

Feinted Mine Blast Causes Tenderfoot to Stage Real Faint

black powder from my gun, saw me, hopped over the log and came for me at railroad speed. I was so surprised by this performance from an animal that I was sure I had killed, that he was half way to me before I started to throw in a fresh cartridge. Then I remembered I had exchanged guns that morning with a friend for the day's hunting and he had my trusty Winchester and I had his single-shot Needle gun and the cartridges were all in my belt. And believe me, I had to rustle some to get my gun loaded in time to stop that bear's rush. In fact I had to jump out of the way as he rolled over dead.

Those days, wild animals were not afraid of man like they are now. Deer would often stand and look and many a hunter was killed and mangled by a bear rushing out upon him from some thicket so quickly he had no time to snatch his gun out from under his arm (same as I had mine that day) and for which piece of carelessness I got a good bawling out from John.

These days bears runs so fast when a man shows up that one has to look quick if he sees them at all. Leadville was booming then, so we took a vacation from our work and went up there to look it over. Only stayed a couple of weeks on that first trip, then returned to our happy home to finish cutting the timber on our preemption claim, at which we could make \$5 a day apiece, which was not at all bad in those times.

By that time I was quite a chunk of a boy. Clean living, daily exercise and plenty of all kinds of both tame and wild meat had put flesh on my bones and toughened my muscles. Before I was 17 I could tip the scales at 160 pounds and was feeling my oats a-plenty. About that time the sawmill that bought our logs imported 40 lumberjacks from Michigan to work in the mill and to cut logs. We happened to be at the train when they arrived and I took an instant dislike to the whole bunch. I didn't like their faces, clothes, manners or anything else about them.

My pals took advantage of that fact at once. Back home I had attended a gymnasium and among other athletic exercises had learned the fine points of boxing. And they dearly loved to see me scrap. Once a week we went to town and we wouldn't be there long before they would come to me with a yarn of how some Michiganard had made certain derogatory remarks about me and I would at once proceed to hunt the offender up and administer fitting punishment with my fists.

These fellows had no science but packed an awful wallop if they could land it. I couldn't lick all of these huskies by any means, but in many cases my science served me well and I came out winner. But these guys were footfighters par



Bing Crosby appears opposite Marion Davies in the story of a girl who fell in love with a voice and followed the owner to Hollywood, in the picture "Going Hollywood," opening at the Craterian Theatre Sunday. Crosby crosses several numbers with Miss Davies also singing a couple of times during the course of the picture. Dances, both ensemble and solo, are executed by the famous Albertina Rasch ballet.

excellence. Many of them could jump straight up, kick a man in the breast and land on their feet again like a cat. If one was getting the worst of a scrimmage, he would slip down on his back and whirl around like a top, all the time fighting with his feet, which would make it almost impossible to get to him. Once they got a man down, they were very likely to jump square in his face or on his breast and tear him up with the sharp caulks in their boots. There was no law against mayhem those days, so if they got a chance they would bite off an ear or nose or gouge out an eye. I didn't like that foot-fighting, but had to learn it to hold my own. I preferred straight knockdowns till one or the other stayed down.

But my pals were always at hand to see that I didn't get chewed up or stomped to pieces if I happened to be getting the worst of it. I took everything seriously and didn't know for a long time afterward that they had framed up nearly all of those scraps just for the fun of seeing me in action. But for months I generally had a black eye and sometimes two. Finally I got to liking the Michiganards. They were such joyful scrappers. They fought

for the pure fun of fighting and, win or lose, would forget it by the next day and be glad to see a fellow as ever.

It is possible these tales of violence may shock the sensibilities of gently nurtured persons, but the business of the west in early days was not conducted with a view of pleasing the fastidious tastes of such individuals. And I am not writing pleasant fiction stories to conform to the squeamish notions of people who know nothing about the old west, but am simply stating facts that actually occurred.

I have found that my education in gun-handling and scrapping came in very handy later on, when in the mining excitement of the west I had to take my own part unaided, against the bullies, claim-jumpers and toughs who always were to be found in these new mining camps.

Up in the high range prospectors began finding mineral, some very rich, some not so good. But a hole in the ground those days that showed any mineral at all could almost command a good price. English capital entered the country and the prospectors considered the wildcatting them to a fare-you-well. A famous character named "Gassy" Thompson took a contract from an English company one winter to run a 300-foot tunnel into a hogback where some good mineral outcroppings had been discovered, a few miles above where we were then. Right beside this hogback was a deep gulch where the snow was piled up to the depth of 20 feet or more. After digging awhile, "Gassy" decided it would be easier to dig in the snow, so he ran the tunnel out into the gulch, timbered it up nicely, threw some mud on the sides and sent for the agent.

The agent came, measured the tunnel, complimented "Gassy" on his good work, paid him and left. Next summer, when the snow melted, there stood the naked timbers out in the gulch and the Eng-

lish were stung again. I have seen them many times.

This "Gassy" Thompson was a practical joker from away back. He was an experienced and lucky prospector and made several big strikes. Once I know he sold out for \$200,000. Another time I heard for \$125,000, and it was reported he sold out a silver claim for \$85,000. And on several occasions he made smaller strikes. His worst failing was that of gambling. He always believed he could beat the "tiger" (faro). His first move whenever he made a sale was to hit for a telegraph office and send a wire to New York, something like this: "Hell's broke loose and 'Gassy' Thompson's coming."

When he reached New York, the crack gamblers of that burg would be out in force to meet him and in a few weeks his money would be gone and he would come back to the Leadville country to make another stake.

A young easterner came to Leadville and told everybody who would listen that he had been studying to be a mining engineer and had learned everything they could teach him in the east, and had been told to come west and finish up his education with practical experience in the mines. He repeated this story over and over, till finally someone took pity and told him of two miners who were sinking a shaft on the hill above town, who would probably take him on. So next day he climbed up there and the two miners turned out to be "Gassy" Thompson and his partner. The young fellow patiently explained his predicament to them. Said he didn't care for wages, had money of his own, but simply wished to gain the practical experience that would

round out his education. So they took him on.

Going down with them to the bottom of the 40-foot shaft, he watched them drill the holes, load them with dynamite, attach the caps and fuse and get ready to fire the charges. "Gassy" said, "You two fellows go up on top. I'll lift the fuses and jump in the bucket and you can pull me up. Then we'll jerk the windlass out of the way and let 'er go." Matters turned out as planned and the young fellow was tremendously interested and impressed as the blast went off and the shaft mouth spouted flying rocks like a miniature volcano.

In the afternoon they cleaned the shaft bottom and the young engineer was initiated into the mysteries of cooking supper and breakfast.

Next morning they drilled another round of holes and the young fellow saw them heavily loaded and made ready to fire as before.

"Gassy" complimented him on the speed he was making in learning the practical side of engineering and asked him if he would like to light the fuses himself and let them pull him up. The youngster fairly jumped at the chance. So "Gassy" instructed him carefully how to proceed and went on top. Fuses all lit, the new beginner hopped in the bucket, gave the signal and they immediately started hauling him up. Halfway from the top the bucket stopped, held there by the brake. Glancing up to see what caused the stoppage, he was horrified to see "Gassy" and his partner fighting. He yelled at the top of his lungs, but they paid no attention. Just kept on fighting. Looking down, he could see the fuses were just about to set the

powder off and the two on top were still cursing and fighting.

Remembering the terrific blast of the day before and realizing certain death was very close, he feinted away in the bucket. Next thing he knew, he was lying on the dump on top and they were throwing cold water in his face and laughing at him. "That is the way we break in tenderfeet who come out west looking for practical experience," said "Gassy." "How do you like it?" They had loaded the holes with sand cartridges, which were used sometimes for tamping, instead of dynamite. Both looked alike to the young fellow. So of course no blast went off and the fight on top was just a fake.

They tried to persuade him to stay a few days and get a little more mining education, but he decided he had about all the practical experience he needed and beat it for town, where he took the first train east.

Even if you can build a better mousetrap, it's foolish to build six times as many as there are mice.—Olin Miller.

A Kansas man hit his wife over the head with a bridge lamp and she retaliated by pouring boiling water over him. Anything to pass a long winter evening.—Olin Miller.

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