

## A PENNSYLVANIA COLLIERY VILLAGE.

### I.—A POLYGLOT COMMUNITY.

BY HENRY EDWARD ROOD.

OVERHEAD the sky is light blue; toward the south a billowy bank of clouds, white a few moments ago, but faintly tinged with pink now, until it looks as might a thousand tons of wild roses crushed into a feathery mass and blown about at the caprice of a gentle breeze; as far as the eye can reach, beginning with the east, a sweep of upland, covered with huckleberry-bushes, sassafras, wintergreen, intermingling with more ambitious undergrowth; then, toward the pulsating, opalescent clouds, a sudden rise, crowned with sturdy trees, vigorous and proud, but not of great size; and swinging southward and beyond, toward the west, the delicate wild-rose tints deepen to wide bands of crimson laid upon the sky as with a huge palette-knife, and between the bands uneven flashes of gold or silver where the sinking sun has pierced. Outlined against this heart of the dying day stand the rigid black forest sentries.

Close to us, here in the foreground, is a wide, rambling road, bordered on each side by small, unpainted frame-houses, placed together two by two as if they were a ridiculously large number of twins; for each pair is surrounded by a picket fence, each has the same number of doors and windows, the slant of the roofs is similar, and the positions of chimneys correspond exactly. Chickens may hold possession of one yard, and ducks and geese of another; but, with such slight variations, the company houses of the anthracite colliery are alike. In them dwell the Irish, Welsh, Scotch, and English miners, with their families; and a quarter of a mile away, on that hillside,—past the company store, and beyond the tall, ungainly breaker that rears its black head menacingly toward the summer sky,—over there is the collection of shanties wherein exist the ten or eleven hundred foreign miners, with their few women and children, who form the most picturesque feature of any of the anthracite mining towns, or "patches," as they are termed.

Back of the company store, a stream of

sulphur-water, pumped from the mines, finds its sluggish way along a ditch. Then we see railroad tracks leading from the breaker to the great world, which is always asking for fuel; and beyond the rails, a long, irregular mass of black dirt, seventy, eighty, ninety feet high, known as a "culm-pile." The level land between the culm and the hillside whereon the foreigners live is devoid of vegetation. Grasses and wild flowers once were luxuriant there, but for many decades rains have been washing from the huge pile some of the deadly black particles that smother plants, even trees, as we realize by noting the gaunt, leafless, lifeless trunks scattered here and there, with naked grayish limbs uplifted as if crying to Heaven for help. Were it not for the green hillsides and the kaleidoscopic sky, this would be indeed a somber picture. To the immigrant just arrived from Italy the colliery town must seem a realization of desolation itself.

When anthracite came into general use, the original miners quickly established themselves in their adopted homes, and ceased to speak regretfully of childhood associations in Wales or in England. They had an abundance of work here, and wages that would seem a fortune in the old country. In those days a Pennsylvania miner deemed it an unlucky month if he and his two brawny sons failed to earn two hundred dollars or more. They were not always paid at regular intervals before and during the Civil War, for money was not plentiful in this region. But they were credited fully on the books of the company, and they were permitted, if not encouraged, to purchase goods at the company store, where could be obtained food, clothing, toys, furniture—in fact, about all the necessaries and comforts and luxuries the miner had learned to use. Prices were high, but wages corresponded, and work was steady. But after the terrible struggle between North and South came a period of depression in business. Selling prices dropped lower and lower, and wages felt the result. But the average miner did



A GERMAN.



AN ITALIAN. (COBBLER AND MINER.)

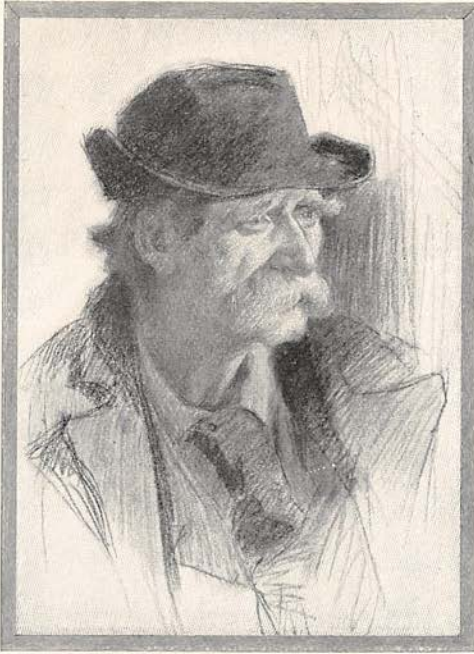
not understand this. He saw that the operator of the colliery took wife and children to Philadelphia or New York as often as in previous years, and that the superintendent wore clothing as costly as ever. He forgot that while he had been spending his wages every month, and often exceeding his account at the company store, the operator and other officials had been saving at least a portion, if not the greater portion, of their earnings.

The miners grew discontented, and talked the matter over. As the panic drew near, they had more idle hours than ever; and their complaints reached the ears of smooth-tongued rascals who «organized» them into a band ready to resist any further «oppression,» as the business changes were termed. And right at this point let it be said that the old-time professional agitators referred to were wholly different from the responsible, intelligent men who have performed such good service during recent years by organizing and directing trades-unions like those which embrace the printers and the locomotive engineers and firemen. If the anthracite miners of Pennsylvania had been wisely led and firmly controlled in the early seventies, the Keystone State would now be spared many black chapters in her history. But such happiness was not foreordained. Owing in some degree to the troublous times, and in a greater degree to a group of beings

more devilish than human, there sprang into active control of a portion of the commonwealth the most brutal, vindictive, terrible conspiracy that ever a civilized community has been cursed with in recent times—the Molly Maguires; and it required the genius of Franklin B. Gowen of the Reading Railroad, and the marvelous courage of James McParland, a Pinkerton detective, to break it up, and hang its leading spirits, not singly, but in groups of ten.

Then, within a few years, came the «long strike» in the Lehigh region, when the old hands refused to work under any consideration. Week after week and month after month dragged by. The collieries remained idle; the men, women, and children almost starved. Fortunes were lost in flooded mines and in burning breakers. And at last one of the greatest of the operators sent abroad to Austria-Hungary and brought thence to his mining-patch in Pennsylvania the first of the «foreigners,» who have long ago succeeded, by their very presence, in driving out all of the English-speaking miners who could obtain work elsewhere and who had the means to remove their families.

It is an old story now, how the first of the Slovaks, Polacks, Italians, and Sicilians who came here were comparatively intelligent, and learned readily, in the course of a few years, the work of mining coal. And we all



AN IRISH AMERICAN.



A GERMAN AMERICAN.

know that year by year the immigrants of such nationalities decreased in the scale of civilization until those who have come to the anthracite fields during the first half of the present decade are, as a rule, much more dangerous to the body politic than the excluded Chinese; for not only are they eager to work for wages on which an English-speaking family would starve, but they are superstitious and murderous, and do not hesitate to use dynamite if they desire to blow up the home of one whom they particularly hate. Also, unlike the average Chinaman, each of these foreign miners insists on voting as soon as possible.

But it is time we were back in our mining village; for the whistle has blown, and the men are coming home from work, and the crimson is fast fading from the western sky. The English-speaking miners come from the slope, each man carrying his empty dinner-bucket, nearly all wearing rubber boots, several (whose homes are at a distance) keeping alight the lamps which are firmly fixed at the peaks of their caps. Most of these men have fair skins, and some of them yellow or auburn hair; but as they appear from the «workings» underground, their faces and necks and hands are coated or smeared with coal-dust, which makes them blacker than any Africans. Near the breaker, at the crossing of two roads, they separate

into groups, and tramp homeward, laughing, chatting, skylarking. And then from breaker and slope and stripping come hundreds of Italians, Slovaks, and Polacks, men of each nationality gathering as they proceed with awkward gait toward «Shantytown,» on the hillside across the way. The Italians generally are small men, wearing short jackets, round little hats of black felt, and clumsy shoes. The Slovaks and Polacks are tall, brawny, muscular fellows, with dull expression of countenance and heavy features. But here in the mining-patch they are not known by such designations. The Italians are termed «Hikes,» and the other foreigners are grouped under the inelegant name «Hunks.» The miners have been at work since seven o'clock in the morning, except for an hour's rest at noon, and have earned from fifty to ninety cents each during the day; some may have earned a dollar, a very few perhaps one dollar and ten cents. And all are rejoicing because the «boss» has promised them steady work five days per week for a month.

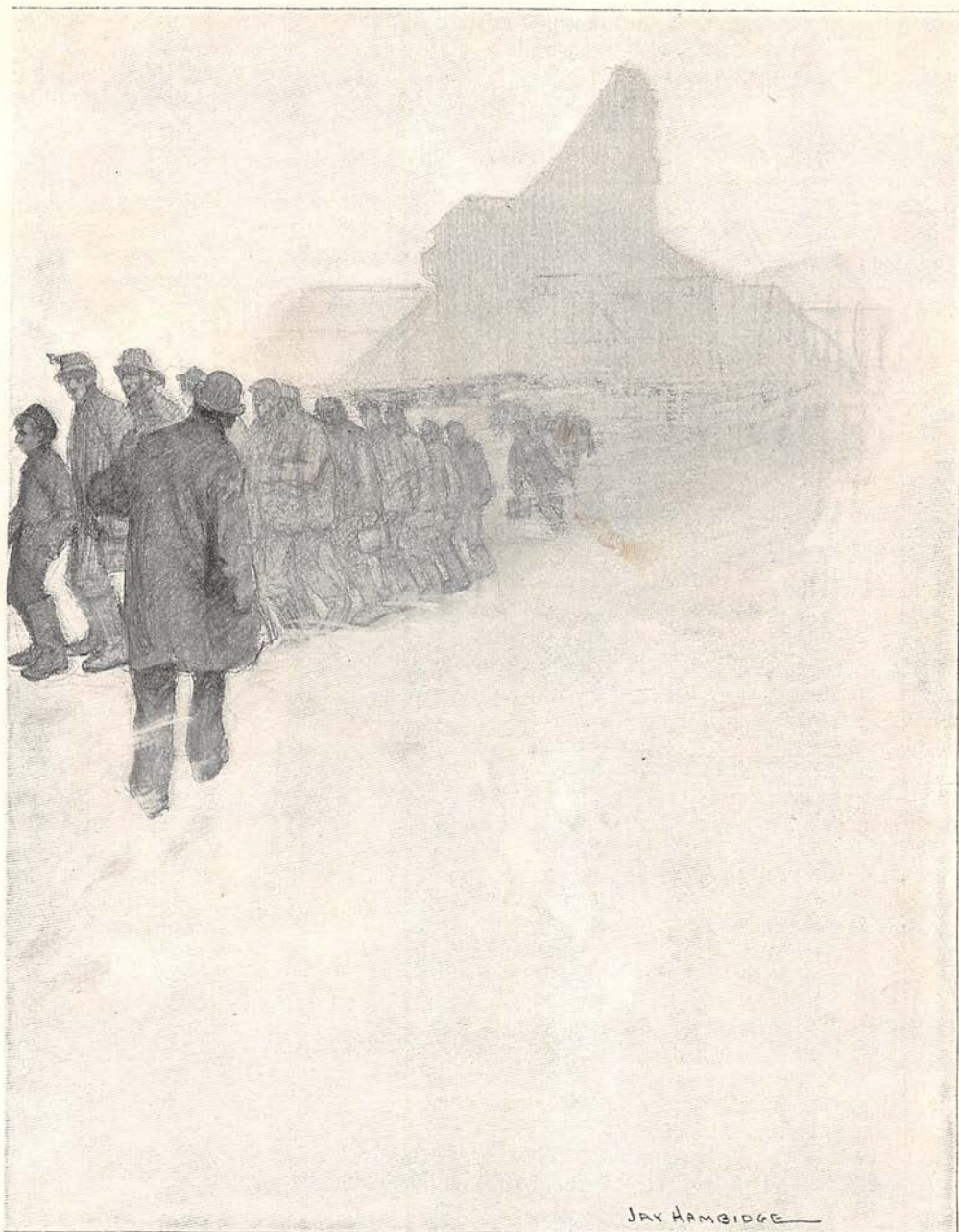
To-night they spend quietly around their shanties, gambling, discussing the affairs of their religious societies, or telling stories of witches they heard while at work in the mines. Some of the more intelligent lounge from one group to another, after the evening meal has been eaten, explaining



THE PAY

their ideas as to the government of America, and insisting that every good foreigner should obtain his «papers» as soon as possible, and vote at the coming election, lest the «white men» throw too many votes into the ballot-box, and pass a law to drive them out of the country. Now and then a group will steal away from Shantytown to the woods, and there discuss the best methods of getting

rid of some hated enemy—a member of the coal-and-iron police force, for example, or a priest who has antagonized them. But there is little excitement in the mining-patch this evening, for the foreigners have scarcely any money in their pockets. To-morrow, however, will be pay-day—a time for rejoicing, drinking, and dancing. With this thought in mind, the men tumble into their bunks,



JAY HAMBIDGE

LINE.

or beds, and sleep heavily until the six-o'clock whistle arouses them.

At the present time, in many collieries of the Lehigh region, little work is done on payday, particularly if it falls on Saturday. The great pumps must be kept busy, of course, sucking water out of the caverns underground; and a force of men must feed the mules in the stables hundreds of feet

below the surface. But by far the great majority of miners, laborers, driver-boys, and breaker-hands are idle. They gather in the neighborhood of the company office long before the appointed hour, and wait patiently until a coal-and-iron policeman throws open a window, at which sits the paymaster with his treasure-chest close at hand. And then a long line forms, the men wearing their

best clothes, the foreign women arrayed in frocks of gorgeous colors, gaudy kerchiefs taking the place of hat or bonnet.

As a rule, from six to a dozen of the foreigners live in a single shanty, which they have erected upon land owned by the company, for rental of which fifty cents per month is charged. Then fifty or seventy-five cents is deducted for the company doctor, who asks no other fee for medical advice or for medicines, unless called upon to perform a surgical operation. Formerly twenty-five cents was deducted each month from the wages of Roman and Greek Catholics to pay the priest; but this custom is by no means invariable at present. Of course all the miners are charged with food, clothing, tobacco, powder, fuses, and oil that they have purchased during the month through the company store or office. The remainder of their wages is paid to them in cash. The English-speaking miners expend from four to ten dollars per month rental for their houses, according to size, location, conveniences, etc. Many assertions have been made that the

company robs its employees to such an extent that when pay-day comes the miners find they have little or no cash at all due them; and as to this, it may be said that prices vary at different collieries, and that while some superintendents undoubtedly do take every possible advantage of the men, yet others are more liberal in dealing with them. As far as can be ascertained, the price of powder at many collieries is far above the figure asked in the open market; the cost of certain articles of clothing probably is higher. But, on the other hand, the company store transacts a credit business, and it may be worth while remembering that certain furniture-houses in large cities, conducted on the "instalment plan," allow ten per cent. reduction to cash purchasers. The worst feature of the company-store system is the absolute conviction, on the part of the

miners generally, that they will be deprived of work if they neglect to buy all, or nearly all, their goods from the company and dare to trade in the open market to an appreciable extent. Rightly or wrongly, this belief is firmly embedded. Furthermore, it is openly asserted that the Pennsylvania legislature appointed a committee to investigate the company-store system a few years ago, and that an order for printing fifty thousand copies of their report was canceled because "of the disgrace which would fall upon the State were the truth made known of conditions existing in the Schuylkill region."<sup>1</sup>

Newspapers have published many articles concerning the industrial systems of the anthracite region, and tales are not wanting of men who work for two or three weeks, and at the end of that period receive only a dollar or two in cash. The writer was told, last autumn, of one miner who worked for sixteen days, and when pay-day came ascertained that all the cash due him amounted to four cents. Other instances are quoted of men who have lived and died in debt to the company.



TWELVE-YEAR-OLD ITALIAN BRIDES AND THE HUSBAND OF ONE OF THEM.

But before accepting all such stories as the whole truth, it might be well to inquire as to the industry and capabilities and soberness of the men referred to, as well as to the thrift or extravagance of themselves and their wives. It is an undeniable fact that for some years, especially during the recent general depression of business, the anthracite miners of Pennsylvania have been as a rule, very poor. Yet the manager of one of the oldest collieries in the Lehigh region states that his pay-rolls for September 1, 1897, amounted to about \$26,000, of which \$18,000 was deducted for living expenses, and \$8000 in cash was paid his men.

As the foreigners receive their money from the paymaster, they walk away in small

<sup>1</sup> P. J. McGuire, vice-president of the American Federation of Labor, in a speech delivered at Hazleton, Pennsylvania, Saturday evening, September 18, 1897.



THE «STRIPPINGS» OF A MODERN COAL-MINE, SHOWING THE EXPOSED VEINS OF ANTHRACITE, WHICH VARY FROM FORTY TO SIXTY FEET IN THICKNESS.

groups, and start for the nearest large town, either to deposit most of their surplus cash in a bank, or to send it home to Italy or Austria-Hungary, through one of many steamship agents who also transact more or less of banking business. And it may be well to remark at this point that there is little occasion for sympathizing with the foreign miners because of low wages; for they are earning four or five times as much as they ever received in Europe, and are relieved of various taxes in time and money. Sympathy may well be given the old hands, however, whose work has been taken away by the invading host from the Mediterranean. The foreigners manage to save money no matter how small their wages; and the reason is plain. The English-speaking miner has a brood of children to dress and educate; he takes pride in the appearance of the little house he lives in; he wants his wife to be nicely dressed on Sunday; he enjoys seeing a game of base-ball or a good old-fashioned melodrama; and he likes to take his whole family to dances and picnics and other merrymakings. In brief, the old hands are under expenses similar to those of skilled laborers elsewhere; and while they receive from one dollar and twenty-five cents to two dollars per day, yet for a number of years they have had work only four or five days per week, and many a month they have

averaged not more than fifteen working days.

But with the foreigner the case is different. The first purchase made by Slovak or Polack is a revolver, by Italian or Sicilian a stiletto; then the newcomer buys a silver watch; and after that is secured he begins to save money. If the Slovak or Polack is particularly thrifty, he postpones purchasing a revolver for several months, and carries in one pocket a round, hard stone large enough to crush a man's skull, and in another a piece of iron filched from the colliery scrap-heap. The Italian or Sicilian too poor or too penurious to afford a stiletto buys, begs, or steals a long file, and sits down in his shanty or by the roadside, with two or three stones, and grinds it to a keen edge and a needle-like point. Then he fastens the blunt end in a corn-cob, and has ready for use a weapon of no mean possibilities. Once armed, however, and provided with a watch, the foreigner manages to live at a total expense of about six dollars a month—and this may be regarded as a liberal estimate in most instances. The remainder of his wages is saved toward the purchase of a vineyard or a farm in the old country, whither almost all expect to return and spend their lives. Speaking generally, when a group of immigrants bring hither their wives and children it is a favorable indication. Many thousands from



BIG MARY'S HUSBAND. (POLE.)



A HUN.

Mediterranean ports, who are now settled in American cities, have their families with them; and the men and boys keep fruit-stands, repair shoes, and work as barbers or at other trades. While it is not to be expected that all the adults will learn our language or understand our scheme of government, yet their children are almost sure to become Americanized. But the undesirable ones whom we are now considering are the hordes swarming through the mining regions, and elsewhere in localities offering opportunity for hard labor. These have accepted without a murmur cut after cut in the scale of wages, until tens of thousands of English-speaking men are driven away from life-long associations or are reduced to poverty.

More than one half the total number of immigrants into the United States are coming from Austria-Hungary, Italy, Poland, and Russia. While official statistics are not available, yet careful investigation leads to the belief that perhaps fifty or sixty per cent. of arrivals from the countries mentioned have had no regular occupation, while possibly thirty per cent. may have been servants or laborers. Five years ago the Rev. Mr. Maujerie, himself an Italian, in company with the writer made a tour of observation through the Lehigh region of Pennsylvania, and stated that in his opinion the Italians working there were about three centuries behind Am-

ericans in their standards of living—that is, in their ideas as to food, clothing, shelter, wages, work, and general intelligence. Since that time there has been no improvement in the class of immigrants arriving at our ports.

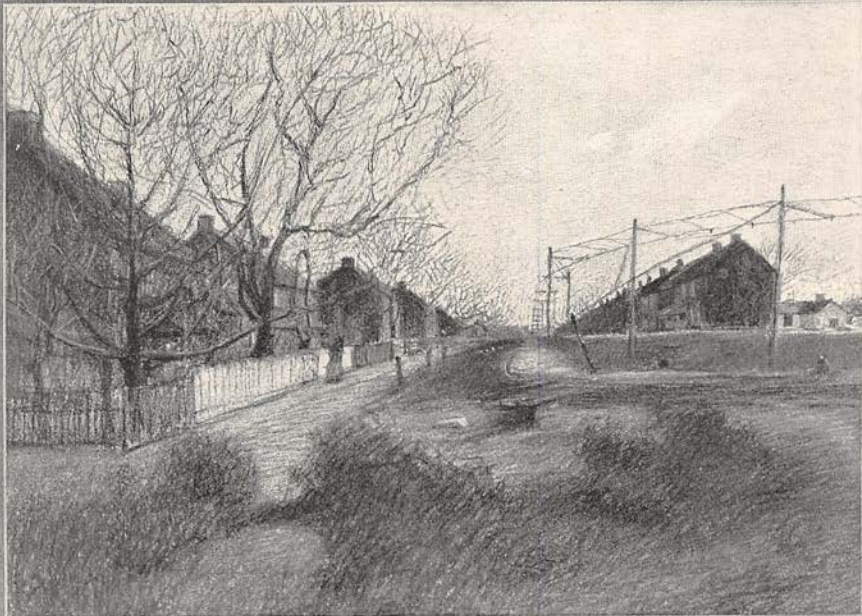
While we have been talking over these matters, however, the foreigners have walked from our colliery village to the nearest town, where their money has been deposited; and after having swallowed a few potions of beer, wine, or liquor, they have started homeward. If there is a short cut through the woods, the women carefully remove their shoes and carry them when they leave the public road, for shoe-leather costs money and must be cared for. Before sundown brewery wagons appear in or near the village, and the «boarding boss» of each shanty purchases a supply of beer or liquor to last over Sunday. This «boarding boss,» by the way, corresponds to the host of a small hotel in that he buys all food needed, and when pay-day comes each of the boarders contributes an equal amount to recompense him. Sometimes the «boss» has a wife to cook the food and look out for the safety of the little trunks or large valises of the boarders while they are at work during the day. If the «boss» has no wife in this country, he attends to the cooking.

When the mines have been working three-quarter or full time, so that a large sum is distributed on pay-day, the coal-and-iron



police, and the superintendent of the nearest hospital, make ready for a busy time, particularly if they hear of a wedding or a christening to be celebrated. It is not at all unusual for such a celebration to last five or six days, and at least one murder is expected to occur as a matter of course. This statement may be regarded as somewhat exaggerated, but it is made in all seriousness. One Easter Monday, a few years ago, I happened to be in a mining town, and the police reported that during twenty-four hours previous five or six men had been found dead within a radius of a few miles, and the supposition was that all had been murdered. But there is a general saying among these immigrants from Austria-Hungary: «Dead Hunk no good. Save the living!» and the officers knew there would be little use in «loading the county down with the expense of a lot of murder trials.» Once the writer served as a juror at a coroner's inquest held over the body of a Slovak who had been killed at a dance. After supper, following pay-day, a dozen boarders had formed a circle around a bucket containing a vile, poisonous liquor called *polinki*. The shanty must have been crowded, but there was room for a lamp, and,

in one corner, for an old fellow who dragged unmusical sounds from an ancient accordeon. The boarders danced first on one foot and then on the other, much as do some of the Indians; and they sang their barbaric songs, and became gloriously drunk by reason of the fiery *polinki*. All the testimony, barring that of the boss, was to the effect that a free fight resulted, during which the man found dead had been knocked down and kicked in the head, and then thrown out of doors into the woods. Every one of the boarders swore that the victim was a brother of the boss; but that gentleman denied any relationship whatever, in order to save funeral expenses of ten dollars! Great difficulty was experienced, by the way, in having the testimony translated. Deputy Coroner Buckley or the foreman of the jury would ask a question of an interpreter, who would turn it from English into Hungarian; and then a second interpreter would retranslate it from Hungarian into the dialect spoken by the witnesses, who could understand little more of their national tongue than of English. Thus there were four translations before the jurors could obtain an answer to any question, and a careful examination of witnesses was simply out of the question.



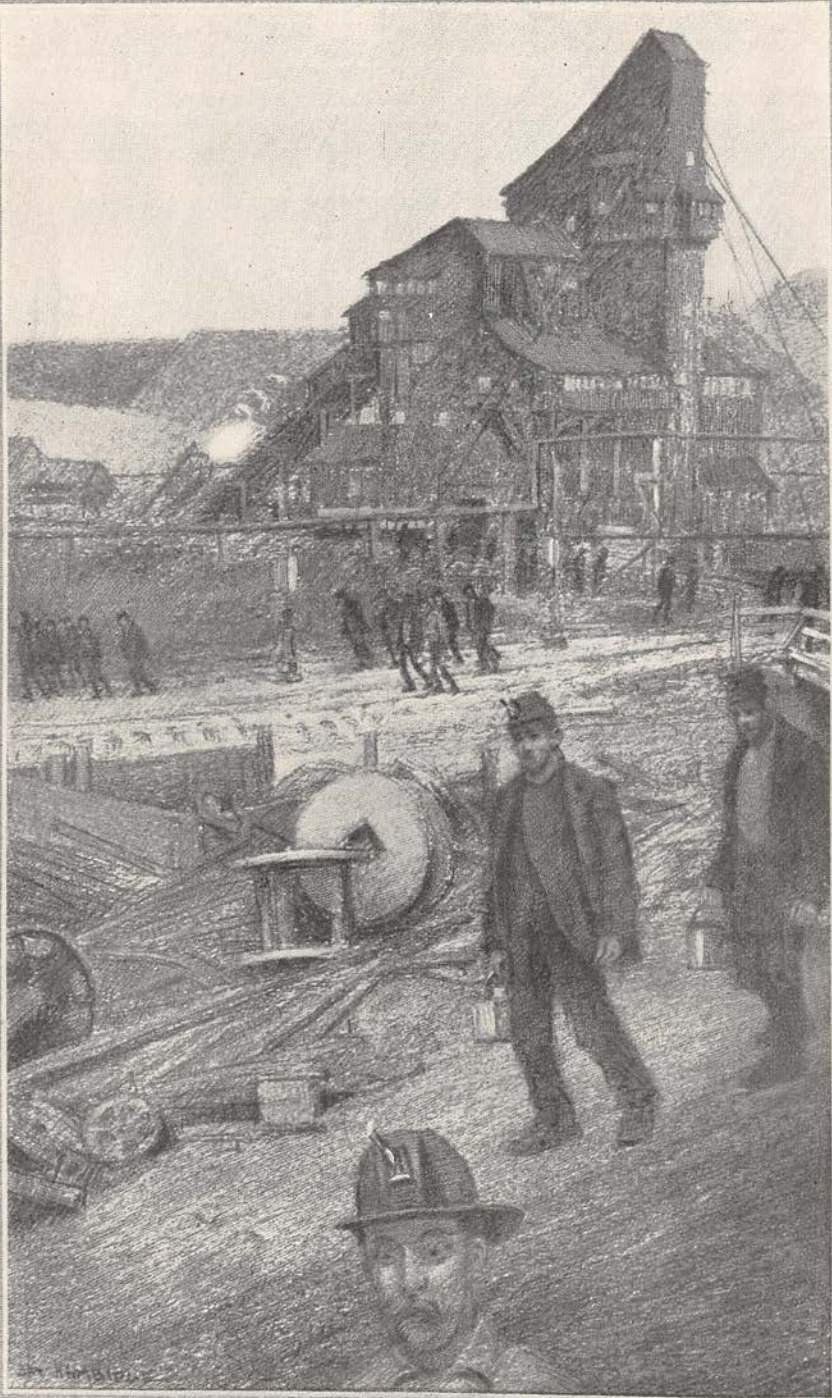
MAIN STREET OF LATTIMER, PENNSYLVANIA. THE SCENE OF THE ATTACK ON THE DEPUTIES, SEPTEMBER 10, 1897.  
VOL. LV.—103.

If a wedding among the Italians occurs during the evening of pay-day in our mining-patch, the celebration is begun with a feast at about sundown. But it is not possible to relate accurately the incidents which follow the banquet—that is, until reports reach the police concerning a general fight. I never knew an English-speaking person who possessed fortitude or recklessness sufficient to enable him to be present at such an event. If the usual program is carried out, however, somebody brings news into the nearest town, on Sunday, of a «Hike butchery,» with one or more killed or fatally wounded. Then the deputy coroner gathers his jurors, and they proceed to the scene, and, after calling upon available witnesses, bring in «the usual verdict»—that such and such a man came to his death at the hands of a person, or persons, unknown. Meanwhile the police have arrested half a dozen men and women, who are taken before a justice of the peace for examination; and each of the suspected produces witnesses, living in towns ten or twenty miles distant, who swear that the accused was visiting there while the fight was in progress. It would have delighted the soul of Mr. Weller could he have foreseen the ease with which Italian mine laborers in Pennsylvania arrange an alibi that simply cannot be disproved in nine cases out of ten. It must not be forgotten, however, that in too many instances the foreigners have been made victims of extortion by justices of the peace and by certain constables who have practised a system productive of large revenues to themselves. By this is meant the plan of fining every person brought into such subordinate local court, prosecutors and defendants alike, and even witnesses for both sides. And a significant fact, in this connection, is that in the Lehigh region at least, where the foreigners preponderate, one or two men for years have been in the habit of paying ninety per cent. of the fines for Italians under judgment of the police justices' courts. These leaders among the Italians have never explained why they furnish money for the fines of their fellow-countrymen; but of course the fact that they do so, and the ease with which alibis are «proved,» indicate the existence of a secret society formed for the express purpose of assisting members when accused of crime. Belief in such secret organization, by the way, is general among those who have to do with police work in the mining-patches of the Lehigh region; and the existence of such a society was proved, at least negatively, as long ago

as July, 1891, by Mr. A. E. Watrous, then of the «New York Herald» staff, who came to the locality mentioned, at the request of the writer, and made careful investigation of the matter.

As a rule, the foreigners in the anthracite fields have been content until recently to labor for very low wages without a protest; to huddle in shanties like so many domestic animals; to eat half-spoiled vegetables and fruits that could not be sold to English-speaking people. They care nothing about acquiring our language, and do not associate with the old hands for obvious reasons; they have their own churches and amusements and weekly newspapers; and, until the summer just passed, they never had an idea of engaging in a general strike. It is within the bounds of reasonable belief to state that the terrible affair at Lattimer, Pennsylvania, on September 10, 1897, never would have occurred had not English-speaking labor agitators aroused the immigrants to a frenzy because of alleged «wrongs.» The ignorant, hulking Slovaks and Polacks, and the brawny, cunning Italians, who formed the mobs, would not have thought of raiding through the lower end of Luzerne County had it not been for politicians and agitators. But when once started on the war-path,—the word is used advisedly,—nothing could stop the rioters, except a volley from Winchester rifles in the hands of Sheriff James Martin's posse of deputies. Five times in four days had this brave officer risked his life by reading the riot act to mobs; and he was reading it for the sixth time when he was disarmed, knocked down, and trampled upon. Then his deputies fired, shooting fifty of the mob, twenty-two of whom have died. And this sheriff and his assistants are undergoing trial for murder or manslaughter because they performed their sworn duty!

The problem of enacting and enforcing laws which will keep undesirable immigrants out of this country in the future is a grave one, for there is no prospect that their numbers will decrease. There is no doubt that the future immigrants from southern Europe will drive out of other employments requiring hard labor American, German, Scandinavian, and British workmen, who must earn good wages, and who cannot compete with Slovak, Polack, or Italian in the problem of cheap living. At present an honest, industrious, but impecunious family may be refused admittance, while a group of anarchists may enter if each has in his pocket ten dollars or more. Of course it is impossible to detect more than



A BREAKER AT LATTIMER.

This is the breaker on which the striking miners were marching when they were fired upon by the sheriff's deputies.

a very few criminals among the crowds of immigrants who pass through our ports of entry, when steamers arrive with heavy steerage lists. Yet I once heard an officer connected with the service testify before a congressional committee that he was able to recognize by their general appearance almost all the crimi-

leaders of national influence, and to the Immigration Restriction League, with headquarters in Boston, the present secretary of which is Mr. Prescott Hall. But much remains to be done.

This question of restricting immigration in the future, moreover, is scarcely of greater

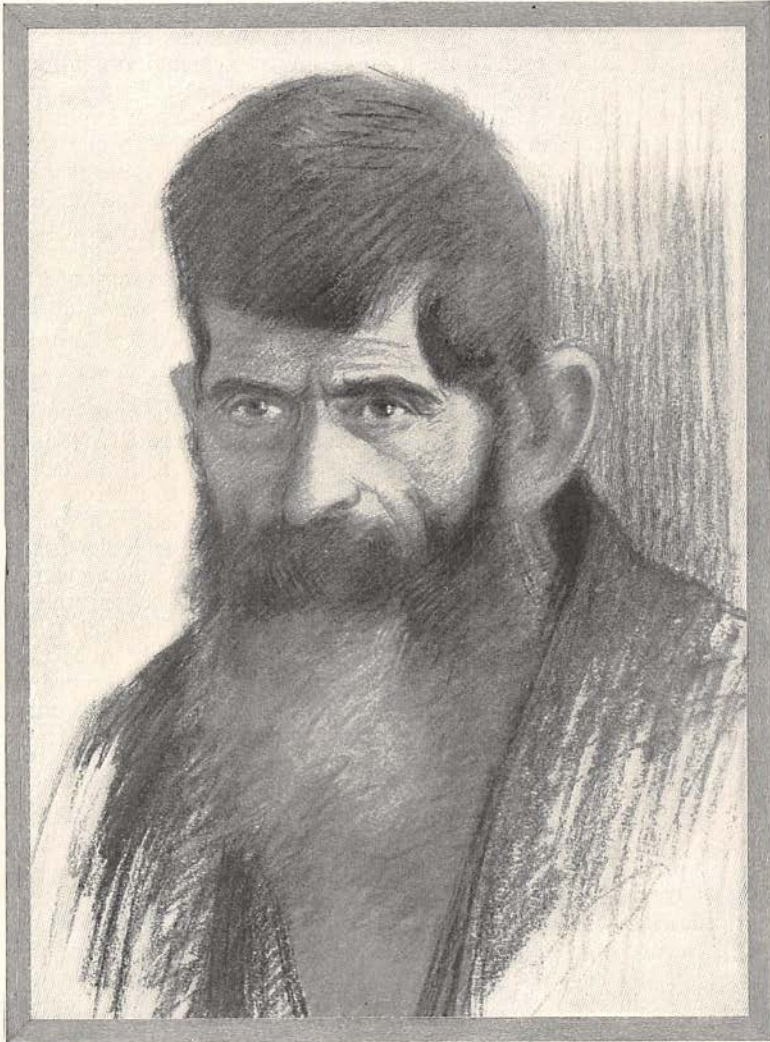


BIG MARY. (POLE.)

nals who sought to enter; and he was surprised to see that some of the congressmen present smiled as if a little incredulous. The fact is that for many years certain leaders of various parties would not permit the enactment of stringent laws restricting immigration, fearing, doubtless, that they might shut out thousands who could be induced to join this or that political organization. A beginning has been made, thanks to a few patriotic

importance than the question of handling the thousands and thousands of illiterate, undesirable men nowhere and scattered in colonies throughout the country. They are here—there is no denying that fact; and in communities where they have congregated closely the foreign vote is so heavy that the various nationalities are «recognized in the deal» when municipal, township, or county officers are to be elected.

About 143,000 young men and women registered as students in the colleges and universities of the United States. Of these, 35,000 are debarred, by reason of the accident of sex, from casting ballots in general; and of the 108,000 young men, a very large proportion are debarred likewise, because nothing for our country, except as a place wherein to make money; who long for the day to come when they may return home, there to pass the remainder of their days, exempt, by reason of their naturalization here, from restrictions, taxes, etc.; who believe firmly in witchcraft, and are content to eat and sleep



A FACTOR IN THE PROBLEM. (ITALIAN.)

under twenty-one years of age. A vote of the English-speaking man who reads these words will carry no more weight in deciding the destinies of our nation than the ballot cast by any one of thousands of foreigners who have become naturalized citizens as a matter of business; who care and fight among themselves, like so many half-domesticated animals. The Mediterranean shores have sent us many good citizens; but I have yet to meet one of them who fails to regret the presence here of the hordes of undesirables who have swarmed hither year after year.