

by little the numbers decreased, people adjourning for their meals. At six o'clock, when the lights were turned down, I went with an attendant and examined the register at the door. In the four hours *two hundred and fifty-four persons* had visited the Library, a number, I believe, far exceeding anything known previously on week-days. The Sabbatarians are evidently defeated all along the line, and henceforth the opening of the public institutions on Sunday must remain a fixed law. Sydney, for once, has emerged from its Sleepy Hollow, and set an example to Melbourne, which I trust will soon be followed.

AT NEWCASTLE.

WHEN I was instructed to proceed hither, I examined the newspaper advertisements to ascertain the means of transit. The A.S.N. Co., the Newcastle S.S. Co., and the Hunter River S.S. Co., compete for public patronage. I have been travelling so frequently of late by the magnificent boats of the A.S.N. Co., that I am afraid I am getting too well known on their line; so, anxious for privacy, I determined to take passage by the Newcastle Co.'s vessel. Lime-street Wharf is a gloomy locality, and the transparency outside bearing the legend "Kembla to-night" failed to make it more cheerful. Everything was dark and dank, and the lapping of the water against the piles had a mournful sound suggestive of wrecks and suicides. I found the *Kembla* to be a small sidewheel steamer, very much like an English channel boat, the berths on the sofas in the saloon increasing the resemblance. I was informed by the steward that she is owned in Newcastle, having been started to destroy the monopoly possessed by the

other line. "We've brought down freights and passage money," said he, "but folks are ungrateful, and even our shareholders go in the other boats." This was *apropos* of my drawing attention to the small number of passengers. We had but three in the saloon: a steerage passenger, an old collier, wanted to make a fourth, and was highly indignant at being told to quit. He left, expressing a preference for the bare deck and a sheet of bark, in the possession of which he intimated he would be a better man than the Governor or any of us blanked blanks in the cabin. We started on time at a quarter past eleven. Sydney harbour on a dark night is not more impressive than Hobson's Bay. Taking off my coat and shoes, I lay down on the sofa, and shortly slept the balmy sleep of the old *voyageur*, which is not always the attribute of the virtuous.

I awoke at half-past five, and, after plunging my head into a basin of cold water, went on deck. We were just nearing the shore, and after rounding a rocky island called "Nobby's," which is connected with the mainland by the breakwater, we were in the harbour, and shortly alongside the wharf. Standing on the bridge in the grey dawn of the morning, I imbibed my first impressions of Newcastle. They were decidedly favourable. At first I imagined that here I saw greater signs of prosperity, improvement, and advancement, than at any place I have yet visited in the colonies. All along the wharf lay steamers and large sailing ships; in the stream, on the opposite shore, and far up the river, there were vessels of all sorts and sizes. Smoke from numerous tall stacks blackened the sky, destroying, of course, much of the charm of the view according to the artists' standpoint, but giving promise of employment for labour, and of useful production, which to the lovers of

humanity amply atones for the loss of the beautiful. The rails are laid alongside the water's edge, with hundreds of waggons filled with coal ready to be discharged into the holds of vessels by the aid of shoot or staith; this was an improvement on anything I have seen in New South Wales or Queensland. There was a strangely familiar shadow over everything; the drizzling rain driving down the smoke like a pall over the city, and reviving reminiscences of Pennsylvania, Lancashire, the Black Country, the Tyne, and South Wales. An immigrant from the coal districts of the old country might almost fancy himself at home here, there is so little typical of anything Australian, nothing but the tall gaunt limbs of dead gum trees, a few of which are visible in the distance. All around there are signs of wealth and energy, both called into existence by the black diamond, which is the cause of the prosperity of this neighbourhood. We said of old, in the Southern States, that "Cotton was King." Coal has been the true king, and source of England's greatness. Who knows but in time the said greatness may revert to the Australian colonies, and that coal will take its proper place in our productions, ahead of gold and wool? There is plenty of coal not discovered, nor worked in Australia.

I took my bag, borrowed from a friend on account of its age and shabbiness, and of such a disreputable appearance that a beggar would hardly pick it up in the street, and walked ashore. Then I proceeded to look for lodgings. I had no desire to go to the leading hotel, and at two others my vagabond look frightened the proprietors, who refused to take me in. At last I found a small corner house opposite the railway station. The proprietor sat drinking his morning cup of tea in a room opening into the street, evidently on the look-out for

the early customers. I was a stranger, and he took me in, but only in the literal sense; for I must declare that I have been as well treated at the Terminus Hotel as anywhere in the world. Of course, my chamber was small, but everywhere in the colonies one has to sleep in rooms in which you can hardly turn. But it is quite a novelty to meet a landlord who looks after the wants of his guests. As a rule in Australia, hotel-keepers, like those in America, are very important personages. They drive fast horses, and wear diamonds, and are great authorities on betting. It is as much as the bravest dare to complain to them. How often, at Saratoga or Longbranch, have starving guests watched with envy the proprietor sitting in all his glory at the table reserved for himself and his friends, with half-a-dozen embryo Georgia Minstrels dancing around him, whilst they could not get waited on until everything was cold! American and colonial hotelkeepers are far too great men to attend themselves to those they take in. But "Joe" Milthorpe, being a Yorkshireman, has got old country notions, and personally looks after the comfort of his guests. I must confess that in English country towns I did like to find courteous hosts in old-fashioned inns; men who would take a glass of wine with you, tell you all the news of the neighbourhood, and receive your custom as a favour. I know such are not to be met with in America, and seldom in the colonies, and when found are to be appreciated. After breakfast I took a walk round Newcastle, in defiance of wind and weather. Built on the side of a hilly promontory formed by the estuary of the Hunter River and the ocean, the city has extended itself along the flat on the edge of the harbour. Three blocks from the wharf, and the hill is almost too steep for vehicles to ascend. From this hill there is a magnificent

view of the South Pacific, and at the foot the surf rolls on to a rock-bound beach. The hospital is healthily situated on the bluff above the sands. Further along is the old and ugly church—I beg pardon, the Cathedral—which is planted in the midst of its acre of dead, just at the back of, and looking down on, the principal streets in the town. Here the graves are crowded together; and bodies, I am told, are piled one above the other until it must be all one mass of corruption. About a mile from here, on the road just outside the town, are two plots of ground used as cemeteries by the Roman Catholics and Presbyterians. These are also in a disgraceful state. It appears that a piece of land has been offered to the city for a general necropolis, but, owing to Municipal or Parliamentary delay, nothing further has been done in the matter, and burials daily take place in the present mortuary grounds, greatly to the detriment of the public health.

For five days it rained in torrents in Newcastle. Under such circumstances, one's impressions were hardly likely to be favourable. Still, I admire the place and the air of prosperity which exists all around. It is true there are grumblers. "You should have been here when you couldn't see across the harbour for masts," I was told. "The trade is being driven away from the port." On asking the reason of this, all the business people I interviewed put it down to the high price of coal, fourteen shillings per ton. Reduce the price of coal, and there would be a greater demand, more exports, more men employed, and, generally, more money in circulation. This is the argument of the shopkeepers and merchants, and they are, as a rule, pretty good judges of what affects their own interests. You shall see anon what I think of it. But, at present, the stores in this city appear to be doing pretty well; and in the

main street there are some very good shops. Of course, there is no Alston and Brown or Peapes and Shaw here; but, I daresay, a fair amount of "style" may be procured by the local *élite* of both sexes. In the large stores, one notices piles upon piles of moleskin garments and crimean shirts, interspersed with gaudy waistcoats and scarfs, such as the collier's soul is popularly supposed to love. All these articles are of the exact patterns I have seen vended so often in mining townships in Great Britain. The side walks of this city are paved with clay tiles. I really think Hunter-street here is, in many respects, equal to George-street, Sydney. That, however, is not saying very much. The inhabitants here appear to have done their best; and, taking all things into consideration, I do not think Newcastle need feel ashamed when compared with the metropolis. If I had only remained here one day, I should not have had a word to say against this town; but, alas! I have a heavy indictment to bring against the authorities. There is no water supply, and the sanitary arrangements are most abominable. Water is procured from tanks and wells; from the latter, it is stated, only for washing or domestic purposes, and used alone for such it would be bad enough, as the drainage from the churchyard on the hill must affect every well below. But when it is also taken into consideration that neither the water nor earth-closet system is used here, and that wells are sunk side by side with cesspools, one may with justice shudder when the supply of rain-water fails. The drainage of the town is also most deficient, and I think Newcastle offers a fair chance for cholera or fever some day to decimate it.

On Saturdays special trains run to Newcastle from the adjacent mining townships, and return late. I have seen so

many Saturday nights amongst the colliers in Great Britain, that I thought I should here have a chance of picking up some "character" and information. But—and I am very glad to write that it is so—in this respect Newcastle offers a great contrast to any similar town in England. The miners and their wives promenaded the streets, stared in the shop windows, made some slight purchases, and went home soberly and sedately. There was really very little drinking. I thought of the oceans of ale I have seen poured down thirsty throats at Wigan, at Bilston, and Tredegar; of the wives, sitting by their "masters'" sides, waiting to help them home; of the rows and quarrels and brutal fights—and I was thankful that labour in Australia has learned one important attribute of manhood—self-respect. The miners give the police in this district very little trouble; what drunkenness and rowdyism there may be, is amongst the crews of the foreign vessels in port.

On fine days half the population of Newcastle gathers on the wharf. Every night, too, it is considered the thing to go and see the Sydney boat start; this allows opportunities for flirtations amongst the fair sex, and iced drinks amongst the elders. But at night the wharf is dark and damp, or dusty and dirty—gloomy in either case. In the daytime there is always life and motion on the river, and one can endure the grimy stickiness of the atmosphere, or the coal dust flying about, for the sake of the busy scene around—ships coming in or going out of port, ferry boats crossing to the north shore, steam-tugs and tenders puffing up and down the river in a frantic manner, all black with coal and smoke. High above our heads the elevated sidings convey the waggons to the shoots, which discharge their contents into the vessels lying below. Looking up the river on certain days, one will see a

very pretty sight, recalling reminiscences of many historic streams in Europe. I was talking to one of the smart water policemen, when, raising my eyes, I saw afar off, on the waters, something green. In the midst of the prevailing dusky hue of everything around, this was a novelty. "That is one of the market boats from Mosquito Island," I was informed. Dancing along on the tide, it came nearer and nearer, and then we could see that it was rowed by an old woman and a boy, who, with a young girl, comprised the crew. These skilfully manœuvred their craft under a low bridge on the wharf, into a small basin used as a boat harbour. Now I could see that it was lucerne with which the flat-bottomed skiff was filled. Under the seats, on the seats, and high above them the cool green forage almost hid the occupants. Some pumpkins and a box of peaches completed the freight. Turning again to the river, I saw half-a-dozen more boats coming down, one after the other. They were all stacked with lucerne, amidst which pumpkins, melons, peaches, apples, babies, and dogs were hidden. Sometimes a man and a boy rowed, sometimes a boy and girl, but all were hardy and healthy-looking, and pulled well at the oar. There was little time lost in unloading the produce on the side of the wharf, and sales were soon effected. It was a scene unlike anything in England. "It reminds me of the Rhine," I said, and as I spoke I heard the soft gutturals of the German tongue. Nearly all these were honest Teutons, who reside on small farms on the islands in the river, by which they bring their produce to market. But these would not half supply the garden stuff needed for Newcastle. There, as everywhere on this continent, the heathen Chinese is to be found—patient, industrious, frugal, making the soil yield more

than any other can. The Chinese about Newcastle appear to be fully appreciated by the people; in many cases they have married Caucasian wives, and have very comfortable homes. I noticed, also, that a great many have cut off their pigtails—sure sign that they have abandoned all desire of returning to their native land, and that generally they have adopted European costumes. It is a question if this latter is an improvement.

Besides the venerable and ugly Cathedral, which I admired at a distance, there are divers other places of public worship in Newcastle. There is also a Protestant Hall, in which I heard the Rev. Wazir Beg lecture on William of Orange. Now, as Brother Beg is an Oriental, by descent at least, this seemed almost as remarkable as the supposititious Maori of Macaulay. There is a fair market hall, a School of Arts, a Court-house, and police office, from whence Sub-inspector Thorpe kept a watchful eye on me during my stay. I fully admit that I am a suspicious character, and the fact of a robbery taking place at Milthorpe's hotel whilst I was stopping there, certainly justified the police in looking after me. I will return the compliment. The new railway station which is being built will be a credit to the town, and the most prominent erection after the Custom-house and the new Castlemaine Brewery. Beer is a wonderful thing! Commencing at Castlemaine, thence making a stride to Melbourne, on to Sydney, to Newcastle, and to Brisbane, Fitzgerald, Prendergast, and Co. are scattering their establishments over all Australia, bringing malt liquor home to the very doors of the people. I believe in beer, lager and otherwise, though I cannot say that I drink much colonial; but anything is better than the lavish use of spirits in this climate. I do not think

that in Newcastle there are, in proportion to the population, so many drinking places as in Sydney; still there are a very large number, but they are kept in good order, and close punctually at midnight. It is only in the metropolis that the police wink at "café" enormities in the small hours. The theatre here is a good one, and, I should imagine, a fair paying property. I should like to have it in Brisbane, where the home of the drama is a miserable den. Whilst I was in Newcastle the Royal Company was playing the pantomime "Humpty Dumpty." *Apropos*, rather an amusing incident (to the spectators) occurred. During the great storm which welcomed my arrival, the dressing-rooms and stage were flooded, although the auditorium proved watertight. Actors and actresses dressed in wet costumes. Their humour for that evening was decidedly damped. But it was rather laughable to see Prince Prettyboy, *id est* Maggie Oliver, come dancing from the O. P. side, "What, my Roseleaf!" Then Roseleaf dances in, "What, Prettyboy!" They then rushed to embrace, but stopped; a pool of water was between them; so they waltzed around on tiptoe, trying to find a dry place on which to meet. Hornpipes and breakdowns were danced ankle-deep in water. This is one sample of the easy life popularly supposed to be the lot of an actor. Followers of this company were two or three stage-struck little waifs from Sydney, who had stowed themselves away on board ship in the hope of being engaged in the pantomime. The success of "Sammy" and the little girl who plays the juvenile Columbine has turned the heads of half the youngsters in the city.

Of course there is a vast amount of betting in Newcastle. The native Australian passion for racing and gambling is supplemented by the tastes of the miners from home. After

strong meat and strong drink the collier's craving is for sport. Those who have seen races on the Town Moor, at Newcastle-on-Tyne, or at Manchester, or Aintree, or Wolverhampton, and have heard the mighty roar from thousands of hoarse throats when some favourite won, will recognize that, in spite of the molelike life he leads, the collier retains all the tastes of his ancestor, "half savage and half hunter." In Lancashire and in the black country, rabbit coursing and pigeon flying and shooting are highly popular. An English collier has a wonderful love for his dog. *Punch's* joke is perhaps overdrawn, "What hast den wi' new milk, missis?" "Gien it thay child." "D— thee, why didn't 'ee gie it thay bull pup." I think that is rough on the black country collier; but the incident narrated in the little ballad which I wrote for my friend Mr. Garnet Walch's annual, *Hash*, is quite true. In this case, for days the men had been confined in a narrow gallery, through sudden flooding of the mine. When the water was all pumped out, the survivors were brought to earth. Only one was conscious; he, a rough, strong man, devoted to sport, had given away all his food to a young weak boy, and had himself subsisted by chewing the leather from his clogs. Yet, the ruling passion strong within him, his first words were, "Mate, whose dog won the race?" And so, at Newcastle, races and pigeon matches are always attended by a large number of miners. "They are grumbling about hard times, but can always find money enough for a bit of sport," I am informed. Following these "bits of sport," there is, alas! the usual amount of betting and roguery, local and imported from the metropolis. The other day a splendid piece of villany was perpetrated. A young gentleman from Sydney, a mighty shot, went to Newcastle, engaged to annihilate so many pigeons at

a certain distance, and with a stipulated amount of ammunition. I detest these tournaments of doves, and I am disgusted at the rage in fashionable society in England for such. There is not an element of real sport in it! With our young Nimrod went certain bookmakers, who "backed the birds." Great interest was excited in this match, and, one way or another, considerable money was laid on it. The shooting commenced. Nimrod hit every bird clean, but many managed to fly away out of bounds. Astonished at this, he at last examined his cartridges, and found that several had been opened and partly filled with black sand instead of gunpowder. This was an elegant trick, which I have no doubt commends itself to the winners. There is a slight dispute as to where the "job was put up," at Newcastle or Sydney? Amongst the men from the North of England rowing is very popular, and nearly every Saturday there is a race on the Hunter River.

The immediate suburbs of Newcastle are not inviting, and none of the private houses very imposing. Perhaps the nicest residences are situated on what is known as the Terrace, which is on the hill overlooking the ocean. Underneath, the surf rolls in on to a sandy beach, where maidens bathe. Further on there are rocks and miniature caves, where sea anemones and other treasures of the deep are to be found. On the main road into the country, Honeysuckle Point, one mile from town, is the first suburb. Here there is a bridge over the creek to Bullock's Island, and a branch of the Great Northern line also runs there. The dyke now being made will form a large dock, and the additional railroad and wharfage facilities afforded at Bullock's Island will enable double the quantity of coal shipped at present to be loaded with ease. On the Island are several important establishments,

the chief of which is the Soho Foundry of Messrs. Morrison and Bearby, situated at euphonious Onebygamba. Here, the other day, a large fog-bell, for the Northern breakwater, was cast. I believe it was one of the largest castings ever made in the colony, and the event created quite an excitement in the Press. Before leaving Newcastle, and taking my readers amongst the colliers, I beg leave to second the wish of a local journalist that it may continue "to hold its own as the second city of the colony of New South Wales, and the largest shipping port in the Southern Hemisphere."

AMONGST THE COLLIERS.

LEAVING Newcastle for the coal district, one can travel either by rail or road. During my sojourn in the neighbourhood, I tried both. By the branch rail to Wallsend, it is only eight miles; but there are four stations in this short distance. The nearest collieries are at the Glebe and at Hamilton, two miles from town. Driving from Newcastle along roads black with coal-dust, and across railway sidings, one is soon at Hamilton. This seems a prosperous township. There are some brick houses, chiefly those in the "public" line, of which there is an ample supply. There are stores, amongst them a "Co-operative," which I am glad to see. The cottages are wooden, some only slab, with bark roofs; but they are generally good, and there is an air of contentment and of ease around all. The children one meets are strong and healthy, and the women neat and clean. On Sundays and holidays, every one appears well dressed, and the families sitting in the verandahs present

a happy appearance, quite incompatible with the presumed hard times which we have heard of. Not that here there have been any great complaints. It is at Wallsend only that distress, if any, has occurred; but anti-immigration advocates always speak broadly of the "suffering in the Newcastle district" in a manner which would make one think it was spread all around. It is true that neither at Hamilton nor the Glebe have the men been working on "full time," but they have kept up a good average, with which they are quite content. There are only two shafts in the whole of this district, and one of them is here. The blackness of the heaps of smoking cinders and of waste coal contrast strangely with the green freshness which all Nature has put on after the late rains. The cottage gardens are verdant with broad banana leaves and semi-tropical creeping plants. Behind the grimy collieries the primeval bush forms a background, and the fresh sea-breeze is wafted from the shore. Amongst the men, in their homes, and in the entire surroundings, there is a better tone than in any similar locality in Great Britain.

"Similar locality!" How can any coal-field in England be compared to this? Here man is only just commencing to deform the face of Nature, there it is entirely changed. I know of what I write, for I have lived amongst and studied the colliers of England, and in other climes have been thought worthy to be held an authority on the subject. From Cleator Moor to Wigan I know every pit. From Wolverhampton to Birmingham, and from Dudley to Cannock Chase, I have ridden over nearly every inch of the "Black Country." I know the vales of Ebbw and Taff, and the Rhondda and Rhymny valleys. I have ridden, one dark night, *via* Nantybwhc

to Cyfartha Castle, and been benighted on "Dowlais Top," till I saw the fires of Merthyr-Tydvyl gleaming below me. What a difference there to here! There for miles one may ride, at night, lighted by the glare from hundreds of furnaces and puddling mills, through a country blasted as if by volcanic action. Not a green thing is to be seen. Around are immense heaps of cinders and slag. Gaunt frames of machinery are visible everywhere. A perpetual pumping and clanging of engines may be heard. Above there is a dense pall of smoke. The atmosphere is full of black particles. The houses and huts you pass are wretched dens, often falling into the earth through "a crowning in" below. Little children, dirty and squalid, are working with their elders. Who are these latter? Men and women are dressed so much alike that one can hardly tell the sex. In their language they are alike coarse and brutal. Suddenly, perhaps, the traveller through this district will hear a rumbling noise below; smoke issues from the ground afar off. Thinking of other lands, he imagines this to be the effect of a volcano. But soon round the pit bank mothers, wives, and daughters throng: they know too well the dreaded "fire damp." And then, as of old in Rama, there is a voice heard, "Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted because they are not." I have seen explosions at Cyfartha, in South Wales, and at Dudley and Cannock Chase, in the "Black Country," and the sad impressions will never be effaced from my soul.

For the collier in England works in daily peril of his life—in peril of water, peril of fire, peril of choke damp. Far down in the bowels of the earth, deprived for the greater part of his existence of the light of day, labouring in an unhealthy atmosphere, and in a cramped and uncomfortable position,

his lot does not seem one to be envied. Too often it is cut short by accident. And then—brutal and degraded though he perchance may be in his pleasures, fond of the physical exaltation caused by strong drink, and rough to his womankind—the MAN comes out in such a moment. There is little need to call for volunteers to rescue those in the pit. Every collier will step forward. And those who go first lead a forlorn hope; too often they themselves succumb to the deadly foe. I have seen some battlefields in my life; I have passed through perils on sea and on shore. I have witnessed brave deeds on both. I mourn gallant comrades who fell at Gettysburgh, and my pulse yet beats when I think of those charges up the Cemetery Hill. But I declare that never in all my life have I respected men more than the rough Black Country colliers I saw go to certain death in the endeavour to rescue their comrades. And when I think of them, and of the gallant gentleman, the superintendent of the mine, who led the search, and with whom I had the previous night shared his last dinner on earth, my eyes grow dim, and I would that I were of the faithful, that I might say a prayer for their souls. Such a gallant end as theirs should, however, shrive a sinful life. I trust my miner friends in Newcastle will believe that I understand the collier. I know his faults, I know his virtues, and I thus bear testimony to them in proof of the love I have for all men who do the world's work manfully, and who will succour their fellows, even unto the death. Let none say that in my criticisms, which may appear harsh, I am actuated by any feeling but the desire to tell the truth, as leniently perchance as may be.

Here, however, the collier's life is much altered, and for the better. There are no deep shafts nor tunnels, and accidents from explosions are almost unknown. Instead of

the locked "Davy," men work with ordinary naked oil lamps stuck in their caps. (By-the-by, I wonder a cheap method of utilizing electricity in lighting a mine has not been discovered.) Their labour is generally lighter than in the old world, and their pay much greater. In this glorious atmosphere, and with the freedom of unfettered Nature around them, they should lead, morally and physically, healthier lives than in their old homes. Not but what there are beauty spots around the English coal-fields. "Badger Dingle" is a favourite resort of the Black Country collier. On the other side of the county "Barr Beacon" is a magnificent upland moor, where one can lie in the heather and gorse and listen to the lark dropping from the sky, whilst watching the church spires in the distance. The Shropshire collier from Oakengates or Lilleshall, where the Duke of Sutherland is in quite an extensive way of business in the coal, iron foundry, and machine-making line, is close to the beautiful Wrekin, from whence he has a magnificent view of twelve counties. And, leaving the griminess of Brynmawr, one just passes through the railway tunnel to Clydach, and the glories of the vale of Crickhowell, with the Usk winding through it, lies at your feet. The collier at Blaenavon can walk a mile, and from the side of the Blorenghe have a like magnificent view. But the immediate surroundings of the English colliers' homes are dirty, squalid, and miserable! Here, as yet, kindly Nature still smiles around the miner's hut. And—thank God for it!—one of the greatest scandals in English coal districts is absent here. No woman works at the pit. Those unsexed creatures, "pitbank" girls; are unknown here. Woman pursues her proper vocation as housewife and mother. The result is marvellous. Transplanted to this soil, the collier's children are strong, healthy,

ruddy, without exception the very finest I have seen in Australia. The girls, too, who in England would have had every trace of beauty, almost of sex, stamped out of them by their hard toil, are here patterns of womanhood. I saw a collier's daughter who was without exception the most beautiful girl I have seen in this country. Tall and upright, with black hair and eyes, most perfect features, and a queenlike manner, she might be imagined to be "That Lass o' Lowrie's," only I am afraid that "Joan" would never appear in such good case. She was only a north-country collier's child, but was as modest, sensible, and well-behaved as a squatter's daughter, and I hope she will get a mate worthy of her.

But let us get on to the "starving colliers" at Wallsend. Turning to the left, out of the main road to Maitland, we leave to the right a pleasant vineyard and garden, called "The Folly." Why, I do not know, as it seems to me a most sensible place indeed, where one can eat grapes and drink the pure juice thereof, very much in the same way as at the Italian vineyard near Castlemaine, where I spent one very pleasant Sunday. On the Maitland road one meets bullock drays, and mobs of cattle going to Newcastle, not only to supply the town, but other ports in the colony, as well as for shipment to New Caledonia. The Waratah Colliery Company have a private railway, which crosses the road near by. The township of Waratah, four miles from Newcastle, appears in anything but a flourishing condition. There are broken-down buildings and shut-up stores. The coal here is giving out, and the inhabitants have migrated to the other mining townships. The public schools are the only decent buildings in the place. Climbing a stiff hill, one gets a view of Old and New Lambton, prosperous both of them. Here let me say

that the roads about Newcastle are simply abominable. In a district which must pay so much to the general revenue of the country, a little more ought to be doled out to maintain decent highways. Almost all the way from Waratah to Wallsend there are houses—such as they are—miners' cabins, often very rudely constructed, but weather-proof. They are each situated in their own plot of ground, sometimes purchased, sometimes a free selection on Government land, sometimes a nominal ground rent is paid to the collieries for it. There is a great difference in the homes. Some have pleasant gardens around, others have none. But all the occupants look well and hearty. There are other houses, of brick and weatherboard, far more pretentious, and which I am told are also the homes of colliers. Of course there is a difference in men, in every rank of life. Some invest their spare cash in whisky, others in building societies. Whisky no doubt is a very good thing, but a house is really a more permanent blessing. All around this district one meets with Primitive Methodist chapels. I was pleased to see State schools everywhere. Lambton, Old and New, are, like Hamilton, prosperous in that a fair average of work has been done here, some say through the colliery proprietors underselling their coal in defiance of the agreement. No doubt there are grumblers, but there is no pretence of any distress, and they have sent £30 to their brethren at Wallsend. Passing through a patch of scrub, over the bridge by the Wallsend Company's new tunnel and siding, from the top of the hill one gains a view of Wallsend, the largest of the colliery townships, and where, according to reports, distress amounting to starvation has existed.

Here the railroad and slidings and tunnels have pushed into

the very heart of the bush. Mounds of refuse coal are stacked around the roots of gaunt dead gum-trees, which at night have a weird appearance, as of ghostly mourning shadows of departed Nature. For local reasons, there are two villages, or towns, or townships here—Plattsburg and Wallsend—though where the division is it would be hard to say. At the former is the Co-operative Colliery, owned by Mr. William Laidley, of Sydney; at the latter is the Wallsend Company's Colliery. The railroad appears to roughly divide the district, through which the tunnels run in all directions, sometimes for miles from their mouths—"a crowning in," or sinking of the earth, in many places showing where a tunnel has been abandoned. There are evident signs of a recent, if not present prosperity. Brick hotels, bank, stores, and houses, these are scattered about amongst the more primitive wooden erections. Such establishments would not be started without having a fair show of success. One draper's store, however, announced in startling letters the "alarming sacrifice" of a "clearing-out" sale, as the owner himself was "clearing out." The miners' cabins are all around, some in the streets of the township surrounded by patches of garden luxuriant with maize, and perfumed by the scent of the Spanish trumpeter; others erected without any defined boundaries but their four walls; others right in the bush. In a great majority of cases, however, the cottages are owned by the occupants. Pigs, goats, and geese stray about promiscuously. The streets in the townships are fairly good, and the local authorities appear to do their best to improve the district, which, I trust, will yet have a flourishing future.

I came here to look for distress, if not starvation, and to find out why the colliers would not accept Mr. Watkins's offer

of work on the Northern Railroad, which had lately been made to them. I interviewed both Mr. Fletcher (the manager of the Co-operative Colliery), a gentleman for whom I have the highest respect, and who gave me most valuable information, and Mr. Neilson (of the Wallsend). From the secretary of the local branch of the Coal Miners' Union, Moses Owen, I had also some valuable information, and obtained an insight into the feelings of the men and their leaders. Moses Owen, whose father was a Welsh miner from Carnarvonshire, is a highly intelligent man. He was aware that I represented the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and that his statements would be published, as (although my enemies accuse me of not being particular how I obtain information) I would scorn, in such a case, to entrap any one into sayings "which might be used in evidence against him," without warning. I also spent hours in the colliers' huts, prying about in an intrusive manner, which nothing but the urgency of my mission justified, and for which I feel inclined to publicly apologize. Within his own home the collier should be respected, and I do not wish to violate his domestic privacy. I flatter myself, however, that I know how to give my fellow working-man the treatment which is his due. On the contrary, let me acknowledge that at Wallsend the colliers and their wives gave me always a courteous reception, and, as a rule, answered my questions readily. I am pleased to record that in this land the miner has lost a great deal of that roughness and coarseness which is the characteristic of his class in England. It was the general impression, whilst I was in this district, that I was a ganger or agent of Mr. Watkins, and I was content to let this idea remain. Now I am not going to say that there has not been any distress here, but it has been

grossly and mischievously exaggerated, and the cry has, I believe, been raised with a purpose. Here, as in all the mines around Newcastle, there have been slack times lately, and the men have felt the effects in the loss of those luxuries which, in this colony, they have come to look upon as necessities. But the necessaries of life have, I think, never been wanting, and the distress is as nothing to the "hard times" so often seen on the English coal-fields. The published report that the earnings of the Wallsend Colliery men during the last twelve months had averaged £1 17s. 4¾d. a week, I found to be correct. At the Co-operative Colliery I was informed the average was a little lower. Now this certainly is not a very heavy wage; but when it is considered that only from three to four days' work a week has been done for this, and the small amount on which a man can live here, the case assumes a different aspect. During the flush times, many of the colliers bought their allotments, and own their cottages; others only pay a nominal ground rent of sixpence a week to the company. Coal *ad libitum* is allowed them. And the savings bank at Newcastle has a goodly sum of money invested by the more frugal, who made provision for a rainy day.

But all are not careful to imitate the ants, and lay up a store of their surplus for the winter-time. It is human nature. I admit that I am myself the most improvident of men. But it is generally on others, on borrowers and beggars, that my cash goes. I fully recognize the feelings of a man who cannot save. He is, no doubt, an injurious item in the community; still I am not going to cast stones at him. The collier who in good times has, by fairly easy work, been earning £3 to £4 a week, and has spent the same freely, is the man who now, earning perhaps not £1 a week, feels the hard times. "If there were

less drink, there would be less distress," said a collier to me. That is true, and I record it as a fact, although I, with the knowledge of the expensive and choice liquors which my soul loves, am not inclined to be too hard on the collier if he drinks within his means. And of one thing I am sure, there is less drinking around Newcastle than, in proportion, in a similar coal district in Great Britain. After the improvident, what distress there has been, as usual, fell upon those least able to bear it—upon widows with young families, with one or two boys perchance working in the mines on a scanty wage, and who, even in good times, when work was brisk, would find it hard to make both ends meet. Labourers outside, who do not get as much as miners, have lately been making very poor wages. One man, at the Co-operative Colliery, has only averaged sixteen shillings and eightpence during the last six weeks; and on the last fortnightly pay, each man received only for one day all the "time" made. This was certainly very rough, and, unless they have savings or credit, it is a wonder how they will get through. At the Wallsend Colliery, however, the men made five and a half days during the last fortnight, and received £4 12s. 6d. a man, certainly very good wages for the time worked. It is amongst the men employed at this latter colliery that the chief distress is reported. And amongst the improvident, and widows, and new chums there has been distress, induced by causes which will always occur in every community. To relieve this, £30 was voted by the Lambton miners, and £42 by those at Minmi. This was distributed by the Union officials amongst about thirty to forty families. £30 was also given by the company, and divided by the clergymen amongst deserving cases. In the whole Newcastle district, therefore, with its 2,500 miners, not two per

cent. have been so "hard up" as to need relief, and only £102 has been so expended.

There may have been many, however, who have battled against the hard times without making a sign. But the poor generally know each other's troubles, and are the first to give each other help. There is a sympathy between them which the rich can never feel. And it was from inquiry and visiting amongst them that I *failed* to find any real distress. Mr. Fletcher narrated to me one case of a man, with a large family, who came to work with nothing but bread and treacle for his meals. Now I fully admit that this was hard. A man who works as the collier does should have substantial, wholesome food. But when I think of the thousands of men I have seen in England, going to far harder work than any done in Australia, with nothing but bread and butter to support them during their ten and a half hours' labour, I cannot allow that an isolated circumstance like this in any way justifies the cry of distress. Mr. Fletcher also reported to me of a new arrival who was in destitution, and whom he had relieved; but this could have no bearing on the question. There was one family which I heard was very hard up, in the worst possible case. It was said that the children were fed on boiled maize. Now this, though not enticing, is at any rate substantial; but to those used to miners' luxuries, not enjoyed by many a curate's family in Great Britain, it must appear a great hardship. I went to this cottage, not a very good one, but still without any signs of abject poverty. The children were stout and healthy-looking, and certainly not starved. The father, on being roused out from his bed, had a strange muddled appearance, which he accounted for by saying he had "been drinking." This was evidently a case of the improvident. Would he take

advantage of Mr. Watkins's offer and work on the railroad? He didn't know; it was different sort of work to a collier's, and things might turn out better here. How did he manage to live? Well, they got along somehow; had friends, perhaps. Besides, he understood it would cost a pound or thirty shillings to get tools and a tenf, and he hadn't any money. Didn't know if the Union would advance this. And his blackened eyelashes, which, with shining white teeth, are the collier's characteristic, closed sleepily. So, perforce, I left him. I hope that the coin which I gave his little girl did not go to the public-house. His "mate" told me that this man had had no butcher's meat for a fortnight, but shot wild ducks in the swamp. Anyhow, I came to the conclusion that if he could get money for drink, he could for food. The publican is not a more trusting man than the butcher or baker.

In another cottage I found a North-country miner, with a family of ten children, all rosy and chubby. He and his wife, a hearty laughing Cumberland woman, were very proud of their offspring. He wasn't going away to do navy's work; times would very likely change soon. It wasn't much of a look-out, though, at present. And the woman laughing, said, "I don't know how we'll get through to next pay, however, with all these mouths to feed." There was a pile of linen on the table, which she was starching. "Do you take in washing?" I asked. "O no! these youngsters make enough work for me to do." From the oven at the back she afterwards brought out a large batch of newly-baked bread. There did not seem any fear of present starvation. Yet I was told that this was one of the worst cases. In another, where the head of the family had earned very little money recently, I found that a small store was kept, tended by one of the daughters, a pretty young girl.

Here, also, there were more young children. The manner in which the transplanted collier increases and multiplies is something marvellous. Families of from seven to ten are numerous here. And all the children I saw at Wallsend district were blooming, healthy, and happy. Really, with such a rising population, it is no wonder that here the feeling is against the vote for immigration purposes. And the appearance of the children and women-folk more than anything else contributed to clear my mind of any doubt as to the exaggeration of the reported general distress. These always suffer first in such cases. Yet in one or two instances of widows with young boys at work, I did find that times were hard, with so little coming in. This cannot be taken as a criterion, however. All the cottages I visited were much of the same stamp, wooden, with either bark or shingle roofs, overcrowded sometimes with young children, but with free air and space outside, in which all day long they played, or "paidled i' the burn" running near the doors. The inside sometimes papered and furnished according to its owner's providence. Generally, in a corner, a cupboard containing sacred and ugly crockeryware, never to be used. Prints of popular pictures printed "Unter den Linden" at Berlin. Now and then portraits on the walls, and occasionally a Bible on the table. Not that I think that, as a rule, English colliers are very pious. (I always believe that poor Ned Farmer's "Little Jim" is the finest *fiction* poem ever written.) There are places of worship enough in this district, but the most religious people are, I think, the Welsh miners. One old lady from Anglesey, with whom I exchanged reminiscences of Amlwch, and of several places beginning with "Llan," which for the compositor's sake I will not write, was, I think, truly

pious. She showed me her Welsh Bible with reverence, and although she lamented Wales, "the same God was over her here." She said she was happy and content. Would there were more like her, that the spirit of contentment should be present here, not engendered by the "something will turn up," *laissez faire* spirit of indolence, but by a true and higher motive.

It was popularly supposed by the Lancashire miners that I was from Staffordshire, by the "Black Country" men that I was from Wales, and by the Welshmen that I was from Lancashire. I chatted to them of all these localities, and also with those from the North of places on Tyne side, and the revelries on the Town Moor. There were plenty of men loafing about Wallsend who were glad to converse with a stranger. The collier in his working dress, from sole to crown all one uniform black, his flashing eyes and pearly teeth shining out in rather a ghastly manner, is perhaps not a pretty sight, but he is more picturesque than in his holiday clothes. The hideous cut of modern garments and the curious combinations of colour do not set off to advantage faces and hands seamed by hard work, and often darkly engrained with coal-dust. Men from the old country appeared quite content to lounge about and smoke, idling the days away. Every one said times were hard, but then they might possibly mend soon. Nobody lamented their old homes. "It's bad enough just now, maybe, but it's worse in England. Why, in Staffordshire the coal is givin' out, and — me if they ain't goin' to turn the Black Country into a farm. What d'ye think, mate? There's a wheat-field o' sixty acres at Bilston where there used to be pitbonks." And the collier shook his head and puffed his pipe plaintively, mourning over the degeneracy of the neighbourhood where corn could be of more account than coal.

Amongst a great number of the men there really appeared to be a feeling of animosity against Mr. Watkins for having offered them work, and so publicly demonstrated through their refusal to accept the same the fallacy of the sensational reports as to the distress in this district. "Watkins thinks himself somebody. He's a — fine man, ain't he, now?" said one of two men, who were working for the Corporation, at road-making. "I don't believe a bit in this offer of his. It's all put up by the Government." "But hasn't your general secretary, Mr. Dixon, explained to you that he has seen Mr. Watkins, and is satisfied that his offer is a good and advantageous one?" "I don't know any more about it but what I see in the papers, and I don't know where to go to get a pass; and if I and my mate got up there we mightn't like the work, and where would we be then?" This was a continual cry, the men didn't know how to get to the work—in fact, they did *not* care, or want to know. I was wroth with them at this lack of energy, and suggested to one that he should have a pair-horse buggy to take him to the station, and a special train from thence to the scene of his proposed labours. He said he thought it would be a good idea. Could these be the men who were said to be in distress? I thought of Joseph Arch as he stood by my side under the chestnut tree at Wellesbourne, and made that memorable speech which was the key-note in the agitation which has changed for the better the lot of the English farm labourer. "Men," said he, "you are on strike. I struck years ago. I had but nine shillings a week, and a wife and young family coming. I asked my master for more, and he said he could not give it. I struck! I left my home, and for years tramped all over England and Wales. I slept under hayricks and hedges, and sent all the money I could to—

my wife. I had vowed at the altar to love and cherish her, and I meant to do it." Now, these were the accents of a man whose condition in life was far inferior to that of the miner. Thinking of this, I was disgusted with the apathy I saw exhibited amongst the colliers at Wallsend. But all men have not the grand principles of Joseph Arch, whom I am proud to call my friend. He is a leader of his class. Where are the leaders here, the men who should point out the right course to their followers, and assist them to pursue it?

Now, nothing astonished and annoyed me more than the absurd ignorance amongst the men as to the value of Mr. Watkins's offer, and how to take advantage of the same. Nine days after the general secretary of the union, Mr. Dixon, had interviewed Mr. Watkins, men in Wallsend assured me they knew no more about it than what they had seen in the *Miner's Advocate*, which has all along encouraged them to migrate from the district. Some said if they knew how to go, they would go; others, that if they had enough money to buy tools, they would also start. Now, I think the leaders of the Coal Miners' Union are fairly chargeable with tacitly encouraging the existing state of things for ulterior purposes. It may be that the cry of distress has been raised to discourage labourers from the other colonies, who might migrate to this district, or for anti-immigration purposes, or to keep up the price of labour. The latter seems contradictory, but the leaders of the union can urge that, when there is now distress, what would it be if wages were reduced. At the bottom, I think, is the desire to obtain high wages for little work. There was a rather extraordinary article, headed "Work and Play," which appeared in the *Newcastle Herald*. This urged that through all time people had worked too hard,

and suggested that the colliers now-a-days should not do more than they could help. This was a highly popular notion with them, and the article was often quoted to me. I don't blame the men for agreeing with it; I know how it is myself. But we must first do enough to maintain one's family, before thought of play. Distress of a certain kind, what in England would be called "hard times," has existed here, yet the leaders of the union have done nothing to alleviate it. There are eleven branches or lodges of this union, and it numbers 2,500 members in the district. Each lodge has a delegate and a secretary. There is a chairman and a treasurer, and a general secretary—the only paid official, who gets £3 10s. a week. The distress at Wallsend has been loudly proclaimed by these. No work, and starvation, has been reported. What have they done to help the men who trust them, who pay in their twopences a week to support a general secretary to look after their interests?

Now, in attacking Mr. Dixon, the above secretary, I do it on the highest public grounds, for the sake both of the masters and the men. Before leaving the district I wished to see Mr. Dixon, to hear his view of the question; but he was unable to come to the appointment kindly made for me by Mr. Sweet, of the *Newcastle Herald*, to whom I owe thanks for courtesies. I think the secretary was away preaching; he is a "local," and spends much of his time in that manner. I say that if the leaders of the union had acted with *bona fides*—if there had been any great distress—if they had wished to relieve the overcrowded labour market of the district—if they were competent to hold the positions they do—immediately Mr. Watkins's offer was made public, delegates should have been sent to the end of the line, where the new works are going on, to report on what

was required from the men, and how much they could earn. A deputation should also immediately have waited on Mr. Watkins, and arrangements been made for passes, and for transporting the men to the scene of their labours. Meetings should have been called at Wallsend, and the men urged and encouraged to accept the work tendered them. The facts are that, three weeks after Mr. Watkins's offer was made, the men told me they heard nothing about it but what they saw in the papers; and Moses Owen, secretary of the Wallsend Lodge, knew no more. No meetings had been held, no arrangements made, no inducements given to the men to migrate. Moses Owen admitted to me "that it looked bad when men would not take work offered them;" but pleaded an oft-repeated excuse, "that the work was different from colliers', and there was no saying if they could earn what was offered." All throughout, this statement has been and is made. Mr. Dixon published a letter, without a signature, in the *Newcastle Herald*, which he says he can guarantee, and which is supposed to be from a miner working on the line. It was of a nature to deter men from going there, was discouraging in its tone, and stated that, instead of from 8s. to 10s., 5s. to 6s. was the most that was earned. I should like to see the writer of this letter. Mr. Dixon, however, never told the men what he said to Mr. Cameron, M.P., who had a great deal of thankless trouble in this matter. After Messrs. Cameron, Sweet, and Dixon had their interview with Mr. Watkins, they were all perfectly satisfied with the liberality of the offer made; and the general secretary said to Mr. Cameron that *he* knew, from his old experiences with the pick and the shovel, that the men could earn the sums named, 8s. to 10s. a day.

Now, as I do not think Mr. Dixon is utterly incompetent

for the position he holds, and taking all the other circumstances into consideration, I conclude that this quibble as to possible wages to be earned is an utterly false one, raised to discourage the men from accepting Mr. Watkins's offer. I do not presume to be a judge as to what a man can earn at navy work, but two colliers whom I met at Wallsend, who were road-making, said they would accept the offer and go to work on the line as soon as they could, as, from old experience, they thought they could make 10s. a day. It would have been so very easy, though, for Mr. Dixon to send a delegate up to the cuttings, and obtain full information as to the amount now earned, and expenses of the men. I am forced to the conclusion that the apparent want of energy and action on his part is wilful, and that the Union leaders will go on raising a false cry of distress, sanctioning sometimes an amount of *real* distress, and sacrificing a few for the purpose of maintaining high wages and little work. There cannot be a doubt that the labour market here is overstocked. Mr. Fletcher, manager of the Co-operative Colliery, who, himself a workman, was the leader of the great strike some years back, calculates that there are fully twenty per cent. too many men on the books of all the collieries around Newcastle. It is urged that this number is being added to by immigration, and there is a popular idea that the Government has dark designs on the prosperity of the district, and so introduces colliers from home. "We want Berry here," said one man to me, though on cross-examination he failed to show any cause for his faith in the Victorian crisis-maker. There is no doubt that a certain number of English colliers have been assisted out, but the strangest part of the affair is that their friends here have been the means of their coming. There have been more "nomina-

tions" (that is, the deposits, according to the immigration regulations, have been paid in the colony) from the Newcastle district than from all the rest of New South Wales. The colliers have themselves aided to overstock the labour market. From other colonies, especially from Victoria, miners have come, attracted by the high wages which, when work is plentiful, can be daily earned here, and recking little of the slack times, which are also so plentiful.

How can this high daily wage be ensured for a sufficient number of days a week to give the workmen a fair yearly average? It all depends upon the out-put of coal, and is a question which affects the masters as much as the men. Coal now is 14s. a ton, and the miners' hewing price is 5s. a ton. Taking this as a standard, it has been arranged between masters and men, that miners' wages shall rise and fall 3d. in the shilling per ton, according to the price of coal. Thus, if that is reduced to 12s. a ton, the men would only get 4s. 6d. Some argue that the reduction would bring increased trade to the district, and that the men would be amply compensated for the slight reduction by the extra work, and that "full time" might become general. But it has been calculated that an additional trade of over 100,000 tons per annum would be required to return the miners the same amount of wages they are now receiving, if the price of coal was reduced to 12s. a ton, and in ratio the masters' profits. Most of the men are strongly against a reduction in the price of coal, and their organ, the *Newcastle Morning Herald*, has published a long series of able articles on this subject, which are reprinted in pamphlet form. Many of the masters, too, are of the same mind. They argue that they possess, and can always keep, the intercolonial coal trade, and that this cannot be extended

but with the gradual growth of the country. As regards the foreign coal trade, that is ruled by the amount of English and foreign shipping here, which again depends on exigencies of commerce and trade, over which no control can be exercised. For certain ports, the only thing to be shipped from Australia is coal. A vessel wishing to go to that port will take coal, even at a much higher rate than it is now, sooner than go in ballast. A reduction of price would only give the shipowners the profit; and until the commerce to Australia and between the colonies is much increased, there is no chance for the demand for coal being greater than it at present is. This seems a reasonable argument, and may be used both by masters and men. But there are many other aspects of this question of the agreement or conflict of labour and capital in this district yet to be considered.

ON STRIKE.

"STRIKE AT ANVIL CREEK.—*Notice to Coal Miners.*—The Miners at Anvil Creek Colliery having, on the 12th February, received fourteen days' notice that their services would be no longer required, unless they would give 25 cwt. of coal for a ton, which would be a reduction of 1s. 3d. per ton, or 25 per cent., have now ceased work rather than consent to such a reduction. JOHN DIXON, Miners' General Secretary."

THIS advertisement daily appeared in the *Newcastle Herald and Miner's Advocate* for some months. Mr. John Dixon, who could, or would, not give any notice to the "distressed miners" of the work provided for them by Mr. Watkins, was equal to the occasion of disseminating news of a strike. It

was necessary, perhaps, to show that he did something for his salary. In the same journal, side by side with the above, were announcements of thirty men wanted at the Greta Colliery, with constant work guaranteed for a time, and for men at the Anvil Creek Colliery to work at one shilling and threepence an hour. There seemed a complication here worth studying, and so I again made a trial of the *Kembla*, and started for Newcastle. But before going into this question, it may be worth while to study the rules of the Union, copies of which I have obtained.

The first organization of the miners appears to have been started in 1873. In this year there was the celebrated strike, which lasted for five weeks, and at the expiration of which the agreement between masters and men was made as to the present price of coal and regulation of wages thereby. "The Coal Miners' Accident and Mutual Protective Association, of the Hunter River District, in the Colony of New South Wales," had as its objects "the raising of funds for the protection of labour, and for the support of any member that may be victimized in any way by advocating his own or fellow workman's rights; also for raising a funeral fund, and relief of members in case of accident while actually following their employment, and for giving aid to the families of those who may meet death through accident." The relief to be paid to each member who met with any accident was fixed at twenty shillings a week for the first six months, ten shillings a week for the next six months, and seven shillings and sixpence a week for the remainder of the illness. In all cases of death by accident, £15 was to be paid to the member's widow or next of kin. The rules of this society contained clauses as to strikes, and were generally comprehensive. But two years

afterwards the Union was re-organized, and placed on a different basis. It appears to have been no longer thought advisable to make provision for relief of members who might be injured by accident, or for a funeral fund, and the fear as to any particular workman being "victimized" seems to have vanished. This clause was no doubt originally inserted by some of the leaders of the strike. The present society is merely called "The Coal Miners' Mutual Protective Association," &c.; and besides "the protection of labour," its objects are "as far as the light of science can make provision, to prevent the loss of health and life in mines." The latter is a very sensible clause, and the men are assisted to carry it out by the Coal Mines Regulation Act of 1876. There are eleven "lodges" in the association, numbering 2,500 members. The entrance fee is 2s. 6d., with 1d. per week contribution, to be paid fortnightly. Special levies to pay the general secretary's salary of £3 10s. a week, &c., are occasionally made. The lodges are governed by secretaries and delegates. The latter assemble quarterly, although special meetings may be called at any time. The rules with regard to strikes are:—"No lodge in this association shall give notice to come out on strike until their grievance has been laid before a delegate meeting to consult on the subject further. *In every case, before a strike is determined on, the board of delegates shall offer to the employer or employers the option of settling the dispute by arbitration or conciliation.*" This is a rule to be highly commended, but which has not been acted upon in the case of the strike at Anvil Creek of which I now write. When a strike has received the sanction of the association, each lodge has to contribute a proportionate share to the support of those "out." There is a rule coercive on employers that "in the event of any

member being discharged, the committee of his lodge shall investigate the case; and should it be proved that he has violated no working rules of the colliery, they shall request that he be re-instated in his employment, and if refused, a delegate meeting shall be held as early as possible, and such course as they determine shall be pursued." That is to say, an obnoxious miner may be the cause of a strike throughout the district.

Pondering over many disputes between capitalists and labourers which I have witnessed in other lands, I sat in the cabin of the *Kembla* until I was bailed up by an ancient mariner, in an oilskin coat, for my fare. Considering the accommodation provided, I think the rate (12s. 6d.) is excessive, and, with three companies running to Newcastle, I wonder that it has not been reduced. In proportion to the distance and time occupied *en voyage*, the rate is higher than that on any other intercolonial route, where one travels in fine steamers, with good state-rooms; and this is without calculating the cost of meals, which on the Newcastle boats one has to pay extra for. It is true that there is one good and comfortable vessel on this line, the *Coonanbara* of the A. S. N. Company, by which I returned. This, a side-wheeler, is more like an American river boat than any I have yet seen in Australian waters. Outside the harbour there was a great sensation on board: there was no light on the South Head. Our captain, I expect, could feel his way in the dark, in or out; but, to strangers looking out for the light marked on their chart, it would be rough. I have not heard that any shipwreck happened, still I place on record the fact that, on the night of the 7th March, 1878, in pitch dark weather, there was not, at least for a considerable time, any light on the South Head.

To lie down half undressed for two or three hours is almost as unrefreshing as stopping up all night. It was a weary night's travel, and when I went on shore I was glad to meet a medical practitioner at Joe Milthorpe's. This was after I ran the gauntlet of the draymen. It is an extraordinary thing that, although there are several hansom cabs in Newcastle, still you never get one at the wharf. But every steamer is besieged by men who worry you with the question, "Want a dray, sir?" If I had not fought desperately, my bag, coat, and self would have formed a triumphal procession of three drays through the streets of Newcastle in the early morn. However, I escaped this, and took the first train, starting at seven a.m., for Greta. Chance is a wonderful thing. There is a friend of mine from Cooktown at present in Sydney, through whom I formed the acquaintance of a gentleman who was a fellow-traveller with me to Greta station, and there he introduced me to a friend whose kind offices will make me ever retain the most pleasing memories of my first visit to the Hunter Valley—not, I trust, by any means my last. Of my impressions of the journey by rail, and country *en route*, I will speak anon. Let us hasten now to the scene of the strike.

Three or four men were waiting on the platform of the Greta station. These were evidently colliers in their holiday clothes. They looked suspiciously at me for a moment. I found out afterwards that these men were "on picket," which has been held to be an offence in England under the Trades' Union Act. Should a man arrive here with a swag, the question will be put to him, "Where are you going?" If he replies that he has come to seek work at the Anvil Creek Colliery, in response to the advertisements, he will be informed that the men being on strike he cannot work

there; and the new comer will generally be persuaded to return to Newcastle, or wherever he came from, his railroad fare being paid for him. I do not say there will be any intimidation, but only *persuasion*. This applies to non-unionists; no man in the Association dare apply for work here after the notification that the men are on strike. The Anvil Creek Colliery Company possesses a large property lying to the left of the railroad before you arrive at the station, which is situated midway between the villages or townships of Greta and Anvil Creek. The colliery has been opened some five years, and was the first in this district. Mr. George A. Lloyd, late M.P. for Newcastle, is the chairman of the company. The present dispute arises from the fact that, here, colliery proprietors labour under disadvantages compared with those around Newcastle. The first great one is in the difference of freight. From Wallsend to the port, traction cost is tenpence per ton, from Anvil Creek and Greta it is 2s. 4d. per ton. The difference means a fair margin of profit or loss. Here now, too, I am informed that outlay for a new shaft and works is required, but the company does not feel inclined to invest capital at a loss, therefore notice was given to the men that, unless they would consent to give 25 cwt. to the ton, or work for 4s. a ton, the pit must be closed. This would have been returning to the price prevalent at this colliery three years ago, when the men gave three skips of unscreened coal to the ton at the pit's mouth, and made far more money than they do now, although they worked more hours. The Miners' Union makes laws which are arbitrarily applied to every colliery, without considering the difference in the conditions of working in various localities; hence the present dispute, which certainly appears to me to be one which could be easily settled by

arbitration. But, in defiance of the printed rule, no such attempt has been made. It is true that the General Secretary came down to Sydney to see Mr. Lloyd, and informed him the men would not work at less than the old rate. The chairman said "Go in peace, I will try to get other men." The answer was, "No other men will be *allowed* to work at Anvil Creek."

After the great strikes I have seen in the old world this seemed a poor, mean affair, still it is a sample of the feeling of the men and their leaders. In the list of the miners in the Hunter district, at the commencement of the year Anvil Creek is stated to have sixty men employed. But at present this number has dwindled down to twenty-five miners, with a few boys and labourers. This is a small, merry, and defiant band—very happy and contented withal, the men each receiving an allowance of £1 a week whilst on strike. The man who meets with an accident, or is unemployed through slackness of trade, obtains nothing from his lodge; but he who strikes, who will not work when there is work, gets £1 a week, an allowance which is munificent, when it is taken into consideration that recently the miners in the Wallsend Company's Colliery only worked half a day a week, and the Co-operative one day a week. All the men "out" at Anvil Creek have also been offered full work by Mr. Vickery, at the Greta Colliery, which has some very large orders to supply, but they refused to accept this. It is the policy of the Union to keep them idle, and prevent any other workmen being employed. I had a knowledge of most of these circumstances as I rode over to Anvil Creek, but I wished to see the men personally, and hear their side of the question. This is the most primitive place I have yet seen in the colliery districts. Along the siding which runs from the railroad to the pit, cottages are scattered promiscu-

ously. These are the property of the company, for which the men pay rent. There is plenty of ground around each, which the occupiers are at liberty to annex and turn into gardens, but in hardly one single instance has this been done. In every sense there appears a condition of things indicating a lower tone in the inhabitants than at Wallsend and Lambton. Nowhere has there been any attempt at cultivation, and in many places there is a thick second growth of scrub. Riding about the village, I was lucky in early coming upon a group of men clustered around a building which has done service as a chapel. Some were seated on the ground, others squatted in the uncomfortable position affected by Hindoos and Cornstalks. They smoked and chewed straws, and chatted lazily. The delicious sense of doing nothing possessed them, and they seemed to appreciate it as highly as any savages I have ever met, or, in fact, as I do myself.

I reined up old "Bluey," a sedate steed, which nothing less than an earthquake would discompose, and spoke my miner friends fairly. I pride myself on being courteous to all men—except to bookmakers and some of their diamond-ringed companions. Which was the road to the pit? It was down there; but it was no use my going—no one was there—it wasn't working. "Ah! not working?" "No." Fifteen pairs of eyes looked at me, with the expression in each as plain as words—"What the —— do you want here?" Lancashire, Staffordshire, Welshmen, and "Geordies," the types were plainly depicted. Here, also, was the native, with long locks and matted beard, who would look the part of either gold-digger or bushranger. I produced some tobacco, and, helping myself, said carelessly, "This is real American. I got it from the mail steamer. Would any of you like some?" That

fetched them, and broke the ice. For an hour I was the centre of a group of talkers, whose utterances would fill pages of this volume. I should very much have liked to be photographed there. Sitting on old "Bluey," who cropped the grass at his feet, a circle of miners squatted around me, with one every now and then arising, and in a rude dramatic way giving vent to his wrongs—at the back the primitive huts, and beyond these the bush—it would have been a companion picture to the one taken when I received the army (only 450 rank and file) of—— in the Plaza of a South American city. There was a certain rough dignity in these men which I could not but admire, and which for a time I was at a loss to account for. Was it the dignity of labour of which we hear so much? Oh no! My mind went back; there was something in this scene bearing resemblance to one in a far-off land. At last it flashed across me. I remembered the lodge of the Sioux chief, Sitting Bull, when the braves one after another rose and detailed their grievances. A strange simile, it will be said. But the Indian savage and the Australian collier had exactly the same rude, outward nobility—a spurious dignity, born not of work, but of play. In each there was the aspect of men who were not oppressed by labour, but who were accustomed to take their ease often, and had the consciousness that they were free to do so. I declare that never in the old world have I met, amongst men of far higher social position, such apparent readiness and self-reliance as I did amongst this knot of bush miners.

Errant knaves some of them, no doubt; one varlet had been through Maitland Gaol, through a slight difficulty in respect to the laws of *meum* and *tuum*. But, outwardly, they were respectable-looking; they wore clean shirts, and there was no sign of poverty. On their £1 a week they seemed in far

better case than many of the Wallsend colliers. They were unanimous to a man, and glibly expressed their determination to stand out—"as long as we get our allowance, however," said one of them. They backed their opinions by many very strangely-warped dogmas of political economy. I was told that the Anvil Creek colliers were the hardest lot in the district, and I believe it, but I have not one word to say against their conduct during our palaver. They were, after their lights, courteous to me; and if they expressed their opinions strongly, still, altogether, I avow that they set a good example to honourable gentlemen in another place. At the outset, Orwin, the lodge secretary, "speered" at me that I was "interested in the colliery." I said that I *was* interested, although certainly not in the light he meant. We argued the question of the reduction of wages, each man answering my propositions in his turn. It was useless my pointing out to them that here, at Anvil Creek, the colliery owners were taxed one shilling and sixpence a ton more for traction than in the neighbourhood of Newcastle. "It's the fault of the Government. They should reduce it, then, and encourage men to come here." This was a very popular idea. I asked them why they would not to go to work at Greta. The reply was that they dare not, the Union would not allow them. "We've got our allowance, £1 a week, and we're bound to stop here, and the company will be obliged to open the pits; they've got too much property here to let it lie idle long, they can't afford to shut it up." Smart fellows these, no doubt, from their point of view. I think the £1 a week, however, has a great deal to do with their determination. I was anxious to know why they would not endeavour to have this settled by arbitration, and quoted to them an article from their organ, the *Newcastle*

Herald, advocating conciliation in all disputes of labour and capital. "What have we got to arbitrate about?" said the secretary. "We want five shillings a ton; it's the Union rule; and we won't work under." This long interview ended by one man stepping forward, and with dramatic action, throwing his cap on the ground, said, "I suppose you know what that means, sir?" "Well," said I, "what will you do with this?" producing a coin. "Maybe we'll buy things for the children, but if you give anything you shouldn't ask what becomes of it." There was a rude truth in this which I acknowledged, and I "parted" without further query.

I rode across the township, accompanied by my friends. Shortly we came upon two public-houses, which must be in a state of bankruptcy. Alas! for the "things for the children," the crowd turned into the "Anvil Creek Arms." "I think you ought to drink us luck, anyhow, sir," said one. "Mates," said I, "I have told you my opinion. I think you are acting wrongly and stupidly, but I wish you all the luck you deserve," and I drank it them in Wood and Prendergast's ale. We parted amicably, and I cantered across the scrub to the colliery. It looked strangely deserted, not a sign of life about the place, the engine stopped, fires out—it was mournful to contemplate. The erections here are old, and fresh capital is required to be invested, but with the present feeling of the men towards their employers, it is scarcely likely that this will be done. I left Anvil Creek with sad thoughts of the policy of the Union which makes stupid rules as to wages, allowing for no difference in locality, or of cost in working; and which, for an idea of supporting the "independence of labour," maintains men in idleness, and encourages the pernicious theory that it is better to play than to work.

DOWN IN A COAL-MINE.

I HAVE been down the deepest coal-pit in the colonies, and endured thrilling experiences therein. From the Greta station there are two roads—one through the scrub to the village; the other, across a large paddock, which has been at one time cultivated, leads to the colliery. As, however, the bridge across the creek has broken down, this latter track is not available for vehicles. There are cottages scattered about; these are the property of Mr. Vickery, and are let to the colliers. There is plenty of ground which the occupants can cultivate; but, as at Anvil Creek, nothing has been done in that line. The working men in this remote district appear more thriftless and careless than those nearer Newcastle. Riding across the paddock, one shortly comes to a siding which branches from the railroad, and, after running for about a mile, taps the line again. Double accommodation is thus provided. I notice that the rails are steel-faced, and that the work seems of the most solid description. Shortly we arrive at the first pit. Here railroad waggons are being loaded direct from the mouth, and are then shunted into other sidings, from whence the engine fetches them on to the main line. Smouldering heaps of refuse coal give out smoke by day, and fire by night. The village of Greta can be seen through the trees. Riding down the siding, and leaving the manager's house to the right, one comes to the pride and glory of Greta—the new shaft, 440 feet to the bottom. “Do you know anything about coal-mines?” asked Mr. Harper, the manager. With my usual self-reliance I replied, “I know *all*

about them.” He looked dubiously at me for a minute; there was an expression in his eye which seemed to mean “blowing!” However, before I ended my few days' pleasant sojourn in the district, I think Mr. Harper was satisfied that I did know considerable on this subject. “I am glad to hear it,” he said. “I am going to show you something you've never seen the like of elsewhere. If you've anything better than our erections, and the seam of coal down there, in America, I'd like to know it.” He was right; before I was all through, I had to admit that the United States could not show much to beat this.

The shaft is all fenced in; massive beams support a substantial frame above it: at the side there are three lines of rails, on which three parallel rows of waggons receive the coal from above. On the other side is the engine-house, and this I proceed to examine first. This is built on a great platform, to raise it to the level of the pithead. Immense piles and beams of wood are strengthened and clamped by iron bars and rods. The two boilers of 80-horse-power are built in stone foundations. There is an appearance of solidity about everything, as if it was meant to last, which it is pleasing to see in a new country. The boiler is filled by a little donkey-engine, and the waste steam is turned into the tank; and so, warming the water, a great deal of power is saved. In the large and airy engine-room there is a double engine, and also two immense drums, on which the wire-rope is coiled which lifts the cages up and down the shaft. Here, all day long, stands the engineer, with his hands on the levers, starting and reversing them, with his eyes intently fixed on the pithead, and his ears listening to the signals, which are made by wire, from the bottom of the pit. With every sense strained, and the

lives of the men in his hand, I think the engine-man has the hardest work on the place—certainly, it is the most responsible. Every half-minute, with a flash, the rope descends, and one empty cage goes to the bottom, whilst another, laden with a “skip” of coal, is brought to the top of the pit. All parts of the machinery in the engine-room are railed off. On the wall a copy of the colliery rules is hung; these contain a very complete code of signals in use between the pit and engine-house. We cross over to the other side of the pit and ascend a ladder to a platform above the lines of rail. Here are four sets of “screens,” and four rows of waggons can be loaded at once. The process is self-acting and simple. The “screen-boards” are merely immense riddles formed of bars of iron. The top one has a space of three-quarters of an inch between the bars; the bottom one only half an inch. The “screen-boards” slope from the platform at the top of the pit; a “skip” is tipped on to this; the small coal falls through the first spaces on to the second screen, the still smaller and dust through the half-inch spaces; spouts and shoots lead to the waggons beneath. This divides the coal into three classes—that for market, the small or “nuts” used for the boilers, and the third, called “duff,” is treated as refuse, and is tipped off at the end of the siding. It is a very simple and complete plan. Three waggons are loaded side by side, and, there being four sets of screens, twelve can be loaded at once. At the end of this platform is a weighing-machine, where two men are stationed; one of them is employed by the colliery, the other is an agent of the men, known as the “check-weigher.”

The Coal Mines Regulation Act of 1876 not only gives thorough protection to the lives of the colliers, but also looks

after their material interests. It contains clauses empowering the men to appoint one of their number to weigh and take account of the coal gotten by them, and owners and managers are to afford him every reasonable facility for doing so, under pains and penalties. Reading through this Act, and taking the action of the Union into consideration, I am altogether of opinion that coal-miners at present are the most pampered and privileged class of the community. The “check-weigher” does not test every skip. The colliers below have each certain numbers, and every now and then, at irregular intervals, skips from the different “shifts” are weighed. The average of each man is taken as the amount earned by him during the day. The check-weigher is paid by the Union Lodge, receiving weekly the average earning of the men employed, who each contribute to it in proportion. This arrangement works satisfactorily both to masters and men. When the railroad waggons arrived at Newcastle they are weighed again, and there is never any material difference between the weights. The labourers employed on the screens and platform are paid daily wages. We leave these, and ascend the ladder to the platform at the pithead. Here one might have a splendid dance; it is 50 feet by 40, covered in at the top, lofty and airy, allowing the men to work free from sun and rain. The frame is made by immense beams of ironbark wood, clamped with metal; the cages are continually ascending and descending; “safety gates” guard the mouth of the pit. As a cage arises, it lifts the gate, which slides in a groove in the framework above. When the cage descends, it falls into its old place. Accident is thus almost rendered impossible. The cages are provided with rails the width of the trams or skips; at the top these are received by men and boys, who run them to an inverter known

as a "kickup;" this shoots them on to the sloping-screens and waggons below. There is the most perfect system and order in working everything. Looking below, one sees the great beams which work the pump running down inside of the shaft, and also that one side of the pit is boarded, cutting off a certain space from top to bottom. This is a flue for ventilation. From the top of the pit a narrow gallery is built, some forty feet in length, communicating with the flue at one end and with a furnace at the other. This is always kept alight, and the draught causes a current of cold and fresh air to circulate round the mine.

My companion has procured two lamps, and the signal being given to the engineer that we are about to descend, we step into the cage, merely a narrow platform of iron with open ends. There is an inch steel wire rope between us and eternity, but I know it is strong enough to bear tons. It is a strange fact that, when wire ropes were first introduced into England, the men at many mines struck against their use. Now, no single-linked chain is allowed to be used in collieries in New South Wales. We go down quickly, but steadily. The motion is as regular as that of the Palace Hotel lift at San Francisco. It is a splendid shaft, fifteen feet wide, well bricked—I have never seen a better. By the dim light of the lamps you see the pump-rods, the boarded flue at the side, the rope of the other cage which is ascending, and then the lamps go out, and for a few seconds we are in darkness; and during this time I cannot feel that we are moving. We stop without that sudden jerk which one feels in some elevators, and, guided by my companion's hand, I step out. Darkness everywhere—water dripping on our heads—faint lights, as of glow-worms in the distance. A will-o'-the-wisp, a light with a voice underneath

it, at about the height of my head, salutes us. The manager waves his lamps around, and I see that this is a black gnome. Other gnomes come around us. Then there is a bustle and noise, and I am cleared out of the way to make room for a dark body, which, after a time, assumes the shadowy form of a horse, drawing skips to the bottom of the pit. In a little while I get used to the gloom, and I see three lines of rails branching off into the darkness. Empty and full skips are continually being hauled along these. At the sides and overhead, great props make the place secure. This is one of the main "levels," which run north and south, and from which in every direction "headings," and "drives," and "bords" are made. We walk along the level, and my companion flashes the lights around. *Ciel!* I am in the midst of wealth greater than that of Golconda. Floor, roof, and sides of this tunnel all sparkling like jet. What are gold and diamonds compared to this? I am in a seam of splendid coal 26 feet in thickness, and where we stand 17½ feet of this has been mined. Above and below us coal has been left: it is easier and safer to work only a certain amount of this. Mr. Harper strikes the walls—a clear, ringing sound, as from marble, is given out. He takes up a piece of the mineral and gives it to me. "Put it in your pocket; it won't soil your fingers or handkerchief." I am amused at the idea of taking such a *souvenir*, and at the attachment exhibited in this case, as amongst all men, to what provides them bread. The farmer praises his crops, the squatter his herds and flocks, the captain his ship, and the collier his coal. It is natural!

We go into a little cave on one side, where some of the men eat their meals. This, also, is hewn out of the solid coal. It is wonderful. I feel avaricious. To think that this great wealth—800 acres of coal in the Greta property alone—

does not, some of it, belong to me! A thousand tons a day can be raised from here; and where does this coal-field end? The "dip" is towards the west, and the best coal goes with the dip. In the future, the world may be supplied from this place. Every minute the horses tramp by us: these, at first, had to be brought down in slings, and have never since seen the light of day. At the old pit there is a tunnel leading up to the surface, and there the horses every week have rest and recreation above ground. I wonder what they think of their strange existence. We retrace our steps. I am shown the stables, also hewn out of coal; and afterwards a great underground pool, where the water from all parts drains, and from which it is pumped by the engine above. A strange, weird scene, with the light flashing on the black water and black roof. Then we go along the levels, and headings, and bords. It is dark, and dank, and slippery under foot. Stumbling and tripping, sometimes ankle-deep in water, I follow the manager. I should once have been brained but for the protection of one of Priddy's strong "pullovers;" for although, in the headings, the roof is high above you, in some of the new "bords" it is not so. These "bords" are simply openings branching from the "headings," from whence the coal is obtained. Between each bord a pillar of coal, four yards in thickness, is left, and the men are not allowed to make the bords more than a certain width and height. This is for safety. As they go along, they prop up the roof above them. When a bord is worked out, it is abandoned, and it may cave in. The main levels and headings are always carefully propped. In all the workings, there is a quantity of small coal left behind as rubbish, which, in Melbourne or Sydney, would be fairly valuable. It seems hard that, with all this labour and trouble, never more than

five-sixths part of the coal is obtained, the remainder having to be left as supports. In these bords, creatures, who look like stalwart black demons, naked to the waist, are picking away at the black walls before them, their lamps stuck into niches of coal by their side. These demons, rough-looking though they are, speak us kindly and fairly. They work in couples in each bord, one generally picking whilst the other loads the skip, which is fetched away by lads and run into a main level, and thence by horses to the foot of the pit.

Now these genial demons make all one inquiry: "Have you ever been down a pit before, sir?" Being wary after my kind, I reply, and truthfully, "Yes," for I know that otherwise I shall be bailed up for grog-money. I manifest a wonderful acquaintance with the properties of coal here, and am so enthusiastic on the subject that the demons get an idea that I am going to buy the mine, and I am treated with respect accordingly. I interview them as to the wages they have made, and find that, on this day, some have already made 17s. 6d., others 15s., and others 12s. 6d. Good pay that, for in these large seams the work is not really very hard. The men can make higher wages at less exertion than in small seams. We go on and on to the end of a heading, where there are not many yards between the workings of the two pits. In a short time communication will be established, and then the men can walk down the sloping tunnel to their work, and the horses will once more see daylight. One can hear the noise of the picks on the other side of the coal-wall. The atmosphere at this point is close to the stranger, although for a mine it is healthy, there not being the slightest danger of "damp," naked lights being used everywhere. The ventilation is managed by a number of doors,

which shut up the entrance to the various passages, and regulate the current of air flowing up the flue in the shaft. By the time we get back to our starting place I am considerably tired, and very glad once more to see the light of day. But I have again to go through the ordeal of descending the other pit. This, however—the shaft being only about 100 feet deep—is a small affair, compared to the first. There is one large main level here, dipping towards the new mine; and on the tramway along this the skips are drawn by a wire rope worked by the engine above. This is a saving of time; and when the communication between the pits is made, the whole mine can be worked in this manner. Boys in charge of the trams ride up and down on them, and in the dark jump on, and off, and caper around like youthful gnomes. The rattle of the chains and ropes, the rush of the trams, the will-o'-the-wisp lights flashing about—all make a wonderfully impressive scene.

We inspect the waggon-shop, where skips and railroad waggons are made, and every appliance is at hand as if in the most settled district of England and America. I am astonished and pleased. The owner of this mine, Mr. Vickery, is evidently not one to bury his talent in a napkin. Much capital has been invested here, and judiciously invested. Of course there is a conflict with labour, and, after partaking of Mr. Harper's hospitality, I visited the office to hear a certain proposition made to the men. It happened to be "pay Friday." During the previous fortnight nine days had been worked, and some of the men took away £10 for that. Of course these were highly skilled men; others would not earn anything like the amount. I find the average earnings during the past year were 13s. per diem, when at work, or £1 13s. 6d. per week for the whole

year. But the daily earnings average was actually higher, for men are off work every day through sickness, drink, &c. Good men can make 15s. to 17s. 6d. a day in an average "bord." The above is not a high weekly wage, but then little work was given for it. One would think that men who, through slackness of trade, have had to "play" so long, would be glad to earn money when they could. Yet it is not so. Although the men can only work when vessels are loading, and although, owing to the erratic nature of the foreign trade from Newcastle, there may, at an individual colliery, be no vessels and no order for a month or two, they will not work "overtime," or on a "pay Saturday" or holiday. Vessels may be waiting, and a day or a few hours' work would complete the cargo and save expenses, yet the men will not give it, however idle they may have been during the previous weeks. On the present occasion there were a number of vessels in Newcastle, and a request was made to the men that they would work on the next day in order to save orders. They laughed it to scorn. Work on pay Saturday? Not they! Mr. Vickery had got ships waiting, had he? Why didn't he get them while work was slack? I questioned many of the men as to their disinclination to earn 12s. 6d. at least. Some said they had never been used to it; others that they wanted a little relaxation. "What will you do to-morrow?" I asked. "Well, master, I daresay I'll get drunk;" and at this there was a laugh which vouched for the truth. I found, at last, that it was a rule of the Union that no man should work on holidays or pay Saturdays; if he did, he would be fined 12s. 6d. This was another of those absurd arbitrary laws made by the Miners' Union. It appears the policy to keep the men as idle as possible.

When Mr. Vickery came into possession of the Greta Colliery, he made the men an offer of constant daily work throughout the year at 4s. a ton wages instead of 5s. This was refused, and for a long time the pits remained idle, the proprietor not seeing his way clear to make a profit at the higher wage. I suppose it would not be worked now unless a profit *was* made. But I suspect that cannot be very large. It is urged that, because traction costs 1s. 6d. a ton more to the port than from collieries near Newcastle, it is no reason men should give the same work for less wages. But the circumstances are different. Coal is more easily got at Greta, and the cost of living is very much cheaper than in the Newcastle district. Surely, when constant employment is offered to the men at a slightly reduced wage, they had better accept it than remain idle for more than half the year. But high wages and little work seems the motto of the Union. I trust it will not lead to more serious results than the slight distress of which so much has lately been made. There is work for the starving Wallsend colliers, not only on the railroad, but at the Greta pit, and yet they will not avail themselves of it. The moral is obvious.

IN THE HUNTER VALLEY.

DURING my trip in the Hunter Valley, I formed the conclusion that this was the most fertile part of Australia I have yet seen, not even excepting the far-famed Western District of Victoria. In the neighbourhood of Newcastle there is ample railroad accommodation. In a distance of thirty-five miles between that city and Branxton there are fourteen stations, an average

of one every two and a half miles. The Great Northern Line is like the other Government railways in its accommodation, neither better nor worse. I do not think, however, that the permanent way is equal to that on the Western Line. Of course we were locked in the carriage—a barbarous practice which they are just abandoning in Victoria. There will be a terrible accident some day, and then the folly of treating passengers like cattle will be patent to the railway officials here. Some may remember the account of that heartrending catastrophe to the Irish mail between Rhyl and Abergele. Some waggons containing nitro-glycerine and petroleum were being shunted at a siding to make way for the “Wild Irishman.” A coupling broke, or there was carelessness on the part of the guard. Anyhow, they got away, and ran down the incline towards the coming train. A collision took place, then an explosion; in a few minutes flames ran along the ground, the whole train was burnt up, and the passengers roasted alive. I was on the spot an hour afterwards, and shall never forget the sight. There would have been ample time for the unfortunates to have escaped, but that the carriage doors were locked. A Welsh countrywoman deposed at the inquest that she ran along the side of the train and called to the passengers to get out. The doors were locked, and they could not; and, whilst hesitating, the flames enveloped them, and in a few minutes all was over. This sad lesson appears to be forgotten here; but, to avoid similar horrors, I do hope some member of Parliament will press this question on the Minister for Works. To my mind, the Commissioner or Traffic Manager who persists in authorizing the locking-in of passengers should, in event of an accident, be hung—*pour encourager les autres*.

I thought sadly of these things as I took my seat in the train at Newcastle. Then I interviewed the guard. Suppose I opened the carriage door myself? The penalty, I was informed, was £5, or three months' imprisonment. What an infamy! Suppose I got through the window?—not a very easy task for me. I should forfeit my journey. Thus the guard. He may have been only "bluffing" me; and I think I will practically test the question on behalf of the public at an early date. On this occasion I leant back in the carriage and cursed the Government—a proceeding which injures no one, and is always a relief to the mind. "Leant back," but not very far, for this, the smoking compartment, was a narrow kennel in which one could not stretch his legs. King James would have been delighted at the miseries here inflicted on lovers of the weed. One's knees touched the partition opposite, which in the upper part was covered with advertisements. Now this I considered another outrage. On all the best lines in England they have done away with this abomination. In America even, the land of advertising, we are generally safe from it in the cars. But in Australia the horrors of railroad travelling are aggravated by the announcements, mostly of things which nobody ever wants, staring one obnoxiously in the face. I declare I will never buy anything from anyone who advertises in a railway carriage. To sit for hours opposite a staring placard recommending some patent cooking-range, or infant's food—it is an insult to all bachelors. A dark design enters my soul. These offensive ads. are all screwed on to the wood of the partition. They can easily be removed. Some night, in a lonely railroad carriage, I will have fun by throwing them out of the window, and strewing them about the remote bush by the side of the line. They might disseminate some useless

knowledge to free selectors—something in the same way that the Indians of the Plains have acquired a taste for contemporaneous Art through the study of *Frank Leslie's* and *Harper's*. When on the Pacific railroad there are any particularly heavy mails, it was the custom of the sorters to throw a sack of newspapers on to the track. These were blown by the wind for hundreds of miles—indeed, it is said some have been found in Mexico. The Comanche or Apache capture the illustrated journals, and take great delight therein. The first copies they thought "big medicine;" but now they are quite used to the pictures, and your youthful brave knows the difference between the pencils of Matt. Morgan and Nast. The squaws attempt to jerk their robes like the Broadway belles, whose counterfeit presentments they admire, and the demand for false hair has caused scalps to rise in value. Thus civilization is spread!

When we get past Waratah, we leave the coal district to the left, and travel through a good pastoral and agricultural country. There are splendid paddocks here, and, after the drought, it was a treat to see cattle and horses standing knee-deep in the long lush grass, feeding to their stomach's desire. We crossed Hexham Swamp, and here I made a new acquaintance. The "Norfolk Greys" were a celebrated regiment of horse which did good service for the South. The "Hexham Greys" are not soldiers, but bloodthirsty banditti—in fact, mosquitoes. I have been bitten by these pests of mankind all over the world, but from a mere passing friendship I give the Hexham Greys best. It is said they generally wait for the morning trains, being partial to strangers. They swarm into the cars, and go for you in every direction. Clothes—they laugh these to scorn; nothing but tarpaulin will keep out their

stings. Handsome fellows, too, large and fat, with broad bands of black and grey on their backs, quite tigerish. Hexham is a nice place, I am told. I hope the "Greys" will always think so, and stop there. Should they emigrate to Sydney, I take the first boat to America. Maitland, from the rail, seems a nice, prosperous, old-fashioned town. It possesses evidences of Christianity in a gaol, which is counterbalanced by a racecourse. There seem wide streets, and good substantial houses. But I should think it is principally known for its railway stations. No other town in Australia possesses three within a mile of each other. This is an undecided sort of a place. It, so to speak, slops over. There is East Maitland and West Maitland; but it is best to compromise by alighting at High-street station, midway between the two. Then you offend nobody. Local jealousies, I suppose, caused the erection of these three depots. It does seem absurd that a little place like Maitland should be so accommodated. At night the railway platforms are always crowded by country larrikins, who stare stupidly into the carriage windows, and who, being more ignorant, are more offensive than their city compeers. As I am going to pay a visit to Maitland one of these days, I will say no more about it at present. At every little station along the line we saw baskets of butter on the platform, waiting for the train to Newcastle; from thence, perhaps, to be sent to Sydney. In all the paddocks there were fine cattle and horses, but few sheep, which one took to be a good sign. The houses are well built, often of brick. There is an air of substantial and long-settled prosperity around, which it is pleasing to see.

The township of Greta, where I left the cars, has sprung up with the colliery. It possesses four public-houses and four

places of worship. It has a Public School and a School of Arts, where I listened for an hour to some very fair singing and playing, included in a concert given in aid of the local cricket club. There are brick stores and butchers' shops here. Soon there will be the added glories of a courthouse and a lock-up! A hawker had made his pitch whilst I was there, his principal stock-in-trade consisting of flaming handkerchiefs, calculated to catch the collier's taste. But his Chinese opponent drove about in a covered spring-cart, and supplied the neighbourhood with vegetables and little odds and ends used in housekeeping. "John" is very popular about here. Coal was first discovered in the creek running through the township, and the outcrop of it can yet be seen there. The Great Northern Road passes through the place, and daily large mobs of cattle are driven along this. I am told that, in by-gone times, this was a rare haunt of bushrangers. Historical parallel—the Great Northern Road, from London to York, was the favourite hunting-ground of Dick Turpin and his followers. Greta would be nothing without the colliery that I have already described. As during my stay there I enjoyed the kind hospitality of Mr. Harper, I have not much to say about the people. The landlord of one of the hotels was, however, very anxious to sell out to me; I don't know why—unless that I look like a would-be Boniface.

From Greta I was driven through the bush to the celebrated Dallwood vineyard, which I had been invited to visit. The homestead here is one of the oldest in the district. It has a goodly site on the rising ground above the flats. Before one stretches the open valley formed by a bend of the Hunter. Hills are all around. The cleared flats on this side are grassed, and bloom beautiful with many a nameless wild-flower. Across

the river are the cabins of many small farmers. On the banks are great patches of lucerne and maize, growing as luxuriously as in Egypt. And the conditions here are similar to those in the land of the Pharaohs, for the soil is alluvial, and the periodical floods which destroy property in the townships still are blessings in disguise. These floods, however, certainly prove rough on the cottagers who live on the banks of the river, and who often have to fly for their lives. Not very far from Dallwood are the posts erected as mementos, showing where, some fifty years ago, the Hunter rose over thirty feet in one night. What has happened once, may again; and, if so, woe to Singleton and Maitland! In ordinary flood-time the latter place is now, I believe, somewhat damp. Sitting on the verandah with my host, with this peaceful scene before me, I desire nothing better than to dream away the days here. Everything is so soothing; there is more green here than I have yet seen in Australia: and the iced wine at my elbow is remarkably good. But in spite of the heat of the day, it is my duty to examine the vineyard. This is one of the oldest in the colonies, and occupies all one paddock on the high ground just above flood-mark. The vines are regularly planted, supported by wooden standards and wire trellises. There are intersecting roads by which it is easy to drive around. Some date-palms and fig-trees have been planted, which relieve the monotony, and occasionally one comes on a vine-embowered arbour erected to give shade for the labourers during their mid-day meal. Shaded platforms, as in Italy, are also here. Deep trenches drain the vineyard. The grape-gatherers have ceased work for the day, and we are alone but for the magpies which fly around in numbers. These are strictly preserved by my host;

it is one of his conditions that any of his men shooting one shall be fined £1. They are most useful in destroying worms and insects, and being protected here, will follow the plough as it turns up the soil between the vines, picking up whatever dainty may be thus exposed. The grapes grown here are chiefly the Black Hermitage and the *Pineau blanc et noir*. The average yield is 60,000 gallons of wine per annum. In the harvest the gatherers are principally the women and children comprising the families of the small settlers in the neighbourhood. Women, and even children, can pick more grapes, and therefore earn more than men. The latter, perhaps, will hardly make "tucker" at this, whilst a young girl is getting very fair wages. The cellars or stores cover three-quarters of an acre of ground, partly brick and stone, and partly iron-roofed. There are five wooden presses; from these the juice is conveyed to great vats, where fermentation takes place, and from thence pumped into the immense casks which line the cellars. There are 4,000, and 3,000, and 1,000-gallon casks—monsters which are bound and strapped with iron rods and wooden bars. Some of these come from Bordeaux, being specially made of oak. Some are of home manufacture, of Australian beech. Wine-tasting on a hot afternoon is not a bad occupation, if one happens to be a seasoned vessel. What between the white and the red wines, I put in the time very pleasantly. I am prepared to testify as to the excellence of the vintages here; and the certificates which cover the office walls, from agricultural societies and intercolonial exhibitions throughout all Australia and New Zealand, to one from *l'Exposition Universelle de 1867*, where a silver medal was obtained, prove that my judgment is not in fault. My host has won enough silver cups to stock a jeweller's

shop. The Dallwood wines are so well known that, for many years, the produce of the vintages has been bought in advance by one firm of merchants.

There is nothing like the pure juice of the grape as one gets it here. The children are beautiful and healthy, and I notice that the complexions of the young ladies are almost equal to those of the Tasmanian belles. I would that I lived in a wine country. But all this has been brought about by individual capital and perseverance. Looking at this peaceful valley, it is hard to realize the time, not so very remote, when Mount Huntley, in front of us, was a convict station—when that “peculiar institution,” which was the first foundation of these colonies, flourished in full vigour—when the prisoners were treated like brutes, and often escaping to the bush became worse than brutes. It is hard to realize that this verandah at Dallwood has been boarded up and barricaded, with loopholes for musketry, standing a siege against bushrangers. Yet all this has been, as no doubt in many other parts of New South Wales. What do we not owe to the generation of men who, to provide happy homes for their children, risked their fortunes and their lives in this then wild land? Pioneers are never sufficiently appreciated. It is not only the individual good they do to themselves and their families—and too often they sacrifice all and gain little—but it is the incalculable general benefits they pave the way for in the future. I spent the Sabbath at Leconfield, belonging to a brother of the proprietor of Dallwood. He has gone into a different line of business, and is a man of herds of the purest breeds. The house, situated on the brow of the hill, commands even a finer view. The whole valley is before you, and Dallwood House and vineyard lie below. Hundreds of Herefords and Devons luxuriate in the rich

pasture. I passed one of those pleasant days, oases in my rugged vagabond career, which will be for ever impressed on my mind, for many reasons. It is pleasant to be a vigneron; but it is also pleasant to own prize cattle, and ride amongst your oxen and your horses, all of the most aristocratic breed. I had private interviews with some very high-toned bovine princes. The beautiful Devons, with their symmetrical forms, well-shaped heads, and general appearance of grace and elegance, giving promise of lightness of bone, especially took my fancy. I had no idea that the breeding of fine stock was carried to such perfection in Australia. Lying on the lawn at Leconfield, with the cool breeze fanning our cheeks, I “enthused” on the glories of the Hunter Valley. Within a circle of a few miles, wine, and corn, and fat cattle, and coal are produced. I do not know a like place on the earth. This is a peaceful scene, and it would be a pity to have it polluted by pit-banks and smoke-stacks; but yet the greatest wealth is, perhaps, below the surface. Coal is here, as at Greta, although it may not be worked in our generation. Here, everything is produced tending to wealth and prosperity. Fair women, and stalwart men, and beautiful children, give good promise for the future of the Australian race in the Hunter Valley.

NEW COLONISTS.

THE good ship *Erato*, 1,250 tons burden, Captain Dice, commander, from London to Sydney, one hundred days out, arrived in the harbour on May 15, 1878. She had on board