WAKEMAN'S WANDERINGS

THE "PIT BROW LASSES" OF ENGLAND AND WALES.

20 Thousand Women Workers at British Pit Mouths—Their Leader, Scoggins and Victor—How Noble Women's Labors for Defenseless Women.

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WALES, England, July 25.—The "PIT BROW LASSES" of England and Wales are about fading in number. They are the girls and women of all ages who are employed about the "mouths" or mouths of British coal and iron mines.

In former times women were employed "below ground" in the English pits, and it is worth while to recall that in 1841 all women below in the underground collieries was put an end to, almost entirely by the efforts of the noble Lord Shaftesbury, who introduced upon parliament bills to relieve women and boys of a year later. But previous to that time, even since English coal, and iron mines were first mined, the labor of women was utilized in a manner revolting, and scarcely beyond description. The pictures of the "pit brows" in the English pits were a marvelous revolution. In Lancashire, Yorkshire and Wales it was usually so. Then thousands of girls and boys made employment in the pits. There each other was as drawers and "hurrichers" for the colliers who cut or dug the coal.

These female workers were chiefly girls from twelve to twenty years of age, and their work of drawing, or "hurrying" as it is called in Yorkshire, then consisted in carrying the coal in baskets on shafts or in carts or wheels from the "stall" where the collier was at work to the shaft of the pit. Often the children would be entirely in the coal, as is now frequently the case, in a pit not six feet in height, and from one to two miles from the only outlet to the world outside. Through pitch black passages, on low or to permit of their standing upright, and up and down steep inclines the women carried the coal, pulling in many tools after them or "hurrying" it, that is, pushing—there from behind. Frequently more or three children were sent together to turn pull one or more load trucks. Leather belts were put around their waists, and then the little ones were harnessed, coupled by a chain passing between their legs from one belt to another, when the children clawed, scramble and tugged along on their hands and knees after the manner of lower horned animals.

The inhuman treatment of women in these mines is well known to other works. The exposure of not the fairest part of all this wrong brought instant legislation in Parliament to prevent it.

But there was a large number of women left in every colliery region who obtained in any manner of labor than would sustain life. A few were working with women and lads at the pit brows. Gradually nearly all of this work, such as dumping the coal from the "cars" to which they are "brought to surface" from the bottom of the mine shaft, screening the coal and sorting out the slate and stone, loading the coal wagons to send it to market, and the market, and carrying the coal dust to the ovens where it is transformed into coke—some to be burned in the furnaces. Thereupon the collier opposed it at the public house and in outcrops of his union. Practically, to secretly supported it, for his brother might have been killed in a explosion, and the wife or daughter at the pit brow took up the fight for bread where dad left off. And she was even as good as men to pick off some day in the necessary, and his own mother or wife could spring to the goads or scream, and do a man's labor for half man's wage.

So for a name for them all, though many were taken as longer, and I have seen women of fifty and sixty years working near the at the screens, they came to be known as "Pit Brow Lasses," and in time got nearly all the pit mouth labor heretofore destined lads. But, a few years ago, mutterings were heard in those districts that Northumberland and Durham, where no women were employed, would follow the lead of the second, these fellows who had all the labor themselves, said, the improvidence of the women and other lads, and the "Pit Brow Lasses." Then came a miners' conference at Birmingham, in January of 1891, and a resolution there passed that women should not be allowed to work in the pits, and the miners strongly insisted as a clause in the next miner's regulation amendment bill, which came up for action in the house of commons in March, 1891.

This was followed by bringing the ancient women's pit brow labor in The Miners' Journal, and other labor journals. Trades unionism, as well as a horrifying leader in the Trades Lament. Then a vast array of female witnesses appeared before the Royal Commission, who adversed confessed for once in the matter, began writing to the press, writing to members of parliament and writing to myself also who would assist in advertising their interest in the matter, month after the manner of our own noble philanthropists of the Shaftesbury stamp, and for a time it seemed that the poor pit brow lasses, as the fill was to be acted on the following May, would be given short shrift at the hands of men.

The city trade unionists who were carefully noting the various sentimentalities of England (or rather it merely cited 4,000 men in place lately made vacant by 4,000 women, very slowly put forward the more humane proposition, where the pit brow lasses were taken out, and boys put in their place, that their occupation was "blackening" that it was as fabulous as to really interest human life, that it had to be forcibly in its nostrils, much needle work of men and women; that the drow of women and short petticoats was indecent in the highest degree, and that, if the girls were engaged in the husbands of women as employed. The whole country was astonished and horrified at the discovery of one new fact on English civilization. It seemingly more monstrously with the sponge, as it were, of government functionary in its hand to wipe it out.

Then one lone woman also arose. This the lone woman stood unalled defended the, to extend the entire trades union of England, conquered the opposition of philanthropy of two house secretaries—Gladstone and Matthews—in succession, molded public opinion to the sense of the jo lose lose by and achieved one of the most remarkable social and labor victories ever won in Britain.

It is a [illegible] to make such a woman after lady Americans. Her name is Mrs. Scoggins—Park, into surpassing of Wales. He instead, discovered in November, 1890, was a political lion movement there, and perhaps the most popular individual in Lancashire, she was a question to by his side. He was elected to the majority for the alternative terms between 1885 and 1890, the same being conceded an extraordinary honor, as Wales is the old est kingdom in Lancashire, having a national history dating from the days of Arthur and the crusades. The city is the center of the Lancashire coal and iron fields. It is a district of collieries and cotton.

Mrs. Park is a Lancashire lady by birth, and had all her life interest for the betterment of the lady. She is a striking example of a thoroughly cultured woman of wealth mixing one of her gifts and means by her own noble spirit. She remembered "how their Lancashire folk in their everyday toil and in their homes. Scarcely one was tutored and almost [illegible]. And she knew, too, possible [illegible] a woman and means or numerous studies and practical minimizing the movements of the pit brow women question perhaps better than any other living man or woman.

Three 4,000 helpless women had no friends. She instantly became one. By clear and brightest generations of their morality, their health, their and and that of their dependents upon them, and the injustice of the present deprivation of their only means of subsistence. With her singing mystery upon the individual women of England of the principle that all women for voluntary labor by women should be expunded rather than restricted, each good woman as Emily Faithful, Lady Lathbury and Lydia Becker, Women's Rights Jane, now two pit brow women's cause their support instead of opposition. Intelligently developed facts and clear, logical appeals on the subject were supplied to Home Secretary Children and to members of parliament.

With the enthusiastic cooperation of Thos Mitchell, of Pontefract, an intensified military town near Wigan, where the most numbers of women work at the pit brow, about meetings of the pit brow women themselves were held, and these were followed by the great gathering in Lancashire and Wales. This class of women are noted for their integrity and clearness. "They are branch right through," as they say in Lancashire. They not only have early business, but their wage is a check, trouble unknown and honesty behind their cash-sports. Politics after politics was dispatched to London. These extraordinary gatherings of extreme dusty women, with an extraordinary women as their leader, interpreter and deliverer, had an electrical effect throughout Britain. A sensitive revelation of feeling and emotion was the result.

But outside of this, Mrs. Park insisted that now be the pit brow lasses had been heard at home they should also be heard in London, with the ear of the Home Secretary's office, it needs be. But Mr. Children had heard such tales of the "Amazons" in the room, and took to politics of these lady leaders in London. Thereupon Mrs. Scoggins and Victor, and with such lesser representations of them as the illustrious politics that this was too much. So Mr. Children, in a conference, armed with shovels, sticks, scissors, and perhaps picks, for time. The lion of their resolutions to twenty down upon him, with what had already been done, and the press of England now being monumental against the measure, were unanimously solicited. The preliminary clause was withdrawn and the pit brow cause of England and Wales was declared to remain a permanent British institution.

But their first victory was a temporary one. The trades unions, appearing to generously accept defeat, were only weaning their opportunity. Just a year later, early in the spring of 1891, word came to Mrs. Park from London that the clause against pit brow women's work was again being pressed, and that it was probably to make unions and other political influences, and that there was great danger of the government accepting the measure through the then new home secretary, Mr. Matthews.

Mrs. Park at once determined that the pit brow women should go in person before parliament and the home secretary. She wrote and telegraphed other women engaging women to call meetings, explain the threatened danger, and ask the women at the mines to send to ballot two of their number to come each mile to join the deputation. This was done, the lines being their own expenses by subscription, so that no labor of mine owner's interest could be charged. A special train was secured, and away sped the unique deputation to the great city.

A common notion prevail then all the way to London. Mrs. Park had meantime secured permission from Secretary Matthews to present the deputation. The women were lodged at the Girls' Club and Home, Soho square. Their arrival created the greatest interest and excitement. Royalty itself never attracted greater crowds. They were taken to parliament house, and were also granted a peep at the house of lords. The lawmakers of Great Britain were were ever in a body.

The next morning the entire London press rang with their praises, politically and the story of their toil and deprivation, those who had threatened the prohibition of their arduous and honest labor. They came the memorable parade of Hyde Park, through Regent street, Oxford street, along Pall Mall, across St. James' park and Whitehall and on to Westminster, the women in their pit brow costume, and the girls in their old pit brow costume. Then the procession moved on the house of commons, the women carrying their aprons as they went. Here Mrs. Park told their claims before Mr. Matthews in a low, singing accession, which Disraeli pronounced the most pathetic and powerful address ever presented to a public assembly. Then the procession moved on the house of lords