

ing before the first shift of men go down, someone explores the mine with a closed lamp, to see whether there is the least danger of gas, but it seems totally free from foul air of any kind, and the men here work without that deadly fear. We went along the wide, black streets, over which are laid fine cables. Long trains of wagons run along these, as in the Drummond pit, but hardly as fast, as the grade is not nearly as steep. There is little stooping to do, as the mine is dug deep down, and above is a roof of solid rock. There are not so many wooden supports here, as the walls seem firmer, and they are unnecessary, but it is most beautifully hollowed out, and walking is comparatively easy.

There is a long street of stables here, a good deal of the hauling being done by horses. Fifty-five animals are kept constantly at work. They are well groomed, their coats shining like silk, and they are as fat as they well can be. We saw "Cossack," a beautiful little Russian pony, the pet of the miners, and "Rattler," a big fellow, clever with his heels; and several other special favorites. They are always interesting, these dumb citizens of the underground towns, these faithful working creatures who only come to the top to meet death, and it was a keen pleasure to get into their boxes and rub their soft noses, and watch them stare with intelligent eyes at you, and smell your hands, and gawn, wondering in their wise way what a woman was doing down in these men's places.

We passed on, descending gradually till we stood far out at sea—under the vast Atlantic Ocean. Above us, ships were passing, carrying some of this very coal. They say that you can hear them casting anchor above your head, but this may be an underground fairy tale. Could one hear the clank of the anchor-chains through a rock roof, seven feet thick? Maybe: anchors are heavy. As you descend, the distance between you and the sea grows. There is no fear of that great rock strata falling and letting in the ocean on you. Above you there, the fishes are swimming, and

maybe dead men's bones lie. It is queer to stand and think of it, as you do presently, for your guide has gone off through an archway to hunt for fossils, and you are alone with your tiny flickering torch. Blow it out and see—or rather feel—for a minute, what real darkness and silence are like. How awful it is! Never did you imagine blackness like to this. Dense, thick—the words are poor. It is material. You put up your hands to feel it, this darkness that is like a palpable thing. Madness lies in it, and terror, and the most shocking despair. And the silence! You can almost hear it. Can it be that there is life anywhere; that up there people are laughing and grieving and noising? There is no hell can be more awful than this place of blackness and silence. No fire that ever roared could be more shocking than this. Suppose the man never came back. Suppose you were lost and forgotten in this side cutting into which you have wandered. You reach out and touch the walls. It is like a tomb. Shut down by the mighty ocean, far down in the deepest blackness and silence of this wonderful earth. Oh, how quick madness would come, and despair, and the hideous gnashing of teeth they talk of as being one of hell's fancies! I tell you that for one moment there, letting imagination take full hold of me, there was a sickening thought came to me, that crept like an evil thing over every inch of skin, that was worse than any death that ever struck a human being, or any hell that ever yet was devised for us by a fiendish human mind. It was glorious when a faint "halloo" came from somewhere. One could have kissed the blessed flaring light that danced its way down the black passage presently. The man's face looked, for the moment, like to God's. It is foolish, foolish, for a woman who is a bundle of nerves to blow out her light and stand alone in such an awful place. The company of rats, rats in shoals as they are in sewers, would be better than such another moment of shocking silence! It was a mighty horror.

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