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The Salt Mines of Austria

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THE SALT MINES OF AUSTRIA

By EMILY A. BUDD

Training School, Richland Center, Wis.

SITUATION. The salt mines of Austria, which lie mainly in the Carpathian Mountains, furnish a little less than five per cent of the world's output of salt. As one author states, the annual production of salt from Austria is enough to build a sidewalk from Boston to San Francisco, six feet wide and six inches thick. The mines are a monopoly of the government, and one of the principal sources of income for the country.

Occurrence. In many places there once existed salt lakes or arms of the sea, whose waters in the process of time have disappeared, leaving the salt. Changes in the crust of the earth have buried these deposits under deep beds of sedimentary rock, and rock salt as hard as coal has been formed.

Mines and Methods of Mining. The usual way of obtaining salt in this country is from brine wells. A well is bored down into the deposit. Water is forced down to dissolve the salt and this brine is forced to the surface, evaporated by the sun or artificial heat, leaving the salt crystals. In the most up to date mines a double tube pipe is used, the fresh water going down in one while the brine is pumped up through the other. Sometimes salt is obtained from natural brine springs. A third method is by mining.

Wieliczka Mines of Austria. A few miles from Cracow is a little town, Wieliczka, which is built on the roofs of the great salt mines beneath. These salt mines are the most wonderful in the

world. To descend into these mines one may go by means of a great staircase carved out of solid salt or by means of an elevator. This mine has been quarried into chambers that lie in seven stories, one above the other. Each chamber is connected by horizontal passageways and the stories by winding stairs.

One gallery opens into a splendid ball room, three hundred feet long, ninety feet high with ceiling, pillars and chandeliers all of sparkling, glistening salt. Statues of Vulcan, Neptune, and other mythological persons adorn the room. At one end a rude throne has been constructed, for the use of the Emperor, should he ever honor any of the festivities with his presence. One ball room has been used for social functions since 1814.

Chapel of St. Anthony of Padua. Near the ballroom is the Chapel of St. Anthony of Padua. This was hewn out of solid rock salt. The great organ, the high altar with its crucifix, its twisted pillars and statues of the saints are carved of pure glistening white salt. In former years mass was celebrated every morning but now it is held only on July 3 of each year.

Underground Railway Station. In the third story of the mine is a railroad station and an excellent restaurant. Twenty-five miles of railroad lines from all parts of the mine center here. The restaurant is kept open all summer for the benefit of tourists; four hundred guests may be seated at one time at the dining tables.

The Dead Sea. Seven hundred feet below the surface of the ground is a great salt lake. One of the most thrilling adventures for the tourist is to ride over the thick dark waters in a boat which is guided through the various caverns by ropes and pulleys.

Kaiser Franz Chamber. This room is two hundred feet long and it contains two immense pyramids carved and ornamented in honor of a visit of the emperor and empress.

Export. Austria has many other salt mines and brine wells. The deposits of salt are said to be inexhaustible. In 1905 Austria produced 609,572 short tons of salt. In one of the mines a plant has been installed for the making of salt briquettes. The moisture is pressed out so that only about one per cent remains. These are made chiefly for export to tropical countries.

THE AUSTRALIAN BARRIER REEF

THE Great Barrier Reef of Australia is one of the wonders of the ocean world. Its marvelous structure and extent were first brought into prominent notice by the famous explorations of Captain Cook. Imagine a broken line of beautifully colored