

Painless Dentistry.

"Come in," said the M.D. (Mechanical Dentist) after I had timidly knocked at the door.

Entering, I saw a gathering of athletic young men situated in graceful, though apparent nonchalant attitudes, around a room which was called an office, or perchance a dental parlour. My curiosity was heightened by apprehension, which latter sentiment was increased by not a little fear, which was not at all minimised by the significant winks which the young men exchanged one with another, while the head man openly licked his chops at me, as he sized up my attenuated frame and hangdog expression. Still, though an imaginative bugle was trumpeting the retreat in my listening ears, I bravely stuck to the floor. My life not being for sale, I was at some loss in that I could not decide to sell it dearly, but I was pleased to think that earlier in the morning I had written up all my S. & T. forty-fives, and that the jitney, after years of preparation, could now go from Cooden to the Post Office without stopping.

A furtive glance round the room showed me, in a far corner of a long table, a huge iron contrivance, somewhat of the bigness of a large helmet, to which was attached a metal chinstrap on hinges. It was easily seen that this was an apparatus to clamp on to a patient's head to keep him from shifting, while the chinstrap would hold his jaw immovable. Nearer, a Bunsen burner flared full on with nauseous fumes, and close by was a cauldron of boiling water in which many instruments of torture, I presume, were heating.

A quantity of reddish-looking strips of some material, which I afterwards found out to consist of alveolar tissue, were drying on a flat, dish-like structure. These had evidently been cut away from the gums of some victims, whose ill-fitting plates would not remain in their maxillary environments.

This was too much for my dentist-shocked nerves, and giving a slight cough I attempted to withdraw. *Mais non*, as the Croatian Akislooes say, this was not to be. Turning about, which I did by numbers, to show my nonchalance, I faced one of the athletic significant winkers, who leered at me in a manner too horrible for words. Seeing over his shoulder, I glanced at another A.S.W. barring and bolting the door. Strong and brave as I am, I could not suppress a quake or two, and much desire to swallow, while of licking of dry lips there was no end. 'Eaven 'elp me, I thought—me last hour is come. Seeing my retreat cut off in the direction mentioned, I faced about again, endeavouring to meet my fate with calm and sweet serenity. Fearing some new horror would meet my gaze, I made my gaze dodge about and evolute, even as a hospital ship endeavouring to elude a Teutonic torpedo,

but some hypnotic influence compelled me to act as if at attention, head and eyes straight to the front and—ah, let me cover my face with a blanket, and shut out that awful view which still I see in my nightmares—(done)—.

Over in a far corner of the dungeon, alongside a peculiarly-shaped divan, stood the Chief Athletic Chop Licker, not only indulging in his favourite pastime, but horribly leering at me, and pointing to the peculiar shaped divan in question. No time did I waste in taking a seat thereon. The Athletic Assistants did not intend that I should, to judge by the swift propulsion I received in the rear, at the same time as I accepted a violent blow in the region of my cervical vertebrae. Half-stunned, and weeping bitterly, I obeyed the Chief's behest to open my mouth. In my endeavours to thoroughly oblige him I must have presented a rather large aperture, for he chucklingly informed me he was not going to get inside (terrible humour). Before I could reduce the gap he had inserted a wad of guncotton, soaked with a disgustingly-tasting fluid, into my mouth, and started to swab the thing round my palate and some inches down my windpipe, till I exhibited complete symptoms of asphyxiation, much to his Bolcheviak glee.

Leaving me for a while too helpless to escape, I indulged in a paroxysm of retching, accompanied by much illtimed ribaldry rendered by the attendant Significant Winkers.

Hardly had the last effort to rid myself of the morning meal ceased, when the Chief rushed at me again, and as I opened my mouth to cry out for help, he drove a huge metal arrangement filled with, I fully believe, quicklime and plaster of Paris in between my jaws. So much pressure did the Chief exert that some of the stuff was forced up through the Eustachian Tubes and dribbled out of my ears: while an effort to sneeze made the substance spout through my nose. An overflow from the metal container, moreover, effectively blocked my gullet and windpipe.

Imagine, if you can, my distress, with nose, ears, mouth, and other apertures bunged up. There was I trying to cough, sneeze, expectorate, and be ill at the same moment, while the Chief kept muttering all the time what sounded like pigeon English.

Would he never take the beastly thing out of my mouth? A M.Oish looking gentleman came and viewed my writhing discomfort, and I read in his eyes that he contemplated Tracheotomy. Before giving up the ghost, I tried a last experiment. Spelling out "Kamerad" on my fingers, per the deaf and dumb alphabet, I threw up my hands, that is, I raised them above my head. The result was magical. Smacking his lips with satisfaction, the Chief drew the metal affair out of my mouth, and skilfully dodged the plaster of Paris and breakfast which rapidly pursued it.