younger colliers, whom his humour and story-telling used to bring to his side when their own term of work was done. Many a time would they take his pick from him, and finish his remaining task, while he sat on the floor of the mine, and gave them his racy chat in return. On the day in question he was apart from the others, at the far end of a roadway. While there, an empty waggon came rumbling along the rails, and stopped within a foot of the edge of the hole in which his work lay. Had it gone a few inches farther, it would have fallen upon him, and deprived him either of limb or life. There seemed something so thoughtless in such an act as the pushing of a waggon upon him that he came up to see which of his fellow-workmen could have been guilty of it. But nobody was there. He shouted along the dark mine; but no sound came back, save the echo of his own voice. That evening, when the men had gathered round the village fires, the incident of the waggon was matter of earnest talk. Everybody scorned the imputation of having, even in mere thoughtlessness, risked a life in the pit. Besides, nobody had been in that part of the workings except Brown himself. He fully acquitted them, having an explanation of his own to account for the movements of the waggon. He had known such things happen before, he said, and was persuaded that it could only be the devil, who seemed much more ready to push along empty hutches, and so endanger men's lives, than to give any miner help in pushing them when full.

In truth, this story of the waggon came in the end to have a significance little dreamt of at the time. It proved to have been the first indication of a "crush" in the pit—that is, a falling in of the roof. The coal-seam was a thick one, and in extracting it massive pillars, some sixteen or seventeen feet broad and forty to fifty feet long, were left