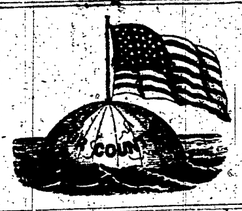
Miners' Journal.

POTTSVILLE, PA.

SATURDAY, MAY 24, 1862.



IGNORANT CRITICISM OF THE COAL REGION.

When the recent difficulties at some of the collieries of this County took place, and the authorities for the first time in the history of the Region, summoned an armed force from Philadelphia, to suppress violence, we were amazed, and at the same time amused at the excitement which existed in the City. The friends of the soldiers could not have wept more copiously, had the brave sons of Mars been ordered to Richmond. Their idea evidently was, that the soldiers were going among a set of savages, who would make drinking-cups of the skulls of the slain, and rings, &c., of their bones. Each journal had its "special," who gave liberal orders for keeping open the telegraph offices, and all of them were on the *qui vive* for something startling to send down for publication. This was all harmless. If the indefatigable reporters of the press had confined themselves to descriptions of the wild scenery of Cass township, where the disturbance took place; (the Philadelphia papers insist it was Pottsville, though neither rioters nor soldiers were seen here during the entire time;) to the exciting life of the pickets, and to the privations incident to a hurried first campaign, we might smile, but would not check their enthusiasm. But when, however, the reporter of so respectable and influential a journal as the Philadelphia *Press*, in lieu of other exciting topics, writes an account of the wretched condition of the miners of this Region, as a mass, and of the illiberality and close-fistedness of the operators, as a mass, and publishes the statement as truthful, the harmless ceases and the mischievous begins. If the statement of the reporter, who has evidently been too credulous during his visit to this County, should be allowed to pass uncorrected, a wrong impression of the actual state of business affairs in connection with coal mining in this Region, would exist in the minds of people abroad.—We were not therefore, surprised to see a communication in the *Press* of Saturday last, from Mr. E. Borda, of this County, manager of the Forest Improvement Company's operations, refuting the erroneous statements of the reporter, and we think that under the circumstances, his tone was mild and courteous, more so than many would adopt under similar provocation. The editor of the *Press* however, quite as ignorant editorially, of the *modus operandi* of the mass of the coal mining business of this Region, catches up the cudgel in defence of his reporter, and whacks it around the ears of the devoted Mr. Borda, quite in the style of the good-hearted but irascible lady in "Great Expectations."

Now we earnestly protest against two things. We protest against Mr. Borda, or any other individual in the coal business, when guiltless, being made the scape-goat of anybody else's sins. We protest against the sweeping accusation of unfairness to labor on the part of our coal men, embraced in the *Press's* editorial. We do not attribute it to malice, for we consider the *Press* too honorable a paper to be influenced by unworthy motives; but the editor has written on the subject without proper data; has erred, and we will place him right on a few of the most important points.

"Strikes," we might observe, are chronic complaints in coal regions, in nine cases out of ten, started by a few men who are seldom satisfied with their rate of wages. It is a habit contracted in Europe, where the mass of the miners is from, and where the contest between "master" and workman to obtain the advantage of each other, is often a life contest. In this country a more enlightened policy prevails, and when the times warrant it, a request is all that is necessary to obtain from the more liberal operators an advance. "Strikes," however, will always we presume, be of frequent occurrence in the coal regions while thriftless and careless men are found among the prudent and economical who always constitute the mass. While "strikes," however, have been common in this Region, violence to private property has rarely been attempted by a mob. The recent instance of stopping the pumps at Swatara and Heckscherville, was an exception, which however, could have been checked, if the Sheriff of this County had done his duty promptly, and energetically, and spared us the disgrace of sending abroad for assistance.

In reference to the store and order system on which the *Press* dwells with so much emphasis, we will state that the collieries in this Region are scattered widely over the face of the country, and some are several miles from a town. At those collieries near towns, stores owned by operators can be dispensed with; but at all other places they are positive accommodations to the miners, who from the nature of the business, must wait for monthly payments. In the interim they deal at their employer's store, and when pay-day arrives, the amount is deducted. We would here state that the operator's store that charges to the miner more than a fair average profit on the articles sold, is the exception, not the rule. Some stores put down an article at cost price for the purpose of disposing of something else at a large profit. The stores at the mines as a mass, do nothing of the sort. They fix a fair per-centage of profit, which runs through all their goods. The operators who have not stores, give orders on other stores, and we believe that if the system where it is conducted fairly, which is the case very generally, in the County, should be discontinued, that the miners would petition for their re-opening. There is but one season in the year in which the men are required, and expected to take orders. That is in Winter, when coal mined must be stacked, and when of course, nothing is realized from it in the shape of money. It is a position unavoidable to the operator, in which he must give his men work in that way or not at all.

It is an unquestioned fact, that the prosperity of this County, its very existence in a business sense, is dependant upon the Coal trade, yet strange as it may seem, all other interests so dependant upon it, are arrayed against it, and not a few mischievously endeavor to impress upon the men that they are imposed on. Self-interest makes these dealers indeed blind, when they cannot see that in truth, they are dependant upon the coal operators for the very business they enjoy. Last season at Tamaqua, the operators were in a position that they were compelled either to lower the wages of their men, or stop mining. Rather than stop and throw out of employment, a large number of workmen, they made an effort to compromise with the men. The men were counselled by a portion of that community, not to yield, and the result was that they lost as well as the men who were idle for about six weeks.—These are some of the difficulties under which the operators labor. At the best the coal business is uncertain, and needs to be fostered and encouraged. An operator may be rich today and poor to-morrow, through no mistake of his. A "fault" in his vein of coal may be the rock on which his fortune is to be wrecked. Look at the long list of operators who have mined in this County, and see how few stand to-day rich men. We contend that the business needs protection, and that is the reason that we have advocated a law to protect equally, the interests of employers and employes. If some such equitable arrangement does not become permanent, and beyond the reach of party demagogues, no person will in the future invest a dollar in the business here. Sensible, thoughtful workmen know, and all should know that if the workman exacts more from the employer than the latter can afford to give, he defeats the very object for which he strives. While, we have good workmen, there are a few bad ones, and we much fear that the recent failure on the part of the proper authorities, to protect with a local force, the property threatened during the late difficulty, is the most disastrous blow ever aimed at the interests of this Region.

As to the direct charges contained in the article of the *Press*, against Mr. Borda, we can reply that we learn that he does not issue orders, and that it is optional with the men to deal or not at his stores. The men can, if they choose, keep an account with the stores, and the amount of each man's indebtedness is deducted at the monthly payment. All the operators acquainted with Mr. Borda's plan of doing business, say that his men are as well treated, and that their wages are as good as those of any other men in the Region.

In regard to the miners' wages in this County, we may state that where miners work full hours, which they can do where the air is pure, they make from $50 to $60 a month.—In prosperous times we have known miners' wages to amount to from $65 to $70 a month. Every good, steady, sober, industrious miner that will work his nine hours a day, can make $60 a month. This price ranges down according to the steadiness of the men and purity of air in the mine. These are not starvation wages, certainly; and our contemporary will bear in mind that it is optional with the men of Mr. Borda to deal at his store. This does not look as if they were paid scantily, or "paid in a manner that reduces their wages to the bare price of bread and fire," as stated by the *Press*. But we contend also, that the wages of miners should be good, and they would be always, if the New York Coal Companies would cease the ruinous policy of placing coal on board at New York at from $2 80 to $3 00 a ton. At those prices wages of miners can never be good, which they should always be, for truly, the miner enters the mines with his life literally in his hand. He knows not when he enters in the morning, whether he may not be brought out before evening a mutilated corpse, from a fall of coal or an explosion. Under the system of the New York companies however, wages can never be good, unless there is a scarcity of coal and an unusual demand.

Another point and we are done. The *Press* charges that the operators grind the men down into the most abject poverty. This is a libel upon the enterprising, whole-souled, liberal coal men of this Region, for there is no class of business men in the country more distinguished in those respects than our operators. Of course there are exceptions, as there are exceptions among good workmen, but we speak of them as a mass. We believe that at this moment there is more money circulating among the laboring classes here, than among a similar number of workmen in any other section of the country. We believe that there is less money lost here to the laborers than to a like number of workmen in any other section. For thirty years we have had business transactions with coal operators, and have lost less money by them as a class, than we have lost by other classes of business men. They are well known to mercantile men abroad, who eagerly seek their custom. This is their character, which is somewhat different from that sketched by our Philadelphia contemporary. We "nothing extenuate, nor set down aught in malice," and the editor of the *Press* may rest assured that he was wrong in the premises and conclusions of his late article on the Coal men of Schuylkill County, and unwarrantably severe upon Mr. Borda.

THE MEN WHO ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS REBELLION.

Before the first overt act of this Rebellion was committed, the leaders of the Breckinridge party of the North contended that if a compromise was tendered by the North to the South, that it would be accepted. To this effect Crittenden's amendment was offered. Gov. Johnson of Tennessee, was in the Senate at the time, and says that the South wanted no compromise. This Rebellion to destroy if possible, the Government, was resolved upon, and the conspirators were determined to let nothing interfere with their desperate and wicked design. As to the argument about the immense importance of King Cotton, which politicians yet agitate, that is disposed of with other arguments of like fallacious character, in a speech delivered by the sterling patriot, Andrew Johnson, in the House of Representatives, at Nashville, on Monday, the 12th inst., which is as follows:

> The Governor said that he had no wish to speak. He wished that to the people's representatives of them control its course. He hoped it would be the beginning of a series of similar meetings. In past years we used to be denominated Whigs and Democrats. These parties had their measures and principles, the other proposing. A United States Bank, a protective tariff, and a distribution of the proceeds of the sale of public lands.—How did they conduct their campaigns? The Whigs marched up to the platform to the tunes of Hail Columbia, and Yankee Doodle, under the folds of the national flag. The Democrats, too, came in martial array, playing the same patriotic airs, and bearing the same banner of the Union. Our contests were heated and often bitter; but we all fought under the stars and stripes, and kept step to the music of the Union. What parties have we now, fellow citizens! Let me reply, Mr. Chairman, by turning to you and saying that this is the proudest moment of my life; for the old divisions which once separated us are obliterated, and I meet you to-day on the noble *platform of the Union*. Let me take you by the hand, and with you pledge new fealty and devotion to the Federal Union. Let us swear that we will not survive it, but that if we must fall in this contest, we will go down upon the battle-field wrapped in the proud old flag. We ask this only of all men now—"ARE YOU FOR THE UNION?" This is our only test and watchword. On this alone we fight the battle, and under this alone we will conquer, or pour out our hearts' blood as a last libation to freedom and the Union. This is a great struggle for the right of man to self-government, and in the struggle, through sun and storm, through dust and heat, over mountain and valley, I will go forth with you to labor for the Union. One question underlies this whole matter. It is the great principle of popular government based on man's capacity to govern himself.—Shall Democracy and free institutions go down forever in this bloody and wicked revolution? The catchwords, slavery, and abolition, have been used as mere pretexts to hide villiany and treason from the eyes of the careless and credulous. As soon as the South-in leaders went out of office, they determined to overthrow the Government. They are bent on establishing a monarchy or aristocracy. Look for example, at South Carolina, who led off in this damnable revolution. She was "anti-revolution from the first. In the revolution of 1776 she was perfectly willing to make any concessions so as to remain under the rule of Great Britain. And the chief hope of the rebel leaders has been British and French aid. If they relied on such aid would they not relapse into colonial vassalage to Great Britain, if the revolution was successful?

> Shut your eyes to these facts, and be hurried away by the senseless clamor of "Southern Rights," "The North against the South," and such idle trash, the mere froth and sayings of lunatic politicians, to follow after such men as Wigfall and Toombs, and be made vassals of Great Britain? Let us not be led astray from the true issue by the tricks of traitly and ambitious office seekers, who would destroy your liberties.

Our brothers fought seven years through privations, hardships, and bloodshed for freedom. Are you their lineal descendants, or has your blood grown thin and pale, and will you bow to rebel marauders and traitors to the rights of man? The redeeming spirit of the people will come like the lava tide to sweep away and consume in its fiery the foes of free government. Have you not heard the coming tempest in the distant trees? Responds already the coming storm of freedom. Treason must be crushed out, and traitors punished. We mean to punish intelligent and conscious traitors—not the poor men forced by conscription, threats and assaults of cowardice, into the rebel service. For them we plead mercy. Let them return to the old flag. But to the conscious traitor, who has drenched the land with fraternal and innocent blood, we extend no compromise. Who is responsible? Look about your streets at the woman draped in mourning. Who has buried off their husbands and sons? Who has