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Two-Cent Coal

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Oh the bosses' tricks of 'seventy-six
They met with some success,
Until the hand of God came down
And made them do with less.
They robbed the honest miner lad
And drunk his flowin' bowl;
Through poverty we were compelled
To dig the two-cent coal.

But the river it bein' frozen
Of course, the poor might starve
What did those tyrant bosses say?
"It's just what they deserve."
But God who always aids the just,
All things He does control,
He broke the ice and He sent it down
And sunk their two-cent coal.

Their tipples, too, fled from our view
And down the river went.
They seemed to cry as they passed by
"You tyrants, now repent!
For while you rob the miner lad,
Remember, you've a soul,
For your soul is sinkin' deeper
Than the ice sunk your two-cent coal."

It's to conclude and finish,
Let us help our fellow man,
And if our brother's in distress
Assist him if you can,
To keep the wolf off from his door,
And shelter him from the cold,
That he never again shall commit the crime
Of diggin' two-cent coal.

(Sung by David Morrison, 81, at Finlayville, Allegheny County, 1940.
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Recorded by George Korson.

"Two-Cent Coal" commemorates one of the most devastating
disasters in the history of the Monongahela River. During that

winter of 1876 the river was frozen to a depth of fourteen inches. Because of the ice the mines were idle from Christmas to late in February, and the miners barely kept alive. Previously, the miners' wages had been cut from three cents a bushel to two cents, the equivalent of fifty cents a ton, a rate the miners regarded as sub standard.

In the disaster that overtook the operators' property when the ice broke in the river, the miners saw the hand of God.
(GK)

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