

## TELLS OF 46 DAYS IM- PRISONMENT IN THEIR LIVING TOMB

**Nevada Miner Describes Terrible Ordeal Through Which he and Companions Passed—Breath of Air the Sweetest Drink of Life, and Lighted Candle Made Their Darkened Prison "Look Like Heaven to Them."**

Ely, Nev., Jan. 28.—After forty-six days A. D. Bailey, Fred McDonald and P. J. Brown, the three miners imprisoned by a cave-in in the Alpha shaft of the Giroux mine here, were pulled out of their living tomb at half-past eight o'clock on the night of Jan. 19. Although high pitched voices and jerky accents told of the fearful strain under which the men had labored ever since December 4, their actions were common-place enough. The first man out gave vent to a long drawn sigh of relief; the second embraced his brother, and the third asked for a chew of tobacco. The only one that spoke immediately of the place where he had been detained referred to it as a "hell hole." Although badly shaken by the awful ordeal through which he had passed, Bailey, after he had seen his wife, readily consented to give his impressions of how it feels to be entombed under a thousand feet of earth. "The thing came almost without warning," he said. "Brown, McDonald, myself, a Greek named Carnai and another man, whom we only knew by the nickname of 'Slim,' were all at work in the bottom of the shaft, eighty-five feet below the thousand foot level. When the sand and rock began to fall upon us we instantly realized our awful predicament and understood in a moment that our one chance for life was to get to the station on the thousand foot level, eighty-five feet above. We sprang to the ladder and started upward, making the fastest time I ever made in my life. As we went up more rock and other debris continued to fall, and it was only by sheer will power that I clung to the ladder rung with the overwhelming, smothering load falling on and about me, filling my ears, blinding my eyes and making me want to let go almost in spite of myself. But I continued climbing, hand over hand as fast as I could, looking neither to the man overhead nor the one underneath.

"It seemed an age until I got to the thousand foot station, and I arrived there first. I was overjoyed when Brown and McDonald got there about a minute later. It was pitch dark, but we knew each other's voices. After a few inquiries I found that 'Slim' and the Greek had not succeeded in making the station, and came to the conclusion that an extra heavy rock must have struck them and swept them from their places on the ladder. Either that or the blinding sand had filled their eyes, and in their anguish they had lost possession of their fac-

ulties long enough to let go. Our joy at our rescue was not long-lived. All that day—and it seemed like many days to us—we could hear the rock and other rubbish crashing down the shaft, and knew that every ton of it meant so much the more of a bar between us and the sunlight and free air above. We were afraid too that our comrades on top might have given us up for dead, and knew that in such an event the work of excavating to the level where we were virtually entombed would take months—long after the three of us had breathed our last from starvation and thirst. We had one hope, and that was the six-inch water pipe that ran from the surface to our station. After we discovered it in the darkness and the uproar of caving debris had in a measure ceased, one of us was constantly stationed beside it, tapping signals that we had some hope might be heard and noticed on the surface. There was only one danger, that the pipe might have been severed some place between us and the surface by a sharp edged piece of falling rock, but that was a chance we had to take. It seemed an age until we finally got an answering tap. They had told me since I came on top that it was twenty-four hours, but it seemed days and days to me.

“Then they let down the telephone wire, and we connected it with the telephone on the station. We were hungry and thirsty, but what do you think we wanted most? It was light. Without light it seemed to all of us

that we must go crazy or die. So they sent us down candles and matches before anything else. And I tell you, you who see the sun every day, and incandescents and arc lights every night, you'll never know what light really means to a human being until you have been in some fix like we were. After we scratched that first match and lit the first candle that station looked like heaven to me. They sent down enough food and drink then to satisfy a company of soldiers, but we did it all justice. But the happiest moment I experienced was when I heard my wife's voice. The company was kind enough to run a wire direct to our house, and so she could talk to me at any hour, day or night. The other two boys are unmarried. We used to have regular hours for sleep, and we generally preferred to sleep at night. It's funny how those habits cling to a fellow in such emergencies. We couldn't tell night from day down in that black hole, but we used to inquire by 'phone, and it's odd that we never were sleepy in the daytime. We spent a good deal of time telling stories, and we must have told some of them half a dozen times over. We played all the games we could without anything in the shape of cards to play with. We played forfeits with matches for stakes and pitch and toss with bits of wood.

"What nearly maddened us was the fact that we were unable to do anything material to the aid of our rescuers, but were cautioned not to try, as the shifting nature of the ground above tended to make such attempts extremely hazardous. That fact, too, caused us great uneasiness. Under ordinary circumstances the rescue party had their work cut out for them to get through 1,600 feet of caved shaft, but with the treacherous, moving ground constantly threatening to engulf them there was no telling at what moment they too, might be trapped and lose their lives perhaps. All these things occurred to us as we sat and thought in our subterranean prison. We did not say much about it to each other, for we were determined to do nothing to cause each other's spirits to fall. We spent a good deal of our time exercising. They instructed us from the top to do so—probably on medical advice—but there was no fear of our not doing something of the sort. Half our time was spent pacing to and fro like caged tigers. When the rescue party finally came it seemed almost too good to be true. I tell you the sight of those faces was welcome. I was the first man off the cage on the surface, and the cool night air tasted—yes, I actually tasted it—better than any drink that ever touched my palate. And when I looked up at the sky and the stars it seemed to me as if there was everything on earth I wanted.

"Everything but one—my wife. I had expected to see her at the top of the shaft. But our baby was sick and she had to stay at home to care for the little ones. And how they acted when they finally saw me!" The experience of P. J. Brown, in one particular at least, was even more thrilling than that of Bailey. The body of the Greek fell over him, almost throwing him from the ladder as he started up for

the station just after the cave. "After the first rush of rock and earth," said Brown, "I darted for the ladder. The Greek was just before me and Bailey and McDonald must have been ahead of him. He was big and clumsy and did not make as fast progress as I should have liked, for, being below him, I could not pass and dared not advance too rapidly for fear of his heavy shoes landing on my fingers, forcing me to let go. After one particularly heavy dash of falling rock, I edged to one side, holding my head down to escape the rain of sand that was coming with it, when the Greek let go and was hurled past me down the ladder. I think he must have struck against 'Slim,' for I heard a cry from a voice just below me that sounded like 'Slim's' and believe it was at that moment he was swept to the bottom, to be buried under further loads of rock and sand."

The disaster at the Alpha mine is the most famous in the annals of Nevada mining since the rescue of seven men from a drift of boiling water on the lower levels of the Alta mine, on the Comstock, about twenty-eight years ago. At that time the miners saved themselves by improvising a raft, which kept them out of the water until a rescue party, at the risk of their lives, penetrated the underground cave and got the men out. But for duration of time underground the recent accident surpasses anything in the annals of mining in this State. It was December 4 that the cave occurred, and it was thought at first that every one of the five at the bottom of the shaft had perished. But when, after twenty-four hours had elapsed, the cessation of falling rock, sand and timbers permitted the sound to be heard, the tapping of the miners on the six-inch water pipe showed that they were still alive. Without a moment's delay the work of rescue began, and from then until the instant when the last of the three succored men stepped from the lift at the collar of the Alpha shaft it never ceased for a moment. The men picked out for the task were the best of the camp, young, powerful, energetic and brave. The ground in which they had to work was extremely dangerous, and not one was ever for a moment secure against a cave that would have terminated his existence on the spot, for, unlike the men they were striving to rescue, no friendly station was within reach if another cave should come. The one slight protection they had against absolute annihilation was the rope fastened about the waist of each as he worked, leading to the surface, and the slender chance that their friends might be able to pull them back to safety in case another cave should start. Brown is a man of about thirty. He has no relatives in Ely and is a newcomer in the camp. Bailey is forty-one years old and has a wife and two young children.