

ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 16, 1897.

## GHOSTS UNDER GROUND.

SUPERSTITIONS OF BITUMINOUS COAL MINERS.


Legions of Abandoned Subterranean Chambers Where Dark Lanes and Dangerous Fire Yawn for Lost Miners—The Tragedy of the Haunted Test-Hole.

"Ghosts in coal mines?" said a western Pennsylvania mine operator. "Well I never saw any myself, but if I should go among my miners, especially the old-timers, I say I didn't believe there were such things in mines, and make light of the subject, they would be reluctant to continue working for me, fearing that some diabolic disembodied spirit of underground chambers might waylay and punish them for laboring for one who regarded it with such irreverent skepticism. Conclusive demonstration of the deep-grounded superstition of old bituminous coal miners in this respect is furnished by the regard in which they hold what they call the Haunted Test Hole Mine, on my property. I haven't had any other than newly hired miners from other fields working in that mine for years—men who have never heard what the prevailing belief is among home miners as to the character of the mine.

"The bituminous coal mines, as you may know, are entirely different in their working from the anthracite mines, the coal from which is reached by means of deep shafts, and mined in tunnels that diverge from the shafts on all sides and at various depths. The bituminous mines in which the coal lies near the surface, are worked by digging into the sides of the hills in slopes or drifts—often called pits or banks. These excavations frequently extend miles under ground, running in irregular galleries and passages here and there, until the earth, after years of working a mine, has become a vast honeycomb or network of subterranean channels. When any of these are worked out they are simply abandoned and left unmarked—regions where perpetual darkness reigns, except where some straggling miner, his supposed knowledge of the intricacies of the abandoned chambers having been at fault, wanders among them with his feeble lamp, seeking deliverance from them.

"One great danger that lies in the unknown way of a miner lost in such a mine is the test hole of a chamber. A test-hole is a shaft sunk in the mine to test the depth or thickness of a coal vein, and these shafts are always deep and frequently filled with water. There are vast lakes also in the furthest depths of these deserted passages, which yawn for the bewildered wanderer. These lakes are where a vein has been followed in its dip, that is, its oblique descent from its horizontal position again, or goes so far into the depths that further working of the vein becomes either impossible or unprofitable. In this latter case it is, of course, abandoned. Water gradually enters the chamber until it reaches its level and the working becomes a lake. Some of these underground bodies of water are of unknown depth, and it requires a stout heart in a man for him to stand on the gloomy borders of one of these and peer out upon its dark water, lying in the eerie glimmer of the light a miner's lamp can shed upon it. Then think of the staring ghastly face of a drowned miner floating there, and coming slowly within the faint line of that vision. I have seen it more than once, and if there is anything that might bring the most skeptical and stolid of men to the belief that ghosts haunted these awesome depths, I think such a sight with such surroundings might do it. I don't think it strange, therefore, that ignorant, impressionable men, passing more than half their lives amid such surroundings should be grounded in a like belief beyond the power of reasoning to change it.

"Years ago, among the men working in one of my mines were two likely young fellows, one an Englishman, the other an Irishman. They had been good friends enough until they both fell in love with the same girl, the daughter of a miner who was new to the working. The girl, it seems, had shown more favor to the young Irishman, who was in consequence much elated, the Englishman becoming dejected in like degree. There had never been any open quarrel between the two, but the Englishman showed in many ways his jealous hatred of the other. They were at work one day in a remote part of the mine, and early in the day the Englishman came out to where a group of other miners were working and shouted to them



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to hurry back with him as his companion had been buried beneath a fall of earth and rock. They found the fallen man and soon removed it. The young Irishman was crushed beneath it. They bore the dead body outside. There was a sharp, deep wound in the centre of the poor fellow's forehead, besides the mutilations on his body made by the cave-in. The marvel of it all was that the Englishman, who had been working at the same bank, should have escaped without having even been touched by any of the falling mass.

"The Englishman continued working in the mine, but many of his fellow laborers quit, declaring there was something wrong; that there was a mystery about poor Barney's death of which something terrible would come. They believed that the miner had been killed by the wound in his forehead, and that the wound had been made before the fall of earth covered and crushed him. A plainer charge of foul play could not have been made than that, but we paid no attention to it, and the Englishman remained at his work, but it was noticed by those who worked with him that he never would go into that part of the mine where the Irishman was found dead beneath the cave-in.

One day a month or more after the tragedy in the mine, while this miner and a number of others were at work in a new drift not far from the main gallery, using one light which was a torch such as is used in pot-hill night parades, a sudden draft of wind, so the miners said, extinguished it. It was not only a strong draft but a chilly one, such as none of them had ever felt before, although they thought nothing of it at the time, only to wonder what had caused the sudden blast. The darkness became impenetrable, and one of the miners who knew the workings well, started to another part of the mine to get a new light. He had been gone but a few minutes when one of the workmen exclaimed: "Yonder's a light down by the gallery opening."

"The voice was the Englishman's. The others looked in the direction he had indicated, but saw no light.

"A man went by the opening with one, at any rate, and I'll go fetch him back," insisted the Englishman.

"With that he hurried along the drift as fast as he could in the darkness toward the main gallery, which was only a few yards away. Some of the miners followed him. It seemed but a few seconds, according to the story of the miners, when a cry of anguish filled the depths, and an agonized voice cried:

"Mercy! Mercy! Mercy!"

This cry was followed by another shriek, and the terrified miners heard a loud splash, as of some heavy object falling from a height into water. While they were standing thus the miner who had gone to fetch a light returned with one.

After hearing the tales the frightened miners had to tell, that miner exclaimed: "Bob has fallen into the test hole."

"With difficulty he induced two or three of the others to accompany him to investigate the matter. True enough, when they came to the test hole, the water in which was several feet below the top, and threw the light of their torch down into it, they saw the body of the Englishman floating. They managed to raise the body from the hole. They carried it to the outside of the mine. Then, in the centre of the dead Englishman's forehead they saw exactly such a wound as had been in the Irishman's forehead. The deduction to be made from all this was plain to excited and superstitious miners. The Englishman had killed his rival by a blow with the sharp end of his pick, they declared, and then felled the mass of dirt and rock upon him. The wraith of the murdered man had come in due time, extinguished in ghastly way the light the miners were working by that day, then showed a specious light, which only the guilty Englishman could see, and which he followed to meet death at the hands of the ghost of his victim in the same way that the victim had fallen before his hand. As a matter of fact, of course, nothing of the kind ever occurred, but that mine at once came to be known as the Haunted Test-Hole Mine, and it is no easy matter now to keep men at work in it after they hear the story.

### MARIA SEEBACH AND THE AGENT.

An American Attempt to Boom a Sewing Machine in "Faust."

The following story, which was published in Germany recently in connection with the death of Maria Seebach, the noted German actress, shows very well the connection of American affairs which still prevails in Germany to a certain extent. Seebach was here more than twenty years ago, and it is scarcely possible that such an incident as is described would have taken place then, but many such stories are told in Germany to-day as illustrative of American enterprise.

According to this reminiscence Marie Seebach one day received a message that a gentleman wished to see her. She told the servant to send him to her drawing room in the hotel, and when he arrived he introduced himself as a certain Col. Smith. Then he plunged at the subject of his visit, and said that he represented a certain well known make of sewing machines.

"I have already heard," he said, "that you are a great artist. I want to find out if you are a good business woman as well. Do you want to make some money?"

"Oh, I've no objections to make to that," she said, "it is possible in a perfectly correct and dignified way."

"Oh, it's the most correct way possible that I propose," the visitor continued, "and I offer you \$10,000 for doing it."

"What have I to do in return?" asked Seebach.

"Nothing in the world," the Colonel replied, and as he noticed the expression of astonishment on her face he went on: "I told you that I came from a sewing-machine company—one of the largest in the world. All that I demand of you in return for the \$10,000 is that as Marguerite in the spinning wheel scene from 'Faust' you will use one of our sewing machines instead of the wheel, and just keep it in motion for a few seconds. Then we would let handbills drop from the gallery, saying that the machine used by Marie Seebach was made by our firm."

The actress is said to have hesitated for a second, but in the end, her respect for Goethe's tragedy is described as the feeling which saved her artistic reputation.

This story is of a type that disappeared from general use forty years ago. It is of the kind told about P. T. Barnum in the earlier days of his career. But stories of the kind still pass muster in Europe, although a press agent who attempted anything of the kind in this country would soon lose his job.

### HEAT PROSTRATION.

Causes Which Bring It On and How It May be Mitigated.

Whenever the temperature is very high and the air saturated with moisture, there is always danger in being exposed to the direct rays of the sun, especially for those not accustomed to outdoor life.

A degree of exposure which would be perfectly safe for one who was in the habit of being exposed to all kinds of weather, would be dangerous, or even fatal to one whose business seldom permitted

them to endure the direct rays of the sun. The symptoms of heat prostration are usually dizziness, severe headache, and a checkage of perspiration. These symptoms are followed by a rapid rise of temperature, which sometimes reaches as high as 110 degrees, although it is usually from 99 degrees to 105 degrees.

The pulse is also very rapid and weak, and the breathing shallow and accompanied by distressing moans.

When heat prostration occurs, the patient should be removed to bed, a bag of cracked ice placed on the head, and the head and the body sponged with cool water, followed by a brisk rubbing.

The sponging will cool the body, while the ice bag will relieve the congestion of the brain, and tend to avoid delirium, which is a frequent and rather grave result of the increased flow of blood to the brain.

In a mild case, the temperature will fall in a few hours, and rest and a light diet will complete the cure. No liquor in any form should be given the patient at any stage, unless upon the advice of the physician, as it would tend to increase the symptoms. The habitual users of liquors are more frequently affected by the heat than any other class of people, as the constant use of intoxicants weakens the heart, causes degeneration of the brain, and so lessens the power of resistance.

In hot weather it is always wise to wear light, loose clothing, and a sponge kept moist in the hat will, by the evaporation of the water, give a measure of protection to those who are compelled to be exposed to the sun.—Boston Budget.

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