THE EVENING NEWS.

Thursday, - - December 28, 1871.

A FIERY BLAST.

[CONCLUDED.]

I turned in a dizzy way to follow the voice, but as I did so I felt something clutch my leg, and as I bent down there in the horrible darkness—ten times as black after that scorching, blinding flash—I touched a hand, helped some one to stagger up, and then, with the water streaming off us, and the air choking us at every breath and making my ears sing, we staggered along.

How far that was I don't know, for it is all mixed up in a confused, troubled way, and I was like one walking in his sleep till I felt my hand seized, and some one I knew directly after to be the foreman half lead, half push me, and the man who clung to me, into one of the openings; where, in a machine-like sort of way, we climbed up and into the light, when I rolled down on the pavement, and lay half stupid for a few minutes.

The voice of our foreman, though, roused me, and knowing what I did, I went down again and helped him and three more, and amongst us we got the rest up—four of them horribly burned by the explosion, and the rest so scared that it was a mercy they got out alive.

I said the rest, but there was one missing on the foreman counting us over; and then, calling to us to follow, he ran like a mad-man down the street to the next opening, where the secret of the explosion lay before us; the trap was shut, and the foul gas made by the chemicals could not escape.

I heard him grind his teeth as he dragged it up, and after it the grating, when it was as he hoped; the missing man—an old hand—had made for this place and climbed up, we getting it open just in time to save his life, for he was nearly stifled, and did not recover for weeks.

This was my first sewer adventure, and nearly the last, and all due to some mischievous person closing the trap left open for ventilation; but I've had an escape or two since, for gases as deadly as those in a coal mine collect, ready to flash off at the first coming of a light. I could show you males all blistered and drawn and distorted by the awful blaze; but I think you've had enough for once of the horrors of a sewer.

HOW HE COLLECTED HIS BILL.

Some twenty-five years ago, Mr. Bodkin, one of the old-fashioned printers of New York, was looking sadly over his ledger. As he turned over the leaf that disclosed the account of Mr. Quoin, with an unsettled balance of $315, and more than two years past due, the sadness changed to grimness. How well he remembered the first visit of the deluding Quoin, when, with a corn-basket full of wood-cuts, said to have cost $1,000, he inveigled the credulous Mr. Bodkin into printing a book, for which Quoin had never paid. But he had promised magnificently.

"As soon, Mr. Bodkin, as I receive the $315—and the sales of the book, I know, will not be less than that every week—you shall have the money. A debt of honor, Mr. Bodkin. You should have it, if I had to sell my teeth." And here he showed a collection that a hyena would have envied for whiteness and hardness. "Then again, Mr. Bodkin, you hold my wood-cuts as security. Worth more than three times the amount of your bill! Finer collaterals were never negotiated in Wall street. Pooh!" And he swung his cane around his head, as if ready to demolish any man or opinion that might rise in opposition.

So Mr. Bodkin, much impressed with the rhetoric of Mr. Quoin, although not entirely convinced, gave up the work, and Quoin went on his way rejoicing. Went to Rhode Island, where he sold his books and pocketed the proceeds. And Mr. Bodkin had waited for the money. How often he had written to Quoin! How he had expostulated and threatened! How he had tried to make payments easy for Mr. Quoin! How he had offered to take calicoes, codfish, potatoes, or shingle nails, or any other production of Rhode Island! All to no purpose.

Then he put the account in the lawyer's hands. Quoin was sued, and judgment had, and execution was issued, and was returned unsatisfied. Neither Mr. Quoin's property nor income could be attached. Bodkin fairly snorted as his eyes fell upon the expenses of that suit.

Then he thought of that security—those invaluable collaterals — the precious wood cuts that had cost $1,000. Bodkin had hawked them, at every publisher in the city, only to get substantially the same answer from all. "Good cuts, of course they are. Worth $1,000 no doubt to cut them; but to us who don't need them; and could not use them, worth no more than fire wood." Such security! Bodkin was growing hysterical.

He laughed aloud, not scornfully, but exultingly. It was the laugh of inspiration. For the wood-cuts had given him a new notion of how the debt might be collected. With undisguised chuckling, he put on his hat and went in search of Mr. Mallet, a young gentleman of remarkable persuasive faculties, and failures in dress—moreover, an agent of the Pokomoke Lottery, and an excellent judge of the games of pea and thimble. What transpired between Bodkin and Mallet is purely conjectural. But it was odd that Bodkin should, on his return, have directed his foreman to print a dozen cards with this inscription: "Henry Mallet, publisher, No. 3,450 Washington street, Boston." Henry Mallet a publisher! Why, even the feeder boys laid their fingers under their noses when they read it.

Two days after this Mr. Mallet laid one of these cards on the desk of Mr. Quoin, and begged to inquire of that gentleman the probable value of the woodcuts used in his book. What he designed to sell them for, or what they he used? To be candid, and candor was always a weakness of his, he needed them sorely. He had made arrangements to publish a certain book within three months. If it was out by that time, he would make $2,000, sure. If it was delayed a week, his chance for profit was gone forever. The miserable engraver wanted three months to do the work, whereas he could not spare three weeks. Quoin's cuts were almost exactly what he wanted, but they would serve. Would he take $50 for the use of them?

Quoin smiled at his innocence, and shook his head. "I don't lend cuts, but I will sell them to you for $800, and that is cheaper than you can have them made to order."

There was no denying this; but it took more than an hour's hard boxing to make Quoin abate the price to $500. The most potent argument Mallet used was his apparently careless production of a long flat wallet filled with mean crisp and crackling bank notes of high figures only, the sight of which made Mr. Quoin show his beautiful white teeth. Mallet was undoubtedly a cash buyer.

Next came the question of terms. "Would Mr. Mallet pay $285 cash, and take an order on his printer, who would deliver the cuts on payment of $315?"

To be continued.

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