

ROYAL RANGER RALPH:

The Waif of the Western Prairies.

BY WELDON J. COBB.

CHAPTER IV. THE PRISONER. On and on with the speed of the wind dashed the two horses, bearing in flight to safety the intrepid Darrel Grey and the courageous and lovely Inez Tracey...

"What is it?" asked Darrel quickly. "Look!" He repeated her own ejaculation of concern, as the advancing daylight showed an obstacle to their onward progress down the main canyon...

"This is strange," murmured Inez, unconsciously. "The horse must be exhausted with the long drive." Her face became white as marble the next moment, however. She had made a sudden discovery, and she was starting and calling that a low cry of dread escaped her lips...

MINING OUR BLACK DIAMONDS.

I have just spent a few days at the United States geological survey in Washington, writes Frank G. Carpenter, looking up facts about coal mining. The geologists know more about coal than any one else. They can tell you just how the world looked when coal was made, and they describe how there were ages of luxuriant growth consisting of pine trees, fir trees and all kinds of mosses and plants, which, dying down year after year, became a great matted bed of vegetation...

pushed by little steamers, and so fastened together that a single steamer will push acres of coal. Loads of twenty thousand tons are taken. A vast amount of coal is carried on the canals and the great lakes from one of the chief highways of the coal traffic.



AN EXPLOSION.

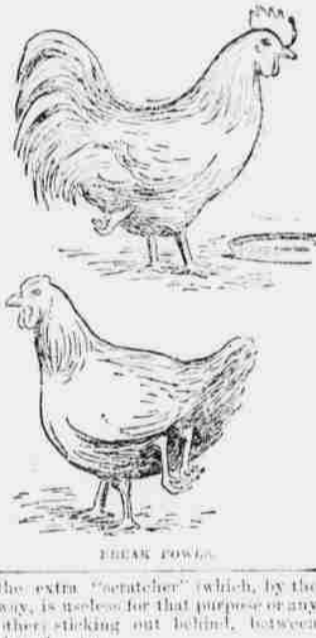
There is also danger from fire damp, or the union of the gases of the mine brought together by the light from a lamp or candle. This causes a great explosion. It comes like a stroke of lightning, and with a clap of thunder. As the explosion occurs a roaring whirlwind of flame goes through the tunnels, pulling down the timbers and causing in the walls. It burns everything within reach. Miners are blinded, scorched and sometimes burned to embers. Hundreds have often been killed at a time by such explosions, and by the flood of carbonic acid gas which follows them.

China, 200,000 square miles; United States east of the Rockies, 192,000 square miles; Canada, 65,000 square miles; India, 35,500 square miles; New South Wales, 24,000 square miles; Russia, 2,100 square miles; United Kingdom, 11,500 square miles; Spain, 5,000 square miles; Japan, 5,000 square miles; France, 2,000 square miles; Austria-Hungary, 1,700 square miles; Belgium, 510 square miles.

Children are employed in the Belgian mines today. The English and Scotch used them for years. They were taken into the mines at seven, eight and nine years of age, and were kept there until they grew up. The English coal veins are very thin and the tunnels are not more than a yard high. These children were used a hundred of them. They were coal, and had to crawl along on all fours with their heads above their waists and their bodies bent double. They were dressed in trowsers and shirts like men. They learned to fight and swear like the men and became bad characters. At the age of thirty they were usually worn out. In Scotland young women were employed to carry the coal on their backs out of the mines. They dragged the coal on the foot of the ladders, and then lashed it on their backs, holding it there by a strap around the forehead. When they climbed up the ladders, to get to the surface, they would have to rest for fourteen hours a day, and would be weak. It is said, which the men would not do, tramping through the water with their loads of coal. According to law women cannot be employed in our mines.

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Two Fowls with Seven Legs. A New Yorker Has a Three-Legged Rooster and a Quadruped Hen. Two freak fowls are owned by C. Easton, of the Third Street Market, East River, New York City, which are believed to be unique in their way.



BEAUFORT FOWLS. The extra "scatcher" (which, by the way, is useless for that purpose or any other sticking out behind, between the other two).

America's Oldest Egg. Near West Superior, Wis., on a steep rocky bluff stands one of the most freakish objects to be found in the world. It consists of a ledge of solid granite, which bears a most grotesque resemblance to a human head. Its cavernous mouth is partly open and its features are distorted with a hideous grin. This monstrosity is known as "Devil's Head." Prospector rub a spot above the eyes, which is said to bring them back. The Indians have a legend concerning the "skull rock" to the effect that it is nothing more or less than the petrified head of a great warrior who came from their "happy hunting ground" to protect the tribes of the Northwest against extermination by the whites.

The largest mass of pure rock salt in the world lies under the province of Galicia, in Hungary. It is known to be 750 miles long, twenty broad and 250 feet in thickness.



BEAUFORT MINERS.

work many of them. They have dug out the surface coal and they are now working at great depths. One English vein, fourteen and a half inches wide, is already down over twelve hundred feet. Such a vein would not be worked to any great depth in America. The Newcastle coal field, which is the richest in England, has veins from three to six feet thick, while the Wales coal veins are less than three feet in thickness. Some of our Pennsylvania anthracite veins run from thirty feet to sixty feet in thickness, while the Pittsburgh bituminous coal veins are from eight to sixteen feet thick. At the present rate of mining it is estimated that all the English coal will be exhausted in 212 years if it is worked down to 1000 feet, and this will be 133 feet deeper than any of the English mines now worked. Notwithstanding the enormous amounts of coal which we have taken out of our anthracite region it is estimated that we could go on at the present rate for 616 years. As England goes further down her coal mining will become more expensive, and her day as a manufacturing nation are, consequently, numbered. Already we surpass her a great deal in manufacturing, and there is no doubt that we, with our vast supplies of coal and iron, are to be the chief manufacturing nation of the future.



IN AN ENGLISH MINE.

In an English mine, the coal is carried down in great barges on navigable streams, and the grate fires of the South Wales with the rays from the black diamonds from Pennsylvania. The Ohio River is the great coal chute for the Mississippi valley. The coal is carried down in great barges