

THE TORPEDO TRADE.

A Peculiar Industry in the Oil Regions.

Cleveland Leader.

WARREN, Pa., June 18.—Two men were trout fishing in a stream near Sheffield, in the Warren oil region, a few days ago. A partridge, frightened from her nest by the approach of the fishermen, flew from a clump of bushes near the edge of the creek. One of the anglers drew his pistol and fired after the bird. The report of the pistol was followed by an explosion that shook the earth. Both men were prostrated. A large hemlock tree was shattered as though it had been struck by lightning. Earth and stones were showered about in all directions. The astonished and frightened men arose to their feet as soon as they could collect their senses. Two rods away they saw a hole in the ground several feet in diameter, which had been made by the explosion. One of the fishermen was an oil operator, and he knew that the pit had been made by the nitro-glycerine explosion. The spot had been selected by a "moonlighter," no doubt, in which to secrete a loaded shell well into the ground. The opportunity of evading the vigilance of the Roberts torpedo detectives at the pit had struck the shell, and the explosion exploded it. These improvised magazines are scattered all through the oil regions.

A STRANGE INDUSTRY.

"Moonlighting" is a peculiar industry that owes its existence to the patent laws. The late Colonel E. A. Roberts introduced the use of nitro-glycerine torpedoes in increasing the yield of oil wells. When the great flowing wells of Oil Creek, after yielding the petroleum pools of the lower field for three years, had exhausted the supply, as was supposed, Colonel Roberts experimented on an abandoned well with a quantity of nitro-glycerine, confined in a tin shell and exploded by concussion. The explosion was followed by a flow of oil, and the old well yielded thirty barrels a day for several years afterwards. The nitro-glycerine had shattered the oil-bearing rock and opened a paraffine-clogged vein. While serving in the army, Colonel Roberts noticed a bombshell exploding beneath water invariably spent its force on the bottom of the stream, throwing up mud and stones in great quantities. This was due, he supposed to the solid fluid tamping above the explosive. It was this idea that led him to the experiment of nitro-glycerine at the bottom of oil wells, beneath hundreds of feet of fluid tamping—oil and water collected in the well he obtained patents on his device. The validity of the patents was questioned, and nitro-glycerine torpedoes were used by others without paying royalty to Roberts. He brought nearly five thousand suits to protect his rights. One of these, as a test, was carried through all the state courts to the United States Supreme Court. Roberts won in every court, and nearly a million of dollars in royalties was recovered.

THE RESULT OF MONOPOLY.

The monopoly in nitro-glycerine torpedoes led to the illicit use of them in wells. Men without fear of death or regard for the law went into the business of "shooting" wells for producers who did not care to pay tribute to Roberts. Any one has a right to manufacture nitro-glycerine and to place torpedoes in wells. In the exploding of them lies the liability to prosecution and penalty. The moonlighter is always ready to contract for the shooting of a well. He carries his nitro-glycerine in wagons made especially for the purpose. They are the backboards, with cushioned apartments under the seat, into which the cans are placed. The roads of the oil regions would scarcely be called roads elsewhere. When not lured deep with mud, they are stretches of deep ruts and gulleys and projecting rocks. Drawn by powerful horses, these wagons, loaded with sixty or a hundred quart of one of the most destructive explosives known, and which a sudden jar is at any moment likely to explode, are driven by their reckless owners over these roads in the darkest nights at the top of their horses' speed.

The men work at night always. They are called the moonlighters, but the absence of the moon does not prevent them from undertaking a job. The Roberts Company has a wonderful detective system, which is constantly employed in ferreting out the trespassers in the torpedo patent. It frequently happens that a moonlighter is spotted as he starts out on one of his nocturnal missions. The moonlighter rarely fails to be aware of the fact when he is followed by one of the Roberts men. Then it is a race between the two. If the moonlighter cannot evade the detective and finish his job, he manages to secrete his nitro-glycerine in the bushes, old buildings, barns or other buildings of farms, or in any place where he is most likely to be able to recover it for use on a more auspicious occasion. Thus it happens that these dangerous stores are liable to be come upon at any time by people passing through the woods or along the streams, or by the farmers whose premises are being used.

THE LIFE OF TRADE.

The cost of torpedoing a well under the Roberts patent averages \$250. The moonlighter will shoot it for less than half of that. Thus the saving effected if the work is not discovered is a great temptation to a certain class of producers. If detected, however, the penalty is heavy. The Roberts price for the torpedoing must be paid, and whatever damages may be assessed. If the well is an old one, and has been shot to increase its yield, the value of the increased yield up to the time the damages are assessed is added the cost of detected illicit torpedoing.

When Colonel Roberts died recently, his income was about \$1000 a day. He had been separated from his wife and family several years. Mrs. Roberts had begun divorce proceedings against him, and they were pending at the time of his death. A nephew of the deceased man, a resident of Bradford, Pa., was made his heir. The nephew voluntarily transferred a third of the wealth he inherited to each of the two children of the dead inventor, keeping the other third himself. Appraisers of the estate of Col. Roberts have been seven weeks engaged in fixing its value. Their duties are

accompanied with a risk that the appraisers of no dead man's property probably ever ran before. They are obliged to visit all the nitro-glycerine safes in the oil region, examine and place a value on their contents. There are thirty of these magazines connected with the estate in the Bradford field alone. These magazines each contain from 1,000 to 10,000 pounds of the explosive. While the appraisers were cautiously creeping about in one of them which contained 2,000 pounds the other day, a driver of a Roberts nitro-glycerine wagon came tearing up to the safe with his team at the usual top-gallop rate. He had been out torpedoing wells. He had seven twenty-pound cans left. These he brought into the magazine, carrying two under each arm, one in each hand, and rolling the other along the floor of the safe with his foot. The six cans he tumbled on the floor as if they had been sticks of wood. The appraisers lost no time in getting out of that magazine.

A PRIVILEGED CLASS. When a nitro-glycerine wagon is met on the road, every other vehicle driver gives it all the way its driver sees fit to ask. The carrying of this explosive in any but the wagons arranged for its transportation is forbidden by law, but it is not an uncommon thing to see some dare-devil driver jolting over the rough roads with cans of it knocking about in the bottom of the wagon. Carrying nitro-glycerine through towns is punishable by heavy fines, but as it requires a rather bold officer to chase a man who is carrying with him material that may explode at any moment, it is not an exceedingly rare sight to see drivers on their way to wells taking a short and easier cut through towns and villages with their stock of nitro-glycerine. A driver was some time ago discovered passing through one of the Bradford suburbs, with a load of nitro-glycerine. The residents protested, and an officer halted the man to arrest him. The driver took one of the cans, raised it above his head, and informed the crowd that if any one attempted to interfere with him he would throw the can against a rock by the roadside, and not three feet away. The man was a moonlighter, and from his reputation the crowd believed that he would like nothing better than blowing up the town and its inhabitants, and if he disappeared in pieces at the same time, so they allowed him to pass on.

Practical Industrial Education.

Western Manufacturer. Five or six years ago we commenced the agitation, in this journal, of the question of a more practical education for the youth of this country, either by connecting a practical industrial education with our schools, or by the establishment of technical industrial schools in our large cities in which the thousands of boys and youths now growing up in idleness and ignorance, might receive an education that would enable them to secure an honest livelihood with their hands. In the same connection we have urged the enactment of a compulsory education law. At intervals from that time to this, we have continued to urge this matter. The only evidence that we have accomplished anything by our earnest discussion of subjects, is the fact that whereas we were at first almost entirely alone in this field of discussion, now many editors, professors and writers are doing good service in the cause, by urging the importance of a more practical education.

In a city like Chicago, the great majority of the pupils of our public schools, are the children of working men and women, who, as they grow up, must depend upon their own exertions for a livelihood. The schools give them a fair education in reading, spelling, writing and arithmetic, but that do them any good toward the education of the hand, which in nine cases out of ten, must be depended on for winning a livelihood, and for at least laying the foundation for independent and honorable citizenship? The education of our present public school system, if followed out to an honorable graduation from the high school, fits the pupils for a clerkship in a store, or the position of an office boy, or some place where they are expected to take their first lessons in the practical business of earning a livelihood. Now, it is well known that the demand for such situations for graduates of our high schools, and for those who have been compelled by the force of circumstances, to drop out of school life before reaching that goal, is in excess of the supply. Among the ever-increasing mechanical and manufacturing industries of the city and vicinity, there would every year be positions for thousands of scholars if they came out of school with a practical knowledge of mechanics, and the use of tools. But so far are they from having acquired any such knowledge, they come out of the high schools with a strong predilection against mechanical pursuits. And it is not an uncommon thing for high school graduates to wait for years for positions that do not pay their board when obtained. We say this in no condemnatory sense of either the schools or the scholars, but simply to show that in this practical age, in which trades unionism and socialism have done away with everything like an apprenticeship system, for the sole purpose of preventing an increase of skilled labor, with the hope of thereby increasing its value, our schools do not go far enough, or else not in the right direction.

It is well known that our workshops and factories have to depend almost wholly upon foreign skilled labor. Probably on an average, there is not more than one native-born American citizen in every hundred skilled workmen the country. This is not the fault of the young men of America parentage. They are ready to engage in skilled manual labor as those of any other nationality. The difficulty is it is almost impossible for them to secure the opportunity to learn a trade; or to become skilled workmen in any mechanical trade or calling. As before stated, the great majority of skilled workmen are foreigners, and members of trade unions; and these unions claim the right in workshops and factories, where a few apprentices are admitted, of dictating who those apprentices shall be, and it is hardly necessary to say such authority in every instance, is exercised to exclude American young men. One reason for this is that American skilled

workmen do not so readily yield to the dictates of trade unions in cases where strikes are ordered. Nor do they, as a general thing, learn a trade merely for the sake of becoming workmen, and remaining such all their lives. The great majority of American workmen consider their skill as means to an end, which is to establish a business of their own, which in due time, shall equal if not exceed that of their employers, and thus become the opponents instead of the allies of trades unionism.

It is for the above reasons, that such a change should be made in our public school system, as would provide for at least a rudimentary education in mechanics and the use of tools, which might be made available by the pupil in securing employment on completing his course. If it is found impossible to connect a workshop with the public school room, then we should have technical and industrial schools established, which should be mainly devoted to furnish their pupils with a practical mechanical education, so that they might soon become master workmen, on entering the workshop and factory. Thousands of young men now receiving the street education in idleness and vice, and thus being fitted for positions in our reformatory and penal institutions, might be made into skilled workmen, and useful and honorable citizens, in this city alone, in the course of a few years. Since so many able and intelligent writers have taken up the advocacy of this system of practical education, we may hope to see something accomplished at no distant day in the interest of practical and industrial education.

Irish Members of Parliament.

London Correspondence New York Time. Mr. Justin McCarthy, novelist and journalist, talks very frequently, but with little effect. It is an amusing fact that Mr. McCarthy, after having delivered a very strong, not to say violent speech, gracefully retires to write a heavy article upon it for the Daily News in which he nicely criticizes his own utterance. He is a man of high attainments and accomplishments, but fate evidently never designed him for a politician. Much the same may be said for Mr. F. O'Donnell, who is also an literary man, or, at any rate, a leader writer on the Morning Post. He, too, is another solitary star "sits apart." Mr. O'Donnell's position is a somewhat peculiar one. A fanatical Ultramontane, he professes to present the Catholic party proper, and may be regarded as the last of that faction in Parliament formerly known as the "People's League." But the Papists repudiate him and hold that he has done their cause more harm than good. A friend of mine, not long ago, while talking with Cardinal Manning about the Irishmen in Parliament, asked him what he thought of Mr. O'Donnell. "An excellent young man," replied his Eminence in his sweetest manner; "a good Catholic, too, but it is a pity that he meddles with politics." Mr. Biggar still remains faithful to Mr. Parnell, but he is rapidly gaining a position for himself, which is not unlikely to encourage him before long to "act up for himself," as others have done. That position is not a very dignified one. Mr. Biggar is the humorist of his party, and the Irish drollery of the little kumpp-backed man is such that the members of the congregation have been reduced to some dozen or so, exclaimed: "Mr. Speaker, sorry, I move that the house be counted." This is not a better story, however, than another I heard the other day about the same distinguished member. Mr. Biggar was once one of a number of persons discussing the religious difficulties connected with the education question. "Well," said Mr. Biggar, "I find no difficulty about it at all. I am a Protestant, and, begad, I send all my children to a Catholic school. Hereupon a friend at his elbow whispered to him: "Hold your tongue you fool. Everybody here knows you are not married."

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NOTICE

U. S. LAND OFFICE, NEBRASKA, May 18th 1881. Concerning N. W. 1 Sec. 4 Township 16, North of Range 11, East of 6th Principal Meridian. To William Corbett, Morrell, Thomas, Boyer, J. B. Watter, Elijah M. Hobbs, and to all whom it may concern. You are hereby notified that on the 15th day of September A. D. 1877, one William Corbett, filed his declaratory statement, No. 5889, upon the N. W. 1 of Section 4, Township 16, North of Range 11 East of the 6th Principal Meridian, and on the 15th day of same month located thereon Military Bounty Land Warrant No. 8017, act of 1847, which warrant was found to have been located at Council Bluffs, Iowa, October 18th, 1860 on land in that land district. The "location" was cancelled by letter of Hon. Commissioner of the General Land Office, dated July 20th 1860, and the counterfeited certificate returned to the local office, and the office instructed to notify Corbett of the action taken; and that as his pre-emptive right had been approved he would be permitted to locate said tract with a valid and legally assigned warrant, or to substitute cash in payment therefor; that no legal notice of the said action of the Commissioner was brought home to said Corbett, or to any party or parties who succeeded to his rights, and it appearing from the records of Douglas county, Nebraska, that J. B. Whittier, and Elijah M. Hobbs, are the legal successors of said Corbett to the title of said N. W. 1 Sec. 4 Township 16, North of Range 11 East of the 6th Principal Meridian, and that said Whittier and Hobbs are entitled to locate the said tract with warrants, or to substitute cash in payment therefor, to wit: J. B. Whittier for the E 1/2 of N. W. 1 Sec. 4 Township 16, North of Range 11 East of the 6th Principal Meridian, and Elijah M. Hobbs for the W 1/2 of N. W. 1 Sec. 4 Township 16, North of Range 11 East of the 6th Principal Meridian. Thirty days from the date of this publication of this notice are allowed, in which an appeal from said location may be filed in the local land office.

If no appeal is filed, ninety days from expiration of the said thirty days are allowed for said Whittier and Hobbs in which to offer the legal consideration for the said tracts. R. H. GABLE, W. M. B. LAMBERT, Register, Receiver, m23e61

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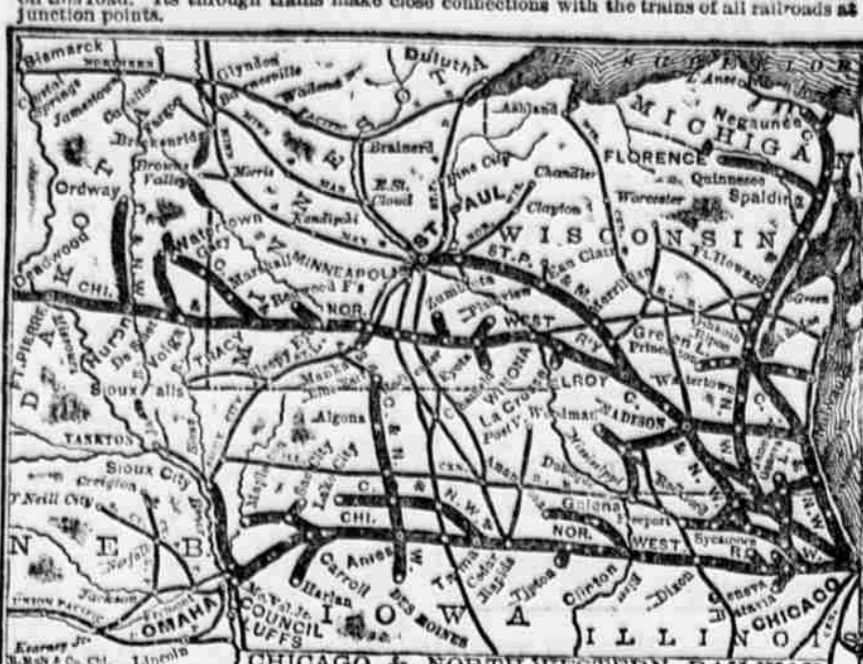
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