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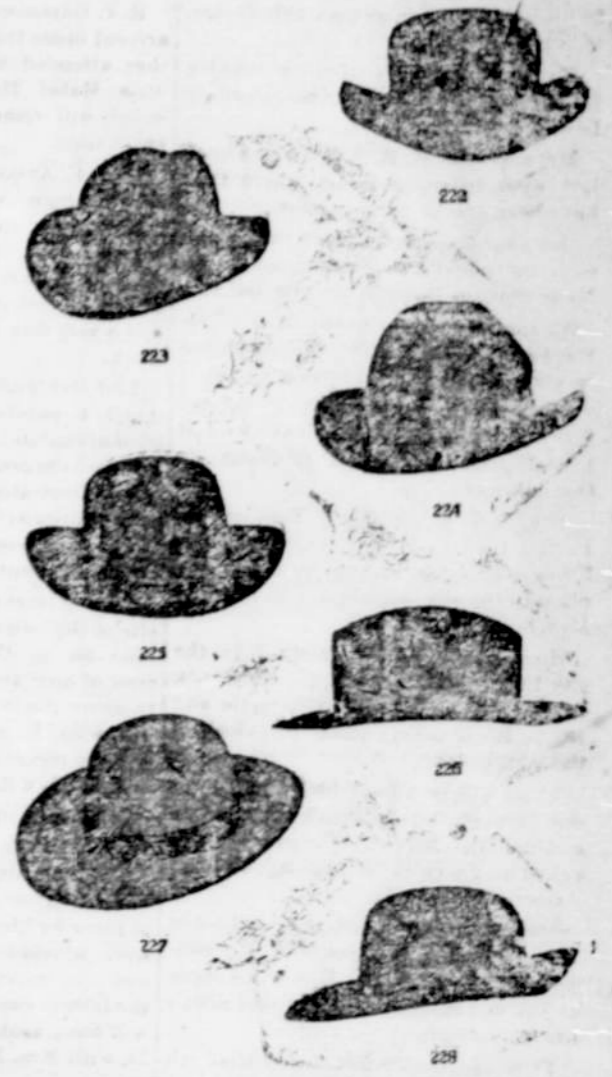
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KLAMATH KOMMERCIAL KOMPANY.

IN A KILN-TOP

By ALBERT W. TOLMAN

DRIVING his heavy four-horse wagon up on the stage beside the open furnace, Harry Sanders stopped. His horse reared and tamed his reins round the whipstock standing in its case on the right of the seat. Then he pulled on his reins, "grate," and began to pitch his load of lime-rock, piece by piece, into the granite-lined pit that yawned below him, vomiting forth a ceaseless tide of smoke and heat.

Underneath, in the body of the kiln, were 20 or 30 tons of limestone in every stage of burning, from the thoroughly calcined lumps at the bottom, which needed only shoveling out and cooling off to prepare them for packing in the cars, to the fragments last thrown in at the top, crusted with coal soot, but not yet heated enough to show any signs of crumbling. From this mass, through which the arches sent a steady flood of streaming flame, spun out by the forced draft, rose a mingled column of carbonic acid gas and coal smoke, a deadly combination for the human lungs.

"If a man ever falls into one of those tops, he's done!" a burner had once remarked, and no one who had seen the smoking pits in full blast would be likely to question the truth of the assertion.

It was Monday morning, and the rock in the kiln had settled a considerable distance. The top was something over 42 feet in diameter. From this point the body of the furnace gradually contracted, until just above the arches it measured barely eight feet across. Up to within two or three yards of the surface it was lined with fire bricks, but for the remainder of the distance blocks of so-called fire granite were employed.

The workmen below never intentionally put on fresh coal when a cart was being unloaded above, but sometimes they could not avoid doing so, and then the driver was subjected to a very unpleasant smoking.

On this morning Sanders was unfortunate. He had not thrown off a dozen pieces when he heard the scraping of shovels, and in a few seconds, curling up through every crevice in the bottom pit, came the sooty vapor. Thicker it grew, eddying and whirling round him in choking clouds. But the team must be unloaded, and he could not stop. The farther he worked the sooner he would be through.

With drooped heads the horses stood patiently, waiting for the signal to start. They were used to the smoke, and, indeed, were so far forward that they did not get nearly so much as their driver. He was completely hidden by it. A spectator a short distance away could not have told whether or not he was still on the top of his load.

Sanders worked rapidly, tossing the lumps one after another into the kiln-top. The wagon was perhaps a quarter unloaded when his left toe caught under an especially large piece of rock, and he stumbled forward. Then a fragment

under his other foot gave way, and he pitched over the wheel into the mouth of the kiln. As he fell, he caught unawares in the whipstock, round which the reins were twisted. It yielded, and the place where he had stood was vacant. So blackly did the smoot's roll over the wagon that a man ten feet off could not have seen him fall.

Almost before the driver had time to realize what had occurred, he found himself sprawling in a loose, helpless heap, upon the rocks he had just thrown in. They were not yet heated through, but their sharp corners cut and bruised him severely.

Instantly the deadly peril of his situation dawned upon him, and he sprang to his feet, bent upon getting out at once. Warm, black and stifling, the smoke wrapped him about like a shroud. He began to cough and choke. An ordinary man would have succumbed immediately in that fearful atmosphere, but Sanders had become so accustomed to breathing coal smoke that he did not yield readily to the fumes. He was perfectly aware that his life could be measured by a very few seconds of seconds unless he extricated himself at once from this fiery pit. Two quick steps brought him to the front wall. He pushed his hands up along the hot granite blocks and found that he could reach well over the highest layer. A moment's grasp upon some firm projection, the quick thrust of a boot-toe into a crack in the lining, and he would be out of his dilemma in a jiffy!

Even in the midst of his peril he was inclined to congratulate himself that the rock in the kiln was so lower, for had the distance to fall been greater he might have broken some bone, the heat would have been more intense, and the depth would have made it impossible for him to get his hands over the top of the granite.

He was on the point of lifting his foot to thrust it into some crevice in the wall when beneath his feet there came a rumbling, a sinking. The driver's heart almost stood still with terror, for he knew too well the meaning of the sound. The kiln was settling! Down slumped the rock with a suddenness that almost threw him off his balance. The heat came inside the furnace sank barely two feet, but when the motion ceased the top of Sanders' fingers rested on the joint between the first and second layers of granite. He could no longer touch the top of the upper blocks.

It was death to stay, but how could he get out? The wall in front was now too high for him to scale. Beneath his feet a dull red, dusky glow showed dimly between the rough pieces of rock. Through every crevice the smoke oozed up from the burning coal just thrown into the arches 20 feet below. He was sick, blind, dizzy. In a minute or two, at the utmost, he would be overcome by smoke and heat.

Round him curved the rugged, soot-blackened layers of granite, barely visible through the murky clouds. Above he caught a glimpse of blue sky, dimly seen by whirling vapor. His eyes smarted intolerably. From the burning coal an heated rock a nauseous, penetrating odor rolled up to him. It was eating the lining out of his lungs. His strength

grew less with every breath he was forced to take.

Dazed by his peril, Sanders stood motionless. Then from a crevice almost under his feet a thin, writhing tongue of flame, forked and lurid, darted suddenly up, wreathed for a moment with the smoke wreaths, and disappeared as quickly as it had come. The apparition brought the driver to his senses. Precious seconds were passing, and instant action was necessary.

Leaping up as high as he could, he threw his hands over the edge of the hot granite, and tried to lift himself to the top, but he slipped back almost immediately. The two feet that the rock had settled meant death to him unless he could devise some way to regain it.

All at once it flashed over him that he might throw the rocks he was standing on into a loose pile against the front wall, and thus make a heap high enough to help him clamber over. Could he do this before the kiln settled, his safety would have been assured. Was there time to do it now?

Stooping, he grasped a three-cornered fragment and threw it against the wall. Another and then another followed. They were burning hot, except those he had just flung in from the top of his load. With bent head, facing the furnace that poured exhaustively up, and drawing them into his lungs with every choking breath, he fumbled nimbly over the hard back lumps.

In this fashion he heaped 13 or 14 pieces against the granite, and then stopped, feeling that to work longer would destroy his only hope of getting out. His eyes were bloodshot, his brain reeling. His temples throbed as if they would burst. He could see nothing, could hear nothing but a confused roaring. Struggling up, he staggered forward. Two steps brought him again to the wall.

To his horror, he found that the pile he had built was not high enough. There was not time to add to it further. What should he do?

Fortunately, at that moment the wind veered. For a little while the smoke drew away to the westward, and left him standing clear in the heat. Only a few feet above him beyond the kiln edge he could see the wagon body and the backs and heads of his horses, their outlines wavering in the heated atmosphere that enveloped him. Then, as he dropped his eyes, he caught sight of something that gave him a sudden hope of escape. Over the granite hung the end of his reins, where they had fallen when he grasped unavailingly at the whipstock. Might he not take firm hold of these, start his horse, and thus be hoisted out of that fiery pit?

Nearly had the idea suggested itself to him when the wind changed again, the smoke blew back, and once more surrounded him in its pitchy clouds. Sanders' brain was swimming. Strength and consciousness could not endure more than 20 seconds longer. His shoes were burning on his feet. His skin was shriveling and cracking.

With closed eyes he swayed forward, felt about until he found the loop of the reins, and hooked his fingers round them. It would not do for him to bear his whole weight upon them, for they might break and let him fall back, thus

destroying his only chance. Even in his extremity he thought of that.

There was no time to waste. How should he start his horse? He tried to shout to them, but so cracked and feeble was his voice that they did not recognize it, and refused to move. Already ten of his precious seconds were gone.

Sanders stooped, picked up a fragment of rock, and launched it at random, through the smoke, in the direction of old white Billy, the off leader of the team. Fortunately, it struck the horse fairly on his flank, rousing him suddenly from his reverie. Billy started forward, and the others followed his lead. There was a heavy stamping of hoofs, a creaking of unloosed axles. The team was in motion.

The moment the driver flung the rock he seized the reins strongly again with both hands. Barely had he done so when the body tightened with a quick jerk. It was the wagon he had been waiting for, the one on which his life depended. Without losing his hold he sprang up, sticking the tips of his toes into the interstices between the blocks of granite. The force of the pull hurled him against the wall, but he clung to the leather straps with desperate energy.

Had the reins given way, all would have been lost. But they were new and strong, purchased the day before to replace an older pair, and they did not break. In a moment Sanders was dragged up and out of the kiln, across the granite edge, and along the plank of the staging, narrowly escaping being run over by the broad-tired wheels.

Less than a minute and a half had elapsed since the driver's feet first struck the bottom of the pit, but it would be hard to imagine a more fearful 90 seconds than that through which he had passed. As he looked back upon it afterward it seemed to him like a brief but horrible nightmare.—Youth's Companion.

Long-Felt Want.

A meteorologist has invented an apparatus to forestall the coming of squalls, and he will confer a benefit on the world, remarks the Chattanooga Times, by making them cheap enough for family use.

Prince Pushimi has learned one sentence in English: "I offer a toast to the president of the United States," and it always makes a hit.

SAPIENT SAYINGS.

Some men never perceive a point unless it's happen to sit on a tack.

In law, who cares what is right or just, provided the rules of the game are observed?

Between the fumes of incense and those of good roast beef, even poets hardly hesitate.

Judging from the careful style of the love letters of some famous men, one would say they loved for publication.

WHO OWNS A WOMAN'S HAIR

Question as to Proprietary Rights of Wife's Tresses Comes to Court for Settlement.

There is nowadays virtually nothing that a wife can do for which she cannot make her husband pecuniarily responsible, declares the Fall Mail Gazette. Whatever happens, he has always got to pay the cost. And though he leaves her at his peril, she can always leave him at her pleasure, and the law she can put in force to compel her return to her life of no use whatever to him. "When I married her I became in sense part proprietor of her hair." Now she has brought him before the court on the charge of stealing that same hair. If it had been the hair of her head and he had exercised it in the course of business the charge of stealing might perhaps have been unsustained. But she had bought the hair with her own money and had been at charges for making it up. The husband had, as the court pointed out, no claim to the hair under the circumstances; there was no part ownership, as there might once have been considered to be, in the product and no right to raise money on it. In point of fact, the relation between husband and wife had come to be such that there was only a committal trial.

LIFE-SAVING DOGS OF WAR.

Successful Demonstration of New Service in England Proves of Greatest Interest.

An interesting demonstration of what dogs trained in ambulance service can do in war time in aid of the wounded has been made at Wimbledon, England. Two highly trained dogs, one of them three-parts collie and one-part Eskimo, and the other also collie with the same strain of retriever, took part in the exhibition. Round the dogs was strapped a sort of harness bearing the Red Cross badge and fitted with pockets on each side containing triangular bandages, and round the neck hung a kee of spirits. The members of the ambulance corps present proceeded to carry out a series of displays in which the dogs found men supposed to be wounded lying on the bench, invisible to the spectators, and, having found them, gave tongue. The ambulance then picked up the wounded man and completed the first aid, which by the dog's help he had been able to give himself. Dogs trained for this purpose are in use in the German service, many being now in Herderland, West Africa, and there are also many with the Russian army in Manchuria.

FEEDING THE WILD ANIMALS

Squirrels and Rabbits Most Quickly Become Winter Pets—Cotton-Tail Comes at Night.

Of the animals that we can cheer about our houses, the gray squirrel becomes most friendly. Put nuts in convenient places and they will make frequent trips for supplies, but only on comparatively mild days will they remain long outside their comfortable winter quarters, where they usually have plenty of food stored. In Central park, New York, the gray squirrels have become so accustomed to being fed that they have, to a great extent, given up storing food, and rely chiefly on what they can pick up each day. Red squirrels can be coaxed by means of food, but they are a very questionable fellows in fact, the general opinion is decidedly against them, owing to their partiality for eggs and young birds. Chipmunks hibernate in their underground homes, so we cannot count on them for winter visitors. The cotton tail will condescend to accept dainties in the form of green vegetables (though one seldom has such luxuries in the winter), but, as he comes almost entirely at night, he is not a very interesting guest.

PROFESSION IS UNDERPAID

Reason Why More Women Do Not Study as Nursery Governesses Explained by Writers.

Martha S. Benesky in the Magazine begins a series of articles which she is to relate her experience as a nursery governess. At the conclusion of this first article she says, speaking of the first family with which she lived: "Their chauffeur was paid \$100 a month, and he had only the use of a machine; their governess was paid \$2, her board and half a room, and the entire charge of their three little bodies, mind and soul. The one who was trained mechanic, the other who required more qualifications than a college woman and a teacher of music, erable experience could boast. My own began at 7 o'clock, the time I called Laura, and lasted till about 10 o'clock in the evening. During this time there was not a moment of rest, not even a sleep at meals. In spite of the pleasant things connected with the situation, a woman of sufficient ability to discharge its duties would undertake the work (unless from motives of pure philanthropy), except for a larger salary than she could get in another occupation."

BIG MONEY IN AGENCY

Insurance Men Keep Large Down for Their Labors—Some Make \$200,000 a Year.

As might be expected from the magnitude of the business—more than a thousand millions a year—the men who are able to carry conviction to the hearts of the multimillionaires receive proportionate reward, says World's Work. Some of the general agents control exclusively a specified territory, pay all their expenses, and turn over the business secured to one of the companies on a commission basis of up to 200,000 a year. The best field men, the actual solicitors, may make up to a year each; and there are thousands of agents whose annual commissions range between \$5,000 and \$10,000. It should be noted that the tendency now is to abolish these general agencies and concentrate the responsibility upon the home office. And the general insurance experts believe that the per cent, or ten per cent, of each policyholder's total payments, which agent now receives, is too high.

Pocketbooks at \$1,000

A German journalist on his way from St. Louis was particularly struck at the sight in certain New York streets of such signs of American extravagance as \$1,000 pocket books for women.

Rooms Remain Intact

Kilkenny castle, Ireland, is one of the oldest habitations in the world. The rooms are the same as they were 800 years ago.

Russian Nationalities

The Russian population now comprises 110 nationalities, the three greatest being Finns, Tartars and Slav.

FLAUSIBLE THEORY

Tom—I wonder why some kisses are so much sweeter than others?

Jack—Different brand of microbes.—Chicago Daily News.

Both Nix

The "Sweet Girl Graduate" now gives way to "The Summer Girl."—Philadelphia Press.