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Tunneling: A Practical Treatise

Charles Prelini

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In his preface the author comments upon the fact that there are " but two books on tunneling in the English language, neither of which he could recommend as text-books for his pupils." The works referred to are those of Drinker and of Simms. Both are extremely valuable as reference books, but far too ponderous, expensive and diffuse to be used advantageously by students during the period of their school training. The writer of this notice can appropriate to himself the expression quoted above, and is glad to welcome Mr. Prelini's book. Any engineering subject, like tunneling, the details of which fall almost entirely outside of the observation of the average student, presents serious difficulties to instructor and student alike. The student is usually hampered by want of that modicum of preparatory acquaintance with the subject, and with engineering matters in general, which would enable him readily to grasp principle and detail, while the instructor frequently labors under a keenly felt lack of adequate illustrative diagrams and models.
The work before us is well designed to serve as a text-book, and we think will be found useful also by practicing engineers. It is concise, orderly in its arrangement, and in the examples quoted is something better than a historical narrative. The author has endeavored to present an epitome of current practice, and has not entered into a confusing mass of detail. He has refrained, too, from giving undue space to certain monumental tunneling operations which are interesting mainly because of the abnormal conditions under which they were carried out.
Beginning with various preliminary considerations, as to location and survey of the center line, and the determination of the form and dimensions of cross-section, the author next proceeds to a brief discussion of drilling machines and explosives used. Jn Chap. IV. the general methods of excavation are considered, for soils of different kinds. Following are taken up successively: the temporary support of tunnel excavations; modes of transport of the excavated material; centers and molds for masonry linings; timber and masonry linings; tunneling in firm rock, with a number of examples; representative power plants for tunnel work; tunneling through soft ground; special methods for treacherous ground; open cut methods, with recent examples, including eight pages on the New York underground rapid transit railway; the several methods of submarine tunneling, with a number of good examples of recent work; accidents and repairs during and after construction; relining timbered tunnels with masonry; ventilation and lighting of tunnels during construction; general figures of cost and speed of work. It will be seen from the above that the author treats only of railway and other tunnels of large cross-section....
....The book as a whole is excellent, and we think it will prove to be a valuable aid for all who have to do in any way with this branch of engineering.
–*The School of Mines Quarterly*, Vol. 22

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