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SAS. W. McEWEN

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MINER'S WAGES.

BRAIDWOOD'S CURSE.

(From last week—Concluded.)

COREY APPLIES THE THUMBSCREWS

Having reduced the scale to 80 cents a ton and introduced the truck store, the company was not long in finding a new source of oppression. There was no longer any great danger of a strike. The men were submissive and apparently stupefied by the fearful strain on their strength. So the screw was given another turn. The coal, when excavated, is loaded onto a car which carries about 1,500 pounds. In hauling these cars along the rough roads to the mouth of the shaft, it was inevitable that some of this coal should fall off.

In former years this was taken into allowance by the weighers and the miner given credit for the coal which lay scattered along the roadway and which was eventually picked up. After the protected workingmen and farmers of the United States had elected Harrison President, and free trade had been dealt a death blow, Superintendent T. B. Corey, of the Chicago, Wilmington and Vermillion Coal Company, issued an order that the company would allow weight for just the amount of coal found in the car. Men were then employed at small wages to pick up this coal. One man could thus collect a large amount of coal in a day, far more than the most skilled miner could place to his credit.

It seems almost incredible, but the men claim that the company has conspired to deliberately rob them by this scheme. They allege that the road has purposely been made rough so as to shake the coal from the cars. The men in the rooms have not been supplied with a sufficient number of cars, being thereby stimulated to pile on a big load, part of which would more certainly fall off.

This humane and Christian scheme has made lots of money for the company. It has been a great success. The miner was compelled to either throw on a small load and remain idle for hours with a certainty of diminished wages, or pile on a decent load and have part of it jolted off and appropriated by the company without pay.

ANOTHER TURN FOR THE QUI'RING WRETCH.

So successful was this scheme that the company was encouraged to adopt another and similar method of reducing the wage fund. It had been the custom to weigh the coal before it was dumped onto the screens. This gave the miner the benefit of all the coal which had not fallen off on the road. Superintendent Corey decided that in the future the coal should be weighed after it was sifted, and that the men should receive nothing for the weight of the screenings.

That settled it, and an order to that effect was posted forthwith. The men read it in silence and turned away. By this ingenious plan the company obtained without expense for mining screenings which have been sold in the Wilmington and other manufacturing towns for thousands of dollars.

There are other though smaller sources of revenue for the company. Two blacksmiths are employed at a salary of \$40 a month. Each of the 1,400 men have 25 cents a month deducted from their wages to pay for having their tools sharpened.

This makes a total of \$350, from which deduct \$80 as the wages of the blacksmiths and there remains as loss to the men and profit to the company the sum of \$270 a month, or the snug total of \$3,250 a year. No petty tyranny which the ingenuity of the company could devise was spared.

The wages were slowly but relentlessly forced down until it seemed as if organized selfishness would go no further in the oppression of faithful workmen.

The limit had not been reached.

With the average wages less than

\$18 a month for the year ending

May 1, 1889, the company announced a reduction of 10 cents, a cut of 12½ per cent. For digging coal they offered 70 cents a ton. Deducing the exactions so systematically made from the men's wages this scale fixed the pay per ton at less than 55 cents.

By the hard st kind of work the men have been unable to mine two tons of coal a day.

It would have been possible to slightly exceed this amount had the company furnished the men with the requisite number of cars and placed but three men in a room instead of four.

Such a course was against the policy of the company. High wages would give the men money to spend outside the truck store, and the company did not propose to stand any such nonsense.

WAGES AND THE TARIFF.

The tariff on coal is 75 cents a ton. The Braidwood miner actually receives less than 55 cents a ton for digging it out of the ground.

They do not even receive the tariff. To state it another way, the Chicago, Wilmington and Vermillion

Coal Company is enabled to get its work done for nothing and receives 20 cents royalty from the United States for each ton hoisted above the surface of the earth.

Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill did not calculate on any such condition of affairs when they penned works on political economy.

During the presidential campaign of last fall a large, red-faced man with a hoarse voice and plug hat made a speech at Braidwood.

He told those of the miners who had strength enough left to drag themselves from their miserable shanties that the protective tariff enabled the mine owners to pay them wages which were princely compared with those received by the pauper and free trade laborers of Europe.

This great orator and statesman went on to tell them that but for the republican party and its policy of protection to American industries the workmen of this country would die off like rotten sheep through competition with the sore-eyed and palsied cripples who made up the pauper labor of Europe.

He drew a glowing picture of the prosperity of the United States and recalled instances where friends of his had arisen from obscurity and were now worth \$20,000,000.

He told the men that any American workman could save his money and become wealthy beyond the dreams of avarice.

In the course of a lengthy speech he told them many other things equally true and convincing.