

Almost simultaneously with the commencement of the noise I heard Goater jump up, and a clash of iron told me he had possessed himself of a weapon from the fender. And as I came out from the screen—

“Die, traitor, die!” he shouted, at the same time raising the shovel to deal me a murderous blow.

His appearance was awful. His face bore an expression of concentrated hate, revenge, and disappointment; the eyeballs were almost starting out of his head, the veins on his forehead were swollen up, and the whole was pervaded with a look of fiendish cruelty horrible to witness. But we didn't waste much time looking at each other.

He came on and aimed a desperate blow at my head. I dodged, and catching him round the waist, tried to throw him. One moment of awful suspense, and then, thank God! I succeeded. And then commenced an awful struggle on the ground, in the one case for life, in the other for death. As regards strength, we were pretty evenly matched—for against the added strength he derived from his madness must be pitted the strength of a strong man fighting for his life—fighting with the tenacity of despair.

He had dropped the shovel, and his great object was to throttle me. I tried to preserve my own strength till assistance arrived.

Over and over we rolled. First one was on the top

—then the other. I became conscious of the door being opened, and of hearing shrieks for help. The man's strength seemed superhuman—my own seemed rapidly going. At last he got me underneath, and in spite of a terrific struggle, I could not get above again. Then, as I felt my strength fading away, I felt all was over, and knew nothing more until I found myself sitting in a chair, and the room full of policemen.

Thank God! help had arrived just in time. Another moment would have been too late.

My wife and the maid having opened the front door to summon assistance, did so just in time to enable the policemen to rush straight in and save my life.

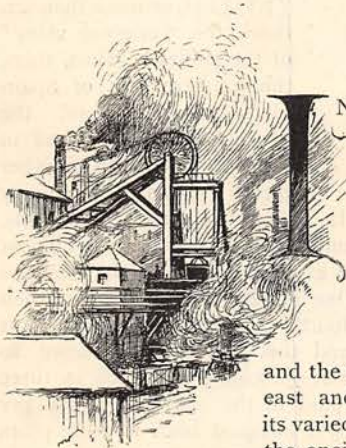
There was the unfortunate Goater handcuffed and roped, and shrieking horribly and demoniacally.

It will easily be understood that I am now a devoted friend of the District Messenger System, and that I also entirely appreciate the disinterested kindness of the old gentleman in No. 41 being taken so suddenly and violently ill, and thereby introducing me to that little call-box which undoubtedly saved my life.

I have only one word to add. If any of my town readers have any magazines or papers to spare, will they send them round to the nearest messenger office, where they will be highly appreciated?

GEORGE MANNERS.

THE ROMANCE OF MINING.

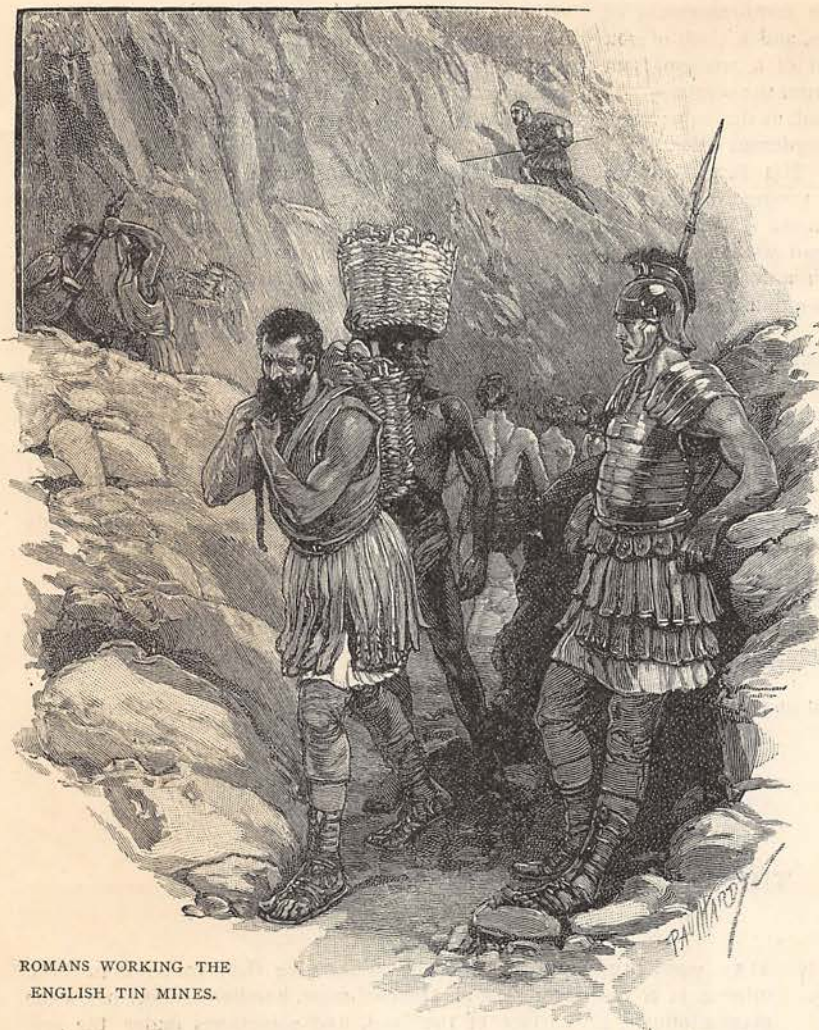


IN its working, mining is a romantic industry; and in its results it is even more romantic. It is co-extensive with civilisation; it is pursued alike in the frozen north and the torrid south; in the east and the west it has its varied votaries; and from the ancient days, when the stones yielded iron, down to the present, it has been pursued with results more remarkable than are shown in other industries. In our own land we have the ancient minerals that attracted distant nations to our shores, won in olden days by washing the soil, and then with rude implements that gave place to better, and led to deeper mining. We have mines of lead and tin that the Romans wrought, leaving indelible marks of their presence on people and place, and we have traces of their early iron-melting furnaces on what are moors now; so that the story of the metals and their users becomes the story of the nation. In their

working, too, the mines give their romance to those who seek: in the coal-mine, hundreds of feet below the surface of the land, and sometimes under the sea,



“RUINED!”



ROMANS WORKING THE
ENGLISH TIN MINES.

where man and horse toil on in a darkness that the fitful lamps do not penetrate, amid surroundings that tell how Mother Earth's treasures are won, and with the knowledge, at what a cost—with strange reverberations, rushings of air-courses, roaring of ventilators, clankings of unseen chains and rumblings of waggons through the gloom—these are the colourings of the mine: not of one, but of many. Following the veins of what is locally called tin-stone, searching for lodes of lead in the mountain limestone of the north or the slaty rocks of the Isle of Man, delving deep for thick coal seams, or in the shallow mines of Furness for the ruddy hematite ores, the occupation of the miner is like that of the sailor in two particulars: its romance and its danger. The day's work may be begun with all the signs of a happy return, but before night owing to chemical changes in the composition of the air, a sudden blast may be carried through the gloomy galleries, and the loss of life ensuing may be enormous.

In every part of the world we have indications of the romance of mining. Spain has especial proofs. It is believed that nearly 2,000 years ago the Romans

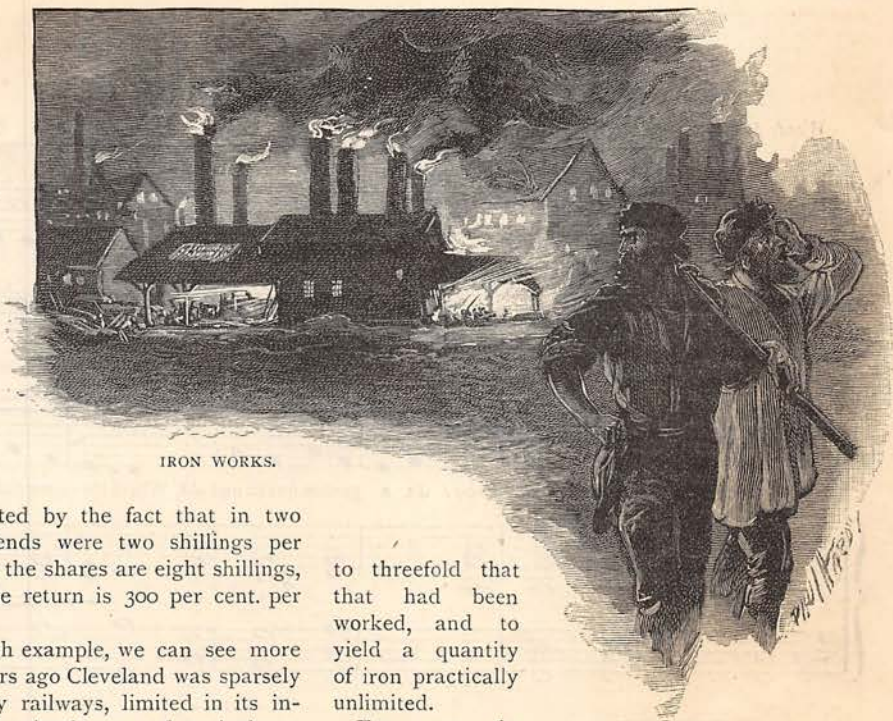
were mining in that fertile tract from Seville to Portugal; but for generations afterwards the vast deposits were forgotten. Then foreigners exploited them on a small scale, obtained limited quantities of copper, projected companies, and struggled against creditors and clients. Wars brought the struggle to an end, some of the mines lapsed to the Spanish Government, and twenty years ago the Rio Tinto Company obtained a lease of what is now an estate of 16,000 acres. For some years it paid no dividend; in 1879 it yielded a modest five per cent., and from that its return has risen up to sixteen and a half per cent. per annum. Near to these mines are those of the Tharsis Sulphur and Copper Company, which began its operations in 1866, which has paid dividends as high as forty per cent., and the gross profits of which company in twenty-four years are officially stated as fully £7,133,231, or more than ten times the "original value" of the mines! Thus, then, the southern part of Spain gives riches beyond the dreams of avarice. And in the north of Spain, another metal shows us equally

fabulous results. In Bilbao hematite iron reigns. It is rich, it is abundant, and it yields magnificent results to those who early entered into the business of mining there. One of the iron mines is owned by a company a fourth of whose shareholders at least are British, and that company is known to have a capital of about £200,000, on which in three recent years it has paid in the aggregate 139¼ per cent.; in other words, it has paid back in these years its capital, with over thirteen per cent. per annum interest. Iron, thus treated, becomes almost a synonym for gold. Over a large part of the world these famous iron deposits of Spain are sent, and the port of Bilbao is crowded with the steamers that carry its iron to England, Scotland, and Wales, to Holland, Belgium, and Germany, and even to the far-off furnaces of the United States. These northern Spanish mines yield the largest and richest deposits of iron ore, and there has of recent years been for it an enlarged demand, because the fleets of the world are more built of steel, and for its manufacture rich ores of iron are needed, and thus their owners find fame

and fortune readily, whilst the growing use gives hope of continuance.

Let us go to the Antipodes, and we find the precious metals giving their testimony to the romance of mining. In the Barrier Range, in New South Wales, is the silver mine of the Broken Hill Proprietary Company. The wealth that has issued from it is incalculable; it cannot be told in figures, but it is faintly indicated by the fact that in two recent years the dividends were two shillings per share per month, and as the shares are eight shillings, it is easily seen that the return is 300 per cent. per annum.

Taking now an English example, we can see more of the effects. Fifty years ago Cleveland was sparsely peopled, untraversed by railways, limited in its industry almost to the primal one of agriculture, "remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow." Small quantities of its ironstone were gathered in from the sea-shore and shipped to northern smelters; the opening of a railway to Whitby led to the discovery of the strata furnishing that iron, near to Whitby; but not until about forty years ago, when the course of the iron trade had changed, and when there had been several attempts to use comparatively thin seams, was the real value of the mineral deposit known. Long search was rewarded; the seam was found to thicken



IRON WORKS.

to threefold that that had been worked, and to yield a quantity of iron practically unlimited.

Far away, in South Africa, are the De Beers Consolidated Mines. Near Kimberley is found much of the diamond wealth of that great company of which a colonial premier is chairman. Its capital is now counted by millions; its results to the district in which it works, to the men it employs, and to the shareholders who own its wealth, have been vast and momentous, and the story of its rise and growth is marvellous as that of Monte Cristo. The story of the "Golden Quarry" in the Sheba Valley has often been told. It is that of another South African romance of gold, not of diamonds. The late Mr. Edwin Bray, the son of a Harrogate gentleman, sought for gold, found a nugget, and was led to prospect for a reef. Above the quarry he sunk a shaft, and opened out that mine which afterwards became the property of the famous Sheba Gold Mining Company. The stories of the De Kaap gold-fields, of the Witwatersrand, and of others in far Africa, are romances that have but entered into the early volumes, and that must yet show striking changes.

These are amongst the prizes of mining results, but the blanks are more numerous, and as startling. If some fortunes have been won, more, perhaps, have been lost, in attempts to win treasure from Mother Earth. And one of the ways to lose fortune is that of the unwise speculation in mining shares and mining adventures. The bold and sagacious, who know localities, lodes, and mines, may win wealth in mining adventures; but there is risk even to these. To those who are ignorant of localities and of relative richness of earth and mineral, loss is almost certain, and is frequently disastrous.

J. W. S.



"AT LAST!"