THE VALLEY OF DEATH.

A Visit to the Ruins of the Exploded Powder Mills.

A SCENE OF DESOLATION.

Men Risk their Lives for a Dollar and a Quarter a Day.

Cumminsville was a sorrow-stricken village Thursday. The terrible calamity that had desolated the homes of four of its inhabitants was so unexpected and so awful in its results that the face of every man was blanched and the eyes of every woman were red with weeping over the woes of their neighbors. The powder mills had furnished employment for the support of many a home in the village in the long number of years the mills had ground out the deadly stuff which created such havoc yesterday, and the feeling of indifference to the dangerous employment had grown so that the works were regarded very much as a foundry or a mill would be looked on in Hamilton. The grimy-faced powder makers worked on with death on every hand, but with little thought of their peril. This fancied security had a rude and terrible awakening yesterday when three of the mills were blown into fragments and six men were hurled through the air like pieces of timber. The village is small and there was hardly a household in it without a friend or relative who was in some way connected with the powder mills. The reports of the explosions had not died away before the villagers flocked to the little valley in which the works stood, many of them yet afraid that the three explosions might be followed by others, and fearing every moment that the magazines containing

FIFTY THOUSAND KEGS OF POWDER

would add their force to the destruction that had already been wrought. Fortunately their fears were not confirmed. It is only powder in process of manufacture that explodes so easily, and none of the *debris* or sparks reached the magazines that occupy secluded positions in the little valley, which yesterday was the Valley of Death.

LOCATION OF THE MILLS.

Cumminsville is in the township of Nelson, Halton county, north and east of Waterdown and about 16 miles from this city. It will be easily understood that the explosion must have been tremendous when it was felt and heard so plainly in Hamilton. The mills have been located there for over 30 years, and the Superintendent, Mr Corlett, has been engaged in them for 29 years. In a valley on the edge of the Twelve Mile Creek, which finally empties into the lake at Bronte, stand—or stood—the different buildings which constitute the works of the Hamilton Powder Company. There were ten buildings in all, of which seven now remain. These buildings were used for the manufacture and storage of the powder, which is shipped to order to the nearest point on the Canadian Pacific or any of the other railways. The buildings are all wooden, and loosely put together in view of possible accidents. They are of little value. The valley is thickly wooded, and the trees include many willows, which are used in the manufacture of sporting powder. The company has about 160 acres of land along the creek, and the buildings are scattered among the trees with the view of preventing just what happened yesterday—the explosion of one mill from the concussion of the explosion of another. The company's land is about three-quarters of a mile to the south of the village.

A DANGEROUS BUSINESS.

As already stated, the explosions occurred a few minutes after half-past 12, when only six men were at work, three in the cracker mill and three in the press house. No person was in the glazing mill, which was also destroyed. These three houses stood about 100 yards apart. Little wooden tramways connect all the mills, and the powder is sent from one to the other on this railway. The cars are also built of wood. Powder is made up chiefly of soda and charcoal, instead of saltpetre and charcoal as formerly. The soda is ground in the grist mill, and, being damp, is then dried by friction. If it was allowed to dry in pans it would crystallize again, and to overcome this the drying is done in the wheel house, where heavy wheels pass over it, the friction drying it and the weight preventing crystallization. The wheel house is considered the dangerous spot in a powder mill. The foreman of the wheel house, who is in charge of the charcoal department, is usually called

THE BLACK BOSS.

It was the wheel house that blew up on the previous occasions on which there were explosions at the mills. From this place the material goes to the press, where it is packed into cakes by the application of enormous pressure. These cakes are sent to the crackers, where they are run through rollers and ground to the required size. When the powder has gone through the glaze house it is ready for packing into kegs. Though there has never before been any loss of life at these mills no one needs to be told that the man who works in a powder factory is not in a very safe occupation. But it will be astonishing to many to know that men will work for low wages at such a dangerous business, for the average wages of the poor fellows who were killed was but $1.25 a day.

WITH THEIR LIVES IN THEIR HANDS.

Not only is powder-making always dangerous, but the class of work on which the mills were running was more than usually so. For about a week past the mills had not been making new powder, but had been re-grinding old stuff. An order had been received to grind down No. 1, the largest grained, or blasting powder, and make it into No 3, two sizes smaller. The great danger in this work arises from the fact that the material is not damp, as in the manufacture of "green" or new powder. It is dry and very dusty. Usually the men could not see to pick up a shovel from the ground so thick was the dust in the mills, and this powder dust was all the time clogging up the machinery. The rollers were grinding up blasting powder when the explosion came.

The men knew their danger, and yesterday it was said that several of them had remonstrated with Superintendent Corlett and the black boss. "Poor Hetherington!" said one of the men yesterday, "He told Mr. Corlett yesterday that 80 barrels of stuff was enough to run through in a day."

"What was done about it?"

"Poor Bill was told that others could be got to do the work if it did not suit him. They sent up for Jake Greenlees to take his job, but Bill went to work. To-night his mother's heart is broken over his death. He never knew what happened him."

HOW IT HAPPENED.

The three mills which blew up did not stand in a straight line, but formed the points of a triangle, the sides of which were about 200 feet long. Most of the men were at dinner, and thus the number of men in the mills was smaller than at any other time during the day. The general opinion is that the cracker house went first. None of the men in this mill escaped, and the house was shattered to matchwood. The roar of the exploding mills and the crash of the flying timbers and machinery through the woods were followed by a dead silence. The white clouds of smoke that shot up with the flash of the deadly stuff were followed by a dark pall of thick, heavy smoke, which hung over the valley for hours. Then the debris took fire. The fire was put out by the mill hands and the neighbors, while the wives and children of the missing men added their cries to the general confusion and terror of the scene. The fire did not spread, fortunately for the neighbood and for places that are not in the immediate vicinity of the mills.

If the explosion of 300 kegs at a distance of 16 miles could be so plainly felt and heard in this city, what would have been the result if four or five magazines had caught fire, one of which, of 40,000 kegs capacity, is said to be nearly full? The glaze and press house went up immediately after the crackers, being exploded by the concussion. The shock would not explode powder except in process of manufacture, and so the magazines were safe except in case of fire. The little creek which supplies the power for the works babbled yesterday past the charred timbers and blackened trees just as it did before, but the mills had disappeared and the men who had worked there were dead or dying.

SEARCHING FOR THE BODIES.

Among the trees and down the creek the rescuing party searched for the missing men. The three men in the press had seen the danger and ran. Two of them escaped alive, but George Matthews took the direction in which the *debris* was blown and was killed by a flying timber. He was badly burned, but the burns were not the cause of death. The others were blown into the race-way, from which Albert Culp was able to climb out and walk to the watch house, though he is badly burned about the face, hands, ankles and back, and has a bruise on the head where he was struck by a piece of timber. Doherty was a pitiable object when taken from the water. He is burned all over the limbs and body, and terribly charred from the knees to the chest. The timbers broke his right arm and scalped him, but he is a man of extraordinary strength, and it was only his splendid constitution that kept him alive. He was quite conscious, and was taken home in terrible agony from his burns and wounds. Dr. Jones, of Cumminsville, was on hand 5 minutes after the accident, and his skill and care greatly assuaged the pain of the survivors. He could not give much hope of Doherty's recovery, but said that Culp might possibly recover. The men in the cracker mill were blown 100 yards away in different directions. Tibble was found in the creek, Hetherington was blown up and over the trees a hundred feet in the air, and Murray was hurled away towards the waggon road leading through the grounds. Matthews' body was not found until after searching an hour or more. The water had been drawn off the dam in the expectation that the body had been thrown into the water. All the dead men were blackened by the powder, and their hair had been scorched away except in the case of Matthews. They were not badly mangled, but most of the clothing had been torn from them by the violence with which they were hurled through the woods. The bodies of Matthews, Murray and Tibble were taken to Harvey's flour mill laid in a store-room and covered with sacks. Blackened and disfigured, and with their jaws tied up by bands of white cotton, the three bodies presented an awful sight, and there was but little conversation in the knot of people who stood about the door of the mill. Hetherington was taken to his mother's home.

THE BLACK BOSS REMONSTRATED

with the Superintendent that the mills were running too hard, and that it was becoming dangerous. Mr. Corlett told him that the company kept telegraphing and hurrying him up, and the work had to be done. There was no time to oil up or get the machinery in order, and something had to give before long."

"I blame ourselves," said another powder maker. "We knew what chances we were taking, and we should have told Corlett that this had to be settled and eighty barrels was all we could or would run."

"Yes," interrupted the first speaker, "and we would have been told as the black boss told Bill Hetherington that others could be found to do our work. The pay is not big, but it came regular every month, and steady work solong as there is water to run the wheels, and none of us have much money to lay back on if we get out of the mills."

"And because we haven't must we let the company run us so hard that we can't hope to escape alive? I tell you that this accident would never have happened if the men and the mills hadn't been crowded till nothing could stand the strain. The machinery was run twice as fast as it ought to be, and there were six of us in the crackers where the work used to be done by two men. The machines were started at daylight and run right along. The mills were full of dust from the old dry powder and the oil holes were plugged with the particles. No time was allowed to clean these out, and there is no doubt among the men that the crash was the result of the hustling that was going on since Saturday. We had only half an hour now for dinner, where we used to have an hour.

THE SHOCK AT CUMMINSVILLE.

The shock at Cumminsville was not nearly so severe nor the report so loud as might have been expected from the proximity of the village to the mills. The shock travelled more in this direction and little or no damage was done in the village. Pieces of timber were blown half a mile away, but did no damage. Poor Tibble's house in the orchard above the mills was the nearest dwelling. The plaster was knocked from the walls and the dishes thrown from the tables. Dr. Macgregor, of Waterdown, drove to the mills in thirty five minutes.

KILLED.—George Matthews, William Murray, Henry Tibble, William Hetherington, Daniel Doherty.

INJURED.—Albert Culp.

All of the men killed and wounded, except Hetherington, had large families to support, and Hetherington was the mainstay of a widowed mother, who is now almost distracted over the loss of her favorite son.

Comfort For Travellers.

Railroad men have for a long time been aware of many faults in the common arrangements for coupling engines to passenger trains, the usual plan followed being the use of the ordinary link, formerly the only coupler known for both passenger and freight train service, but at present confined almost wholly to the latter. Although inventors have been at work for half a century improving passenger coach couplers to keep the vehicles from bumping against each other while running, and, while their efforts have been attended with eminent success, the coupler on the tender has remained practically untouched. In some instances horn castings have been attached in the tender drawbar, thus reducing the loose distance by meeting the car buffer, but this improvement was far from being effective, and was merely better than nothing. Under certain conditions of train running, this loose coupling would give an uncomfortable vibration to the whole train, and at times the application of the brake would cause a jerking of the cars in a disagreeable way. To remedy the many drawbacks to a loose coupling, Mr. George H. Colby, master mechanic of the Boston & Albany Railroad, has invented an attachment for locomotive tenders, which in effect continues the Miller hook throughout the entire train. This device is easily applied to any tender, is automatic in action and prevents accidents in coupling. When it is remembered that the engine is coupled and uncoupled many more times than the separate cars of a train, it must be acknowledged that these are important advantages. There are no links or pins to break, and no slack to be taken up, thus securing the smooth starting and stopping of trains, resulting in increased comfort to passengers. It also prevents the swaying motion of the tender and forward car, and consequent side wear and tendency to breakage of truck boxes. Being within reach from the platform of the forward car, it can be operated with perfect ease. It practically couples the locomotive to a car just as two cars are coupled, and makes the whole of the train an unbroken unit. As every improvement of this kind increases the safety of train operating, and tends to weaken the force of accidents, besides increasing the comfort of passengers, it becomes a matter in which every one is interested. The Colby coupling attachment consists principally of a heavy casting, which is attached to the tender frame and holds the miller hook, a spring hunter and the means of operating the drawbar. The forward end of the drawbar is pinned to a heavy threaded spring encircled bolt, secured under the tender, between the frames, in a strong casting. A spiral spring, secured to the draw-bar immediately behind the bumper beam, draws the head to the position it occupies when coupled. The act of uncoupling is done by a wheel and staff, which operates a chain and ratchet. The invention is being applied to the passenger engines of the Boston & Albany and several of the eastern railroads, and locomotive builders of the country have adopted it as their standard for all passenger engines.

The Professional Grumbler.

Your regular professional grumbler is generally a gentlemen inclined to be stout, and partial to a snooze after dinner. He affects ample folds of broadcloth; is curious in the matter of worsted comforters for keeping his throat warm, and small India rubber boots for keeping his feet dry. He is a comfortable man—very precise and regular in his habits—and has a comfortable house, with everything in it as precise and regular as himself. He has no great misfortunes to bewail, consequently he grumbles at the smallest miseries. His very comfort turns into the serpent that stings him. He is perpetually finding out subjects for pathetic complaint. If he is not eloquent upon the dust in the street he will be overpowering on the mud. The weather always seems to be engaged in a conspiracy against him. The east wind he holds to be the ringleader. He is persuaded that it was only created to waft rheumatism on its wings and keep up the average supply of sciatica. If, however, the weather be still and close and hot, he knows very well that fever is brewing—he is sure of it, mark his words—nothing else can be expected from this confounded choky day. If he goes out without his umbrella and the clouds gather and the rain falls he is almost speechless with indignation. It is always so, always his luck—were he to have incumbered himself with a great awkward umbrella the rain would never have thought of coming on, never. To hear him you would suppose that the clerk of the weather signal office was a real personage; that he and the grumbler had quarrelled in their youth and that the official in question being of a spiteful turn of mind had never forgotten the old grudge.—*Brooklyn Eagle.*

A Fallen Fair One.

A New York despatch says: Mary Hoyt, daughter of the late Jesse Hoyt, the millionaire, a contest over whose will has been in progress for months, was arraigned at the Yorkville Police Court yesterday on the charge of being drunk and disorderly. She created a disturbance yesterday at the Grand Central depot and assaulted a policeman and sergeant. She was locked up, but released on bail. When arraigned yesterday she maintained that she had not been intoxicated, but was suffering from the effects of medicine. The police and other witnesses testified that she was drunk. The justice fined her $10. Miss Hoyt is 40 years old and has been an inmate of an insane asylum.

HAD HER OWN WAY.

Romantic Marriage of a Young Lady in Montreal.

A last (Thursday) evening's Montreal despatch says: Another of those romantic nuptials took place here late this afternoon, surprising all but the immediate friends of the families, which shows that the Canadian fair sex belonging to wealthy families, when they come of age, are following the example of their sisters or cousins across the border, giving their hand and heart to those they love in preference to pleasing their parents and families. Although the celebration did not partake of as much privacy as the marriage of the young heiress of the St. Eustache at Notre Dame Cathedral here in all its environments it differs exceedingly little from that episode in two young lives. Miss Jessie Victoria Buntin, third daughter of the millionaire paper manufacturer, Mr. Alex. Buntin, voluntarily became engaged four years ago to Doctor A. Lapthorn Smith, a member of a most respectable family, which has distinguished itself in the service of the Dominion, from one of the Maritime Provinces, and who commenced practice three or four years since in this city, after holding the position of resident Medical Superintendent of the General Hospital. It appears the young couple were disposed to join hands at a much earlier period, but the parents of the young lady positively refused to even listen to the proposition. If patience be a virtue, the devoted pair are entitled to credit, for they have waited long and anxiously for the natal day of the fair young bride to come, when she could exercise her legal right of deciding for herself. When the mother saw that her daughter was resolved to follow her own heart's desire she relented, and through her persuasion got the obstinate father to finally but reluctantly give his consent. The climax was reached by a private wedding this afternoon, at which the family pastor, Rev. James Barclay, M.A., assisted by Rev. J. Edgar Hill, B.D., the bridegroom's pastor, officiated, and made two yearning hearts as one. The remaining unmarried sister, Miss Cacouna Buntin, was the only bridesmaid present, and Mr. Nolan Delisle acted as the husband's best man. The bride, who is *petite* in stature but exceedingly attractive in appearance, was elegantly and tastefully dressed in a grey Ottoman silk, with trimmings and every ornament to match, was given away by her father. The couple left immediately by train for St. Albans, being given an ovation at the depot when they alighted. A trip through the chief cities of the States will follow, and the young couple will return very soon to the city, as the doctor is in extensive practice. This is the third marriage in the family of Mr. and Mrs. Buntin. The eldest young lady was married to an Italian Duke of old family. The second to a doctor practising in Detroit, who was Dr. Smith's predecessor in the General Hospital here, and who subsequently settled in Michigan. All the marriages but this one were on an elaborate scale, the *elite* of the city being present. All the young ladies were superbly educated in Paris, France. The last one married was a universal favorite in society here, and many of her former admirers will envy her respected husband his good luck.

AN OBJECTIONABLE BRIDEGROOM.

A last Friday night's Montreal despatch says Mr. Alexander Buntin emphatically denies that he gave his daughter away yesterday at her marriage, as neither he nor Mrs. Buntin attended the wedding, which they disapproved of. The ceremony did not take place, as is usually the case with Presbyterians, at the family mansion. There is much sympathy felt for Mr. Buntin under the circumstances, as he has had a good deal of trouble lately. It may be stated, however, that the bridegroom has always sustained a high moral character, and is without a stain upon his escutcheon. It is understood the objection of the parents of the young wife is purely personal.

A Hotel in the Sea.

The situation of the hotel where I am stopping is especially charming; it is built over the water, so that the sea actually passes under the rooms. There is a long, glass inclosed balcony looking seaward, from which one never tires of surveying the blue Mediterranean beyond and below. There is always variety in the movements of the sea. Now its swash is so gentle and soothing that it is the most effective of lullabies when one wishes to fall asleep. Again, the sea is in an uproar, and the spray leaps up to the very windows. The illusion that we are actually at sea is quite hard to shake off at times. The fish have learned to watch for the refuse that is committed to the sea from the hotel galleries, and are consequently very tame. Portly looking fellows a foot or two long come right under the balcony and stare up impertinently at us. The temptation is strong to make them atone for their temerity, and not a few of them have been hauled up with rod and line to the broad verandah. One day somebody got up more enthusiasm than usual and cast a torpedo from the balcony into a school of inquisitive marine beauties. A boy sprang in after the explosion and brought three fat fellows to the surface. Many others were stunned, but not sufficiently to keep them from evading the swimmer. Nets are also cast in front of the hotel and many bushels of fish meat captured.—*Beyrout Letter to New Orleans Times-Democrat.*

A Countess Returns.

Mrs. Nobody—Ah! how d'e do, countess? I am so glad to see you home again; but I was in hopes you would bring your husband with you. Let me see, it is three months since you were married, is it not?

New Countess, whose former beau wrote for the Philadelphia *Call* (wearily)—Yes, three months, three months.

"The count is well, I hope?"

"Yes, he is, I believe."

"And I suppose you enjoyed life in his grand castle?"

"For a while, yes; but you see it took all my fortune to pay off his old debts on it."

"Indeed! Poor child! How I wish I could help you!"

"You can."

"How?"

"Let me have your family wash

A Chinese waul—Celestial music.

A POSTPONED WEDDING.

An Old Couple Attempt to Trade Their Daughter Off for a Farm—She Knew Better.

A Port Jervis despatch says: A wealthy middle aged widower named Dominick Mines owns a farm on the border of Wayne and Luzerne Counties, Penn. It is occupied by a farmer named Obert, and Mines boarded there with his family. Obert's daughter Lena is a pretty girl of 18 years. Both Obert and his wife are noted for being extremely close-fisted, and for an almost insane desire to be rich. A month or so ago Mines offered to make a deed of a farm near the one on which he lived if he would give him his daughter in marriage. Although the daughter was entirely ignorant of the fact that the widower Mines desired to marry her, her parents eagerly accepted his offer. They said nothing to the girl about their intentions toward her, and Mines never alluded to the subject in his daily conversations with her. The Oberts at once began to prepare for the wedding which was set down for the evening of Oct. 1st. Week before last Mrs. Obert greatly astonished her daughter by telling her that she intended to give a large party. She gave her no hint, however, as to what the occasion of the party was to be. The people who were invited were also not informed of the true character of the gathering. The fact that the Oberts were to give a party created great surprise in the neighborhood, as they had never been known before to extend the slightest hospitality to any one. A new dress was ordered for Lena, and it was brought home from Scranton by her father on the afternoon of the day of the party. With it were so many things that suggested bridal apparel that the girl laughingly said to her mother that if she wore them people would think she was to be a bride. Her mother thereupon told her all, and that the neighbors had been invited to witness her marriage to Dominic Mines. A neighbor's girl who had been engaged to help in the house on the day and evening, says that upon hearing the truth about the party Lena stood for some time staring at her mother pale and speechless. Then she seized the wedding garments, and, tearing them into shreds, scattered them about the room. After denouncing both her father and mother for their unnatural conduct she left the house. She walked all the way to Scranton, where she has friends, where she is still. The true situation at Obert's was explained to the guests as they arrived for the party, and all of them left the house filled with indignation at the parents of the girl and with feelings of sympathy and admiration for the daughter who had so bravely refused to barter herself for their gains.

White Pine Ornamentation.

Some recent attempts with white pine appears to give it a value as an ornamental wood which its common uses have not heretofore suggested. The softness of its texture and its susceptibility to injury may have had some influence in preventing its general use for ornamental purposes, but the wood can be "filled," so that much of this objection is removed. Its pure white color—white as compared with other woods—recommends it for purposes for which holly has been heretofore used; and the size of the timber from which clear lumber may be cut is greatly in its favor, boards of a width of sixteen and even twenty inches being not uncommon, with no shade of distinction between sap wood and heart, and only the faintest perceptible grain. Some specimens lately examined show a greatly enhanced beauty by very simple treatment—the filling with warm shellac varnish, bleached shellac in alcohol, applied with a brush while warm. Several coats are given, the last coat being rubbed with pumice and rotten stone moistened with water, not oil. A finish of a flowing coat of copal varnish completes the preparation. Thus treated the wood is of a faint creamy tint with an appearance of semi transparency. Beautiful gradations of tone were obtained by panels of this prepared pine, mouldings of holly, and miles of curly or bird's-eye maple, and fine contrasts were made with the pine and oiled black walnut. The pine is too soft for floors, but for doors, casings and chamber furniture it seems to be admirably adapted. The finest specimens of the wood noted came from Michigan, having fewer pitchy streaks and being of a more uniform color than the Maine product. Its ease of working by carving, and the coherence of its grain, are being utilized by masters and amateurs in the interior wood decorations. A beautiful carved mantel relieved by pilasters of oiled black walnut has been recently finished, which suggests the mellow tints of statuary marble after a short exposure to the atmosphere, while being free from chilling sparkle and sheen of the marble.

His Coat Betrays Him.

A last (Wednesday) night's Collingwood despatch says: Last night a burglar entered the residence of Mr. Thomas Best, Maple street, and stole from the pocket of Mr. David Best $72 in bills and his gold watch and chain. After securing all he could in this room he entered Mr. Thomas Best's room, stole his watch and a couple of brooches, and managed to get away with his booty without being heard, and this morning the Messrs. Best discovered their loss. Before coming upstairs the burglar took off his overcoat, and, when leaving the house, forgot it. With this clue, Chief Constable Lewis and his assistants began a search and finally captured a man who had been seen wearing the coat the evening previous, and who they supposed to be the thief. On being searched at the jail, there were found in his pockets $50 in cash, the two watches and two brooches. The man had only a few days ago applied to the Mayor for assistance, and was allowed to sleep in the lockup. He will be brought before the Chief Magistrate to-morrow.

Only This, and Nothing More, I Ask.

Boston *Globe:* Never to be anywhere when it is a gala day;

Never to be out in weather that is all that could be desired;

Never to hear a talented and popular young soprano sing;

Never to see a versatile and rising young actor so;

Never to meet a brilliant young journalist;

Never to be accused of wearing pants;

Never to be tendered a grand complimentary testimonial benefit.