

Golden Foundations.

The Town Hall at Birmingham, famous as one of the great musical centres of England, is founded on the top of a heap of refuse. This refuse consists of mother-o-pearl shells, brought overseas from the tropics.

At the time it was thrown away only the white flakes of shell were worth money, but now the coloured pearl, formerly mere refuse, is worth many pounds to the ton. There is enough coloured pearl-shell under the foundations of Birmingham Town Hall to pay for pulling down and rebuilding the structure.

That is only a trifle compared with the millions of pounds' worth of minerals hidden away under London. The London clay is made of silicate of alumina, the ore of the beautiful metal aluminium. Clay, of course, is common everywhere, and only worth quarrying where it is easily reached. But underground London is becoming a gigantic subterranean city, and the time will come when the clay removed in the course of tunnelling will sell as aluminium ore, and pay part of the expense of working it.

Far deeper down are the coal measures; and, acre for acre, there is as much coal under London as there is under the colliery districts of the North. The rocks lie like the pages of a wet book—in rather crinkled layers. One chapter of this mighty rock-book is the coal-bearing formation, which rises to the surface along a line extending from Northumberland, through Staffordshire, to South Wales. Strung along that line are the British coal-fields; but to the south-eastward the coal layers dip down far under the surface, rising again at the coal-fields of Belgium and Germany.

All the area of South-East England, the Straits of Dover, and the seas adjacent, is coal-bearing if you go down far enough; and at Dover pits have been sunk for experiment, to see if the deep coal will pay to work.

South Shields has rather an awkward treasure. The coal-pits have thrown out heaps of culm, or coal refuse; not good enough for sale, but still, so rich in fuel-stuff that it might pay to cook it for gas. Anyway, the culm-heaps were good enough fuel to catch fire on their own account, smouldering for at least twenty years, in defiance of the mayor and corporation.

Time and again rows of dwellings have been built on top of the culm. Then the fire would break out and burn a street or two. The South Shields volcano has been behaving itself for some years, but it is not by any means proved to be extinct, and a new outbreak would cause much excitement on the Tyne-side.

Cities built on gold-bearing ground are common in many parts of the world—such as Mount Morgan, in Australia; and Tacoma, the capital of Washington.

At Nevada City a carriage drew up with muddy wheels in front of a bank, and an assayer, having, perhaps, nothing else to do, tested the mud from the wheels for gold and silver. It ran £2 5/ to the ton! The streets were being ballasted with waste from the mines of the famous Cornstock Ledge, and the people were wild with excitement over the discovery that the pavement of one street alone was worth £26,674 in gold and silver at the very lowest estimate.

The City of Chihuahua, in Mexico—a large and beautiful town—is built largely on slag from furnaces used in smelting silver. This slag is rich enough to warrant the tearing down of the city. The walls of the palaces and public buildings are of rich silver ore, and the cathedral, one of the finest in North America, was built out of a small tax on the ore of a mine in the neighbourhood.

Some of the Swiss towns have pavements of a schist, or slate-rock, studded with hard lumps like nail-heads. These are precious stones—crystals of garnet.

But the most curious instance comes from an American mining-town, where the church stands on a gold-bearing gravel, and the church authorities have let the ground under their place of worship to be worked as a goldmine.



H. CONHAM

"Was you called Popcorn 'cause you popped in and out?" piped little Baby Sago.

Sybil Cornflour and the others rushed to comfort her, Mr Rice Currie to give her the support of his calm presence hitherto so helpful in times of emergency. Yet, in spite of all they could do, she fell prone to the ground. It was understood that her back was broken.

The story spread like wildfire to every shelf and cranny of the Store Cupboard. Woe and anguish reigned. The housekeeper, in her weekly raid,

had carried off His Grace, leaving not one trace of the ducal presence. With him had disappeared Lady Frances Cayenne, though no one carried a fig about her; indeed, the joy of the little Peppercorns was quite indecent when the less important fact was made known.

The great question as to who would have been Duchess of Macaroni remains for ever unanswered. Would the duke have married little Pearl,

with her sweet, insidious, simple ways, or Miss Popcorn, with her millions and maturer, more subtle charms? It was between these two that his choice lay. There was much wistful questioning as to whether they would ever meet him again. Who could tell? In any case it was inevitable that he should lose some of his dignity, either in frizzling, hopeless entanglement with Mr Cheese, or lurking lazily in the recesses of a veal pie. Better, far better, that they should think of him as the cultured host of the Store Cupboard, or, as depicted by a great Italian artist, gazing pensively from the marble steps of the Casa Macaroni over the vine-clad slopes of Umbria.

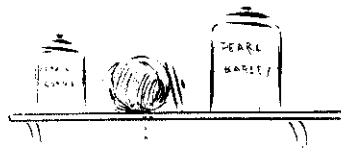
That picture, rich in the grace and colour he loved so well, is the revered treasure of the Store Cupboard. Over it hangs a parchment scroll illuminated by Lady Violet Sago.

"Shall I remain forgotten in the dust, when Fate, relenting, lets the flowers revive?"

And under it he who will may see a series of crystal drops trickling gently towards the central puddle. They shimmer on, but they never grow less.

Words are a desecration. They are the tears of the young and the fair.

E. M. SMITH.



H. CONHAM

The Little Peppercorns became as Mum as Miniature Mutes at a Funeral.

Who beat the Englishmen at cricket?
Who taught them how to play?
Who played the deuce with every wicket?
Australia leads the way.
What plays the deuce with cough or cold?
What makes consumptives fewer?
Oh, what is that worth more than gold?
Woods' Great Peppermint Cure.