

TWO VERY CLOSE CALLS

THOUGHTS OF A MAN WHO WAS TWICE IN GREAT PERIL

Came Once Near Drowning and Once in Danger of Falling From a Roof.

Two men were recently discussing various psychological phenomena. Both were professional men and familiar with the technical as well as the popular side of the subject. They were reviewing, which was the concentration of the attention when face to face with death.

"You often hear wonderful stories of the instant review of the events of a lifetime experienced by drowning persons or those who are in danger of imminent death," remarked the older of the two, "but I have always been a little sceptical about the possibility of that complete revival of the memory and the condensation of the events of a lifetime into the minute and a half it takes to drown."

"But," objected the other, "it has fallen to my lot on two separate occasions to be thoroughly convinced of the rapidity of thought which is possible when you are face to face with death. Instead of a rapid and extensive review of past events I have found my thoughts concentrated on one fixed idea always immediately connected with the danger in which I was placed."

"MY FIRST EXPERIENCE"

of the kind was in the River Shannon, when I was learning to swim. I had taken only a few lessons in shallow water when, being in a row-boat on the river with two others, one of them, a Mr. Brown, who was a very fine swimmer, proposed that we should take a dip. A Mr. George Smith stayed in the boat to guide it.

"After I had tried a few strokes, staying close to the boat, I would grasp the stern and rest myself. Mr. Brown, who did not know I could not swim, got behind the boat and gave it a good push ahead as I reached for the stern after one of my efforts, and I went down."

"Not knowing anything about swimming except the stroke, I had no idea of the movements necessary to bring me to the surface, so I persisted calmly in using the regular breast stroke. This, of course, carried my head under water. I extended my arms and legs in the natural consequence of nothing came to the surface but my fingers."

"The water being very muddy in this part of the river and the current very swift, it was extremely difficult for Mr. Smith to locate me, although Mr. Brown stood up in the boat and pointed out the place where my hands came up last. By the time Mr. Brown got to the spot and dived my erroneous notions about swimming had carried me a yard or two away, just enough for him to miss me."

"As I went down for the traditional third time Mr. Smith noticed that my fingers were quite limp and that

THE STROKE HAD CEASED.

Fortunately for me it had, because after a final dive and failure to reach me Mr. Brown happened to touch with his foot what he took to be a half sunken sod of turf, many of which float down the Shannon under the surface. Instinctively he made another dive and got his hand upon it only to find that he had hold of the hair of my head.

"This is what went on above the surface, as I learned later. Under the water there was only one idea in my mind, and that was whether or not Mr. Smith, who was sitting in the boat rowing, had noticed that I had gone down. Mr. Brown I knew had his back to me."

"As long as I retained consciousness I kept up the breast stroke with the precision of a drill movement. During the whole time, even when the water began to trickle into my ears with a soft, musical sound, and I felt myself swallowing it in large quantities, there was no review of any past life. No fear of death, no thought of the future ever entered my mind for a moment; nothing but a constant effort of the memory to recall whether or not Smith was looking my way when I went under and a desperate effort to determine by some process of reasoning what he would probably do if he saw me sink."

"In this case there was no idea of death, no realization of imminent danger even, and therefore the thoughts may have been quite normal, as I must have been conscious for nearly two minutes. But now let me turn to

ANOTHER CASE,

in which I had to face instant and apparently certain death in a rather peculiar way.

"Being an architect's assistant, it was my duty to measure buildings which were to be altered or enlarged, and one windy day I went to see one of these, which was a three-story and basement brick house, with the usual area and railings in front of it. Adjoining this was a little higher building, and it was necessary for me to get the exact dimensions of the brick wall and

chimney that projected above the roof of the house I was measuring.

"I found a very large and heavy skylight in the attic, which required all my strength to push up and out to open. It was held open by a pivoted stick of wood, and by climbing through the opening I saw that I could stretch myself out on the roof, and by holding fast to the edge of the skylight opening with my right hand I could reach out with my left and measure the gable wall with my six foot folding rule."

"I was sprawled out in this manner, face down on the slate roof, with my left arm and the rule extended at full length, when I suddenly became conscious that the wind had shaken the skylight loose from the stick that held it open and that it was falling shut. If I did not withdraw my hand instantly it would catch and crush it. If I pulled my hand out I would slide down the slate roof to the street below."

"When I first noticed that the support had given way the skylight had already begun its descent and it had not more than four feet to fall. During the time that it fell those four feet I had ample time to review the consequences of losing my right hand if I held on and the result of

FALLING THREE STORIES

if I let go. There was nothing at the edge of the roof but a little half round gutter held up by a few half-pennies.

"It occurred to me that it might be possible to pull out my right hand and insert my left, as it would be better to lose my left hand than my right. I also discussed with myself the possibility of being able to hold my place if I withdrew two or three fingers and sacrificed the others, but I concluded that they would probably be cut clean off by the edge of such a heavy skylight and that I should slide down to the street anyway."

"This idea of the insufficiency of mangled fingers to support my weight on such a sloping roof suggested that it might be better to stick my arm into the opening and that perhaps the injury to it might not be so severe as to require amputation. I distinctly remember trying to recall whether the muscles should be firm or relaxed, and thought it best to hold them firm."

"As well as I can remember, the outcome of my deliberations was a determination to change hands and to sacrifice the left instead of the right. I had no sooner come to this conclusion than it struck me that there would not be time to make the change and that I might lose my hold altogether. It seemed to me that I had already changed my opinion as to the respective merits of the two hands at least a dozen times."

"All this time, remember, the skylight was falling shut. As I look back at it it seems incredible that I did not spend at least half an hour thinking over the pros and cons of the situation, but it must have been less than

A FIFTH OF A SECOND.

My final resolve was a determination to hold on, as there was no time to change hands, and to trust to the shreds of my mangled fingers to hold me on the roof."

"When the crash came and the skylight actually fell shut my hand was not in the opening. I was sliding down the roof on my way to the street below."

"The edge was at least ten feet below me and I was gaining speed at every foot. The only effect of my frantic efforts to clutch at the edge of the skylight, the slates, or anything, was to bring distinctly home to my consciousness the fact that I was in motion, sliding down. I heard my rule go over the edge."

"In that fraction of a second the entire current of my thoughts changed. It was no longer a question of which hand should be mangled, but what would I strike when I reached the street."

"I distinctly remembered the railing around the area and also the absence of any cornice on the edge of the roof—nothing but a rusty old drip gutter. The thing I could not remember, although I made desperate efforts to do so, was whether or not that area railing had spikes in it."

"This question persisted with the same singular tenacity that I had experienced in trying to recall whether or not Mr. Smith was looking my way when I was in the River Shannon. I knew I should fall directly upon those railings, and the spikes bothered me. The minute-ness with which I recalled everything about the house—its number, the alterations that were to be made in it, the sketches we had prepared, the new ideas we had talked over—all these things were reviewed in the effort to recall in connection with one or other of them something that would answer the question were there spikes on that railing?"

"I suddenly became conscious that I was no longer sliding down the roof. It was exactly like waking out of a dream. I then realized that my toes in dropping over the edge of the slates had caught on the little half round iron gutter."

"In another minute the skylight was pushed up by people who had heard the crash and come up to see what was the matter. They soon hauled me to a place of safety."

CONVICT LABOR IS USED

PRISONERS MAKE ROADS IN WESTERN STATES.

In Colorado No Armed Guards Watch Men—Washington More Strict.

The list of States now using convict labor on the highways is too long to mention in detail, says Popular Mechanics, but Colorado, New Mexico and Wyoming are using such labor to construct a great highway which will run through the three States, and Washington, Oregon, North Carolina and Georgia, as well as several other States, have gangs at work.

The convict road gang at work in the southern part of Colorado numbers eighty-eight men. They wear no distinguishing badge in the way of clothing, and no armed guards are to be seen anywhere. If a man wishes to escape from such a camp it is conceded that he can easily do so, but that he may be overtaken elsewhere follows as a matter of course, and the penalty—dreaded by any convict who has had a taste of open work—means that his activities will from then on to the end of his term be confined

WITHIN THE PRISON WALLS.

Only five officers are in charge of the camp, which is composed of tents. The convicts sleep in one big tent, and during the day they are divided into five gangs, each officer having charge of a gang. Eight hours of road work constitute a day's labor, and the men must go to bed promptly at 9 o'clock every night except Saturday, on which they are allowed an additional hour.

Amusement is allowed to all in the camp. Some of the convicts own and play musical instruments. Cards are also allowed. Some spend their time pitching quoits, and a ball game is usually played every evening before darkness sets in.

The method of guarding the convicts working on the roads in the State of Washington is a little more strict, but amusements are just as numerous. The provision allowing the convicts to do such work in that State was passed in 1907, and the point selected for making the first experiment was one of the most remote from the penitentiary.

The idea being to give the new system the most severe test possible. The work selected was the building of a wagon road along the face of a nearly perpendicular rock bluff, the work involving the handling of a large amount of dynamite by the convicts. The character of the rock encountered was

EXTREMELY HARD.

making drilling very slow. Nevertheless, the average daily work accomplished by each man amounts to 2.42 cubic yards of solid rock moved, and one cubic yard of earth and loose rock removed.

As the lowest bid received for moving the rock was \$1.50 per cubic yard, and for loose rock and earth 40 cents, the average daily work of a convict was valued at \$1.00. The camp, established for the care of the prisoners consisted of a stockade 80 by 125 feet, inside of which was erected a barracks 38 by 48 feet. On the outside of the stockade and adjoining it was built the guardhouse. The number of convicts employed at the camp has never been more than thirty, guarded by five officers.

SMALL FARMS OF PORTUGAL.

How They Came to be Divided Into Diminutive Portions.

The Portuguese are extremely conservative people. Every man follows rigidly the methods employed by his father and forefathers. In very many parts of the country the old wooden ploughs are still used.

When a man dies, instead of one of the heirs taking the whole property and paying the remaining heirs for their parts the whole property is divided into as many parts as there are heirs. More than this, each separate part of the property is thus divided.

Thus if a property consists of ten acres of pasture land, eighty of vineyard and ten of grain land and there were ten heirs, each heir would receive one acre each of grain and pasture land and eight acres of vineyard. This process has been going on for a very long time, so that now in the most fertile part of Portugal the land is divided into incredibly small portions.

The immediate result of this is that the product of the land is barely sufficient at best to sustain its owners. South of the River Tagus, or the other hand, there are enormous tracts of excellent land lying unused, but it has been found impossible to induce the farmers of the north to move into this region and take up large holdings.

The truth is all right, but so many people are ashamed to make good.

IN MERRY OLD ENGLAND

NEWS BY MAIL ABOUT JOHN BULL AND HIS PEOPLE.

Occurrences in the Land That Reigns Supreme in the Commercial World.

Considerable progress has been made towards the completion of Truro Cathedral.

The King has forwarded \$50 to the Royal Isle of Wight Agricultural Society.

A deluge of rain such as has not been known for fifty years, flooded Cromer recently.

A laborer named William Stevens died in the Holborn Workhouse recently from starvation.

The foundation stone of the new building of St. Mary's Hospital for women and children at Plaistow was laid recently.

The death is announced at Hayford Hall, Norfolk, of Rear-Admiral Pollard, who served through the Crimea and China wars.

Mr. G. A. Hearn of New York, has given £500 to purchase pictures for the permanent collection of the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.

Mr. Gladstone states that there are now seven youths undergoing penal servitude for offences committed between the ages of sixteen and eighteen.

Charged with shooting himself on his son's grave at Edmonton Cemetery, Alfred Beckett, aged sixty-three, of Shoreditch, was remanded at Enfield.

At the instance of Eburn District Council an order was made for the closing of twenty-two houses which it was alleged were unfit for habitation.

Among the latest donations to King Edward's Hospital Fund for London is \$525, being the annual subscription of the King, the founder and patron of the fund.

The King has sent a swan to Halberton Devon, as company for a cygnet which took up its abode near the village a few months ago and has become quite tame.

At the unanimous invitation of the Rochester Town Council Alderman Charles Willis has accepted the Mayoralty of the city for the fourth year in succession.

Better provision for widows and children of police constables who lose their lives in the execution of their duty is made by a government bill introduced recently.

It is recommended by the Highways Committee of the Wandsworth Borough Council that in future the council should not take into its service any workman over 50 years of age.

About 250 boys and girls from the Foundling Hospital were shown over the Mansion House recently, and an entertainment was provided, during which the children gave several part songs.

Anyone who offers to sell you anything on the street in the Old street district," said Mr. Cluer, the magistrate at North London Police Court, "is a thief, and might as well have it placarded on him."

A Crimean veteran, named George David Deacon, 85, died at Tunbridge wells from a burst heart. His body was covered with battle scars. At the inquest a verdict of "natural causes" was returned.

Shooting for the Inter-Yeomanry Squadron Shield at the Hatfield Rifle Range, Major W. H. Nicholls of the Hertfordshire Yeomanry, scored twenty-one "bulls" in succession at ranges of 200, 500, and 600 yards.

A French silver coin, which probably fell from the pocket of one of Prince Charlie's French followers, has been found on the battlefield of Prestonpans. It bears the inscription, "Louis XIV. by the grace of God, King of France and Navarre, 1677."

A WONDERFUL EXPLOSIVE.

Touch of a Fly's Foot Would Be Enough to Set It Off.

"What would be the consequences of firing a barrelful of nitrogen iodide it would be impossible to say," declares a writer in the Strand, "simply because the stuff is too awful to be made in such quantities."

"It may sound like a joke, but it is nevertheless the truth that the tread of a house fly is sufficient to explode this dangerous material. It is not necessary that a fly should walk over the compound. It has only to let one foot come into contact with the explosive, when the jolt causes it to explode and to blow the insect into the air."

"Another manner in which the peculiar property of this explosive can be demonstrated is by scattering a small quantity of the dry powder over a sheet of clean paper. It then resembles pepper, and only needs a few sharp breaths of the manipulator—just sufficient to make them roll—to cause each speck to ignite and explode, meantime giving off a long, thin column of dense purple smoke. If a barrelful of nitrogen iodide could be made it would have to be kept moist to prevent danger. By comparison, gunpowder is a mild, innocent, inoffensive material."

GERMANY READY FOR WAR

MEN, ARMS, PROVISIONS AND FUNDS ON HAND.

The Only Country in the World That is Always Prepared for Battle.

If war involving Germany should be declared the men liable to military service would present themselves at their respective headquarters all over the country; the horses, wagons, carts, etc., which in time of peace have been noted down by special officers as serviceable would be requisitioned. The quarters for the advancing army, also selected in time of peace, would be prepared for the reception of the various contingents along the line of invasion or defense, the supplies necessary for carrying on a prolonged war against a European nation, always kept in readiness, would be issued, and the country, says McClure's, would be prepared within a few hours time.

This exactness of detail is carried out to such an extreme that even the necessary money required at the outbreak is kept on hand. In the so-called Julius Turn at the fortress of Spandau near Berlin hundreds of sacks of gold containing 120,000,000 marks, part of the Franco-German war indemnity, are jealously hoarded for this purpose. By law this war fund can be used only for requirements that arise at the outbreak of or

DURING A WAR.

Directly war had been declared the Reichsbank (State bank) would take charge of this war treasure and is authorized by law to issue bank notes to three times the amount, that is, 360,000,000 marks, or sufficient to meet all requirements until loans are raised.

Germany stands alone of all countries in the world in being financially mobilized for war and in possessing a war fund. The amount may seem insignificant when compared to the entire cost that a Continental war might entail, yet it would enable the country to tide over the first few days and to administer the first blow without delay, before its foe had been able to make the necessary preparations for defence. Elaborate plans for the provision of the sinews of war have been compiled by Germany's most prominent bankers, and the danger of being compelled to cease operations in a prolonged war for lack of means has been reduced to a minimum.

All German forts and fortresses are armed and equipped to overflowing with ammunition, supplies, stores and provisions, so that they are ready for the outbreak of hostilities and could undergo prolonged sieges. Such forethought is bestowed on these preparations that

THE VERY BREAD.

a dark brown kind called kommiss brot, is especially prepared to keep fresh for weeks.

Millions of the so-called eiserne rationen, or iron rations (the soldiers' food in war time), are kept in stock, and countless field travelling kitchens attached to every brigade are kept in reserve. The barracks are crammed with accoutrements, rifles, bedding, tents, etc., and sufficient stores are in constant readiness to equip 2,000,000 men without fresh supplies being ordered. Everything, even down to the last button on the last soldier's coat, is ready.

Officers who have been present at the trials of the new machine gun are strong in its praise and earnestly urge its adoption. At Juterbog, the great artillery experimental camp near Berlin, these tests have been exhaustively carried out under conditions as nearly approaching the grim realities of war as can possibly be imagined.

The simplicity of construction, solidity and efficiency of the new gun are astounding. According to reports from Juterbog, 236,000 rounds were fired from a single gun, at an average speed of 450 shots a minute, for a couple of days, the gun showing no signs of wear.

WHENCE THE WHISTLE.

Seventy-five years ago the steam-whistle was unknown. In those days engine-drivers were provided with a small tin horn, which they blew as occasion demanded. Apparently, however, they did not always blow loud enough, for in 1853 despite the warning blast, a train ran down a farmer's cart, and utterly destroyed one thousand eggs, a hundred pounds of butter, two horses, the vehicle, and the driver.

When the bill for damages was presented to the railway company the managing director sent for George Stephenson. Stephenson pondered it. Then he visited a musical instrument maker, with the result that he constructed a horn which screamed most terribly when blown by steam. And successive generations have toned that horn down to the familiar whistle of to-day.

He who says he is ready to die for truth often means he is ready to kill.

MEAL BEFORE BEDTIME

NOTED AUTHORITY ASSERTS A NEW THEORY.

Makes Least Demand on the Involuntary Mechanism—Right Food to Eat.

That a certain amount of digestible food taken just before going to bed induces restfulness and contributes to a quiet sleep is asserted by Dr. G. M. Niles, who discusses sleep in its relation to digestion in the Journal of the American Medical Association. Our quotations are from an abstract in the Medical Record. Says this paper:—

"As to the actual influence of sleep on digestion there is some conflict of opinion. It is a well-known physiological fact that the absorption of oxygen and the elimination of carbon dioxide are diminished during sleep, mainly because the muscles are less active. While other secretions are diminished during sleep, this does not apply to those of the digestive apparatus. When the brain is alert, the reflexes on guard, and the voluntary muscles at work, each department of the human economy is calling for its quota of

INNERVATION AND BLOOD;

these different departments are exacting their tribute from the constructive forces, and turning over to the excretory organs the products of combustion and waste.

During this period the digestive department can draw only a working interest, not being permitted to put away any appreciable surplus, until the day's activities are ended. Sleep stills the voluntary movements, decreases the carbon dioxide output, and makes the least demand on the involuntary vital mechanism. It is then that Nature, our industrious handmaiden, begins her constructive housekeeping. She does it in an orderly co-operative way, following a regular method of work in repairing waste, actively forming new tissue, and giving just the proper amount of care and nourishment required of all parts, both mental and physical, in regular sequence."

The following general dietetic recommendations in relation to sleep are given by Dr. Niles:—

"The young infant cannot get too much sleep, and this is best attained by filling his stomach at stated intervals. Vigorous, growing children and those engaged in manual labor thrive on a full breakfast and dinner, these two meals containing most of the

DAILY QUOTA OF PROTEIN.

The supper may be plentiful in quantity, but should consist of such articles as bread, milk, cereals, eggs, fruit, etc., which do not unduly stimulate the nerve centres by their metabolic products. Soups, rich extractives and solid proteins also cause the bladder to be filled with urine rich in waste products and very acid, this being a factor worth considering. Those who labor with their brains, or skilled artisans whose crafts demand mental tension and but little muscular effort, will find their efficiency best subserved by a light breakfast, a slightly more plentiful lunch, and at the close of the day's work a generous meal, provided that after it three to five waking hours are allowed, so that psychic reflexes may have an opportunity to contribute their share to the process of digestion."

HIS UNLUCKY DAY.

Wunst I got mad at maw, I don't remember why, But I 'ist walked right off to school 'Thout tellin' her good-bye.

A big ol' lump came in my throat An' purt' near made me cry, For me an' maw is awful pals An' allus kiss good-bye.

An' might' near ever-thing I did Went wrong, looked like to me; I stubbed my toe, an' tore my waist An' fell an' skinned my knee.

I missed in 'rithmetic, an' lost A chanst to git up head, An' in the spellin' class I left A letter out of 'dead."

An' that ol' lump growed, an' I says: 'S'pose if maw should die Right now, an' me a-leavin' her 'Thout kissin' her good-bye."

Gee! That's the longest mornin' 'At I ever spent, I know, It seemed like more'n fifty years 'Fore it was time to go.

An' never mind what happened When I seen my maw, but I 'Ist bet I won't go away no more 'Thout kissin' her good-bye.

DIDN'T KNOW HER PLACE.

Missus—"Why did you leave your fast place?" New Cook—"Th' missus was gettin' too independent."

It's easier to lead some men to the bar than it is to drive them away.