### THE TORPEDO KING.

VAST FORTUNE WON FROM A SIM-

Strange Freaks of the Explosive-Who Were Literally Obliterated— Recklessness on the Part of the Torpedo Handlers.

The recent death of Dr. W. B. Roberts, of Titusville, Penn., closes a conspicuous career. Roberts was the great 'Torpedo King" of the oil country, and, after the Standard Oil people, the best known man connected in any way with the oil trade. The strange industry which he and his brother built up was peculiar only to the oil regions. His brother, Colonel A. E. Roberts, is also dead. For years they enjoyed a close monopoly of the torpedo business, and both the brothers made millions of dollars out it. When their patents expired by limitation the business of exploding torpedoes in oil wells was taken up by whosoever chose to engage in the hazardous undertaking, and now scores of firms are pended upon "Torpedo Roberts," as the Doctor was known.

Roberts was originally a dentist in New York, but coming to the oil country in mains. the early days of the petroleum excitemen. he and his brother engaged in the oil bu si uess and soon secured a patent on a device for exploding nitro-glycerine in the bottom of oil wells to increase the flow. The d evice was simple, but it proved one of th e most valuable inventions of the age, and ertainly far exceeded the wildest dreams of the young inventors. The device was six uply a tube made of tin to hold the explosive, supplied with a cap for exploding the substance. This was low red into the well to the depth of 1000 fe, if necessary, by means of a cord, and when at the desired depth a small iron we ght, called a "go-devil," was dropped down on the cord, and this striking the tube containing the nitroglycerine a terrific explosion followed. These explosions shuttered the oil bearing rock, and the result in nearly ever v case was an increase in the production of the well. The demand for these torpedoes was enormous. There were anywhere from fifteen thousand to twenty-five thousand wells in the regiou, and nearly all of them were torpedoed at regular intervals. The Roberts brothers got their own prices, and their fortunes were quickly made. In a few years their several fortunes were estimated at from \$2,000,000 to \$4,000,000. Every oil producer had to pay tribute to them, and finally the oil men sought to break the monopoly by attacking the validity of the patents. The producers organized to fight the patents in the courts, and long and bitter litigation was the result. The fight went on in every court for vears, and finally the Supreme Court of the United States decided in favor of the Robert brothers, and they continued to have the exclusive right to manufacture and use the torpedo for seventeen years -the life of the patent.

The torpedo kings, as they are now called, had scores of agents in all purts of the oil regions, exploding these torpedoes in wells for producers. Each torpedo was from ten to two hundred quarts capacity, and the danger in carrying them over the country was very great. The agents were called "shooters." They carried the nitro-glycerine in wagons drawn by one and often two horses. They often carried as much as fifteen hundred pounds of the deadly stuff and yet these men would become so reckless that they gave little heed to the manner of their driving.

"Torpedo accidents" were therefore common occurrence. In dozens of cases man, team and vehicle were blown alat of existence. It was rarely that a cigar box would not hold all of the driver that could be found. In one case, that of "Doc" Haggerty, no vestige of a human being was ever found and only a few pounds of flesh, identified by the hair as being all that was left of two horses. This was the strangest case of the many "torpedo explosions" in the oil country. It occurred early in December last, near Pleasantville, seven miles rrom Titusville. This was after the expiration of the Roberts patents, and others were employed by George W. Van Veill in hauling nitro-glycerine with a two-horse team and storing it in a magazine near Pleasantville. On this occasion the pounds. The explosion occurred at the magazine probably when he was in the act of unloading it, and horses, wagon, magazine and man were blown to atoms.

like most of the "well shooters." Noth. | right. "-New York Tribuns.

ing was ever found, of France but one knee cap picked up two hundred feet from the scene of the explosion.

George Dolan v/as carrying two cr three cans of nitro-gly cerine in a bag through the outskirts of 'Red Rock, a town in the Bradford field. He fell and the glycerine exploded. The force of the explosion knocked down several houses, and all that could be found of Dolan was part of one foot weighing less than a pound. He was a man who weighed over two hundred pounds.

An extraordinary case was that of Charles Berridge, who was killed by an explosion in the Allegany (N. Y.) oil field. He was standing on a gulch, the sides of which were abrupt and not many feet apart. A nitro-glycerine magazine exploded near him, and less than ten pounds of his flesh could be found. The ground at the time of the explosion was covered with new fallen snow, and although the body was so nearly annihilated not a single drop of blood stained the snow. The body of Berridge, except the ten pounds that were found, had disappeared somewhere, no one could tell supplying the trade which formerly de- where, as there was no mark on the snow anywhere in the vicinity to give any clew. Berridge was a prominent oil producer, and diligent search was made for his re-

The number of deaths in the oil country from these explosions will probably reach seventy-five or a hundred. Near Scrubgrass, below Oil City, two men were killed in one explosion, and all the remains that could be found were buried in a cigar box. A man on the opposite side of the road was badly stunned by the force of this explosion. The men were pumping a well, and finding hidden in the woods near the mill a can containing what they supposed was lard oil, they put some of it on the engine to lubricate it. The explosion, of course, followed immediately.

The recklessness of men who handle nitra-glycerine is often remarked. France, whose death is noted above, at one time had an assistant hauling nitro-glycerine, and their mode of unloading the wagon was to toss the cans to each other as if they were handling bricks. Each one knew that the failure to catch a can meant instant death, but they took the chances.

The use of nitro-glycerine has been the means of adding greatly to the petroleum output. The increase on account of it is a laced at many millions of barrels .-N. w York Herald.

### Ytems of Interest About Writers. The novelists, Charles Reade and Vic-

tor Hugo, preferred immense sheets of paper and the coarsest of pens.

Bartley Can pbell scribbled off his famous play, "M'y Partner," on common wrapping paper, with a blunt lead pencil. Both William Black and R. D. Blackmore cover dainty sheets of note paper with their almost microscopic chirogra-

Lew Wallace writes his first draft upon a slate and finishes upon large sheets of white unruled paper, in a most faultless chirography.

Ouida covers large sheets of blue paper with an almost undecipherable chirography, written in an excessively bold and masculine hand.

Wilkie Collins writes on very large sh eets of paper, and his copy is said to abound in alterations, excisions and scraps of pasted manuscript.

Miss Braddon is stated to have penned some of her most thrilling passages on torn envelopes or any other bit of paper that come to hand.

Mrs. Lucy Stone Blackwell was customed to write her editorials for the Woman's Journal on the backs of circulars and similar scraps of waste paper.

Mr. Shorthouse, the author of "John Inglesant," is reported to have violated all the canons of the printing office by sending in the copy for that once popular novel written on both sides of paper of various sizes.

## An Over-Faithful Guard.

An amusing incident occurred at Edison's laboratory at Llewellyn Park, N. J., some days ago. A young man was engaged as doorkeeper for Mr. Edison's sanctum sanctorum—the den, as he engaged in the business. Haggerty was calls it—with instructions to admit no one without first sending in his card. The young man had never seen Mr. Edison, and when a slouchy-looking, shabbily dressed man tried towalk in, he op wagon contained fourteen hundred posed him with a request for his card. 'Oh, that's all right, was the response. "But it isn't all right. You can't come in here without a card."

"Oh, yes, I can," was the reply, and The force of the explosion made a hole the man tried to brush by, but the in the ground like an excavation for a cel- zealous young doorkeeper took him by lar, and the report was heard or felt in the shoulder, and was proceeding to eject almost every part of the county. Thou- him, when one of the clerks, who had sands of people visited the scene. Search been an amused witness of the scene, was made for some remains of Haggerty, called out in a half whisper: "You fool, but nothing was ever found either of his that's Mr. Edison," whereat the young man collapsed. Mr. Edison had greatly Henry France drove a nitro-glycerine enjoyed the occurrence, and patted the wagon in the Kinzua oil district, in eth young fellow on the back, saying: "I Bradford field, and was finally blown up guess it's my turn to say 'that's all

### The Custer Massacre.

In his long service as Indian, Agent Dr. McGillicuddy learned from 'the Sioux many interesting facts about the Custer massacre. For years after that horrible affair the participants in it: were very loth to talk of it to white me:a, but as the agent gradually gained their confidence they told him, little by little the whole story. Sitting Bull had 3000 warriors on that occasion. That is said to have been the largest force of Indians ever encountered by American troops in a single engagement. Custer had over 500 cavalry and some Crow scouts. He divided his force about equally, and sent-Major Reno with one body to attack the lower end of the Indian village, while he charged at the upper end. The Sioux all agree in their statements to Dr. McGillicuddy that their surprise was complete. They were engaged in repelling Reno at one end, when the bugles of the other end gave them their first warning of Custer's presence. They were disconcerted, and were on the point of giving way for a general retreat when Reno, to their astonishment, drew off. This permitted them to turn their whole attention to Custer, "the white chief with the yellow

They told how they managed to make the massacre complete. The ground was broken and Custer was unable to handle his men in cavalry formation. He dis mounted them, leaving every fourth man to hold the horses. The Indians threw themselves first on the men with the horses, shot them down and stampeded the horses. They did this, they said, because they knew that the bulk of the ammunition which the soldiers carried was on the horses. This done, the rest was easy. It was only the question of a few minutes till the cartridges in the belts of the soldiers gave out, and then there was no more ammunition.

"I see," said Dr. McG illicuddy, "that every now and then some man announces himself, in the East, as the sole survivor of the Custer massacre. You can always put him down as an imposter. There was one man who might have escaped. He was a young surgeon named Lord. His body was not found till long afterward, and it was at first supposed he was a captive. The Indians told me a strange story about Lord's death. They said that when he saw how things were going he started off. Several young bucks followed him, but he had a good horse and kept ahead of them. Just as they were going to give up the chase and intending to let Lord escape, he drew a pistol and shot himself dead. I suppose he was crazed at the thought of becoming a prisoner. The only person with Custer who survived was a Crow scout. When he saw that the fight had gone against the cavalry he drew is blanket over his head so that the Sioux might not recognize him as a Crow, jumped about among them and howled, and gradually edged his way out of the fight and made off. I believe he is still about the Crow Indian Agency.

## Uses of Mineral Wax.

The uses to which ozokerite, or min eral wax, can be put are almost innumer able. It makes an excellent insulation for electric wires for underground and line purposes; and finds extensive use in electrotyping and stereotyping, as well as in etching on steel plates. It is used for imparting lustre to shoeblacking, and in the making of sealing wax. It is recommended as a base for a cheap composite paving material and for indurating piles and posts to prevent decay. It is a lubricant for rapid running machinery, and it is used for all kinds of waterproofing, paper treated with it being preferred to oil paper. It is largely in demand for wrapping soaps, metals, books and all articles which require protection from moisture. It is used as an adulterant of beeswax and is applicable to much the same uses as the beeswax itself. It is used to protect boxes, tubs, barrels and kegs, and such when lined with it become tight, as the wax permeats the pores of the wood instead of giving it a mere surface coating, and it imparts no odor to the contents, even if they are the most delicate mineral waters. A recent interesting application is in coating the paper cylinder on which the graphophone stylus traces its record. Its use for the manutacture of candles is growing so rapidly that it is believed, when a refinery is built in the Utah district, much of this trade will be lost to eastern candle makers. Its other uses are as a vehicle in the making of liniments, salves and plasters, in making wax matches, coating life preservers and as varnishes, shoemaker's wax, wax figures, doll heads and similar articles.

## The President as a Hunter.

President Harrison is considerable of sportsman, as sportsmen go in Indiana. It has been his habit to take a jaunt into the northern part of Hoosierdom once a year, generally in the fall, and try his luck with quail, wild turkeys and prairie chickens. He likes to tramp about the prairies and is a very fair shot. He cares more for hunting than fishing, as he has not the physical patience required for the latter sport .- New York World.

### How the Coreans Mourn.

The Coreans go into very extensive mourning for their friends. They hide their faces from the public gaze and dress in sackcloth. Their mourning costume in sackcioth. Their mourning costume is not at all picturesque, but it is curious. The hat, stiff with starch, is of coarse hemp cloth and resembles somewhat an inverted bowl or old-fashioned soup tureen. Under the hat is worn a head band and a cap. The hat, the cap and the head band are worn together the day of the death at the former and at the of the death, at the funeral and at the expiration of the first and second years of mourning. At other times during the mourning period the head band alone is worn. The mourning robe is made of a coarse hemp cloth similar to that of which the hat and screen are made, but with extremely large meshes. The back is a wide straight piece, two gores extend from the armpits down and the front is a straight piece and a gove. It has a rollfrom the armpits down and the front is a straight piece and a gore. It has a rolling collar three feet long and sleeves eighteen inches wide, cut square. The The robes are of a yellowish-brown and white in color, and at the bottom they measure nine and one-half feet in circumference. Over this is worn a robe of freeze weighteen deabad we at the side. ference. Over this is worn a robe of finer quality and slashed up at the sides. The sleeves are wider also. After the death of a father a girdle of hemp rope is worn. If it is a mother that is dead a worn. It it is a mother that is dead a hemp cloth sash is worn. A variety of hats are worn for mourning. A screen hemp cloth is always held in front of the face by a mourner. It is considered a great offense to look into the face of a mourner. Before missionaries were permitted in Corea they used to steal into the country by disguisling themselves as mourners.—Washington Star.

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The happy children cry.
The happy children cry.
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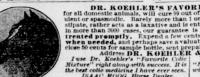




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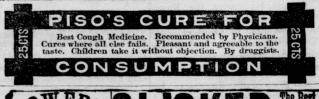
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