

We also quote valuable information by Thomas Oliver, M.D., F.R.C.P., from his work on "Diseases of Occupation." He quotes Dr. H. Bremridge, who is on the medical staff of the Kolar Goldfield, India, as follows:—

In the Kolar gold-mines there are 40,000 coolies employed; the rock is hard. Dr. Bremridge went to India expecting to meet with miners' phthisis, but failed to find evidence of the disease except in men who came from the Transvaal. He found that the native and white men kept good health. He attributes the freedom from miners' phthisis partly to the fact that the men take more leisure, and are not so eager to make a fortune as the miners in the Transvaal.

Dr. Oliver also says,—

The miners on the Rand are paid for piecework; they are impatient, and as they prefer to run risks some persons may say the men are not altogether to blame. They rush back too soon after blasting to recommence work in the particular part of the mine, the air of which contains a slight excess of CO_2 when the explosion has been complete, and always a large quantity of dust. They neither allow the smoke to clear away nor the dust to settle.

These circumstances show the desire on the part of the men to run these risks in order to earn one or two shillings a day more, not only in this country, but in every other country where this system is in operation; and we are of opinion that the system is also responsible for the bad distribution of air, as the men do not seem to give any consideration to the ventilation, in case doing so may impede them in their work. They push on for footage and tonnage, which determines the amount of wages they receive, and thereby assist the companies in evading the provision of adequate ventilation. In many cases it is more economical for the companies to give a prize to the men than establish proper ventilation. We contend that any system which embraces a decoy for men to run risks underground—returning too soon after firing, &c.—is dangerous to health, limb, and life. Circumstances show that the broken rock tends, after blasting, to imprison poisonous gases. The subsequent liberation of these becomes a source of danger when the work is carried on before the air of that vicinity is perfectly clear from dust and all poisonous gases.

We have observed that accidents are far more numerous in the districts where mining is carried on under the contract system than on day wages. This was also observed by Mr. Coutts, the late Inspector of Mines for the Hauraki District. He reported in the *New Zealand Mines Record* of the 17th January, 1902. He brought a charge against Pile and Perry, at the Warden's Court, of having committed a breach of the Mining Act by neglecting to tell their mates, who were relieving them on shift, as to an unexploded charge. Mr. Coutts pointed out that he had brought the present case forward as a warning, especially in view of the fact that there had been more accidents at the Waini Mine during the last six months than had been the case for ten years previously. He was sure these accidents were in a large measure due to the contract system, as the men went to work hurriedly and they left as quickly, and somehow there did not seem to be the amount of care exercised when explosives were being dealt with that was necessary. In our opinion this statement by Mr. Coutts (who had had years of experience) amply proves that the contract men do their work more hurriedly, and consequently more risk is incurred, and at the same time shows that more accidents happened for the last six months than had been the case for the previous ten years, considering the ten years mentioned was worked on the day-wage system.

Here we quote Thomas Oliver again. He said, in regard to phthisis amongst Cornish tin-miners,—

Taking this view of the malady, tin-miners' phthisis can be to a large extent prevented by laying of the dust by water-spraying, by the men not returning too soon to the particular part of the mine after the use of explosives, and by care taken in removing the ore.

This authority advises, not only in one place in his valuable work, but right through his book, that one chief factor in the prevention of the malady is for the men not to return too soon after firing, and our contention is that any system of work that allures men to run these risks is a danger to the men employed and a menace to the community.