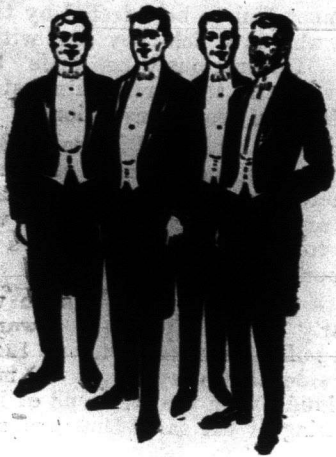




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days. Of home and friends, of father, mother, or friend, he never spoke. Some whispered that he was a fugitive from justice, and that his hands were even stained with blood. But it is not well to enquire too closely into the past records of men whom you meet in the society of a mining camp. If they have this secret, then it is their own affair.

So "Missouri" and his kind get a chance to begin again. The world would be in a bad way without such quiet retreats as Corbin can give. "Missouri" told me however in strictest confidence, and with an unmistakable light in his eye—we were discussing prowess in drinking at the time—that he had got away with more whisky than that stove would hold. "That stove" was a huge box-stove which occupied a central position in the boarding-house kitchen. I give this as an interesting side-light on the character of the man.

The climb to "the big showing," as it is called, was made comparatively easy by taking the fairy road, which leads up around the mountain side amongst the overhanging evergreen trees. What glimpses there were across the yawning and silent valleys! What distant vistas appeared from successive vantage points! What pictures appeared at every turn; of long, rugged,

mining operations with as much ease, and apparently with as much divine right, as they do the engine-room of any steamship or ocean-going vessel.

Some two hundred feet higher up was still another excavation, where the scraper, fifteen feet in width, was being used to clover the few feet of overlying earth from the wealth of coal beneath. Here a happy and vigorous-looking crowd of men are gathered round a stationary engine, which they had roped down solidly to stumps and trees. By using a cable, which winds itself around a revolving drum, they scrape the surface earth and rubbish into a deep cutting, where it rapidly disappears before the onslaughts of a steam shovel. With an eye to usefulness it is carried down the mountain railway on flat cars, to fill in, and support, the trestle bridges, over which the heaviest of loads have to pass each day.

Standing at the edge of this cutting, one sees above it a great stretch of black shining coal, untouched as yet, except for a few prospect-holes, where the owners have bored their way in, for a distance of fifty or sixty feet, evidently feeling a little sceptical over the genuineness of this unique find. Higher up still is the dark belt of spruce and pine, which will have to be cleared off before



Shacks as much alike as peas in a pod.

snow-capped ridges, stretching off north and south for many a mile. Now the mountain stream came howling across the roadway, drenching its banks with spray, and rushing down to seek the lower levels. At intervals there came glimpses of the zig-zag railway, which works its way up, by successive stages, to its terminus at "the big showing." Presently came a bend in the road, and the camp with its tents and cookhouse appeared, apparently glued on to the steep slope, and at once the air became filled with the calls of strange black and white birds of the jackdaw family—camp thieves they call them. Into the very doors of the tents they perched, calling in their impudent and strident way. But here, on the left, was a scene of activity of compelling interest, which, I suppose, is unique in the history of coal-mining. Rising before me was the slope of the mountain, a solid mass of black shining coal, and into it the children of men were gouging and burrowing at will. They had driven tunnels into it, and into these they hurried long coal-cars which seemed to appear from nowhere. With ease and despatch these were being rapidly filled from an overhead platform, and each day hundreds of tons of coal were finding their way down the steeply graded railway into the valley below.

"So ye cam' up to see the big showing?" did ye?" said the genial Scot who was superintending operations.

"Aweel; she's a beauty," he went on, standing back to survey this wonder of nature once more, with his thumbs inserted jauntily in the openings of his vest.

"Three hundred feet thick!" ma aerie! But there's nae feenish tae bairn! And so it seemed. Moreover the presence of this Scot as superintendent seemed to be the last touch for the men of that breed seem to fill their place in all coal-

anything can be done at that level.

Far below, in the lower working, there are two hundred men laboring like ants at an ant-hill, trying in a seemingly futile way to pluck this enormous store of mineral wealth from nature's bosom. Beyond them the mountains and valleys stretch endlessly, at times halting abruptly in sheer cliff-like rocks, where, even at a great distance the anti-clinal folds are easily traceable, or again shading off, the one into the other, in a perfect way. How awesome are the heights and depths! The mountains lie stretched out recumbent like monsters on the watch.

This mountain of coal was possibly formed in the ages of upheaval, which produced the Rocky Mountain ranges and chains. For ages some deep depression had been filling with decayed vegetation and coal-forming material. For ages it had been pressed down, layer succeeding layer, until the upheaval finally came, with its irresistible force, elevating the coal deposit to its present place 1,600 feet above sea level on the wind swept mountain side. There it lay unclaimed for centuries, until the mountains were explored and the wandering prospector made his way to this wonderful find. This is the story of "the big showing," and such an enormous find must be but a beginning, for there is many another which the eye of man has never yet seen, hidden away amongst the recesses of those mountains.

Here on earth we are as soldiers fighting in a foreign land, that understand not the plan of the campaign and have no need to understand; seeing well what is at our hand to be done. Let us do it like soldiers, with submission, with courage, with a heroic joy.—T. Carlyle.