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THE BURNING MINE.

A Story of the Famous Comstock Lode.

In the bonanza days of the Comstock Lode, Virginia City, Nev., harbored two populations, in many ways distinct from one another. During the week the steep streets of the little town, being on the mountain side, were thronged with crowds of eager speculators, mineowners, brokers and business men, who watched the bulletin board for the latest quotations of the San Francisco stock exchange, and in offices, saloons and hotel lobbies discussed the market, and exchanged reports and rumors concerning the condition of this or that mine. On Saturday evening the scene changed. Thousands of brawny miners then came up from the deep workings for their one breath of fresh air and day of leisure; and as the greater number of these were Cornishmen, they gave quite a new and foreign aspect to the place.

Miners, whatever their nationality, are superstitious. They live close to nature in her mysterious moods, and they acquire a peculiar tendency to belief in the supernatural. Mines are, at best, uncanny places, full of deep shadows and corners of impenetrable obscurity; full also of queer echoes, and the creaking and cracking of heavy timbers, and the rush or trip of water; while in the deep workings, from one to three thousand feet beneath the surface of the earth, there is an everpresent sense of danger-danger from the immense pressure of the superincumbent mass of rock, and from fire, which, once started in those labyrinths of wood-lined passages, spreads with such appalling rapidity as to baffle and defeat even the utmost precau-tion and preparation. So it is that the Comstock miners were given to superstition. They had many legends and traditions of fearful things seen in the deep workings; of spectral appearances, of mysterious voices, and, more than all else, of supernatural warnings and premonitions prefacing disasters in the mines. An interesting volume could have been compiled by anyone frequenting the favorite saloons of these honest, old-fashioned miners, for on Saturday nights they were in the habit of "swapping yarns," and the story to be told here is one which was many a time told over pipes and glasses, on these festal occasions.

John Treloar and James Pennart were employed in the Yellow Jacket mine, and, being close friends, they had arranged so as to be in the same shift-a term nearly equivalent to the sailor's "watch" at sea. Treloar was the elder of the two, a sturdy, power-ful, handsome man of thirty, known and liked for his constant readiness to befriend his comrades. He was brave and gentle, modest yet resolute; a man of action, yet at the same time a man of sentiment. His chum, Jim Pennart, was five years his junior, and contrasted with Treloar in many ways. He was physically robust, but of lighter frame, good-looking, honest, frank, but possessing less decision and a timidity that was almost morbid. Pennart had an intellect above the merely bodily toil by which he gained a living. He had managed to educate himself partially, and knew enough to be dissatisfied with his position in life. He was not considered selfish, but his was one | front of them. She looked and recog

Jim Pennart's suit did not prosper. Allee Minton was no coquette, but a very candid and ingenuous girl. She

did not dislike Jim, and she did not realize that her feeling toward Treloar was more than one of strong friendliness. It was only as his absence became more marked that she caught herself pondering upon its possible cause, to an extent that surprised her when she reflected upon it. Still the full truth remained unsuspected by her, and as Pennart's visits became more frequent a sense of habitude commended him to her and she was in a fair way to be prepared for his offer of marriage, when something occurred which changed the situation, tragically and definitely.

All the workings on the Comstock lode are lined and roofed with heavy framed timbers, from a foot to eighteen inches square. Even these large beams have often proved unequal to the tremendous strain upon them; and when they do not give way it is found necessary to replace them at intervals, their fiber being destroyed by the pressure. The great heat of the lower workingalso dries these timbers, so that they become dangerously inflammable; and when, as sometimes has happened, the rock itself is at a very high tempera-ture, mere contact with it may set the wood on fire.

How the great fire in the Yellow Jacket mine started will never be known, for those who were alone likely to know the truth perished in that disaster. The foulest rumors were afterward spread abroad to injure the superintendent of the mine, notwithstanding that he had risked his life in trying to rescue the imprisoned men.

It was the night before this disaster that John Treloar dreamed a dream. He thought he was down in the mine on the twelve-hundred-foot level, and that some serious accident - but he could not make out what-had happened. Whatever its nature, he found himself with his mate, Jim, struggling to reach the shaft; and as they labored through the passage there was the sound of a heavy fall, and lo! the way was blocked before them by the collapse of the roof. And he dreamed that he and Jim set to work to dig themselves out, but that his own strength failed under the heat and foul air, and that Pennart had to drag him through the opening they had made. Toward the end, the dream became less distinct, and the last he remembered was a slowly broadening gleam of light, which, he thought, represented their approach to the shaft.

Then he awoke, and at breakfast he told his dream; and his comrades did not like it at all, but shook their heads. and one or two of them determined then and there that they would "lay off" that day and not venture to go down the Yellow Jacket.

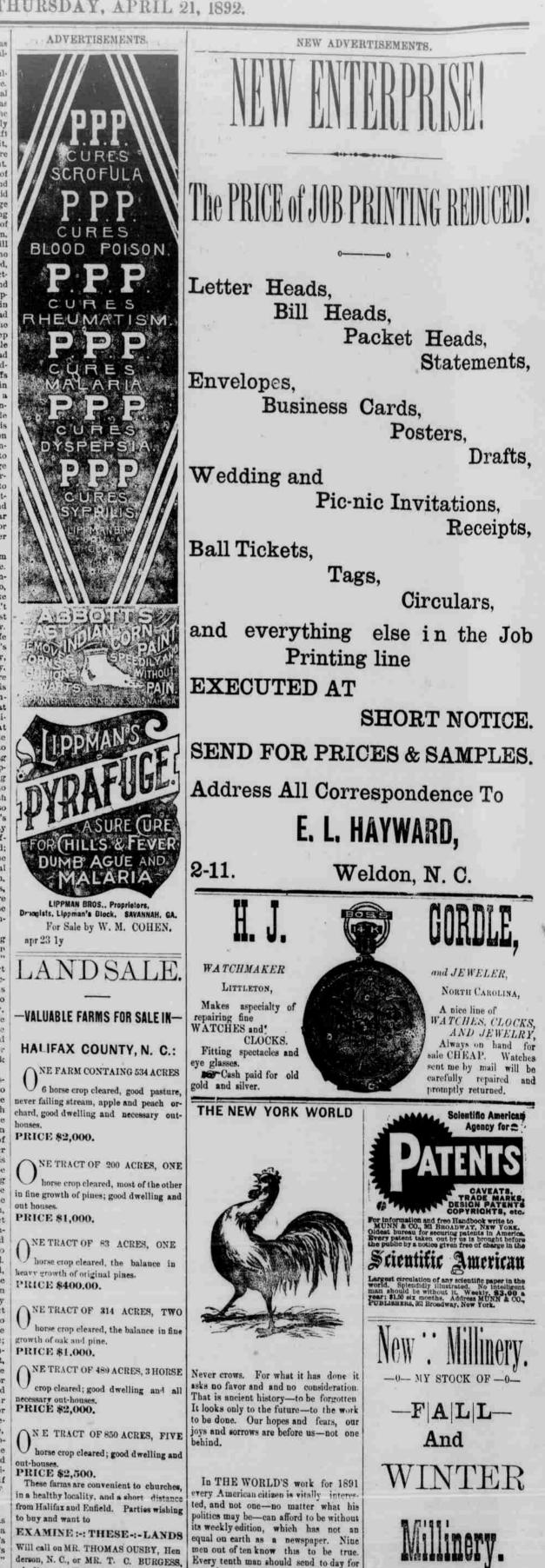
Now, the strangest part of this strange story is that on this same night Alice Minton dreamed about the counterpart of John Treloar's dream-but with a difference which can hardly be regarded as fortuitous. She, too, found herself in the mine, and looking on in a great agitation. At first she saw only a crowd of excited miners, shouting and running this way and that. Then she seemed to float away from the crowd, and into a comparatively silent working, where two men were frantically digging at a heap of rock and earth that filled the passage in of the natures which are formed to nized the two friends, but she could subsorb rather than to dispense trust not speak or make herself known to Presently a narrow opening them. was made between the roof and the top of the fallen mass, and then the men seemed to be talking, but she could not hear what was said. After a pause, one of the men sank back upon the ground, and the other climbed the obstruction and made his way through the opening. At this moment, an intense longing to know which of them had escaped and which was left behind overcame her, but she was now unable to distinguish their faces; and as she seemed to strain forward in order to see, a cloud as of vapor or smoke rolled along the dimly lighted passage, obscuring the scene completely, and the girl awoke with a shudder and the name of John Treloar upon her lips. Then she knew for the first time that the feeling in her heart towards this man was stronger than that of friendship. At the breakfasttable next morning she, too, told her dream, and those who heard it recalled and marveled at the story afterward. For within twelve hours the great fire in the Yellow Jacket mine broke out, and all Virginiz City was thronging to the hoisting works, where the massive engine was being worked at ing almost hurled up and down the deep shaft, and the clanging of the signal-bells, the shouting of orders. the excitement of the miners, and the piteous moans and cries of the women who had husbands, fathers, brothers below combined to make a memorable and tragic scene. And now the smoke grew thicker in the shaft, and those who looked down saw red points far down, showing that the fire was no longer confined to one level, but had made its way in the dry timbers far and wide. So prompt and well-judged had been the action of the superintendent, that three-fourths of the shift on duty below had been brought up. for the most part uninjured, though in some cases near to suffocation from the smoke and heat. But there were still twenty-seven men unaccounted for, and it was known that most of them had been in the workings farthest from the shaft. So long as these miners were below it was necessary to continue foreing nig down the mine, even with the certainty of increasing the fire, and now volunteers were called for to go down, at deadly risk, and search for the missing ones. The superintendent announced his intention of heading the rescue party, and, though he was not loved, the men cheered him for 'iis pluck, and pressed forward with characteristic gallantry au i devotion to offer themselves for the perilous service. An attempt was made to clear the shafts of smoke matters by developing the girl's liking sufficiently to prevent the sufficiention for himself, he determined to keep of the men while descending, and then sway, and thenceforth did so. Still the cage was lowered with such a rush

that old miners held their breath as they saw the cable spin over the wal-

Meanwhile the dream had been fulfilling itself in the depths of the mine. Treloar and Pennart were as usual working together when the alarm was given, and it had broken out in the level they were then in. They quickly ascertained that the way to the shaft was still open, and they started for it, side by side, retaining their tools more from forgetfulness than foresight. They were within a hundred yards of the shaft when Treloar halted and pulled his mate back, and, as he did so, the ground and walls of the passage shook; there was a rending, grinding crash of timber, and a great mass of rock fell from the roof in front of them, filling the gallery. They stood still until it seemed that there would be no further fall, and with scarcely a word, simultaneously attacked the obstructing mass. Both powerful men and skillful miners, they knew how to apply their tools with most effect, and in less than half an hour so much had been cleared away from the top of the barrier that it was possible to creep through close to the roof. But while they had been working, the fire had been advancing in their rear, and sudden puffs of superheated air, whiffs of black smoke and an ominous rise in the temperature, accompanied by a sharp, crackling sound, growing constantly nearer, warned them that little time was left them for escape. At this moment Pennart leaned exhausted on his pick and turned to Treloar, meaning to ask him if it were not best to stop work and try to free the passage over the pile of rock. To his consternation, he saw John slowly sinking to the ground, his face white, as if faint-Pennart sprang to his s.de, and ing. would have saved him, but Treloar shook his head, and, after gasping for breath a moment, whispered rather than spoke: "No, no, dear lad! It's no use! I'm

done! Climb thou through the hole. See! The smoke is thickening, and another minute 'll block that way, too, for 'twill hang under t' roof an' choke thee. Good-by, dear Jim, an' don't worry over me!" And he sank against the timbers of the wall, panting heavily. The crisis of James Pennart's life had come. In such circumstances men's minds work with lightning rapidity, and he tool; in the situation instantly. and graspel the duty that lay before him clearly. That duty was to save his friend, no matter at what peril to himself. He knew perfectly well that John Treloar would have had no hesitation in such a case. He knew that there was just a chance of being able to thrust John through the hole, or to go through first himself and then drag him after. He felt still physically capable of doing this, and yet something held him back. All his obligations to his friend rose up against his sluggish will. With them, unhappily, rose also a remembrance of Alice Minton's preference for the man who now lay half unconscious before him. No definite purpose of evil crossed his mind; no definite feeling of jealousy; but the hesitation which paralyzed his moral nature deepened. All this reflection, tedious as it is to represent it in words. occupied so few seconds that there seemed to have been hardly a pause after Treloar's speech when his comrade answered:

"Nonsense, John! You're a long was from being done yet. Lean or me, and we'll make the rifle together." But as he said this, James Pennart



and affection. John Treloar's loving friendship was poured out upon him. and he accepted it as a perfect matterof-course manifestation. Had the opportunity occurred he might have proved capable of self-sacrifice; as it was, he seemed merely to let himself be loved.

Now these two friends did what has severed many friendships; they fell in love with the same woman. Alice Minton was not a Cornish girl, but of American parentage and born in California. Left an orphan without means in her sixteenth year, she had quite naturally taken "to teaching, and had presently obtained a position in one of the public schools of Virginia City, through the interest of an old mining friend of her father. She had met the comrades, Treloar and Pennart, at a ball, where both had danced with her, and whence both had walked to their lodgings in an unaccustomed silence. The truth was that Jack and Jim were cually hard hit, though neither thought for a moment that the other had been impressed by the pretty and engaging young teacher. Before the mutual discovery occurred, moreover, both had become still more deeply entangled, and when at last the truth | dangerous speed, and the cage was became to light, dismay fell upon each, as they looked at each other. Treloar was the first to recover from the shoeld. His face was white and his mouth drawn and set, as he slowly said:

"Jim, lad, do'st 'ee care for her greatly?'

Jim, with pained eyes and trembling lips, made answer: "Jack! She's just all there is to me!"

Then silence fell again, and the two brooded, shielding their faces with their hands, no longer looking at each other.

Treloar's voice, low and yet strained, at last almost whispered:

"Lad-Jim-count me out of the run-Then a pause, and evidently ning!" with difficulty: "Stand thou up to the rack, boy! I'll do all I can for thee!"

There was no more talk on the subject. Pennart accepted the sacrifice. after his manner, perhaps cheapening it, for the quieting of his conscience, with the assumption that his friend really did not care much for the girl. Treloar did not appear to feel the renunciation deeply, though he knew in his heart of hearts that he had missed the best life could hold for him, and through even his modesty could hardly have failed to realize that Alice looked upon him with special kindliness. But he kept his word loyally as ever, and when he found that by continuing to visit Alice, though with a singleminded purpose to advance the wooing of his friend, he was only complicating clearly knew that the moment for action had passed. John Treloar's eyes opened slowly, he moved his head so that he could look down the gallery. and, seeing a dease curtain of smoke pressing toward them, he once more shook his head, and with half-strangled utterance murmured: "Get, Jim. for the sake-of-Alice!" and his nead sank upon his breast.

Pennart hesitated no longer. Pressing his friend's hand, but unable to speak for emotion, he sprang up the pile of debris, forced his body through the narrow opening, rolled into the clear gallery, and reached the shaft in time to be taken up on the last trip of the cage. As he was strengling over the rock heap after abandoning his comrade, he thought, but could not be sure, that he heard a faint, a dying voice whisper: "Alice!" It might have been an echo or a fancy, and no one could prove or disprove it; for when, after many weeks, the Yellow Jacket mine was once more habitable, nothing but a few charred bones remained beside the fallen rock in the gallery, to show where John Treloar had died. Had died-I have said-but, after all, which of these two men was it whose life ended on that fateful day? John Treloar's name is never mentioned by the miners save with deepast respect and admiration He, indeed, seems to our circumscribed vision to have missed happiness and success and love; but what do we know of ultimate consequences? As for James Pennart, surely his was a living death from the hour he proved recreant to his duty; for he was sensitive and clear-sighted, and he could not forgive himself. Neither could Alice Minton forgive him, nor look upon him with kindness thenceforward. She never married, and he, miserable, went forth a wanderer, objectless, hopeless and indifferent to the future, feeling that nothing it held could by any possibility affect or mitigate the weight of that burden of self to which he was bound-George F Parsons, in N. Y. Ledger.

-Important Information. -A Texas lawyer undertook to cross-examine a colored witness, Jun Webster. "What's your name?" "Jim Webster." "What's your occupation?" "I drives a dray." "Have you got a brother who looks like you, and drives a dray?" "He am dead." "What was he before he died?" "Alive."-Texas Siftings.

-Englishman-"Pardon me, sir; but where do you come from?" Paddy-"From County Cork." Englishman-"Then that accounts for your brogue." Paddy-"May I ax where you come from?" Englishman-"From Worces-ter, sir," (proudly). Paddy-"Then that accounts for your sauce." derson, N. C., or MR. T. C. BURGESS. who lives near Halifax, who will take pleasa specimen copy, that the knowledge may ure in showing them to purchasers. Any or all of these lands will be

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