

'Steve!' said Mrs. Barden, with a sort of choke in her voice, 'don't think I sent you away from me to Melbourne—just for a whim. . . . You remember how your father died—a man in fine health cut off suddenly. Then there was your brother. Even now my heart turns sick when I think of him, brought in crushed and mangled, after being buried alive! When he was killed I resolved you would never work another day at mining, which is the most accursed employment on God's earth! You were well educated, so I sent you to town. I felt lonely and desolate without you, and people said you had deserted me, and were a bad son, but I bore it all to have you away from danger. And now you have come back to it again.'

The youth's lip quivered; he was little more than a boy. 'A fellow must make his living, mother. I know you don't like mining, but I can't go back to town. I hated it so! I hated the close, dingy little office. I hated the white paper, which made my eyes ache, and the black lines and figures crammed into my brain, and made me miserable. I hated the crowded streets and the stuffy houses, and I often longed—oh! so anxiously! to be back to the old, free life up here, where I could breathe again, and feel the fresh air of the ranges entering into my lungs! I know I'll get work. The manager of the "Lone Star" was always a good friend to us.'

'He was, always,' sobbed Mrs. Barden. 'I cannot blame him because dynamite choked off my husband, and a fall of earth killed my son. And he cannot prevent a similar catastrophe happening to you.'

'Nonsense, mother. I'll get on all right—never fear. Every miner doesn't get killed. Besides, I'll try to get on in the battery—where I was working when I was a boy. Then I won't be in danger of falling earth or dynamite.'

Soon afterwards, tired from the long coach journey, he retired, and slept without dreams, but his mother still sat with her eyes fixed on the dim outlines of the dark battery wheel, and the stampers still roared the same refrain: 'He will be killed! Just like the others! It is his fate!'

'But I'm only a half silly woman,' she sighed, rousing herself at last. 'I've lived alone too long. I want Steve at home to liven me up a bit. I can't blame him either for his fancy. Even as a child he liked pottering about the old workings. A love for the life was born in him; we were always miners.'

Next day Steve Barden had an interview with the manager of the 'Lone Star' and succeeded in getting engaged as a battery hand. 'So I won't have to go into the tunnels at all,' he told his mother reassuringly. And as she watched him getting back into his old healthy condition, his cheeks becoming ruddy again, and his step alert and vigorous, she comforted herself with the reflection that it was all for the best. She caught the infection of his bright, sanguine spirit, too, and became happier and more human. She spoke when anyone passed her door and accosted her, and her dress assumed the neatness which had characterised Mrs. Barden of the past days, when she lived in a nice, four-roomed cottage up on the 'Left branch,' and her husband was boss of the 'shift.' The home became tidier. The dilapidated fence was carefully mended by Steve's industrious hands, the straggling vegetable beds were coaxed into order, while the wandering goats were taught to seek pasture at the back of the premises rather than the public road in front.

Winter came on, and the snow began to drift lightly down into Quartz Gully, and lay in soft fleecy flakes on every leaf and twig. Up above, all the ranges were thickly covered with snow, while down below the flooded creek ran along with a turbulent rush that would have done justice to a big river. The yellow earth still flowed out of the heart of the hill, and the trucks rushed down with their loads of quartz for the battery, and the big black wheel went round and round—the little feathery scraps of snow sometimes mingling with the splashes of race water.

It was intensely cold up among the ranges, but Jane Barden in her little hut, warmed with her big roaring fire of bush logs, which her devoted son had kept her abundantly supplied with, did not feel it. She was becoming quite happy and contented, and whenever she looked out of her solitary front window and caught a glimpse of her boy through the door of the battery house she felt comforted by his continual companionship. Each 'crib' time she anxiously waited for his home-coming, and his cheerful words were like sunshine to her.

One evening she felt strangely uneasy. Steve was on night 'shift,' and though his mother had work to do, she laid it aside, and, sitting at the small window, fastened her gaze on the battery house opposite. There was only a faint gleam of light there, from the lantern suspended from the roof, but the thud! thud! and the crash! crash! sounded as unceasingly as ever, and terrible to relate, they ramed and roared the same doleful words that heralded Steve's home-coming. 'He will be killed! Just like the others! It is his fate!' the stampers repeated with maddening persistence.

But the sound gradually grew less distinct. A pale wintry moon rose at last, and transformed the valley into a vision of loveliness, gleaming on the snow-clad mountains all around and silvering the creek which flowed in the middle of the gorge. The moonbeams lingered over the big black wheel of the battery turning the sparkling water into veritable diamonds as it poured from the race, splashing into a thousand glittering drops. It was a weirdly beautiful scene, and the woman's artistic soul absorbed it greedily. Besides, all was well. The lantern still twinkled dimly, and even as she looked, a

figure passed the chink of the door, and she recognised it.

The white, solemn grandeur began to overpower her senses. A strange dreaminess stole over her, and many haunting memories of other days—pale, shadowy phantoms of long ago—glided through her brain. But suddenly there came a sound that brought her back to the present and turned her sick—a tragic shriek of terrible agony which rose clear above the noise of the battery; and springing up, with wild eyes and panting breath, Jane Barden rushed to the door and threw it open. Then she halted. She knew there was no necessity of going any farther—the trouble had come to her before. Her instinct told her what had happened; that the doom foretold had come.

When they bore the poor, maimed, crushed body out of the battery house, across the rocky patch of ground, lightly dredged with snowdrift, and over the little wooden bridge which spanned the roaring torrent of the creek, she received them dry-eyed—without a word or moan. They explained how it happened: how Steve had been oiling the machinery and must have slipped or leant over too far, and got caught in the bands of the rapidly revolving wheel, which clutched him with a terrible grip, then flung him away—battered and dead.

Marching two and two with reverently uncovered heads, six of the 'Lone Star' men bore the corpse up the steep, snow-covered track to the dismal, scrubby cemetery on the bleak hillside. Jane Barden—still with that bitter, set face, and those tearless, fierce black eyes—followed immediately behind the coffin. She spoke to no one, and all, respecting her grief, left her in silence. The high fence which had surrounded the grave had been taken down, and the family tombstone—hewn out of quartz—lay on top of it, and it was noticed that Mrs. Barden's lips curved into a fearful smile as she read the inscriptions on the latter. When the sad ceremony was over the crowd went mournfully back to their homes, and Jane went to hers. She wanted no one's sympathy, and turning a cold face to a neighbor who tried to speak a few comforting words, she shut herself into her house—alone with her overwhelming sorrow.

The Catholic World

CHINA.—A Boxer Insurrection.

Cable messages to English newspapers from China announce a recrudescence of the Boxer insurrection, in the province of Szechwan. Catholics in Peking report the massacre of nearly a thousand native converts.

ENGLAND.—French Nuns.

A community of French nuns of the Order of the Blessed Sacrament have taken Beaconsfield House, Tunbridge Wells, and will shortly take up their residence there. They will carry on work amongst the poor of the town. The Order has houses in Brompton Square, London, and at Brighton.

The French Orders.

The sale of two important Hampshire properties—Norris Castle, East Cowes, and the Grange, Cowes,—is said to have been arranged for expelled French Orders.

Preston's Guilds.

Preston's great Guild Week celebrations, which are a relic of old Catholic days and customs, are still kept up. The first Guild celebration took place in the 14th century, and since then at even dates of 20 years till now. The week ended on Saturday, September 6, witnessed many functions and processions. During the week the membership roll was renewed, and all old and fresh members had to sign this record, which was sealed on Saturday and put away till 1922. There was High Mass on Monday (September 1) at every Catholic church in Preston, and large congregations attended at each of the six.

Cardinal Vaughan's Health.

His Eminence Cardinal Vaughan, according to recent Home papers, continues to make slow progress towards recovery. It is hoped he may be able to say Mass at no distant date.

FRANCE.—A Protest.

The Bishop of Saint-Brieuc has published a protest against the proposed erection of a statue to Renan in the Grand Place of Treguier, his native place. 'I hope that the plan will not be carried out,' writes his Lordship, 'and that the town of St. Yves will remain true to its glorious traditions and to its faith. The author of the "Vie de Jesus" was an apostate, an atheist, a blasphemous. To erect a monument to him would be a crime against which I raise a protest with all my might in the name of Brittany, France, and all Catholic lands.'

The Attitude of the Holy Father.

Since the commencement of the campaign which the French Government has waged against the Congregational schools (says the 'Catholic Times'), several Catholic newspapers have severely blamed the silence of the Holy Father. At length his Eminence Cardinal Rampolla, in a letter addressed to the French Minister to the Vatican, has found it necessary to explain the Papal reserve. He declares that the Pope considers it of the utmost importance to the interests of the Church that he should abstain from any intervention, lest he might be misunderstood by either of the parties to the conflict. 'The application of this principle led him, contrary to immemorial usage, to refuse to listen to the addresses of the