



A YEAR IN A GOAL MINE

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By **JOSEPH HUSBAND**

CHAPTER XI.

The Tragedy of the Mine.

It was about half an hour later when I reached my room, for I had stopped on the way to chat with the gateman. I was sitting on the edge of the bed, loosening the heel of one of my rubber boots with the toe of the other, when suddenly, through the stillness of the sleeping town, from the power house half a mile away came a low and ringing note, the great silver whistle in the power house. Almost fascinated, I listened as the great note rose higher and more shrill and died away again. One blast meant a fire in the town, two blasts fire in the buildings at the mine and three blasts, the most terrible of all, a disaster or trouble in the mine. Once more, after an interminable pause, the sound came again and once more rose and died away. I did not move, but there was a sudden coldness that came over me as once more, for a third time, the deep note broke out on the quiet air. Almost instantaneously the loud bludge of my telephone brought me to my feet. I took down the receiver. "The mine's blown up," said a woman's voice.

It was half a mile between my room and the gate to the mine yards, and as my feet beat nimbly on the long, straight road doors opened, yellow against the blackness of the night, and voices called out—women's voices mostly.

"The gateman knew little. 'She's let go,' was all that he could say.

There were two men at the fan house, the fan engineer and his assistant, and in a second I learned from them that there had come a sudden puff up the air shaft that had spun the fan backward a dozen revolutions on the belt before it picked up again. The explosion doors, built for such an emergency on the new down above the air shaft, had banged open noisily and shot again of their own weight. That was all.

There were half a dozen men at the top of the hoisting shaft. The hoisting engineer sat, white faced, on his seat by the shaft mouth, one arm laid limply on the window sill, his head ethereal on the lever. "I tried to telephone 'em," he said, "but they didn't answer. The cage was down. She came out with a puff like you blow out of your pipe; that's all." He stopped and awkwardly wiped his face. "Then I left the hoist down five minutes and brought her up," he continued, "but there was no one to it. Then I sent it down again. It's down there now."

"How long has it been down?" I asked.

"Ten minutes," he hazarded.

I gave him the order to hoist, and the silence was suddenly broken by the grind of the drums as he pulled the lever back and the cable began to wind slowly upward. A minute later the black top of the hoist pushed up from the hole, and the decks, one by one, appeared—all empty.

There was no one at the mine except the hoisting engineer and some of the night force who were on duty at the power house and in the engine room. In the long months of trouble our force had gradually diminished, and of those who had remained and who were equal to such an emergency part were now in the mine, and the rest, worn out and exhausted by the long day's work, were far away in the town asleep or perhaps, if the whistle had aroused them, on their way to the mine. Instant action was necessary, for following an explosion comes the after dump, and if any were living this poisonous gas would destroy them.

As I turned from the shaft mouth McPherson, the superintendent, a square built, freckled Scotchman about fifty years of age, came running toward the warehouse. There were but two helmets ready, for so favorably had our work progressed that we had neglected to keep more than two charged with oxygen and had allowed the rest to be taken apart for repairs. Familiar with the conditions existing in the mine, we realized that the explosion, however slight, must have blown down many of the stoppings which we had erected and allowed the pent-up gas to rush back into the portion of the mine which we had recovered and in which the night shift was now imprisoned. If the gas had been ignited by open fire immediate action was necessary for our own safety as well as for the chance of rescuing the men in the mine, for in the month preceding we had seen the mine "reat" at regular intervals with two explosions, and if the fire had been ignited from open flame we must enter it, effect the rescue of our comrades and escape before we could be caught by a second explosion. On the other hand, the chances were equal that the explosion might have been set off by a defective gauge in a safety lamp or some other cause and that there would be no immediate explosion following the first one.

In the hurry of adjusting our helmets no one noticed that the charge of oxygen in mine was short and that an hour and forty minutes was my work-

ing limit. And all unconscious of this I tightened the valve, and, with the oxygen hissing in the check valves, we left the bright light of the room and felt our way down the steps into the darkness of the yard, where a great arc light above the hoisting shaft made objects visible to its lavender light. A crowd had already gathered—a dark, silent crowd, that stood like a flock of frightened sheep around the mouth of the man hoist. With a man on either side of us to direct us, we walked to the hoist, our electric hand lanterns throwing long white beams of light before us. There was no sound—no shrieking of women, no struggling of frenzied mothers or sisters to fight their way into the mine. But there was a more awful silence, and as we passed a pile of ties I heard a whimpering noise, like a puppy, and in the light of my lamp saw the doubled form of a woman, who crouched alone on the ground, a shawl drawn over her head, sobbing.

We stepped on the hoist, and for an instant there came the picture of a solid line of people who hung on the edge of the light, of white faces, of the lavender glare of the arc lamp, contrasting with the orange light from the little square window in the house of the hoisting engineer. "Are you ready?" he called to us. "Let her go!" we said, and the picture was gone as the hoist sank into the blackness of the shaft. We said nothing as we were lowered, for we knew where the men would be if we could reach them, and there was nothing else to talk about. The grind of the shoes of the hoist as they scraped the rails made a sound that drowned out my feeble whistling of the "Merry Widow" waltz inside of my helmet.

We felt the motion of our descent slacken, and then came a sudden roaring splash as the lower deck of the hoist hit the water which filled the sump. Slowly we sank down until the water which flooded that part of the mine rose, cold and dead, to our knees, and the hoist came to a stop. Splashing clumsily over the uneven floor, we climbed the two steps which led to the higher level of B entry and for a minute turned the white beams of our lights in every direction. There was nothing to be seen, and no trace of any explosion except a thin white layer of dead dust or smoke which hung lifeless, like clear smoke in a quiet room, about four feet from the ground, but there was a silence that was terrible, for in it we listened in vain for the voices of men. At first we assured ourselves that there was no one around the bottom of the shaft, for we had expected that some one, injured by the explosion, might have been able to crawl toward the man hoist, but there was no trace of any human being.

Walking slowly and peering before us through the bullseyes of our helmets to right and left, we advanced down the entry, our lights cutting the blackness like the white fingers of twin searchlights. Suddenly, far off in the darkness, there came a sound. It was laughter. We stopped and listened. High, shrill and mad the notes caught our ears. Again we advanced, and the laughter broke into a high, shrill song. To right and left we swung the bars of our searchlights, feeling for the voice. Suddenly the white light brought out of the darkness a tangled mass of blackened timbers which seemed to fill the entry, and into the light from the pile of wreckage staggered the figure of a man, his clothes hanging in sooty ribbons and his face and body blackened beyond recognition. Only the whites of his eyes seemed to mark him from the wreckage which surrounded him. In a high pitched voice he called to us, and we knew that he was mad. "Come, come!" he cried. "Let's get out of here. Come on, boys! Let's go somewhere!" And then, as his arms instinctively caught our necks and we felt for his waist, he began talking to Jesus. With our swaying burden we turned and retraced our steps down the entry, and fifteen minutes after our descent into the mine we landed out of the hoist the first man rescued to his friends.

Once more came the vision of the great black wall of people in the lights at the mine mouth, and again we plunged down into the blackness and silence of the mine. Reaching bottom, we walked as rapidly as we were able beyond the point where we had found the madman, to where the great structure of the scale house had once filled a cross cut between B entry and the air course behind it. Where once had been solid timbers and the steel structure of the scales now remained nothing but the bare walls of the crosscut, swept clean by a giant force, and in the entry the crumbled and twisted wreckage marked where the force of the explosion had dropped it in, its course. With a swing of my light I swept the floor of the crosscut. Half-way down it on the floor lay what seemed to be a long bundle of rags. I knew it was a man. There was no movement as I walked toward it, and

as I knelt over it a sudden impulse came to me to disbelieve my first thought that this could be a man. Prevented from seeing clearly by the bullseye of my helmet and the poor light of my electric lamp, I felt for his chest, and as my hand touched his breast I felt that it was warm and wet. Perhaps he was alive. I ran my light along the bundle. Those were his feet. I turned it the other way. The man was headless. Instantly I got to my feet, and in the faint glimmer of McPherson's light I saw that he had found something in the wreckage. "What is it?" I bellowed to him through my helmet. He pointed with his ray of light. A body hung in the mass of wreckage, thrown into it like putty against a screen. We turned and continued our way up the entry.

Halfway between the shafts there was a temporary canvas stopping, and we knew that if we could tear this down the air from the fan which had been speeded up must short circuit and pass through B entry, clearing out the afterdamp before it. Most of the men, if not all, would be in this entry; of that we were confident. By tearing down the brattice and thus changing the direction of the ventilation life might be saved.

As I have said, I had entered the mine on my first trip with a short charge of oxygen and in the urgency had failed to replenish it before going down the second time. As I turned from the crosscut a sudden tugging at my lungs told me that my air was running low. Beside the track in a pool of water lay a darkened object that I knew to be a man. He was the only one I recognized, and I knew that it must be Hanson, one of the gas inspectors—the body was so small. A few feet beyond him lay another and another, all blackened and unrecognizable. The white wall of the brattice gleamed suddenly before us, and in a second we had torn it from its fastenings. One side had already disappeared from the force of the explosion. Why it was not all torn to ribbons I do not know.

As I turned I called to McPherson that I was in, and as I spoke a sudden blackness engulfed me. My air was gone. The sights of that awful night and the long strain of the months of dangerous work on high strung nerves had caught me. I came to with my eyes closed and a clean, sweet taste of fresh air in my mouth. I thought it was above ground; but, opening my eyes, I saw that I was looking through the bullseye of my helmet at a blackened room, dim in the single shaft of a lamp. McPherson was talking to me. He had dragged me from where I lay to where he had felt the air blow strongest. My weight, increased by the forty-five pounds of the helmet, made it impossible for him to think of moving me unaided. There was no time to summon assistance. In the strong current of air he had opened my valves and trusted that, revived by the fresh air, I could reach the hoisting shaft under my own locomotion before the afterdamp could overcome me. Faint and feeble, I got to my feet. We started down the entry, our arms about each other's neck. We were both staggering, and halfway to the sump I fell. Then we crawled and rested and crawled again. I think I remember splashing in the water at the foot of the hoisting shaft, but nothing more. Out of the twenty-seven men who had entered the mine we had found one alive.

In the long night that followed about twenty of the bodies were removed from the mine, for the fan soon cleared the gas from the main entry, where most of the men had been when the explosion occurred. At dawn a faint tinge of fresh wood smoke in the air that poured from the man hoist suggested that a fire had started up somewhere in the workings, and as this might cause another explosion the work of removing the bodies was for the time abandoned and the shafts were sealed.

Two weeks later a final attempt was made to recover the bodies which still remained in the mine, and fourteen men were engaged in the work when a sharp explosion occurred. The majority reached the top, bringing with them two of their companions, who died within a few hours, but they left behind them near the foot of the shaft the bodies of three others.

With this disaster the mine was abandoned, the little town became soon deserted, and for a year and more the great seals on the shafts remained unbroken. Today the mine is once more in operation, for a new company obtained the property and after months of almost hopeless struggle succeeded in restoring it to a working condition.

Sometimes I think I would like to go back and see once more the big black dipole that guards the shaft mouth and perhaps go down to B entry and watch the trains come in, and then I think of faces I would look for, faces that would not be there.

THE END.

(To be continued.)

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ANNOUNCES SECOND POTATO CONTEST

(Continued from page two.)

Since, excepting color, this spongy scab resembles pieces of cauliflower.

This disease causes the decay and destruction of the crop, and if the soil once becomes impregnated with the spores of this disease, it will be entirely unfit for the growing of potatoes for several years thereafter. The earth can hold and carry the disease just as well as the potato plants.

This is a disease until recently not known in the United States, and has not appeared at all in Utah so far as we have heard. But in Canada its ravages are becoming very severe, and the slightest sign of its appearance among your potatoes should cause you to attack the situation at once. If you will report the case to us we will instruct you how to go about the stamping out of the disease.

Scab a Common Disease.

Scab is one of the most common potato diseases, and all who use or grow potatoes are familiar with the irregular, sore like blotches which sometimes are so numerous as to cover nearly the whole potato. It may only affect the surface or it may penetrate and break down the tissues almost to the center. Unlike the wart disease which is very hard to combat, scab can be held in check very easily. Clean, disinfected seed planted in clean ground will produce a crop that is free of the disease. But if the fungus once gets into the soil it will live over the winter and infect the next crop more severely than the preceding one. If that happens, the field should be planted in some other crop and kept free of potatoes for probably four or five years. Since it does not attack other crops, this can be done.

When you pick your seed, select potatoes that appear to be free from scab, but remember that the absence of the characteristic surface markings is not conclusive evidence that the potatoes are free from the fungus. They may have been in contact with scabby potatoes in the bin and consequently infected with scab spores. The only safe or businesslike thing to do is to disinfect your seed. Then you know you are safe. If scabby potatoes are used for seed without having been sterilized, the resulting crop will almost certainly be diseased, and in addition the fungus will pass into the soil, where it is capable of living for several years and where it will infect future plantings even of perfectly healthy seed.

How to Disinfect.

Take fifteen gallons of water and put a half pint of formalin into it. Soak your seed potatoes in this solution for two hours. Dry your potatoes and then plant. Be careful to see that after taking the potatoes from the solution you do not put them back into the old boxes or sacks. If you do that, they will be infected again and you will have your work to do over. If you wish to use the same containers again, you must disinfect them like you do the potatoes. Formalin is not expensive and can be purchased in almost any drug store.

Seedlings from infected potatoes, unless they have been boiled, should not be given to pigs. Barring is the safest, and, in the end, probably the most economical method of dealing with them.

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LYO HAIN
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"You had better get it off."
"Hain— I haven't forgot what it is."



CALLED OFF.
The Lover (sotto voce)—Hain! I am swallowed in engagement ring!

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NOTICE—UNITED STATES LAND OFFICE, Salt Lake City, Utah, March 1, 1913.—To Whom It May Concern: Notice is hereby given that the state of Utah has filed in this office lists of lands, selected by the said state, under Sec. 6 of the act of congress, approved July 3, 1894, as indemnity school lands: viz: NW 1/4 NW 1/4, SE 1/4 NW 1/4, Sec. 21, Twp. 15 South, Range 10 East, and SW 1/4 NE 1/4, Sec. 20, Twp. 10 South, Range 14 East, and NW 1/4 NE 1/4, Sec. 11, SW 1/4 SW 1/4, Sec. 1, Twp. 13 South, Range 14 East, Sec. 10, SW 1/4 NE 1/4, Sec. 1, Twp. 13 South, Range 9 East, SW 1/4 NW 1/4, Sec. 8, Twp. 15 South, Range 8 East, SW Lake meridian, and NE 1/4 SE 1/4, Sec. 7, Twp. 13 South, Range 9 East, Salt Lake meridian, Serial 01138. Copies of said lists so far as they relate to said tracts or descriptive sub-divisions, has been conspicuously posted in this office for inspection by any person interested and by the public generally. During the period of publication of this notice, or at any time thereafter, and before final approval and certification, under departmental regulations of April 3, 1907, protests or contests against the claim of the state to any of the tracts or sub-divisions hereinbefore described, on the ground that the same is more valuable for mineral than for agricultural purposes, will be received and noted for report to the general land office at Washington, D. C. Failure so to protest or contest, within the time specified, will be considered sufficient evidence of the non-mineral character of the tracts and the selection thereof, being otherwise free from objection, will be approved to the state. E. D. R. THOMPSON, Register. First pub. Mch. 20; last Apr. 17-18.

4-365.
NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION—Land Entry. (Sec. 2347, U. S. Land Office at Salt Lake City, Utah, March 5, 1913. Notice is hereby given that Leon Felix Rains of Los Angeles, county of Los Angeles, state of California, has this day filed in this office application for purchase, Serial No. 011125, under the provisions of Section 2347, U. S. Revised Statutes, the NE 1/4, SE 1/4, NE 1/4, Sec. 7, and SE 1/4, Sec. 8, Twp. 13 South, Range 1 East, Salt Lake meridian. Any all persons claiming adversely the lands described, or desiring to object for any reason to the entry thereof by the applicant, should file their affidavits of protest in this office during the thirty-day period of publication immediately following the first printed issue of this notice, otherwise the application may be allowed. E. D. R. THOMPSON, Register. First pub. Mch. 13; last Apr. 17-18.

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