

MINING—Continued.

lease, and when he got the patent, he owned the land in fee simple. He (Mr. Fraser) would propose to alter our law in that respect, so that, if any man wished to engage in mining, he could go and stake out certain portions of ground, not exceeding 1,500 feet in length by 700 feet in breadth. At present the amount of ground a man could take out a license for was only limited by the amount of money he could bring to the mines office. He could hedge others out of a whole tract of country and work in the middle himself. It was his for the time, and while he worked he could keep all others at a distance. He (Mr. F.) thought that very unjust, but there was nothing unjust in giving the discoverer a certain reasonable amount of property. He proposed therefore to alter the law in that respect.

The bill at first declared that all mineral deposits were free and open to exploration and lease. Property already held he of course did not propose to touch, except as it became forfeited to the Crown. After that he proposed that it should come under the operation of the bill, so that the bill did not interfere with parties who at present held leases. Any person who had reason to know that deposits existed in any locality was given the privilege of entering upon and staking off ground, upon which he could search for any length of time, provided he put \$100 worth of work upon the ground annually. After entering, it would be necessary for him to record his certificate in the office of the Commissioner of Mines. After finding a lead on his property, within a reasonable time, he was compelled to apply for a lease, which would be given him after examination by the proper officials. At present, all an individual had to do was to apply at the proper office, and place his money on the table to entitle himself to receive his lease, unless two parties applied at once. No law required any examination. He proposed by the bill that a reasonable time should elapse, after the application was made, before the lease is given. In other words, whatever litigation there might be should precede the granting of the lease, and not follow it. The House would be able to judge better when they examined the bill. The main feature of the bill was the proposal to place a rental on all gold mining property now held under lease, or to be leased in future. At present, when an individual took out a lease, he was required to place 40 days' labor on the property annually. That was the law and condition on which the lease was granted, but the law, it was needless to state, was seldom complied with. Property had been held for the last twenty years on which not one day's labor had ever been placed since the lease was issued. A year or two ago, an amendment was made to the law to the effect that, if no work was performed for five years, the officials could forfeit the property after posting a notice for thirty days. But at any time within that time the individual holding the lease could surrender it and take out a new lease, and then it went on for ten or fifteen years more. Some time since he had asked for a return of leases on which no work had been done, and he found that upwards of 12,000 leases were outstanding, on which no work was performed. After an individual took out a lease, he (Mr. F.) proposed that he should pay the Government a rental of, say two dollars an area, more or less, and that failure to pay for two years should be *prima facie* evidence of forfeiture. On the other hand, the bill provided that an individual developing his mine should get a rebate of the royalty due the Government, so that legitimate miners would receive no injury from the passage of the bill. Many mining districts were at present unapproachable, owing to the defective condition of the roads. The bill was to provide a fund, out of which the Government could make expenditures for the construction of such roads. Two-thirds of the property under lease is unimproved. It was not in the interest of the country, or of development of gold mining that the present condition of things should continue. It was not fair to legitimate mine owners, who embarked capital and labor in their enterprises, to find that land which should be yielding revenue was held year after year by individuals, in the hope that some more enterprising neighbor might develop something rich, whereby they could sell their property. Mining property was supposed to be leased to men who would work it, but three-fourths or seven-eighths of the property leased was held year after year without making any return to the Government or any benefit to the country. Like Tennyson's Brook,

"Men may come and men may go,"
But this goes on forever.

He would ask a fair consideration from the house and hon. members for the principles of the bill. He was not wedded to its details, however, and, if any amendment was offered which would improve it, or if anything better was brought down, he would give it all the encouragement he could.

Hon. ATTORNEY-GENERAL said that, as chairman of the law amendments committee of last year, he had no recollection of seeing this bill, and, on referring to the bill itself, he did not find it endorsed with the ordinary memorandum which would appear upon it if it had been before the committee. Instead of being inclined to oppose the bill, he rather favored the suggestions it contained, and he thought it might be applied, not only to gold, but to coal mines. Many coal mines were not in course of development, and the result would be a serious loss. It was an important step however to alter a law which has been in existence for years and which has worked fairly well, and consequently, the bill was of sufficient consequence to be printed.

Mr. FRASER said that, with regard to a similar bill being before the committee on law amendments last year, it was introduced at a late period of the session and passed its first and second readings without discussion, and after being referred to the Committee, disappeared—accidentally, let us say. He was glad to welcome the assistance of the Hon. ATTORNEY-GENERAL, and would ask the special assistance of the government in aid of the bill, as he thought it a matter which it would be creditable to them to deal with.

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Cash Capital, \$600,000.

Assets,	\$8,417,038.21
Liabilities,	6,321,199.35
Surplus,	\$2,095,838.86

Life Department.

No. of Policies written to date,	44,300
New Life Insurance written in 1885,	\$5,645,920
Gain during year in amount in force,	\$2,477,317
Paid Life Policy-Holders to date,	\$3,290,147.02
Paid Life Policy-Holders in 1885,	\$379,420.79

Accident Department.

No. Policies written to date,	1,186,315
No. written in 1885,	108,218
No. Claims paid to date,	137,331
No. paid in 1885,	17,553
Total Claims paid	\$3,145,123.41
Amount paid in 1885,	\$835,012.34

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