

# **A BLIND LEAD: THE STORY OF A MINE**

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A Blind Lead: The Story of a Mine by Josephine W. Bates

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**JOSEPHINE W. BATES**

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STORY OF A MINE**



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BY  
JOSEPHINE (W. BATES.  
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## A BLIND LEAD.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### THE MINER'S FAMILY.

AT the upper edge of the camp, close under the rocky hill-side, stood a low log house. It did not differ from its neighbors in form or construction: the same rough-hewn logs and mud-mortar; the same protruding stove-pipe; the same unplanned doors, small square windows, and projecting dirt roof belonged to all. Still, about this house there was something distinctive. It stood last on the slope, and was shut in and separated from the rest by a rough board fence. In the yard, though the thin, gritty soil scarcely covered the rock, two small flower-beds were outlined by borders of marble quartz, amid which gleamed specimens of azurite, peacock ores, and pink manganese. Some roses and pansies were growing in the beds but they were dwarfed, and hung

limp and almost lifeless. The same rock border defined a path which, hard and smooth-swept, led from the gate to the door, where a bare stone served as a step.

The house had become somewhat browned with age, which lent it a sombre effect, but the dinginess was neutralized by a plain white curtain which hung at the window, and restored to the simple structure its aspect of wholesomeness.

In the door-way, looking across the hills and shading her eyes against the evening sun, was standing a woman of about thirty-five. In her arms she held a little child, whose face was shiny and suggested a recent application of soap, and whose neat checked apron showed in its even creases that it had just been donned. The mother was dressed simply, in a close-fitting gown of cheap gingham relieved only by a collar at the throat. Her hair, originally brown, was faintly streaked with gray, and her mouth, though gentle in its expression, had a way of tightening in the corners which bespoke a life of endurance or self-suppression. It relaxed now into a smile and her eyes brightened pleasantly as, glancing out, she beheld a man toiling up the steep and trotting along beside him a lovely little girl.

The man was dressed in the garb of a miner: a blue flannel shirt; clay-stained overalls tucked into a

pair of high-top rubber boots, which were held up by a piece of rope tied around the waist; and a soft slouch hat none the better for its length of service and its plentiful drops of candle-grease. On his shoulder he carried a pick and shovel, and in his hand swung a dinner-pail. As he walked his voice was blended with that of the child, who trudged beside him laughing and chattering, and holding now by his hand, now by his loose boot-top.

As the miner caught sight of the figure in the doorway he waved his hand, and the baby in her arms began to kick and crow. She set him down on the floor and passed to the kitchen to pour the water into the teapot and complete the preparations for supper.

One noted in following her the order and cleanliness everywhere. The three rooms into which the house was partitioned, kitchen, sitting-room, and bedroom, were so neat as to almost beget discomfort. That the occupants were above the commoner class of workers one could infer, for in the sitting-room, rather than in the kitchen, was spread the evening meal, and instead of the checked oil-cloth or the bare board, a clean white cloth adorned the table. Everything, however, was of the cheapest and plainest.

When the woman had finished her simple preparations, she returned to the door in time to see the baby caught up in a pair of strong arms and hear the clap-