

# TRAGIC STORY OF LONG WEEK OF SUFFERING



**T**HE shaft of the St. Paul coal mine at Cherry, Ill., was sealed on Thanksgiving day. When they laid the last plank over the mouth of the shaft they wrote "Finis" to the most hideous mine tragedy of years, a tragedy costing the lives of more than 300 men.

So the story of that explosion of November 13 and the events which followed in heartrending variety until Thanksgiving day is done. It has passed into history, to be referred to only for comparison with the next big mine disaster. It is a good thing to forget the details of these horrors as soon as may be.

But though much has been written in the press about the Cherry mine and the terrible accident, one chapter in the story has not been completely told, says a writer in the New York World. It is the story of the most dramatic, thrilling scene which it is possible for the mind to conceive. A fight among a score of maddened, desperate miners, 500 feet down in the bowels of the earth, in the pitch darkness of their prison. No doubt it was not the only fight of the sort which ever took place. There have been many mine horrors, thousands and thousands of men have been caught under the ground, and nobody knows what frightful things have gone on while they have waited for death. Mad with hunger, fear and thirst, men in hundreds of instances must have figured in scenes the telling of which, if there could be any telling, would shock the reader beyond expression. But never before have men who came back from the tomb as these did brought an account of such a scene.

## Among the Fortunate.

When the explosion came on that fateful Saturday afternoon there were 400 men down in the mine. Some miners found themselves grouped together, struggling to escape from the flames, at the end of a long tunnel some five hundred feet from the bottom of the shaft. They pushed on, climbing over the bodies of other miners who had fallen overcome by the black damp; the stronger helping the weak, who would have succumbed but for assistance. There was scarcely five feet of head room, and the black damp hung heavy in the dark chamber. They fell in pairs, with moans of despair, but still there were survivors who got to the end of the tunnel and flung themselves on the ground against the impenetrable wall of coal.

After a while, when their eyes enabled them to see a little in the dark, and they found that there was a considerable number of them together, a miner named George Eddy took it on himself to find out just who was there and how the men were situated.

"Boys," said he, "we're in a pretty fix, but we musn't give up. We're at the end of the tunnel, and between us and the shaft there's probably all kinds of obstructions. But if we can hold out a while they'll try to get to us, and they may do it. First of all, though, we've got to have some scheme for living down here."

"What's the good of planning any scheme?" interrupted another man. "We've got a little food, but the black damp is sure to fill this place, and that will be the end of us."

## Hard Crowd to Govern.

"Not a bit of it," said Eddy. "We're going to wall ourselves up." And then, under his leadership, these men, with picks and shovels, proceeded to perform what must have been one of the most unusual tasks that ever fell to mortal's lot; this was to seal the door of their tomb! It had to be done, of course, else the black damp would have rolled in with its death-giving fumes, and their end would have been quick and certain.

While the men were busy building the wall George Eddy and two or three of his friends found time to discuss the situation.

"There's a hard crowd there," said Walter Waite, a sturdy young fellow of 26. "All kinds—Slavs, Poles, Italians and French. We're going to have trouble with them when they begin to want water."

"That's what is bothering me," said Eddy. "The only way is to take matters right in hand now. Who can we count on?"

It was decided that an Italian named Que Antonese could be counted on to stand by Eddy and Waite in case of trouble, and he was told to watch his countrymen and see that they were kept in some sort of order. It was discovered that there were some sick men in the crowd too, and Waite groped around until he found the two who were in the worst condition—an old Pole named Walowczak and an Italian, Zannarini. Already these two were moaning for water, and the leaders foresaw the trouble that would surely come when it should be discovered that there was no water there.

He maintained an air of perfect composure, however, and when the men had finished walling the chamber he began to talk to them.

"Boys," said he, "we're going to be all right now. The first thing to do is to see how we stand for food. How many of you have lunch pails?" Nearly all the men answered in the affirmative. "Now, hand them over to me. We're going to pool their contents, and I'm going to give the food out in regular rations, so that it will be fare and fare alike. Anybody got any objections?"

Waite, who had been feeling his way about the cave, whispered to Eddy that a big Slav, nicknamed "The Bull," was holding out his dinner pail. Eddy called to him:

## The First Sign of Trouble.

"I don't find 'The Bull's' pail among these," he said. "Come, hand it over." With a grumble the man did as ordered, accompanying the act with an oath that did not escape Eddy.

"There isn't much here, boys," said the leader, trying to be cheerful about it, "but I guess it'll do. Now, as to water, I suppose you fellows think you're going to die of thirst, eh? Well, don't worry. Some of you take your picks and dig into the ground as deep as you can. I think you'll find something to drink, all right."

The men did as he ordered, and in a little while the cry came that the earth was getting damp. Later, water began to seep through the earth, and the men, already thirsty, fell on their stomachs and pressed their faces down into the black ooze that was forming in the little wells. Eddy ordered them to drink sparingly, as there was no telling how long this scanty supply would hold out. As some of the men rebelled against these orders, notably "The Bull," Eddy set Walter Waite and Que Antonese as guards over the two principal wells, and moved the sick Walowczak and Zannarini near the wells, so that they could get the water, as they needed it badly.

## Subduing "The Bull."

Eddy portioned out the food according as his judgment directed, and most of the men stood by him, except a little group headed by "The Bull." It was on the second day of their confinement that the first real trouble occurred. Eddy had called the men to him to give them their food. His hand would select a quantity from the pile which he had made in one corner of the cave, and as he felt a miner's hand reaching out to receive it he would give the man his rations. He could not tell if a man "repeated," he had to take their words in the

dark, for not a glimmer of light was there in that strange chamber.

It was "The Bull" whom Eddy discovered repeating. Something, an intuition, told him that the fellow was doing this, and when he found him out he attended to him promptly.

"Who is this?" demanded Eddy, as the man whom he took for "The Bull" held out a hand for his rations. "The Bull" mumbled the name of the sick Pole, who Eddy knew was lying on the ground by the well unable to move across the cave.

"You're a liar!" shouted Eddy. "You are 'The Bull.'" He tried to catch the man by his arm, but he pulled away. Eddy, however, reached for him and caught him by the shoulder. Then, in the dark, his fist struck out and the other men could hear it land on "The Bull's" jaw. There would have been more of a conflict—Eddy expected it—but somebody pulled "The Bull" away, and for the time being peace again reigned.

The third day came. They knew it was the third day because Waite had a watch, from which he removed the crystal, picking out the time by feeling the hands with his rough fingers. Some of the men took no thought of the flight of the hours, however, and spent their time crying for the loved ones up on the earth, whom they had given up all hope of seeing again. They were getting light-headed, the poor fellows, all of them, and it was a huge task for Eddy, himself sick now, to keep their spirits up.

Waite and Antonese were the only two who gave him any real assistance. Waite, by his sturdy good nature, "jollied" the other men, and Antonese rendered splendid service in caring for the men who were the sickest. He argued with the well men that they must give up some of their share of the water to these sick unfortunates, and though they did not all accept the suggestion gracefully he let them understand that he would stand no fooling on their part, and backed it up with a long knife which they knew that he carried.

On the third day, however, Antonese made a discovery. It was that "The Bull" was stealing water from old Walowczak. He caught him at it himself, and his first impulse was to thrust that long knife between the ribs of the thief, but he resisted that impulse and crept across the cave to Eddy, to whom he told of his discovery. Eddy said:

"We must make sure. We must watch. Say nothing, but keep as near Walowczak as you can and if 'The Bull' goes near him grab him and holler for me."

## Conflict in the Dark.

A little while later it happened. Antonese let out a yell, and Eddy, calling Waite to follow him, leaped to his assistance. He had "The Bull," and they were engaged in a deadly struggle. The other men were screaming and shrieking to know what the matter was. In their unnatural condition of mind this conflict drove them fairly crazy, and they turned on each other and fought savagely for no reason but that each man took the other for an enemy. When Eddy dragged himself through the struggling masses they caught at him and pulled him to the ground. He had to fight back, and felled with his fist half a dozen poor fellows who would have kept him from getting to "The Bull."

In fact, when he reached the spot from which Antonese had called him, the fight for the moment was over. The Italian and Waite both lay sprawling on the ground, nearly knocked out by the big Pole's heavy fist. Eddy demanded to know where "The Bull" was.

"I'm here, curse you!" came the answer from a corner of the cave through the darkness. "I'm here, and I'm armed, and if you or anyone comes near me I'll kill him. Boys," he went on, calling two of his countrymen by name, "there's going to be a change here now. We're going to kill this Eddy and his crew and run things our way. Come over here, any of you that stand by me." There were shuffling sounds in the inky blackness of the place, and Eddy heard some of the men going over to the Pole.

"Boys," he called out, "I don't know how many of you have deserted me, but you're wrong. And you can't get away with it. I'm trying to manage things so that we'll all have a fair chance. That's the only way. If you think you can do better, put it to a vote of us all, and if the rest of the crowd likes your method better than mine I'll step down. How about it?" Eddy's heart leaped with encouragement as he felt the contact of other

forms, when his supporters—more than he had believed remained—crowded to his sides. "Good," he said. "Now, boys, we're going to overcome 'The Bull' and his gang. Are you ready. Are you armed?"

## The Mutineers Subdued.

Many of the 14 on Eddy's side had knives and clubs, broken from the supports of the cave, from which they had been eating the bark for the last few hours. Each grasped whatever weapon he had. "Then come on," said Eddy, quietly but firmly.

His little band dashed forward through the darkness. It was an unprecedented entry into battle, as though the two foes had been blindfolded. It was indeed a game of blindman's buff, but one played in deadly earnest. As one man met another there was a shout, and then the sound of blows falling, of howls of pain and rage, and cries of agony as a club fell across a head.

Eddy found "The Bull," who had a club as long as his body, a big knotty stick of cedar. He flung it about his head as he and Eddy came together, and it would have killed the other if he had not fortunately caught the blow on his left arm glancing, so that he was scarcely hurt at all. He closed in on "The Bull," who was a giant in strength, but he would have had no chance to win but for the timely intervention of Antonese, who wrenched "The Bull's" club from him and brought it down on the giant's head with a crunch. "The Bull" yelled, his arms, that had been crushing Eddy's body, relaxed, and he fell in a heap on the ground.

They bound his hands and feet and threw him into a corner. The rest of his crowd had been subdued by Eddy's supporters and were mostly on their knees, promising, through battered, bloody lips, to obey Eddy's orders. The critical moment had been passed.

These men were in that tomb for a week altogether. The last two days of their incarceration found Eddy among the sick himself, but Waite and Antonese saw that he was well taken care of, even though they themselves had to eat their boots finally to keep themselves alive.

## Last Hours of Suspense.

Some of the men kept diaries, one of them having found in a pocket some pieces of paper and a stub of a pencil, which they took in turns.

It was the water in the well, the seeping ooze, that kept them from knowing the hideous tortures of thirst. "The Bull," subdued, sore and wounded, lay in the corner unspoken to by the others. They brought him water, and when it got too low to dip out they carried him to the well, where he could lie down and lick a few drops up from the earth. They would have liked to kill him, this thief, but they were merciful. Anyway, he, like the rest of them, would not last much longer.

Seven days from the day they went into their tomb, and when they were stretched out, weak, on the floor of the place waiting for death, some one heard a sound. At first he paid no attention to it, believing it part of the dream they had all had at one time or another—a dream that rescue had come.

But then others heard it. Some one raised his tired, emaciated body from the floor and staggered to the wall. He called faintly, "Hello!" There was an answer.

The papers have told the rest, how the rescuers found them and carried them out, all alive but one little Frenchman, who died as they brought him to the air.

The chapter is closed and the mine is sealed, but there's one part of the story that these fellows will tell over and over again—that's the part about the fight in the dark.

## Prisoner's Needlework.

Canon Horsley, the new mayor of Southark, was the last chaplain of the Clerkenwell house of detention and he has many mementoes of his prison days. One is an antimacassar, the work of a once notorious woman drunkard who had been convicted 400 times and spent the larger part of her life in jail. With a bent pin found on the floor of the cell the woman pulled threads from her underclothing and made a really beautiful lace border, four feet long and four inches deep. Next she procured from a warden a needle and thread and a piece of linen a foot square, round which she sewed the lace. With hairs pulled from her head she embroidered an elaborate pattern, the whole of the center being occupied by the words of a hymn. The completed design formed an exquisite piece of needlework.—From M. A. P.

# A Night of Surprises

By DON MARK LEMON

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Jack O'Brien gathered his policeman's raincoat closer about his shoulders and yawned drowsily, as for the fifth time he left Mulberry street and crossed into the shadow of Hampstead avenue, with its one arc light every two squares.

"Nothing doing! Nothing doing!" his \$5 boots seemed to pad softly, as he paced the lower half of his beat, and the flapping tails of his raincoat took up the refrain—"Nothing doing! Nothing doing!"—till perhaps he would have fallen asleep as he walked from sheer monotony, had he not suddenly caught a glimpse of a shadow crouching beneath a rear window of the Hill mansion.

O'Brien was a green hand, having been placed on the force only the week previous, yet he was shrewd enough not to pause in his measured pace, but continued down the avenue as if wholly unconscious of that evil-proportioned shadow crouching beneath the window. Nine to one he was being watched himself, either by the shadow or that thief's pal, concealed somewhere in the immediate neighborhood.

He made his accustomed turn at the next corner, when noting that he was no longer under the observation of the shadow beneath the window, and that save for himself the road before and behind him was deserted, he increased his pace for a few yards and sprang upon the stone wall that ran along the rear of the Hill mansion.

In another moment he had dropped under the wet shrubbery on the inside of the wall, where he could command a view of the rear and right of the mansion, yet remain wholly concealed from observation.

He was confident that the shadow he had seen was that of a man, and he was not mistaken. As he watched, this shadow suddenly lengthened itself and now noiselessly opening the win-



dow beneath which it had crouched, disappeared into the mansion.

O'Brien waited a good two minutes, then thrust his helmet from the hedge with the intention of following, when he was stayed by the appearance of the thief's pal. He crept into view from around the left side of the house, hugging the wall till he reached the open window, through which he disappeared with the alacrity of a monkey.

O'Brien felt for his pistol, handcuffs and billy and crouched silently and determinedly, proposing to wait until the two housebreakers were preoccupied with their labors, then it would be but the work of a courageous five minutes and he would have them both handcuffed and on their way to the station house.

Now again he thrust his helmet from the hedge and was about to quit his place of concealment, when a third figure appeared suddenly from the front of the mansion, keeping close to the right wall, and stole to the rear, where, opening a second window, this figure also disappeared into the mansion.

"Why the devil didn't he take the other window!" wondered O'Brien, "Sure, they must all belong together."

A low whistle came from this second window, and a fourth shadow detached itself from a shade tree set half between the building and the stone wall on the right, and crossing the lawn disappeared into the window whence the whistle had proceeded.

O'Brien reached for his helmet, which in his astonishment had fallen from his head. "Sure, it looks like business," he meditated. "Shall I pinch 'em myself, or call up Finigan?" He decided on the former course: Though there would be more danger entailed, there would be more honor gained. He might even succeed in landing all four thieves, single-handed—such a feat as Jim Maloon had once accomplished—and be a marked man from that night.

Again he felt for his pistol, his handcuffs and billy, and was about to come from the hedge, when he was stayed by a fifth and sixth shadow, that stole together from around the left side of the mansion to a rear door, which they now forced and entered the house.

"Sure, I'll call up Finigan!" decided

O'Brien. "And I'll send in a hook for a dozen of the boys and a patrol. It's a gang that's got tipped off the servants are away and have come around to clean out the place."

He backed towards the stone wall with the intention of putting this plan into effect, when again he was stayed, this time by two men leaping over the stone wall only a few yards from where he was concealed.

These men, after crouching for a minute in the shadow of a hedge, hugged a low cross-hedge to a position opposite the rear wall of the house, from where they stole across the narrow strip of lawn and disappeared through the door that had been forced only a few minutes before.

"Would you notice it!" murmured O'Brien. "I'll just lay by a bit and wait till they fetch the piano wagon." He now removed his helmet and laughed softly into it. "It's the boys playing a trick on me, that's what it is! But the devil a bit will I notice it! I'll get back on my beat and let 'em fool Finigan with their kiddin'!"

He sprang over the wall to the road. "Mike will be waiting for me at the box. 'Twill be the laugh on him and a warm bed for Jack O'Brien."

Shaking a few leaves and twigs from his cape he started down the road at his accustomed pace. The sound of laughter now came from the Hill mansion, and peering over the stone wall through an opening in the hedge he saw two more shadows steal across the lawn and disappear through the open door at the rear of the house.

O'Brien wiped a broad grin from his face. "The boys will know me better after this night," he said. "But I'm right sorry for Finigan! He'd better pull a drunk goat than nab that bunch of plumbers."

At the patrol box O'Brien was soon joined by Mike Finigan and relieved of duty by the latter.

"Anything doing?" queried Finigan, who was a green hand like the other man, and as eager to make a record and get promoted in town.

"You might pull the moon, if he's full," grinned O'Brien. "It's a wet night you'll have, Mike, and wetter outside than inside, I'm thinking."

Finigan winked, licked his lips, and with a grin turned to patrol his beat, while O'Brien moved off toward the station. Here he caught the last electric and soon was relieved of all duties by Capt. Sleep.

At his ten o'clock breakfast the next day O'Brien opened the morning paper, smiled to think that the joke might be out on Finigan, when he all but fell from his chair as his vision was confronted with the headlines:

**MIKE FINIGAN A HERO.**

**A Surprise Party Very Much Surprised.**

**Intrepid Officer Arrests Ten Housebreakers.**

**Single-Handed Holds Thieves at Bay Till Relief Arrives.**

The double column that followed was a detailed glorification of Michael Denis Finigan and his great coup.

According to the paper, a few minutes after Finigan had gone on his beat the previous night, having relieved Officer Jack O'Brien, he had made the discovery that the rear door of the Hill mansion was open, and noiselessly entering the building had surprised ten housebreakers, collected in the dining room about a basket of wine.

Covering the men with his revolver and pressing the electric burglar alarm, he had held the entire party at bay till relief arrived, when the ten men were handcuffed and taken to the station. Only one shot had been fired, which Finigan had been forced to expend on the legs of one of the housebreakers, who had objected to his capture.

The paper went on to state that a grimly amusing fact had subsequently come to light. The housebreakers had effected their entrance to the Hill mansion in parties of two, without the slightest suspicion that they had been preceded or were to be followed by others on a like mission.

Imagine their astonishment—wrote the reporter—when each pair found that the same night had been chosen by four other couples bent on a like robbery, and their still greater surprise when officer Finigan had held them up in a body.

Finigan, the paper went on to state, had already been recommended for promotion, which he so richly merited.

When O'Brien had finished this report, his appetite for breakfast was quite gone. From his place of concealment under the hedge he had witnessed the impudence of the whole business, and had he taken steps to arrest the men his name would now stand bracketed with glory instead of the name of Michael Denis Finigan.

"But who the devil would have thought that ten jimmies would hit on the same night to break into a house!" growled O'Brien, sore as a mashed thumb.

It is difficult to tell which is more painful: to watch the way in which a man handles a baby or the way in which a woman handles a joke.



Wives and Children Waiting for News of the Buried Men.