

A GLACIER SPEEDS UP

Rush Hours at Black Rapids

MILLIONS OF TONS MOVE
A MILE A WEEK

An ancient glacier of Alaska has suddenly awakened from its thousand-years' sleep to come groaning and grinding down its mountain bed at a mile a week.

This old Black Rapids glacier had, till last October, a slow, sloping front, moving hardly a foot a year, if it moved at all. It was possible to walk up it. Now no one dares, for it is impossible to say what will happen along its dizzy face. Pinnacles of ice, sometimes as high as 500 feet, rise from it, and as they are carried nearer the edge thunder down hundreds of tons at a time.

A Continuous Up roar

The glacier is slipping down a rough thirty-mile mountain bed, and spreading into the valley alongside the Big Delta River, two miles wide there, and 125 miles south of the town of Fairbanks. It is a glacier with two branches, one of them joining the other, with a vast upheaval and a continuous grinding uproar, five miles short of the face in the valley. The ice is thick there, though not thicker than ten miles farther back, where the 30-mile glacier has a depth of 3000 feet of ice.

This immense mass is not travelling toward the sea, there to topple off into icebergs and floes, as so many of these Arctic glaciers do, but is moving irresistibly over a valley where trees and flowers grow. Snowy glacial water streams out from one side of the face, pouring out a muddy torrent bearing the fragments torn from the mountainside.

The glacier's breaking of its bonds began last October after heavy rains, which may have found their way beneath it, loosening the hard rock and forming for the ice a sort of lubricated slipway. It has been suggested that the movement is taking place over the top of a far more ancient glacier, older than Black Rapids by a million years. Another idea is that the whole mountainous glacier was shaken from its long sleep by an Alaskan earthquake.

The Threatened Inn

It is travelling faster as the days go on, and the latest reports of it are that its face will fall into the river. The face is now more than a mile wide, threatening the valley road.

There is an inn near its path and threatened by its advance. It is filled with scientific observers and excursionists, and its owners have packed up for flight. They prepare for the worst but hope for the best. In the words of the woman of the house, the "glacier makes a lot of noise and sometimes shakes us in our beds, but that does not keep us from sleeping." We have heard of playing by the rim of a volcano, but sleeping by the side of a moving glacier is something new. See *World Map*.

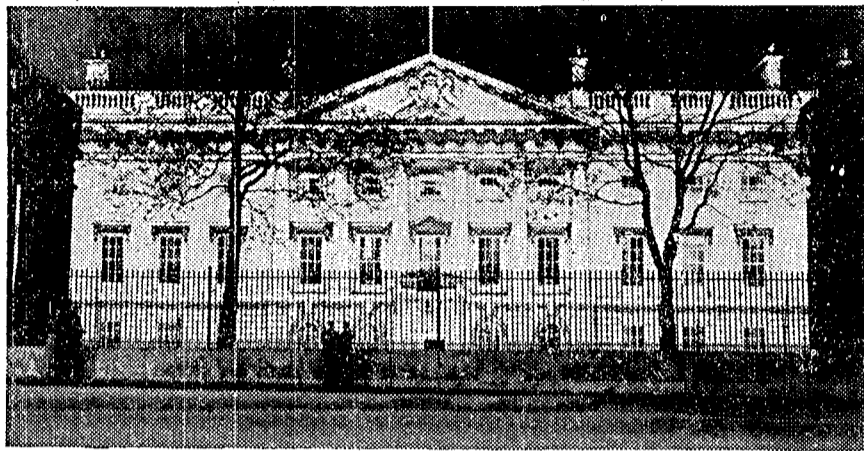
CROOK

The straight men of Crook in Durham have been severely tested in recent years.

Their neighbourhood is still one of the distressed areas, but the way the men have faced up to difficulties has impressed both the Ministry of Health and the Durham Community Service Council. Better times are ahead for Crook, and already four social centres are doing good work, and the colliery is to open again soon.

The men of Crook are grateful for what has been done for them. A muller made on a hand-loom is to be given to Sir Kingsley Wood as an appreciation of the help the Ministry of Health has given; and about a year ago Sir Kingsley was presented with an oak table made by an unemployed miner.

The Mint Where the Money is Made



We run round the Mint this week in our series of visits to London places of interest which will be open to the Coronation millions visiting the capital.

It is a treasury to remind us that all wealth is dross.

Into this sedate stone building on Little Tower Hill roll guarded vans loaded with dull, unlovely ingots of silver and copper and tin, and out of the gates roll out again other vans containing thousands of pounds' worth of the same metal minted into coins. At the gates are a sentry and commissionaires to show that this is no common factory, but within there is scarcely anything to remind us that here are being turned out the precious tokens striven for by poor and rich alike, the implements of trade among peoples, and all too often the food of war.

No Tom Tiddler's Ground

In the reception room, where every ticketed visitor must sign his name, is a glass case containing examples of the raw material, ingots of silver, tin, and copper: no gold, because gold coinage has passed away from the Mint, with no day assigned for its return. Elsewhere, the metal which is to be worked into coin of this realm and of many others seems to be strewn about as if it were of no more consequence than old iron. The appearance is illusory. The big rooms through which the metals travel are no Tom Tiddler's ground. Every fragment is weighed to the last pennyweight, and beyond. In a century there has been only one instance of theft from the Mint.

All the metal is weighed as it is served out, and undergoes more weighings at several stages of its manufacture. Every workman or artificer must account for what has been given to him to handle, and none may leave the room where he is employed except by special permission till his work is done.

Rolling Out the Metal

The first room into which we are ushered is the melting house. Here in huge cauldrons spouting flames of red and green below their lids the silver and alloy are reduced to liquid and poured into moulds, where the metal becomes bars of a uniform composition. The assayer takes samples from each and certifies that they are of the correct alloy.

Then they are taken through the locked and unlocked door into the rolling room, where, by being put through a series of steel rollers with pressures as great as four tons to the square inch, they are thinned and lengthened till they are only slightly thicker than the coins they will become. Next they go to the cutting room, where the strips are fed into a machine that punches out of them circular discs the size and shape of the coin at the rate of 150 a minute. The machine seems to pour them contemptuously into a bucket by its side, and so fast does the stream run that some of them are spilt like drops on the floor. The strips with holes punched in them like regular lacework go back to the melting house to begin another cycle. The discs pass on to be made into coins. First they go to the annealing room,

where the work of the rolling-mills is in part undone because the discs are too hard to take the impressions of the dies. Here they are put into an oven and slightly softened. But before they go to the coming presses they are taken to the blanching room. The discs are cast by the thousand into revolving drums filled with a mild solution of sulphuric acid, which cleanses them. They go into the drums as dingy as an old penny, they come out more white and shining than the silver in our pockets.

Now they are ready for the die presses, steel monsters worked by hydraulic power which can stamp on the faces of the coin with a 40-ton punch. One man can operate each hydraulic die-stamper. As fast as he feeds the coins into its jaw down comes the steel die, and the coin slips away into an awaiting chute at the rate of 30 a minute. It is complete, both sides and edges.

Coins For Other Lands

The first die press, on the day of our visit, was dealing faithfully with half-crowns. It turned them out at one blow, stamped with the royal head on one side, the royal arms on the other, and the milling on the edge. The milling is the one thing a coiner cannot rightly imitate. Other dies were stamping the coins of Iraq, for the Royal Mint produces not only the coinage of Great Britain, but does the work for many other nations.

The coins have another ordeal. They have to be weighed. There is a very old machine in the weighing room where the visitor who cares to contribute to the upkeep of the London Hospital may have his pennies weighed. It is reserved for this charitable work and is the one remaining of the old type of machines. The new type is far more particular. The weight of a single hair will turn their scale, and the coins submitted to them, whether English half-crowns or Iraq two-fil-pieces, can only get past them if correct to a grain. When the coin is right it passes on; if it is light or heavy the machine throws it out to one side or other.

Detecting the Flaws

There are 65 weighing-machines testing coins at the rate of 20 a minute, and they can pass a million a day. Even now the Mint, not careless of a single coin, submits them to further examination. By a well-lighted window sit two men who examine coins at an earlier stage of their history. Sliding trays pass in front of them, on which the discs of metal are cast, and are rapidly sorted out by the expert fingers of the examiners, whose no less expert eyes immediately detect any flaw.

As the exact weight of each coin is known it is a simple matter for other machines to count them into bags more rapidly than any human being could do. Again the coins are cast into a hopper, again a machine counts them one by one with unfailing accuracy and at great speed. When the full complement of coins has passed into a waiting bag, this ingenious machine automatically switches on an electric light to show that the bag contains the right

WHERE ENGLISH AND WELSH MEET

The Beautiful Language of Wales

100,000 BRITONS WHO SPEAK NO ENGLISH

How many Welsh people still speak Welsh?

A most interesting paper by Mr D. Trevor Williams on language in Wales has been presented to the Royal Geographical Society. It shows how greatly the use of the beautiful Welsh tongue varies from place to place.

In Wales as a whole, taking the Census of 1931, over a third of the people speak Welsh. The number who speak Welsh only is about four per cent, while those who speak both English and Welsh are about 33 per cent. In 1931 it was found that nearly 100,000 of the Welsh people knew no English.

The areas in which the English language has most completely supplanted Welsh are Glamorgan, Monmouth, Pembroke, Brecon, Radnor, and Flint. It is in the mountainous north, centre, and west that Welsh has mainly survived until the present time.

War, Industry, and Language

The fate of language in Wales has hung upon old wars and new industries. The rise of coal has played a great part. As to war, we may recall the beautiful but terrible poem on The Welsh Marches by A. E. Housman:

*The flag of morn in conqueror's state
Enters at the English gate;
The vanquished eve, as night prevails,
Bleeds upon the road to Wales.*

Mr Trevor Williams reminds us of the Norman and Anglo-Norman conquests and colonisations of the 12th to 14th centuries, and of the immigration from Ireland in Elizabethan times. The spread of English in Monmouthshire and Glamorgan, which grew apace in the 19th century, was due to coal and coal-based industries. The influence of coal development on any country is always profound, and now in South Wales we see coal deserting the people it brought together.

Irish potato famines brought many Irishmen to Wales, where so often we find Irish names. Thus the growth of the use of English can be readily understood. A mixed population found it convenient to use English fostered by English education and newspapers.

There is now a distinct Welsh revival, and the number speaking both English and Welsh seems likely to increase.

Continued from the previous column

number. An official of the Mint sits in the counting room, and before him are brought the filled bags, with their numbers and schedules to indicate their character, coinage, and value. He is the final authority to pass them and certify their contents and value.

At last the coins are ready for the strong room, which can never be opened except in the presence of three authorised officials. Yet with all this accuracy, formality, and care a touch of informality will sometimes creep in. When the circuit of the rooms of the Mint has been made the visitor finds himself in the stone cobbled yard of the strong room, the ultimate depository of the Royal Mint's valuables. If he is fortunate he may see a plain van waiting there with two guards beside the driver. It has come from the City to take away £1000 worth or more of coin, having brought money of another sort to pay for it. All transactions with the Mint, even those of the Bank of England, take place on an immediate cash basis. But when the bags of coins are loaded into the van off it goes with no more ceremony than if it were carrying a load from the neighbouring docks.