IN A TUNNEL.

"You'll get caught some day," said Job Davis, shaking his head wisely as he rolled some powder into a "squib;" "and then you'll have a lively run to escape. When you've had as much experience in mining as I have, you won't take any chances."

Dennis laughed softly, but continued shoveling coal into the car, his lamp, hung in his hat, throwing fantastic shadows across the chamber against the black walls on either side as he worked.

"It's no laughing matter, boy," continued Job. "I learned to be careful in just the same way you'll have to. After you have had one or two pinches, you'll listen to me. I worked seven years in the old country in a vein only three feet thick, and had to lie on my side all day long to mine the coal. That's the kind of experience you want. These Pennsylvania veins are thick enouge for a giant to stand up in, and there's some kind of a show for a man when there's an explosion or accident; but there—" and Job shook his head dismally at the recollection.

"Were you ever in a tight place?" asked Dennis, leaning on his shovel and looking attentively at his friend.

"Lots of times, boy," Job growled, fixing the squib in a "blasting barrel" that led to the powder tamped in the hold. "More'n once I've had to crawl on my hands and knees for my life! You can't run there as you can here, and if a miner was as reckless as you are, it'd be all up with him in a week. Look out, now! I'm going to light it!"

Dennis dropped his shovel and started down the chamber; and Job, after knocking the crust from the wick of the lamp applied it to the squib. There was a faint sputter, he cried "Fire!" for a warning, and turned and ran toward the shelter, his heavy boots waking the dismal echoes of the place.

"It'll be a good shot, I hope," he said, very much out of breath, as he joined Dennis behind a large prop. "It ought to blow down enough coal to last till quitting-time."

"You were long enough getting it ready," Dennis remarked, dryly.

"Yes, boy," Job said, scraping a handful of tobacco from his pocket and putting it in a short, black pipe. "I learned to take time when I was your age. I've seen many a man carried home on a stretcher because he didn't take time; and some day I'm afraid you'll have to be taken out of the tunnel in the same way."

"Don't worry about it, Job."

"But I will," puffing loudly to clear the stem. "You know as well as I do that the tunnel isn't safe, ahd yet you go out that way every night in spite of my warnings."

Dennis laughed again, at which Job shook his head sadly. "Go your own gait," he said: "and if you don't lose your life, you'll lose your job, and then you'll remember what I said."

"I'll do nothing of the kind, for I have my life and my job, and I intend to keep them both."

"I hope so, my boy, I hope so," he said, but his countenance plainly belied his words. "I've seen so many men run risks and get beaten that I know it's only a matter of time for your turn to come."

"May the day be far distant," said Dennis, gravely, disturbed by Job's words. "I always try to be"--

The explosion at that moment interrupted him. There was a rush of air, a dull roar, and the sound of fragments of coal falling around them.

"That was a good one, I'll bet!" exclaimed Job, gleefully. "There's five cars of coal in that shot if there's a pound."

Waiting a few minutes longer until the smoke had cleared away, they walked back to where the yellow glare from their lamps showed the devastation the powder had made. Large blocks of coal had been thrown several feet from the "face" of the chamber, and many smaller pieces lay scattered around. Job began to split up the large chunks, and Dennis, after looking at the hole made by the explosion, seized his shovel and began filling the car, singing a wild song in a minor key as he worked.

The song continued most of the day with few interruptions. Occasionally Job had something to say, or a story to tell, to cheer up the solitude of the place, while through the darkness came the reports and concussions of numerous explosions around them and the shrieks of the engine's whistle in the distant tunnel; but as every day before had passed, so did this one, until the regular number of cars had been loaded and it began to get dark outside of the mines. Then packing away their tools in a small box, they hung their dinner and tea cans on their shoulders by a small cord, and walked slowly down the chamber. When they reached the gangway Job stopped.

"Are you going through the tunnel?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Dennis, quietly, the rim of his hat shaded his eyes from his lamp.

Job shook his heak. "You'll go through it once too often, I'm afraid," he said; "but mind, I warned you! You better take more time and go out of the slope with me."

"Oh, no!" laughed Dennis. "My sweetheart is waiting for me, and I must hurry."

"She'll wait in vain some day," said the old man; and nodding his head until his lamp nearly fell from his hat, he turned down the gangway muttering to himself.

Dennis wathched him a minute or two, and was almost persuaded to follow him, but shaking off the impression Job's words had made with a shrug of his shoulders, he started up the gangway that led to the tunnel, whistling a gay tune to drown his thoughts. His heart was light in thinking of his sweetheart, and he walked quickly along, passing the many deserted chambers that dismally echoed his footsteps.

The coal glistened in the light of his lamp that cast weird shadows of himself on the pillars and props, and in thinking of the face and form that were beautiful to him, he forgot the warning words of Job, and plunged boldly up the incline leading to the vein of coal above.

In the Greenwood mines, as in many of the large mines in that vicinity, a small locomotive was used to draw the loaded cars from the workings to the "foot" of the shaft, a distance of nearly three miles. It was an odd-looking machine, with no sign of a smoke-stack or sand-box, these parts of the engine being on a level with the top of the boiler; but it did the work of many mules, and drew a long train of mine-cars over the under-ground railroad at a fair rate of speed. It made a great deal of of gas and sulpher fumes, and the heat from the fire crumbled and loosened the top rock; but being a necessity, it was used by the company in spite of its disadvantages. It was very closely and compactly built. The passages it traversed were generally shunned by the miners, who dreaded the bad roof over their heads.

The Greenwood locomotive was larger than such engines usually are, having a long tunnel to go through and up, which led from one vein of coal to another. The two veins were seperated, vertically, by twenty-five feet of rock, the "top lift" as it was called, being connected with the shaft, and the "bottom lift" with the tunnel, which, with its connecting passages, was over a mile long.

The tunnel had been cut through rock and coal and was necessary, owing to the peculiar "lay" of the formation. The miners always shunned it, fearing to be caught by the engine or cars; and as it was barely high and wide enough for the locomotive to pass through, there was no room on either side to get out of the way. Dennis, however, used it frequently, in spite of Job's warnings and contrary to the orders of the company, as it was a short cut from the chamber where he worked to the foot of the shaft.

On entering the tunnel he had blown out his light. Whistling softly to himself, he walked as fast as he could through the dark to get where the air was purer. The gasses were suffocating and the blackness of the place blinded him, but he cared not for these trifles so long as he could see his sweetheart an hour sooner than if he had gone around the longer and safer way. There were no turns for him to make; the tunnel was straight, and he had become so accustomed to feeling his way over the ties and pieces of coal that had fallen from the cars that he seldom stumbled.

To one unaccustomed to the mines the intense darkness would have been appalling. Dennis, however, had been used to it since he was a small boy, and his heavy, hob-nailed boots kept unrythmical time to the tune he was whistling. He was not a good whistler, nor was the tune an attractive one, but so absorbed was he in thinking of her from whose lips he had first heard it, that he did not hear a faint roar and stumble behind him. Nearer and plainer it sounded, rising and falling on the atmosphere, but the dull thud of his boots drowned the hum of the train as it entered the gangway at full speed, nearly a mile below him.

Unconscious of his danger he plodded along, not knowing that the engine was running so late in the day. He had over half a mile to go before the main gangway could be reached, and as the fans outside had stopped running, the air in the tunnel was growing more foul every minute. It was difficult for him to breathe, and it was so warm that the perspiration ran down his face in small streams.

He was walking as fast as he could with comfort and safety, but the engine minded neither the heat nor the darkness, and the sounds of its quick exhausts became more distinct as it came steadily up the track with its load.

Suddenly its sharp, shrill whistle rang out on the heavy air, and brought Dennis to a stand-still. His heart gave a quick throb as he realized his danger, and for a moment he hisitated, not knowing what to do. To run seemed useless. The rocks were pitiless, and would not let him stand on one side of the track to let the engine pass. Yet, already it was struggling on the up-grade toward where he stood!

It would soon reach him. Conscious of the terrible fate that would then be his, he threw away his cane, turned and ran!

How slow were his steps compared with the revolutions of the wheels! Twice he looked back, as his feet slipped and stumbled on the rough floor of the tunnel, and the third time the red-hot sparks beating against the roof, not a half-mile below him, showed how remorsely the engine was lessening, at every swift revolution of its wheels, the distance between them.

He threw away his patched and soiled coat to cool his reeking body. Desperately he struggled to increase his speed; desparingly he saw that it would soon be too late!

The choking fumes of sulpher from the fire-box almost strangled him. The strong exhausts grew louder; every second the fierce sparks were nearer, and the roar and rattle of the train, confined to the narrow walls, almost deafened him. He was accustomed to all the dangers of the mines, but to be crushed beneath the iron wheels when his wedding-day was so near! He gave a hoarse cry at that thought, and the warning words of Job sounded again in his ears.

"Oh, sweetheart!" All the agony of his mind came to his lips in those words, as he looked back and saw the faint outline of the engine a short distance below him, surrounded by a halo of fire. His breath came in quick sobs; his legs refused to move; fascination held him motionless until the sparks from the stack almost rebounded from the roof against him. Then with a despairing cry he took his hat from his head to cover his face!

His lamp!

He had no matches, but with trembling hand he forced the cover open, bending over he poured the oil out on the rails, and then took a few steps up the track. Throwing his lamp away, he stumbled on over the ties, fell down and closed his eyes.

A second more and the wheels of the engine struck the oiled surface of the rails, and the friction between them being diminished, the wheels spun around helplessly: the train being on a heavy up-grade, came to a speedy stop. Then all was still.

Dennis fell back unconscious. The engineer, cursing angri-y at what he knew not particularly, climbed out of the cab, followed by the fireman, to see what was the matter. No sound betrayed the cause of their stoppage. The escaping steam from the safety-valve hissed spitefully, until the discovery of the lamp and the oiled rails explained the mystery. A few steps further up the track was discovered the prostrate form of a man, lying across the ties.

Tenderly they picked him up and carried him to the cab of the engine, where they made a bed of coats for him; and the wheels that would have crushed him bore his weight over the rails to the foot of the shaft.

The pure air soon revived him, and the "footman" and driver-boys crowded around the engine as they saw it coming without its customary train. A dozen lights flashed in his face as he opened his eyes and met the sympathizing looks of his comrades, while the engineer tersely explained his narrow escape.

The next ascending "cage" carried him and two attendants upward to the earth, that never before looked so beautiful in the hazy twilight as then; and as the engines pulled briefly with their heavier burden of coal, coming up on the other "cage," he walked slowly away in a dream, not able to realize that the pure air of heaven was blowing in his face.

The news was quickly noised about, and soon reached the ears of his sweetheart, whose consoling words made even the harsh voice of Job sound sweet that evening.

Program for Greeneville District Conference.

The Greeneville District Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church will convene in annual session at Johnson City, Tenn., July 30th, 1884, at 9 o'clock, a. m.

The following is the program of Literary Exercises:

Opening sermon at 10½ a. m. first day. Rev. N. G. Taylor, D. D.

Alternate, Rev, S. G. Ketron.

ESSAYS.

Benefits of affliction:—J. N. Baker, J. R. Hughes

What are the Tests of Ministerial Success?—J. L. Cardwell, A. J. Brunner, E. B. Clark.

Sunday-school Lesson Papers. The Extent of Their Use.—W. M. Christian, J. P. Easterly, D. R. Britton.

Are we Directing our Attention and Energies Sufficiently Towards the Conversion of the Children?—J. J. Robinette, J. P. Milburn, J. J. Yeager, J. S. J. Willhoit, A. Bunn.

The Relation of the Pastor to the Benevolent Collections.—A. F. Creswell, J. H. Jennings, G. B. Cox.

Qualifications for Church Membership.—M. Seaton, J. B. Fitzgerald, F. H. Little, J. B. Walker, W. R. Cox.

Our Rules Concerning Marriage.—G. W. Jarvis S. G. Ketron.

Euangelistic Work as Related to Church Growth.—N. G. Taylor.

Why Have we so few Subscribers to our Church Papers?—J. S. Petty.

What Difficulties are to be Overcome in Organizing our Sunday-schools into Missionary Societies?—R. K. Boyd, D. N. McInturff, D. J. Nelson, D. J. White, W. G. Burgner.

Prohibition of the Liquor Traffic.—J. G. Weems D. W. Remine.

The General Conference of 1884.—J. H. Ketron.

Centennial of Methodism.—T. H. Hodge, J. C. Wright, T. B. Russell.

Centennial Sermon Friday at 11 a. m.—Rev. E. Stockbridge.

ANNIVERSARIES.

Missionary and Church Extension Anniversary, Wednesday at 7½ p. m. Speakers—T. H. Hodge, D. W. Remine, J. J. Robinette.

Educational Anniversary, Thursday, at 7½ p. m. Speakers—J. H. Ketron, G. W. Jarvis, J. C. Wright.

Centenary of Methodism, Friday at 7½ p. m. Speakers—N. G. Taylor, J. G. Weems, S. G. Ketron.

Unless the Conference orders otherwise, the morning sessions will be devoted to disciplinary business, and the afternoon sessions to literary exercises.

We trust there will be a full attendance, and that the brethren will prepare themselves to discuss thoroughly the subjects assigned them. All the members are earnestly requested to be present at the opening and remain till Monday.

Bishop J. M. Walden will be here Wednesday and Thursday.

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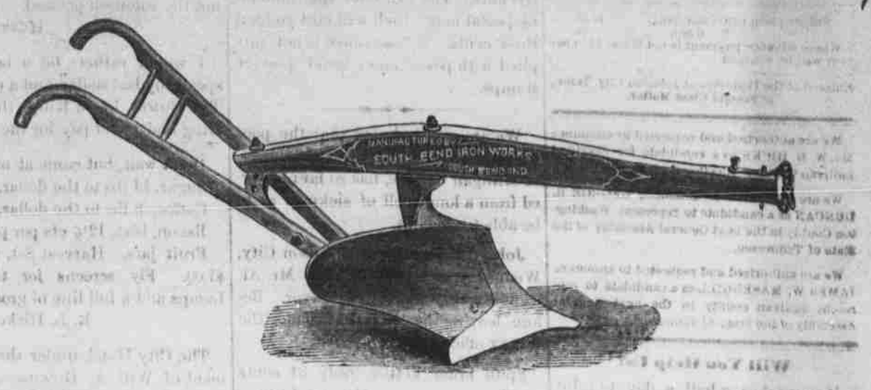

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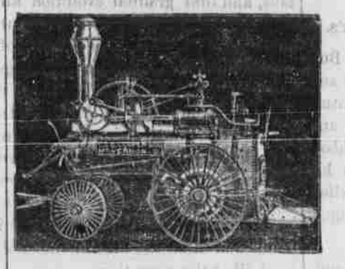

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