

ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17, 1898.

From the Depths of the Mine.

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On the 23rd of December 1855 an explosion of gas occurred in Barberry colliery, Derbyshire, England. In these days there was no such thing as a Mines Act, no such individual as a Mine Inspector, to worry the life of the manager, or raise fears of danger in the minds of the workmen, and every mine went its own "gait" as the Scotch say. Fans, safety lamps and ventilation were the sole property of cranks, and it was an indication of lunacy to talk of anything of the sort.

At the time of the explosion in question the workings were confined to the upper, or Black Rock seam, and about 150 men were employed in the various operations of underground work. The principal face of work lay in the North West level about one and a half miles distant from the main slope. The cause of the explosion was generally set down to a sudden outburst of gas but in those times we would be more inclined to look upon it as the result of a blown out shot fired in a dusty atmosphere. As considerable water existed in the mine however, the force of the explosion was confined to the particular section in which it occurred. Therefore the majority of those who lost their lives—25 in number—with the exception of five men, who were within a few yards of the original blasts fell victims to what was at that time called choke damp, but which we know to be that deadly gas carbonic oxide, one half of one per cent of which we know to be fatal to human life.

Of the twenty-five unfortunate victims of the disaster all the bodies were recovered at the time save one, that of John Westerdale, and thereby hangs a tragedy—romantic and weird, but true. At the time of the explosion which, as I have said, occurred two days before Christmas, there lived in the village of Barberry two cousins—John Westerdale mentioned previously, and Hiram Fletcher. Westerdale was engaged to be married to Mary Wallace, bright, pretty girl, who counted her suitors, rough and uncouth as they were, by the score. The marriage was to take place on Christmas Eve, the day after the event which brought so much sorrow and desolation to the humble homes of Barberry. Westerdale's cousin Fletcher, who worked with him in the mine, was to act as groomsmen, and while it was thought that he at one time fancied the bride-elect himself, he succeeded in disarming any such foolish notion by doing his utmost to hasten the bridal day.

When the explosion took place on that dark and ever-remembered Thursday, messengers were dispatched to the "upper lift," where the cousins were at work, for the purpose of warning them of their danger. While expediency was advisable, there seemed to be no very immediate necessity for haste, as the explosion, having spent itself on the other side of the airway, was not likely to carry any disastrous effects to the section in question. In these days, however, fans and even furnaces, were most conspicuous by their absence, and a steam pipe in the down-east caused a sudden reversal of the current and a hasty retreat was, at the last moment, made necessary. The young man Westerdale, lingered behind, and though his cousin tried to save him, he had to abandon the effort and sorrowfully returned to the surface alone. With tears in his eyes and a voice broken with emotion, he told the news to the sorrowing sweetheart.

By and by, when the first bitter grief of the young girl had somewhat abated, he told her that Jack's last words to him were that if he could not escape himself, his wish was that Mary might marry Hiram.

Mary married Hiram Fletcher.

The events recorded in the previous part of this tale had passed into history when I, Robert Adams, arrived at Barberry Colliery to take the management of the mine in February 1884. Mary Wallace was Mary Fletcher, and though nearly thirty years had passed since the great sorrow which had darkened her youth, she still retained traces of early beauty of form and feature. True the brown tresses were whitening fast—and the dark eyes had a strange expression in their depths—the look of one who gazes ahead into the years with

the fear, the knowledge, almost, that fate has not yet dealt her hardest blow. Her husband, Hiram Fletcher, was at the time of my arrival underground manager of the Colliery and had the reputation of being a good husband, a hard but scrupulously honest task master, and a rigid Wesleyan local preacher. He always seemed to me to have the face of a man whose life held some sorrow that would bear no inquiry, but after hearing the story of his heroism in attempting to save his cousin twenty nine years before and of his deep sorrow for that untimely death, I understood his apparent stolidity, and admired his honorable, upright dealing with all his fellow men.

About two years after my advent at Barberry, it became necessary, owing to a law suit with a neighbouring company who owned and worked the same seam to the rise side of us, to make preparations to catch whatever water might come down on us from the upper workings.

After considering many methods of accomplishing our object I decided to drive parallel water levels through the old workings where the explosion occurred in 1855, and which had been closed ever since. The most vigorous opponent I had to this scheme was Hiram Fletcher; and so pitiously did he plead for me not to desecrate the home of the dead, and to spare the feelings of his wife of nearly thirty years, that I was almost induced to erect a large pumping plant away to the dip at the second shaft. Other influences were at work however with our owners and Fletcher was overruled.

The levels were started and as they progressed at an average rise of 1 in 140—the necessary inclination to carry off water, we periodically crossed "gate roads" in the old "gob," and to our surprise found them not only open, but free from gas of any kind and "dust dry."

After progressing about 1500 yards we cut into an old road which had the appearance of being a main dip haulage. We—that is Fletcher his son Jack and myself, traversed it towards the rise for a considerable distance and eventually reached a point where a "cross gate" branched off to the left.

A low agonized exclamation from Fletcher made me turn to see if he had met with any accident, and his face startled me, it was so white, ghastly and fear-stricken. Two roads were there before us and again Fletcher asked me to follow the "cross gate." Without however waiting for an answer he dashed into the "cross gate" accompanied by his son, and called to me to follow him. The main road seemed to me to present better possibilities for excitement and despite his almost frantic entreaties I made my way alone until an incident occurred, which to all practical purposes froze every drop of my blood in my body.

I had given my last response to Hiram when my eye caught sight of the figure of a man sitting at the side of the roadway. He was leaning towards the right, his head resting against a block of coal; his hands were clasped between his knees, while his cap which appeared to be drawn over his eyes gave him the look of one asleep. Thinking that perhaps he was one of the "headers" who had first discovered the old roadway and had tried to explore it with the result of going to sleep I called on him to get up and go to work or home. There was no answer and as I failed to recognize in the lonely figure, any of my workmen, I knelt down and looked in his face; my gaze was riveted there in horror. Shall I ever forget the feeling that ran through me as, unable for a moment to withdraw my eyes, I continued to stare at the parchment-like face, which was that of young man. My heart beat so loud that it seemed to me it must be heard all through those silent subterranean corridors. My head swam round and round, and every nerve was quivering with horror. It was not that the sight of death brought any cowardly fears—Ah, no; I had seen it too often for that in my mining experience, but there was something in that rigid form that affected me as I had never been affected before. Finally through mingled terror and weakness my eyes sought the ground. My God! What did they see. Before me was the sequel to a tragedy of

nearly thirty years before! There by the light of my Marsant lamp, I read written on a slab of roof slate the words: "Mary—Hiram and I quarrelled—he has given me my death blow—he cursed me and said he would tell you I could not escape the choke damp and that I asked you to marry him—Oh my head—good bye Mary—Jack Westerdale."

On the forehead of the figure before me was a ragged wound round which the blood of thirty years still showed itself and told too plainly of the blow with which jealous Hiram Fletcher had removed a rival and gained a wife.

These things are matters of history now, in Barberry Colliery, true history, and I do not wish to enlarge on the way in which Fletcher accepted the situation when his son told him of my ghastly discovery. He had been expecting it, much I believe as all criminals expect ultimate punishment and perhaps in the same way he longed for it. A sudden paralytic stroke followed the announcement, and a few days later Hiram Fletcher was called to answer before God for the crime of his early days. Neither do I care to dwell on the way in which his wife received the true version of the tragedy of her life. Today Hiram Fletcher lies a dishonored man in his grave, in a dim, damp corner of the village graveyard. Over that neglected mound falls the shadow of a giant pine, whose hoarse murmuring makes ever a mournful requiem. The children in their play, in the home of the dead, never by any chance come near that lonely grave. In the village of Barberry, Fletcher's widow drags out her weary days, an old woman, recognizing no one not even the devoted son who has given up his life to her. She sees in him only that other Jack—the young bridegroom who waits the day when he shall arise, when his bride shall become young once more and he shall resume his place as a lover, a lover forever.

M. A. R.

TROUT COOKED ON THE HOOK.

Conclusion of one Story Told About the Wonders of Yellowstone Park.

"You needn't think that just because I have been out there I am going to give you all the details of a surprise which I did not feel at the stock tales of the Yellowstone Park said the critic tourist. Anybody knows that boiling water will cook fish, and so long as you know that the Yellowstone is full of geysers and boiling springs I don't see what there is wonderful about catching a trout and the turning around and dangling it in a boiling spring until it is cooked. It would begin to be wonderful if boiling water didn't cook fish everywhere."

"But I wish when they are telling this old story they'd finish it up—make it complete. The next time you hear anybody tell that story just you watch out for the way it ends. It never ends. The man tells how he caught the trout. Well and good; anybody can catch hundreds of trout in those overstocked waters. Then he tells how he swung around on his heel and, without taking the fish from the hook, lowered it into a pool of boiling water and cooked it. Well, what's the end of the story? There isn't any end. He just chortles about how he was overcome by the marvels of nature and that sort of thing. He doesn't say another word about the fish. Now, if you will only let the marvels of nature alone and keep your eye fixed on the fish with which the story began it will look mighty different."

"There is the pool of boiling water pretty handy, but not by any means to be reached by pivoting on the fisherman's heel. Then just so's to have something to talk about when he gets home the fisherman soups the live trout into the boiling water. If its cruelty to broil a live lobster there ought to be something done to a man who will boil a trout alive. And it spoils the fish: the man has to throw it away after he has shoved it through nature's marvels for the sake of his miserable little story. Nobody can eat a trout that has been boiled with all its scales on and all the machinery in place; it's got to be thrown away. There's another thing, too about this story, the next time you hear it ask the man if he took the trout out of the pool of boiling water. If he says he did then the fish didn't begin to be cooked, for anybody who has ever seen a boiled fish of any sort knows that when it's done it won't hold together tight enough to be lifted unless it's wrapped in a naykin before its cooked."

"So there you have the plain facts about cooking trout on the hook. I know because I thought it was such a great marvel of nature that I had to go and try it. Then I saw what happened, and I haven't yet got through feeling disgusted with myself."

CALIPH'S

COMMENTS.

"If the Cap does not fit, don't wear it."—Old Saw.

HALIFAX, DEC 14.—While I think the Honorable Attorney Generals book "Love" has been commented on enough for one season, I cannot refrain from mentioning what I heard the other evening. A bookseller no less, one of the praying kind and a strait-laced presbyterian at that, has called the book obscene and refuses to sell it. Ye gods and little fishes! When a book with a high moral purpose can be called obscene, what in Heaven's name are we to do with the Bible, if we judge it on the same level as Dr. Longley's book? One cannot claim that the bookseller aforesaid has not perused the pages of his Bible for his whole life manifests that. Verily the breadth and scope of some mens minds tends to prove the narrowness and shallowness of others remain a miracle yet inexplicable and unanswerable.

One day last week while the piercing wind and chilly blasts swept down the principal thoroughfare of the city, there stood beneath the shadow of a blank building aged and infirm specimen of the aboriginal settlers of this Province,—a once stalwart and muscular Indian. There he stood outstretched hand asking a pittance from the white man, whose tender heart might feel a passing pang this Xmas season and give a few pence to help cheer his loneliness and brighten the memories of days gone by. It seems to one a sad commentary on fallen greatness. The once brave arrow now humble and abject begging a passing dole! How have the mighty fallen.

There seems to be a great lack of literary life in this city. Even the daily morning and evening papers are not up to the standard of literary or news excellence that such a sized city demands. On every hand complaints are heard, but still improvement lingers in the lap of don't care, and the literary and news abortions continue to pursue the even tenor of their various ways. Now and then something phenomenal will flash athwart the literary newspaper sky, and in a day or two leave us darker than ever. We cannot measure

up our own sister city St. John in this respect. The more the pity! Badly printed, poorly edited and without news, Halifax papers are a crying shame to its citizens who deserve better at the hands of its would-be representative papers. The scissors and paste-pot seem to be the essential articles in the editorial equipment.

As a moral city Halifax can hold up its head with any in the Dominion, the remarks of those in high positions to the contrary. Its people are on the whole law-abiding, well-mannered, cleanly in thought and habits as those of other cities. A great deal has been said about it on account of the military and navy, but I am of opinion that the presence of Tommy Atkins and the jolly tar, while raising the devil in a few instances, is not detrimental to the morals of the citizens. Vice is always so hideous that we naturally abhor and are more ready to observe it in others while virtue goes unnoticed without a passing comment. Halifax can measure up in all that appertains to making good, sound citizenship, with any city of its size in the Dominion. May she always hold this high and honored position!

To hear the merry jingle of the sleigh bells reminds one of the festive season so near at hand. Associated with Christmas are the snow and frost, so conducive to good cheer and jollity, refreshing to the soul and spirit of—man, woman and child. A green Christmas augurs ill. Give us the keen frost and feathery carpet spread o'er hill and dale, with all its joyousness. An old-fashioned Yule-tide, such as childhood memories recall, with the pleasant aroma of roast goose and plum-pudding; with Santa Clause not a myth or fiction, but a reality. Give us the laughing games, and sport; the general good-will and festiveness the season brings! Away with man or woman who would dare rob us of these hallowed memories, for Christmas must never be relegated to the limbo of forgetfulness while there's a goose to roast, or the ingredients for making a plum-pudding.

A CARELESS PICKPOCKET.

How He Lost His Diamond in the Place of an Empty Purse.

This story did not come from the man interested; it came from the lady who was with the lady who was interested. Perhaps that fact will relieve the mind of the man 'who did.'

The two ladies were crossing from Hoboken the other day, and in the ferryboat sat next to a flashy dressed man, who wore many imitation diamonds and much jewelry. When the ladies left the boat one felt for her purse and didn't find it.

"There wasn't much in it," she explained philosophically to her friend. "I wasn't going to buy anything, you know; I was only going shopping. But it served me right for putting the purse in my pocket."

The friend agreed consolingly, and they walked on for a moment, when the lady whose pocket had been picked pulled out

a small hard lump of glass from her pocket. "The poor thief," she said; "here's one of his diamonds!" They laughed and went on uptown. In the course of time they were up in Union Square, and for the fun of the thing decided to go into Tiffany's and see what the thief's "diamond" might be worth. So they went to the diamond sharp and asked if the glass was really worth anything.

"It's not glass," said the expert; "it's a diamond, and a very good one." Then he studied it a little longer and said that it was worth about \$800.

For some reason the man who lost that diamond hasn't advertised it yet. This story will do that for him—New York Sun.

A Cheap old Queen.

An Egyptian mummy, supposed to be that of Queen Anne, wife of Ramesses II was offered for sale in a London auction-room and realized \$60.

CAUSE FOR ALARM.

How baldness begins.

How to prevent it.

Every person, male or female, shrinks from baldness. It adds to the appearance of age and is a serious discomfort. The cases are rare when the falling out of the hair may not be stopped, and a new and healthy growth of the hair promoted. The hair grows in the scalp like a plant in the soil. If a plant flourishes, it must have constant attention; it must be watered regularly and find its food in the soil where it is rooted. It's so with the hair. Neglect is usually the beginning of baldness. Dandruff is allowed to thicken on the scalp. The hair begins to loosen. The scalp loses its vitality. The hair, insufficiently nourished, begins to fade and to fall. The instant need in such a case is some practical preparation which, supplying the needed nourishment to the scalp, will feed the hair, give it strength, and so produce a strong and healthy growth. All this is done by Dr. Ayer's Hair Vigor, the most practical and valuable preparation for the hair that can be obtained. It tones up the scalp, does away with dandruff, stops the hair from falling, restores the original color to gray or faded

hair, and gives an abundant and glossy growth. Those who are threatened with approaching baldness will be interested in the following voluntary statement, made by Alderman S. J. Green, of Spencer, Iowa. He writes:

"About four months ago, my hair commenced falling out so rapidly that I became alarmed, and being recommended Dr. Ayer's Hair Vigor by a druggist, I resolved to try this preparation. I have been now using it for three months, and am much gratified to find that my hair has ceased falling out and also that hair which had been turning gray for the past five years has been restored to its original color, dark brown. It gives me much pleasure to recommend this dressing."

S. J. GREEN, Alderman, Spencer, Iowa.

Those who are interested in preserving and beautifying the hair will do well to send for Dr. Ayer's Curebook. A story of cures told by the cured. This book of 100 pages is sent free, on request, by the J. C. Ayer Co., Lowell, Mass.