

Northern Messenger

Wm Bronscombe 30 05

VOLUME XXXIX. No. 23

MONTREAL, JUNE 3, 1904.

30 Cts. Per An. Post-Paid.

Sir Humphrey Davy.

A MAN WHO SOUGHT KNOWLEDGE AND FOUND IT.

Just three-quarters of a century ago, on May 29, 1829, there died one of the greatest of the early scientific chemists, Sir Humphrey Davy.

These chemists differed from their predecessors, the alchemists, in that, like Solomon, they made knowledge their first object. The alchemists spent their lives searching for the secrets of everlasting youth and infinite wealth, and accomplished almost nothing. But because the scientists put knowledge before wealth and long life, the world has reaped from their lab-

He found that when nitrate of ammonia was heated, it gave off a gas that made anybody that breathed it insensible to pain. Up to that time people who had to undergo surgical operations had just to take the pain as it came, but now, merely by smelling a gas, they could to a certain extent at least escape it.

We, who are accustomed to such superior anaesthetics as ether and chloroform, can hardly realize how wonderful such a discovery seemed a hundred years ago. Davy called his discovery 'laughing gas,' and the same preparation, under the same name, is often administered for such minor operations as pulling out teeth.

At the age of twenty-three, Davy was appointed a lecturer in the Royal Institute of

cium are among the vast number of things that Science keeps in its attic, so to speak; not in use at present, but available at any time.

For these discoveries, Davy was knighted in 1812.

The great invention of Sir Humphrey Davy's life, and the one which will perpetuate his name as long as men go underground to look for coal, is the Davy safety lamp. The terrible losses of life by explosions in coal mines attracted his attention, and he set about to find a remedy.

Finding that flame would not go through a fine wire netting, unless the netting was red hot, he constructed a lamp with wire cloth all round it. The explosive mine gases would, of course, go through the netting, but they could only burn harmlessly inside the gauze, without setting fire to the gas outside the lamp.

The value of this invention was at once recognized, and Davy was made a baronet. Two years later, in 1820, he was elected to the acknowledged headship of the scientific world—the presidency of the Royal Society.

After his death, in 1829, the statue and monument shown in the picture were raised to his memory, in his native town.

The Three Bidders.

AN INCIDENT IN THE LIFE OF ROWLAND HILL.

(TRACT.)

Will you listen, kind friends, for a moment,
While a story I unfold;
A marvellous tale, of a wonderful sale
Of a noble lady of old:
How hand and heart, at an auction mart,
And soul and body, she sold.

'Twas in the broad king's highway,
Near a century ago,
That a preacher stood, though of noble blood,
Telling the fallen and low
Of a Saviour's love and a home above,
And a peace that they all might know.

All crowded round to listen;
And they wept at the wond'rous love
That could wash their sin and receive them in
His spotless mansions above;
While slow, through the crowd, a lady proud
Her gilded chariot drove.

'Make room,' cried the haughty outrider,
'You are closing the king's highway;
My lady is late, and their Majesties wait;
Give way there, good people, I pray.'
The preacher heard, and his soul was stirred,
And he cried to the rider, 'Nay.'

His eye like the lightning flashes;
His voice like a trumpet rings—
'Your grand fete-days, and fashions and ways
Are all but perishing things.
'Tis the king's highway, but I hold it to-day
In the name of the King of kings.'

Then—bending his gaze on the lady,
And marking her soft eye fall—
'And now in His name, a sale I proclaim,
And bids for this fair lady call.
Who will purchase the whole—her body and
soul,
Coronet, jewels, and all?



ors a very considerable addition to the average length of life, and wealth beyond the dreams of the alchemists.

Humphrey Davy was born in a village in Cornwall, in the modest house shown in the picture, in the year 1778. His parents could not afford to give him a very good education, and he was apprenticed to a druggist at the age of seventeen.

To a boy of his enquiring disposition, the drug store was a happy hunting ground. Davy was an enthusiastic and skilful fisherman both then and later (he found time, thirty years afterward, to write a book on salmon fishing), but knowledge always had the first place in his affections.

He had only been with the druggist three years when he made a remarkable discovery.

London, and was able to devote more time to experiments. In the next few years he succeeded, by using powerful electric batteries, in breaking up the alkalies and alkaline earths, potash, soda, lime and magnesia, into oxygen, hydrogen, and the curious metals potassium, sodium, calcium and magnesium.

The only one of these metals that has come into common use is magnesium, which supplies photographers with their flash lights. Sodium was formerly used for making aluminium, but has been done away with by the electric process. It is coming into use again, however, as an ingredient of sodium peroxide, a chemical used for such various purposes as bleaching cotton and supplying air to divers. Potassium, which lights and burns with a blue flame when thrown into water, and the yellow metal cal-