

purpose, but Heaven bade me wait until this evening; I knew you would and am prepared to execute Heaven's command."

Imagine my horror! If I could have faintly I should have experienced relief and would have been executed without consciousness. But my nerves had grown strong during the last moments; I had perfect control over my faculties and feelings and thought of means to escape an untimely death.

Involuntarily I looked at the bell-cord line, which, unfortunately for me, was on the other side of the compartment.

Madmen are cunning; he caught my look and said:

"It is useless to look for that rope there; this train does not stop at any of the way stations, nor would heaven permit this work to be interrupted, and when we reach the City of Mexico I shall be famous and you in heaven!"

For a moment I thought of jumping at the door, opening it and saving myself, but the idea was not feasible, because, at the rate the train was moving, I would be dashed to death, were I lucky enough to escape the grasp of the powerful maniac.

"Make haste," said he, drawing his watch, the execution must be completed before five, and it is now twenty minutes to five.

This intelligence caused me a thrill of joy; since force would only hasten my awful end I must seek to gain time. The train was due in the city of Mexico at five o'clock; if I could divert him for that length of time I was saved.

"My dear sir," said I, "I am quite willing that you should try your invention on me, but before I die I ask you to grant me a favor."

"What is it? speak; it is granted."

"I wish to write my will and a letter to a lady to whom I am betrothed, and would ask you to mail the letters in the city of Mexico. Will you do that?"

"Certainly, with pleasure; only be quick about it."

"I thank you very much. Ah, how provoking," said I, searching my pockets. "I have no paper to write the letters. Could you oblige me with a sheet of paper?"

"Certainly, sir; I have plenty of that," said he, extracting from his breast pocket a tablet of paper and two envelopes.

While he was taking the paper from his pocket I managed to break the point of my pencil.

"Just see how troublesome I am. The point of my pencil has broken off and I have no knife to sharpen it."

"Oh, no trouble at all," he replied.

"Just hand me the pencil and I will sharpen it for you." With this he took

his coat and sharpened the pencil. He was evidently as well armed as he was physically powerful. Having sharpened the pencil, he sheathed the dagger, and told me to go on. I thought of writing a lot of nonsense, but could not for the life of me—which really was at stake—compose a single sentence. In my despair I copied the alphabet. I drew the characters with care, in order to fill up time and space.

At last the sheet was full, and my executioner asked me if I were ready.

"I am ready with my will, but I have not written the letter to my affianced."

"Well, write quickly," said he, and his look was threatening.

"I should like to describe to her your wonderful invention. Can you show me how it works so that I may write intelligently on the subject?"

"Decidedly, I will; you are a good fellow, entirely unlike those cowards from Montreal."

"Ah, but where will you fasten it?" I asked.

"Nothing easier; I slip the end through that lemp bracket in the ceiling, just the place for it."

So said and so done; but while he was thus occupied I cast a glance at the window and my heart gave a leap, for I saw the first houses of the great Mexican city. To gain a little more time was all that I needed, but my life depended on my doing so.

"Behold how it is done," said he, holding the cord in one hand.

"Ah, but you would have to engage a living executioner to slip the noose over the criminal's head," I argued.

He became frightfully excited, and in his rage did not hear the whistle of the locomotive.

"This is the greatest invention of the age," said I. "Can you draw?"

"No," he replied. "Why?"

"Because I should like to send my affianced a sketch of this wonderful executioner. But as you cannot draw, and as I, who am a first-class sketcher, could not possibly make a sketch after my death, and she will be sorry, because she edits a newspaper."

"A newspaper did you say?" he cried, his eyes flashing wildly. "They refused to mention my invention in the papers in Montreal, the curs."

"My affianced would be only too happy to do it, if you would consent to throw the noose over your head so that I could sketch you."

"This is a capital idea," said he, "and if you are quick about it I'll do it."

"I will be quick," I cried. "Get ready."

I had hardly finished when he slipped the cord over his head, but quicker than thought I was at the door, opened it and

jumped. I fell into a crowd of people—we were at the station of the City of Mexico. As I jumped I heard the gurgling sounds of the strangling maniac. I was not hurt by my fall, and when I regained my feet I hastened to the compartment, anticipating the horrible sight of the madman strangled by the invention of his disordered mind. But imagine my surprise when, on reaching the place of my late adventure, I found it—vacant.

The curious crowd made such a noise that the conductor came forward, eager to know the cause of the tumult. I asked him if he knew my traveling companion, if he had seen him leave? He looked at me in amazement; he had seen no one leave the compartment, except myself—in the peculiar manner described. He said that I had been the sole occupant of that compartment from Queretaro, and, turning to the crowd, said in Spanish "The American is crazy," which caused the crowd to disperse panic stricken. Seeing that I could get no satisfactory explanation from the conductor, I took my overcoat and bought a ticket for Orizaba. At the station there, I was met by Jackson, who received me very cordially and informed me that Feldon had been found. I had experienced some shocks in the last few hours, and this news hardly surprised me. Still I asked: "Where was he found?"

"In Jalapa," was Jackson's reply.

"When was that?" I queried.

"Last night," said Jackson.

"What has he got to say?" said I sternly.

"To say!" cried Jackson, "the poor fellow has nothing to say; he is as crazy as a loon; I pity him. It took six men to manage him last night."

We had just arrived at the quartz mills, and Jackson conducted me to the room where Feldon was strapped to an iron bedstead, a raving maniac. As I looked into his face I nearly fell, the shock was so tremendous. Great God! it was my travelling companion of the night before!

When I told Jackson the cause of my agitation he was perplexed. "The automatic executioner is the very thing he raved about. We found him half dead with a riata around his neck. This is very strange!" said Jackson.

My story met with many incredulous smiles in San Francisco. My dear wife alone believes it, and shudders when I relate it to others. To me it remains a psychological mystery.

Lawson & Bennett, brewers, Victoria, have dissolved, John Lawson retiring.

H. S. Fairall, brewery, Victoria West, has sold out to G. Varrolman and Steve O'Brien.