

- - HOLIDAY READING - -

THE RUBAIYAT OF FREE MINER'S CERTIFICATE

No. 655342

Year after year has come and gone again.
As buckets passing on an endless chain
Laden with rock, or poor or rich the vein.

Some smoothly bore me gold in goodly sums,
And others ! iron rust to clog the drums,
Now creaking slowly, 1900 comes.

And that same year to me may represent
The final clean-up—well, I am content,
Fate cannot rob me of the wealth that's spent.

There's wealth and wealth, I've sampled and I know,
Some things I valued not, long years ago
Paid from the grass roots though they assayed low.

And others, running thousands to the ton
Pinched out before assessment work was done.
Lord, what a many mines I've seen begun.

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That's life as I have seen it, here and there,
In mining camps and cities, everywhere,
That I could find the samples to compare.

I'm old, you're young, a specimen or so
I'll give you, that may guide you as you go,
Seeking you know not what, but what I know.

Be a Free Miner, but maintain the pact
That gives you license, common sense and tact,
Say, "set your stakes according to the Act."

"Jump not and be not jumped" the Golden Rule
For all Free Miners is—but be no fool,
Keep one eye out for fractions, and keep cool.

Don't go by books entirely—if it fall
That you have struck pay ore with ne'er a wall,
Dig deep and take your profits, great or small.

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I'm old and garrulous—to make amends,
I'll tell you this, choose not your mine or friends
Thro' experts, if you seek for dividends.

Nor choose by outward show a mine or wife
Deep hidden in the veins of rock and life,
Lies gold or barren quartz, sweet peace or strife.
J. H. M. G. in B.C. Mining Record.

AN UNCANNY CARGO.

Going down to our places of business one brisk February morning, Captain Crangle and I fell to speculating upon the causes of the disaster to the United States war ship "Maine," just blown up and sunk in Havana harbor, with so dreadful a loss of life. The captain was all against the notion of Cuban or Spanish treachery, and declared that the explosion was on board the "Maine," not outside of her. I had just been citing three instances of dire explosions on ships of the British navy; one, and the most severely fatal, through the ignition of gas in a coal bunker; another through the sticking of a valve on a boiler; the third through the concussion or ignition of a peculiar explosive kept on board for torpedo purposes. Suddenly the captain slapped his hands together and gave his head a quick shake, as he said: "Yes, there you have it; these explosives are the essence of mischief; and I think from an article I lately saw, written by one of themselves, that American naval

officers have much to learn of the safe treatment of such dangerous materials. Now I know something about explosives on ship-board—not of their explosive force, but of the anxiety they produce in those responsible for their safe-keeping or transport."

I begged the captain to explain what he meant, thinking from the sudden gravity of his manner that something unusual was in prospect. And this was his story:

"I once put a lot of that sort of thing on one of the boats of my line—I was younger then, and more reckless. When the Canadian Pacific Railway was being built along the north shore of Lake Superior, a dozen years ago, Hugh Ryan, the contractor, came to me one day and told me he had a lot of stuff he was anxious to get taken up to the north shore of the lake, and he knew that one of my boats was just then at Montreal, where his goods were. I asked him what kind of stuff, and he told me, straight, that there was hardware, provisions, and a lot of nitro-glycerine and blasting powder, besides, he added, about 300 Italian laborers. I looked at Ryan for a minute, and suggested that there was a good deal of potential fireworks about that cargo, whether we considered the live or the dead-weight part of the load. 'Yes,' replied Hugh, 'We know that, but I must get them up there, and money will do almost anything.' So on this hint I named a lump figure for the trip, and a mighty high figure, too, I warrant you, for it was late in the navigable season. Ryan never made a word of protest about the price, I'll say that for him. But before we went into particulars I explained that this offer was made conditionally. 'Well, let's hear the conditions.' So I said that before making the charter I must first write to the Captain of the propeller, the "California," and tell him the nature of the cargo, and get his consent, and the consent of the crew to the trip. Ryan agreed that this was reasonable, and I wrote. Back came the answer that all hands were willing—the sailors' usual recklessness, you see—and away I went by train to Montreal to see to the loading of this cargo, with all the elements of an Inferno in it.

"Little by little the nature of our load and its destination came to be known, and the 'California,' as her load increased, grew to be avoided like a plague-ship. Neither householders nor vessel owners thought us quite canny. Here we were in the harbor, loading these death-dealing substances—I think there was forty tons of powder, and some 500 cases, that is, 2,000 tins, of nitro-glycerine, which is put up in tins of 20 pounds weight, four of which are packed in each case, with sawdust, making a package that a man can handle readily; and if a man slipped, or one of these cases fell, it was good-bye ! to ship and crew. However, we got all loaded and away went the boat, up the stretches of the St. Lawrence through canal after canal, and how the folks would run to what they thought a safe distance when they saw the 'California,' for you see our reputation had preceded us. Finally, we reached the chain of lakes, but as we were on a through trip of 1,200 miles we needed to make but few stops after we got out of the Welland Canal.

"I had taken the precaution to make some enquiries beforehand about the proper care and treatment of explosives, and you may be sure that what I learned did not make me any more comfortable. I was told by a scientific friend that a certain degree of heat would explode the glycerine—and that too great cold would also suffice to explode it. So as this was the month of October, and we were bound to a coast where they keep the coldest of Canadian weather on tap, I thought it well to take some pains to have this 'perilous stuff' kept at a reasonably even temperature. A sort of house was therefore built on board for the explosives, and arrangements made to keep it safe, and, as one of the crew expressed it, 'kind o' comfortable like.'

"The passengers were just what you would expect a lot of Italian navvies to be; quarrelsome, dirty, and the reverse of cheerful. They kept to themselves, however, and the crew had little, if any, trouble with them, for they could not speak English. They would smoke and sleep and gaze at the water, but rarely could they be heard to sing. Rows were not uncommon among them, and bad language was frequent, if its character could be inferred from truculent gesture or glance of eye. The captain told me that some half dozen of them were missing when he