

had happened to be related to the present parish minister—a dignitary whom we heard some of his parishioners call the “Meenister,”—Rev. Robert Montgomery, M.A. To *his* hospitality we owed more enjoyment than can be now expressed, and eventually one of the most novel experiences of our lives.

For it was he who introduced us to Mr. John Angus of the iron works, a broad Scotchman with a well-balanced head on his shoulders, who, in turn, initiated us into the mysteries of iron smelting, and gave much valuable information regarding the working of a coal mine. Unfortunately we did not see much of the smelting process in operation, as our visit was made on a Monday, and God is not forgotten in Muirkirk. Every Saturday night the fires are damped, and the dark, grim establishment rests all Sabbath according to the commandment. This entails the loss of the day following, for it is well into Monday night before the fires are all repaired and the furnaces in full blast again; but it has been found by the experience of a century that five days’ work is quite sufficient for overtaking all the manufactures for which there is any demand. This foundry is the second oldest in Scotland, having celebrated its centenary last year; and its continued prosperity through such a period surely goes to show that in the long run its observance of the Sabbath has not been a pecuniary loss. The fact is that countries hitherto notorious for their disregard of the Sabbath are now beginning to realize how huge a blunder they have made, even from a worldly standpoint. The week before we were in Paris, as we learned shortly after our arrival, a statute came into force requiring employers to give their hands *one day of rest in every seven*, though not necessarily Sunday. This in itself is surely an admission full of significance.—But if I go on moralizing, I fear I shall never get my patient readers INTO THE HEART OF THE EARTH; and nothing short of that to-day is to be our destination.

“The Journalist” was the one who expressed most loudly a desire to explore the murky depths of the coal mine; and Mr. Angus promised to gratify his request, calling one of the foremen, Mr. Gilchrist, to conduct him below.

“Tak’ this young man doon,” he said.

“Ay, sir, and will I no bring him up?”

“O well, I’m no sayin’ that,” quoth the broad Scotchman with a knowing wink.

The “Meenister” shuddered visibly at the proposal to go below.