II.—AN ARTIST'S IMPRESSIONS OF THE COLLIERY REGION.

BY JAY HAMBIDGE.

NEWS of an attempted assassination the previous night, and the sight of a dozen loaded Winchesters leaning against a wall in the company's office, were a part of my introduction to the colliery town.

D—— is the foreman of a «night gang» at work on the new canal. He had seen a figure coming toward him down the track shortly after midnight, and had held his lantern up to get a look at the stranger's face. When only a few steps away, the man had opened fire, and two bullets whistled uncomfortably close to the startled foreman's head. The would-be assassin escaped.

So D—— is a marked man. He had acted as a deputy sheriff during the strike of a few weeks before, when about fifty miners had felt the lead of rifles; and now he walks about with a furtive look in his eyes, and the consciousness that the hands of men are against him.

The clerks at work on the great books in the office were deputies, too. They sit on their high stools, and add and count and write; but the Winchesters are with them. An officer of the company picks up one of the guns, and I fancy there is somewhat of affection in his manner as he strokes the gravel-scratched butt of the weapon.

«It 's a great gun,» he says, partly to himself; «sixteen shots.»

The clerks speak to a man who has just entered the office, and who carries both his arms in big slings of white muslin, which give him the appearance of having wings. It is explained that he was the only deputy injured during the recent fight. A bullet had pierced both his arms as he was in the act of sighting his rifle. He shows his fellows a large blister on one of his hands, where the doctor had been burning it with a bottle of hot water to see if feeling was returning to the paralyzed member.

«Do you think it would be safe for me to go out to-night?» inquires one of the men of another. «My brother-in-law is one of the cast of the company giving the show over in the town, and I 'd like to go.»

«Well, you know one of the men was followed the other night,» is the answer. «Still, you live pretty close to the trolley-line.»

«I guess I 'll go; but I 'll have a gun in both pockets.»

The office of the company is close to No. 1 coal-breaker, and from the windows of the superintendent's room I see the «strippings,» great holes in the ground where the earth has been removed to get the anthracite out in wholesale quantities. The rattling of the chains of the giant steam-shovels is audible, and with the sound comes the «who-er» of shunting switch-engines, the shrill screech of whistles about the works, and the intermittent boom, boom of exploding dynamite. Word comes in that a man has just been killed at a point not two hundred yards from where I stand. A premature explosion had torn his entire chest away. I hear no comment but the mere mention of the fact. Later in the day, one workman asks another if the man is dead. «I think he is,» is the reply, «for I saw his little girl coming from school crying.»

Truly this is a land where life is held cheap. Constant familiarity with powerful forces makes the men fearless of danger and callous to suffering. A death from violence is noted to-day, but to-morrow it is a fact remote, and is recalled by association of idea with some other incident. The miners buy high explosives at the company's store, for use in their work in the mines, with the same freedom with which they purchase staples of life. Nearly all of the many men working in the strippings use powder; and when a charge is ready for ignition the man firing the blast is supposed to warn his fellows, and they dodge behind boulders or any other protection which may be convenient. But the constant crying of alarms, if heeded, would make the miners' work an incessant act of dodge and duck. So they grow careless, and risk the consequences. The result is frequent deaths, also frequent losses of arms, legs, or hands, and injuries to eyesight and hearing.

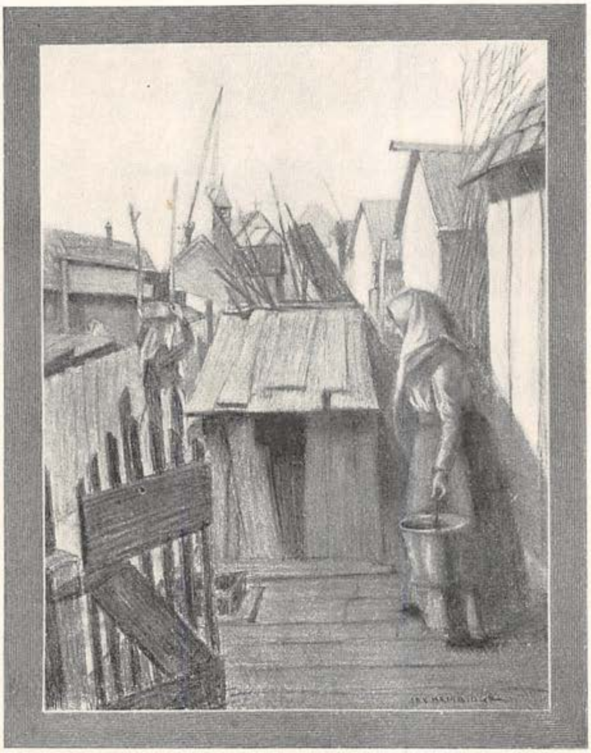
The superintendent of the company courteously offers me the service of a guide to the settlement of foreign laborers in the mines. Schleppy is the man. He is called a timekeeper, but he is also an adept in the detection of crime. Some of the feats he has accomplished in ferreting out the acts of crafty evil-doers would rouse the envy of the keenest sleuths of the cities. He understands enough of every language spoken in the coal-region, I am told, to converse with any of the foreigners. «I 've just sent a ‹Hunk› for a horse,» says Schleppy; and in season the horse arrives. Not a likely-looking beast; but it is a long distance to No. 2, and Schleppy has recently been shot through the foot, so any conveyance is better than a walk for him.

The homes of the workers in the mines who live in No. 2 are scattered over a hillside which is of a raw reddish color from the dead leaves of the scrub-oak partly concealing it. Portions of gray and yellow mud show here and there. The roadway is black, the mine buildings are black, the culm-piles are black, and the houses are black. The somber-looking houses in the foreground are of the better class, and like those on each side of the main street of the town,—company houses they are,—while back of them is a hazy-looking mass with many poles sticking out of it and sharply defined against the sky. This hazy mass, Schleppy says, is the «patch.» In one place a large wooden cross shows clear and distinct. It is what we have come to see.

Schleppy seems to be a favorite with the workers we meet, for he is greeted everywhere with apparent good-natured nods and words of salutation. An Italian youngster of ten or so, with an intelligent look in his bright black eyes, yells familiarly to him: «Hello, Schleppy!» I remark on the evident good will of the men.

«Well, you see,» says he, «I have n't been out among them much since the shooting, so I can't tell exactly how deep the feeling runs. It looks all right on the surface, but it 's an unknown quantity below.»

At the entrance to the road leading into the patch we meet the company butcher returning from his afternoon delivery of meat to the miners' homes. Both wagons stop, while Schleppy greets the butcher, and remarks: «I saw the —— » (mentioning the name of a local paper); «and that was a pretty stiff roast you got.»



AN ITALIAN QUARTER OR «PATCH.»

«Yes; I heard about it. Did it say I killed the dog?»

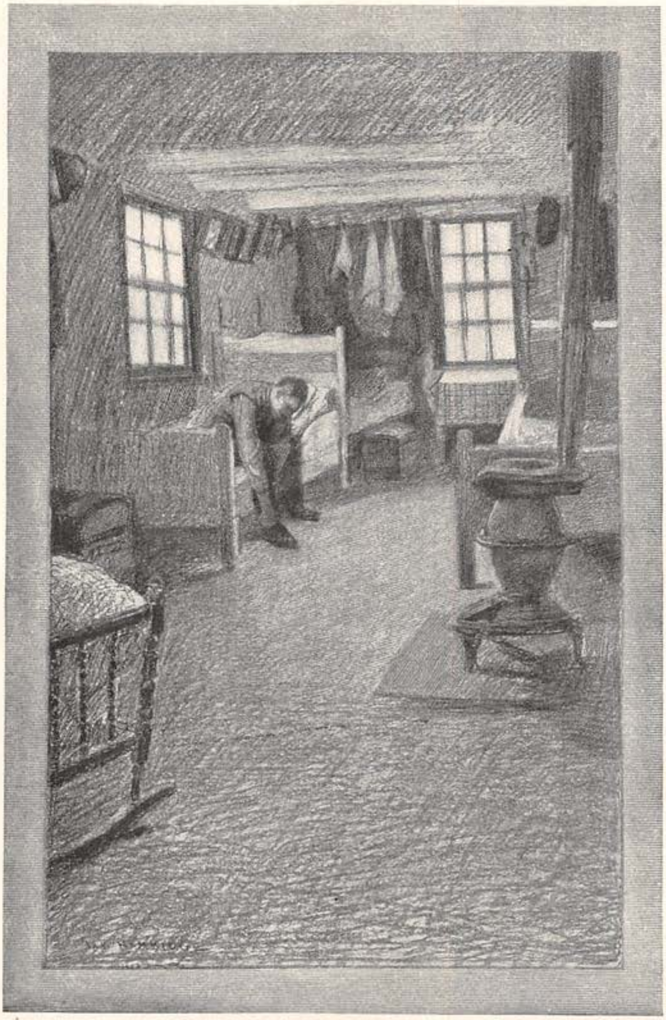
«Yes; says you brained it with your cleaver.»

Both laugh, and as we drive on Schleppy explains that the company is the object of frequent attack by the local press. In this instance the butcher was accused of killing a dog, which had stolen a piece of meat from the shop, with the cleaver which he used to cut his customers' meat.

The roadway is a mere lane, and as we leave the level, the boulders and stones are so thick that passage is difficult.

The regular company house is a square structure built of raw lumber, which the weather and coal-dust have stained a dirty brown, and which from a distance takes a general tone of black, relieved only by the clear sky above. The fences about the little plots of ground attached to each house are constructed in a haphazard way. Some of the boards are horizontal, others perpendicular, while others, again, shoot out at every imaginable angle, the whole forming about as incongruous a mixture as one can well imagine.

The company houses in No. 2 are few, and we are soon at the opening of a lane much narrower and more crooked than the one we have just traversed. It leads into the patch, and up this lane we drive. Then up another lane, more tangled than the last; and this is the principal street of a settlement of the queerest structures, some of them not much larger than dog-kennels. There is no sewage system, and the alley is the dumping-ground for all offal. At every few steps of this winding, reeking way are little openings leading into other passageways, not much wider than will permit a man to walk through. This is a place to be described by metes and bounds and degrees of instruments, and to do it would tax the ingenuity of the best of surveyors. Can you read character from handiwork? If so, this would be a place to practise your art. Each little house, with the



A ROOM IN WHICH FOURTEEN LIVE.

boxes, cubby-holes, and fences about it, has been built by the man who lives in it. And he is a laborer, a struggler for mere existence, not deft in the use of tools, nor with an eye for the symmetrical, nor with an appreciation for anything beyond the most primal facts of living. The roofs of the buildings slant at all angles, with no two sides of the same length or deflection. One portion will have eaves, while its companion will scorn the luxury. The same incongruity prevails everywhere. Some of the small openings used for windows are high, while others are low. One door will open in, and another out. The hinges have evidently come from the company scrap-pile, and the staples and latches and locks from the same source. Some of the roofs have shingles, others weather-boards, while others are formed of great pieces of rusty sheet-iron.

And the dogs and the pigs and the goats—the little alleys seem alive with them. Children, too, are plentiful. The boys—sharp-eyed, intelligent-looking younkers—strut a good deal, with their hands in their pockets and their shoulders stooped, in mimicry of their fathers. The little girls drudge early. We see one of them coming up an alley, carrying two large pails of water which she has filled from the settlement well in front of the church. It is this church that bears the cross which we saw from the distance. The child does not appear to be over six years of age, yet the burden she carries would be enough for one three times her years. This is the first evidence—of which we see more later—of the woman as the animal, the chattel, the thing to be possessed for its usefulness, as a piece of furniture, a cow, or a mule. A little later in life (not much later—six years is enough) this mite of a child will be, not married, but given and taken in marriage; and the certificate from the priest will be to her husband as a bill of sale—documentary evidence of possession.

From the windows of the shanties we see faces as we go along, and are aware of many eyes peering at us from behind cracks of doors and other openings. The curiosity of the «Hike,» Schleppy says, is as keen as that of the monkey. «They 'll be wondering what we are looking for.»

Some of the little girls we see are not uncomely. One, I notice, has auburn hair and blue eyes. She is carrying the usual burden of water, and greets my guide as pleasantly as did the men and boys about the mines below.

"What percentage of these children attend school?» I ask.

«One hundred,» answers Schleppy; «and they are bright, and learn fast.»

Here, then, is hope.

There is one special object of curiosity in the patch, I am told, and Schleppy guides me readily to it. It is a painted house, but differs not materially from the other houses, save that at some time it has received a coat of coloring. The present occupant is the widow of a victim of a dynamite explosion. Now she is supported by the company. Her account at the store is never closed. This pension system, I find, is practised in many instances; and it is a feature of the relation between the coal-mining company and the worker which is seldom noticed.

In front of Johnny Claypotts's house we see a wagon from a brewery. Two men standing beside it hold an uncorked bottle in their hand, and with many nods and winks invite us to partake. Claypotts is a Hungarian, and to-morrow there is to be a christening at his shanty. On a visit, next day, I counted a dozen kegs of beer, several dozen bottles of the same beverage, several gallons of whisky, many boxes of a cheap brand of cigar, and a case of «soft» drinks. The baby, the innocent object of the demonstration, is stored out of the way in an outhouse while the participants in the festivities hold high carnival in the house itself. Schleppy tells me that Johnny is anxious to convince the company that the christening is to be a very quiet affair; but the company thinks his anxiety on this score is prompted by fear that he will have to pay for the attendance of a coal-and-iron policeman.

«Big Mary» is for a time the object of our search, and we finally find her cleaning a goose for her Sunday dinner. Mary is by far the most forcible and picturesque character in all the mining region. In her peculiar way she is a queen, and rules things with a high hand. During the strike Mary was the most troublesome of all the foreigners. No professional agitator had half the force for mischief that this woman exerted. One day she led seventy-five women of the patch in a charge on the troops. At that time these amazons were armed with clubs and pieces of scrap-iron, and they stopped only when they felt the bayonets of the immovable line of soldiery. One would not imagine her such a character from the smiling greeting she gave us. With her husband, she keeps a sort of boarding-house for other miners; and in the living-room of the shanty were seven beds and eight trunks. Probably from twelve to fifteen men occupy the same room with this man, his wife, and daughter, a large-boned girl of fourteen. The girl, like the mother, was named Mary; in fact, all the Hungarian women I found were of that name. Young Mary was much taken with the picture-making, and stood, an interested spectator, one bare foot resting on the other.

«Mary,» commanded the mother, in a tone of imperious command, «go to work!»

«No,» said Mary.

«No?» repeated her mother, with a tinge of menace and a reach for a big strap hanging behind the stove. But Mary suddenly vanished from the room. A moment later she came back, stole one arm around her mother's neck, and kissed her.

Over each of the beds in the room hang pictures of the crucifixion, the Virgin, and patron saints. In one of the frames is a card bearing the Lord's prayer, printed in English. The family are Polanders, and have little proficiency in the use of any language but their own—save, however, as shown in the handling of English oaths; but this is a common accomplishment in the mining district, and the property of all foreigners, from the lisping child up.

In a bed at one end of the room two men are sleeping with their clothes on. They work on the «night shift» in the mines, and sleep during the day. These men belong to the class which was most active during the strike. Mary the mother rattles along in a conversation with her husband and daughter, her talk being well punctuated with profanity. Suddenly she turns to me with a demand to know if I eat meat on Friday. I answer in the affirmative. «Jesus kill you some day,» she says, and laughs.

The amazon loves her husband, she asserts, and the affection is evidently mutual, for as he passes her from time to time, he says some pleasant word or pats her cheek. They have been married thirty years, and the daughter Mary is the only living one of ten children. «When I 'way from my man I cry all time, and when he 'way from me he cry all time,» is the way the woman puts it. In all their years of married life he had never once struck her.

This is the woman who has the reputation of being a veritable tigress. The men in the mining company's offices are afraid of her, and give her a wide berth. The trolley-car conductors tremble when she hails a car, and not one of them has ever been known to collect a fare from her except when she felt disposed to pay. She has a contempt for American women. They are not strong, she says, and cannot work in the fields. The food they eat is too sweet; they would be better off if they ate sour soup and sour cabbage.

In the high altitude of the mining region the weather is extremely variable. A howling snow-storm suddenly sweeps down the valley from the northwest, and the thermometer will drop twenty or thirty degrees in an hour or so. Without Balenski's shanty the storm is furious. The snow is already three inches deep, and the wind is blowing more vigorously every moment. It is warm enough within. In the dingy room a small iron stove, filled to overflowing with «company coal,» is heated to a degree which approaches the melting-point, and the temperature is that of a Turkish bath-room. Three men of the «night shift» are sleeping in one of the four small beds. Within the narrow limit they lie «spoon fashion,» all their clothes on except their boots and stockings. Six great bare feet stick out from beneath the cheap quilt which is spread over them. In this small room fourteen men live. Sometimes the number is increased to twenty. There is one woman. She is now bending over a cradle, tenderly crooning a lullaby of the fatherland to a sleeping baby.

On a trunk in the corner a man sits, laboriously picking out the words in a Slavic primary spelling-book. The woman is Balenski's wife. The man is a boarder, and a different-looking chap from those sleeping in the bed. He wears a collar and a gay-colored necktie, and shoes instead of boots. His clothes are carefully brushed, his hair is combed, and his face cleanly shaved. His manner is suave and oily, and his disposition evidently that to please. A year before he had eloped with the woman. At the time the incident caused some talk in the patch, but now is apparently forgotten, and both of them are living with the injured husband. He probably was glad to have the woman return. She is strong and vigorous, and without her the shanty had received scant attention, and its desirability as a boarding-place consequently suffered. Now the room is swept, food is cooking on the stove, and great loaves of bread are baking in the stone oven in the yard.

The man wants to get a job again in the mines. Would Schleppy speak to the boss?

Ignorance and superstition are apparent in every question asked. They had been warned that the stranger would take away their pictures of the Virgin and the saints. A good deal of explanation and strong language from Schleppy finally restores confidence, and the man talks. His English vocabulary is limited, but gestures express his meaning, and in a measure we understand each other. The big city must be a fine place, he thinks. Do they have stone churches there? Plank churches are bad, and there are none but plank churches at the mines. And factories are plentiful off in the East? He would like to work in a factory. He explains all this to the woman, and they talk together in their patois, and shake their heads. How much would he have to pay in the city for a suit of clothes such as he was wearing, and flour, and potatoes, and coffee? The company store is high-priced, he says, and he could even buy many things cheaper in a neighboring town; these necessities must be very cheap in the great city.

During the conversation the door opens, and a young girl from a neighboring shanty comes timidly in. I turn to look. Her hair is as tousled as a bird's nest, and her dress, apparently the only garment she has on, is old and torn. Her feet are bare, and she brings into the room a quantity of snow on them, which the warm air quickly melts and forms into pools on the rough board floor.

It is but a step from Balenski's shanty to the shanty, or rather shanties, of Walley Morfeano, another Polander. This individual is the speculator and moneyed man of the settlement. As soon as a foreign workman makes preparation to leave the place, either to return to the old country or to move to another mine, Morfeano buys his house, with the right to pay the company fifty cents a month for the use of the grounds. By this practice he has gradually secured the rental privilege of a large number of shanties, and in a place where any sort of shelter is at a premium he gets whatever price he may charge for their use. To the house which he built himself when he first came to the mines he has added others, until the structure now looks like a great black worm. And living with him he has eight families, with their relatives—some sixty persons in all!

John J—— was a «fiery Hun» after I had made a sketch of him and he realized what the polite request to sit still a short time meant. He stamped up and down the floor like an angry bull. It was a «blank shame,» he bellowed; and his broken English enabled me to understand that the shame consisted in making an honest workman sit still while a lot of foolishness was being played upon him.

John has n't a very prepossessing face. His heavy jaw, coarse skin, and piercing eyes have little suggestion of a gentle nature. The general character of the Hungarian as he is found in the mining region is summed up in him. With a sturdiness of physical force there is combined a stupid stubbornness that makes him almost unapproachable.

Six weeks previous, this man had his right hand so shattered by an explosion of dynamite that it required amputation. Now he is at work again, with the stump bandaged and tied in black oil-cloth, using high explosives with apparently the same freedom as before.

«Are n't you afraid you will get injured again?» I ask.

«No,» he growls; «me no afraid.»

The marching army of striking miners that advanced upon Lattimer on September 10 was composed almost entirely of Huns and Polanders. These foreign workers are now organized and members of a labor union. A superintendent of one of the mines was returning from a trip of inspection at a neighboring mine the day before the shooting occurred, and saw a mob of five hundred or more of these men standing in front of a school-house, with their right hands raised, solemnly taking the oath of allegiance to an organization.

Through one of the narrowest, most crooked, and dirtiest of the small passageways we pick our way to the home of the shoemaker of the patch. Ganoro Volco works in the mines in the daytime, and in the evenings mends his neighbors' foot-gear. He is a small man, but there is a look in his eye which, once seen, cannot readily be forgotten. As I sat in front of him, and received the full force of his steady, penetrating gaze, I wondered if I could put it on paper. All the other markings of his features seemed to be lost. He appeared not to wink once, and the cunning of the craftsman was strong upon him.

While others of the miners would take the visit of a stranger with stolid indifference, Ganoro evinced the greatest curiosity in the implements of workmanship, asked pointed questions, and seemed to consider the methods as well as the accomplishment. Then, too, came reminiscences of Italy. I spoke of Michelangelo.

«Buonarroti,» he added.

Raphael, he said, was the great glory of his country; and Leonardo, Perugino, Fra

Angelico—he mentioned all of them as he sat on his low bench and pulled pieces of leather out of a bucket in which they had been soaking. A shoe, he said, when made by hand,—and though he could n't express himself clearly in English, I understood,—reflected the character of the maker, and, according to the strength or weakness of that character, was good or bad, and in such measure was art. The same article made by machinery—a shrug of his small shoulders.

OUR winding lane through the slums of the mining town ends, and we are upon the hill in the rear of the shanties. About us are scattered stockaded inclosures suggestive of frontier forts, minus the blockhouses. These are the gardens of the miners, and in season produce potatoes and other vegetables; but the work of tillage must be heavy, for the ground is exceedingly stony. Down below us, we see the valley of the shadow, lurid and depressing. Coal-breakers rear their great tops at intervals as far as one can see. Sinister and ominous, these giant structures of men suggest great behemoths of the waters under the earth which have forced themselves through the black openings visible in the strippings, and are sniffing inquiringly for the cause of the disturbance which has led to their unleashing.

Ten yards from where we stand is the crest of the hill, and from it, toward the north, a fertile valley reaches forth, and is bounded only by the horizon. It is one of the most beautiful and productive vales in all the great State of Pennsylvania. Behind us, despair, ignorance, strife, and struggle for mere existence; before us, the beautiful valley seems a land of infinite promise.

COAL IS KING.

I.—THE ADVANTAGE OF ENGLAND AND THE UNITED STATES IN THE WORLD'S COMMERCE.

BY EDWARD ATKINSON.

IT will be remarked that the deposits of anthracite are found in very mountainous regions. The difference between this hard and what are called the soft coals was explained to me by the late Professor William B. Rogers. When the contraction of the earth's surface took place by which the mountain regions of Pennsylvania and a few other parts of the Carboniferous series were formed, these mountains were thrown up, turned over and twisted in such a manner as to cause the materials of vegetable origin of which coal is formed to become coked, or partly coked, under extreme pressure. It is due to that pressure and accompanying heat that the anthracite coals are hard and virtually free from bitumen; while, under other conditions, the bituminous or semibituminous coals are soft and more friable, containing more bituminous element. In some other parts of the earth's surface where coal is found, the so-called brown coals and lignites have not been subjected to the measure of heat under pressure sufficient to convert them into true coal.

It will be remarked that the use of coal in the production of iron and steel displaced charcoal, except for special products, about a century ago. The blast-furnace was first applied to the conversion of ore into iron in Great Britain, where the bituminous coals were worked. It was held for a very long period that the anthracite or hard coals could not be applied in this art. The late Mr. Thomas of the Thomas Iron Company, a Welshman who came to this country many years ago, was the first to apply anthracite coal successfully to the production of iron. For a long period iron made with anthracite coal exceeded all other kinds in quantity. Then followed the coking process, and the conversion of ore into iron with raw coal, and iron into steel with coke, the latter being necessary in the finer forms of steel production.

It may here be remarked that the Bessemer process of making steel has created a revolution in the railway service almost equal to that which ensued from the invention of the locomotive engine. This process was long held by Great Britain, resulting in an excess of production above that of all other countries. That first place is now lost, first on account of the approximate exhaustion of the ores near Bilbao in Spain, which are the only ores near British furnaces suitable for