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It Happened To Me

UNDERGROUND

(By "Jack")

WHEN my mate, Tom Crean, and I went on shift one night at the Waihi mine some forty years ago, we had no more thought of danger than any of the thousands of miners who have done, and are still doing the same ordinary thing.

Miners are like that. Consistently they flout the safety regulations, and confidently forget dangers that surround them.

We descended to No. 5 level. Our job at the time was "rising" on the Martha to No. 4. That means we were "sinking" through the quartz, only upside down, to a height of about ninety feet before we could break through to the upper level.

Even then it varied from six feet to twelve feet and was very irregular. This meant timber. Stulls across, and slabs to form a platform to work from, and the wider the span the more likely the next round of shots would bring down the whole of the timbering. (It is well to remark here that the only light in this dark cavern was from our two flickering candles.) At thirty feet up we ran up against a huge boulder and decided to work round it, leaving it projecting about three feet. Sometimes luck is not recognised at the time.

At forty feet the going was more compact and we prepared a round of

five holes. My mate went below, and I hauled up the five charges. I loaded the holes, and, when all was ready, spit the fuses.

That was the time to get out as quickly as possible, as the stink of gelignite fumes and smoke soon filled the rise, not to mention the fact that delay might mean being blown to atoms.

Only a few feet down I lost my candle.

Instantly everything was in black darkness. Through the creeping smoke fumes I swung down feeling for remembered grips.

I yelled to Tom for a light, but he did not hear me.

As I swung down frantically waving my legs for a foothold I felt that big boulder and regained my bearings somewhat.

Hastily scrambling under its partial protection I clung like a leech with sudden death only ten feet above.

Bang went the first shot. Down crashed rock and timber, the concussion pressing me against the wall in comforting caress.

Instantly a feeble light appeared through the murk far below, and Tom yelled, "On top." (The usual hail underground.)

I jumped. I think Tom got a greater scare than I did.

A smashed thumb and a few cuts were the sum total, unless you count a life that has been happy enough since. That's all.

LESSONS IN MORSE

(7) Two More Common Faults

The following is a draft of Morse signalling lesson No. 7, which was broadcast from Stations 2YC, 12M and 3YL, at 10 p.m., on October 21, 22 and 23.

THE talk which preceded the receiving practice deal with two further common faults in sending. These are the faulty formation of letters and the lack of proper spacing between letters.

Dealing with the incorrect formation of letters first, the instructor stated that those most commonly mis-sent were "L," "C," "Y" and "K." After illustrating the correct formation of the letter "L," the manner in which it was often incorrectly signalled, was shown and the result of the incorrect formation was the transmission of the letters "AI" for "L." Similarly, "C" badly spaced became "NN," and "Y" became "TW." It was pointed out that many other letters are split in this manner and the fault was one which frequently led to errors. In nearly all cases, the pause or split in the formation of the letter was made when a dot followed a dash. The cause of this pause was due to the fact that it was necessary to bring the wrist to the upward position to send the dot. If a slow

motion picture were made of the wrist action of a good Morse sender, said the instructor, it would be noticed that each character of every letter was made with the wrist descending. Taking the letter "L" as an example, there is a sharp movement of the wrist to form the dot, after which the wrist returns to its original position; then follows a downward movement to form the dash, which is held by the fingers as the wrist recovers to make the necessary two sharp movements to complete the letter. More often than not, split letters occur as a result of the dash not being held with the fingers.

The other fault is the lack of spacing between letters. As an instance the word "And" was taken. The omission of the proper spacing between the letters which make up this word often results in the signalling of "PD." Further examples: the word "Troops" is often sent as "Coops," and the word "True" as "CF." Many further instances could be illustrated. The fault is due to an endeavour to obtain speed. Speed should not be tried for in this manner; it will come of its own accord.

The remainder of the lesson was taken up with receiving practice, jumbled letters, figures and plain language being transmitted.