

ILLINOIS COLEY

I have been down into the world's greatest coal mine. That mine is taking out more than 10,000 tons of coal every working day. A day is eight hours. Eleven hundred miners, with picks and shovels, and a battery of electrically driven machines, gnawing and biting at the black coal seams, keep the stream of fuel coming out.

The mine broke all records for production one day last December. It brought to the surface, in eight hours, 12,825 tons of coal! By next fall it will be putting out 12,000 tons every day! To get that much coal will be a simple thing; merely sending down more men and more machines.

The mine is an Illinois mine. It is just at the edge of West Frankfort, in Franklin county. Where the town stands was nothing but farms twenty-five years ago. Today it is the home of 21,000 people. Some of West Frankfort's oldest citizens are little more than boys.

Jack Rodenbush, superintendent of the New Orient mine, for that is the name of the world's greatest mine, lays out newly laundered overalls, khaki colored. He hands us miners' caps. We get electric lights with pocket batteries. Matches are given up.

No Matches
Just the other day someone struck a match in the mine. Five bodies were brought out. We are a group of novices going down. The subject of the explosion is rather avoided. But the giving up of the matches impresses us.

We are going straight down, 500 feet. An openwork elevator rises from the black hole. It has no front or back to it. We step onto the platform and grip chains. We hang from a cable's end, nothing below us for 500 feet. A bell rings. We drop swiftly, dangle. The pits of our several stomachs rise. The square walls of our well rush upward.

Somewhere above a hand at a lever brings us to a stop, without jar, softly, within a fraction of an inch of the exact spot where we should stop. We step out—

Shadowy City
Here about us is a shadowy city of streets, and street railways, and lights—some of them red and green. We enter the underground city's power-house. It is large and straight-walled and orderly. It has many switchboards and transformers and whirring wheels. Men work among the machinery. It is difficult to believe that we are 500 feet down in the earth.

Current comes in, we are told, from the "Cips," Central Illinois Public Service Co., and the mine's monthly meter bill runs from \$12,000 to \$15,000. We move on. This scene is too metropolitan.

We come to a long tunnel. A train of dump cars extends, it seems, endlessly out into blackness. It moves up, the length of two cars and stops, moves up two more cars and stops, two more cars and stops. At each stop there is a roar. In the tunnel it is deafening. They are weighing, dumping, weighing, dumping—always two cars at a time.

Swift Operation
The cars remain in the train. They are coupled together on swivels. On to the dump, two at a time, over the roar of falling coal. Into twin hoppers. Each carload weighed by itself for the miner who filled it must be credited. How swiftly the men work! Coal to the skip-hoist, coal shooting upward, the hoist working up-and-down, up-and-down. A car of coal up the 500-foot shaft every seventeen seconds!

Twenty-five miles of tunnel down here; "rooms" innumerable. We are outbound to a point a mile away, Indian file, Jack Rodenbush ahead. The machines are out there, gnawing at the coal seams. The coal has slept here for a million years in utter silence, blackness eternal. An hour from the time steel claws rip it out it will be above, in the sunlight, graded, sorted, sized, in railroad cars!

Speeding Trains
Lights come booming down upon us. A warning and we step into a niche in the tunnelwall. Those booming lights bring a train of loaded cars. It is pulled by a squat electric locomotive. A youth lies almost flat upon it, rather jockeylike, one hand manipulating levers, the other on the trolley pole. Twenty miles an hour it comes over 70-pound steel rails.

Down a neighboring tunnel, connected by arches, comes another rumble and a rush of air. We bend against the wind. It is a train of empties going out. We follow and come to the machines. A shearing machine has cut into the coal from ceiling to floor at intervals. Another machine has under-cut the coal thus blocked out. Shots have been placed and fired.

To this comes the loading machine with its crablike claws and its endless loading belt. The machine backs and turns and moves forward, striking viciously. It looks much like its cousin, the wartime tank. And the coal goes out—

Many Employees
It costs money to operate like this, 1400 men on the payroll, 1800 before very long, they say, maintaining a city 500 feet in the earth. The payroll of the mine in December, 22 days of work, was \$214,000; in January, 21 days \$288,000! The six loading mops around West Frankfort have

a payroll of about \$8,000,000 a year. And the coal that's flowing steadily, 10,000 tons a day from the New Orient mine alone; on that record day 232 railroad freight cars heading out with coal! More than 200 cars every day and coal in the one mine to last fifty years!

Caverns and Shadows
We leave the whirl and dirt of the loading machines and it is a full mile of caverns and shadows, a long road back. Loaded trains rush by to the dump and the skip-hoist; empties roaring back. We meet new blasts of wind; giant fans pushing it down the tunnels, swift-moving trains adding to the currents. Back to the nerve-center of it all.

The endless stream is still going over the scales, two cars at a time being emptied, coal crashing down. Men check off the coal in its travels, guided by colored bulbs on a table before them, green, red, yellow. Again to our dangling platform hung on a steel spider's web. Three bells. This time the walls of the shaft rush down. The pit of the stomach sags. Sudden daylight breaks. The wind outdoors seems biting cold.

There's more to see. The stream of coal we met below is now going over the screens. They shake and jog and jiggle and the smaller pieces drop through holes to other screens beneath. The coal is sized, shiny and clean, into eleven grades. As it moves over tables men stand all day picking, picking, picking out the impurities and laying them aside.

A battery of booms carry the coal down to a battery of open coal cars. The trains move up, side by side, on parallel tracks. Nine cars can be loaded at a time; nine different grades of coal going to market.

King of Mines
This mighty mine, king of them all, in a district filled with big mines, is

owned by the Chicago, Wilmington & Franklin Coal Co. It was designed throughout. I was told by George B. Harrington, of Chicago, president. Joe Louis, general superintendent of the company's many mines, pointed out to me "the largest safety lamp room in the world"—2,000 lamps, and the "world's largest flywheel set hoist." He showed, too, that all the wires are buried, even in the tunnels, except, of course, the trolley wires.

Let us now turn a moment to the city of West Frankfort. The first town was known as Frankfort. It stood on a hill looking down across the valley of the Big Muddy river. Legend says that a man named Frank built a post that passed for a fort there in the beginning. A town was laid out on the hill in 1818. The first court house in Franklin county was built there in 1826; the first brick building in the county on the square in 1832.

Came elapse of time. The village, in 1902, had a little group of stores and 300 inhabitants. Then came the mines and railroads to the mines and the merchants on the hill stamped. In a twinkling the square was deserted of business. The most of the 300 inhabitants left for there was wealth down the hill in the valley.

Growth of City
West Frankfort grew and Frankfort ceased to be. Another town update somewhere appropriated the name of Frankfort even. As West Frankfort swelled to its 21,000 souls and became more of a city than a mining camp, paved, built schools and churches, good stores, got even a handsome golf and country club, people began to migrate back to the "hill."

Today they call it Frankfort Heights. Soon, probably, it will be

amalgamated with West Frankfort. This city claims the glory of being the largest city in all that stretch of southern Illinois known as Egypt. And here, because of the great coal reaches and many mines, is a network of railroad running everywhere.

As I leave West Frankfort a picture sticks with me. Ten thousand tons of coal coming up out of a mine in an eight hour day is—well, it's a mighty stream of coal.

The good advice handed out to the school and college graduates is at least very comforting to the parents.

The taxes in Great Britain are so heavy that the average Englishman must work one day in each five for the government, according to estimates. When Coolidge and Mellon get out of a job here John Bull ought to hire 'em.

Reports say that the Berlin public jeered the march of the steel helmeted monarchists the other Sunday.

ADJUDICATION NOTICE
PUBLIC NOTICE is hereby given that the Subscriber Administrator of the estate of John H. Carlberg, deceased, will attend the Probate Court of Lake County, at a term thereof to be held at the Court House in Waukegan in said County, on the first Monday of August next, 1927, when and where all persons having claims against said estate are notified and requested to present the same to said Court for adjudication.

North Shore Trust Company, Waukegan, Ill., May 19, 1927.
Bowen E. Schumacher, Attorney for Administrator. 13-15

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