

to speak a word in his own exculpation or explanation. But those who were there said that, when he had painfully risen to his feet to do so, his handsome aristocratic face flushed from its deathly paleness into rosy red as the first faint words were uttered, and that he sat down choking before even a reporter could gather what he would mean. Even down among ourselves there could not but be some weak, sentimental, maudlin, if you will, compassion for so winsome a scoundrel, and much sincerely expressed and earnestly felt sorrow for the miserable misuse of gifts so brilliant and so highly prized.

So that on reaching the office on Hunter street, one memorable afternoon, it was with anything but pleasurable emotion that I read the following note handed me by the chief clerk of the business department. It was, as may be seen, curt, imperative, and mater-of-fact, and had been purposely written on one of our ordinary "detail" forms.

S. M. H., 19th April, 186—.

SM,—You are detailed to report Gilbert's execution at Bathurst, on Monday morning. You will leave at once to be there early on Saturday, and will at once seek an interview with the condemned man. A synopsis of any statement he may voluntarily make you will send on by wire. Also a brief report of the execution, say a column in all. The details by mail, at length, according to your own discretion.

Yours faithfully,

JOHN FAIRFAX, General Manager.

Mr. H. Haywood

I went straight up to the chief editor's room and found him in and busy. "Where's Mr. Fairfax?" I questioned sharply.

"Gone down this morning to Melbourne. Left a note for you, he told me, down stairs."

"Read it. What does he mean by shoving this on to me?"

West took the paper and read. "It's unpleasant duty," he assented, "but you must go. We talked it over early and there's no one else to send. And the government, strictly between ourselves, have good reason to fear a rescue, or at least a row, and the matter becomes, therefore, important. I am sorry for you, and so is the governor, but unless I went myself there is no help for it."

The idea of the doctor, sworn enemy to capital punishment in any case, standing on the drop beside a death-doomed criminal was too absurd to be entertained. So, after some little consultation as to style and amplitude, I went grumblingly home to prepare, and that same evening was suffering the torments of sea-sickness, as a stiff northeaster forced down a lively head sea against the track of the Clarence River steambot.

The worst of the whole duty was the interview so unceremoniously commanded. It is hateful to see a man hanged certainly, but it is ten times more hateful to be compelled to worry his last poor hours of life with impertinent newspaper questions. But, there was no help, and