

seeing it that one reads of; rather, it looked unreal, staring, painful. And yet the day was already greying. We were deplorable sights. Fast in my hand I held a chunk of coal I had "picked" out of the wall myself at the lowest depth, and it had got all over me, making me look a deplorable sight, indeed; but before removing this coat of dirt there was one more thing to see. Entering a little door always kept locked, we came into a stone hall, whence another locked door, thick with slime and ooze, led into a small court where the great fan that ventilated the mine was whirling. It was throwing off the foul air and conveying the pure at a rate of 100,000 cubic feet per minute. You could see nothing, the whirling was too quick; but you inhaled and smelled the foul, gas-charged air of the mine, and, for a second were almost choked with it. For twenty years, without breakage or need of repair of any kind, these invisible wings have whirled night and day, stopping only for a short time each Sunday. One dares not think of what it would be if the fan broke, and no one were by to repair it. Perhaps there would be ample time to get the men and horses out; no doubt there would be, but we remembered all those thousand feet and shivered.

The main object of many persons who visit North Sidney, Cape Breton, is to see the oldest coal mine in the Dominion. That was my object when I went there. This pit yields 180,000 tons of coal annually and there are still many years' coal in it. With memories of the Drummond pit fresh in my mind, I was not deterred by them from making a fresh descent to the under-world. This time we went down through a straight shaft. The old Sidney mine, as it is called, is a thousand times more interesting than the Drummond pit of New Glasgow. It is very old and stretches a long way under the sea, the vessels which enter the harbor passing over it. Covering yourself with oil-skin or mackintosh you step from a high platform into a narrow elevator, in which you are closed by an iron bar. The signal is given and you dash into the intense blackness. Never was elevator so swift. You whirl down

—it feels like falling into the bottomless pit—down, passing through an atmosphere thick with steam, and water drips on your head and shoulders as you fly through the darkness. There are no lights, there are no words. You catch your breath as the swift cage falls faster and faster, and wonder where it will end, and how deep the earth is. At last, after falling 681 feet through this narrow shaft, you come on a glimmer of lights and the sound of men's voices, and a pair of strong arms reach in and lift you out. You are at the bottom of the shaft of the oldest mine in the country, and you are at the level of the sea. You have still to go much deeper—into the very heart of the earth—in under the sea and the ships.

If you had never been down another mine, if you had not toiled down steep slopes with your closed lamp, if you had not smelled gas, and found yourself as far from help, in case of an accident, as if you were already buried—you would not understand me when I describe this old Sidney mine as a beautiful place. But so it seemed after the Drummond pit. A number of men were working at the bottom of the pit, loading wagons and sending them up by elevators. "Come on, me darlin'; shure it's you that's welcome," said the strong, old man who lifted me out of the cage; an old man with a brilliant eye and a young heart, and the blarney of the old sod in the tongue of him. "Shure it's you that's the darlin'," he said, as we—my guide, Mr. Egan, and myself—stepped into the black street. The men looked more like goblins than ever, for here they carry the naked light, which is fastened in their caps, and, as they work, now bending, now lifting, now passing rapidly from one wagon to another, now resting a second in some recess. The lamps are little tin cans filled with oil, in the spouts of which the wicks are placed, and the lights flare and twist in the wind—for there are great currents here—and shining on the blackened faces, have a weird effect. There is no gas in this old mine, at least none has been discovered since the catastrophe of 1878, whereby five men, two of them "bosses," lost their lives. Each morn-