

# The Voice of the Bar

by George Albert Leddy

'Twas payday; the boys were all gathered at Dugan's saloon, for 'twas there;  
In that "Gambling Hell" as they called it, though, the sign read "The Grizzly Bear;"  
Where the gang from the boy in his twenties, to the old grizzly bearded and gray;  
Up from the underground coal mines, would gather each night to be gay.

The room it was scented with liquor, and dimmed with the smoke of the Weed;  
And rough with the voice of a Miner, who bragged of some terrible deed.  
When a voice, like the rumble of thunder, caused each Ruffian to shrink in affright;  
As the Bar took the form of a Demon, and roared—"I am Speaker tonight!"

"You must listen to me!" the Bar thundered, "for years I have listened to you;  
You thought me a friend, good and faithful; and I've stood by you well it is true.  
Why, I knew your grizzly ancestors, I remember the day of your birth;  
How they boasted and bragged of their offspring, 'twas I who knew well of your worth.

"I swore that my Slave, I would make you; you'd toil and I'd capture the Gold;  
And that oath I have kept, never failing; I've held them, the young and the old.  
I've watched them grow up from the cradle, I wait till they pass by my door;  
I hold out a glass of my liquor—'Just one, Boy, just one!' I implore.

"At first he hesitates, but I press him; I urge him till I make him think;  
That he won't be a man like his Daddy, until he has learned how to drink.  
One drink then my heartless-breast holds him, one drink and my cursed work is done;  
Then I sneer as I list' to your boasting, I sneer for I've captured your Son.

"I'll tell you of crimes I have witnessed, all done by my agent old Rum;  
Whom I have trained till he knows well as me, the man with the Gold from the Bum.  
The man with the Gold how I greet him, and deal-out the best that I hold;  
Till his brain is a wreck, his eyes blinded, and my coffers are banking his Gold.

"Though his pockets are empty he lingers, he pleads for 'one more' then he'll go;  
Then I scoff at the fate of the drunkard, who through me has fallen so low;  
But I care not for him, and I cast him, a wreck on life's wild raging sea;  
Where the cursed famished waves of wrecked manhood, will carry my victim from me.

“The Sweetheart, the Mother, the Children; who cursed me in hate from the start;  
I get them, I hold them, I starve them; and rejoice when I’ve broken their hearts.  
I’ve gazed on the face of the Widow, and the Children who feel the disgrace;  
Till their poor hearts, from sorrow, cease beating; and they pass to the Last-resting-place.

“Why I’ve seen men losing their fortunes, by dice or by shuffling the deck;  
I’ve seen men lay dying from gunshot, I’ve seen men strung-up by the neck;  
I’ve seen men cut-down in fair battle; I’ve seen daggers thrust from behind;  
I’ve seen loving Brother kill Brother, when friend Rum had stricken them blind.

“Now I gaze on a desolate churchyard, where my victims I’ve sent one by one;  
And I sneer like a miserable Hell-fiend, at the damnable work I have done!”  
Then the room it grew dark, and the Monster, once again took the form as of old;  
With it’s agent, old Rum, standing promptly; waiting and watching for Gold.

Then the smoke from the rear told the Miners—the Bar had been conquered, at last;  
For a Power, more true, had invaded—it burns to the ground, quick and fast;  
And there every grizzly old Miner, stood still in that liberty-light;  
Now freed from that damnable Demon, by the lesson they’d learned that night.

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