

The Miner (1698)

Abstract

Improvements in technology, as well as demand from growing populations and warring states, led to a boom in mining in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. By the eighteenth century, mining had become a state monopoly and a central component of mercantilist state economies.

This copperplate engraving by Johann Christoph Weigel (after 1654-1726) was published in his *Abbildung der Gemein-Nützlichen Haupt-Stände* (Regensburg, 1698), which included verses by Abraham a Sancta Clara (1644-1709), an Augustinian monk who became famous for his earthy, humor-filled sermons and his prolific writings and treatises on moral and religious themes. The verses underneath the engraving explore the act of mining in both a literal and a figurative sense, imploring readers to dig for “invisible things that make gold and silver worthless.”

The Miner

How high shall the value of earth become?
We try to pull from deep shafts,
The idol of avarice, the quarry of time:
Oh, if only we would make equal effort
To dig in this mountain of visibility
for invisible things
that make gold and silver worthless.

Source



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