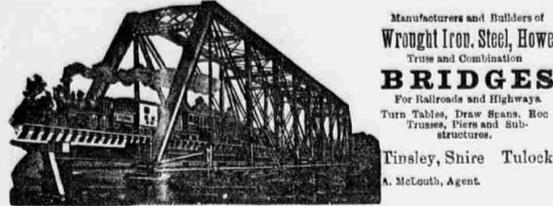


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GERMINAL

Or, the Story of a Great Miners' Strike.

BY EMILE ZOLA.

Translated from the French.

SUMMARY CHAPTERS I AND II--Anton last night's visit to a mine near a town of work. The village at night--Morning in a miner's cottage, and preparations for work--The Village mine.

CHAPTER III.

Anton had ventured to approach the Vulture, and all the men to whom he addressed himself, asking if he could get work there, shook their heads and ended by telling him to wait for the superintendent. They left him alone in the midst of the badly lit buildings, filled with black holes and confusion with the intensity of their rooms and floors. He had just mounted a dark flight of steps, half decayed, when he found himself upon a swiveling foot-board, then having passed through the screening shed, he plunged into a darkness so profound that he walked with his hands before him, so as not to hurt himself. Suddenly in front of him, two enormous yellow eyes shone out of the gloom. He was under the tower, at the superintendent's office at the mouth of the shaft.

A miner, the elder Richmond, with a large soldier like figure and gray mustache, was walking slowly, directing his steps toward the superintendent's office. "Do they need a woman here, no matter for what kind of work?" again inquired Anton.

Richmond started to say no, but he checked himself and responded like the others, with a nod of the head: "Wait for Mr. Dancaert, the superintendent."

Five lanterns were set there, and the reflections which were all turned toward the mouth of the shaft shone brightly upon the iron inclined plane, the handspikes and the plans upon which the two cages were held in. As for the rest the large room, like the nave of a church, remained in a strange light, filled with great floating shadows.

For an instant Anton remained motionless, deafened, blinded. He was shelled with the currents of air coming in from outside. Then he stepped forward attracted by the engine, the shining steel and copper of which he now saw. It was located at the end of the shaft, in a higher room, and set so firmly upon its brick foundation that it ran at full steam, with all its four hundred horse power, with no movement but that of the crank, which rose and fell with a well-oiled smoothness, shaking the floor. The engineer stood at the controls, his eyes never leaving the indicator, on which the shaft was represented, with its different galleries by a vertical groove through which some plummet ran suspended by cords and representing the cages. And at each departure, when the engine was again started, the drums, two great cylinders seventeen feet in circumference, about the centers of which steel cables wound and unwind in opposite directions, revolving with such rapidity that they look like nothing more than dust.

"Take care!" cried two miners who were dragging a huge ladder. Anton had just escaped injury, his eyes becoming accustomed to the light, he watched the cable moving in the air, more than one hundred feet of steel ribbon, which writhed in the air in the tower where they passed over the drums and then descended perpendicularly into the shaft to be connected to the hoisting cages. An iron framework similar to the high framework of the tower supported the drums. It was like the flight of birds, without noise, without collision, the movement swift, the continual coming and going of a cable of enormous weight, which would lift as much as twenty five hundred pounds at the rate of thirty feet a second.

"Great heavens, look out!" again cried the men who were dragging the ladder to the other side to examine the drum on the left.

Slowly Anton returned to the superintendent's office. That gigantic flight above his head, astonished him, he shivered in the drafts of air, he watched the working of the cages, his ears cracked by the rolling of the cars. Near the shaft the signal was operated--a heavy hammer upon a lever that a cord from below let drop upon a block. One blow to stop, two to descend, three to come up. It was without intention, like the blowing of a gavel, a trilling a tumult, accompanied by the clear sound of a bell, while the crushers directing the movement often increased the noise by shouting orders through a speaking trumpet to the engineer. The cages in the middle of the clear space appeared and sank down again, were emptied and refilled without Anton understanding anything of their complicated operations. He could only comprehend one thing: the shaft swallowed up the men in groups of twenty and thirty, and with a gulp so easy that he did not seem to notice them pass away.

The descent of the workmen commenced at four o'clock for a signal below; shouting to lunch for the purpose of giving information that the load was human flesh; then, with a slight jerk, the cage silently disappeared, dropping like a stone, leaving behind it only the trembling flight of the cable.

"Is it deep?" asked Anton of a miner who was waiting near him, with a sleepy air.

"Eighteen hundred feet," responded the man. "But there are three levels below the first at one thousand feet."

Both turned their eyes to the cable, which was running up again. Anton resumed: "And what if it should break?"

"Ah! if it should!" The miner finished the sentence with a shrug. His turn had arrived, the cage had reappeared with its easy, tireless movement. He crouched down with these men, he kept on his knees and bent his body as if he were a leather head-dress designed to protect the head, a precaution which the father and children disdained. The tools were taken out of the chest where they found all ready the shovel of Florence. Then when Mahon had shut up their seats and also Anton's bundle, he suddenly became impatient.

"What's the matter with that fool of a horse? We are a half hour late to-day." Zacharis and Lavaque shrugged their shoulders quietly. The first said at length: "Is it Chaval we're waiting for? He got here before us and went down at once."

"What you know that and you said nothing?" "Come on! come on! come on! hurry up!" Catherine, who was warning her beamed hands, started to follow the party. Anton let her pass, then followed. Again he found himself in a labyrinth of stairs and blind passages, where the bare feet made a soft noise like old socks. But suddenly a small light glared up, showing a glazed place filled with racks where a number of safety lamps were ranged in rows of a hundred, inspected and cleaned the evening before, shining out like tapers at the end of a lighted chapel. At the door each workman took his own, placed at his number, and examined it, closing it up himself, while the time-keeper seated at a table inscribed upon a register the hour of the descent. Mahon was obliged to ask for a lamp for his new partner. And there was still another precaution taken; the men walked in single file before an inspector who satisfied himself if all the lamps were well shut up.

"The descent! It's not warm here," murmured Catherine, shivering. Anton contented himself with nodding his head. He again had that shivering feeling before the shaft, in the midst of the vast hall, filled with currents of air. True, it might be his brave, but there came a disagreeable sensation in his throat at the thundering of the cars, the heavy blows of the signal, the smothered belching of the speaking trumpet, in the sight of the continual flight of the cables which wound and unwound on their drums, with the engine at full steam. The noise rose and fell with their stealthy movement of an animal at the night, always taking down some men which the mouth of the pit seemed to swallow. It was his turn now, he was very cold, he maintained a nervous silence which made Zacharis and Lavaque laugh; both had disapproved the hiring of that unknown, Lavaque especially, who was offended by not having been consulted. But Catherine was pleased at seeing her father explain things to the young man.

"See here, above the cage, here is a safety brake, some iron clamps etiek into the guides in case of a break. That works! Oh! not always. Yes, the shaft is divided into three compartments, enclosed by planking from top to bottom. In the middle one are the cages, on the left one is a ladder."

But he stopped to growl without raising his voice. "What's the matter? Good heavens! Is it right to freeze us in this manner?"

The boss, Richmond, who was likewise going down, his lamp fastened to a stud on his leather cap, heard the complaint. "Take care, the walls have ears!" kindly said the old miner, true to his companions, "the work must be done. Hold on! We are there, got in with your people."

The cage, composed of bars of iron and a fine wire mesh, waited for them, held up by the looking bolts. Mahon, Zacharis, Lavaque and Catherine crawled into a car at the bottom; and as it should hold five, Anton entered also; but the good places were taken, and he was obliged to crouch down close to the young girl, who was now struck into his side. His lamp annoyed him, they advised him to fasten it to a button of his vest. He did not hear, and held it awkwardly in his hand. The loading continued above them, a mixed mass of humanity. It seemed to him so long that he lost all patience. At last a jerk shook them up, the lamps became dark, the objects around him disappearing while he experienced a strange sensation of falling. The only light of day came from above the two stories of the office, struggling through the network of timbers, then falling into blackness of the pit it disappeared until no longer perceptible to the senses.

"Now we're off," said Mahon, quietly. They were all easy. But the moment asked himself if he was rising or falling. He was motionless while the cage went straight down without touching the guides, and with sudden bumps finally producing a shaking of the joints which made him fear an accident. Meanwhile he could not distinguish the walls of the shaft beyond the grating against which he had put his face; the lamps badly lit up the people at his feet. Only the open lamp of the boss in the neighboring car burned like basoon.

"This one is thirteen feet in diameter," continued Mahon, instructing him. "The tubing ought to be repaired, for the water filters on all sides. Hold on, we are arriving at a level, do you hear?"

Anton suddenly asked himself what was that noise like a shower. Great drops finally sounded upon the top of the cage, at first as a beginning of a rain, and then the rain had increased, streaming down and changing into a veritable deluge. Without doubt, the roofing was broken in, for a stream of water ran down the shoulders of the young man; he trembled all over. The cold became intense, they were buried in a damp darkness. When they had rapidly gone down still lower they caught a glimpse of an opening where men were bustling about in the rays of a lamp. But in an instant they were lost to sight.

Mahon said: "That's the first gallery. We are one thousand feet down. Look how fast we go."

Raising his lamp, he lit up a joint of the guides, which ran like a rail under a train at full speed; and beyond that they could see nothing. Three other galleries were passed in the twinkling of an eye. The descending rain fell in the darkness.

"How dark it is!" murmured Anton. The descent seemed to have lasted for hours. He was suffering from the uneasy feeling which he had taken, not daring to stir, especially on Catherine's side. She did not speak a word; he only felt her against him, warming him by her breath.

When the cage stopped at last at the bottom, eighteen hundred feet, he was astonished to learn that the descent had lasted just one minute. But the sound of the bells which were slipping in place and the falling of solidly under him, suddenly obscured him up and made him so happy that he spoke familiarly to Catherine.

"What have you under your skin to be so warm? I have had your elbow in my side all the way."

Then she also made merry. He was

stupid to still take her for a boy. He must be blind. "I guess you've had it in your eyes--my elbow, I mean," responded the girl in the midst of a trumpet of laughter which surprised the young man, who could not see the point.

The cage was emptied, the workmen passed the main opening of that gallery, a room in the rock, arched with masonry, and where three great open lamps were burning. The loaders were actively rolling some full cars upon the iron floor. A cave-like odor fell from the walls, a small of silks with warm breaths of air came from a neighboring stable. Four drifts were worked there, yawning and dark.

"Through here," said Mahon to Anton. "You're not there yet; we've a good mile to go."

The workmen separated, disappearing in groups at the bottom of the dark holes. Fifteen men had just begun digging on the left, and Anton walked behind Mahon who was preceded by Catherine, Zacharis and Lavaque. It was a good wagon level cut out through a layer of coal and from a rock so solid that it had only needed to be partly walled.

Only after the other, they wind on and on by the little lights of the lamps. The young man hit against something at each step, catching his feet in the rails. Each instant a dull noise made him uneasy, the distant sound of a shower of rain, the rush of which seemed to proceed from the bowels of the earth. Was that the thunder of the storm sending down upon their heads the enormous mass which separated them from the earth? A light pierced the night, he felt the rock tremble, and when he halted himself along the wall like his comrades, he saw pass before his face a great white horse harnessed to a train of cars. Heroist was seated on the first, holding the guides and driving, while Johnnie, his hands pressed against the back of the last car was running in his bare feet.

They resumed their march. Farther on a crossway appeared, two now divided, opened, and the party again divided, the men distributing themselves a few at a time in all parts of the mine. Now the wagon road was timbered, the wood, with its bark on, and of a palish yellow, supported the roof, making in the fallen rock an immense hole, sticking out of which one perceived sharp pieces of slate sparkling with mica, and a heavy mass of stone, dull and rough. Trains of cars, full or empty, were continually passing, crossing each other with their loads, carried in the darkness by a dumb beast, with a phantom-like tread. Across the two rails of the road a long black serpent was also passing, a train stopped, the horse snorted, so startled in the night that his haunches dropped like a block trembling from an arch. The rough wooden doors slowly closed up, and the farther they advanced the straighter and lower the drifts became, while the uneven ceiling forced them to bend their backs constantly.

Anton severely bumped his head. Without the leather cap he would have cracked his skull. However, he followed with attention the least gestures of Mahon before him, whose dark shadow was produced by the rays of the lamp. Not one of the workmen knocked themselves; they were obliged to know each projection, every knot in the timber and enlargement of the rock. The young man also distinguished the slipping ground which annoyed him more and more. Now and then he passed through some real pools, which the mudiness of his feet alone revealed. But what surprised him still more was the sudden changes of temperature. At the foot of the shaft it was very fresh, and in the wagon line through which passed all the part of the mine there blew a cold wind whose force was like a gale between the narrow walls; then as they passed into the other drifts, which only received their allotted portion of the air, the wind ceased, it grew hot, a choking heat, heavy as lead. For a quarter of an hour they had gone on and on through these narrow passages; and they were now entering into a more even-like pit, blinding and melting.

Mahon no longer opened his mouth. He went into a drift simply saying to Anton, without turning round: "The vein William."

"This was the vein where the lead was discovered."

From the first step Anton struck his head and elbow. The sloping ceiling dropped so low that it was necessary to walk doubled up. The water came up to their ankles.

His breath left him for an instant for the heat still increased. They proceeded thus six hundred feet, when suddenly he saw Lavaque, Zacharis and Catherine disappear, who seemed to be swallowed up in a small fissure opening before him.

"We must go," said Mahon. "Put your lamp on a button and hold on to the wood."

He also disappeared. Anton was compelled to follow him. This opening left in the vein was reserved for the miners and cleared the whole second floor. It extended through the layer of coal more than twenty inches. Happily the young man was slight, for still upward he drew himself up with difficulty, his hands on his shoulders and hips, pulling forward by the strength of his wrists, his hands clinging to the timber; at the end of fifty feet they first came upon the second floor, but they must go on, the vein belonging to Mahon and his gang was at the sixth floor, "in hall," as they said. The two floors were separated only by the other at distances of fifty feet, and the ascent still continued straight through that cleft which scraped the back and chest. Anton was stifled as if the weight of rocks rested upon him, his hands scratched, his legs bruised, his skin worn away so much that he could feel the wood burning out. Dimly in a path he perceived two double up beings, one small and one large who were pushing the cars, it was Lydie and Moquette already at work. But he must climb up to the highest part of the vein. The perspiration blinded him, he was despairing of overtaking the others, whom he heard with agile limbs climbing the rock with a long glide.

"Courage, here we are," said the voice of Catherine. But when he had really arrived, another voice cried at the end of the wall.

"Well, what's the matter? You don't think of any other folks. I have to come a mile from Montson, and I'm the first to get here."

It was Chaval, a tall, thin man of twenty-five years, with strong features, who was angry at being compelled to wait. When he perceived Anton he inquired, with a contemptuous air: "Who's this? What does this mean?"

And Mahon having told him the story, he headed between his teeth: "Then, the boys will take the bread from the girls!"

The two men exchanged a glance lit with hatred, which from intuition is felt on the instant. Anton had felt the injury without being conscious of it. A glance regained, and then all set to work. The veins were at last filled. Little by little the leads were alive at each step, at the

end of each path. The devouring men had swallowed its daily ration of men--almost seven hundred workmen who were laboring at that hour, in that huge swarm, boring holes in all parts of the earth; it was riddled like an old piece of wood filled with worms. And in the midst of a profound silence following the crushing of the heavy layers, with the ear held close to the rock, one could hear the steps of the human insects in walking and the flight of cable which sent the hoisting cage up and down, and even the scratching of the tools cutting the coal, at the bottom of the falling boards.

Anton in turning round, found himself again pressed against Catherine. But this time he noticed the rising roundness of her neck and shoulders, he comprehended immediately the warmth which he had felt.

"Are you a girl?" murmured he, in astonishment. She responded with a gay air, without blushing: "Yes, it's true; but it's taken you a long time to find it out."

[TO BE CONTINUED]

Take all in all.

—Take all the Kidneys and Liver

—Take all the Blood purifier

—Take all the Rheumatic remedies,

—Take all the Dyppepsia and indigestion

—Take all the Brain and Nerve force

—Take all the Great health restorers.

In short, take all the best quality of all these and the best—

—Qualities of all the best medicines in the world and you will find that—

—Bitters have the best curative qualities and powers of all—concentrated in them.

—And that they will cure when any one of these, singly or—combined. Fail not!

—A thorough trial will give positive proof of this.

Hardened Liver.

Five years ago I broke down with kidney and liver complaint and rheumatism.

Since then I have been unable to be about at all. My liver became hard like wood; my limbs were pulled up and filled with water.

All the best physicians agreed that nothing could cure me. I resolved to try Hop Bitters; I have used seven bottles, the hardness has all gone from my liver, the swelling from my limbs and it has worked a miracle in my case; otherwise I would have been in my grave.

J. W. MOLEY.

Buffalo, October 1, 1881.

Poverty and Suffering.

"I was dragged down with debt, poverty and suffering for years, caused by a sick family and large bills for doctors."

I was completely discouraged, until one year ago, when the advice of a friend led me to using Hop Bitters, and in one month we were all well, and none of us have seen a sick day since, and I want to say to all poor ones, have all come well a year with Hop Bitters for less than one doctor's bill will cost. I know it.

—A Workingman.

Presento the Swindlers!!!

If when you call for Hop Bitters (see counter of Hops on the white label) the drug-gist hands out any stuff called C. D. Warner's German Hop Bitters or with other "Hop" names, refuse to buy them, as all come from my liver, the swelling from my limbs and it has worked a miracle in my case; otherwise I would have been in my grave.

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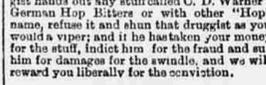
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