

## *- Rubs by Rambler.*

A critic of the Nova Scotia Regulation Mines Act said in reference to sub-section 'N', Section 4—Interpretation—that the definition of the word 'shift' was far from corrective. It is very easy to be a destructive critic. Knowing this, I asked to construct a sub-section that would satisfy all readers. The pause, after the request was put, has not up till the present ended; it is still on. Well, what is a shift, in mining parlance. The Mines Act defines it as: "Shift means a division of the men or boys, or both, employed in any mine (other than men or boys engaged in attending to the ventilation of the mine) who go to work in the mine at a set period of the day." For my own part I think the section is comprehensive enough for all practical purposes. In mining shift has two meanings. It may apply to a number of men or it may apply to a division of time. When an overman or a pumpman tells one that he is on the night shift, he simply means that he is doing duty at night, the word here having no regard to number or to a division of the force on the pay roll. In the same way a two or four or six hour shift has reference only to time. Shift at the same time may mean a number of men as for instance: "See that timber is sent down to the night shift, or 'Leave plenty of boxes for the night shift', or 'Tell Tom to examine the places before the night shift comes down.'" Such expressions may be frequently used, and in such cases the word has, more particularly, reference to workmen than to time. Of course I understood the critic to insinuate that 'shift' generally, and more particularly as well, had reference to a set time. That may be all right but I maintain that shift is more frequently used as referring to men, or a set of men, than to time. A witness was asked the question: "Whose duty was it to have props put up?" The answer: "The duty of the night shift." That was quite intelligible. The witness' answer conveyed to intelligent men that it was the duty of the men who had worked the previous night to have done the timbering. By giving the word a compound meaning a lot of English is saved, and for that reason I find no fault with the interpretation of 'shift' in the Mines Act. At the same time I admit that if a half dozen mining students got discussing the word, the closure might have to be applied to end the debate, and prevent blows.

### INSURANCE AND CHANCE.

Under the heading "On being insured" J. B. the excellent essayist of the Christian World says:—

We are all occupied to-day with problems of insurance. The great scheme which Mr. Lloyd George has just brought forward, and which, if we mistake not, will send down his name to posterity as one of England's greatest benefactors, has captured the national imagination. At last politics are beginning to mean something more than the squabbles of rival parties, than the hunting-ground of the placemen. In David's novels, describes the view of the ruling classes of his time. Politics to them meant the providing of

younger sons with twelve hundred a year. But the Taper and Tadpole idea is wearing thin. At the moment when Christianity seems losing ground in the Churches it is winning glorious victories in the national life. We read of Jesus that 'when he saw the multitude he 'had compassion on them.' Here was a politician whose thought, as He viewed the people, was not how much He could get out of them, but how much He could give to them! And this absolutely novel idea has at last actually caught on. Up to now the attitude of the comfortable classes towards those beneath them was largely that which mediaeval theologians ascribed to the saints in heaven, whose happiness was greatly increased by the sight of the miseries of the outsiders down below. To-day mirable dictu, the comfortable classes are being rendered uncomfortable by the sorrows of the people in the pit. They are being haunted by that line in which Pope, himself a most imperfect Christian, managed to put the very essence of Christianity:

Never elated while one man's oppressed;

Never dejected while another's blessed.

And thus the nation, in a spirit which does it infinitely more honour than the winning of battles or the extension of empire, welcomes with enthusiasm a scheme which proposes to lift from the shoulders of its tiring millions the burden of some of life's heaviest anxieties. It is an achievement for us all to have lived into the age when politics are represented by measures of this kind; when they cease to be the science of personal ambition, to become the science of the universal human welfare.

But the idea of insurance, of taking precautions against risks, is, when we come to look into it, much wider than the wisest of our national schemes. There are a good many other risks than those of sickness, of unemployment, of general disability. From the beginning man has taken note of these risks, and it is most instructive to observe his various ways of insuring himself against them. Before we come to that, however, one may bestow a thought on an insurance scheme which was in operation long before man appeared, one which concerns him intimately, but in the development of which he himself has had no part.

Certainly, if appearances go for anything, man seems to have been an object of care long before he took thought for himself. If it has all been a matter of chance, that seems a series of miraculous chances which placed our planet at the exact distance from the sun which gives us warmth enough without burning us up, and cold that disintegrates without freezing us to death; which places between us and the void a ring of outside planets that act as a defence from the crash of destructive meteorites; that dipped our earth at such an inclination to its orbit as secures all the variety and charm of the seasons; that filled our oceans with such a nicety of calculation as secures us a constant water supply, while one-tenth more would have flooded and drowned us; which, anticipating man as a manufacturer and power-user, stocked his cellar ages ago with boundless supplies of coal; which—but why go on with the recital? This story of adaptation, of fitting man to his world and his world to man as a key fits a lock, is an endless one. If chance did all this, chance is a very wonderful fellow, and we ought to raise an altar to him. And the latest idea of our materialists, that all this shows no purpose or forethought, but simply the fact that our nature happens to fit the circumstances, it to credit chance with the most wonderful feat of all. Indeed, your believer in chance as