

Interesting Analysis by President Judge H. M. Edwards of the Six Best Manuscripts Submitted.

THE WINNERS OF PRIZES IN

- FIRST PRIZE
"Disentombed".....Pluto
- SECOND PRIZE
"A Romance of the Culm,"
Jean Graham
- THIRD PRIZE
"Jocktan".....Mark Tapley

THE TRIBUNE'S STORY CONTEST

The Contest as a Whole an Agreeable Surprise, Showing an Abundance of Local Literary Talent.

AS ANNOUNCED last week, the task of passing upon the relative merits of the manuscripts submitted in The Tribune's short story contest was, at The Tribune's request, kindly assumed by Hon. H. M. Edwards, whose fitness and experience are everywhere conceded. But a sudden press of judicial duties incident to his elevation to the president judgeship made it, at the last moment, impossible for him within the time allotted to examine personally each of the 47 manuscripts. The Tribune, therefore, rather than to incur delay, through a council of its editors, undertook to choose from among the 47 stories the six that in its judgment best deserved to be considered as possible prize-winners. Judge Edwards thereupon took these six under consideration and his award as to their relative merits is as follows:

Judge Edwards' Award.

Editor of The Tribune—

Sir: Of the six stories submitted to me, Emerson's is hardly within the conditions of the competition, because preference is to be given to "stories tending to bring out the romance and legendary lore of the anthracite mining industry." Emerson's story is weird and ghastly, depending for its interest on three murders and a suicide. It is well written, and is not inferior to the prize stories for which the publishers of the Black Cat have paid from one hundred to three hundred dollars.

I shall refer briefly to the other stories.

1. Pluto. This story is entitled "Disentombed." It contains a very vivid description of a "fall" or "cave-in" in the mines, and discloses accurate knowledge on the part of the author of the inside workings of a mine. I was afraid that the "form" which led the entombed miners to the

light of day would ultimately become a monstrosity on the author's hands; but the fine dramatic ending saves the situation and has greatly enhanced the interest of the story.

2. Jean Graham. "A Romance of the Culm." Considered merely from a literary standpoint this story stands high. The author is evidently accustomed to writing. The plot in part is somewhat hackneyed; yet the story ends well and with good dramatic effect.

3. Mark Tapley. "Jocktan." Although written in plain and ordinary style, lacking the literary polish of Jean Graham's story, this is a tale well told and is graphic in its description of heart-rending scenes.

4. St. David. "Rogers' Chamber." Ghosts, a subterranean cave and deserters from the army suggest the stirring incidents of this story. I have heard more than once of occurrences such as the author describes. The story is written in good style.

5. Juniata. "The Angel of Bald Mount." A beautiful idyllic tale, written in the form of letters and unfolding the story of the suffering and darling of one of the early pioneers of this valley. The author deserves honorable mention, although he (or she) has no chance to win a prize.

I have no hesitation in awarding the first prize to Pluto and the second to Jean Graham. As to the third prize, my judgment is that it should be divided between Mark Tapley and St. David.

I congratulate the authors of these stories on their success in writing readable tales, and I commend The Tribune for its attempt to unfold the rich treasures and possibilities of a new domain in the realm of fiction. There is no reason why the legends interwoven with the history of anthracite mining should not become as famous in the field of literature as the

vivid tales connected with the deep-sea mines of Cornwall. Yours truly,
H. M. EDWARDS.

The identity of none of the writers was known either to The Tribune or to Judge Edwards until after his award had been received and it became necessary to open the sealed envelopes containing the authors' real names, in order to make arrangements for the publication of the first successful story. Then it was discovered that "Pluto," the author of "Disentombed," was that well-known poet and litterateur, Theron G. Osborne, of Greenwood. A short biographical sketch of Mr. Osborne, together with the text of his graphic story, appears elsewhere. "Emerson," the author of the thrilling story, "The Pyrosiderite Compound," to which Judge Edwards pays high tribute, but which, under the rules, had to give way because not built around the legendary lore or romance of the mines, is John A. Foote, of Archbald, now at Georgetown university, the winner of the \$25 prize offered some years ago by The Tribune in a short story competition in connection with an esteddfod given by the Robert Morris lodge of Ivories. It is highly complimentary to Mr. Foote's ability that another story from his pen, "Rogers' Chamber," submitted under the pseudonym, "St. David," formed one of the six manuscripts sent to Judge Edwards for final adjudication. Judge Edwards recommends that it and "Jocktan" share third prize. In the sealed letter which accompanied it Mr. Foote makes this impossible, however, by specifying that if it does not win second prize or better it must be returned to him. An effort will be made to secure from Mr. Foote permission for The Tribune to print both his excellent stories.

The author of the story which captures second prize, "A Romance of the Culm," is given in

the envelope as S. Granger, of Glenburn. This story will be printed one week from today.

The author of "Jocktan," to which, as explained above, the third prize will go, is Mrs. K. S. Cross, of Factoryville. This story will appear in The Tribune of April 27.

There remains to be noticed the sixth story, "The Angel of Bald Mount," which just missed capturing a prize. From the standpoint of literary finish this story is as good as the best. It is a beautiful love romance of the pioneer times, exquisitely narrated in the form of letters. But it, too, falls outside the rule which promised preference to stories featuring the tradition and superstition of the mining industry. The author of "The Angel of Bald Mount" is M. C. Huslander and if permission is not withheld the story will appear in The Tribune of May 4.

In the selection of the six manuscripts for Judge Edwards' eye, the editors adopted the following plan: One careful reading of every story was depended upon to subtract the manuscripts without more than ordinary quality. This reading reduced the 47 to 20. A second careful reading reduced the 20 to 14. The six which were selected out of these 14 having already been mentioned, it seems fair to mention the other eight, which were nearly if not fully as good as were those submitted to Judge Edwards. They are:

"Between Falls," by Junius Junior, who is requested to send his name and address to The Tribune, he having failed to do this as the rules required.

"Dan Dermont in the Tower Hill Cave," by Tom Aldrich.

"An Unrecorded Story," by Jasper Jifkins.

"The Black Maria," by Doris Thrane.

"The Fantom Mule of the U-Know Mine," by Violet.

"The Mystery of the Pump

House," by Margaret Virtue Price.

"The Robbing of the Paymaster," by A.

"The Mule That Grew Up with the Dump," by Lora Hill.

Of the contest as a whole, we must say that it has been far more interesting and successful than was expected. Both the number and the quality of the manuscripts have surpassed expectations. We did not look for more than half as many as were received and we should not have been surprised had many of them been of a character unfit to print. But of the entire 47 only one is unworthy of type, while of the remaining 46 a very large percentage not only have something interesting to tell but tell it in better than the average fashion. Letters will be sent to each contributor requesting permission to print these stories in The Tribune, as an illustration of the very considerable local literary talent which is deserving of encouragement and development; and it is earnestly hoped that no mistaken sense of modesty will cause any contributor to hesitate to grant this permission, together with consent to the use at the head of the story of the writer's real name. Those who won the prize awards are evidently practiced writers. There is consequently no humiliation to an unpracticed writer in failing to compete successfully. What is lacked in most instances is the facility that comes with practice.

The Author of "Disentombed."

Theron G. Osborne was born at Lake Winola, in Wyoming county, and educated at Wyoming seminary. At an early age he exhibited literary ability. Verses from his pen have appeared at varying intervals in many of the leading periodicals. Mr. Osborne has done little story writing. This he assures us, is almost his "first offense." Mr. Osborne is a school teacher and journalist. He has been principal of the schools of Miner's Mills and Moosic, and managing editor of the Wilkes-Barre Leader. He is now one of the assistant editors of the Lackawanna School News.

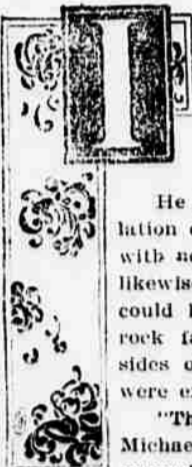
List of Stories Submitted.

Name of Story.	Pen Name of Author.
"The Avon Strike"	I. S. D.
"Avenged, or The Miner's Daughter"	Beatrice Archer Trevford, Jr., Editor
"Little Dick, the Driver Boy"	Lavere Ernesti
"A Breaker Boy's Ambition"	Mildred Vaughan
"O'Connor's Substitute"	Alice L. Elliot
"A Romance of the Culm"	Jean Graham
"The Little Silk Weaver"	Yrogerg Yevrah
"Disentombed"	Pluto
"The Miner's Pride"	Regina Hetherington
"Victor, The Breaker Boy"	Martin Vincent
"Dick, The Driver Boy"	Leon Paul Mack
"A Summer Holiday"	Abigail Gremough
"Between Falls"	Junius Junior
"Dan Dermont in the Tower Hill Cave"	Tom Aldrich
"And a Little Child Shall Lead Them"	Sally
"Rogers' Chamber"	St. David
"Trapped by the Iroquois"	Red Jacket
"The Pyrosiderite Compound"	Emerson
"Jocktan"	Mark Tapley
"An Unrecorded Story"	Jasper Jifkins
"The Haunted Sprigley"	Christian Hope
"Cousin Bill"	P. R. Ovid
"Misunderstood"	Glenn Lomond
"Number Eleven"	Anssan
"The Hero of the Grange Disaster"	Doubtful
"A Romance of the Clear Spring"	Mollie Ward
"The Angel of Bald Mount"	Juniata
"Quakley Slope"	Milton Howard
"The Spectre of the Coal Chute"	Common Sense
"A Peep Behind the Curtain"	Uncle Bill
"The Story of One Miner's Life"	Francis Ernest Mackay
"Jack, I Envy You"	Gabriel Shugermalt
"Brave Lads"	Elaire Brierton
"The Black Maria"	Doris Thrane
"A Timely Rescue"	Tilda Jane
"A Christian Man"	Howard Le Grande
"An Incident of the Satan Mine"	Wasador
"The Phantom Mule of the U-Know Mine"	Violet
"The Mystery of the Pump House"	Lora Hill
"Wanted—A Cook"	Marg. Virtue Price
"The Story of the Mines"	Laura Smithers
"Won His Bride in a Coal Mine"	Ruben
"The Woman in Black"	Lionel
"Chester Lloyd's Curse"	Little Willie
"The Robbing of the Paymaster"	Dan Delay
"The Mule That Grew Up with the Dump"	A.

A ROMANCE OF THE MINES.

"DISENTOMBED."

FOUNDED PARTLY ON FACT.



IT WAS in the old "Groundhog" mine.

Aleck Graeme, the foreman, lingered late along the gangways carefully examining each chamber, cross-cut and man-hole. Indications of a "squeeze" had begun to show a few days before and the utmost vigilance was necessary.

He finished at last, and, seated upon an accumulation of rock beside the track, smoked meditatively, with now and then a word to an old miner who was likewise resting from his labor. In every direction could be heard the sound made by small pieces of rock falling from the roof and the crackle of the sides of the supporting masses of coal as particles were expelled by the mighty pressure above.

"There'll be bod trouble here afore many days, Michael, or I miss my guess," said Aleck, rising and preparing to depart.

"Faith, it's mesel' as be thinkin' that same," returned his companion, with ominous gravity.

The rumble of wheels and noise of hoofs betokened the approach of a trip of cars from the shaft. The flare of a lamp on a driver-boy's head lit up for a moment the darkness into which they gazed, then the trip came to a standstill at the branch leading to Michael's chamber. The driver threw the stretcher over the mule's back and the animal wheeled to his accustomed place. The two men, assisting the boy in the work of detaching a car and pushing it to its place, heard not the sudden rumble in the distance. They heard only the wild, blood-curdling bray of the mule as he dashed into the track and tore down the gangway. Then they were thrown violently to the ground, every sense for the time paralyzed.

Workmen above ground felt the earth tremble, heard a crash, saw the timbers and machinery of that portion of the works above the shaft hurled far into the air. They knew too well what it meant.

An extensive cave-in turns every passage, be it gangway or shaft, into a gigantic air-gun. Acres of the mined-out underground are in a twinkling filled with solid rock. The compressed air must find a way to freedom and it clears its passage with the force of exploded gun-powder.

The "Groundhog" was a wreck. Cars were piled in the gangways. Mules, dashed against the "rib" or pillars by the force of the shock or in the mad rush occasioned by fright, lay dead or dying in the darkness. The hoisting carriage was twisted and torn into uselessness; and when the workmen from other parts of the mine began to gather at the foot of the shaft they found that, although they were in no immediate danger, it would be hours before they could be reached with ropes from the surface.

When the shock had passed and the air-pressure subsided, Aleck Graeme slowly returned to consciousness. He clutched one of the rails that met his grasp, rose upon his knees, staggered to his feet, then sank to the ground again, overcome with a dizzy, sickening weakness. In a few minutes increasing strength brought a partial awakening of the senses and he began to realize his surroundings and what had happened. It was pitch dark. He thought of his companions and crawled about in search of them. His hand rested upon a man's face. He shuddered.

The beard told him it was old Michael. Was he dead? He rubbed his hand on the wet ground and applied it again and again to the old man's brow. Soon his efforts were successful and he was overjoyed to have his wrist grasped by bony fingers and old Michael rise to a sitting posture; at the same time a sound of sobbing reached him from nearby and he knew that Jerry had also regained consciousness.

Relieved of his fears for his companions, Aleck now searched about for his lamp. This found, he struck a light and the smoky glare that followed lit up the place.

"Coom, Jerry, lad, be a mon and thank God ye're a livin'! This is nae sic a bad plight. I doubt not but we'll find a way out in good time. Cheer up, lad!"

Jerry, encouraged, quieted down and Aleck, taking the lamp, began to make explorations. The gangway through which the cars had been brought by Jerry was entirely filled, making progress in that direction for more than a few rods impossible; but besides this passageway there were, or had been, several others that might afford means of egress. With lamp on hat and pick in hand, Aleck groped about, now near, now far, examining every cavern of the dismal place, his movements followed eagerly by the eyes of the others who sat mute and miserable.

Any considerable fall of roof in a "working" area is like the giving way of a keystone. Restraining pressure is relaxed in every direction, and places already weakened by the action and influence of air and water and the never lessening burden, thus sapped of ultimate support, sink down in obedience to the laws of gravity.

Thus had spread the cave-in that now shut these three into what might easily prove a living tomb. One after another Aleck found the avenues of escape locked with bars no human hand could move save by long and laborious toil. He paused at last, his shoulder against a giant prop of oak, and gazed into the last place remaining to explore. Cold sweat lay upon his forehead. He turned and gazed up the track where he had left the others. He had not told them his fears, only that he was looking for the best way out. Failure in so many directions made him almost despair, and he dreaded the knowledge of further search.

He was just about to turn to his task when a blow from behind sent him sprawling into the middle of the passage. He scrambled to his feet and ran up the track, for his light had been extinguished. Reaching his companions, the three crouched trembling together. A rush of cold air into the cavern told them a change had occurred in the condition of things. Something scamped over Aleck's hand. It was a rat. Another, stopped in its flight, ran half way up his body. He lighted his lamp. The place fairly swarmed with great, gray, long-snouted rodents seeking refuge. As the imprisoned ones shrank away from this loathsome horde thus suddenly thrown upon their sorry hospitality, a fierce crackling sound assailed their ears and they felt that to compass their destruction the solid walls of coal on either side were on the verge of being crushed to powder.

Aleck, stout-hearted ever, doubly so in time of greatest danger, groped down the track, keeping close to the rib and holding high his lamp. The others, too much terrified to remain behind, followed, clinging to his clothing.

And now they saw a strange and awe-inspiring sight. The huge oaken prop, where Aleck had stood a few moments before, was bursting into shreds under the weight of the gradually

descending rock and, even as they gazed, was crushed to the level on which it stood. It was a splinter of this, having suddenly given way, that dealt Aleck the blow.

Would the fall extend to them? They shrank back in dread, ever keeping their eyes upon the place from which they were retreating. All at once Jerry shrieked and clung to Aleck as for protection. Old Michael burst forth in an agony of prayer and supplication as one in the extreme of mortal terror. For an instant Aleck knew not the fresh cause for alarm, then he desisted against the blackness and crouching against the rib—a Shape!

What it was he could not immediately make out, dim as was the light extending to it. His hair stood on end, but he stayed and gazed. He was soon aware that it had eyes—eyes that gleamed and closed alternately as though struggling with the undue light. Then came the outlines of a hairy face—shoulders draped with what looked like an old blanket, ragged and tattered, half covering black and bony arms that thrust fingers into the ground; legs, so much as could be seen of them, cramped, twisted; the back, humped until it reached above the shoulders, forming a background for the head.

Was it a human form drawn by rheumatism, dwarfed by groveling, clad in blackness, or a gruesome fossil forced from the surrounding depths and quickened again to life—the creation of some prehistoric age?

The great fear that for a time filled Aleck's inmost soul had passed away as a fire burns to ashes. He had been and still was face to face with death. Nothing could be worse than that. Man, beast, demon—whatever might be before him—should no longer appal or terrify. If he was to meet death he wanted to meet it with clear vision and sane mind. He turned to his companions. Old Michael had relapsed into silence, but his eyes were closed and his lips moving as if in prayer. Jerry was crouching behind him trembling as with ague. The cool draught still drew through the place. It breathed hope.

Aleck again regarded the strange Shape. It was still in the same position of body, but had turned its eyes toward the outlet of the air-current. In a moment it began to move. With a peculiar hobble it crossed the gangway to the face of the fallen rock, scrambled up the side and disappeared through an opening that Aleck now saw had been left above the mass. He grasped old Michael and shook him.

"Ha' done w' prayin', mon, and le' us get to work. We'll follow if it tak' us to the dell's den. Coom, Jerry, oot w' ye're suivelin'! Coom!"

Suited to the action to the word, he made haste to the opening. The others would have staid, but could not endure the absence of Aleck. So they clung close upon his heels. As they passed through the opening they caught sight of the twisted legs moving in the gloom. The layer of rock upon which they made their way had parted from the layer above and left a space of several feet. Sometimes loose masses of rock in the way caused the Shape to pause and change its course, sometimes to retreat a few yards, but, ever finding apertures sufficiently large for admittance, it passed on. At last they descended over a mass of jumbled rock and struck what appeared to be a more regular track. Yes, it was an old gangway! They knew it by the remains of ties they stumbled over and the rows of fungus-covered props on either side—ghostly spectators of the faintly-lighted

procession. The way, too, led upward. They were surely making toward the outcroppings on the hillside.

Suddenly the Shape stopped and for the first time cast a look behind; then it moved to the right where another passageway was seen to lead off, turned again and, with a flashing of those strangely gleaming eyes, motioned them forward in the course they had been pursuing. But, even as it did so, from the dripping roof a shower of rubbish descended, there was a quick cry, a gurgling, gasping moan, and they saw their strange guide had been struck down.

Aleck leaped forward. Those expressions of pain and suffering were of neither beast nor demon. The life of a human being was being crushed out.

With strong arms he threw aside the thin slabs of rock and dragged the limp, enaciated body to a place of safety; then, raising it on his arms and calling on the others to follow, he pressed forward. In a few moments they reached the mouth of the passage, a place where the surface had dropped in former days, and stood in the free open air once more. The ground was white with snow lately fallen and the stars were shining.

"Now, Jerry, away for the doctor. Ye has been little enough use heretofore. Mak' ye're legs fly, lad!"

A light glimmered in the window of a house nearby. Aleck, with his burden, rapped impatiently at the door. There was a shuffle of feet and a frightened voice asked who was there. Without replying Aleck brought his knee firmly against the door, which flew open, revealing an old woman, with pallid face and gray hair, standing in the faint light.

"No harm, dame, but we has a mon here sair hurted in the mine."

He deposited his burden upon the floor, knelt by it, tore aside the matted rags, placed his hand over the heart. It still beat, but faintly. At the same instant there was a wild, piercing scream. Aleck sprang to his feet. The woman had sunk to a heap upon the floor. He stared wildly about. He was alone with the two, for Michael, unwilling to enter that house, whose history he knew too well, was hurrying across the common as fast as his stiffened legs could carry him.

Aleck placed the unconscious woman upon a bed in the inner room and did all that he could to restore her. He brought snow and bathed her brow. But she moved not. At last he took his lamp from his head and held it close to the withered, careworn face. The eyes were fixed and staring. Was she dead? The thought appalled him. He reeled and sank upon a chair, for the time utterly oblivious of his surroundings.

After a time he bethought him of the poor wretch lying in the next room. He dragged himself to his feet and passed out. At the same time the outside door opened and the doctor entered. A hasty examination revealed the fact that he was too late. Both were dead.

"Who was this woman?" asked the doctor, with the air of one who stands within the presence of a Destiny no human power can thwart or understand.

"She were Mary Grayson, sir, wife of him who, folk say, killed the paymaster twenty-odd year ago and was never heard of after," said Aleck, simply.

"And this man?" Aleck shook his head. But the two were buried side by side.