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COAL MINING IN GREAT BRITAIN.

Two Recognized Methods of Working Out Coal—Dangerous Subsidence.

The alarming subsidence which took place some time ago in Scotland, on the North British railway, near Prestonpans, and which was fortunately unattended by any accident, has doubtless added a fresh source of fear to the nervous railway passenger. That the permanent way of a railway for a distance of about fifty yards should suddenly sink to the extent of two feet is almost incomprehensible at first; and had this subsidence occurred while the train was passing, instead of immediately afterward, the consequences might have been disastrous. It is the case, however, though it may not be generally known, that subsidences—fortunately only gradual and comparatively inappreciable—are taking place over many of our railway lines, and that "minerals" are actually being extracted from underneath nearly every line of railway under which there is any mineral to get.

There are two recognized methods of working out coal. The old method is what is known as the "stoop-and-room" or "pillar-and-room" system; and the method introduced into Scotland about the beginning of the present century is known as the "longwall" or "Shropshire" system of working. The first system explains itself by its name. After the bed of coal is struck, "rooms" are worked out, leaving "pillars" or "stoops" to support the superincumbent strata. The object to be attained in this system, as practiced in the olden times, was to have a large room worked out, and as small a stoop or pillar of the coal itself left, as was consistent with the safety of the mine and the support of the surface, while the mine was open.

But this system entailed the entire loss of the pillars so left. To obviate this loss, the method now generally adopted is to drive narrow rooms or passages, seldom exceeding fourteen feet, through the seam, leaving large pillars—about 75 per cent. of the mineral—until the extremity of the available coal is reached. When, however, no regard is to be had for the surface, and the coal has thus worked out as far as can be done, the miner commences to work backward, taking out the stoops or pillars as he goes. The whole roof of the mine then comes down; and this is the most dangerous kind of subsidence. It does not take effect immediately above the place where "stooping" has been going on, but it also "draws" round about it.

The "longwall," or Shropshire method of working, is what is known as the system of complete excavation; that is, the miner takes out the whole coal as he proceeds, leaving perhaps only a foot of the roof, should the overlying strata be soft, and props up a passage with wooden supports as he proceeds, to enable him to keep an open way to the face of the coal. The portions worked out are packed on each side of the "road" with the waste material taken out with the coal. This method of working, though it necessarily implies subsidence, is on the whole the safest for the surface, and is generally the one adopted. In fact, as mineral landlords are paid, in lieu of rent, a royalty or lordship on every ton of coal or other mineral brought to the surface, and as the tenant can more quickly extract the mineral by the wooden prop method, he is generally bound in his lease to work in this manner, when practicable.—Chamber's Journal.

An Illegible Prescription.

A gentleman received a note from his lawyer which he was unable to decipher. On his way to his office he met a friend at the door of a drug store. The friend, after vainly attempting to read the note, suggested that they step inside and hand it to the druggist without comment. The druggist, after studying it in silence a few minutes, stepped behind his prescription case and in a short time returned with a bottle of medicine duly labeled, and bearing directions. When the gentleman saw his lawyer he was informed that the note was a notice for him to call at his office between 3 and 4 p. m. of the following day. It is a pretty difficult matter to "stick" the regulation druggist.—Medical Age.

Constructing a Paper Chimney.

A large factory of Breslau required a chimney fifty-four feet in height. Instead of constructing the chimney with bricks, as usual, a large number of solid blocks of paper firmly compressed were made use of. These blocks were placed carefully one on top of the other and joined together with a special cement. The chimney is non-inflammable, is very elastic, and is by the nature of the material quite secure from lightning, which so often plays such sad havoc with the more ordinary sort of factory chimney.—New York Sun.

Rhode Island's Declaration.

On May 4, 1776, the legislature of Rhode Island passed an act releasing the inhabitants of that colony from allegiance to Great Britain. It was carried in the upper house by unanimous vote, and in the house of deputies with only six dissenting voices out of sixty. The act was tantamount to a declaration of independence, and the establishment of a self-constituted republic.

The Darwin Theory.

A Russian physician was lately consulted by a woman on account of a peculiar deformity, consisting of an extension of the spine which formed a tail two inches long and half an inch thick, with two vertebræ.—Medical Journal.

The Beard a Mask.

The beard is a mask. It conceals, not the features, but the character. I never thoroughly understand a man until I see his chin. It is the sole index of mental intrepidity or of executive vacillation.—Cor. Brooklyn Eagle.

On Good Authority.

We have it upon the authority of an ancient mariner, who knows whereof he affirms, that the bight of a rope is warming rather than nourishing.—Boston Transcript.

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Fooling General Sherman.

About six miles out of Savannah, I came across a farmer who accepted a plug of tobacco, and was ready to sit down on a log and answer all questions, says a correspondent of the Detroit Free Press. When I asked him about Sherman's approach, he burst into a loud laugh and slapped his leg, and was so tickled that he did not calm down for two minutes.

"Excuse, me stranger," he finally said, "but whenever I think of how I fooled Gineral Sherman it tickles me all over."

"Did you fool him?"

"Well, I rather reckon."

"How?"

"Wall, you see, that's my place up thar' on the rise. When the war broke out I was the most cantankerous rebel you ever saw. I swore I'd fight and fout and fit till we lick the Yanks, if it took a hundred years. I reckon Gineral Sherman heard of it."

"Probably he did."

"And after he took Atlanta he made up his mind to gobble me. He knew I'd swore to die before I'd surrender, and he came along down from Atlanta with over seventy thousand men, to surround me. Mighty cute old man, that Gineral Sherman!"

"Yes."

"Wall, they got here one night about 10 o'clock. I reckon that nigh on to thirty thousand of them surrounded my house up thar' and called for me to come out and surrender and end the war,"

"And course you did?"

"And course I didn't! That's whar' the fun comes in. I wasn't home at all but was down in Virginny with Lee. They entered the house and sarched and sarched, and went to the barn and called and called, and when the old woman finally told 'em I wasn't home they was the maddest crowd you ever sot eyes on. They had hoofed it all the way from Atlanta to get their paws on me, and had had their long march for nothing! I expect Sherman was ready to bust with madness, and I reckon he won't never quite forgive me. It tickles the old woman wuss than it tickles me, and you'd better come up to the house and hear her tell what them seventy thousand Yankees said when they got here and found me gone."

Where The Shoe Pinches.

Talmage, Beecher, Murphy, Powderly and Ingersoll all agree that the curse of the workingmen is too much rum, but none of them struck the nail on the head as firmly as the noted freethinker when he said "Here is a shoeshop. One man in the shop is always at work during the day. In the evening he goes courting some good, nice girl. There are five other men in the shop who don't do any such thing. Those spend half their working evenings in dissipation. The first young man by and by cuts out these others, and gets a boot and shoe store of his own. Then he marries the girl. Soon he is able to take his wife out to ride of an evening. The five laborers, his former companions, who see him indulging in this luxury, retire to a neighboring saloon and pass a resolution that there is an eternal struggle between labor and capital."

There is an intellectual and refined sensationalism as well as a vulgar—sensationalism of thought as well as of word. Some seek notoriety through the eccentricity of their thoughts; others through their words. Both will have their reward.—W. Poole Balfer.

Alluding to the late Edwin P. Whipple, his friend, Rev. Dr. Bartol, lately said: "I never heard a word of envy from his lips, and I never saw a gleam of malice in his eye." What higher ambition can any man cherish than to be worthy of such eulogy after death?

Kindly offices are possible in a small city. How much more human a place is a small city than a large one! for at the farthest you cannot be very distant from your friends. The helpfulness of friendship is easier in towns than in capitals.—T. M. Coan.

To make "The Man I Am" one with "The Man I Might Have Been" is the great end of our lives; it was for this that we were created. To have accomplished this is success; to have missed it is failure.—National Baptist.

Judge: "Have you any thing to say before the judge passes sentence upon you?" Prisoner: Well all I got to say is, I hope yer honor'il consider the extreme youth of my lawyer, an' let me off easy."

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