



THE great thing in the world is not so much where we stand, as in what direction we are moving.

—Holmes.

The Turning Point

By Philip Verrill Mighels.

(Concluded from last week)

HE stepped on the cage, with Bixby at his side, and was lowered away, ten hundred feet deep, in the velvet blackness of the hole. Three days the gambler had been working in the mine, and the camp kept his secret from his mother. For three days Blawd had vainly sought to way to even up the score he felt must be squared between himself and Watson. The sooner it was settled the better.

To-night, when he finally overheard the tale of Mrs. Watson's presence in the camp, he was inwardly burning with pleasure. The midnight shift would soon go on, a score of men. The miners were assembled at the shaft when Watson came in with his pail. His face seemed even more white than before. He was tired, tremendously tired. His hands were blistered and bruised. His body was lame from over-labor.

Blawd had been waiting. Bixby had not yet appeared. As Watson limped quietly into the group, nodding in silence to acquaintances, the shift boss advanced a yard to meet him, glancing him over with scorn.

"So, you slick-fingered gent," he said, "you thought you'd hide with honest men, did you? Wanted to look like a decent citizen awhile? Thought you could make your mother believe you was earning your money on the square and no more thiev'n, hey?—and come here to work up the game? Oh, you certainly did have your plans all laid out slick."

Watson faced him without a sign of the anger and pain of his being.

"Haven't I done the best I could?" he said. "I know I'm not much of a miner."

"Much of a miner?" mocked the big boss sneeringly. "Much of a cheat is more your size—cheatin' 'at cards and cheatin' 'at work and cheatin' your mother like a sneak! And once you had me throwed outside your roost of robbers, busted flat—and to-morrow you bet you'll git your pay when I go and tell your mother what you are and how you've been earnin' your livin'."

A hard, bright gleam had come in Watson's eyes. He looked at Blawd unflinchingly.

"Don't try it, my friend, or you'll never boss a shift again," he said quietly. "What games you've got to play with me you'll play without dragging in my mother."

Blawd was not the stripe of man to accept a psychological struggle. He laughed as he thrust his big face forward, insultingly close to that of Watson.

"Maybe your mother's no better than you—" he started when Watson cut him short.

He struck a quick, hard blow with his fist, and Blawd went sprawling on the floor.

Instantly up, unbent and eager, the fellow leaped back with crushing weight and force, laid hold of his man.

with remarkable agility, landed a blow that staggered Watson's senses, then in his labors, he was also an excellent miner.

"What's this? What's going on?" the superintendent demanded. "Haven't I told you, Blawd, I'd give you the bounce if I ever caught you fighting here again?"

Watson arose, weak and dizzy. He could never have been a match for the boss, and exhaustion had sapped him of strength.

"It wasn't all Blawd," he admitted fairly. "I opened the ball myself."

Bixby shrugged his shoulders and went on his way.

The cages were presently shot from the depths with the men who were leaving the works. Crowded together and holding on above, the midnight shift, with Blawd and Watson included, went down in the earth to their labors.

Watson was working in a large, untimbered chamber, pushing a car. Beyond him Blawd, with a crew of skillful men, was bracing a bulkhead where a mass of earth, for three days soaked by unprecedented rains, was bulging softly inward on the drift. The danger here had been heightened by the fact that the rain had percolated through from many of the other shafts and drifts, saturating tons on tons of gravel.

Hour after hour passed with Blawd

fighting back the gigantic pressure of the hill. He was not merely stubborn in his labors, he was also an excellent miner.

Back and forth, meanwhile, Watson was plodding with his car. He was fetching heavy timbers, trundling out debris, taxing his muscles for more than their worth, but doggedly remaining at his task.

It was some time early in the morning that the Titan of earth broke his bonds. With a sudden crunching and crumbling of the puny beams with which the great bulkhead was being reinforced, the masses of water-soaked earth and rock moved inward like a tidal wave of mud, carrying all before it.

Sounds of rending and the min-vells made fearful alarm in the chambers. Timbers as thick as a wall were shattered and splintered. The bridge-like structure that Blawd had built came down like a trestle of straws. The lights of three of the candles went out—and Blawd was caught beneath the wreckage.

Bawling in fear that the roof of all the drift would be in on them, he came after cave, the miners ran wildly to meet their escape and left their boss, pinned and unconscious.

Watson was coming with his car. He met the men fleeing for their lives. In the darkness that was feebly illuminated by the candles on their caps, the faces of the men were like grotesque and animated masks. All turned and gasped out their tale and their warning in a breath and fled on to get to the shaft.

"Come back here! Come back!" yelled Watson to the leaders. "If Blawd's in the cave we must get him!" He caught at one of the miners going by and clutched him by the shirt.

"Never mind Blawd! What do you care for him?" said the miner, wrenching loose. "It's all coming down! Git out!"

No thought of Blawd, as Blawd, was actually in Watson's mind. A man was in there, underneath the mass, and a bare chance remained for his rescue. That was the appeal to Watson.

Leaving the car and once more shouting to the men, Watson ran onward in the drift. He was soon confronted with the wreckage. Half revealed only by the candle at his forehead, the scene was appalling to behold. It looked as if the bulging stuff would drop in there at any moment, blotting the tunnel from existence.

On two or three timbers the mighty weight was hung, and these were fairly groaning with the burden. They were bent till two were visibly cracking underneath, the white gleam of newly breaking pine growing longer every moment.

Beneath a dumping of earth and lav Blawd, stretched prone upon his face. A red stain had trickled from his hair.

Watson laid hold and began to tug him out. The strength he exerted was almost superhuman. He dragged the great bulk of inert humanity almost free, then discovered that one of Blawd's feet was crosswise of a hole beneath a timber.

Downward the great beams were sagging with the mountainous weight laid upon them. Frantically hauling, then kneeling on the rocks and reaching far under to turn the boss's foot, Watson was winning in his struggle.

He dragged the big form free at last and stepping in over the helpless form, deftly hoisted him up from the rear. Over at last he rolled the timber bulk, and himself fell headlong in the effort. Out went his candle.

A wooden sort of shriek, as if the snirts of the forest itself, whence the timbers had come, rent the silence of the place as the beams were split, trembling under tension, and in upon Watson dropped a ton of stuff and buried him, all but his shoulders.

Out of his sore, exhausted body went his breath. For a second a feeling as

Midzhab

The Lord watch between me and thee,
when we are absent one from another.

Gen. 31:49

Go thou thy way, and I go mine—
Apart, yet not afar;
Only a thin veil hangs between
The pathways where we are,
And "God keep watch 'tween thee and me,"—
This is my prayer.
He looks thy way, He looketh mine,
And keeps us near.

I know not where thy road may lie,
Nor which way mine will be;
If thine will lead through parching sands,
And mine beside the sea.
Yet God keeps watch 'tween thee and me,
So never fear;
He holds thy hand, He claspeth mine,
And keeps us near.

SHOULD wealth and fame perchance be thine,
And my lot lowly be;
Or you be sad and sorrowful,
And glory be for me;
Yet God keeps watch 'tween thee and me,
Both are his care
One arm round thee and one round me,
Will keep us near.

I sigh, sometimes, to see thy face,
But since this may not be,
I'll leave thee to the care of Him
Who cares for thee and me.
"I'll keep thee both beneath my wings,"—
This comforts, dear,
One wing o'er thee and one o'er me,
So we are near.

AND though our paths be separate,
And thy way be not mine,
Yet coming to the mercy seat,
My soul shall meet with thine;
And "God keep watch 'tween thee and me,"
I'll whisper there
He blesseth thee, He blesseth me,
And we are near.

—Julia H. Baker