

of nature have been combining to assist them, *and* on the floor will be a mass of coal all ready for carting to the surface.

Whack. Whack. Whack.

Hard work, this, for only three and six a day ; but that is all the miners get—just *eighty-four cents* in Canadian money—and they have to clothe and feed their families on it. I rather think, if a certain boy I met knew all the circumstances, he would not persist in his desire to be a miner. “Why do you want to be a miner?” he was asked. “*Because, you know, you don’t need to wash your face!*”

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But enough. We must return from this weird vault of death and vegetable decay to the upper regions of light and life—the bairns will be getting anxious.

What, and is there life down here as well? Life, nine hundred feet below the reach of sunlight?

Ay, that there is. Hold the lamp well up and you will see.... There... Is it not beautiful?—that pendent fungus. Could driven snow be whiter? And what a contrast to the mass of black from which it hangs. Where least we would expect it, we encounter life; and though of the very lowest order, who can doubt it has some purpose. But pass on. Don’t block the passage. There is an underground hill to climb, and after that nine hundred feet to mount before we breathe once more beneath an open sky.

The little procession moved along a different gallery from that by which we had reached the pit, the line of lights waving, now through one cavernous passage, now through another, till, the subterranean hill surmounted, and a circuit of about half a mile completed, we found Davy where we had left him, and also the bairns at the top, just “a wee bit” solicitous concerning the fate of their paternal relative. Contrary to our expectation, there was no trace of mud upon our shoes nor black upon our faces.

Perhaps our faces might have been *whiter* had we known—what we learned afterwards—that only a few days before a miner had been killed in the very cage from which we stepped. He had entered it *alone* (which was contrary to rule), and when about half way up, had fainted and fallen against the side of the shaft. The engineer, with his hand on the lever at the top, felt something wrong and stopped the machinery in time to prevent the unfortu-