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Produced in collaboration with James Campbell.

PREFACE

To the publishers of *Blackwood's Magazine* and the editors of the *Outlook* (New York), the writer desires to offer his thanks for the privilege of here reprinting such matter as has appeared in their periodicals. At the same time he would acknowledge his indebtedness to the Rev. W. L. Stephen, M.A., and Mr. David Beveridge whose valued assistance made the experiment possible. The kindly cooperation of Mr. Edward McGegan has also been deeply appreciated. His verification of facts, criticisms of details, and many suggestions have added to the effect and worth of the study from the student's point of view.

K. D.

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FOREWORD

The Following entry appears in my private journal under the date of Kelty, June 29th, 1901:

"Last winter I was interested in a club of working men in Edinburgh. They were all intelligent men who read the newspapers and discussed among themselves what they read. The publication of certain facts concerning the Fife miners aroused their interest in these men and led to a series of questions which I was unable to answer on the spot, so I visited the mining village of Kelty, talked with the men, and one of the managers, and went down a pit, carrying back to the Club sufficient material for an interesting and profitable discussion. My own interest was whetted. I wanted to see more of the miners. Their views on life must be so different from any that I have been used to.

Professor G—— had once said to me ' You are a very good example of the educated, middle class dilettante. You will never be worth your salt till you have done something with your hands.' I wrote to him about a scheme for learning about mines and miners he immediately replied with his enthusiastic approval. My idea was cast my lot in with the miners and do everything that they do that I might become familiar with every phase of their life.

I planned to begin my experiment on Monday July 1st, 1901.

There were several reasons why I selected Kelty.... it is a typical Scottish mining village; the Gothenburg system of public houses is tried there; there is a flourishing co-operative store; it borders on an agricultural district—Kinross around Loch Leven. Friday morning, June 28th ,I left Edinburgh for Kelty and directly sought out —— who told me that I might have difficulty securing a place to stay in, as the village is much over-crowded.

I got a 'crop' (hair cut) and bought my lamp, ball of wick, flannel shirt, 'gravits,' tea and piece box. A first name is the ore the day here, and as my own is quite unpronounceable to the men I am advised to take another; so for the sake of simplicity have adopted 'Bill'

I report for work at the pit head at 6.15, Monday morning.

This was written in a journal intended for no other eyes than my own, at a time when the publication of my experiences, or any part of them, had not been considered or even seriously suggested.

As a social student sincerely interested in questions of the day I have several times sloughed off the commonly accepted hall marks of gentility and thrown myself into places where I have jostled shoulder to shoulder with the unadorned realities of life. This for my own edification, never for purposes of publication, and indeed, publication has never been made of any of these experiences. My journals lie shelved in their entirety. As the days and weeks of the summer passed, friends who were watching the progress of my schooling among the hardy toilers of the pits began to urge publication; and at last, having been convinced that an account of some of the incidents of the summer might prove of interest, I decided to put them into some such form as that in which they now appear. They do not pretend at anything more than a collection of impressions by an unbiased, yet sympathetic, observer who has aimed to present them in a simple, straight forward way. Truth, and accuracy of detail having never been knowingly sacrificed to picturesqueness of effect or readableness. Incidents set down were all thought to be typical and fairly representative of a class.

The manuscript has been read and freely commented upon by a number of critics, affording opportunities for weeding out the more superficial observations and doubtful impressions that would naturally be noted by one coming to the field with a wholly fresh point of view. Every suggestion that has come to the writer has been considered, and whenever possible has been acted upon.

All of July, and most of August, was spent in the pits. Toward the end of the second month, a slight accident to my right hand kept me off work till September, and then when I began again I continued steadily at it till into October. The latter days were spent at the brick works, for, as I have attempted to explain in Chapter IV, bricks being made from the waste material of the coal pits, brick kilns are now frequently, run in conjunction with pits and under the same general management. Brick-making is, in point of fact, so closely connected with coal-mining that, in spite of the marked difference between the trades, the separate unions and wide distinctions in other particulars, I could not look upon my experience among the Fife miners as complete until I had also laboured at the brick works. Here, however, my experience was necessarily of a slighter nature, owing partly to the trivial injury which handicapped me in the

use of my hand for some weeks. At the same time it was sufficient to enable me to draw comparisons between the two trades. Here again, this chapter is offered for what it appears, nothing more. It may be judged upon its surface value.

The growing interest in the Gothenburg experiments in Scotland, as a phase of that gratifying quickened interest in the temperance problem in Great Britain seems to warrant the devotion of one chapter to a consideration of its place in communities like that of Kelty.

It will be noticed that throughout the opening chapters the role of the writer in conversation with the men is that of "devil's advocate," the only object being to get at their opinions. Any opinions of his own that appeared to him as worthy of expression have been relegated to the final chapter on "Conclusions." Referential footnotes scattered through the book may add somewhat to its authenticity.

And lastly, if there has been any secondary *motif* in the publication of these chapters it has been that a wider audience than that of my own circle of acquaintances may catch a little of that spirit of admiration which I feel so strongly for the men whom the following pages deal. From the educational point of view I cannot rank my sojourn among the Fife miners too highly. Measure the standards of social conventions they may be rough diamonds, but diamonds of the first water they are, nevertheless. It will be sufficient to know that here and there in the bigger world another has come to think on them more intelligently and more appreciatively, and to feel what the writer has striven to reveal, that under the surface crudities, which sometimes arrest one, there is always the ring of sterling worth.

CHAPTER I

THE DAY SHIFT

The horn blew six o'clock as we clattered across the railway bridge where I vainly tried to scuff over the boards with my leather-soled shoes in the same noisy fashion as the men whose hob-nailed boots scraped and banged against the wood and iron with the rough ease that betrays long unconscious practice. A straggling procession of coal blackened men shuffled along the broad road from the pit, slow and careless after the night shift; another stream of men fresh for the work of the day tended towards the restless, hard-breathing, vomiting Thing, the Aitken Pit. A long cloud of heavy brown smoke from the towering brick chimney stretched strainingly over the fields to the last of the Lomonds as if to crest old Benarty with a symbol of the work-a-day world.

The engine that moves the great wheels round which run the cables that support the cages intermittently belched forth heavy, full puffs of steam that barely blew to the top of the mound of weathering blae, behind the engine-house, before being dissipated in the fresh air of the morning. Railway tracks fairly veined the area beneath and around the raised sifting shed; the loud clanging of hard strokes against resounding iron that came from a long, low building not far from the tracks betold the smithy and machine shop.

The human current flowed past the flaming forge, turning in and out among the railway wagons that stood on the tracks waiting for fresh loads, on under the sifting shed and up a long flight of iron steps to the pit-head, where, according to my first orders, I was to present myself at a quarter after six. As we neared the top I realised that a group of girls whose heads and shoulders were covered with soiled shawls had taken note of the stranger and were surmising who he might be and where he could have come from. The little tin lamp in my -"bunnet" as the men say—felt strangely heavy, as if it would draw the cap over my eyes, and the never ceasing rattle was bewildering.

There was only a moment to look about, for as one of the cages jarred to the top and sixteen men rusher out, the manager appeared and we joined the group awaiting the signal to step on. Caution is the watch word of the pit Three clamorous strokes announced that men were about to ascend and descend and a single clank signified that all was ready. The crowd rocked impatiently before the cage during the moment when the gate stood open and the pithead man held

it clear until the signal from below had been given. Then sixteen of us with lowered heads to escape the low gate made a quick rush into the gale of ventilating air that is forced down the shaft and thence through all the pit.

I heard a gruff warning to "grip the bar" and as my fingers grasped the cold, wet rod a shade above our heads, the cage began to drop, fast almost from the start; down, down, down, the air forced below by the powerful fan whistling gaily upon us, then the cage dropped faster as if to race with the wind ; a rough scrape midway down shook the cage like a toy then it settled into a speedy run so swift and smooth that there was scarce any perceptible motion. The darkness was blinding. Suddenly there was a strong feeling as if we had stopped and the next moment were bounding upwards, up, up, and ever so much faster than we had dropped down. What was wrong? No one spoke, yet up we flew, up into the increasing wind. A sudden burst of light—but not daylight; another rush, into the lurid glare of a score of tiny reeking lamps and the cage settled uneasily towards the sump with a mocking grating as if conscious that a greenhorn had been played a pretty trick a suffered a strange illusion.

"Light your lamp. This way—mind the hutches". He led and I stumbled after.

Even here, twelve hundred feet down, there was the same deafening, clattering roar as above. Races of six, eight, nine and ten hutches came rattling out of the black passages drawn by fast-going ponies, guided by a single rope which took the place of reins. Wee boy drivers, not so high as the undersized ponies some of them, grotesque in their patched muddy clothes, cried in piercingly shrill voices at the animals, deep-chested men shouted back and forth as they rolled the coal-weighted hutches off the rails on to the smooth sheet plates and then on to the cages, or jerked the empty ones back to the rails.

" Follow this man," and without a word my new guide, a grizzled old miner, turned abruptly to the right down a dark passage—a " level "—where the last echoes of the noisy pit bottom were quickly lost and only the weird babbling swish of an unseen stream and the sucking of the mucky ooze beneath our feet was audible.

Presently there was another turn, this time to the left, followed almost immediately by a second through a strong wooden trapdoor that closed with a

prison dull thud behind us. Here the low roof and lower proppings bent us far forward and we began a laborious ascent over wet, muddy slippery rock with numerous small pools through which we splashed in silence. Occasionally, when the sickening reek of the lamps, his burning oil and mine tallow, blew persistently into my face filling my mouth and nostrils with a nauseating odour I rolled against the soppy walk and sometimes crashed my head with discomforting force against the roof. At the end of two hundred and fifty yards we reached an open area high and wide and in every detail a second bottom. Here I was handed over to the section "gaffer" with whom I began another and longer climb which must have taken near a quarter of an hour.

The road was up two "wheel braes" that are made perilous by fast running cable hutches. The weight of six full hutches descending is balanced by six empty hutches that are attached to the other end of the cable and are thus hurried to the top. Twice we had to take refuge in manholes and both times the gaffer spoke pleasantly enough of his experience of fifty years in the pit and pointed out certain dangers that I should constantly guard against. Even by the murky light of the lamps in our bonnets I could catch the laughing twinkle under the shaggy eyebrows and behind the strong lines of relaxed sternness, for in spite of my old clothes and my blue flannel shirt, in spite even of my workman's gravit carelessly thrown round my neck (previously arranged with the most consummate care as a matter of fact) and my tin tea-flask and " piece " box carried so indifferently there was no disguising the fact that whatever else I might have been I never before had been a pitman.

The first task given me was with a small gang of roadsmen to remove a heavy fall of rock from an old wheel brae which has been out of use for a long time and was about to be used again. Roadsmen are generally all-round practical men who can turn their hands to anything, and their work is various. Sometimes they are platelayers, sometimes joiners, again they are brushers or repairers,—in short a roadsman must be prepared to overcome any obstacle that may be met with in making ready a section or part of a section for the miners who hew the coal from the rock. Some tons of rock had dropped from the roof, completely blocking the brae for nearly twenty yards; the old props had been demolished, and there was nothing left but *debris.*

The work of smashing the rocks into manageable bits that could be removed in a " bogey " and stowed away in an old " waste "—a place from which the coal has

been previously removed—occupied us for several days. Some of the stones which for the others were not difficult to lift, proved awkward in my unaccustomed hands; and many of the rocks were sharp cornered, and cut. Every two or three yards it was necessary to put, up proppings to make ourselves secure and this introduced the joiner work. Heavy bars or beams had to be fitted across the roof with the ends resting in the coal which, as it happened, formed the walls on both sides, and larch trees wedged tightly in from below. It was rough, unfinished work, like most work in the pit, and I venture to suggest that much of the roughness characteristic of miners comes from the fact that there is so little polishing in their lives. A passage is never swept clean, a prop is never fitted with exactness, appearances count for nothing so long as the work is strong and safe. They begin work on the fore shift about 6.15, stop for their breakfast about " half ten," and quit work about a quarter after two. Only the engine men must be exact.

" Bill," shouted Jim, the grey, old-school miner who appeared to have me in charge—among the men I was never anything but Bill, indeed that was almost all they knew about me—" Bill, saw off about twa inches frae yon tree—I'll hold it for ye."

I began with feverish haste which resulted in the saw jumping from the groove and tearing across the forefinger of my left hand. It wasn't the cut that I feared only that Jim might have seen my clumsiness, so with all the strength I could muster I clutched the tree so as to repress the bleeding as much as possible, and so that the few drops of escaping blood might trickle from underneath the tree and away from *his* sight Jim was a typical pitman of the better class. For forty-nine years he had worked at the coal, and as he had been steady and saving all his days he had no reason to dread the coming of old age. The winter of life never looks bleak and moory to men like Jim. He worked quickly, and when he was puffed into an honest sweat he would stop for a "blow." Jim, like myself and most roadsmen was an *oncost* man, that is he worked " on the company's time " at so much per shift; hewers are paid by the ton, drawers, who draw the coal away from the face, by section contractors, who receive a bargained-for sum per score of hutches drawn, the price varying according to the distance and difficulty, some roads being much harder than others. On the whole the men at the face who are paid by the ton make more than the oncost men, but the latter have the advantage of being able to work, as they put it, "according to their wages." Once and awhile they lose an hour or two owing to the stupidity or

carelessness of some other body, as when a lot of trees and bars needed in a "wooding" operation are marked, for instance "Campbell's No. 2," (which was where we were working during these first days) and it is switched off *"Spion* Kop " or "Meek's Level" Once Jim saw me rise up in a forgetful moment and knock my head rather solidly against the roof. " Yell be sair te-morn's mornin', Bill." "Ay," I replied in *my* broadest Scotch as cheerily as I could under the circumstances, " but bide a wee and I'es be a' richt"

All through the long hours there was never any respite from the terribly cramped position. To stand straight one must needs lie down as it were, and the strain told. When the rocks and stones had been cleared away there was always a mass of small stuff which had to be shovelled into the bogey, and to toss near a half ton at a stretch was sore work for one's back, but the cheeriness of the men was always a help. Those who can, sing at their work; and sometimes the words of a popular song or an old familiar Scotch ballad came out of the darkness at most unexpected moments. One morning as I was making my way along a lengthy level whistling to myself the refrain *of "Sweet* Genevieve," some one so far ahead that I could not catch the faintest gleam of the lamp that I knew full well he must have, caught up in the melody, and out of the lugubrious gloom came the faint, silvery echo, like sounds sent back by some eerie spirit of the earth's depths. A good song not only means a light heart but it makes the very work seem lighter. The men have divined this, possibly subconsciously, and though a quarter of a mile below the waving grain that in summer greeted them, as they came out of the depths, like a smile from heaven, they make the ancient rocks re-echo with the sounds of their voices as well as with the music of their industry. But while singing is so common a feature, a ringing laugh is seldom heard, probably because conversation generally takes a serious turn.

The animal that delayed the fraction of a moment in stepping over the rails. But most wonderful of all are the thieving ponies that show their fondness for food and drink by learning to open the piece boxes of the men and eating the bread and jam or cheese; or the cleverer ones that uncork the flasks and drain them to the last drop.

When first I heard these stories I was sceptical but it was not long ere I was convinced of their truth. One man lost his piece box, and after accusing his neighbours of playing him a mean, practical joke, went home hungry. The next morning a pony was seen to leave his stall with an empty piece box which was duly dropped at the very spot where on the previous day the victim had left his breakfast.

It was to a part of the pit that was new to me that I was directed for the drawing—a walk of ten minutes through a much used level where long races of hutches rattled from one end to the other, the ponies guided by reckless boys who delight in shouting their warning at the last moment and make the dismal passage ring with their piercing voices high above the clatter of the hoof-beats and the thunderous rumbling of the heavy hutches.

At the point where I left the main level there was a blast of air so warm and for the moment overpowering, that it seemed almost suffocating. The man with whom I was to work (the next few word are unreadable Jim C.) the ever increasing heat for nearly two hundred yards where the men were working naked to the waist, their steaming bodies streaked and begrimed with coal dust which permeated all the atmosphere till they seemed little like men. Breathing was an effort in spite of the current of air that passed through the passage. The monotonous click of the picks against the resisting coal fell on the ear like sounds from an unreal world, while from a distance the men who crouched or knelt before the grim wall, which they attacked with the brutal force of automatons, looked like creatures damned for their sins, the muttered " T-s-s-t—t-s-s-t, sish-s—sish-h, t-s-s-t" coming from between their half closed teeth with machine-like regularity.

An empty hutch weighs nearly five hundred pounds. In appearance it is like a small railway coal waggon. An average load is from half a ton to twelve hundred pounds of coal. Fourteen or fifteen hundred pounds is a fairish load for a muscular man.

I started on my first trip. First a dead level, followed by a slight rise, another short level then an abrupt fall, not sufficiently abrupt to be characterised as steep but so inclined that it would have sent an (another few words that are unreadable Jim C,) It took every particle of my strength to mount the first incline and with a sense of relief I felt the forward end drop as I gripped the other to hold it back. An uneven bit of rock caused my foot to trip over a sleeper, the hutch gained in speed till I was jerked off my feet. The hot air cooled as I was dragged on with quickly increasing speed, faster and faster. I struggled with might and main to hold back, but it was useless. The thing had gained a terrible headway, by great leaps and bounds I went stumbling into the nothingness ahead at a mad pace; my lamp was blown out before twenty yards had been covered and there flashed -a picture of the one hundred and sixty or more yards to go; clinging desperately as

if for my life, my weight hanging all too loose on the end of the runaway hutch barely balanced it to the rails. If I rose to three quarters my height I knew I would crash against the stone roof with terrific force, if I let go, a hard tumble would be inevitable. Not knowing what was in front was terrible, and the thought of reaching the end of the level where men, ponies and long races were passing with every few seconds, was sickening, as with crouching leaps we—the hutch and I—went careering on, till with a joyous thrill I found it coming more and more under my control and at last it rolled gently on to the switch as if the whole run had been just as usual. Every muscle in my body felt pulled out and my tongue was cleaving to the roof of my mouth like dry leather. There was naught to do ^but relight my lamp, get behind an empty hutch, and laboriously push it back to the face. How my legs stiffened and ached under the strain! My breath came in wheezes and every pore seemed a tiny spring. With greater determination I started upon the second trip, when to my unaffected horror it was the same madcap rush over again, only worse. My fingers would not act, my strength seemed to be running like the sweat from every limb. How the hutch kept the rails throughout that breathless, perilous run I shall never know. The heat was cruel. With violently trembling hands I grasped my flask and swallowed a mouthful of tea, lukewarm but refreshing. My lips were like blotting paper.

Until now my mate, a broad shouldered fellow with Herculean biceps and chest had not spoken a word, but as he passed he said lightly:

"After my first shift on this job I thought I was dead."

With this encouragement I again started to the top with an empty. The hutch caught on the plates and I had difficulty in getting it on to the rails. A pony driver, a boy who looked more like an imp, pushed me aside and the quickness with which he set it right showed that he had learned the trick. I don't know the lad, they called him Dick, but again and again during the day he gave me a friendly lift without uttering a word. Then and there I registered a vow that if Dick and I ever meet under altered circumstances I will spare absolutely nothing to do him a good turn. I remember him with deepest gratitude, for his was the only substantial sympathy I got.

As I bent over that next tub on the up journey the flame of my lamp curled down and licked the ends of my hair that had escaped the protection of my hat. I

heard it crackle as it singed, and I smelt it, but dared not take a hand from the heavy hutch lest it roll back upon me.

At the top my mate was called away for a moment and as I saw him disappear in the darkness, with an indescribable sensation of relief I sank across the tracks and let my head rest on an iron rail. It was so restful—I could have slept. The drowsiness was pleasant—I wanted to yield to it. Then came the thought of my reputation among the men and with a genuine laugh I sprang to my feet determined to get some fun out of my job. Why take it all so seriously? What if it does crash off the rails into the propping and perhaps unloose a ton or two of rock? It will be a jolly moment and the damage at worst will be reparable. Be a fatalist. Test the theory of the Will to Believe; see if Will can push a hutch.

When we started a third time my heart was light and the scheme worked beautifully. That reckless race in the dark was the most thrilling sport I ever had. The hutch kept the rails; I steadied it hard and enjoyed the whole run hugely. But alas! The next time about half way down, when I had begun to feel myself safe and happy there was a sudden scraping, a wild leap from the rails, the coals spilled, my lamp flew out of my bonnet, and I was thrown violently against the hutch which had nearly turned on end. In the flashing second that followed there was a simultaneous sensation of being pinned to the roof and crushed under the hutch as it righted itself, empty of its load. As a matter of fact both things *almost* happened, but neither quite.

Slowly the long day wore on and I managed to worry through with it. The road grew familiar, the heat became less cruel and with frequent mouthfuls of bitter tea the task came to be less hard than it had seemed at first The deepest shaft has its sump, and when the call came that it was “ lowsing “ time there was a grim satisfaction in knowing that the “ sairest brae in the pit” had not proved “ owre hard “ for one not of mining stock.

The merriest quarter of an hour in the day is often that at the pit bottom when the men are waiting for the cage to carry them to the top. Hour after hour all through the weary days the cages rattle up and down the shaft with the coal, four hutches at a time, sixteen hundred tons a day. Sharply at a quarter past two the iron signal clanks and the men who have been gathering for some minutes rush with light if not buoyant steps towards the shaft. The open area known as the bottom fairly blazes with murky light, and from far down the distant passages

come the bobbing lamps of men, will-o'-the-wisp-like in straggling procession. Once in a while when the men are in the mood they break into song as they are gathering in the bottom and to one who has heard the chorus of those mud-covered, coal-besmirched men letting their lusty voices ring out on the catchy strains of a favourite air, recollections of the pit can never remain all shadow. One of the bottomers whose business it was to pull the empty hutches from the cages as they reached the bottom and push on the full ones, had a famous tenor voice, and to hear his clear musical notes ringing out with distinct sweetness above the crunching, jarring rattle that never ceased for a moment was, something not to be forgotten. The one-time popular ballad " White Wings " thus sung seemed to express a certain longing for an outlook on a broader world than they, poor cramped miners, knew aught of, as if an innate something was feeling the narrowness of its life and cried out for a boundless freedom. In the abysmal depths of the Aitken pit eight hundred men are working out their lives. Their work is labour that costs hard sweat, and though they feel themselves slaves of the lamp even as their fathers before them were serfs of the soil, they extract as much joy from life as they may, and to many of them the ideals they never realise and the pleasures they never taste are sung with spirit in the ballads of their, fighting, loving sires, or the songs of the passing hour. So it was when the great bottomer sang the words:—

"Sail home! as straight as an arrow My yacht shoots along on the crest of the sea

High up where cliffs they are craggy
There's where the girl of my heart waits for me."

Then came the deep throated chorus from the crowd of rough workers fairly drowning the boisterous noise

"White wings they never grow weary, they carry me cheerily over the sea; Night comes, I long for my dearie, I'll spread out my white wings and sail home to thee."

The song ended, the roar of iron goes on till the signal is given from the pithead. A small coupler, surely not more than four feet high, who has been performing

his work of coupling the hutches into races with extraordinary quickness and dexterity, shrilly cries out, “Wha’s last?” Men entering the bottom shout the same query, “Wha’s last?” and peer into the surging crowd till one calls back “Follow me.”

“Cry the bend,” orders one from the midst of the crowd. “One,” “ twa,” “ three,”—and so on to eight, while across the shaft another eight are being tolled out. It is a puzzling proceeding. Each man as he turns the bend in the passage that leads to the open bottom follows the man who immediately preceded him and hence his number is called the bend. As the first cage arrives with its sixteen men fresh for the next shift there is a tinny rattle of tea flasks and piece, boxes as the men prepare to spring on to the cage. Once, on, we all grip the bar as in descending. Suddenly the cage starts, up it leaps, up into the teeth of the fresh air which in running against becomes a gale. Nearly every lamp blows out at the start—one burned uneasily a few seconds and I could see the unprotected space between the cage and the shaft. A man slipped from an ascending cage about the time I went into the pit and fell to the bottom a mangled, lifeless mass. The last lamp became dark and in the awful blackness of the pit we were drawn with breathless speed toward the top. Two thirds of the way up there was a jar, a torrent of water appeared to be falling on to the roof of the cage, the cage stopped, then began to drop swiftly, silently down. It was the experience of the descent reversed, owing, I think, to the sudden slacking of speed which gives the very peculiar sensation of reversing the motion.

A sudden burst of daylight dispels the illusion. Was ever daylight so pure before? Then the sun, the glorious golden sunlight filling the vale between the hills, caressing the ripening harvests, deepening the green of the woodland. If ever I appreciated the sun it was that moment after my first shift in the pit. Old miners have since told me that the delight of the first plunge out of the darkness into the radiant light of heaven never lessens with years. For the first minute it is dazzling, one stumbles over the tracks about the pit head, and when the cooling air, sweet-scented from the fields, blows soothingly from the hills toward the sea, and as the eye rests on the distant village of less than five thousand souls all told, straggling along one road up and down a brae, the imagination recalls the ride of Queen Mary over that road three centuries ago, after she had broken the bounds of Loch Leven Castle and rode with a small dashing cavalcade to the Queen City of the North twenty-five miles away.

Since that time the hand of man has been laid heavily on the beautiful valley at the foot of the Lomonds, and from a single coign of vantage may be counted nearly a score of towering chimneys, marking as many working collieries. Here and there a lark quivers from earth to sky breathing into the air his trilling song, and peeweets call back and forth as they swoop in graceful circles near the foot of the hills, but the sounds that predominate are of the groaning, creaking wheels, the belching steam puffs, the whistles that call men to' labour, robbing pristine Nature of her virginity ; but of the pain and travail of the transformation has been born the Soul of Industry; and it is the throbbing of that Soul at Work that echoes through the quiet air or is carried on the strong winds to further valleys to harbinger the advance of the day-spring when man shall find his work and pleasure one and inseparable, the warp and woof of life.

Chapter II

THE NIGHT SHIFT

THERE is a quality of strength peculiar to isolation, and it is said that the nomad of the East roving his life over the vast deserts gains a leisurely perspective of life that the western in his eternal, immoral hurry gets only in rare gleams that flash like meteors across his sky and vanish in the mist long before they touch his horizon. The Scotch mind is naturally reflective, and although the Fife miner, as an individual, does not lead an isolated life, his community is one apart from the world masters of the hills, of his covenanting forefathers, or of the uncertain times of bonnie Mary whose spirit still lingers over the region from Loch Leven to Maryborough. It is but natural that from the dismal depths of the pit there should spring ideas and views of life and the world bearing traces of a characteristic-ness of the environment that has fashioned the community itself, traces which appear in the conservative opinions of the men on modern thought and advancement that reach them chiefly through the press and their pulpits. In the resting hours in the pit, theories are dissected, ideas born, and half a dozen men, grouped with picturesque ease, "hunkering" over their pipes at piece time in low, dank corners, come to their own conclusions. For the most part Kelty miners take life seriously and consequently serious conversations were the rule It was interesting to note the efforts of the men to shape their own philosophies, to discover the rudiments of deep economic and moral truths struggling for expression through crude conceptions, convictions warring against traditionalism, and watch the workings of independent thought. They are seldom faddists. This may in part be due to the fact that they have fortunately escaped immediate contact with the apostles of new creeds and doctrines and they have never been swamped by a wave of enthusiasm having for its dynamic the magic influence of personality.

In parts of England, particularly in London, working men have had socialism in a hundred forms, read to them, preached to them, and thrown at them in pamphlets and books. In some districts, West Ham, for example, working men can quote whole pages of Marx, while in other districts they are true to the broad socialism of John Burns, which mixes the milk and cream of human kindness with all that it does. In Kelty there seems to be lacking that feeling that it is the duty of labour to redistribute the wealth of the world. To the miners, Karl Marx is but a name; Proudhon, Fourier and other French champions of labour are

practically unknown, and the number of professed socialists among the miners is very small. Considering the success of the Kelty co-operative store and the strong views of many of the men in regard to wages, this at first seemed strange; but I soon discovered that most of the ideas as to definitions and meanings were crude in the extreme, and these were always stated with dogmatic simplicity. On the other hand not a few knew Tolstoy, and I noticed that Tolstoy's books in the library were nearly all much worn. None of the men would think of calling themselves anarchists, even though the word were qualified by " philosophical " or " Christian." Their liberalism is certainly more socialistic than they realise, however, and their socialism often has touches of thoughtful, harmless anarchy—in short, they have an eclectic system of philosophy that incorporates sections of several systems and calls itself something that it is not. On only two questions are the men absolutely sure—wages and the land.

One never knew what subject was to be taken up at piece time, but I soon came to look forward to the conversations of the men; whatever the topic, the opinions were always interesting, and if a man told a story it was sure to be a good story well told. One day while I was yet new to pit life we were munching our dry breakfasts under a beautiful growth of stalactite-like fungus that dropped in snowy hangings, from some beams of decaying propping. We had been eating in silence for some minutes when one of the younger men who had finished before the rest of us recalled the story of Margaret Erskine of Port Moak, one of the lesser known legends of the district. It was a fascinating story as told in the simple, homely language of the miner, and the men listened without interruption. Port Moak stands beside the old Caldie settlement at the foot of Bishop's Hill, a little above Loch Leven. One of the Erskine's who, in the early part of the last century occupied the old Erskine Manse at Port Moak, married one called Margaret, who after a few years was struck down by a malady, and, supposedly, died. When she was being prepared for burial it was found that her fingers had swollen so that a certain precious ring could not be removed from her hand, and it was therefore interred with her. The cupidity of the beadle had been so roused that he determined to secure the ring. The night after the funeral he went out to the old cemetery, exhumed the body, and set about cutting away the finger to get the ring, when, to his unspeakable horror, as he hacked at the clammy flesh with his knife the body suddenly showed signs of life and rose up like one alive. He fled in wildest terror.

That night as Erskine was conducting family worship in the old manse, there came a curious tapping at the door. Looking up he said "Had Margaret been alive I would have said that was her knock.' With that he flung open the door and Margaret stepped in upon the bewildered household like Lazarus of old, arrayed in grave clothes and looking a wraith in the flesh. The knife of the beadle had seemingly set the blood in motion or stimulated the nerves. At all events the story is vouched for, and Margaret Erskine lived for several years after the episode.

As we were delayed some minutes that day waiting for wood props, we had a slightly longer time than usual. Jim turned to me in a very characteristic way and asked abruptly: "What do you think of socialism, Bill?"

The question was apropos to nothing and I was taken aback.

"I suppose there is some good in it," I answered guardedly. "Are you a socialist?"

Jim shook his head stolidly.

"I'm no for it."

"No? what is wrong with it ? "

He shut his piece box with a sharp bang.

"What's wrang wi' it ? I'm no for it. Socialism says a' folk are equal, that everybody is as gude as every other body. That's ridiclus—there's orra folk and folk that are no orra. Some men work hard and are deservin', but ye ken fine that some men lowse twa days a week reg'lar. When they get their food and pint they're no carin' for aught else. Is it right that they should hae an equal share wi' the industrious ones? Why, some folk canna do ony work out o' the pit; it's in the pit they get the siller and they tak the bairns frae the school afore their time and then they canna get on in the world."

"Ay, but a good lot hae families and need the siller," put in one of the others. "The wages are no sae awfu' grand and the laddies can do weel."

"That's hit, that's what I say. Everyman should hae the same chance to get on,

but afore he has had he chance he's no as good as every other body. If a man works he gets his siller, and if he lowses he's no deservin" o' some other body's siller."

" Ay, Jim, that sounds true, but a' men are alike in the sicht o' God."

Jim hesitated a moment before he answered : " Mony a mon mak's a gude servant but only a few mak's a gude maister."

"Some have more'n their share," took up one of those backward ones, "Look at the big hooses wi' the parks"

Ay, you've said it noo. Hit's the land that should be made equal amongst a' those who can manage it properly. A mon's hoose is his own, and so is his siller, but the land's God's and a' men hae a richt to use it One mon's faither could fecht so he has great parks, and the other mon's faither wha cudna fecht so weel, he has nae where to go but maun tak' a wee hoosie that he's put into. Na, na, mon, that's no richt. Let 'em fecht for it noo! "

"What you say may be true, Jim, but so long as another man has the land we can't take it away from him."

"We canna tak' it awa but the government can, and mak' it free to everybody wha is industrious. Let the government tak' it and protect it, so that only God wha made it, can tak' it awa frae the men wha mak' richt use o' hit"

"If you give the government a chance to take the land, why not give it a try at the gas works and the railroads, as the Socialists say?"

"Weel, noo, if the government can do it as cheap as it is done noo, perhaps a little cheaper and a wee bittie better than we cud, but I'm awfu' doubtish as to that—and mon, if ye gae sae faur ye maun gae farther, for some folk will no stop satisfied there. Ye'll be pressed till ye mak' a redistribution of a' the wealth in the world."

Some of us protested that this was not necessary that it was too extreme a view, but Jim held to his position.

“Everything maun hae a point, and that’s the point o’ Socialism. S’pose we put a’ the wealth in the world together and divide it, to every man alike, next week ye wud hae to do the same thing again. You micht be savin’, but anither mon wud spend his, and then where wud ye be? Sae long as you are gettin’ a share of some other mon’s wealth it sounds weel, but when the time comes to divide your purse wi” some other body, it’s gey different. Socialists are aye lookin’ for what they can get, and no for what they can gie. The best way to get is to gie.” “ A good paradox, Jim.”

“Paradox “ puzzled the old man.

“I’m no carin’, if it’s orthodox!”

The day shift men were such a good lot that after I had got to know them I was reluctant to go on to another shift where the men would be strangers, but as work was done on the night shift that is not done at any other, a change was necessary.

The first glimpse that I got of the pit head by night was a striking one. The cages for the moment had stopped running, no hutches rattled through the sifting shed, no lassies flitted through semi-darkness. Only a few colliers stood about waiting to go down. In a dark corner near the shaft sat a massive figure in dripping oilskins close to a brazier of coals burning at red heat. The trickling water from his broad hat brim fell upon the hot brazier with a spattering sizzle, sending off tiny jets of steam. The man looked more like a New England pilot fresh in from a gale, than a repairer of a coal pit shaft. He hugged the brazier and shivered. We all shivered. As we entered the cage our teeth rattled. Down below we forgot the frosty night, forgot that it was night at all. Twelve’ hundred feet below the surface the passing of the seasons, or the passing of day into night, registers no change in the dankness or the darkness of the pit.

During the night the cages do not run regularly and the night shift is mainly given over to repairing the roads, the shaft and the machinery. When I became a night-shiftman I took the name of brusher, brushing being the technical term for taking down sinking roofs and making the passages safe for the day men. This branch of pit work is usually let out to contractors who keep as many men employed as the work demands, paying them (at the time that I was brusher) seven and threepence per shift. The contractors undertook to keep a certain section in repair at a specially bargained-for rate. My boss was a man of the

world, a man of little education but wide travel. He had been in the mines at Johannesburg, and at that time was talking of leaving Kelty for China. There were two other men in the gang, one, a frail little fellow called Dick, who being the only son of his mother and she a widow, "kept his mother." They lived together in one room, and Dick worked harder for her than many men work for their wives. An older man—Sandy—was the other. Another gang of three or four was always near by, the two parties always joining at piece time, and occasionally we joined forces over a hard bit of work.

When a brae became closed by a falling roof, the brushers were the ones sent to "redd it up." If the roof was hanging loosely so that the pinch or crowbar could be inserted and the loose rock pried down, blasting was not resorted to; but as a rule the sinking of a roof was a very gradual process and blasting was necessary. Dick and I were generally the ones selected to do the boring for the explosive. In ordinary cases three drills were used. The first one short and heavy, the next considerably longer and finer, and the third longer still. The actual drilling was accomplished by a semi-rotary motion with the machine handle, Dick on one side, I on the other, working in unison. Sometimes difficulty would be experienced in forcing through an internal break in the rock, and occasionally it was found necessary to start a new hole after the first had been well started, for breaks are apt to divert the course of the explosive, especially if it be gunpowder. Dynamite is not used nowadays, but gelignite or gunpowder. In most of our blasts we united the gelignite and gunpowder in one blast, which is a barefaced infringement of the law which directly forbids such a combination of explosives. But the law if long-fingered is often nearsighted, particularly in the dark. The gelatine or more common preparation of gelignite, comes in cylindrical rolls called spots or cats, rather more than a finger long, while the gunpowder is prepared in quarter-pound packages. Blasting gelatine is the most powerful of known explosives, containing 93 per cent, of nitroglycerine and 7 per cent, of nitro-cotton. It is said to be about 50 per cent, stronger than dynamite. The gelignite is a slightly less powerful composition containing 65 per cent, of blasting gelatine and 35 per cent, of absorbing cotton. Gelignite is particularly sensitive to cold, freezing in a temperature of forty-six degrees Fahrenheit, so that it is customary to rub the cats between the hands for a moment before using them in order to make them more susceptible. This is always a risky thing to do, for a too quickly rising temperature may result in an explosion, and any number of accidents have happened in this way. Some idea

of the power of this explosive may be judged from the fact that if the hand is drawn across a perspiring brow after handling the gelignite a splitting headache results. For an ordinary blast, from one to three cats are rolled into a rough ball, a fulminate of mercury cap in the middle of it, with a squib attached projecting out of the hole. The gunpowder is then stemmed home, and it is at this point that the greatest care must be taken. An eight pound pressure on the fulminate of mercury cap explodes it, and with it goes the entire blast. Should the cap be laid bare as the gelignite ball is being rammed to the far end of the bored hole, and the metal stemmer strike the metal cap, an explosion would be inevitable. The second night that I was with the brushers the work of charging the blast was given to me. My first efforts to gauge the force of the stemmer to seventy or seventy-five pounds, when the men were telling me to stem harder were highly amusing—to those at a safe distance. A long copper needle is placed in the hole to leave an open channel for the squib, while the charge is being packed with loose dust to the edge of the hole.

The first charge that I lighted was marked by a laughably stupid incident. The alarm had been sounded, and the men working near had retreated to a safe distance. Now a pit is not an easy place to run in under favourable circumstances. Being my first blast I was anxious that it should go off properly at the same time I wanted to be sure and put a safe distance between it and myself before it went off. Taking my lamp from my bonnet I looked as far down the passage as I could, haloed to know if all was well and receiving a far away " a' richt" held the lamp to the fuse. It sputtered green sparks, hissed and I turned in haste to make off. Following the habit of blowing out a match after it has been used, as I turned I gave a vigorous blow at my lamp putting myself in total darkness, with the hissing charge just behind me.

Gunpowder is called ' cowardly' by the men because it always takes the easiest road, hence a break in the rock may mean no damage whatever with gunpowder alone. The gelignite goes so quickly that it cuts through anything and everything. The law prohibits the double charge because there have been cases of one explosive taking effect and not the other and when the rock has fallen and the men are clearing it away the jar of a pick or a mash against the unused explosive has sent it off. The men argue that with due caution this ought not to happen and as the double charge is so much more effective they continue to shrug their shoulders at the law.

One who has never known the pit, can scarcely realize how exposed the men are to dangers every hour in the day; the number of hairbreadth escapes that daily pass without comment; the acts of real heroism that are performed as a matter of course in the day's work, for in the pit there is no thrilling excitement that roars of battlefield glory, no gallery to play to. There arc few old colliers who have not met with some accidents in their lives. I remember talking with one veteran who told me that he had been fifty-seven years in the pit and had never had an accident. I thought this very remarkable until he explained that at one time he had had three ribs broken and at another time his collar bone had been dislocated—" but those little things didn't count." Accidents occur with such awful suddenness—a rope breaks, a roof drops without a warning crack and a man falls injured, maimed, perhaps dead. And yet the sense of danger is never a consciously realised one by the men themselves. It is ever present but familiarity has made it sub-conscious—It is upon the women that these strains come.

When a woman sees her husband leave for the pit "she never knows what he will get afore he comes out." I remember of hearing a woman pass comment upon her next door neighbour who" aye tak's gude care to hae some wee bit thing to do aboot the window at the back o' twa o'clock." After a big accident the anxiety of the women is often extreme. One woman whose boast it was that she had never known what fear was, after a disaster in the town said that "it seemed as if she were all nerves, aye afeard.' One week when I was on the night shift I noted that not one piece time passed but the subject of accidents was discussed at least part of the time. When an accident occurs there is always sympathy but never surprise or, save in the case of a big disaster, any strong sense of shock. A man was hurt on a brae not far from where we were working and he was put into a hutch to be carried to the cage. As his neighbours started off with him some one shouted to know if he could "spare the rest of his tally," without the slightest consciousness of the grim humour of the request. Each man seems to feel that if there is an accident it will be the next man who will get hurt, not himself. It is a singular attitude that the men take. When they work they work hard, "because they will be a long time dead" as one said to me, and the thought of danger does not hamper them at any time.

There was on an average nearly one accident a day in the Aitken while I was there, many of them trivial to be sure, but two were fatal[1] It was during the second month of my experience that the tragic Donibristle disaster occurred at a

colliery only a couple of miles away. There was a sudden subsidence of ground where a group of miners were at work; great masses of moss and water poured into the workings and four of the men were entombed. A rescue party of four set out to try and save the imprisoned men and they too were lost. Immediately there were hundreds of volunteers for other rescue parties. No one flinched, no one thought of hesitating—men were dying—every effort must be made to get at them. The rescuing parties worked heroically as rescuing parties always do under such circumstances, they worked day and night long after all hope of getting the men out alive had been abandoned; but the difficulties were enormous, the ground kept loosening and flooding in upon them as fast as the way was cleared and at last a new shaft had to be sunk. The details of the finding of the bodies are too harrowing for these pages but the unconscious heroism of the men, their willing sacrifices, their eagerness to jeopardize their lives on the slimmest cord of hope gave proof of a spirit that transcends the force of words. A parallel accident might have occurred in the Aitkin yet no one was disturbed by the thought! One night a shaft repairer lost his balance and fell from the narrow scaffold where he was working. The strong current of air spread his great oil skin coat which, by an almost impossible chance, caught on a projecting arm of wood and the man was saved. I had no such narrow escape as that but one night Dick and I were rather badly shocked.

"According to H.M. Inspectors' Reports for 1900 there were 75 fatalities in Scotland during the year. This figure is unusually low

We had lighted a charge together and as the fuse began to sputter we dashed down a side level that we thought free when to our momentary horror we came full upon another charge that had been lighted by the other party. It was too late to turn back—the squib in front of us seemed on the point of going out for a moment, then as we stood in fear and trembling it suddenly took life and the spark ran home to the explosive. Fortunately we were not struck and so without a second's delay we plunged into the thick of the stifling smoke until our charge had fired when we rushed into the air current for breath. Dick and Sandy had a much narrower escape a few nights later. The squib had been lighted by Dick and after a longer wait than usual it was assumed that it had gone out, so Dick accompanied by Sandy returned to relight the squib. It is a very rare thing for a pitman to trip and fall on a level that is not obstructed by ropes or rails but just as Dick got exactly under the roof where the charge was inserted Sandy stumbled

over a piece of jutting rock, sprawling full length along the level. At that instant the delayed charge blew, the great mass of rock flew outward, escaping Dick, who collapsed either from the concussion or fright, and was hurled over the prostrate Sandy. Had he not stumbled he would have received the full force of it against his head and body. Dick instinctively rolled and crawled when he fell and he had barely got from under the unstable roof before some tons of loosened rock that had been left clinging for a few seconds, dropped to the spot where he had fallen Both of these men were serious for the rest of the shift but the incident was never referred to again.

Another night word was passed from mouth to mouth that the "dook was being flooded." A tremendous stream of water from some unknown source had burst through the lower workings of the pit. The men who were at work in the section at the time were able to escape, but for some days, about seventy men were thrown out of employment. For days the water gushed in at the rate of one thousand gallons a minute, which was nearly twice as fast as the most powerful pump available could throw it out of the pit. Various strange rumours were circulated as to the possible reservoir. One recalled that there was once a loch near the village of Lochore, that at one time Lochore Castle was surrounded by water as Loch Leven Castle is unto the present day, and suggested that the long hidden springs of the old loch were now finding vent through the workings of the Aitken Pit. The doom of the pit was prophesied. In time, however, the inflow ceased and only a part of the pit was temporarily sacrificed; but these little incidents which arc constantly occurring indicate how precarious is the life of the miner.

With a full consciousness of these things, I joined the back shift where awaited me new and trying experiences that culminated in the " hewing " or actual mining, and completed my acquaintance with the trials and discomforts of the pit.

CHAPTER III

THE BACK SHIFT

THERE is something reminiscent of early days in the appearance of the pit-head girls with their high boots, short skirts encircled by a binding string to prevent their catching, half protected by blackened aprons, and old soiled shawls tied snugly round their heads and falling loosely over their shoulders. After the first hour of work their faces are covered with the dust that ever blows fiercely through the sifting shed, stirred to angry restlessness by the powerful ventilating fan whose escaping puffs send eddying whorls outward from the shaft with every ascending cage. For the most part it is heavy work for the girls, pushing and jerking the heavy empty hutches, from track to track, hurrying them back to the cages, snibbling the wheels of the loaded ones, dropping nimbly between the moving tubs that look for all the world like miniature railway waggons, performing their work with tireless dexterity, keeping the whole place in a flutter from early morning till mid evening, when, according to a factory law that almost suggests a care for these girls, the work is left to those who are better able to perform it through the night. Time was when girls worked in the pits, but now they are only allowed at the pit head, and the time is coming when even this will not be permitted.

The girls of Kelty who work may be roughly grouped in four classes: pit-head girls, girls who go to the mills at Dunfermline or Kinross, girls who go into service and girls who become dressmakers. That is the social order of their own making. The dressmakers consider themselves superior to the domestics, who in turn look down upon the mill hands, and at the bottom of the list are the pit-head girls, the lowest paid servants of a great and wealthy company who slave for wages that vary from one shilling and two pence to one and six, and, to a very few of the strongest, two shillings a day. The pit head atmosphere is the most demoralising atmosphere that can be found in a small village. Some few of the girls who have come from good homes hold themselves entirely aloof from the others, but as a class they are a sad lot. Most of them—not all— go to the pit head directly from school, perhaps at the age of thirteen, when they fall all too easily into the ways of the older ones.

Four coal laden hutches come up with each cage, strong men drag them off and start them down the incline toward the sifting shed. One afternoon as I leaned against an iron pillar waiting for the time when the back shift men

descend, I watched these girls at work with no little admiration for their strength and dexterity. A lassie in a red waist of dirty cotton snaps the steel snibble nimbly into the wheels of a heavy hutch, curbing its speed, and as she runs round the end to catch the one behind she slips by a broad shouldered young collier who is standing thumbing his pick point. With a saucy toss of her head she makes a rude familiar jest and boisterously laughs as she checks the speeding hutch. The coal in the first hutch may be destined for a port on the distant Baltic, that in the other for an inland French town ; her life will probably never break the bounds of the pit district. Behind her runs a girl in an old green plush dress, a dress that had done duty on more than one high occasion when it was new, but now, old and torn it is fit only for the rough usage of the pit. With careful clumsiness she trips over the foot of one of the older men who chanced to be squatting with his back against a pillar smoking, and, like myself, waiting to go down. She fell more heavily than she had meant to, which was sufficient excuse for a burst of oaths that made the hardened miner tingle for very shame.

"They dinna ken any different," said one half apologetically to me.

The pit head is all they know of the world, and they are quick to follow the example of the older ones in playing for attentions. The grime and dirt that settles like a pall over everything within hail is like a dark shred of a curtain that drops over their consciences, stifling, dwarfing, killing them. They work—oh so hard—and when the day's work is done they look about for their share of the world's fun—surely they have a share—but where are they to find it if they don't make their own good time ?

Forty-two steps lead from the ground to the pit head, and of all the busy spots in or about the pit, this is the busiest. It is here that the hutches of coal are received from the cages and weighed, the coal sorted and sifted into the railway waggons that carry it to the Forth docks for exportation and to the cities where it is consumed. By the present system the miners who hew the coal are paid by weight, and every hutch is presumably weighed at the pit head As a matter of fact this is only done with a comparative few, so that it is not usual for more than six of every twenty hutches of each man to be taken to the scales. The averaging of the pay, however, comes out so nearly the same week after week that this need not imply any underestimation as to the amount due any one man,

and indeed it is quite as likely to be an overestimation, so that on the whole the arrangement is probably just.

When I got to the "face," I began to think myself a qualified collier for that was the last phase of actual mining, the place where most of the money is earned, and it is the work which, to the uninitiated, constitutes mining. The first place that I was sent to was at the top of Spion Kop, a long hard brae which at the end of the shift was almost as hard to traverse as the work of the shift had seemed while I was at it. It certainly took nearly as much out of me. When I went to the face I went on to the "back shift," which extends from a quarter after two to a quarter after ten. In the north of England the men who work the coal have a six-hour day, but in Scotland the eight-hour day is still universal.

The two systems of mining now employed are known as the "bord and pillar" and "longwall," of which the latter is by far the commoner, and all the time that I was at the face I worked the coal long-wall. The word practically explains its own meaning. Instead of the seam of coal being followed along a narrow working, it is attacked broadside as it were, and perhaps thirty yards worked by a row of men seven or ten yards apart. By certain arrangements in the former method the miner not only gets the coal but makes all proppings and repairs, so that the face moves much more slowly than with the other method where the hewers devote all their time to getting the coal and merely stop to make themselves secure with single sprags or tree proppings, and another corps of men attend to the rest of the work. It is generally considered safer to have the face move quickly and as the men are paid by the tons they take out, the company pays one shilling fourpence half-penny for every square permanent pillar that they put up—a piece of work that may take an hour.

In the Aitken it was customary for a certain number of men to change from the fore-shift to the back shift on alternate weeks, so it happened as I rounded the head of Spion Kop on that memorable first night, puffed out of breath with the hard pull, I heard the surprised voice of roadsman Jim :

"Hi, Bill, are ye gaun to get at the coals, laddie?"

Jim had long been on the day shift regularly until now, but as he had come to work in another part of the pit he had found it necessary to accept the change-about system. I felt better to know that he was about, for I knew that he would

give me advice when I needed it. When he heard where I was to work he merely said:" Watch yersel', Bill, or ye'll bring the coals doon o' top o' ye."

I should have heeded the warning but I did not grasp its full significance until an hour or so later when I did bring the coals down atop of me. At the longwall the face is first "holed," that is, the very bottom of the coal hard against the pavement of rock is hewn out leaving the great mass of coal hanging and a clear space of three or four inches between it and the ground. The coal is then hewed down, or in places where it is solid it is shot down with gunpowder, and part of the art of mining is in knowing when one has holed sufficiently far in without tumbling the bank of coal down before one has got safely away. - At the spot where I was working the seam was five feet high, but it was only a shaking up that I got that reminded me of Jim's warning for the future. Sometimes serious accidents occur in this way when the men in their anxiety to make a good wage don't stop to make themselves secure with temporary sprags and props for which they receive nothing. In pits where big coal is mined the 'holing' is done at the top hard against the roof and the coal is then hewed down in great chunks.

That day for the first time I lifted a pick to strike in earnest, and frankness compels me to admit that I made very clumsy work of it. The coal was hard and did not yield to my repeated strokes, the pick handle jarred against my palms till they swelled, blistered and finally bled. When I gripped the shovel to fill the coal into the hutches it was with a genuine sense of relief. My, how we worked that evening! At a quarter after six we stopped for our pieces but in a quarter of an hour we were at work again. Hutch after hutch was filled and rolled into the darkness by the drawers, the perspiration tickled in black rivulets from my head and arms, painful kinks caught me in the back, but as the others kept on shovelling so I kept on. One man kept hewing away at the coal bringing down whole hutch loads at a time from places where it had been previously holed. At last when the shift was nearing an end the drawers counted up the tally and it was found that we had sent out about five tons per man. Five tons is an average shift in the Aitken, and while I was outdistanced every time at the hewing by the experienced men owing to the skill that is born only of practice and that is essential, at the filling I could always hold my own and send out from ten to fourteen hutches a shift. During the first three days my hands were in a pretty bad condition, being torn and skinned and swollen a good deal, but after the third shift the hardening process set in and they gradually lost their soreness.

The strain of so much unaccustomed muscular fatigue began to tell upon my system but this was not serious, and as the muscles became tougher there were no effects of overstrain and the work settled to a dull sodden routine that demanded sheer health and dogged effort, tiring but never so exhausting as the drawing nor so dangerous as the brushing.

Soft coal was mined at the Aitken. The black dust coated the men inside and out. We spat black at the face. The broken rays of the bad smelling lamps gleamed weirdly against the strata of shining mineral that ever and anon crackled ominously as it worked loose of the pressure that had packed it together for an aeon or more. One night the air grew hot and heavy, there must have been a fall in one of the air current levels for all that drifted to our far corner stifled rather than refreshed us. Suddenly the lamps grew dim, my neighbour reached for his oil flask but his lamp was nearly full. The yellow flames flickered a lurid red turned to a leaden blue, at times approaching a phosphorescent green. Then we knew there was gas. Some one snatched a jacket and flecked it right and left till it was completely dissipated when the lamps flared up once more.

Black damp is not a gas that creates any special alarm as it takes nearly sixty per cent, to effect a loss of sensation and power, and it is readily dissipated. Fire damp is of a much more dangerous character, and it is this gas that causes most mine explosions. There is very little fire damp in Fife, but it is occasionally met with and sometimes with disastrous results.

A man who has been in the centre of a spontaneous combustion told me that he was pinned to the roof by a palpable, invisible force that held him as in a vice. He heard no sound although a report echoed down the levels for many yards, alarming most of the men in the section. The after damp of such an explosion is often more deadly than the gas of the explosion and the more treacherous because the flame of the safety lamp is not affected by it. It is in places where such gases exist that coal dust become dangerous, its finely separated particles being particularly inflammable tending to aggravate the action that culminates in an explosion.

The men grow callous to the presence of a little gas and once it is blown away they think little of it. It is the occasional occurrence of such an incident that has

developed a trait in the characters of the miners that is quickly observed and admired by an outsider. It is the spirit of *camaraderie,* the ever willing desire to lend a hand, the watchful care for one another that never lies dormant but all unconsciously burns low, fed by the unnoticed, unspoken of atmosphere of possible danger ready to burst into being at the crux of any unforeseen crisis. It is a spirit that shows itself at all times and the readiness with which the men take hold and help their fellows over hard places, unasked and unthanked, speaks emphatically of the nearness with which they stand shoulder to shoulder with never a thought of desertion. A miner will even sacrifice wife and family to his neighbour by rushing into peril to do what he can to ward off impending danger when in the eyes of the world it might be wiser for him to think first of those who are dependent upon him. It is this spirit that breeds a sense of security which in the pits is no small matter. In such companionship a man may never seem to "know the use of fear;" for where stout hearts stand firmly together danger takes wings. Peril becomes duty, and duty howsoever hard can never be shirked. Men are wary of dangers that are seen, but in the darkness of the pit where they are unseen the men come to stand strong at all times ready for whatever comes. After years of tramping long, dark passages a miner's walk betrays his *métier.* As each foot goes down it drops solidly, clingingly to whatever it rests upon, rarely slipping, never uncertain, and the man appears to forge ahead with a slow rock like a ship that is engined in exact proportion to her beam. It is in the presence of the realised but unseen danger that a man's stuff is tried. It is then that men like to feel that all of their neighbours are brothers. As some one said to me when I first went into the pit:—" Be stuffy. If ye canna be stuffy, be as stuffy as ye can."

Jim and I had an animated discussion in regard to the pay of the men one night as we trudged homeward along the line. The glow of the northern aftermath still lingered over Benarty and the white arc lights round the pit shone clear against the sullen eastern sky. A disturbed bird was circling over the deserted Old pit and the nearby brick kiln from which glowed the blood-red reflection of the never dying fire. A strong wind held across the fields and the air felt like a storm.

"Weel, Bill, ye've earned your siller this nicht." "I have certainly worked for it," I replied. "D'ye ken how muckle ye'll get?" "I hope I shall make the average but there was a lot of small stuff to-night."

"Ay ' ye'll no mak' the average this nicht. The average is six and eight ye ken, but wi" a' the billy dross at yon face ye'll no get that unless they forget to gie it a weigh at yon pit head. For the gude coals ye'll get two and fivepence a ton, frae that to three shillin'; but for the dross—twopence."

There was a sneer in his voice as he said the last words, and he spoke them slowly as if thinking on what the company and the company's shareholders were getting.

"Twopence a ton is a small wage," I agreed. When he began again after a moment's pause his voice was touched with a tone of melancholy.

"The company pays expenses frae that dross—almost. That sells for maybe five shillin'. Noo isn't that terrible to mak' men work that hard for twopence a ton that the company gets five shillin' for?"

"On the whole though you are getting good wages, Jim. You have all you want to eat and when you have paid all of your expenses you still have a good lump of money left over at the end of the year."

I knew that Jim, though an ordinary miner, was something of a capitalist in his own small way, inasmuch as he had saved enough to buy land and build his own house. Like nearly all workmen, however, he was bitter toward the company, and he did not hesitate at times to say unkind things about the men who were getting most of the profits. Jim knew his own side but not the other, in fact it probably never occurred to him that there might be both right and reason on the side of the capitalist It is this narrow point of view, not of the men towards their employers alone, but sometimes *vice versa* as well, that often is the cause of misunderstandings.

Yet Scottish workmen think they have views of their own and theories, and as Jim was in every way a typical Fifer I urged him on that I might hear his side.

" Ye ken fine that the Company paid a dividend of over fifty per cent, last year.[1] Noo what did the shareholders do that they should be entitled to a' that ?"

" They risked their money before they knew that the Aitken pit and all the other pits were going to prove so profitable and they—"

"Look you here, Bill, wha is carin' about their siller? The men risk their lives everyday. When ye gae into the pit ye never ken what ye'll get afore ye come out—" "And remember the lean years, when the company paid no dividend at all."

"I ken naught o' that but I ken fine that the average dividends for years hae been way up. The original shares hae been watered doon till each share is worth three, and they are noo sellin' at near three times their first value. If the shareholders were to get ten per cent, or even twenty per cent, in the best years that should be gude enough. The men who are the producers should get the rest; instead of that they gie the shareholders fifty-twa and a half per cent, and as if that wasn't enough they gie 'em a bonus."

Jim's view was very much the view of the workmen. It pretended to be nothing else and desired to be nothing else. Jim reckoned that the men who did the work were the ones who knew most about mining, and consequently they were the ones whose opinions should sway the action of the company. Like many miners Jim had no sympathy with the people who had never soiled their hands with work. In his estimation, their opinions were worthless. Various difficulties presented themselves to my mind, but these were not entertained by him at all.

"If you were to raise the wages of the men in the Aitken above the wages of the men employed in other pits and by other companies that don't have such big dividends, all the miners in Scotland would be wanting to work for your Company and that wouldn't do. There would be strikes everywhere."

"Ay, but they could gie us a bonus accordin' to our work. The men wha had done the most work would get the biggest lump o' money."

"And you are forgetting the people who make the market. According to the men more than half of the coal is exported, and it is sold in foreign markets at a lower price than it is sold in Edinburgh. Supply coal *Is* now selling for from eight and six to ten and six a ton, and the better qualities of household coal for from thirteen and six to sixteen shillings. That comes rather hard on the poor people who have to get their coal by the hundredweight. In the Cowgate and Canongate in Edinburgh you find people staying in their beds all of Sunday in the winter so as to keep warm. Coal is so expensive that they can't afford to burn it for warmth."

"Hit's scand'lus, sich like prices, they should come doon tae."

"And there again you would demoralise the market and kill other companies that can't get their coal so easily."

"I'm no carin' about that. If you gang wrang that's nae reason why I should. I say it is scand'lus to mak' that dividend and keep the price o' coal up, and mak' the men' work as we hae to for our wages. If the pit should be flooded the morn's mornin' there'd be nae loss to the shareholders. They are a" protected by a sinkin' fund, but we would be lowsed and maybe a lot killed—our lives are not protected but their capital is. I say that the men should a' share those profits. The workin' men will be able to run a pit for themsel's some day. Look at yon co-operative store we get our dividends reg'lar. We own the store, and support it, and we benefit by it." "You are the company then ?""Exactly." "And what wages do you pay your men who work in the store for you? How many arc getting from four or five and twenty to thirty shillings a week? And how many get above two pounds? "" We pay 'em the average," he answered hotly; but he saw the point. "You are getting better wages than that, Jim—"

"But look at the work! "

"Of course it is harder work and that is why you get more of it. If some men had more than they are getting now they would be spending all of their time at the public houses. You get enough to live on easily and some over, you know how to use your money but all men don't. Come now, Jim, would the ~men use the money properly if they had it? "

We were almost at the crossing where our ways parted. The old man who considered himself victimised by capital stood still and as the moon near an hour high shone through a rift in the scurrying clouds full upon his blackened face I could see his eyes snap with disgust. Jim had never in his life been accustomed to looking on more than one side of a question. If he saw one side clearly he was content. He could find wrongs aplenty in the world and though he was no pessimist in regard to most things he was in every way a typical workman in his attitude toward his successful employers. They were filling their coffers with the money that he earned for them." Does the Coal Company speir its shareholders what they do wi' their money? " he asked. " S'pose some men do spend their money for booz, the share-holders canna a" be angels."

Jim's back was against a wall now. He knew full well that there was something to be said for his side.

" If you think that you can run a pit for yourselves aren't you arguing for socialism?"" I dinna say that a' socialism is wrang. It's when ye press it to the point that I'm no for it. We need a little o' that sort o' thing but no' owre muckle. And then there's a difference between lettin' the men run the pit and lettin' the government do it. Hit's the government that ye canna trust. They micht do it cheaper but wi'out benefitin' the men wha wurk in the pit."

"It so happens that you are a workman, but how would it be if you were an employer?" " I'd mak' a fair employer."" Perhaps you would; but if your money was in use at a big risk for a number of years getting no interest whatever, wouldn't you think it fair to pay your men the average market wage, to sell your goods at the average market price and keep a goodly part of your balance for your sinking fund for protection against loss and your own clear profits?"

"Na, na. If I was drawin' fifty per cent dividend, I would call it robbery. If it were no for the men I'd get nae profits. I'd keep ten per cent, and let them share the rest. I wouldn't ask about how they spent it or what they did wi" it. I'd have houses built fit for folk to live in, and I'd have enough of 'em. Richt is richt and twa wrangs will ne'er mak' a richt. They've been reducin' and reducin' the wages, whiles provisions hae a' been up and goin' higher. Them that hae gets mair and them that hasn't gets less."

Jim's sentiments on wages were echoed by most of the men. They knew how much they had to do but their horizon was limited, and the burning sense of wrong_ and injustice kept them in a constant state of hatred toward the hard-heeled company that to them was the monster parasite, living off them and their labour. As we parted for the night his usual equanimity of temper returned and he bade me be of good cheer for the morrow was pay day.

"A collier is born a fortnicht afore his meat" is an old aphorism of the pits referring to the fortnightly pay system. Parallel with this is the "meikle work and little fee" adage current where miners are paid by the ton, or, as they themselves phrase it, where they "get it at their ain takin'." Every second Friday is pay day and the men then receive their pay for the fortnight ending the previous Tuesday.

The crowd that surges round the office door waiting for the arrival of the gaffer with the pay "lines "is invariably a good humoured crowd. The men jest and push, laugh boisterously for the sake of the noise and grasp at any little incident for a joke. As the gaffer begins to call the names of the men there is a vain striving to get nearer him and for the first two or three minutes the bare little office just next to the smithy is like a mass of seething, boiling humanity, men are pressed together, squeezed upwards, dropped away at the edges. On one of my first pay days there was a trifling incident that occasioned a riple of amusement. Most of the men were black from the pit, some who were about to go down were fresh and cleaner. An ordinary labourer stood just on my right, expectant and eager like the rest. Suddenly as the name of "Andra Carnegie" was called, he struggled forward to grasp the slip and the crowd gave way with a great rollicking shout. A popular name in Scotland was that at that moment. The birthplace of the steel king and Scottish-American philanthropist is but a few miles off: the workmen's train started from there every morning.

The pay lines indicate the amount due for hewing, for oncost work and so on, and the amount of deductions for house rent (in cases where the men live in houses belonging to the company), tools, blasting materials and the doctor's stipend. It is a matter of convenience to the men and protection to the company to deduct a stated sum for rent from the wages fortnightly, and the doctor who is ostensibly employed by the company receives sixpence a fortnight from each man. This entitles all of the men to his services at any and all times without further costs This scheme is now in general vogue throughout Fife and is steadily gaining in favour as the sixpence per fortnight is not a burden to the men, and if the doctor has two or three pits each employing several hundred men the plan is satisfactory to him.

When we had received our lines we straggled over the railway bridge and up the road to the Lindsay Pit a half mile or so away, where the slips are redeemed in coin of the realm. Some were of necessity wearied, some were fresh, but we all walked like men whose hearts were light. The spirit of the day was in the atmosphere, and with the clink of silver and gold, stiff joints grew easy and soreness fled. The mere satisfaction that those shillings gave was worth working for. As we filed into the little wooden office of the paying clerk, the grinding of the Lindsay wheels echoed loud in our ears, and dust from the mountain of crumbling blae blew towards us in gusts. Through a narrow window we could see shelves of small tin cups labelled conspicuously with consecutive numbers

after the manner of shaving mugs in a big barber's shop. The number on each pay slip corresponded to a number on one of the cups which was supposed to contain the amount indicated on the slip. When we had counted the hard earned shillings and made sure that we had got them all we filed out at the opposite end from which we had entered. A man with a freshly bandaged stump of an arm, smelling strongly of hospital odours, stood at the door with doffed hat begging. His body that once was strong and able to do its share of work was wasted and weak and his face bore the mark of suffering. Many a penny dropped into his hat that day although the men don't countenance such barefaced begging as a rule. He had been a collier. Not one of us could tell whose limb might be missing ere the next pay day.

The wages of miners are constantly fluctuating. They are raised, reduced, battled for, begged for struck for, seldom remaining stationary for any considerable length of time. In 1896 they had been regularly falling for several years until they reached the low water mark of an average of four shillings a day. The next year there was an increase of a little over six per cent, which amounted to about threepence a day. Slowly they crept up and in 1899 trade grew rapidly so that further increases were granted. There was an enormous boom in the coal trade which sent prices up tremendously and it was necessary to yield further to the demands of the men who spent their lives amid the dangers of the eerie pits to get out the coal for the market. For a brief season at that time the average wage rested at eight shillings but it was not for long, the reaction set in and wages began to fall and are still falling. They were at six and eight-pence[1] a day when I drew my first pay, since then there have been further reductions.

Some men not ambitious for more than an existence wage, and men in hard places, fail to come up to the average, but many others go above the average. If a miner in the Aitken pit could forget that the shareholders in the Company had received a dividend of "fifty-two and a half per cent, and a bonus of one pound per share in addition he would in all probability be less discontented. But being aware of this, and being human, as he works with all his strength, giving the best of his life to produce profits which he shares so niggardly, while others who risk a few pounds— but not a hair of their heads—share so munificently, the joy that he might take in his work becomes tainted with gall. It makes him vaguely restless and uncomfortable as he toils to realise the "collier's paradise," which according to the current doggerel is:—

“Eight hours work,

Eight hours play,

Eight hours sleep

Eight bob a day”

CHAPTER IV

MAKING BRICKS WITHOUT STRAW

A late tinsel-like moon shone faintly through the rising mist of a dark autumn dawn as I caught up to a group of brickwork hands, who were splashing along a pooly, muddy road toward the big brick kilns. The party consisted of a father, a married son, two younger sons and a daughter, the latter a lassie of twenty.

"Are ye fur the brickwork, Bill?" Asked one as I fell in with them. I knew the family.

"Ay, Jock," I replied," I want to learn the trade."

"Ye were better aff in the pits," growled the old man. "I've been six and twenty years at the brick trade, and I'm tellin' ye that you'll soon weary o' *hit"*

"Maybe. But I'm in for it anyway."

"There's nae money here for them that should be earnin' guid wages," put in the girl. "And the hours are ower lang." She shivered a bit and turned to catch the first streaks of the day just shooting in crimson flashes across the wide fields to the west. The misty air was cold. I drew my gravit tighter round my neck and plunged my hands deeper into my pockets. It wanted two or three minutes to six, but the late sun made it look and feel much earlier. I thought of my first morning in the coal pit several months before, when the sun had been long up and the atmosphere breathed of work—now it sniffed of sleep. Then my labourer's clothes felt curiously uncomfortable and out of- place, as if they were part of a disguise assumed for an hour to be sloughed off at the end of the shift, now they hung in torn, patched and splattered wrinkles quite naturally, and my gait had changed to a steady shuffle. Even the strange hands gave me no heed.

At the yard there were a few sleepy greetings from the men, while three or four tireless girls were racing round a half dozen empty bogeys that were standing on a truck running alongside the big kilns. At the first toot of the horn jackets were pulled off and sleeves rolled elbow high. For thirty seconds the horn blew, long enough to wake up the yard if not the village itself. A cloud of exhaust steam puffed noisily over the roof of the engine house, and the great crunching

machine wheels began to turn. The day had begun. The brickworks lie about a mile from the Aitken pit on the other side of the village, hard by the shaft of a colliery.

In Kelty, brick-making is an industry sprung from the utilisation of the waste material of the pits. Bricks are necessary in every pit for shaft linings, proppings, walls and so on, so that it is cheaper for large coal companies to make their own bricks than to buy them. The Company has another extensive brick yard at Hill of Beath. Brick-making on a large scale is profitable, and the company is building up an industry so as to enter into serious competition with the market. There are two pits near to the brickwork. The workings are extensive, but not nearly so deep as in the Aitken. The rock which often forms the roof above the coal seams, known as blae, makes an excellent brick clay. In the pit it is hardened by the intense pressure of centuries, but when exposed to the weather and atmospheric changes it soon crumbles and, in the huge brickwork crunching mill, it is easily ground to powder.

It had been arranged that I should begin at the lowest rung of the brick trade ladder and climb up, step by step, following the various stages of the clay, from the rough, till it came out finished articles for the market.

"Feed yon mill, Bill, and mind your head when the stanes tumble down."

"Yon mill" was a huge dry or riddle mill pan whose bottom was like a strong sieve; and as the horn blew, the pan was set in operation with a regular circular motion, by two tremendous crushing wheels that fitted into the pan bottom, revolving with a rumbling almost as loud, but not so rattling, as the big pit wheels. As the blae is brought out of the pits to the surface it is run out on an elevated platform to a spot above, and just outside of the dry mill, where the hutches are overturned and their loads spilled into a shapeless pile. The men who "feed the mill " have to shovel from this pile into the pan with a constant energy that makes them literally a part of the machine—human automatons, who dare not stop save when the machine stops. I was placed between two men with a light stone shovel in my hands. My right-hand neighbour was a youngish man, who looked played-out with hard work and hard living. The other was a man past his prime, well meaning enough in his way, but who eternally nurtured a feeling of irritation that sometimes bordered on wrath, that his lot was to toil all his days at such work when there were many superior jobs, even about the brickwork.

“Talk about slavery being debolished” he shouted in my ear, above the roar of the machine, as he, jammed his shovel hard into the heap of broken blae never stopping for an instant as he spoke ; “ yon mill is the *stuck* of despond ! “

The old cheeriness of the pit was entirely lacking at the dry mill and, as every hour in the day demanded its full sixty minutes of work, there was not even time for a smoke, consequently, the mill feeders chew their tobacco. Chewing is happily a habit that is not nearly so common among Scottish workmen as among American workmen, for instance, who are almost universally addicted to this habit.

Sometimes good-sized rocks would come down with the smaller stones, and these had to be first broken with a mash. When we worked specially fast we reduced the pile so that the distance between the mill and it was twelve or fifteen feet, which was too far to throw the heavy shovelfulls, so wheelbarrows were brought into use; this, of course, meant considerable extra work. All day long the wheels ground round, pulverizing the stone to dust, and all day long we would work, stopping only when the wheels stopped. It was our duty to keep these wheels supplied with stones, and no other consideration was allowed to regulate the work. Aching muscles, tired limbs, all these were subordinated to the dusty, worn, feelingless machine. Four tons of clay produce approximately one thousand bricks, and the machine that we were feeding turned out twelve thousand bricks a day on an average. With three men shovelling into the pan, this means that each man must shovel nearly sixteen tons of stone a day. There should be a slight allowance for the weight of the water that is added to the dust after it leaves the mill, but the average day’s work of the mill feeders is not far from sixteen tons of shovelling. This means rapid, continuous work, and, as I can testify, the wear and tear of such continuous exertion is most exhausting. Unless he is very strong, the man who feeds the mill is too tired for much else than his newspaper and his pipe at nightfall. At nine o’clock the machines arc stopped for three-quarters of an hour for breakfast. Most of us went home to breakfast and dinner. Some few, who lived at a distance, had to bring their meals. As I passed out of the door one morning, a man, who had settled into a comfortable corner on the floor, held up a couple of dry bread and cheese sandwiches of abnormal thickness, and, with a sardonic laugh said :—

“This is what we work ten hours a day for—a half-hour’s feeding once and awhile.”

Before the whistle had ceased blowing, a quarter to ten, the wheels were in motion, and the men were again bending to their tasks. The forenoons generally passed more quickly between breakfast and dinner, and at one o'clock the shovels were dropped with the first sound of the horn, and the three-quarters of an hour allowed for dinner was made as much of as the hours of labour—forty-five full minutes, never forty-four, never forty-six. In the afternoon the toil continued in all its monotony from a quarter to two till half-past five. There was never any variety, never a bit of rest, the same downright hard work day after day, from six in the morning till half-past five at night, with the two brief meal hours excepted. At the mill the man stood as in a doorway, working mostly just outside the threshhold. The mill was inside the building, while the pile of blae was outside. In fair weather, this arrangement was satisfactory, but on stormy days the men are exposed to all the fury of easterly winds and rains. The icy blasts sweep up the Firth of Forth from the tempestuous North Sea and strike up the valley with terrific cutting force, screeching through the wide-open doors almost like the air forced below by the pit ventilating fan. It is then that these men suffer. The rate of wages that they receive does not tend to reconcile them to the hardness of their lot; for this rough, sodden work, the pay is four shillings and four pence a day. Brick-workers are not bound together by a strong union and, consequently, they have much to put up with that the miners have been able to overcome. Whereas the miners' day is but eight hours long, including the meal hour, the brick-workers' day extends for eleven hours and a half, and their average wage is far below that of the miners'. The additional three hours or so make a vast difference to a man. Speaking for myself, I found that the last two or three hours of work demanded as big an effort and took as much out of me as the first eight. Judging from the men whom I worked with, one can work hard for seven or eight hours a day, but after that the strongest men show signs of fatigue, and need a much longer time in which to recuperate. From an economic standpoint, as well as a humanitarian, I have little hesitancy in giving as my firm belief that, in the long run, the eight hours' day yields the best returns, for the men remain capable longer and the standard of their work is higher. A man who rises at half-past five (often earlier), and handles sixteen tons or more of stone during the day, getting home between half-past five and six o'clock in the evening, can hardly be expected to encourage many serious interests. I have watched the men come home from the brickwork, and as soon as they had finished tea, they would drop into a chair before the fire and drowsily doze away two or three hours, and then tumble into bed. This was about all that I felt like

doing after feeding the mill from dawn till dusk. It was not difficult to see here an excuse for men drinking. Alcohol produces a pleasant effect without demanding any effort. The public house is often more attractive than the home, and many men prefer the hum of voices, the cheery, stimulating, spirited atmosphere to his own quiet kitchen ; a glass or two of beer may refresh a man's jaded spirit and turn all life immediately about him to a brighter hue and make the world appear couleur *de rose.* He feels that it is recreation that he needs, and that is the only way that he knows how to recreate without violent exertion. Sometimes he grows hungry for a big bite of pleasure, so he gets drunk he revels in his debauch for a night and when he awakes he does not grumble because he is not right, but pays for his fun like a man. This view may be a sad one, but I learned to appreciate it, and I, at least, became convinced of the utter futility of *preaching temperance* without doing something to relieve the conditions that produce the desire for drink, and to offer some substantial substitute for the public house, before entirely doing away with the institution.

As the big wheels revolve, they press the powdered stone through the sieve bottom of the pan, where it is caught in metal buckets that are secured to an endless chain which empties them automatically into a trough, where water is mixed with the dust till it becomes clay. It is then forced into the brick-shaping machine, and under great pressure moulded into bricks, one at a time. There are machines that turn out six bricks at a time, and nearly thirty thousand a day, but such machines have not yet been introduced at Kelty. As the bricks take shape, a girl lifts them from the machine and loads them on to trucks or bogeys that are pushed to the kiln where the bricks are fired.

The next step was preparing fire clay for handmade bricks. Handmade fire clay bricks command a higher market price, because they are more carefully and solidly made and, consequently, last longer. They are much used for fireplaces and elsewhere, where there is excessive heat. After the clay dust is sent to a second mill, it is allowed to pour into a "wet" pan, which much resembles the dry pan, save that its bottom is not riddled and it is somewhat smaller. Here the clay is rolled and softened until it becomes properly stiff, yet pliable, when it is lifted from the pan into a wheelbarrow by means of a long-handled shovel attached to the machine, and operated with great ease through its extended leverage. The fresh clay is then wheeled across the yard to the "baking" rooms where it is shaped into the hand moulds. It is a question why the shaping of cold

clay should be called baking, but such is the case, and the process of heating the bricks in the kiln is called firing, but the man who tends the fires is not a. fireman but a burner.

In the pit I had learned to use a mash and a shovel, so I got along passing well feeding the mill. When it came my turn to wheel the barrow of wet clay from the wet pan to the baking room, I began without a suspicion that that was work that demanded a certain amount of skill as well as strength. As I crossed the yard with the first barrow, I was startled by my own clumsiness. A load of clay weighs from two hundred and fifty to three hundred pounds, and if it is not placed squarely on the barrow, it is exceedingly difficult to preserve equilibrium, and more often than not I found it impossible. After crossing the yard, winding between and over bogey tracks, there was a narrow doorway to pass through, a wide room to cross, another doorway to enter into, a second room and an eight-inch plank to ascend to the baker's bench. I escaped the tracks, managed the doorways, but met my Waterloo on the plank. After a little practice by dint of much trying, I found it possible to reach the top of the plank without a spill, but as the hours wore on my muscles seemed to weary; and again and again I noticed that my arms trembled as I started up the plank with my load, and at last I went tumbling off the narrow roadway, barrow and all. After a little this became almost a regular proceeding, so that it was wisely decided to give me an immediate promotion. Promotions are not usually made on this basis. Perhaps, if they were made so oftener, some of life's failures would redeem themselves, as I redeemed myself upon my promotion at the brickwork.

A bench was given me and a brick mould, a very simple affair consisting of a wooden frame, oblong like a brick, but with neither top nor bottom. This frame is placed squarely on the table, a mass of dripping clay, roughly shaped with the hands somewhat narrower than the frame, but considerably higher, is then raised eighteen inches or two feet above the table, and slapped into the frame so hard, that it spreads itself to every part of the frame and fills the corners. It is then pressed firmly down, and the top smoothed off with a wooden scraper and the brick is slid gently out of the frame on to the floor. In the baking rooms the floors are of concrete, underlaid with steam pipes, so as to dry and harden the bricks before they are sent on to pass through the next processes of preying and firing. It is only after long practice that one can make bricks with any rapidity, and it was not expected that I should keep pace with the experienced

men. Perhaps it was because little was expected of me that I won the favourable comment of the manager here. At all events, during the first day I worked at the rate of five hundred bricks a day. If this statement could stand alone it would be all right, but it must be added that, while I was making five hundred bricks alone, the experienced man across the room, assisted by two girls, made three thousand. Three thousand is an average day's output of an experienced man, but under specially favourable circumstances a man, who is truly an expert, can turn out nearly five thousand. Such speed, however, is very exceptional.

Formerly this branch of the trade was paid for at piecework rates, which were one and nine per thousand, but now that is changed and the bakers get four and four a day like the yard labourers and most of the brickwork men. On the whole, these figures cut a lower rate than at the piecework rate, although there are certain advantages, as when a machine breaks, or clay is slow in arriving .causing a delay, the loss is not a loss to the workmen as it otherwise would be.

The bricks are left on the warm floor about twenty-four hours, and then pressed and conveyed to the kiln. Pressing is almost as tedious and tiring as feeding the mill; it is quite as monotonous, but less noisy. Two girls stand by, one on each side of the machine. One puts them in and the other lifts them out. The man's work is to guide a huge iron lever so as to press the brick in this inverted elaborate vice, and then to press it back so as to release the brick it is solely a matter of physical exertion, requiring little attention. The tedium of the motion is wearing, and I found that after a day at the press, my physical condition was nearly the same as at the end of a day at the mill.

When I reached the chimney-can room, I began to feel like a skilled workman. The making of chimney-cans is almost delicate work in parts. The chimney moulds are big clumsy affairs, three or four feet tall and in two halves. A mass of wet clay is beaten into a thin flat layer, somewhat larger than the half into which it is to go, and then fitted carefully. It must be well levelled all over, nicely turned with a knife, and the whole thing rubbed to a polish. The second half is done in a similar manner, and the mould is folded together, the seam carefully worked over and polished so that, if possible, every trace of it is obliterated. A dexterous workman can make nearly fifty chimney-cans a day if he works continuously at the same thing, but as the brick industry now means a good deal more than actual brick making, the men who do this work are well trained,

practical workmen, who also make all kinds of brick drains, troughs, cornices and so on. A chimney-can sells at from one and six to four and four, pig troughs from two to eight shillings, cattle troughs from three and six to eight shillings, a far better proportionate price than ordinary bricks bring. For some curious reason, I was most successful with pig troughs, so I made pig troughs mostly. This department entails the lightest work in connection with the brickwork, also the greatest skill, and hence the higher wage of five shillings a day. The price of common bricks was down to nearly one guinea a thousand, from that to seven and twenty shillings, while I was there, but the handmade fireclay bricks were selling for sixty shillings per thousand. To give some idea of how many bricks there are in a wall, it may be mentioned that there are about fifty thousand bricks in an ordinary miner's cottage and upwards of one hundred thousand in a medium sized house. In some places the cost of clay is a considerable item, but in Kelty it is, of course, procured at almost no cost. Yet, with all the modern improvements in the way of new model kilns and machines, it costs about sixteen shillings to make one thousand bricks, leaving a profit of about ten shillings per thousand.

It was a crisp clear morning in October. There was an autumn crisp in the leaves stirred by the fresh west wind, and the men worked with a briskness that was unusual. The mill was kept well filled, the clay came out quickly and the bricks began to cover the baking-room floor at a much earlier hour than usual. The sharpness of the clay seemed to have got into the men and we all stepped lighter; some sang now and again that morning. The saucy lassies romped like the children they are between jobs, and threw small pellets of wet clay at the busy men from behind piles of bricks and through broken windows. Every one seemed equal to his task. Perhaps the sudden bright break in the weather after a wearying period of rain and humid mist was accountable for the quickened spirits. Things went along so merrily that morning that we wondered how long it would last. That afternoon I was sent to help empty one chamber of the Hoffman kiln. Each of the ten chambers of that kiln holds about ten thousand bricks.

As I neared the doorway, two sturdy girls, one fifteen, the other slightly older, came out with their faces a crimson purple, their strong bare arms were damp with perspiration. The younger one dropped on to an empty bogey and leaned her head against the end, her eyes closed as if she would sleep. The other stood with arms akimbo, gazing wistfully toward purple crested Benarty over the wood of autumn painted trees.

"It's a braw day," she said as 1 came up—" a brawer day for the hill than for this job."

The gaffer appeared at that moment and she gave her companion a warning kick. "Wake up, Liz," and they both hurried through the low, narrow doorway. I followed with the empty bogey. The chamber was more than half emptied, and the blast of heat that swept against me as I straightened up in the kiln fairly staggered me. A flaring lamp exactly like a small iron kettle with a wick run through the nozzle threw a flamboyant glare against the brick walls. As I drew near the spot where the girls were already fast at work, I felt as if I must suffocate for want of a cool breath. The gaffer came in just then and remarked:

"It's gey warm, Bill."

"Indeed, yes—how hot is it here?"

"He laughed. " I dinna ken. It micht be a hundred."

"One hundred. Man, it must be more." "Mair than one hundred? Na, na, Bill. It tak's a guid lump o' heat to be a hundred."

The girls piled the bogey full and rolled it out, returning presently with another one empty. Neither spoke. The heat remained about the same during the afternoon, neither decreasing nor perceptibly increasing. The next time I went into the kiln, I carried a small thermometer in my pocket, the only one I could procure at the time. As I entered the kiln, it stood 68' Fahrenheit. The air was hottest near the roof and more bearable at the pavement, so I took a fair average and placed it at the height of a lassie's head. In fifteen minutes the mercury had shot up to 140° and there it stopped, because the limit of the thermometer had been reached. I don't know how hot it really was, for I did not get another chance to test it, but there, in that kiln, with the heat above 140* and probably not less than 150°, those girls are working for from two to four hours at straining, tiring work, taking the still hot bricks from the piles where they had been fired, and .placing them on the bogeys from which they are emptied into railway waggons that carry them to the market.

At another time I was with those same girls building up a kiln. The air was close and heavy with the nauseating odour of oil, warm but not hot. Bogey loads of one hundred green bricks were sent in every two or three minutes from the

machines. Great care is needed in this work to pile the bricks so that, when the heat begins to dry and shrink them, there will not be a collapse of the whole kiln, as sometimes happens, causing a good deal of damage. Those girls were perfect Amazons in point of strength. They each handled from five thousand to six thousand bricks a day and, as green bricks are made heavy by the water in the soft clay, each brick weighs about twelve pounds. The girls lift them, one in each hand, from the bogey to the pile, setting them down a finger's width apart, working at a high speed that is bewildering to a novice. From early morning they work handling score after score, hundred upon hundred, thousand upon thousand, never slackening their speed as the day advances. There arc no two men in the brickwork who can handle as many bricks in a day as do those girls, although it is really a man's work. As these are specially skilled workers, they receive higher wages than any of the other girls—two and threepence a day. The other girls receive from one and sevenpence to one and ten pence a day, which is distinctly better than the wages paid to the pithead girls. The work is not so brutal as at the pithead, but the hours are longer, and the girls themselves are of a slightly better type, indeed, some of them come from most respectable families. They are full of fun and keen on a good time, but, on the whole, their boisterousness does not descend to vulgarity and their jests are merry, crude and of single meaning.

My kiln work did not last long ; it was only on busy days. My next and final serious work was burning—otherwise stoking. A burner is really an intelligent stoker. I say intelligent because it requires a man of some brains to advance the fires from chamber to chamber round the Hoffman kiln without injuring the bricks by too suddenly exposing them to the white heat. The old way of firing bricks in what is called the Newcastle kiln, is to start a small fire in one end of the kiln as in a furnace, and gradually enlarge the fire, eventually barring the door with a solid, so as to keep every particle of heat within the kiln. In this kiln it requires ten hundredweight of coal to fire one thousand bricks. In the improved .kiln, the Hoffman, which is an entirely different method, one hundredweight only is necessary. The Newcastle looks likes a large brick furnace heavily buttressed, so as to prevent the walls from bulging out to the breaking point with the heat. The Hoffman is a much larger, low, oval-shaped structure, with walls tending inward, so as to lean against the expanding force as it were, and surmounted by a brick parapet three or four feet high. Within, it is divided into ten chambers which open one into the other right down the

contour of the kiln. The roof is dotted with upwards of a hundred iron cups, which cover as many small holes, through which small coal is dropped into fiercely burning fires at the bottom of the kiln. Perhaps half a dozen fires are kept burning at one time, and the heat advances slowly into distant chambers warming the green bricks gradually until they are ready to receive the full intensity of the white heat, when the dampers are removed and the fires carried nearer. The man who tends these fires is able to keep them properly fed without being forced to stand the blistering heat that bursts from the door of the furnace-like Newcastle. As a rule, six or seven days must elapse between the time when the bricks are first put into the kiln and when they are brought into close contact with the fires. About ten days are necessary for the full firing process. When material like chimney-cans, troughs and drains, that demand a glaze, fill a chamber, quantities of salt are piled into the fires, thus producing the glaze effect.

On the day shift, the job of burner is, by no means, a bad one; it is not heavy work and there are many breathing spells, but as the fires have to be kept going day and night a change about system is necessary, which means that the man who is on the day shift one week, must take his turn at the night work the next week. The night shift is a frightfully dreary vigil, thirteen hours long, from five in the evening until six in the morning, seven shifts a week and no holidays ; the pay is four and sixpence a shift.

At one time, my companion burner was a young fellow who had been in the Navy. He had been a marine at the time of the Greco-Turkish war and had done duty in several engagements. He was a rollicking fellow, who did his work well and conscientiously and made the time pass with many a story of adventure and incidents of his sailor life. It is an exposed position that occupied by the kiln, and some nights the storms that sweep down the valley bid fair to force one over the parapet. It is, of course, impossible to keep a light under such circumstances, and the burners have to feel their way about in the stormy darkness. My night shift companion was almost as quaint a character as Jim. He was not so solid as Jim, but he had a delightful strain of unconscious humour that could beguile the weariest hour. On moonlight nights I have watched him going his rounds whistling merrily to himself, occasionally stopping to look off toward the hill that is always so fascinating in the moonlight, rising so shapely above the picturesque loch. If he thought that I was watching him on these occasions, he would remark:

“I’m no frae Kelty, ye ken. I belong tae Cupar.” The old fellow’s heart was warm on the coldest night, and many a tramp who has strayed to the brickwork at night attracted by the burner’s light has been led to a warm, protected corner by him. I have known him to share his piece with a hungry beggar, without even expecting a thank you for it. He must have had an extraordinary constitution, for, more than once, when a clay man was laid off, he has stepped in and done his work, after having served his own shift the previous night, and, without a wink of sleep, he would go on with his own work the following night, making three successive shifts or thirty-five hours. He never complained of being tired.

“ I’m no” carin’ aboot mysel’,” he would say, “ I’m no carin’ aboot mysel’ sae lang as things a’ gang richt.”

He often referred to a certain famous November storm when he undoubtedly had a pretty bad time of it. It was worth hearing him recite his adventures of that night. He told them to every stranger.

“I’m tellin’ ye, mon, hit was a wilder nicht than when the Tay brig blew doon. I was lost in the dark and gaen aboot in terrification lest something gae wrang—I was no’ carin’ aboot mysel’, ye ken.” It was a genuine treat to listen to him. “Sae lang as things gangs weal, I’m no’ carin’ aboot onythin’.”

The last time I saw him he was leaning over the parapet one dark winter morning, as I turned from the brick-works for the last time. I had followed the brick-making process step by step and had been tried for a little at every branch of the trade. Nothing more remained to be done after the burning; so with that I dropped the role of labourer—at least for the time being. That morning that I took leave of the familiar yard, my quaint old neighbour was waiting for the gaffer to arrive. It was never enough for him that he had been relieved by the day men, he must needs report to the manager himself. I climbed slowly down from the roof, more than half inclined to wait for him, but the air was chill and the gaffer was sometimes late, so I shouted back a “good-bye” through the gray mist. As I scrambled over the railway tracks toward the rough road, his characteristic answer came ringing after me—” Ta ta, the noo.’

CHAPTER V

HOME LIFE

IT was a typical miner's house, one of a brick row with triangular roofs. There was a parlour and kitchen on the ground floor and an attic above. When we were all at home there was little spare room, as together, family and boarders, we made up a company of fourteen; I do not include the minor but never-to-be-forgotten part of the establishment, namely, the cat, the big dog, and the five little dogs. There were four persons in the parlour and four in the kitchen. The place was recommended to me as a good representative miner's home, and when I called upon the mistress she was perfectly willing to take me in, but did not make mention of the fact that I was to have a few room-mates. It was not until well into the first night that I learned that five of us were sharing the attic. As to the terms they were about the same as if I had had the room to myself.

"I charge twelve shillings, but them that wants to gie's me thirteen," my landlady had said to me.

This was the average price in the village. The twelve shillings included board, washing, mending and any incidentals that might be needed. In some places thirteen shillings was charged but that always included black twist tobacco and clay pipes.

Since then I have been in a good many houses and I have every reason to believe that it was a thoroughly representative home of its class. The things that transpired within the circle of that household were the things that were happening within the circles of other households, the daily routine was much alike through the village; shaken together, one house was just as good as any other house. There were some better' homes, some poorer, but the majority were of this class.[1] The tide of life ebbs and flows about those hearth stones bearing on its bosom the flotsam and jetsam of love and sadness, toil and fun, realised ambitions, disappointed hopes. The round of existence that drew me into an unnoticed niche was simply the round of life that was being repeated in most other homes in the community. It was real though cramped. Such as it was it was made the most of. Some years ago a book appeared which had a wide circulation in England as well as in America, called, " From Log Cabin to White House," being the life of one of the American presidents. It has been noticed that on the cover of that book was the drawing of a log cabin and of the White Mouse, and

that while the log cabin was stamped in gold the White House was only in silver. There is a roughness in the lives of the miners that is unsavoury to some, a tinge of under-civilisation that shows up in sharp contrast with the over civilisation of certain forms of city life, but for all that there is a solid metal ring about it. The strength of a picture is often its shadows, and though a true drawing of the lives of the miners must disclose obvious faults and sad facts, yet there is a something that lies dormant, a something oftener felt than seen, which has given solidity to the character of the people and which may be relied on in a crisis.

[1] The description here should be accepted as general of one type

Our house was overcrowded, but not more so than many houses in the village. Every one whom I questioned corroborated the statement that it is practically the rule for from eight to ten persons to occupy the two-roomed houses, and the three-roomed houses were generally filled proportionately. The testimony of the doctors on this point was perfectly clear. I found one place where no less than nineteen herded together in three rooms. This in the country! Many of the houses are built by the company and the supply does not begin to equal the demand. The workmen's train which comes from the south each morning brings some eighty men to the Aitken pit alone and half as many come from the other direction. Then there is a large and happily ever increasing class of homes which are very different. It would be a mistake to convey the idea of *squalor* in writing of Kelty. It is a comparatively new village. New houses at least predominate, and there has not yet been time for squalidness to develop to any extent, and if it is possible for the-men to continue building for themselves, it may be largely forestalled. Until very recently it has been impossible for many men to buy enough land for building purposes. But now on the outskirts of the village one comes upon small rows of neat, self-contained houses, with flower-beds and grass plots before the doors, and having every appearance of coziness.

The Building Society puts up houses for men who can pay down from fifteen to twenty per cent, of building cost by way of security. The title deeds are held by the society and the rate of interest charged is four per cent. The maximum time limit for payment is twenty-three years. The way in which this aid is being accepted is sure proof that every restriction which is taken off the miner means the liberation of a new ambition which springs toward development. These homes are largely representative of the small tradesmen as a class.

The house that I describe in detail is the commonest type. It is the typical average house— not the poorest, not the best, but what I believe to be a fair medium. The impression that I would fain leave of Kelty, however, is not so much that of what it is, as what it is becoming. For a long time to come the conventional brick cottage erected by the company—a score, or it may be a hundred at a time,— must remain the predominant type, but there is this tendency toward individual, tasteful homes. This in common with other gratifying improvements will become more general the nearer the employers get to their men, the nearer the men feel themselves to their employers.

But for our (average) home-life. One or two nights a week we were all together in the attic, and in the heat of midsummer the single window half open did not begin to ventilate the room and consequently it was Stirling. The door opened to the stair which led from the parlour and it again opened into the kitchen so that there was no current of fresh air. The rest of the week, however, the relay system was in vogue. One or two were on the day shift, a division which kept the beds in use twenty-four hours in the day. There was no closet room whatever, so all of our things had to be stored about the room. One corner was occupied by the wardrobe of one of the grown daughters who was "in service" in the village. Two of my roommates were quiet "bidable" fellows, the other two had failings; one had a weakness for poetry and stirring passages of Scottish history, the other (my bed mate) for strong drink. Between them they often made life interesting for the rest of us. The man who delighted in reciting could not read a stanza of the most swinging verse without stumbling and mangling the sense, but by dint of much perseverance he could memorize the words of a piece and then repeat them over and over until they flowed from him with a prolonged mighty roar. Morning after morning when I failed to hear the call of the mistress from the foot of the stairs at five o'clock that it was time to rise I would start at the sound of the words:—" My foot is on my native heath : my name is Macgregor" given in a stentorian voice that never varied in its repeated inflections nor failed to arouse us all. Dougal was an ingenuous soul and I forgave him much for his genial good humour. He possessed only two books in the world, but he was familiar with every page of them both. " Rob Roy " was one and the other Aytoun's "Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers." His strenuous efforts to learn the "Execution of Montrose" were most funny. He was often a late body, it being no uncommon thing for him to romp up the bare wooden stairs between twelve and one o'clock at night, with some such words

loudly emphasized at every other step, with a particularly heavy stamp:—

> ‘“It was I that led the Highland host Through wild
> Lochaber’s snows,
>
> I’ve told thee how we swept Dundee, And tamed the
> Lindsay’s pride, But never have I told thee yet Of how the
> great Marquis died.”

My bed fellow, Sandy, was as near a caricature of a Scotsman as I have ever seen in life. Short, fat, forty, red hair, red whiskers, florid face and fiery nose, he would have been singled out of a cosmopolitan group in the Antipodes. Sandy never missed his nightcap all the time we shared the same bed, and Sandy was very fond of a joke. He had no wit, little humour, but any amount of fun. One night he took Dougal out with him and brought him home in the middle of the night uproariously intoxicated. When they got into the room Sandy took a notion that he would like a game of golf, so he took up a broom that had been left in the room, and using it as a driver, mistook Dougal’s head for a ball. The atmosphere was astir at once and Sandy’s fun threatened to last indefinitely, till Dougal made the suggestion that they compromise by pulling me from the comfortable corner of the bed, from which I had been watching them with sleepy interest. At this point I ventured to protest, but my protestations were of no avail. I was summarily routed out and we romped round and round the room in a boisterous whirl, until the neighbours were aroused and shouted to us to desist. As my bed had been stripped to the mattress, as soon as I could free myself I made for the other, to be promptly pulled out. It was late when the room quieted sufficiently for sleep to enter the chamber. This was merely one of the many incidents that enlivened the nights, and I give it simply as an illustration of what sometimes goes on within those small brick walls under the sheltering cloak of night.

As for the good woman of the house it is but doing her justice to say that she was

> “Ane o’ the awfu” cleanin’ kind
> That cleans folk clean out o’ their mind.”

She would begin her cleaning every morning before the men had fairly got off to their work, and the house was in a perpetual state of being scrubbed and

polished till eight or nine o'clock in the evening, when things were allowed to rest in their brightness.

As for cooking, at scones and porridge she was first class, but unfortunately for the lodgers, she seldom experimented much deeper into the gentle art. Our fare was distinctly plain, not to say coarse, and this in face of the fact that the overcrowded condition of the entire village together with a comfortably high standard of wages, made it possible for her to exact so substantial a price for her accommodation.

Figuring roughly, the food that was given us during any one week could scarcely have exceeded half-a-crown or three shillings in cost to her, per person. This is so low a figure that it is only fair to introduce a detailed account of what we received. The arrangement of the meals for those on different shifts was slightly different, but my own arrangement for the time when I was on the day shift is probably as representative as any. At first I started the day on a cup of tea and a slice of bread, but finding this somewhat insufficient, a beaten or a "switched " egg and milk substituted for the tea. At half-past nine, we stopped for our piece in the pit, and this usually consisted of two prodigiously thick slices of bread, semi-occasionally spread with jam, more often sandwiched with a piece of strong old cheese, and a flask of cold tea. When the day's work was overcame the dinner, as a rule near three o'clock. In most miners' houses meat is eaten a good deal, and I have reason to believe that in most of them it is more common than in this house, for our dinner three days in the week was made entirely of coarse, wholesome "porritch." The first day I very nearly betrayed myself by starting to put a dust of sugar on *them.* On the other three days we had meat such as it was. A great soup plate would be piled high with chunks or scraps of meat which was generally dripping with rich grease; another soup plate towered with potatoes, and from these two dishes each man round the table helped himself. - Knives and forks were always supplied, but not always used. Individual plates were made use of incidentally. Conversation was always suspended during the eating, for that race for food was to the swift, and those who could swallow their bits of meat and potatoes without thinking of the pure detail of mastication got the most. The meat sometimes purported to be steak, but often it was ham or eggs. There was always an ample supply of bread and scones. Tea was simply tea, bread, scones and jam, and supper was just the same as tea without the jam. About once a fortnight, Scotch broth took the place of porridge at dinner, and on Sunday morning we had boiled eggs for breakfast. Save for the monotony of it, this was wholesome fare.

The house was plainly enough furnished, the trinkets and nick-nacks all being of the cheapest variety. In many of the houses music of some sort is a feature ; in fact, nearly every household has one or more musically gifted members, and violins and melodeons are almost universal, while expensive pianos and organs are by no means rare. Since wages have risen, the steadier miners have consistently tried to make their homes attractive, not with pictures and ornaments alone, but also with the more expensive luxuries of pianos and harmoniums, thus employing one of the strongest counteracting influences of the public-house. If the homes could be made better, men would not care to go out at night and spend their hours in a brilliantly lighted bar room. The safest way to root out intemperance is to kill the desire, and while the craving for liquor itself is the primal cause of intemperance in later stages, there are other elements of the most vital importance that contribute to the elementary stages, and the lack of attractive homes is one of these.

The family library was not large, but its miscellaneous character was distinctly of the national character. Jane Porter's " The Scottish Chiefs" occupied a prominent position, and near it were " Samuel Rutherford's Letters," " The Prince of the House of David," Hugo's " Toilers of the Sea," " The Three Musketeers," " Uncle Tom's Cabin," " Valentine Vox," and a harmless assortment of lesser books by E. P. Roe, Lever, Marryat and Mayne Reid. All of these books had been read, and in several cases read more than once by nearly every member of the family. The current papers that found their way into the house were of the *Peoples Friend and Answers* type.

The most striking features of the home life were the totally different standards of good and bad, right and wrong, and the subjection of the women. To deal with the latter matter first, I was at first surprised, but gradually came to take as a matter of course the servitude of women. Their slavery to the men was almost universal throughout the district. The men were looked upon as the wage earners, and the lives of the women were given up to making them comfortable. Not once can I remember of the women eating their meals with the men in our home. In some houses where the families were smaller and the tables larger it might have been possible for the women to eat with the rest, but in our house to have made room for them would have meant crowding and cramping the men. Any suggestion of inconveniencing the workers would not have been tolerated at all. There were two big easy chairs in the kitchen (which was our "common room") and if either of them chanced to be occupied by one of the girls or

women when the men arrived it was instantly left for one of the men to drop into. This particular act is probably a survival of the ancient idea that the one who supplies the food for life must be carefully tended, as in certain remote Scottish fishing villages unto the present day where the fishwives plunge into the water to meet the returning boats and wade ashore with the men folk on their backs, that the last shock of the cold water after the strain of the night's work may be avoided. Unfortunately there has been an evolution in the idea, so that now it is only a part of the general custom of the women caring only for the men. It was a common thing for the men to demand that their pipes be filled by one of the women. I have seen a son of one-or two-and twenty order his mother across the room to get his pipe which was on a shelf directly above his head a few inches out of his reach from the chair where he was sitting. All the time the men were at home the women would hover about ready to be instantly commanded for the most menial services.*

* Every part of the MSS has been read by those who should be competent to judge of its truth and accuracy both in lone and detail, and no point, however slight, that has been queried has been passed unnoticed

This last paragraph emphasizes the result of different standards. Here is the clear, honest impression of one who pretends to be nothing more than an unprejudiced outsider. One whose lifelong familiarity with his life gives weight to his words remarked with righteous indignation," instead of' slavery' you should call it ' devotion.'" Frankly, that side of it had not occurred to me. Those who had never thought of it as anything but devotion would probably argue that I had been corrupted by my training in other spheres. In the miners' world the man is the keystone to the household arch. Woman's place is to support and buttress him from every side. That which is so natural from their view point may, and in this case did, appear very differently from mine.

The young girls it seemed to me, were early made to look upon work as a duty that can never be shirked, and a large share of the household duties seemed to be left to the younger ones. It is possible that my landlady was a particularly severe task-mistress, but so far as I could observe elsewhere I think not. **On** more than one occasion I have known her to go *off* for the day leaving a girl of seventeen to do all the work of the house and the week's washing besides. It is this kind of steady toil that led one to express her notion of things by remarking one day

when I had come out of the pit particularly tired: "Oh! There's hard work in the pit as well as out of it." It should again be emphasized that these are the observations of an outsider. The women themselves do not complain, indeed they know no other life, and are probably the better because they do not even catch glimpses of other circles of life.

It was once my privilege to be present at a village wedding. The bride was modestly and plainly dressed, and throughout the ceremony acted half afraid as if she was scarcely worth all the fuss. The bridesmaid, on the other hand, was plumed and veiled, held her head high and in every action betrayed the consciousness of her own importance that she felt. At the proper moment the best man took hold of the bridegroom's glove to remove it. The gloves were new and it stuck. He pulled harder, braced himself and finally peeled it off with a noisy rip. The minister chose for the text of his remarks—" Wives obey your husbands." His advice was entirely in keeping with the tradition of the place in regard to the relationship of wives to their husbands. "The husband is the head of the family even as Christ is the Head of the Church." After the ceremony came the signing of the certificate which was a most typical and picturesque scene. The bride of but a moment sat at the table nervously biting the end of the pen, while the minister leaned over her shoulder and put his finger on the space where she was to affix her signature. By her side stood her husband watching with a satisfied smile that seemed to betoken relief that the worst was over, and across from him the ever self-confident bridesmaid, who stared round at the company with a haughty glance that met the bravest eye. She had done her duty, she had done it well; and she knew it.

Where wages are good in comparison with the cost of living, early marriages are always common. House rents in Kelty are moderate. The oldest houses in the village rent for four pounds ten shillings; the newer and average houses rent for seven and eight pounds a year, and the best of them for ten pounds. The great trouble is- that there are not nearly enough of them, hence the evil of overcrowding is forced upon the people, who are only too eager to have homes of their own. That overcrowding is an evil and a sore one there is no contradicting, but from what I saw of it in Kelty I am inclined to think that it is a much misunderstood evil just as the drink problem has until recently been a much misunderstood problem. From a hygienic standpoint the wrong that is done the people who are forced to corral together like sheep in the shambles can scarcely be exaggerated. In summer the atmosphere becomes stifling—in our

house we never had sheets over us, merely rough blankets, and at times these were “gey ill to hole.” There was one window in the room four feet two inches high by two feet five inches wide. This dropped down about half way from the top so that we could get some fresh air, though often it was hot. In winter, however, everything is kept shut tight—” to keep out the cold “as the people say—and in the kitchen where four or five persons sleep and all the food is cooked the air becomes poisonous. Granting, then, that all that is said on this point is justified, and that on these grounds alone the evil is a scourge that is threatening a definite proportion of the working class, and is therefore a blot on the scutcheons of those whose indifferentism prevents its remedy, what of the other point so often dwelt upon by reformers, namely, morality?

In Kelty I found myself enjoying life in the rough, on the bed rock of crudity as it were. There was the maximum of natural and the minimum of convention. It was a bold illustration of life without the limelight glare of etiquette and fashion. Society at the sands is a very different thing from society during a season, and society riding to hounds is not society in the Row. The Belgian philosopher, M. Maeterlinck, has said that it is only of the dead that true portraits can be painted. In life men flash innumerable facets of character for different eyes. Society is buried beneath its forms. But with the workers—they never masquerade, they live their lives with a wholesome freedom from sham that develops hearts and souls, if not fine manners, and holds honesty and truth above ability to amuse and entertain.

When city reformers cite instances of night clerks using a bed that at night is used by another, even when the other is of the opposite sex, this need not necessarily imply any material lowering of moral standards, for people nurtured in such an environment have such totally different ways of looking at things.

In Kelty where the lodger system is so common and night shift workers sleep by day, the houses being often of but two rooms, what privacy can there be? The difficulty is obviated by doing away with the need, that is to say, men throw off their boots and jackets and “going to bed “ means little more than lying down. And in the course of time that which has become a custom builds for itself a new but not necessarily lower standard.

Given such an environment, immorality is often (not always) more easily fallen to, but that it is an inevitable result is certainly not true. It would have been a

difficult matter to have convinced my Kelty neighbours that their moral standards were lower than the moral standards of the ladies who fill the boxes and dress circles of the city theatres, wearing diaphanous and décolleté' gowns. Any such comparison would have aroused violent indignation.

A man who was discovered in one of the pits taking the pins from the hutches of other men and substituting his own was denounced out and out. Any form of meanness is looked down upon and constancy in friendship is rated high.

A conservative Church of England clergyman, a working man and I were once debating a point among ourselves, and the clergyman was rather getting the best of the working man when the latter answered resignedly, "Any way, I would treat you, and that is more than you would do for me." To him that was the last word, the test of a good social spirit. Generosity in little things, a characteristic which is not necessarily in paradoxical contrast to a reputation for closeness in larger matters.

Mazzini long ago pointed out that the social problem is at root an educational problem, but he did not emphasize what is so obvious today, that the education must come from below to the top as well as from the cultured to the lowly. In short, the education that is needed is a general mixing together that will show each to the other "how the other half lives," and what is of greater importance, what the other half thinks. Not until all classes grasp this fact, that a difference in standards does not imply a real wrong on either side, and that the chances are that when there is a wrong that in the end it will not be judged as harshly as the far commoner one of indifferentism, will any of the fundamental problems be solved.

Some of the pleasantest hours in the lives of the miners are evenings when some of the neighbours come in from nearby houses, and the time is spent in singing and dancing. Near a score gathered in our kitchen one night to say good-bye to a family who were leaving the village. The people called it a foy, or as it is called in other parts of Scotland a *ploy.* Beginning with the head of the family every one in the circle was expected to make a contribution to the entertainment of the evening with a song, a dance or a tune on the melodeon, the violin or the mouth-organ. The old Scotch songs that never grow old were sung with a right royal will, and the dances—" hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys and reels"—were given with an enthusiasm that showed that the day's work had not affected the " life and mettle in their heels." There was no drink that night till the very end and Auld

Lang Syne was sung with the merry wistfulness that betokens the flight of memory over the days that are gone when similar scenes have ended with those same familiar strains, when other faces have stood round the room and other hands have linked together the friendship circle, binding hearts to hearts with ties that nothing can sever.

Another scene equally memorable, even more characteristic, but of a very different nature was that in a chamber of death when one of the last of those moribund customs of yesteryears was gone through with—a chesting service. Of all the sad affairs in life and death surely few can be more grim than a coffining. It was at the house of a neighbour where the baby girl, a wee golden-haired lassie, had died suddenly. As is customary, a few friends were asked to be present. The minister arrived before the coffin. There was a passage of scripture and a brief prayer before the undertaker came in and the little chest laid open. The mother then lifted the lifeless form of the little one, pressed her tear-stained face close to the cold cheeks of her babe in a long, lingering kiss, then sank back in a paroxysm of weeping. The lids were placed over the box and with a grinding, crunching noise that grated into the very hearts of the sorrowing friends the undertaker screwed the boards tight. Thus the tragedy and comedy of life plays round these modest homes just as the sunlight and shadows flit about the lives of those who are in the intenser circles of the world where living is a strenuous battle with the complexer forms of life. It is an isolated world this little mining community, in touch with the outside world only through the impersonal medium of the great company that is the outcome of the conditions which have environed it from it earliest stages, and it has established standards that accept no criterions outside of those it has developed. For all its crudeness and entire naturalness this life rings true at bottom, for men and women are more easily stripped of the vestiges of convention that distort and dwarf the hearts and souls of human kind, and though handicapped by the heritage of disinheritance by those who hold the golden ring of power and influence—in spite of all the flaws and dark rough spots—it is a life that in its frank simplicity is nearer in accord with the golden rule than the glittering, tinsel-draped life that in one mood it would curse, but which .in the long run, in its ignorance" it envies and is drawn toward as is a moth to the alluring treacherous flame.

CHAPTER VI

GENERAL INTERESTS

HE *is* a social being to be sure, the Fife miner. Only he takes a great deal of knowing. He is inclined to take his humour as seriously as he takes his work and you often must needs catch the sparkle of his eye to know when he is really laughing. But there are a few days in the year when he plays in good old rollicking fashion and it was not until I had laughed with him, shouted myself hoarse with him, trudged a round of sight seeing, sunk to depths of profound and subtle controversy with him and then sung " Auld Lang Syne," his rough, hearty hand clasped in mine, that 1 began to feel that I knew him. In short, a Fifer's holiday means a run of the entire scale of moods that go to make up his nature. When he sets aside a day for a good time he begins with gaiety at the first hour and grows serious as his effervescing spirits and strength subside: and at night before he completes his day he sings " Maxwelton braes are bonny," " Me and my true love will never meet again," and if he has a breath of the North in him, like as not, the melancholy strain will appear in

" Like an empty ghost I go

Death the only hope I know,

Maiden of Morven "

before he concludes with Auld Lang Syne.

The first holiday that I spent with him was the day of the July Fair at Kinross. But Fair Day is universal and at Kinross it differs only slightly from the general run, so it need not be further alluded to. It was my first jaunt that I found unique. For on that day I found my miner playing at his best.

When the holidays come round "jaunting " is in universal vogue. The railways offer tempting excursions at exceedingly low rates, so that it is possible for whole families to take advantage of them. During the summer I made two jaunts—one to Aberdeen and one to Inverness. Nearly three thousand went on the latter trip, all from Kelty and the nearby towns. The return fare was only 45. I had been warned that these excursions were frightful crushes, always very late, and that excessive drinking was the most pronounced feature. So with a stout heart, prepared to endure all manner of discomforts, I joined the throng awaiting

the train at Kelty station. There were three trains all told ; and, as they started a few stations below, the first two trains, having been filled early rolled past without stopping. It was a glorious July morning, and the spirits of the crowd ran high. As the first train approached a great shout went up that was echoed back with a right royal will. The carriage windows were all wide open and filled with noisy laughing merry-makers. It was the first holiday in several months, and the pent-up feelings were given full freedom. The tumultuous enthusiasm was contagious, and I found myself shouting too. It seemed to me at the moment that I would gladly work a whole year if I could feel as actively, recklessly happy for one day as they all seemed. The singing and the shouting lasted all day, all the way to the Highlands and back, and at night when the trip ended —oddly enough nearly an hour before it was scheduled to—I was able to testify that drunkenness was conspicuous for its absence. Drinking there had been, but for a trip of that kind there was little intoxication.

As we started the homeward journey one of the men sitting opposite me, an ordinary typical miner, jumped up, exclaiming, " One hundred and fourty-four miles to go. Where's the whiskey?" I made up my mind for an uncomfortable evening. Whiskey and beer were produced, and bottle after bottle was handed round till the men were fast growing hilarious. I was a stranger to them ; but as usual I had endeavoured to be friendly, so the bottles were always offered to me. After my repeated refusals to drink, one well-meaning fellow searched diligently in a bag of many things till he had found a certain package, which he produced and held out to me with the words, "If ye'll no drink wi' us, will ye tak' some sweets? You're decent company, so we maun treat you richt." At one point a man in the opposite corner to the one I was occupying leaned over towards me. He had been drinking a good deal, but was not properly drunk by any means.

"D'ye ken," he began," I've worked a" my life amang stane in the pits, but I dinna ken onything aboot the mines. I dinna ken how the coal got into the pits. Comin' up this mornin', I was thinkin,' How do a' the hills get there? Some o' them look burnt and twisted-like as they'd been near fire, and others look different. Occasionally there is a field or a brae covered wi' sma' stanes. How did they get there? Did men put'em there?" I hesitated before answering, wondering how best to explain the questions, when the man next to him, whom I had thought almost maudlin, rolled forward, his clay pipe dropping from his mouth as he spoke:—

"I dinna ken muckle aboot it, but I hae read a book by a mon, Professor Geikie!" From Kingussie to Killiecrankie he gave us his version of Professor Geikie in vivid graphic language, using homely but descriptive words, and making the matter very much clearer than I could have done with the book before me. He talked for nearly an hour, and as he talked his interest in what he was telling us about got keener and keener, and the effects of the liquor seemed to disappear before his increased mental activity. Later in the evening, when the moon was shining upon us from a clear blue heaven, that same man showed an equally conversant acquaintance with Young's "Astronomy," and he told some interesting things about the firmament. He had not merely read these books, he had studied them. "Where did you get hold of them ? " I asked. "Oh ! I picked them up at a second-hand shop in Dunfermline," he answered carelessly. Those men thoroughly appreciated that trip to Inverness, and it had not proved unprofitable to me. From that day on we were better friends.

Two small attractive stone and brick buildings stand on the main thoroughfare of the village two or three minutes walk above the "cross roads" where the Gothenburg is situated. One is the Public Library and Moray Institute, and the other the Aitkens Baths—both valuable and important features in the village life. The library is a most compact building, embodying a circulating library, a reading and recreation-room and a billiard-room all on the same floor. The games of draughts and dominoes were popular with the men, and owing to the shift system, there are always a number of men off work at every hour of the day, and I found that the reading-room was likely to be in use nearly all day, even in summer. Billiards is nearly always a popular game where it is accessible with-working men, and the fact that during my sojourn there was but one table, was about the only drawback. The distance between the library and the nearest public house is sufficient to entirely remove temptation from any who might feel their proximity as such. If the men ever play for drinks they must do their playing at one time and their drinking at another.

It was interesting to note the kind of books that were most used in the library. Henty is the ever popular writer among the boys. Robert Louis Stevenson, Stanley Weyman and Sir Conan Doyle and others of their classes were found to be in the greatest demand among the men. I was somewhat surprised to find that Tolstoy was read by a certain few. Marie Correlli also has a small following. Taken all in all, A second table has since been added, however, I am not sure that these somewhat vague statements can be taken as indicative of the literary tastes

of the village, for there were only about two hundred members, and these the ones who really appreciated the value of the library and attendant privileges under the same roof. The success of the library is very largely due to the keen interest and stimulating influence of the librarian, who is himself a working man. The Gothenburg grants will probably tend to swell the membership, and as the library grows and the town develops it is to be hoped that it will become a more important factor in the lives of the miners.

A public bathing establishment must be a boon to any village, and especially to a mining community. The building is capitally equipped with a swimming pool thirty feet by twenty, individual baths and a vapour room which is an excellent substitute for a Russian bath. Adjoining the dressing rooms are two spray attachments. Everything about the place is modern and convenient. When the chairman of the Coal Company, whose gift it was to the village, formally handed the building over to the people, it was accepted by the treasurer of the Library Committee.

These two buildings stand for the progressive spirit of the village more than anything else. They are signs of advance along right lines, and as these interests come to take a larger and deeper place in the lives of the people, other attractions such as those afforded by the public houses and the clubs are bound to become subordinate.

Before passing to the more serious interests of the village, reference should be made to the interest in athletics. The football and cricket matches are followed with the keenest interest, and cycling and fishing are widely popular. Bicycles are getting very common among the men,-and these enable them to keep in touch with neighbouring towns in a way that was previously impossible. In winter there is a good deal of dancing.

There are branches of the usual number of Friendly Societies in Kelty, the Shepherds and the Gardeners being the strongest. The mediaeval prototype of these societies were the trade or craft guilds, and now as then they are benefit rather than benevolent organisations, flourishing through necessity rather than by virtue of their social importance. Recently there has been a tendency to emphasize the social side, and a costume procession of the combined Friendly Societies is an annual event heartily looked forward to. "The object of this Society," say the rules of the "Blairadam Vine Lodge of Free Gardeners'

Friendly Society," " is to provide, by subscriptions of the members, for the support of its members in case of sickness or accident, and for insuring money to be paid on the death of a member, and for funeral expenses of the wives and children of members and of the widows of deceased members."

There is a great difference between the various trade unions. The Miners' Union, which I joined by paying one pound down and my dues fortnightly, is vastly stronger than the Brickmakers' Union, and the results are partially found in the contrasted length of the days of the two sets of workers. The objects of the " Fife and Kinross Miners' Association" as set forth in its rules and regulations are these:

(a) " To raise funds by Levies and Contributions for the purpose of mutual support."
(b) " To protect members when unjustly dealt with by Employers."
(c) "To provide Sums of Money for Members and their Families in the event of Death."
(d) "To Cooperate with other Organised Districts or Bodies with view of promoting the welfare of its Members, particularly when applicable to any of the above objects.
(e) "To promote Labour Representation of Parliament and other public bodies.

There are many subsidiary rules, but two which are of more general interest, may be taken to show the nature of restrictions laid upon members.[1]

STRIKES AND DISPUTES.

23.—" No district, or any part of a district shall be at liberty to come out on strike, unless by the authority of a majority of the members of the Association, or by recommendation of the Executive Board or Standing Committee. Any district, or part of a district, violating this rule will have no claim upon the support of the Association. And in every case, before a strike is resorted to, an attempt should be made to have the dispute amicably settled.

24.—" Every Member thrown out of employment by strike or lock-out, shall be entitled to receive nothing less than Eight Shillings per week, or, such other sums as the Board may agree upon. Half Members shall be entitled to half-rate.

VIOLATION OF EIGHT HOURS A-DAY.

28.—" As one of the fundamental objects of this Association is to maintain the principle of eight hours a day underground, any Member known to violate the established rule of working only eight hours out of the twenty-four, unless when compelled to change his shift, and in that case, being eight hours off before returning, shall for the first offence be dealt with by the District Committee, and may be subjected to the penalties mentioned in the bye-laws, or the custom of the work. But, for repeating the offence, he may be expelled from the Association, and forfeit all claims on its funds. Members working on the fixed idle day shall incur the same penalties, unless permission to do so is previously granted by the Local Committee, on the understanding that another day be observed as a holiday by those granted the privilege."

•*See Pages 8 & 9 of the printed "Rules and Regulations" issued in 1900.*

Trades Unions, as fairly and as well managed as the Miners' Association, must redound to the good of both masters and men.

" Support your own enterprise and success is certain " is one of the advertisements of the Co-operative Store. Co-operation has done much for Kelty. It has brought out the business ability of men who would never have credited themselves with any remote qualities that go to make up the commercially successful man. It has demonstrated to the people that they can be their own managers, and it has brought some at least to look forward and realise the possibilities of further development along lines of self-government. It has come to fill so important a place in the village life that any word picture which failed to make mention of it would be leaving a prominent blank. There are 1,259 members scheduled in the I I3th quarterly report, and, as this may largely be said to the membership of householders, the immense prestige that it has in the village is at once seen. What has impressed the people particularly has been its rapid rise from a very small beginning. The drawing for the Spring quarter of 1902 amounted to £14,727 35 and the capital at the same date stood at £26,741 195. 5d. Dividend day is always a great day among the women folk. There is a flutter of excitement which one feels in the very atmosphere, and although the dividends never fall below three shillings, and very seldom below three and fourpence, and rarely rises above three and ninepence, it arouses the keenest interest and speculation as to whether it will be a penny above or a penny below

the previous quarter. It is a fact worthy of special comment that again and again when it has been suggested that liquor be sold in the store that there has invariably been a strong outcry raised against it. A grocer's license would naturally raise the dividends materially and that local feeling has all along been strong enough to resist this is most significant. There is an old Fife proverb which says " Ye're no' aye gaun to kirk when ye gang doon the kirkgate." Traditionally the miner is not a pillar of the church. The Covenanters were largely agriculturalists. My experience was that whether the Fife miner believed in it for himself or not he was respectful of it, and when pressed argued that "the kirk was no sae bad." There are three churches in the village; one is well attended, one meagerly, and the third would not be placed with either. The summer is naturally a bad time in which to judge the church attendances, but the mid-summer communion service which I went to in one (the largest) was attended by 198 communicants, nearly half of whom were men. According to the Scottish Church and University Almanac there are 433 members claimed by the two United Free Churches and 344 communicants by the Established Church. The first Sunday of my stay in the village I attended the 11^30 service in the largest church and was impressed by the solidity and appropriateness of the sermon—which was delivered without notes on the subject " The stature and fullness of Christ," Ephesians iv. 13—the heartiness of the singing (there was no organ) and the attention of the congregation. I could not see the gallery but there were about 150 people in the area, 80 of them women and girls, 20 boys and the rest men. One Saturday afternoon there was a Sunday School picnic which I attended. The entry that I made in my journal that same evening gives the details so succinctly that I cannot do better than quote the passage in full.

A charming spot on a private estate about a mile away was where the picnic was held.

"I knew no one and no one knew me. I threw myself into the sport of the day with unwonted energy and had just the 'bestest' time. I carried the bairns on my back, ran races with the laddies and swung the lassies till I could swing them no longer, ate hokey pokey which I bought in penny quantities from an Italian ice cream man who strayed on to the field, drank lemonade, and when some one gave me a great bag of sweets to distribute—there must have been four or five pounds—I ran off to an elevation followed by nearly all of the children, some *200* of them, and scrambled several handfuls, then off I ran, followed by the

whole pack of screaming, laughing children, to another brae where we had another scramble. When they were all fairly mixed up with each other in topsy turvy piles, off I made again Pied Piper of Hamlin-like with the whole troop behind. It was glorious fun. No one seemed to look upon me with suspicion after that. At tea time the children were collected and told to sit down on the grass in a large circle and the superintendent announced that they would sing one verse of a hymn. This is what they sang :—

" Lord a little band and lowly
We are come to sing to thee
Thou art great and high and holy
O, how solemn we should be."

Poor little things—trying to be solemn at a picnic long enough to sing their hymn. It was so very Scotch. A few moments afterwards children and teachers were up again and at play, their fun in no way tinged with solemnity.

As I sat down to take my cookies, buns and tea, a finely formed young fellow sat down beside me and began a conversation with the words:—

" I have only been like this a little while."

I could not make out what he meant till he continued after a pause.

" I was converted about a twelvemonth since."

" Converted ? What do you mean by that ?"

"Well. — By converted I mean—converted—converted—changed from one position to another. I was in sin ; now I'm happy and peace fills my heart. I wudna change for onything."

" Why are you happy ? What gives you that peace ?"

His answer was lovely.

" I have meat that ye know not of."

He then told me that he worked as a brusher on the Company's time in the Aitken pit " It is hard to walk a Christian life among workmen," he added, "unless you walk it all the time. They watch you so." He and two other Christians work together and help keep one another up. As I was interested to find out what his beliefs were I remained reticent, and merely threw out questions to draw him on.

"The good soul lives, the bad soul dies, or worse than dies. It is condemned to everlasting punishment."

"What kind of punishment ? "

"Everlasting burning and fire.

"We dinna ken the fuel, but it burns."

After that he told me about his father who for forty years has been fond of his pipe and his whiskey and who two months ago put them all aside and now leads a Christian life. I sounded him on smoking, cards and the theatre, and he said he " didna want ony o' them, but he wudna judge others." Presently he told me about the Christian Endeavour Society and the Y.M.C.A. and was working round to get me to join one or the other or both, when a lot of girls, Sunday School teachers, came up and asked us to play " French Tig " whatever that may be. He consented and so did I; but inasmuch as I don't want to become attached to any one circle just yet I withdrew. It is said that "Fife folk are fly," "French Tig" sounded fly—or suggested high flying at all events— and it was six o'clock and I had certainly had my share of the afternoon's fun."

Later on I saw something of the Christian Endeavour Society, and though not very large it was full of life. It seemed to me that it must give stability to the uprising generation of church members. It is a feeding ground for the church, and at the same time it has a steadying and strengthening influence upon the younger members. It helps to provide suitable social opportunities, while it is quickening the zeal and enthusiasm of its members to active work. The Sunday afternoon open-air meetings throughout the summer seemed to be a regular feature. All that I saw of the active members during the week in the pits or at the brickwork emphasized the consistency of their lives. What must be a specially pleasing feature to the ministers and leaders of the Society is the substantial support that is given by the few men in the place whose general outlook on life has been widened and deepened by educational advantages, men, for example, like the local doctors.

It is a far cry from the church to the club, yet there *is* a class, unfortunately a very large class, whom the churches utterly fail to attract. There are a number of men in every community who don't fit naturally into any clique, and to whom the usual social interests make no appeal. The church, the Christian Endeavour

Society, the Y.M.C.A. are things clearly out of their ken. They may not have any group of companions, and taken all in all their lives lead along lonely roads. Then there are the wilder spirits, good fellows, spirited lads, who chafe against the limits of their world. They strike bounds at every reach. These are the kind for whom special attractions should, but don't as yet, exist. They are left to create their own amusements, and one of the most natural outcomes of their restless turnings is a club. There is a social smack about the phrase " the club." It rings in the ears and suggests comfort, *cameraderie* and a good time in leisure hours. But of recent years a new kind of club has come to the front in Scotland. It is usually known among its patrons as a " Workmen's Club." One of these " workmen's clubs " has become an institution in Kelty as a matter of fact.

The club is one of those drinking-places that have been much heard of recently in Scotland—though not so much talked about in country towns, perhaps, as in the cities of Edinburgh and Glasgow, where Sunday drinking has increased enormously. The clubs are really not clubs at all, if features other than drinking are considered. In Kelty the better men will have nothing to do with the place: but as there are several hundred men representing a definite section of the community who do support it, I determined to join the club for the same reason that I had joined the Miner's Union. I wanted to know the men who went there, and I wanted to know why they went. I sauntered down to the club one Saturday forenoon about ten o'clock. As I slank through the doorway of a square brick building whose windows were screened to prying eyes by panes of heavy, yellow ground-glass, I instinctively pulled my hat farther over my eyes. The inner hall was piled with cases of empty bottles, and a stench of spilled liquor and dirt filled my nostrils. I paused to read a notice announcing that a collection would that day be gathered for the family of one of the members of the club who had been killed in a pit disaster. From within a room to the left came the sound of many voices above the scuffling of feet.

Suddenly the door flew wide, and two men, one of middle age, the other scarce more than a boy, clutched in each other's arms, wrestled into the hall and sprawled noisily floorwards in a half drunken tussle, pushing **me** into a small room: a bagatelle-board in one corner, a table wet with beer-froth and bearing a half-emptied glass of whiskey, a number of plain wooden chairs thrown about any way over a dirty wooden floor, a few flaring lithographs and tobacco advertisements tacked to a cheaply papered wall— not the cosiest or tidiest of club-rooms, surely!

I crossed to the big room opposite. About fifteen men were lolling against the bar. Here again there was a nauseating sprinkling of dirt and slopped liquor, giving the place the general appearance of a city slum public-house. At one end of the bar a glass of beer had been upset, and two men were playing dominoes exactly in the sour pool. Next them stood two others playing draughts—playing for drinks. As the manager leaned over the bar to me I told him I wanted to join the club.

"Join? All right; but your name must come before the committee. Just sign the book."

When I had signed the book I turned to go, thinking that I had done all for the present; but he stopped me—" It costs one shilling to join."

"Very well. Do I pay now or after my name has been approved by the committee ? ""' Oh, pay now. It will be all right. "On Sundays the club is open for a little while in the forenoon, and again in the later afternoon. It was a matter of note that the patrons were usually men apart from the typical life of the village. That the liquor problem is in truth a problem of " forgotten needs," at least in rural districts, was clearly illustrated on the Sunday afternoon that I spent in the club. It was the only other time that I crossed the threshold. I went early, so as to watch the men as they came in. The rooms had been well cleaned and aired, and the place was far more attractive than on the Saturday. Some of the men I knew, and many recognised me. I fell into conversation with the man nearest me. As we talked he grew confidential. He told me of his boyhood and the incidents that led to his leaving Scotland and going to Wales when he was a young man. Inclining his head close to my ear he whispered, " It was there I met my wife, and when we were married she didna understand what I said, and I didna understand what she said." He spoke so seriously that I immediately regretted having laughed at this. For a long time he studied the froth on his " shandy gaff," with his head resting on his hands. At last he added " It was kind of comic-like." He smiled ever so softly as his memory pictured the past anew—a solemn, weird smile, for old Andra' was gaunt and cadaverous in his expression

and a smile fitted his face ill.

" She kenned one word of English : she cud ca' me ' Scotty '."

" How did you manage to come to an agreement when the time came for you to return to Scotland and you wanted to bring her with you ? "

"¸Weel, noo, I could not tell ye. It went along so smooth like that it a' came kind o natural. We didna need to speak ; she understood me and I under-Stood her. Ay' mon, she made a grand wife. When she was alive ye didna see me at a club or a public-hoose. Na, na, when I had her I didna care aboot goin' awa' from the fireside. She took care o' me, she did." Poor old Andra'! He would not have been credited with feelings so deep. After a little he began again—

"Ye see what I am. I dinna ken muckle—I'm simple-like. I wudna gang wrang i" purpose, ye ken, but I'm easy led. When she was in the hame naebody led me but her."

" How long has she been dead ? " I asked.

"Twenty years. We were together sixteen year, and she's been dead twenty. I miss her as much as when she was first dead. I'm never without some remembrance o' her," and I watched his hand steal unconsciously to his inner waistcoat. When we parted, Andra' again surprised me—" I'm glad ye gave me a crack," said he ; "I dinna care muckle aboot the drink —it's the company, it's the crack I'm wantin' wi' some one, and I've had a gude crack wi' you."

CHAPTER VII

THE TEMPERANCE QUESTION AND THE GOTHENBURG EXPERIMENT

A STRANGER passing through Kelty any week day or evening, save on the fortnightly pay day would not be arrested by the intemperate habits of the people. On the whole I should repudiate the word “drunken “ if applied to them. Drink they certainly do—the eight or ten licenses in the village of 5,000 inhabitants proves that—but there are circumstances which order their drinking and confine excessive drinking to stated times, to wit, the pay night, the day, or it may be the two days following, and holidays, especially at the New Year. There are indications that Sunday drinking is rapidly increasing, but the club rather than the public houses is responsible for this.

In certain English collieries the men are allowed light beer in the pits, but in Fife even this is prohibited and so far as I was able to observe this is a rule which the men universally honour. I never saw the slightest trace of liquor in the pits. Miners of all men know that clear vision, steady nerve and untrammeled wit are often the safeguard of their own lives and the lives of their neighbours.

Early one week one of my fellow workers on the day shift said with a ring of expected pleasure in his voice—” Next Saturday I’m in for a gude drunk.” “Why do you do that?” I asked. “ Och, mon, just to break the monotony.” I knew this fellow fairly well and 1 am sure that he was not habituated to excessive drinking. It was not to satisfy any craving that he looked forward nearly a week to getting drunk on the Saturday. Another man told me that his drinking was regulated by his wife. It was his custom to take all of his earnings home to her and each day she gave him so much from the surplus over and above household and other expenditures. This was a novel method to me and I thought it most excellent. A little inquiry disclosed the fact that other men follow the same custom.

It is somewhat dangerous to make any sweeping statement in regard to the drinking habits of the miners, for there is a number who regularly drink too much, and from the number of licenses to the population, from the amount of liquor consumed in the village, from the deplorable scenes (by no means unique in Kelty) on the pay-week Friday and Saturday nights it may be asserted that as

a community it does drink too much. Whatever the inner facts may be, so far as I saw, drinking among the women seemed nonexistence. One or two isolated cases are met with but these are locally notorious instances, and inasmuch as they excite the attention that they do they may almost be said to be the exceptions that prove the rule.

Yet the temperance question is very much to the fore in that little village under the shadow of Benarty, as it is in fact in many Fife villages at this moment, for one of the largest of the oft-discussed Gothenburg public house experiments is being made there.

There is no Mercat Cross in Kelty. The main corner of the village is commonly spoken of as the " cross roads." This is the natural trysting-place of the men after working hours and on off days. Approaching the cross roads from the South, or from the direction of the pay office one's attention is arrested by the fine stone building which stands prominently on the north-east corner. A fine bow window, neatly hung with lace curtains breaks the corner on the first floor. There is a nice air of respectability about the place that suggests some prosperous commercial concern. One is naturally surprised and interested upon reading the sign which runs in bold letters along one side between the ground floor windows and the first storey: " Kelty Public House Society, Limited."

The men called it "The Gothenburg."

It was a warm night in midsummer that I came slowly up the brae from one of the pits at the foot of the road. It was the pay night and I had been on the " back-shift," but having come out of the pit early I had purposely made a detour to approach the village from that side. My piece box and tea flask jangled in my right hand. A dash of luminous green, merging into dun and saffron across the sky behind the hill, still marked the west. Not a breath was stirring, the lamp in my cap was still burning, flaring an uncertain circle in the dry road ahead. There were three or four of us, and despite the fact that we were not long out of the pit we walked along cheerily : we were always cheery on the pay night. As we stepped into the wider circle of the great lamp which hung above the Gothenburg, I removed the tiny lamp from my bonnet and blew it out.

" Come away, Bill, hae a wee dram afore ye gang hame."

I nodded assent and followed him past two doors marked " BAR" into a spacious room crowded with men. Some of them were in their working clothes,

like myself, but most were washed and shaved, and dressed in fresh suits. Along the polished brass rail before the bar leaned a solid line of men, groups of three to six or more stood about the room or talked in farther corners, some animatedly, some boisterously, but there were no signs of rowdyism. The first glance showed nothing more than an ordinary barroom, somewhat larger than the average village public, but as long as I remained I saw no one properly intoxicated. It was the first night that I had visited the Gothenburg and I had purposely chosen a pay night. A spruce manager walked behind the bar, sometimes stopping to serve a glass of liquor but devoting most of his time to scrutinizing the patrons, keeping constantly on the alert for men who had already had more than they could carry without exhibiting signs of intoxication. Behind the bar, against the wall, were mirrors and rows of bottles usual in barrooms, and in a corner with a separate entrance to the bar was the "Jug Department" where the "off" liquor is dispensed. I saw Jim making for the door soon after I went in. Now I knew that Jim and certain other men of the better type who would not frequent ordinary public houses, did patronize the Gothenburg. The Gothenburg had a more than ordinary interest for me because no practical experiment of recent years in connection with the liquor problem in Scotland has attracted more widespread attention and met with such hearty recommendation, and such hostile criticism at one and the same time. The Kelty Gothenburg is one of the several in Fife, and though not the first it is the most imposing, and its distribution of profit has been such as to awaken more than local interest. At the end of the first year a grant of £50 was -made to the village library, a district nurse was procured, and there began to circulate rumours of a bowling green, a public park and electric lighting. To sift the real argument on either side, to weigh them in the balance of right judgment and determine the net result I found to be an exceedingly difficult task. I approached the matter without prejudice, and before considering the criticism of experienced writers and social reformers I endeavoured to sound the man. I began by loafing round the bar with my eyes open and picking up casual remarks dropped by the men, and afterwards I approached the experiment from the theoretical, not to say scientific side, intent upon finding how far these several view points were in agreement.

Since the experiment was started as recently as January i, 1900, it is of considerable importance that the steps of its development be traced in at least brief detail. The population of Kelty was something under 4,700. It had five public houses, three licensed grocers, and one hotel. Owing to the rich mineral

productivity of the district the village was rapidly growing, and though an additional license had recently been refused there was a growing feeling that another one would be granted before long. This however is a moot point. In the autumn of 1899 two public meetings were called to consider the proposal to establish a Gothenburg public house which was to be conducted by a committee, employing a paid manager, secretary, and such other assistants as should be found necessary. Local interest in the scheme ran high and it met with heated opposition from certain quarters, with the result that at the second meeting the motion was not only without a seconder but a resolution against the establishment of the house was carried. Eventually
1200 voting cards were issued for the purpose of a plebiscite, and to the question " Are you opposed to the granting of a licence to the Kelty Public House Company?" The following answers, which for convenience are here tabulated, were received.

Opposed to licence:—

Householders and resident voters	318
Non-voters, men	124
women	296
Total	738

In favour of licence:—

Householders and resident voters	153
Non-voters, men	117
women, - - - in Total	381
Majority opposed to licence	357

With this strong opposition the experiment was persisted in, the license was eventually granted, and the grand building erected at a cost of more than .£3,000 by the solicitor of the Coal Company, the ostensible leader in these experiments. At the end of the first two years the profits for each year were, in round figures, £600.

One of the declared objects of the Kelty Gothenburg is " to counteract habits of intemperance." What its methods are we shall presently see. Opponents of the scheme sometimes say that the Gothenburg is being run by men never before publicly interested in the question of temperance but who now claim to be helping the temperance cause. Parenthetically, the secretary of the Kelty house,

whose salary is £14 per year, is a teetotaler. As to this general statement, so far as I can see, it has no bearing upon the matter. It is one of the signs of the times that men never before interested in this question are taking an active interest in it, and one of the most energetic temperance movements in Scotland today is largely backed by so-called moderate men, who are supporting distinctly moderate measures, feeling that any small contribution to the solution of the problem of drunkenness is what is wanted; *not* extreme measures, and the Gothenburg claims to offer a rational method of reform. Private profits is one of the root causes of the condition of the present system, many reformers maintain. Its main plank is the elimination of private profits. Therefore it seems to me a hopeful sign that fresh minds are approaching the problem. This does not mean that the solution of these difficult and important questions is to be left to amateurs. Far from it. There never was a time when trained minds were more needed. It does mean, however, that there is a growing tendency among practical men of affairs to shake off the indifferentism of the past, that the long war waged between the so-called traffic and the extreme temperance party may give place to a widespread, charitable, sincere seeking after some reasonable, effective method of reform. For that reason, if for no other, it seems to me that the approach of comparative outsiders should be welcomed. The Temperance question has too long been in the hands of idealists. Idealism it needs, but idealism tempered by the practical. The phrase practical mysticism, practical idealism has passed into current use in the language. The practical mystic is the strong man among men. The Temperance cause has need for men of every opinion. There is room for the specialist and the amateur, the idealist reformer and the practical reformer. If the now turbulent cauldron of ideas which boils for the cause of temperance be kept going, some day something effective is well nigh certain to emerge from the troubled, restless surface. The Gothenburg public house is a kind of experimental laboratory or school. The same cause that has produced the Rechabites, the British Women and the Good Templars has also produced the masterly scientific work of Messrs. Rowntree and Sherwell, and the statesman-like legislative temperance proposals of Lord Peel and his colleagues who signed the Minority Report. Each has its sphere. When the time is ripe all efforts will converge for the force which comes only through unity. An experiment which rises so far above the commonplace as the Gothenburg is deserving of serious consideration, for whatever its actual results may be it is the outcome of an honest striving after a satisfactory substitute for that most demoralizing institution which flourishes all over the land today—the public house.

The argument here appears that the Gothenburg system offers a respectable drinking house, and through its division of profit it places a premium on drinking, and hence its contributions toward "counteracting habits of intemperance" are delusive. The fact that I saw men go to the Kelty Gothenburg who would not enter one of the other public houses in the village might seem to support this view, but then there are other factors that must first be considered.

" The trouble with reformers has been," said Mazzini, " that they have been after purely material reforms. AM reforms should begin with the regeneration of the individual, spread to the community, and then the nation." This may seem a truism, yet it cannot be too often reiterated that any attempt after reform leaves its mark on the public mind and an attempt like the Gothenburg experiments cannot but go to mould public opinion through the quickened interest of individuals and the accompanying reaction which will be felt by the nation cannot but be wholesome. The obvious fact so commonly overlooked by every class of reformers is that this a great well-rounded question, and that any single attack upon one point cannot accomplish everything. Those who are familiar with social conditions in the slums of great cities know only too well how intimately the temperance question is interlaced with other questions. Moral suasion is necessary, but moral suasion alone is not sufficient. Legislative effort is needed, but legislative effort alone will never bring about a far reaching measure of real reform. The off quoted "You cannot make a man sober by act of Parliament," holds; what can be done, however, is to make it easier for men to live sober lives, just as legislation makes it easier for men to live honest lives. But even here we are still on the fringe of the problem, and before judgment may prudently be passed there are other elements which enter in and which must be duly examined.

In passing it may be of interest to recall the outcome of the remarkable moral temperance revival in Ireland, 1838-1842, under Father Matthew, perhaps the greatest moral temperance advocate that the world has known. At the time that he began his temperance crusade there were, roughly, 21,000 licenses in Ireland. In four years these diminished to 13,000, wholly owing to lack of demand for liquor. In other words, 8,000' publicans failed, were forced to close their doors simply because the temperance sentiment was so strong. This was purely the result of moral influence. The people of Ireland were not wise enough to make laws at that time, and when a few years later the awful famine descended upon them the moral restraint was no longer strong, there were no legislative

safeguards, and the work of Father Matthew was largely undone. Today Ireland has 18,000 licenses, or nearly as many as when Father Matthew began, and with only half the population. On the other hand, in Norway, once one of the most drunken countries in Europe, there was a revival of temperance opinion early in the last century accompanied by an amount of good legislation, and today in Norway, the consumption of alcohol is less than in any other country in Europe.

[1] Practical Licensing Reform, by The Hon. Sidney Peel, page 6.

At a time when there is so much controversy current concerning the workings of the Scandinavian liquor laws, and so much speculation as to their effect if emulated in Great Britain, a certain familiarity with them is an advantage. In Sweden the *per capita* consumption of spirit has been lessened one-third since 1850. Norway shows the startling annual reduction of nearly 50 per cent, since 1876. " These results," say Messrs. Rowntree and Sherwell, " have been brought about by the joint action of Temperance effort and of wise national legislation ; the former could have done little without the latter, and in both Sweden and Norway its main service has been in creating the public opinion which was essential alike for the enactment, the enforcement, and the progressive improvement of wise and strong public law."[1]

[1] The Temperance Problem and Social Reform, page 435.

The same writers have elsewhere[2] laid down five "conditions of success ".which have characterised the Gothenburg experiment' in Scandinavia, and which, they maintain must characterise the similar experiments in Great Britain, whether in the Kingdom of Fife or in other parts of the country. These conditions are:— *First, "The* elimination of private profit from the sale of drink." *Second, "* Public cupidity must not take the place of private cupidity and to this end the appropriation of the profit must be determined by clear statutory laws." *Third,* " In any town in which a company is established it must have a monopoly of the retail licenses, both 'on' and 'off.'" *Fourth, "* The system must provide for the full liberation of the progressive sentiment in a locality." *Fifth,* "If these companies are to achieve any high success they must be conducted as undertakings having for their object a distinct temperance end to which commercial considerations must be strictly subordinated." Differing conditions may demand altered methods when a system is transplanted bodily from one country to another, and indeed the *a priori* judgment might easily be that this would follow of necessity. Any broad principle which attains a marked success

in Scandinavia may do the same in Scotland ; but it may fail. There is a trend running through all Scotch law which differentiates it from even the law of England, and unless this subtle philosophy be conformed with, any legislative action may go to one side instead of forward.

2 British Gothenburg experiments and Public House Trust pages 4-8.

At the outset it may be well to state to what extent these five " conditions of success " are found in Kelty. The first clearly exists. Private profits are eliminated. In the second instance it may be argued that public cupidity is restrained from taking the place of private cupidity only in a limited sense. The third condition, namely that of a monopoly certainly does not exist. That the system provides for a full liberation of the progressive sentiment in the locality which is the fourth stipulation, may be disputed by some, but for purposes of the present examination it may be granted the doubt. While the last requirement, that the " undertakings must have a distinct temperance end," is claimed ; witness the words " to counteract habits of intemperance."

The object of my inquiries was twofold. In the first place, to determine the attitude of the inhabitants of the village towards the experiment, and secondly to determine as nearly as possible the value of the experiment as a contribution to the solution of the problem of intemperance. The words " Gothenburg" and " Norwegian " are persistently applied in popular use to these Fife public houses, yet, if the fivefold " conditions of success " outlined by Messrs. Rowntree and Sherwell be fair and full, there is a difference which may be of paramount importance, which may handicap, not to say change, the British system so essentially that the unbiased judge must bear in mind that the present workings and results of the scheme in Norway and Sweden cannot harbinger the results of the present incipient schemes in Fife. And conversely an adverse criticism of the Scottish houses should not imply inherent weaknesses or general condemnation of the system as a system.

That there must be differences of environment goes without saying. Briefly, the conditions attendant upon the rise of the Scandinavian system were after this wise : Previous to the year 1855 the manufacture and sale of spirits in Sweden were exempt from excise charges while beer was looked upon as a temperance beverage. Every farmer being thus left free to manufacture his own " branvin " (which may be freely translated " brandy ") most of the grain raised in the country was devoted to this purpose. According to Mr. John Walker,[1] the number

of stills throughout the country in the year 1829 was 173,124. In 1855 the system was radically changed, and through the passage of a law placing all distilleries under supervision and requiring a license of each one the number at once dropped to 3,481, and in 1876 there were only 410 left. At the same time the price of the liquor rose from one shilling a gallon to five shillings. A complete revision of the licensing laws introduced a due amount of taxation similar to that which at present exists in Great Britain and all these reforms helped to materially reduce the aggregate consumption of spirit. This act of 1855, also foreshadowed a scheme of company management which was particularly recommended nine years later by a local committee in the town of Gothenburg appointed to inquire into the causes of pauperism in that place. The recommendation suggested that the drink traffic be taken out of private hands and placed under company management for the benefit of the community. Shortly after, the first " Bolag " was floated. Seventeen licenses were held at the outset but by 1874 they had complete control of the spirit trade. Six per cent, of the profits are laid aside, and the remainder is divided in this way: to the community 7 tenths, to the State 2 tenths, and to the Provincial Agricultural Society 1 tenth. This last tenth is offered to the farmers by way of compensation for the loss which they have sustained in being deprived of their right to free distillation.

The example of Gothenburg was presently followed by towns and villages all over the land and now no less than 92 towns in Sweden have given their retail liquor trade over to the Bolags. There are minor restrictions which go to make up part of the system, such as discontinuing the sale of liquor during the dinner hour of the working men : and no sales to intoxicated persons or children. The net result of this legislative activity has been the reduction of the number of public houses to a proportion of one to every 7,864 inhabitants. In Glasgow there is one to every 521 persons. In Kelty, excluding licensed grocers, there is one place where liquor is obtainable to, approximately, every 550. This rough division includes the women and children.

(The word BOLAG is the Swedish for Company: SAMLAG is the Norwegian equivalent)

Norway soon followed in the footsteps of Sweden and in 1880 a law was introduced empowering the Samlags to take over all licenses through a system of equable compensation. The compensation was arranged on the basis of grant

equal to the average yearly profits for the preceding three years. In Norway the profits are largely devoted to philanthropic purposes, and herein lies the chief difference between the systems of the two countries. In Sweden the profits are largely devoted to a relief of the rates. In Norway the Samlags sell only intoxicating liquors, the shops are generally small and unattractive while the Bolags of Sweden often attempt attractive rooms and to unite the sale of food with that of drink. In both countries the actual seller of the drink receives no part of the profits aside from a stated salary, but he often does receive a percentage on temperance drinks and food. The capital of the companies is generally small and the percentage on the dividends is restricted to the current rate of interest.

The application of this system in England is aside from our present purpose, for in Scotland the circumstances were peculiar and distinctive, and in examining the results which have been reached the Kelty house affords a typical and concrete example of the strength and weaknesses of this Anglo-Scandinavian system. A powerful coal company comes into possession of a district which has heretofore been chiefly agricultural. The opening of several pits introduces a colony of workers and their families, and a village comes into existence. Or in other cases an older village is augmented by the opening of new pits. Until late years it was the policy of the coal companies to resist all license applications, but in 1895, when the village of Hill of Beath, which was practically owned and controlled by one of the companies, and which had up to that time been kept free from any license, seemed unable to exist -longer without a public house, the coal company applied for a license in order to forestall the granting of one to a private individual. The license was refused by 11 votes to 9, but it was granted the following year. The representatives of the Coal Company stated at the time that the application was made, that they would restrict their profits to 4 per cent, on the original expenditure and use the remainder for the common good of the village. Until the end of 1900 this house was managed by a company of five, three of whom represented the Company and two the miners. It was then found that this management was not all that it might be and a local company was formed under the name " Hill of Beath Tavern Society, Limited, [1]' part of the capital being subscribed by the miners, and the Coal Company sold its house to this Society for £1,200, which included a bank balance of nearly £300. Thus the idea began in Scotland against the expressed wish of the inhabitants.

In 1900 Kelty became possessed of one of these public houses purporting to be conducted on the Gothenburg system as we have already seen. The share capital

was put at five shillings per share, no one person to hold more than 200 shares. The Committee of management consisted of eight members.

The fundamental points of difference between the management of the house and the true Norwegian system were noted in the paragraph following the enumeration of Messrs. Rowntree and Sherwell's " conditions of success." The manager here is paid a fixed salary of £2 per week, with house (the flat above the barroom) coal and gas, but no percentage on temperance drinks. Immediately opposite the Kelty premises is an ordinary public, and the village being small, the others are all within easy walk, so that here, instead of a monopoly, it is forced to enter into competition with the other houses, at the same time that it is endeavouring to " counteract habits of intemperance !"

Its measure of success in point of cutting a niche for itself in the community may be judged from its balance sheet. For the first 2 years the profits were about £600 annually. To compare the bar receipts with the restaurant receipts the following quotations from the Minutes of the Society show the drawings for two weeks in July and two weeks in August during the term of my stay in Kelty.

For the week ending 15th July :—
Bar, —— .£63 1 7
Restaurant, - - - - - £2 8 7

For the week ending 22nd July: —
Bar, —— - £80 0 4
Restaurant, - - - - £3 3 3

For the week ending August 19*th:*—
Bar, —— .£54 9 2
Restaurant, - - - - - £3 2 2

For the week ending August 26th :—
Bar, —— £70 4 4
Restaurant, - - - - £3 15 11

The contrast here speaks for itself. The Gothenburg is competing with public houses, i.e., drinking saloons, not restaurants. And in any event a restaurant

does not hold the same place in a village that it would in a city. In support of the somewhat vague statement made near the beginning of this chapter that the miners drink at regular intervals, the following table of daily drawings for a fortnight illustrates the point:—

1901

Monday, May 20th	£11 16 0
Tuesday , May 21st	£7 5 5
Wednesday, May 22nd	£7 8 0
Thursday, May 23rd	£6 16 0
Friday, May 24th	£5 8 8
Saturday, May 25th	£17 8 0
Total	£56 2 1

1901

Monday, May 27th	£ 6 17 0
Tuesday, May 28th	£4 16 1
Wednesday, May 29th	£5 8 0
Thursday, May 30th	£5 11 6
Friday, May 31st (fortnightly pay day)	£21 10 0
Saturday, June 1st	£24 14 2
Total	£68 14 9

It will be noticed that the Friday drawings of the first week amounted to five pounds eight shillings, while on the following Friday, which was the payday, amounted to twenty-one pounds ten shillings.

There is practical unanimity among the miners in regard to one or two points, namely, that there is a sharper lookout kept than at any of the other public houses for men who have already been drinking, making it more difficult for a partially intoxicated man to get served ; * and that the grade of liquor in the Gothenburg is on the whole superior. Both of these considerations may be taken into account when sifting the chaff from the grains of evidence. It is when the allocation of

profits is taken up that the difficulties become more complex. A village nurse working in conjunction with the local physicians, public library grants, and a bowling green may sound very fine, but there are a goodly number who take the stand that one Kelty collier took with a certain investigator ;[z] "I object to it on moral grounds. I don't want to have my books or papers or anything else supplied out of drink money." Others again say that it is converting the public house profit into a weapon against the public house.'itself for these are wholesome outside interests and theoretically counter attractions.

[1] There was some complaint to the contrary at the outset but this is certainly the case under present management.

'Special Commissioner of "The Alliance News:" See ''Alliance News," June 20th, 1901.

The medley of opinions in regard to the experiment leads one to believe that to try to separate them and judge between them is folly akin to the wisdom when doctors disagree. One who has been thoroughly familiar with the house from the very start considers that " it has justified its existence," adding that" despite the increase of population the drawings will not likely turn out larger this year than the first year nor does this mean that other public houses are getting the better of it. *It is a real reduction in drinking."* An investigator[1] who has written on this Bolag says :—" In Kelty it is evident that the house has increased drinking in the town." The villagers give all kinds of conflicting testimony. That drinking has been on the increase in the village during the last two years there seems to be little doubt. But Messrs. Rowntree and Sherwell point out three causes which may have contributed to this. I.—The prosperous times. 2.—Increased population. 3.—Establishment of a Club. And in conclusion they remark :—" The defects of the Kelty experiment do not indicate any inherent defect in the principles of public management rightly applied and directed. . ." This may be accepted as expert testimony.

For myself I do not see how any public house run in competition with a half dozen or more ordinary public houses, however well it may be managed, can diminish drinking. A man may not get the last glass which proves too much, in the Gothenburg, but he may get the first glass there, and then go elsewhere for the rest. If every public house in the village were placed under this system, obviously, no one could get served who showed the slightest effects of drink, and

drunkenness would consequently be held in check. That it makes drinking " respectable " to any large extent I should be inclined to doubt. And I could find no adequate proof to support the assertion that it is responsible for the increased drinking in the village. The liquor dispensed *is* less raw than in many other places, and the portion of profits which is devoted to practical purposes must have a certain restraining and counteracting influence-It is not true of Kelty, but in one village the bowling green adjoins the public house. This I believe to be distinctly bad. The counter attractions should be far enough removed from the house to make a flying trip between games (of anything from bowls to draughts) inconvenient. Putting aside its claims to " counteract habits of intemperance," which under the present existing conditions I believe to be impossible, and judged solely on its merits as a public house, I am inclined to believe that the balance of evidence is very slightly in its favour. This in spite of its failure to demonstrate that it can, as it should do, " counteract habits of intemperance." Furthermore, its existence seems to me to have been justified by the amount of genuine public opinion, *pro* and *con,* which it has been the cause of creating. It may or it may not be a decided advance on the old form of drinking shop; it is at least a step forward. And it has stimulated thought and interest in the whole great question of temperance as few kindred experiments have done.[1]

[1] The temperance question comments are slightly extended in the chapter on " Conclusion."

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS

FROM a hilltop above Kelty one looks over the broad valley which marks the western boundary of the Kingdom of Fife where it runs into the vale of Kinross. Nearly twenty collieries are visible round about, all within the Fife lines; for beyond the point sentinelled by Benarty above Loch Leven the district is purely agricultural, green and golden harvest lands stretching as far as one may see, field after field till they roll their rich fringes over the first steppes of the Ochils. The contrast is deep and effective. This coal district is supposed to be the most northern limit of extensive coal fields in Great Britain, and as if the wealth of vaster fields were here concentrated the seams are many, broad, and usually most accessible. Kelty is claimed by the parish of Beath and as long ago as 1606, according to old documents, the coal pit of " Kelty-heuch " was conferred to William, Earl of Morton, by his father. At that time the amount of coal mined amounted to four or five tons a day. Now it is sometimes more than 1700 tons a day in the Aitken pit! In spite of this ancient record Kelty is essentially a new village. Walking through its long drawn out streets one is impressed by its youthfulness —score upon score of fresh brick miners' houses, company built; every now and again a neat little cottage or it may be a row of individual houses, built by some of the more prosperous and thrifty men ; an attractive library, and next it a compact public bathing house; a comparatively new church; a handsome main corner building which might be a bank, or a store, but which as a matter of fact is the "Gothenburg" public house building. All these things tend to attract attention rather than the older buildings. The great difficulty with Kelty has been that it has outgrown itself altogether too fast and has consequently been subjected to various inconveniences. I went to Kelty because I was interested in it and in its people. Its ways were new to me, sometimes strange, but I tried to catch the spirit of the people. And now that I am constrained to share with others as much of that experience as I may I have, in the preceding pages, set down much of what I found there, and I have tried to be as full as the circumstances will permit, but above all else I have aimed at fairness. Lest undue emphasis may appear to have been laid upon one phase or another of the life, and since I may here briefly recapitulate and perhaps venture to intrude a few more personal observations, I shall aim to let this chapter both **in** tone and matter convey as best it may my impressions and to indicate both the attitudes of my approach and my leave-taking.

At the outset I felt that there must needs be certain surface barriers between the men and myself; “‘ but concealed beneath^ their mannerisms and mine I knew that there must be common feelings, emotions, and even ambitions. I therefore took up my life amongst them with a degree of sympathy, prepared to clasp the hand whenever I found it open. Their world was sufficiently different from mine to discount any preconceived theories. Any respect that may have been lacking for them as workers was thoroughly rooted and established before I left.

Looked at from whatever point one chooses, pit work is serious labour. It has its compensations to be sure, but the amount of discomfort that pit-workers become accustomed to as part of their regular routine must be experienced to be appreciated. However severe manual labour a man may have to get his shoulder to above ground, he always has the advantage of two things which are usually lacking to the miners—a high roof above him, and daylight. The .toilers in the pits must carry their own sunshine with them—and for the most part they do—and the nature of the work is such that it develops many of those qualities which go to make up splendid manliness, courage, determination, trust in their neighbours, and along with this a corresponding trustworthiness and dependence in themselves. A man should have a sturdy constitution to stay him in the darkness of the pit depths. Exercising every muscle severely, his body often bent more than double, splashing and wet with water from unseen founts, exposed to innumerable dangers from which there is no escape save through Divine Providence; these are not the things for a man physically poor to brave and endure rashly. Given constitutional fitness, however, these things make strong men stronger, and longevity tables show that as working men’s lives run the miner’s is a long one. Sudden climatic changes, or even the ordinary rigours of winter alternating with the heat of summer do not affect or even reach him. The demands upon his endurance, physical and moral, are constant and may be met only by long and arduous training.

In the chapter on brick-making I took occasion to compare briefly the effect upon the men of the eight hour day (not including meal hours) with the brick workers. I found that I could work hard for eight hours a day without excessive fatigue, but that longer than this I could not work without feeling it a strain. The last two or three hours of each day at the brick work took more out of me than the first eight I; repeat what I said in the earlier reference to point, that “ from the economic standpoint, as well a humanitarian, I have little hesitancy in giving my firm belief that, in the long run, the eight hour day yields the best return, for

the men remain capable longer, and the standard of the work is higher." argument is sometimes advanced that if the eight hours' day were made universal the supply of labours would be inadequate to the demands of the day. To this I can only reply, that it seems to me that any economic or other academic theory which must be upheld at the expense of a man's physical strength and general comfort must contain some inherent fallacy. Any standard set for men that is so grievously taxing cannot be a righteous standard. It is possible, very probable, that there are kinds of work which men can stick to longer than eight hours a day without exhaustion. But with work as exacting as mining, eight hours a day is as long as the average man can labour at his best. Before I went to the brick work I had noticed that the brick workers were less ready to take part in any form of recreation after the day was done. For myself I was unable to do much after working from 6 a.m. to 5.30 p.m.—including, of course, the two periods of three quarters of an i hour each for meals. If men lived to work this might , be allowed to continue with no voice raised in protest. But this attitude cheapens life so terribly; it reacts , Upon a man's character and his very nature ; it unfits him for moral growth. A man who works all day

and comes home too sodden with weariness to do anything but dose over a newspaper and a pipe before a fire, cannot be expected to develop very far mentally spiritually. These men are not physical machines. They have minds, they have souls, and any system of work which necessitates starving either mind or soul, is not one that can stand for long. In laying emphatic stress upon the eight hours' day, the Miners' Union is .rendering a service to the masters as well as to the men. The man who is well taken care of and not rub till he runs down every working day of his life can do better work and yield better return to his employer.

The wages question seems to be one of perennial :. seriousness. Judged solely *as wages* the miner's earnings are good. Compared with the wages of many other workmen they are good. There is room for a good deal of controversy over this question however, when the details of the whole system are considered. It is practically impossible to state even he approximate profit from coal for there are so many outlets, not only as actual cost expenditure, but also as reserve funds, funds set aside for depreciation, opening of new pits, etc. There is no question that some pits yield much greater profits than others, and that the profits of some companies are infinitely greater than the profits of others. Why, then, should the workmen in the pit which produces large profits be kept upon

the same level as the workmen in the pits where the profits are comparatively small ? Are the arguments about" unsettling the market" as deep and real as they may appear at first glance ? The employers are not restricted to the amount or proportion of their profits, why should the upward tendency of the men be curbed ? These queries open up a vast question, but the replies which shower in, do not, it seems to me, do more than prove the unsatisfactoriness of the entire system of work and wages as it exists to-day.[1]

[1] Mr. Robert Smillie, as Vice-Chairman of the Conferences held early in 1901 between members of the Conciliation Board of the Coalowners of Scotland and the Scottish Miners' Federation, at one point said : " When you invest your capital and claim a dividend of 5, 10, and as high as 40 per cent., you also claim that at the end of your term of working collieries, you ought to be able to get back your whole capital and no less than that. A miner invests his whole capital at 45., 55., 6s., or 8s., a day, but he can set nothing aside for depreciation, and at the end of his life he does not realise his invested capital—he goes to the poorhouse. Now, 1 think that with less than 8s. a day it is impossible that he can set aside anything for depreciation. he ought to claim that he should be able to set something aside."
See page 72 of printed report of these conferences.

Of course things are moving, and moving in the right direction, therefore my feeling is, that the more that can be done to keep them moving the better. One is naturally sceptical of radical changes. Save **in** rare instances they are unhappy in their results-The difficulties tend to disappear as the bond of sympathetic interest between men and masters grows stronger, and this is the fundamental point in my thesis, perhaps the most important impression that I have 'carried away with me from Kelty. The prime differences between classes of men, the most crying evils, arise through misunderstandings and misapprehensions.

The point of view of the men with whom I wrought was almost invariably the point of view of the working •man, and if it was suggested to them that there was another side to a question it was pretty sure to be admitted with keen suspicion. Very much the same thing may be said of the employers in their position. They often make strenuous efforts to see the side of the men and to feel the motives that inspire their views, but somehow these attempts so often prove futile.

If at this point I might venture a theory it would be this. The Fife miner (and I don't know that he differs greatly in this particular from other Scottish working men) desires nothing more than a fair chance to develop and to grow, at least apace with his employers. If education proves unsettling that is the fault of the nature of the education that he gets.

In Kelty the Company owns approximately two-thirds of the houses in the village. Most of the other third are owned by the men, but the Store owns a small number of these, and the homes of the small tradesman make up a proportion. These houses are for the most part singularly attractive from the outside, and cozy and homelike within. This is the sort of thing that the men do for themselves when the land and other restrictions are removed and they are left free to make homes of their own. They are given scope for exercising a little taste and individuality. They take pride in their home, and tending the garden becomes a supreme pleasure. The miner's wife seizes the opportunity to give rein to her womanly instincts which appear when she is left free to make the home in her way. In short, it raises the whole standard of life. Why should the entire family of an employ^ of a Company whose published output of coal for the year 1900 was over two million tons, a Company issuing such enormous dividends,—why should these people be obliged to cramp into two small rooms ? Add to this the evils, perhaps at the present time unavoidable, of the lodger system whereby people occupying two or three rooms take in several lodgers, and the result is obvious. A demand is made for men to help sink a new shaft or to enlarge the workings of an old pit, the work is made ready for them but not the housing accommodation, such as it is, until some time after. Overcrowding is inevitable under the present system in towns and villages that are growing as rapidly as Kelty and certain other Fife villages. Looking at these things merely as I found them striving to restrain all prejudice, I could not help putting the question to myself—Is it fair ?

The cost of a miner's house of the kind built by the Company ranges from £100 to £135- The rentals are fixed, and though owned by the Company, the rise and fall of wages effect no corresponding fluctuation in rents. This is another grievance of the men, and though perhaps not a very sore one is worthy of a passing thought.

The matter of how utterly different are the standards of this mining world from those of the larger world beyond and around it, has been commented upon

so often that to bring it up again may seem unnecessary but an incident that occurred one Sunday night illustrates how conscientiously they adhere **to** the standards which they do hold. I was sitting in a kitchen chatting with one of the men, when a young girl was somewhat rudely rebuked, as I thought, by her mother, for merely humming the refrain of " White Wings." Not suspecting the real reason for the rebuke I asked her why the lassie shouldn't sing—it was a good tune—whereupon she turned on me almost fiercely:

" Dinna ye ken that this is the Sabbath day ? There is a time for everything, a place for everything, and a day for everything. The Sabbath day is nae day for sich like songs as that."

An anecdote rather than an incident, but revealing a trait, came under my notice one afternoon in a conversation between two women. One was regretting that " swear words " were coming to figure frequently in her husband's conversation.

" My mon," replied the other, " never swears—except in the pit. O' course he swears with the men below ground, but when he comes up, never a swear."

Left to themselves in off hours the men who do not have fireside ties (and some who do) are inclined to seek some outside activity or relaxation. Many of them walk a good deal, especially on Sunday. There are a number of charming walks a little outside of Kelty, through Maryborough and towards Kinross, and on the Blairadam estate—to the Kerry Crags with associations of Scott, the ruins of an old Castle of the Lindsays, Benarty, Loch Leven and many more. The miners are not uncommonly fishers. Bicycling is becoming more and more popular. The grosser, or I might say, more social spirits turn to the Club or the Public-house. One or two groups of men playing cards on the grass by the roadside not far from the railway line attracted my attention day after day. The library has its circle and the various organisations of the Churches have theirs. The Friendly Societies are tending to become somewhat more social, and this is a hopeful sign. These men are quite capable of working out the salvation of their own leisure if they but have the opportunity.

Politically the Fife miner is a most canny individual. Liberal traditionally he does not evince that same enthusiasm for fresh movements that many of his brother miners in some other parts of the country do.

As for the Church influence, I think it may be said to be real—what there is of it. " Conversion " is a scientific fact in their lives. Their religion does become a dynamic influence. It is of a homely conservative type, but as with most simple things, it is true. In a word, the religion of the Fife miner is more in his everyday life than in his prayers or his church going.

Under the heading, " The Temperance Question and the Gothenburg Experiment," the actual state of the temperance question in Kelty was dealt with both in its direct and indirect bearings to the " Gothenburg " public house. This enterprise was started to "counteract habits of intemperance;" it was hoped that it would help to diminish drunkenness in the village. This it can hardly be said to have done. On the other hand it 'has clearly justified itself through the widespread general interest in the temperance question that it has aroused, and if it may be compared to an ordinary public-house it is, in my estimation, a slight improvement. There is an elimination of private profits, which is a fundamental advance. The profits are used in part, for the common weal of the community, and this does not tend to materially increase drinking so far as any facts bearing on this point as yet show. Wholesome counteracting influences are the most effective means of keeping men away from the public house. This point seems to me so important, that a further illustration of the need for considering it at all times in connection with the temperance question is in keeping with the trend of this chapter and germane to the present phase.

Emile Souvestre has pointed to the crux of the situation in *Un Philosophe sous les Toils. "* Economists," he says, " have been trying for a long time to discover how best to employ the energies of men. Ah! if they could but discover how best to employ their leisure! Labour in plenty there is sure to be. But where look for recreation ? The daily work provides the daily bread, but laughter gives it savour. Oh! all you philosophers ! Begin the search for pleasure I Find for us if you can, amusements that do not degrade, joys that uplift. Invent a holiday that gives everyone pleasure, and makes none ashamed." There never was a person yet who has studied this problem as it is, among those who are its greatest sufferers, but who feels the pressing need for reform along the lines of recreation. This side of the question looms very large when seen near to. At the same time there are other matters which are closely allied, and the following conversation which I once had with a group of city working men brings them out with no little force, at the same time it emphasizes afresh the point which I am

here endeavouring to lay special stress upon. They were a company of ordinary typical Scottish working men—a mason, one or two factory hands, an ex-soldier—and I was the only outsider present. We were discussing the public houses in a general way, and I was interested in getting their views upon temperance efforts.

" If you are to keep the working man out of the public hoose, you maun gie him better places to live in," said one. " I come hame at night weary. The pub is a cheerier place than the hooses of this part of the toon. Mak' the hame better and he'll no want to gae near the pub."

" The pubs have ' free-an-easies' on the Saturday nicht. Ye should gie the working man gude concerts and smokers," threw in a second.

" Do you know,[1]' inquired a third, " do you know that there is not a place in this part of the toon where a working man can gie hisself a wash ? "

That I thought a most penetrating and important query. Too often a man drinks because he is uncomfortable, there is something the matter with him and he does not know what. He takes a glass of liquor on chance. *En fond* his discomfort is due to hygienic causes.

"I dinna ken aboot this," put in another, "but I ken fine that there should be enough men's clubs for every working man in the toon."

" Yes," interrupted a fifth " you should gie us more Clubs, you should gie us decenter hooses, and baths I suppose, but you know, you can't reform an old stager like me. It's no use. These things are a' What you can do is to gie Clubs an' sich-like to the bairns. Interest them instead of lettin' "em run the streets an[1] they'll ne'er hae the desire for't."

Up to this point I did not utter one word. These remarks came spontaneously from them. The majority of these men would agree that the temperance problem is to a very large degree an " Amusements of the People" problem. This is nearing bedrock, but there are some, like the last man quoted, who are not to be reached by any amount of amusement. In an analytical examination like the present one, it cannot be hoped to do more than point to the vulnerable points and suggest what experiences prove the effective remedies, and to define as

dogmatically as is possible the impregnable points and suggest how they may best be battled with. " You don't know what you are talking about," said a confirmed drunkard to me once, "you were never drunk. When you are drunk you feel a great man. Look at me, what am I? I'm nobody. But when I'm drunk I'm everybody's master." Others have testified to the hopeful mood induced by alcohol. Professor James[2] asserts that " the sway of alcohol over mankind is unquestionably due to its power to stimulate the mystical faculties of human nature, usually crushed to earth by the cold facts and criticisms of the sober hour—It is in fact the great exciter of *the yes* function in man. It brings its votary from the chill periphery of things to the radiant core. It makes him for the moment one with truth. Not through mere perversity do men run after it. *To the poor and unlettered it stands in the place of symphony concerts and of literature"*

"For further scientific evidences on this point see "Substitutes for the Saloon," published by Haughton, Mifflin & Co. for " The Committee of Fifty." Pages 335-336.

'"The varieties of religious experience." The Gifford Lectures of 1901-1902 delivered at the University of Edinburgh. Page 387,

On all of these grounds drunkenness may be combated, but it is essential that we should know the special relation of each individual to the whole problem and be fully aware just how far individual appeal is likely to carry us. I am aware of the danger of trespassing at too great length upon this topic. But I am so convinced that the supercilious indifference of many social reformers to the power of moral correctives, and the shameful unbelief of moral advocates, often their total neglect of the other side, are together responsible for much stagnation in the forward work of this question. A chain must first be thrown round it and then tightened with equal force from every point—and this with the only hope that some day there may be left as foremost difficulty the well-nigh insoluble one of the heredity taint.

The Gothenburg experiment, then, has been of immense value not only to Kelty and to Fife, but to the country at large in focusing all kinds of minds upon this important problem. It must be borne in mind that this is still an experiment which is in its early stages. The whole broad question awaits action. In the meantime it is well to suspend judgment and at least give this scheme time to prove its worth, or, if it is to be, its inefficiency.

After only one summer among the Fife miners I dare not presume to pass any judgment, presuming that I *know* them. My impressions, however, were bought with a price, and the record of the whole transaction I have tried to set down here clearly, frankly, and above all fairly.

The work, the play, the serious interests and the men have all been dealt with. After all is done and said, I worked, and I played, I joined the Union and the Club, and went on jaunts, and Sunday-school picnics, not for the work's sake, nor the play's sake, nor for the benefit of the Union, the privilege of the Club, or the pleasures of the jaunts and picnics, but rather that I might get closer to my miner in as many different ways, and see him in as many different lights as possible. It was the Fife miner whom I wanted to know. I found his life very different from my own, but I accepted it as I found it. And now in conclusion I desire to express for what it is worth, my impressions summarised and set down as a concrete whole. The feelings with which I have come away are mingled respect and admiration ; my recollections of the hard experiences in the pits and above ground are lightened by hope. The miner has his crudities, his roughness, his faults. Of these I have not been sparing. But when I place myself by his side, feeling that my own are perhaps less apparent, and judging by the standards of the eternal verities, I am almost startled to confession ;— I make haste to put down as my last view of him the one word, APPRECIATION.

APPENDIX.

25 Upper Grove Place
Edinburgh, Sept. 7, 1902

Dear Mr Weir,

There seems to be a belief common among the Fife miners that the dividends of the Fife Coal Company a year or two ago amounted to 52 ½ per cent. During my stay at Kelty, I found that this was universally accepted by them. You, being more conversant with these things and more familiar with the men, can perhaps tell me if I am right in accepting this as the commonly asserted fact.

I am further led o believe that the actual declared dividends are somewhat misleading to the outsider owing to the so called "watering down" of the shares. The "watering down" as I understand it, consists or consisted in so adding to the original shares that each one is now worth three times its original value. This is the explanation that the men give, and if it is wrong or fallacious, will it not be asking too much of you to put me right?

Believe me,
Faithfully yours,

KELLOGG DURLAND
FIFE AND KINROSS MINERS'
ASSOCIATION

Miners' Office, Victoria Street
Dunfermline.

DEAR DURLAND,

I have your letter inquiring about the Fife Coal Company's dividends and the "watering down" of stock. I think you don't exaggerate as to the dividends. The "watering down" of stock is sometimes difficult to understand, and I do not presume to a knowledge of the inner workings of the Fife Coal Company; but this I can confidently assert, that I have pointed out the fact that the share capital of the Fife Coal Company was tripled in value by a stroke of a pen for the purpose of concealing the actual amount of dividends paid from time to time. This I have done in the presence of the Managing Director of the Company and no attempt at contradiction was made.

Yours faithfully

JOHN WEIR.

No 12

Proceedings at Conferences

BETWEEN

Members of the Conciliation Board of the Coalowners of Scotland

AND

The Scottish Miners' Federation. .

(Report of meeting held on 8th February 1901. Pages 71-72.) The Vice-Chairman. ..... John Wilson in a circular to the shareholders said that even in dull years they paid 42 per cent, in dividends.

The Chairman—After rubbing out two-thirds of their capital.

The Vice-Chairman—Of course, that was their lookout. (Laughter.) They paid 42 per cent.

The Chairman—That was a financial transaction as Mr. Carlow said.

The Vice-Chairman—Mr. Carlow's people paid 40 per cent. And for that it requires 2/- a ton, so that Mr. Carlow must have had a gross profit of 2/-a ton on the whole output. That is a most extraordinary thing, and a far higher realised profit per ton than even Mr. Nimmo says. They earn 1/9 and Mr. Carlow's people alone have earned 2/- a ton.

Mr. Carlow—I don't think that it was extraordinary, considering the wages that the men were getting. Do you know how much we paid each person employed underground last year ? They averaged £10$: 9/- per man and boy employed for the twelve months' working.

The Vice-Chairman—That should almost have kept them comfortably.

Mr. Carlow—Yes, and we should get a little extra when the men are so well treated. It is for men and boys, you know ; it is per person employed.

The Vice-Chairman—That is a very fair wage indeed, and I am very glad to hear it. I hope they will earn as much this year. For my knowledge of Mr. Carlow, I feel sure that he has no very great desire to have his men and boys working for any less than £105.

Mr. Carlow—So long as I get 50 per cent. I don't mind.

Note :—The Chairman was Mr. A. K. M'Cosh, representative of the Coalowners ; the Vice-Chairman was Mr. Robert Smillie, representative of the Scottish Miners' Federation.

Mr. Carlow is the Managing Director of the Fife Coal Company.—K. D.