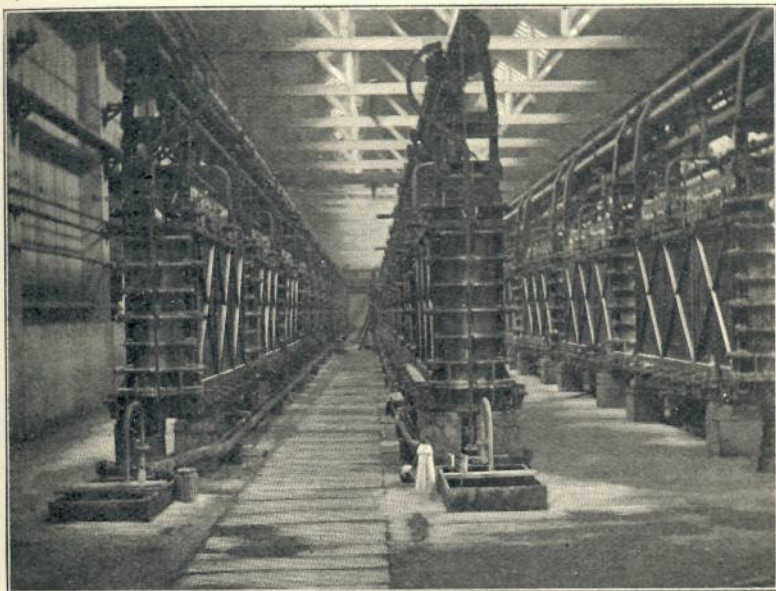


A VISIT TO A CHEMICAL WORKS.

By EDWARD RICHMOND SWALES.

(Illustrated from Photographs specially taken by the Author).



THE CELL ROOM.

LONG ere I set foot in Cheshire, I was aware—as all good students of Geography should be—that it was famed for cats, cheese, and salt. But to tell you the truth, the Cheshire of my experience, though it abounds in cheese—mostly imported American—and in salt, has no cats peculiar to itself!

But I fear I am trifling. The other day I visited a chemical works, and, as it proved a more than usually interesting visit, I have ventured to think that I might interest you also by recounting what I then saw; especially as I took some photographs, which, having turned out well, will serve as aids to your comprehension of my description.

But, when I say chemical works, I use a rather broad term; there are many types of chemical works which, from various raw materials, produce many and varied commercial commodities. So it seems necessary to state that the Electrolytic-Alkali Company are manufacturers of the numerous chemicals obtainable from salt, and which are usually comprised in the somewhat general term "alkali."

Now, the especial interest of my visit lay in the fact that the process by which these products are obtained is a new, and but very lately-invented one. I need not tell you particularly in what this process differs from those which it is expected to supersede; only that that delicate and beautiful force, electricity, is the presiding genius.

The Manager of the works was exceedingly kind, and did me the honour of personally conducting me over the works. At my request he allowed himself to occupy the foreground of the general view of the works which I took, and there you may see him.

200 feet or so below the surface upon which the works are built, lies a stratum of rock-salt, some 180 feet thick. Through this underground rivers are boring their way, taking up the salt into solution as they go. From this depth the water (when a fully saturated solution as it is called—that is to say when it has in suspension or solution as much salt as it is capable of bearing) is pumped, by the use of compressed air, to the