

A Terrible Tale from West Virginia

Mary Boyle O'Reilly wires from Charleston, W. Va., to the Cleveland Press, the following story of mining conditions in West Virginia:

The laws of war among civilized nations and most savage tribes prescribe the removal of women and children from the peril of the firing line.

For a year West Virginia has been in a state of war, the war of the twentieth century struggle of workers and organized capital.

The United States senate subcommittee on labor, now hearing testimony concerning the Paint creek coal mine war, sits in a long low banquet room in the Kanawha hotel here. Pale blue walls without decoration, cheap deal tables for the committee and the various counsel, indicate the grim businesslike atmosphere of the place.

The room is crowded to suffocation with blue-shirted miners, standing, for once, shoulder to shoulder, with burly railway detectives and rat-faced mine guards, whose hunched-up coats indicate the holsters holding loaded arms.

About the tables on either side gather the opposing counsel—the sleek, tame solicitors of great coal corporations summy in pale gray and fawn-colored clothes; the half-dozen alert, coatless young lawyers of the United Mine Workers of America, whose teamwork under their chief, Judge Monnett, former attorney general of Ohio, is the one bright spot in the somber proceedings.

The packed hearing room was insufferably hot. Long, familiar evidence dragged. A witness testifying of outrages perpetrated on unoffending strikers by the coal corporations' mine guards used the word "thugs." A florid "company counsel" protested. A junior among the miners'

lawyers seemed to acquiesce. Then—"Mrs. Parker," he called.

"Mrs. Estep—Mrs. Seville." They came at once—three miners' wives, typical women of the coal valleys, and tidy and self-respecting, in heavy, long-sleeved shirtwaist belted, with pleated alpaca skirts.

There was indescribable pathos in their work-worn, ungloved hands, their simple, home-trimmed hats.

Senator Martine leaned forward. "Madam, you swear to speak the truth, the whole truth, nothing but the truth?"

Despite obvious effort, chivalry and sympathy softened the official phrase.

"Indeed, I do sir"—and Mrs. Georgia Parker took the witness chair.

"I am the wife of C. C. Parker of Lamont, on Cabin creek," she said, diffidently. "My husband is a miner. We have—I mean 'had'—a baby. It died.

"On Feb. 21, at noon, a neighbor, Mrs. Nance, and my sister, Hattie Workman, started with me to Red Warrior cemetery. I wanted to fix my baby's grave. At Lunwood, mine guard Jackson stopped us, throwing up his gun and twisting Mrs. Nance around. We told him about my baby's grave, but—but—it made no difference."

Quietly the witness stepped aside. An ominous mutter voiced the comment of the audience.

"Mrs. Estep—" An instant and she was there, the wife—no, the widow—of Francesco Estep, an unarmed striker shot from the C. & O. armored train at Holly Grove.

"My name is Maud Estep. My husband, Francesco Estep, a miner, was killed on the night of Feb. 7.

"We lived on Paint creek near the swinging bridge. That night we were talking and laughing in the house

when Frank heard the armed train coming. There were no lights in the train, but the Gatling guns it carried sent out sheets of fire. Mine guards, under a man named Lentz, worked those guns.

"My Frank called us all to get into the cellar. I carried my year-old baby and another—unborn. My husband stood at the bulkhead, warning me not to fall. A shot from the train killed him.

"I saw no shooting from the town. That night I took my baby and went away. I never went back."

A sound like a groan swept the listening audience.

Alone, in her pathetic mourning the widow stepped aside and went back to her loneliness.

"Mrs. Seville, Mrs. Seville." A worn and worried woman sank nervously into the witness chair.

"Sirs, my name is Gianiana Seville, wife of Tony Seville, a miner," she spoke up. "We have four children. I expected a baby in four months. Our house was company property at Banner Hollow, in Paint Creek. We left because we were afraid mine guards would kill us after what had happened." The whispering voice sank into silence.

Senator Martine, tense with indignation and pity, silently pounded the table with his fist.

Senator Kenyon, standing, with hands clenched on his chair back, leaned forward gravely. All that a man feels for women in pain sounded in his quiet voice.

"Mrs. Seville, were you ever mistreated by mine guards?" he asked. The tense face responded to unspoken sympathy.

"Yes, sir—I mean senator," said Mrs. Seville, humbly. "On the tenth of January I got up out of bed to hear some shooting. I saw the mine guards coming down the hill. Those mine guards were going into neighbors' houses. They began to pick the men they could find. They had Winchester rifles. Then they came to our house and looked under the bed. My baby was asleep on the bed. I told the guards to let my baby alone.

"Then they struck me. I fell down and they hit me with their fists and kicked me. Tony cried out what shape I was in, but a mine guard hit Tony with the butt of his gun.

"There were 29 guards. Only two hit me. I do not know why. We had done nothing. After that I was sick all the time until August. When my baby was born it—it was dead."

No sound broke the silence. The innermost circle of capital in anarchy had been reached. As if dazed, Mrs. Gianiana Seville rose from the witness chair. Instantly a path opened for her through the awed throng. Watched by 200 grim-faced strikers, she passed out of the room, the bereft mother of a baby victim who found life too cruel in a capital-throttled state and so slipped silently away.

In the name of the law!

A SCOTCH TRIAL

The inventor of Sherlock Holmes on several occasions has applied the methods of that redoubtable investigator to actual crimes. Sir Arthur's latest essay in the realm of reality is not an attempt to fix guilt, but to free a victim of what he believes to be a miscarriage of justice. This victim is Oscar Slater, now in a Scotch prison for the murder of a wealthy spinster in Glasgow. The case came into momentary attention in America because Slater was arrested in New York. Sir Arthur analyzes the case against him and makes a strong defense. If he is quite fair to the prosecution, Slater was condemned on flimsy evidence. In fact, of the Scotch jury of fifteen one voted "not guilty," five "not

proven." Yet under the dour Scotch law on this vote of three-fifths against him Slater was condemned to death, a sentence commuted only at the last moment to life imprisonment! To the American conscience this alone is condemnation of the proceedings against Slater. Even in England, where, as Americans are inclined to feel, the presumption of innocence in criminal trials is a legal technicality rather weakly opposing a tendency to believe in guilt, a jury must agree unanimously against the defendant. That a man's life should be taken when six men of fifteen declare that he has not been proved guilty is shocking to us, and it is to be hoped always will be. We accuse ourselves of too much leniency in the suppression of lawlessness, but the Scotch system tends to reconcile us with our lesser evils. And certainly, unless Sir Arthur is cheating badly, which is not believable, there were holes enough in the prosecution to warrant any jury in refusing conviction. Analysis can not be undertaken here, but the strong suspicion aroused by Sir Arthur's presentation, now published in the United States as "The Case of Oscar Slater," is that Slater was convicted not of killing Miss Gilchrist but of being a generally worthless character, who might safely be condemned on general principles. Is this sort of confusion more likely to occur in Scotch or English courts than in American? An inquiry would be difficult, yet it would be an interesting study of national attitudes and tendencies.—Chicago Tribune.

PRESIDENTIAL POWERS

Senator Simmons' denial that the president is or has been dictating to the senate committee on finance in the matter of tariff rates is as timely as it is conclusive. There have been conferences at which executive preferences and council have been made known, but nothing in the nature of dictation has appeared.

Presidential power, though often supreme, is not arbitrary. In practical politics the president is undeniably the leader of his party, in and out of congress.

Is it to be supposed that a man fit for such responsibility would have nothing to say about a measure involving the principal pledge on which he was elected? The presidents who have made most lasting impression upon their times were those whose influence on congress and their countrymen generally was greatest.

It is the belief of many well informed persons that Woodrow Wilson is to be a president of that kind.—New York World.

REFINED PUNISHMENT

The golf bug's soul came back from a little range around Satan's preserve with a smile as wide as the Amazon river.

"I say," it exclaimed. "I don't call this much of a hell. They have the finest golf course out there I ever saw in my life."

A droll-looking old soul who was sitting on the safety-valve looked up. "But did you see anybody playing on it?" he asked. "No," the newcomer admitted. "I didn't." The old-timer chuckled. "That's it," he said. "He won't let anybody play on it."—Cleveland Leader.

A PALPABLE HIT

"The scientists have discovered that all diseases are caused by germs," said the Intellectual Souse, as he paved the way to cadge a drink.

"If that's the case, you have never lived in a house where there were water bugs," replied the bartender.—Cincinnati Enquirer.

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