

CANTASTOPHIS ?

STROPE.

Oh he was a sweet, young, lithsome man,
And he moved with a tender grace;
And a smile like the sweep of an angel's wing
Played over his fair young face.

ANTISTROPE.

"I bring," he said, and the editor bowed,
For he loved the sweet young thing,
"I bring," he murmured, "a poet's song,
A lay of the balmy spring."

CLIMAX.

Then the editor gathered his cross cut saw,
And the nail grab, all the same;
The big sledge hammer, the long crow bar,
And the club with the terrible name.

CATASTROPE.

He sawed him in two and he flattened him out,
He tore out each quivering lung;
He pinned him up to the sanctum wall,
So scattered, and yet so young. —[Hawkeye.]

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THE BLACK-INDIES !

By JULES VERNE.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE WAY.

(Continued.)

At this moment the smoke stack of the "Prince of Wales" vomited volumes of black smoke, and the boiler rumbled with deafening noise. At the sound of the bell, which was rung but a few times, the tardy travellers commenced to run. There was a crowd of merchants, farmers, and ministers, the latter distinguished by their knee breeches, long coats, and the fine white linen which circled their throats.

James Starr was not the last to embark. He sprang nimbly on the deck of the "Prince of Wales." Although raining violently, not one of these passengers dreamed of seeking shelter in the cabin. They remained quiet, enveloped in their wraps, some refreshing themselves from time to time from their flask of gin or whiskey—or, as they say, "looking after the inner man." The last bell sounded, the moorings were cast off, and the "Prince of Wales" cleared from the little basin which sheltered it from the billows of the North Sea.

The Firth of Forth is the name of a gulf which indents the banks of the County of Fife on the north, and those of the Counties of Semlithgow, Edinburgh and Haddington on the south. It forms the estuary of the Forth, but like the Thames or the Mersey, of great depth; it flows from the western slope of Ben Lomond and empties into the sea at Kincardine.

The distance from Granton Pier to the end of this gulf would be short but for the many detentions caused by stopping at stations on both sides of the water. Towns, villages and cottages dotted the banks of the Forth among the trees of this fertile country. Sheltered under the large foot-bridge thrown between the paddle boxes, James Starr made no effort to look at the country, then streaked by the fine hatching of the rain. He was anxious to see if he were attracting the notice of any particular passenger. Could the anonymous author of the second letter be on the boat? The engineer could not detect any suspicious glances.

On leaving Granton Pier the "Prince of Wales" steered toward the narrow strait which glides between the two points of South Queensferry and North Queensferry; beyond which the Forth forms a sort of lake, navigable for vessels of a hundred tons. Through the openings in the mist, the snowy summits of the Grampian Hills were visible.

Soon the steamboat had left behind the village of Aberdour, the isle of Colm, crowned by the ruins of a monastery dating from the twelfth century, the remains of the castle of Barnbougle, of Dornbristle, where was assassinated the Regent Murray's son-in-law, then the islet fortified by Garvey. It cleared the strait of Queensferry, passed on the left Roslyn Castle, where formerly resided one branch of the Stuarts, of which Cromwell's mother was a kins-woman; shot by Bleckness, always fortified, in conformity with one of the articles in the treaty of the Union; and skirted the wharves of the little port of Charleston, whence is exported the limestone from Lord Elgin's quarries.

The weather had grown very disagreeable. The rain, heated by the violent wind, was swept about like water-spouts by the roaring gusts. James Starr was not free from some anxiety. Would Simon Ford's son be at the rendezvous? He knew from experience that the miners being accustomed to the quiet depths of the mines, are less willing than the outward men to face inclement weather. From Callander to the Dochart Pit and Yarrow Well the distance was four miles. These were reasons which might to a certain extent delay the old overseer's son. And all this time the engineer was worried by the idea

that the meeting arranged in the first letter had been countermanded in the second.

It was, in fact, his greatest anxiety.

At all events, if Harry Ford was not in waiting when the train reached Callander, James Starr had decided to go alone to the Dochart Pit, and even if necessary, as far as the village of Aberfoyle. There he could without doubt hear something of Simon Ford, and he could ascertain where the old overseer actually lived.

Meanwhile the "Prince of Wales" continued its course, raising great billows under the strokes of its paddle wheels. Nothing could be distinguished on either bank, neither the village of Crumvie, nor Torryburn, nor Torryhouse, nor Newmills, nor Caariden house, nor Kirkgrange, nor Salt Pans, on the right. The little port of Bowness, the port of Grange-mouth, hollowed out at the mouth of the Clyde Canal, disappeared in the heavy fog. Currioss, the old borough, and the ruins of the Abbey of Citeaux, Kincardine and its shipyards, at which the steamboat touched, Castle Ayr and its square tower of the thirteenth century, Clackmannan and its castle, built by Robert Bruce, were not even visible through the slanting lines of rain. The "Prince of Wales" stopped at the Alloa dock to let off some passengers. James Starr felt his heart beat faster, passing thus, after ten years' absence, this little village, the seat of such important mines, which still supported a large number of miners. His fancy led into this subsoil, which the miner's pick still hollowed out to great advantage. These Alloa mines, almost contiguous to those of Aberfoyle, continued to enrich the county, while the neighboring borings, now for many years exhausted, did not boast a single workman.

The steamboat, after leaving Alloa, struck into the numerous turnings which the Forth makes for a distance of nineteen miles. It steamed rapidly between the great trees on both banks. One moment through a glade appeared the ruins of the Abbey of Cainbuskenneth, which dates from the twelfth century. Then Castle Stirling, with the borough of that name, where the Forth is crossed by two bridges, and is no longer navigable for high-masted vessels.

Scarcely had the "Prince of Wales" touched the dock when the engineer sprang lightly on the wharf. Five minutes after he reached the station at Stirling. One hour later he left the train at Callander, a large village situated on the left bank of the Tuth.

There, on the platform, stood a young man who at once approached the engineer.

It was Harry, Simon Ford's son.

CHAPTER III.

THE DOCHART PIT.

Harry Ford was a tall young man of twenty-five years, vigorous and well developed. His serious expression and habitually pensive bearing had distinguished him from infancy from his companions in the mine. His regular features, his sweet earnest eyes, his hair rather wavy and of a chestnut rather than blonde shade, his natural charm of manner, all agreed to form the perfect type of the Lowlander—that is to say, a superb specimen of the Scotchman of the plain. Inured almost from his earliest childhood to the work of the mine, he was at once a reliable companion and a brave, honest soul. Guided by his father, led by his father, led by his own instincts, he had worked, he had learned in time, and at an age when one is little more than an apprentice he had made himself of importance, one of the first in his station, in a country which numbers few ignoramuses, as it does everything to suppress ignorance. If during the early years of manhood the pick had scarcely left his hand, nevertheless the young miner was not slow in acquiring sufficient knowledge to advance him in the hierarchy of the mine; and he would certainly have succeeded his father in the position of overseer in the Dochart Pit if the mine had not been abandoned.

Although James Starr was still a good walker, he could not have easily followed his guide, if the latter had not moderated his steps. The rain fell with less violence. The large drops were scattered before touching the soil. They were more like moist gusts which swept the horizon, stirred up by the fresh breeze.

Harry Ford and James Starr—the young man carrying the engineer's light baggage—followed the left bank of the river for the distance of a mile. After having skirted its winding bank they took a road which struck inland under the great rustling, dripping trees. Pastures spread on either side, surrounding isolated farms. Several flocks were quietly grazing on the grass, which is always green on the Lowland meadows. There were hornless cows, or little sheep with silken wool, which resembled the toy sheep of children's folds. No shepherd could be seen—he was no doubt sheltered in a hollow tree—but the colley, a dog peculiar to this country of the United Kingdom, and renowned for his vigilance, roamed around the pasturage.

The Yarrow Well was situated four miles from Callanpar. James Starr, even while walking, could not help feeling depressed. He had not seen the country since the last ton of coal from the Aberfoyle mines had been thrown into the cars of the Glasgow Railway. The agricultural life had now replaced the in-

dustrial one, always more exciting, more active. The contrast was all the more striking because that in winter the farmer's work decreases. But formerly in all seasons the mining population, above as well as below, enlivened this district. The great coal trains passed day and night. The rails now buried on their rotten sleepers were once ground under the weight of the wagons. Now a road of stones and clay was gradually taking the place of the old tramways of the works. James Starr thought he was crossing a desert.

The engineer looked about him with saddened eyes. He stopped at intervals to take breath. He listened. The air was no longer filled with the distant whistlings and the panting noise of the engines. Not a single column of blackish vapor which the workman loves to see mingled with the great clouds in the horizon. No high cylindrical chimney, or prismatic vomiting of smoke; after being fed in the depths of the earth, no shaft exhausts itself in breathing out its white vapor. The earth, formerly blackened by the dust from the mine, had a natural appearance, to which the eyes of James Starr were not accustomed.

When the engineer stopped, Harry Ford stopped also. The young miner waited in silence. He understood what was passing in the mind of his companion, and he fully shared his feelings—he, a child of the mine, whose whole life had been spent in the depths of this soil.

"Yes, Harry; all is changed," said James Starr. "But in proportion as they are withdrawn, the treasures of the mine must some day be exhausted. You regret that time?"

"I regret it, Mr. Starr," replied Harry. "The work was hard, but it was interesting, like all efforts."

"Without doubt, my boy. The constant struggle, the danger of the mine falling in, of fires, of inundations, of explosions, of fire-damp, which strike like lightning! To ward off these perils! You are right! It is a struggle, and consequently the excitement!"

"The Alloa miners have been more favored than the Aberfoyle miners, Mr. Starr."

"Yes, Harry."

"In fact," cried the young man, "it is too bad that the whole earth was not made entirely of coal! Then it would last for several millions of years!"

"Without doubt, Harry. But we must admit that nature has proved thoughtful in forming our spheroid principally of sandstone, limestone and granite, which cannot consume."

"Do you mean to say, Mr. Starr, that human beings would have ended by burning their globe?"

"Yes, decidedly so, my boy. The earth would have passed to the last mite into the furnaces of the locomotives, the machines, the steamers, the gas-works; and certainly it is thus that one of these fine days our world have ended."

"That is no longer to be feared, Mr. Starr. But instead the mines will be exhausted much sooner than statistics say."

"That will happen, Harry; and in my opinion, Harry, England is wrong in exchanging her coal for the gold of other nations."

"You are right."

"I know well," added the engineer, "that neither hydraulics nor electricity are yet completely understood, and that these two forces will yet be more thoroughly utilized. But never mind. Coal is of great practical use, and is easily adapted to the various needs of industry. Unhappily men can not produce it at will. If the outer forests should spring unceasingly under the influence of heat and rain, the inner forests could never be reproduced, and the world will never again be under the conditions necessary to make them."

James Starr and his guide, while talking, had been walking rapidly. An hour after leaving Callander, they reached the Dochart Pit.

The most indifferent spectator would have been touched by the sad appearance of these deserted works. It was like the skeleton of what had been before full of animation. In a vast square, bordered by some miserable trees, the earth was still thick with coal-dust, but all signs of cinders, pieces of coal and soot were gone. They had long since been carried off and consumed.

On a small hill was distinguishable the skeleton of an enormous frame, which the sun and the rain were slowly eating away. At the top of this frame was a great rowel or casting wheel; and still lower rounded the great drums, on which formerly were rolled the cables which drew the cages to the surface of the earth.

On the lower floor they saw the dismantled machine-house, in which the copper and steel parts of the mechanism had once glistened. Some fragments of the wall lay on the ground among broken joints, moldy with damp. Remains of beams, to which were fastened the shaft of the exhausting pumps, wedges, broken and encrusted with earth, toothless saws, overturned weighing machines, several ladder rounds, fixed to wooden horses and looking like the great bones of the ichthyosaurus, ralls carried on broken cross-pieces, still upheld by two or three tottering piles, tramways which would not have borne the weight of an empty wagon—such was the desolate appearance of the Dochart Pit. The chafed stones at the edge of the pit were covered with thick mosses. Here were the pieces of a cage, there the remains of a shed, where the

coal was stored before being sorted according to its quality and size. Finally, the remains of tons to which hung the end of a chain, fragments of gigantic wooden horses, the plates of a ripped-open boiler, twisted pistons, long beams suspended over the mouths of the pump wells, foot-bridges trembling in the wind, culverts shaking under the feet, walls full of crevices, half-broken down roofs, overhanging disjointed brick chimneys, resembling those modern guns whose breach is chiseled out in cylindrical rings. Everything conveyed an impression of desolation, misery and sadness; not produced by the ruins of an old stone castle, or the remains of a dismantled fortress.

"It is desolation," said James Starr, looking at the young man, who did not reply.

They then passed under the shed which covered the mouth of the Yarrow Pit, whose ladders still gave access to the lower galleries of the mine.

The engineer swung himself over the mouth. Formerly the strong air exhaled by the ventilators could be felt there. It was now a silent abyss. It seemed like the crater of an extinct volcano.

James Starr and Harry stepped on the first landing.

While being worked, an ingenious engine served certain shafts in the Aberfoyle mines, which in this respect were well supplied with apparatus. Buckets furnished with automatic parcheutes, held by wooden slides, oscillating ladders—called engine men—which, by a simple oscillating motion, allowed the miners to descend without danger and ascend without fatigue.

But this perfected apparatus had been carried away after the work was stopped. There remained at the Yarrow shaft only a long line of ladders, separated by narrow landings at intervals of fifty feet. Thirty of these ladders, placed end to end, would allow a descent to the bottom of the lowest gallery, at a depth of fifteen hundred feet. It was the only communication which existed between the bottom of the Dochart Pit and the surface of the earth. As for ventilation, it happened that the galleries of the Yarrow Well communicated with another shaft which opened on a higher level. The warm air was thus naturally set free by this kind of a reversed syphon.

"I will follow you, my boy," said the engineer, signing to the young man to precede him.

"At your service, Mr. Starr."

"You have your lamp?"

"Yes; and would to heaven it were the safety lamp which we formerly used."

"The fact is, an explosion of fire-damp is no longer to be feared," said James Starr.

Harry was furnished with a simple oil lamp, the wick of which he lit. In the empty mine, carbuted hydrogen gas cannot be produced; thus no explosion need be feared. No necessity exists for interposing between the flame and ambient air that metallic gauze which prevents the gas from igniting the outer air. The Davy lamp, then so perfect, was no longer needed here. But if the danger had ceased to exist, it was because the cause had disappeared, and, with this cause, the combustible which formerly made the wealth of the Dochart Pit.

Harry descended the first rounds of the upper ladder. James Starr followed him. Both soon found themselves in profound darkness, broken only by the light of the lamp. The young man held it above his head, the better to light his companion.

They went down ten ladders with the measured step habitual to the miners. These were still in good condition.

James Starr looked with curiosity, as well as the insufficient light would permit, at the dark sides of the shaft, still covered with a half-rotten, wooden planking.

Arrived at the fifteenth landing, that is to say, half-way down, they halted.

"Dedidedly, I have not your limbs, my boy," said the engineer, taking a long breath, "but still we'll do it."

"You are stout, Mr. Starr," said Harry, "and it is something, you see, to have always lived in the mine."

"You are right, Harry. Once upon a time, when I was twenty, I could have run down with one breath. Let us go on."

[To be Continued.]

One of our country exchanges says: "The absence of our leader to-day must be excused," etc. The editor's wife has gone to Boston to buy a new bonnet.—[Commercial Bulletin.]

Welcome, season of string beans,
Lettuce, dandelion greens,
Radishes and juicy beets,
New-laid eggs and fresh-born meals;
Welcome, season of delights,
Balmy days and breezy nights;
Welcome, hale and hearty chills,
Doctors' physic, doctors' bills.
—[St. Louis Journal.]

Last week a man was arrested in New York for stealing newspapers. He had a mania for his apparently profitable thievery. He had stolen, in thirteen months, eleven thousand newspapers, and his room looked like the humorous column of a St. Louis newspaper.—[Hawkeye.]