

only one minute. I thought at first of trying to see the mouth of the pit with its speck of sky becoming smaller in the distance; but, either from the speed or the novelty of my sensations, the attempt was vain. The situation was new—the darkness complete—no sound reached my ear from the great world above; I cared nothing about confederation or annexation—strange to say I never thought of Joseph Howe—I felt no interest in the Spanish revolution—I was indifferent to reciprocity. Empires might rise or fall, I was beyond their reach. The only thing that could disturb me would be an earthquake. Talk of hermitages and nunneries! There is no retreat from the world so perfect as a retreat into it—as a descent into a deep mine. No sound was heard but the dripping of water and the running of the rope. Hanging at the end of that wire rope, we performed a smoother journey than you ever did upon our provincial railroad. The only new bodily sensation I had was a kind of fulness in the ears. This was caused, I fancy, by the quickness of descent, the air at each point of our progress being rarer. There was no such feeling in the mine.

In the course of a minute we landed on the floor of the mine. The first object I saw was a horse alongside. The overseer stepped up to ask after our welfare. There were quite a number of boys as small as many of you sitting near the foot of the shaft, resting. The pit was not working, so that we did not go into the remote parts, where men hew down the coal. Two tunnels run in opposite directions from the bottom of the shaft. These are not long, as this is a new pit. But there is no need of crouching as you walk along. The dark glittering ebon gallery that receives you is 13 feet high. There is no want of light to shew off its beauties. The part we visited was considered safe. It was shut off by doors from the interior parts of the tunnel where there was more danger from inflammable gas—such gas as comes through our gas pipes. That part, therefore, was lighted up much better than any hall for an evening assembly in Halifax or St. John. Small pipes were driven into the dark walls of the cavern, and from ten such jets flames issued forth as large as your open hand. Fancy how full of gas, such as is used in our cities, this noble coal must be. Seldom, indeed, can any pit in the world be lighted up in this simple way with its own gas. This, however, its peculiar excellence, is also its danger, as you will learn. Thus profit and loss are balanced by God in this complex world. After remaining a short time down, we mounted up once more smoothly and swiftly into the open air, and re-appeared upon the stage of the world of rival parties and churches—farms and factories. I thanked my courteous guide into subterranean regions, and went my way—almost thinking, like Bunyan, that “I had awoke, and lo, and behold! it was a dream!”

In the course of the following day, on looking out of my window, I perceived a great black column of smoke ascending high into the air, and then spreading itself over the neighbourhood. Seeing it was in the direction of the Foord pit, I walked to the place, two miles distant, as quickly as possible. But what a change! I could scarcely see the works with the dense cloud in which they were enveloped. Men and horses were rushing to and fro. The pit was on fire. The very inflammable gas had caught and ignited the rich bituminous coal, and no effort of skill could extinguish the flames. At last men and boys had fled in haste for their lives—got into the cage, and been *all* hoisted to the top. The last of them were nearly lost, having come up almost choked with smoke. The story goes that no one kept his post so manfully as a little boy, whose duty it was to stand at the foot of the cage and signal to the engine room. There he stood amid all the awful race for life, signalling like a hero. You see how well even a little boy may acquit himself. It is not body but mind that makes a manly character. By God's mercy every human being was safely rescued from a furnace of fire—from a hole composed of *some of the best fuel in the world, and filled with a gas as inflammable as gun-*