

MEANING OF WORDS.

We know the meaning of most words
By sound as well as sight;
They mean, although they have no mien,
So mind and write them right.

For thus—in "eccentricity,"
One sees good many c's,
Also, in "hubbubububorous,"
The b's are thick as bees.

There are no i's in English "eyes,"
But e's there are in "ease,"
A does want ye to make it "aye,"
There's but one p in peas.

Some judges judge the English tongue
But kill it with a breath;
With wind and words they sentence some
Fine sentences to death.

A sea-horse is a sea-horse, when
You see him in the sea;
But when you see him in a boy,
A bay horse then is he.

Of course a race course isn't coarse,
A fine is far from fine;
It is a saddening sight to see
A noble pine tree pine.

If miners are all minors, then,
Their guardians get their gains;
All glaziers extra pains should take
To put in extra panes.

A kitchen maid is often made
To burn her face and broil it,
A lady knows no labor but
But to toil it at her toilet.

How do you do? said Sal to John,
'So, so,' replied he;
'How do you do?' said John to Sal;
'Sometimes sew, sew,' said she.

If one were ridden o'er a lot,
He might his lot bewail,
But 'twould be of no use to him
To rail against a rail.

A bat about a farmer's room,
Not long ago I knew
To fly, He caught a fly—and then
Flew up the chimney flue;

But such a scene was never seen,
(I am quite sure of that,)
As when with sticks all hands essayed
To hit the bat a bat.

A vane is vain, one would suppose,
Because it wants a mind;
And furthermore, 'tis blown about
By every idle wind.

'Tis pun-ishment for me to pun;
'Tis trifling, void of worth;
So let it pass unnoticed like
The dew that's due to earth.

THE BLACK-INDIES!

By JULES VERNE.

CHAPTER I.

TWO CONTRADICTORY LETTERS.

"MR. J. R. STARR, 30 Canongate, Edinburgh.—
If Mr. James Starr will present himself to-morrow
at the Aberfoyle Coal Mines, Dochart Pit, Yarrow
Well, he will receive a communication of an inter-
esting nature. Mr. James Starr will be waited for
all day at the small dock at Callander by Henry
Ford, the son of the old overseer, Simon Ford. He
is besought to keep this invitation a secret."

Such was the letter received by James Starr
by the first mail, December 3, 18—; a letter
which bore the stamp of the Aberfoyle Post-
office, County Stirling, Scotland.

The engineer's curiosity was excited to the
utmost. It did not even occur to him that this
letter might be a mere hoax. He had
long been acquainted with Simon Ford, one
of the old overseers in the Aberfoyle mines,
of which he, James Starr, had been for twenty
years a director—what in the English mines
is called a "viewer."

James Starr was a man of strong constitu-
tion, who carried his fifty-five years as if they
were but forty. He belonged to an old Ed-
inburgh family, of which he was one of the
most distinguished members. His works
did honor to that respectable corpora-
tion of engineers, who demolish, little
by little, the carboniferous subsoil of
the United Kingdom, as well at
Cardiff and at Newcastle as in the lowlands
of Scotland. Nevertheless, it was more par-
ticularly at the bottom of the mysterious Aber-
foyle mines, which lie adjacent to the mines
of Alloa, and occupy a part of Stirling County,
that the name of Starr is held in general
esteem. There he had spent the greater part
of his life. Besides, James Starr was a mem-
ber of the Society of Scotch Antiquaries, of
which he had been elected president. He
was reckoned among the most active members
of the "Royal Institution," and the Edinburgh
Review frequently published remarkable arti-
cles over his signature. He was, we see, one
of those practical savants to whom is due the
prosperity of England. He held a high rank
in this old Scotch capital, which, not only
from a physical, but also from a moral point
of view, has been deemed worthy the title,
"Athens of the North."

It is known that the English have given the

whole of their vast mines a very significant
name. They call them, very justly, the
"Black-Indies;" and these Indies have, per-
haps, contributed more than the East Indies
to increase the surprising riches of the United
Kingdom. There, in effect, a nation of miners
work night and day to extract from the Brit-
ish substratum the coal, that precious combus-
tible—indispensable element of industrial life.

At this epoch, the limit of time assigned by
scientists for the exhaustion of the mines was
far distant. There were yet to be largely
worked the carboniferous deposits of the two
worlds. The manufactures, appropriated to
so many different usages—the locomotives,
the machines, the steamers, gas works, etc.,
were not in danger of failing for want of com-
bustible mineral. However, the consumption
has been of late so largely increased that cer-
tain beds have been exhausted, even in their
poorest veins. Abandoned now, these mines
bored and intersected uselessly the soil of
their forsaken wells and deserted galleries.

Such was precisely the case with the mines
of Aberfoyle.

Ten years before the last ton of coal had
been raised from this mine. The material of
the "interior," machines designed for trans-
portation over the rails of the galleries, ber-
lins forming subterranean trains, underground
tramways, cages used in the shafts, flues—in
a word, all that constituted the mining ap-
paratus, had been drawn up from the depths of
the pits, and abandoned to the surface of the
earth. The mine, exhausted, was like the
carcass of a mastodon, of fantastic magnitude,
from which the various organs of life had
been withdrawn, and only the skeleton left.

Of this material there remained only the
long wooden ladders extending into the depths
of the mine by the Yarrow Well—the only
one which afforded access to the lower gal-
leries of the the Dochart Pit, since the cessa-
tion of the works.

Outside, the building which formerly shel-
tered the exterior works, still showed the place
where the shafts of the pit had been sunk,
completely abandoned, as were the other pits
comprising the mines of Aberfoyle. It was a
sad day when for the last time the miners left
the mine in which they had lived for so many
years.

The engineer, James Starr, had gathered
these several thousand workmen who compos-
ed the brave and active population of the
mine. Overseers, rollers, conductors, banks-
men, woodmen, road members, receivers, car-
penters, gatemen, blacksmiths, all, women,
children, old men, outside and inside work-
men, were assembled in the immense yard of
the Dochart Pit, formerly encumbered with
the overplus of the mine.

These brave men, about to be dispossessed
of the necessities of life—those who, during
long years had succeeded generation of gen-
eration in the old Aberfoyle, were waiting,
before leaving it forever, the last farewell of
the engineer. The company had distributed
among them, under the name of a gratuito,
the profits of the current year. This amount-
ed to very little, for the product of the veins
had but slightly exceeded the cost of working
them. Still it would enable them to wait till
hired in the neighboring mines, on the farms,
or in the factories of the county. James Starr
stood before the door of the vast shed under
which the steam engines of the shaft had so
long performed their functions. Simon Ford,
the foreman of the Dochart Pit, then fifty-five
years of age, and several other overseers, sur-
rounded him.

James Starr raised his hat. The miners,
hats off, preserved strict silence.

This farewell scene had a touching charac-
ter, which did not lack grandeur.

"My friends," said the engineer, "the mo-
ment of separation has come. The Aberfoyle
mines, which for so many years have united
us in a common work, are now exhausted.
Our efforts have not led to the discovery of
a new vein; and the last piece of coal has
just been drawn from the Dochart Pit."

In support of his words, James Starr showed
to the miners a block of coal which had been
kept in the bottom of the bucket.

"This piece of coal," continued James
Starr, "is as the last drop of blood which cir-
culated through the veins of the mine! We
shall preserve it, as we have preserved the
first fragment of coal taken from the Aber-
foyle bearing, one hundred and fifty years
ago. Between these two pieces many gen-
erations of laborers have succeeded each other
in our pits! Now, it is finished! The last
words spoken to you by your engineers are
words of farewell. You have lived by the
mine which your hands have emptied. The
work has been hard, but not without profit for
you. Our large family is about to separate,
and it is not probable that the future will ever
re-unite the scattered members. But do not
forget that we have lived a long time together,
and that with the Aberfoyle miners it is a
duty to help one another. Your old chiefs
will never forget this. When people have
worked together they not how to be strangers
to each. We will watch over you, and where-
ever you go as honest men our recommenda-
tions will follow you. Farewell then, my
friends, and God bless you!"

James Starr embraced the oldest workman
in the mine, whose eyes were dim with tears.
Then the overseer of the different pits came
to shake the hand of the engineer, while the
miners waved their hats and cried:

"Farewell, James Starr, our chief and our
friend!"

These farewells should leave an imperish-
able souvenir in all these brave hearts. Gra-
dually this multitude silently quitted the large
yard. The black soil of the road leading to
the Dochart Pit echoed for the last time un-
der the miner's feet, and silence succeeded the
noisy life which had heretofore filled the Ab-
erfoyle Mine.

One man alone had remained near James
Starr.

It was the overseer, Simon Ford. Near
him stood a lad of fifteen, his son Harry, who
already for several years had been employed
in the mine. James Starr and Simon Ford
were acquainted, and knowing each other,
their esteem was mutual.

"Farewell, Simon," said the engineer.
"Farewell, Mr. James," replied the fore-
man, "or, rather, let me say, 'till we meet
again.'"

"Yes, 'till we meet again,' Simon," replied
James Starr. "You know that I shall always
be happy to meet you and talk over old times
in Aberfoyle."

"I know it, Mr. James."

"My house in Edinburgh is open to you."

"Edinburgh is far away," said the foreman,
shaking his head; "yes, far away from the
Dochart Pit."

"Far, Simon! Where then, do you intend
to live?"

"Just here, Mr. James. We shall not de-
sert the old mine, our old nurse, because her
milk is dried up! My wife, my son and my
self will remain faithful to her."

"Farewell, then, Simon," said the engi-
neer, whose voice, in spite of himself, betrayed
emotion.

"No, I say again, 'till we meet,' and not
'farewell.' By the word of Simon Ford,
Aberfoyle will see you again."

The engineer did not care to destroy this
last illusion. He embraced young Harry,
who was looking at him with great, yawning
eyes. He again pressed Simon's hand, and
finally left the mine.

This scene had taken place ten years before
our story opens. In spite of the desire to see
him again, expressed by the foreman, James
Starr had never heard tidings of him.

It was after these ten years of separation
that Simon Ford's letter reached him, invit-
ing him to hasten to the old mines of Aber-
foyle. A communication of an interesting na-
ture! What could it be? The Dochart Pit,
the Yarrow Well! How these names recall-
ed the past! Yes, those were happy days—
those of work, of struggle—the best part of
the engineer's life.

James Starr re-read the letter. He consid-
ered it from every point. He was sorry that
Simon Ford had not added a line.

Was it possible that the old foreman had
discovered a new vein? No!

James Starr remembered with what minute
care the Aberfoyle mines had been explored
before the final cessation of work. He had
himself gone to the last borings without
finding any deposit in this soil, ruined by ex-
haustive working. An attempt had even been
made to work the rock coal under the layers,
which are usually of an inferior quality, such
as the red Devonian sandstone, but without
result. James Starr had then abandoned the
mine, absolutely convinced that it no longer
held a piece of combustible material.

"No," he repeated, "no! How admit
that what escaped my researches could be re-
vealed to those of Simon Ford? Meanwhile
the old overseer well knows that there is but
one thing in this world that interests me, and
this invitation, that I must keep secret, to pre-
sent myself at the Dochart Pit!"

James Starr always returned to this idea.

On the other side, the engineer knew Simon
Ford to be a skillful miner, particularly en-
dowed with the knowledge of his craft. He
had not seen him since the abandonment of
the Aberfoyle Mine; he was even ignorant of
what had become of the old overseer. He
could not have told where he was employed,
nor even where he lived with his wife and
son. All that he knew was that a meeting
had been arranged at the Yarrow Well, and
that Harry, Simon Ford's son, would wait for
him at the Callander Dock during the whole
of the day after that on which he received
the letter. It is evidently his duty to visit the
Dochart Pit.

"I shall go!" I SHALL GO!" said James
Starr, who felt his curiosity and excitement
increase as the time approached.

This worthy engineer belonged to that cat-
egory of impassioned men, whose brain is al-
ways working like a kettle placed over a
strong flame. It is in such kettles that ideas
foam and boil over, while in others they sim-
mer peaceably. On this day James Starr's
were in a bubbling condition.

But, then, a very, unexpected incident oc-
curred. It was the drop of cold water,
which instantly condensed all the steam of the
brain.

In fact, about six o'clock in the evening,
the third mail brought James Starr a second
letter. This letter was enclosed in a coarse
envelope, the superscription indicating a hand
little accustomed to using a pen.

James Starr tore off the envelope. It
contained but a scrap of paper, yellowed by
time, and which looked as if torn from an
old copy book. On this paper was a single
phrase, thus expressed:

"Useless for the engineer, James Starr, to
trouble himself—Simon Ford's letter being now
motiveless."

And no signature.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE WAY.

James Starr's train of thought was rudely
arrested. This second letter was contradictory
of the first.

"What does this mean?" he asked himself.

James Starr took up the half-torn envelope.
It bore, like the other, the stamp of the Ab-
erfoyle Post-office. It had then been sent from
the same part of the County Stirling. Evi-
dently it was not the old miner who had writ-
ten it. But not less evidently the author of
this second letter knew the overseer's secret,
because he formally countermanded the invi-
tation given to the engineer to repair to the
Yarrow Hall.

Was it, then, true that this first invitation
was now motiveless? Would they prevent
James Starr from troubling himself, whether
needlessly or otherwise? Was it not rather
a malicious effort to thwart Simon Ford's pro-
jects?

After serious reflection, James Starr reached
this conclusion. This contradiction which
appeared in the letters, simply produced in
him an ardent desire to go to the Dochart
Pit. Besides, if this were all a hoax, better
be sure of the fact. But it seemed right to
James Starr to place more reliance on the
first letter than on the second—that is to the
request of such a man as Simon Ford, rather
than to the advice of his anonymous con-
tradictor.

"The truth is," he reflected, "if they wish
to influence my resolution, it must be for the
reason that Simon Ford's communication is of
extreme importance. To-morrow I will be at
the appointed rendezvous at the hour men-
tioned."

In the evening James Starr made his pre-
parations to go away. As it was possible
that his absence might be prolonged for some
days, he notified by letter Sir W. Elphiston,
the President of the Royal Institute, that he
could not be present at the next meeting of
the society. He also excused himself from
several engagements which would have occu-
pied him during the week. Then, having
told his servant to pack his valise, he lay
down, perhaps unnecessarily impressed by this
incident.

The next morning, at five o'clock, James
Starr sprang out of bed, dressed himself
warmly—for a cold rain was falling—and left
his house in the Canongate to take at Granton
dock the steamboat, which, after a three
hours' sail up the Forth, reaches Stirling.

Perhaps for the first time, in going through
the Canongate, James Starr did not turn for a
look at Holyrood, the palace of the old kings
of Scotland. The Canongate is the principal
and most celebrated street in the old town of
Edinburgh. Before the palace gate stood
sentinels, dressed in the old Scotch costume.
This consists of a green stuff skirt or kilt, a
scarf or plaid, and a goat-skin purse, the long
white hair of which rests on the thigh. Al-
though an enthusiastic admirer of Walter
Scott, as is every true son of old Caledonia,
the engineer, for the first time, failed to glance
at the inn where Waverly alighted, and in
which the tailor brought him that famous
chieftain's costume which the Widow Flock-
hart so artlessly admired. Neither did he sa-
lute the little spot, where, at the risk of kill-
ing Flora MacIvor, the mountaineer's dis-
charged their pieces after the Pretender's vic-
tory. The prison clock showed, in the mid-
dle of the street, its mournful dial. He only
looked at it so as to assure himself that he
would not be too late for the boat. We must
also admit that he did not glance when in the
Nelher Bow at the house of the great reform-
er, John Knox, the only man who resisted the
smiles of Mary Stuart. But, taking the High
street, the popular street so minutely described
in the romance of the "Abbot," he hastened
toward the gigantic bridge of Bridge street,
which connects the three hills of Edinburgh.

In a few minutes James Starr arrived at the
terminus of the General Railway, and half an
hour after he left the train at New Haven, a
pretty fishing village, a mile from Leith, which
forms the port of Edinburgh. The rising tide
covered the blackish and pebbly line of the
sea shore. The first waves bathed the stock-
ade, a kind of pier, supported by chains. On
the lefts a boat which plies between Edin-
burgh and Stirling was moored to the Gran-
ton pier.

[To be Continued.]

AN AMATEUR CIRCUS.

The following antique announcement was
found tacked on to a Straight Shore fence:

NOTICE.—Rope Walking comenced on
Saturday half past 2 o'clock. On Saturday
night With Torches by Louis Collins. Thomas
McNally tak of drunken woman, Louis Col-
lins drunken man. Mr. gorge donelson Will
go through his proformens half past 7 o'clock.
Nealey quinn also tumbler.

After a man, who has always main-
tained the highest standing in the re-
ligious community, has once run
across the yard after dusk and tried to
cut the clothes line in two with his
chin, he always has to explain to his
horrified wife that he got into the hab-
it of swearing in the army. And,
very probably, he did.