An apparently well-grounded hope was entertained by sane mining men that this autumn's boom in Cobalt stocks would not exceed the bounds of reason and propriety. It was foreseen at least ten months ago that a boom was inevitable. But there seemed to be scant room for a recurrence of the crude robberies and "raw deals" that characterized the first boom.

The boom, however, has attained dimensions that are distinctly dangerous. The lessons of the last two years have been ignored or forgotten, and Cobalt stocks are playing over the financial sky like mad northern lights.

One effect of the boom of 1907 was that the legitimate exploitation of the undeveloped portions of Cobalt and of the Montreal River districts was retarded. For a time Cobalt became an object of contumely. Then, gradually, the clean work of clean men brought results, and an output of six million dollars' worth of silver was an argument not to be ignored.

Of the several hundred mining companies incorporated up to and during the year 1907 only about thirty now survive on a working basis. Not more than twenty of these have paid dividends. Several of the companies that have paid dividends were totally unprepared to maintain payments. Every one of the hundreds of flotations appealed to the public with rosy promises and hectic adjectives. A large number of the worst of these received the support of the Toronto World.

Glancing through the advertising columns of the Toronto World, which has constituted itself the chief tout for all classes of Cobalt and Montreal River wildcats, we notice that several new flotations, especially those that occupy advertising space, are given warm commendation in the special mining columns of this obviously purchasable sheet. It strikes one as being lamentably significant of journalistic turpitude that a paper of the World's standing uses its reading columns to misdirect and delude those whom it is supposed to protect. The readiness with which the World declares that a youthful promoter is an "acknowledged expert," or that a case-hardened fakir is a "mining engineer of continental reputation," is pre-eminently painful.

The most enthusiastic friends of Cobalt and Montreal River will acknowledge that there are, especially in boom times, many crooked flotations foisted upon the public. Does the World ever damn any of these? Does it do anything but play into the hands of men whose dice are loaded and whose cards are marked?

This is a time when mining men and others are in duty bound to exercise discretion. There is nothing reprehensible in lending one's name to a mining project. But it is at least incumbent upon responsible citizens to make sure that there is no room for doubt as to the soundness of the concerns with which their