

PINETREE SIDING.



ICKETY, tick, tick, rattles the sander in the little box-like structure which serves as water and cooling station as well as dispatcher's office, midway between the towns of Bluefields and Port au Diabie, on the S. F. & L. railroad.

Overhead the sun pours down in pitiless glare, making the air quiver and swirl in a wavering sort of dance over the straight stretch of track on either side of the station.

Upstairs, in his glass-enclosed cage, the operator sits in his shirt sleeves, snapping the perspiration from his face and neck and gazing moodily at an open letter on the desk in front of him. It is a short letter, on the company's paper, and signed by the division superintendent, but its few typewritten lines have had a wonderful effect on the operator. Only a sharp, business-like letter, written by a busy man who cannot afford to waste time on trifles: "Dear Sir: Certain details of your previous history, which you thought fit to conceal when you entered the employ of this company, having come to the knowledge of the writer, your services will not be required after Thursday, July 31, when you will receive your pay in full to that date.

Your successor will arrive on the special following No. 6. Very truly yours,
J. M. L.,
"Division Superintendent."

The 31st! That is to-day, and he has only received the letter an hour ago! So he was to be turned out on the world at a moment's notice, without a chance to prepare himself for the next step in the struggle for existence! To be dogged all his life by that one black spot of his youth, which he had hoped buried forever. It was always the same old story; like Banquo's ghost, it would not down, but, spreading its grisly arms, effectually barred his entrance into the paths of honest competition for what many claim as a right, and which he only asked to be allowed to work for a livelihood.

His ears are ringing and his head burns as though a thousand devils were making a cast of it in molten steel. Even the clatter of the telegraph instrument, which during the long, lonely hours spent in his glass cage, had become like the voice of an old friend, as the train orders and message flashed through the little station, now seem to mock and jeer at him with its ceaseless rattle and tick.

And above all that great dazzling orb continues to blaze down upon the shrinking earth until the verdure on the hillside above and below the station withers and curls, and the glass cage is like an oven.

The operator's head seems to be on fire and his brain throbs so violently that he cannot think at all clearly. There is but one idea around which his mental forces rally and to which his nerves respond—retaliation! And this idea grows upon him irresistibly.

Shall he tamely kiss the foot which kicks him out of a position in which he has ever tried to best subserve the interests of his employers, and which he now loses through the malice (so he tells himself) of one of the superior subordinates of the company for which they both work, and who uses as a means of satisfying his spite an error committed and expiated twenty years ago? What claim had such a cur on life which should be respected by the rest of humanity? Would he not be doing the human race a favor by ridding the world of such a travesty on man? The human race! Bah! What did he owe the human race? Had not



START BACK IN HORROR.

The hand of his fellow-man been against him for twenty years? Was he not a pariah, one cut off from social communication from his fellows, living, traveling, working under an assumed name, ever endeavoring to obliterate and dispel the old shadow? He had striven to live a life which should be blameless from the world's point of view and those few with whom he had been thrown in contact, and who knew naught of his previous history, could cast no aspersions against his character. But to what avail? It was his fate. Surely it had been that every man's hand should be against him. So be it—his own hand should be raised against the unforgiving race of Pharisees. And the operator knows that his present position, albeit his tenure of it is but short, is such as to render such a wholesale declaration of war doubly effective.

Hotter and hotter blazes the sun from an almost white sky, and wilder and wilder glare the eyes of the operator at Pinetree Siding.

Suddenly they happen to rest on a wire running close to the glass in front of the station, and light up with a wilder gleam than ever, while his working features distort themselves into a malicious grin.

The towns of Bluefields and Port au Diabie are lighted by electric light, the plant being situated at Bluefields.

Promptly at 5:30 every evening the dynamo are started up, running until 6:30 the next morning. The wires connecting the two points run directly in front of and close to the station at Pinetree Siding, and it is one of these wires which has caught the attention of the operator.

It is now 9:45 in the afternoon, and not a cloud has crossed the face of that hanging ball of fire which threatens to shrivel and scorch to a cinder everything on which its beams rest.

The operator goes over to the window and attaches to the electric-light wire, from a portion of which he carefully removes the insulation, the end of another piece which he holds in his hand. When this is secure he carries the other end over his desk, and kneeling down, spends some minutes in arranging it in some manner below; bringing two free ends up through a hole in the top of the table. This done, he takes from a closet several round and greasy-looking sticks about a foot long, and, descending the stairs, places them at regular intervals along the railroad track, connecting them all together with wires, which he afterward brings up stairs and joins to the arrangement underneath the table. Then he returns to his seat, and save for his trembling hands and the peculiar glare of his eyes, performs his routine duties in the usual manner.

Tick tick, tickety tick. It is the call for Pinetree Siding. The operator opens his key and answers promptly. It is a message from headquarters announcing that the special following No. 6, and carrying the division superintendent and the new operator for Pinetree Siding is due at 5:50, just three minutes after No. 6's schedule time. The operator's eyes flash; it is as he has anticipated. He wires the track clear and waits.

Promptly at 5:47 No. 6, the vestibuled limited express for the east, dashes past the siding with a rattle and crash that causes the operator, whose nerves are tense to the breaking point, to spring to his feet in alarm, fearing that the destruction meant for the special has overtaken her predecessor. But the express whirrs safely by and the operator has the satisfaction of seeing his innocent looking messengers of death lying untouched but waiting his will to fulfill their devilish mission.

And now the operator's breath comes short and sharp and his eyes glisten and glare as though the fires of hell were lighted behind; his lips are drawn back over his teeth and his long fingers work nervously, as if longing to execute the finishing touch which shall culminate the awful catastrophe he has planned. Gold help the poor men on the train so swiftly rushing to their doom, and God help their waiting families, for the operator at Pinetree Siding who holds their lives in his hands is no longer a man but a demon.

Suddenly the whistle of the approaching special is heard and the operator bounds from his chair and rushes to the window, eager to feast his eyes for a moment on the sight of his nearing victims. Everything is complete. He has but to press together those two tiny bits of wire and the entire telegraph line will be transformed into a hissing, blazing serpent, carrying death and destruction to the poor operators along its path and wrecking the instruments, thus stopping telegraphic communication all over the line; while at Pinetree Siding only a scattered tangle of wood, iron and human flesh would mark the annihilation of both the special with her human freight and the operator as well. For he is quite willing to sacrifice himself to achieve his end, and counts the cost but little if with the forfeit of his life he may encompass the revenge he has so cunningly plotted.

But there is no time to lose; already the special is slowing up in front of the station, and, leaping to the table like a wolf upon his prey, he presses the two wires together. But no boom or roar of the expected explosion follows, nothing but the escape of steam as the air-brakes of the special bring her to a stop, and the operator, realizing that his scheme has miscarried, flings himself upon the wires, biting them together with his teeth, cursing, praying, blaspheming and shrieking aloud in his mad rage and disappointment. But all to no purpose; and as the division superintendent and the new dispatcher enter the room they start back in horror at sight of the body of the operator, as with black and twisted features he lies across the table, still grasping in his hand the wires by which he had hoped to avenge himself for a life of scorn and enmity. A glance reveals the whole plot, and with cheeks pale than usual they cut the wires and restore everything to its original state. As the new operator brings in the dynamite which he has carefully removed from the track, and looks over at his predecessor lying straightened out on the floor by the window, he shudders as that the division superintendent jumps forward to catch the stuff, thinking he is about to drop it.

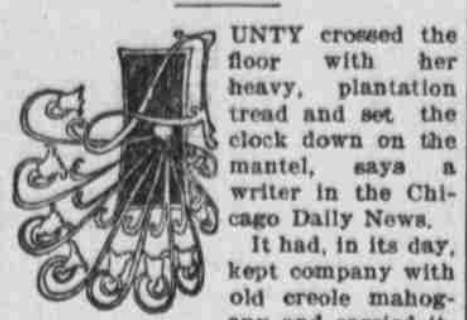
Next morning the Bluefields Examiner calls the attention of the citizens to the wonderful mercy of providence which by permitting a fuse at the electric light plant to blow out, so cutting off the current just before the special following No. 6 was due at Pinetree Siding, had saved the lives of several prominent railway officials, besides a large amount of damage to railway property. And when the coroner gave to the public the verdict that the operator at Pinetree Siding had come to his death from the effects of the intense heat of the previous day no mention was made of the letter found by the division superintendent on the table beside him.

While in England potatoes are grown almost entirely as an esculent about 4,000,000 tons are annually used in France in the manufacture of starch and alcohol.

"AUNTY" WRITES ONE.

THE REAL LABOR FALLS UPON HER MISTRESS.

Amanuensis Tries to Be Truthful—But the Clock and the Messages to the Granddaughter Are Confusing—Ends with a Sigh.



UNTY crossed the floor with her heavy, plantation tread and set the clock down on the mantel, says a writer in the Chicago Daily News.

It had, in its day, kept company with old creole mahogany and carried itself in lordly fashion among its peers, but now for many years, on account of some obscure derangement, it had been retired to humble society.

"The clock doctor, he say she all right, now, an' jest as magnificus as she ever were; only you'll jest have ter wind her up, please, ma'am," said Aunty.

The mistress cheerfully arose and essayed the novel task.

The key turned in its place with infinite difficulty, as if it dragged after it the whole weight of the unwilling years and there was a strange groaning and creaking within and a convulsive shudder of the whole machinery and framework. But it began to tick and the hands began to move.

Aunty surveyed it with awe and delight.

"She goes tribulatin' along as peart

as ever she did. How nachal it does sound!"

"Where did you get such a fine old relic, Aunty?" asked the mistress, noting its points.

"My ole mist'r's give her to me arter the surrender. They was all broke up and the ole plantation was sold and they went to N' Orleans ter live. An' now, honey, I see ready fer de letter if you is."

"Yes, Aunty. Who is the letter for?"

"My granddaughter. Her mother give her ter me an' I let her go to N' Or-

leans ter stay with her father. You see, they didn't get erlong—"

"Who, Aunty? Your granddaughter and her mother?"

"Bless yer heart, no! I means her father an' mother, an' they separated an' he's got another wife an' she's got another husband."

"Oh, well, I have written 'My dear granddaughter.' Now, what next?"

"I was mighty glad ter hear from you all an' that you was well an' doin' well."

"She give one when she orter give twelve an' she give twelve when she orter give one," said Aunty, interrupting her droning relative.

The scribe looked up in bewilderment. Aunty's eyes were fixed distastefully on the clock.

"Didn't you hear her strike?"

"No. Never mind the clock now, Aunty."

"He said she were all right," murmured Aunty, sadly.

"We will consult him again if she is not, but now we must write the letter if you want it to go in the next mail."

"I does want it ter go powerful bad."

"Well, then, what next?"

"I am well and doing well at present, but I have had mighty pore health this winter. Be a good girl an' don't fergit your pore ole gran'mother. If her father don't let her come up here 'fore long I'm gwine down there."

The scribe caught her breath and drew her pen through a line and a half.

"What you do that fer?" complained Aunty.

"Never mind. Go on."

"You worries me so, scratchin' out the writin', I done fergot. Oh! Won't you please let my gran'daughter come

she won't think hard o' me. Tell her I'm comin' ter see her in a week or two an' to be sure an' look out fer me."

"Now, Aunty, you know I can't spare you in a week or two."

"Co're I does, an' I ain't a-gwine. But she kin be lookin' out, I wish," added the kind soul, regretfully, "that I could send her some fruit. But how can I? I don't know anybody gwine there."

"Why, Aunty, there's always lots of fruit in the city market and you can send her a dime or two bits any time in a letter and she can buy some."

"Law sakes! So I kin. Hucomes it you alays thinks of everything? That head o' yours is plum full all the time," said Aunty, admiringly.

"Is that all, Aunty?"

"Oh, tell her ter be sure ter ax her father ter pray fer me."

"Aunty, I wouldn't. He seems to be a bad fellow."

"But you see, honey, I don't want him ter be mad at me, 'cause mebbe then he won't let her come an' see me. I don't reckon he aims ter let her come, now. He took her away ter keep her, but he needn't have gone at it that reverent way."

"What name shall I write on the outside?"

"Rev. Jim Brown."

"But, Aunty, it's for your granddaughter."

"He gets the letters an' he'll know who it's fer. And now there's another one an' it's to the Rev. Jim Brown. An' thenkif you ain't anything partickler to do, I'd like ter have you write ter my daughter out on Tickfaw, please, ma'am."

Two hours later the amanuensis laid down her pen with a long sigh of relief.

The Original of Mr. Casaubon.

Many years ago Frederick W. Myers, in an article on George Eliot, told us how once, when he called upon that great woman and George Lewes, he found the couple vastly amused over the fancied discovery by a friend that the portrait of the pedantic, capricious and jealous Mr. Casaubon had been drawn from Lewes.

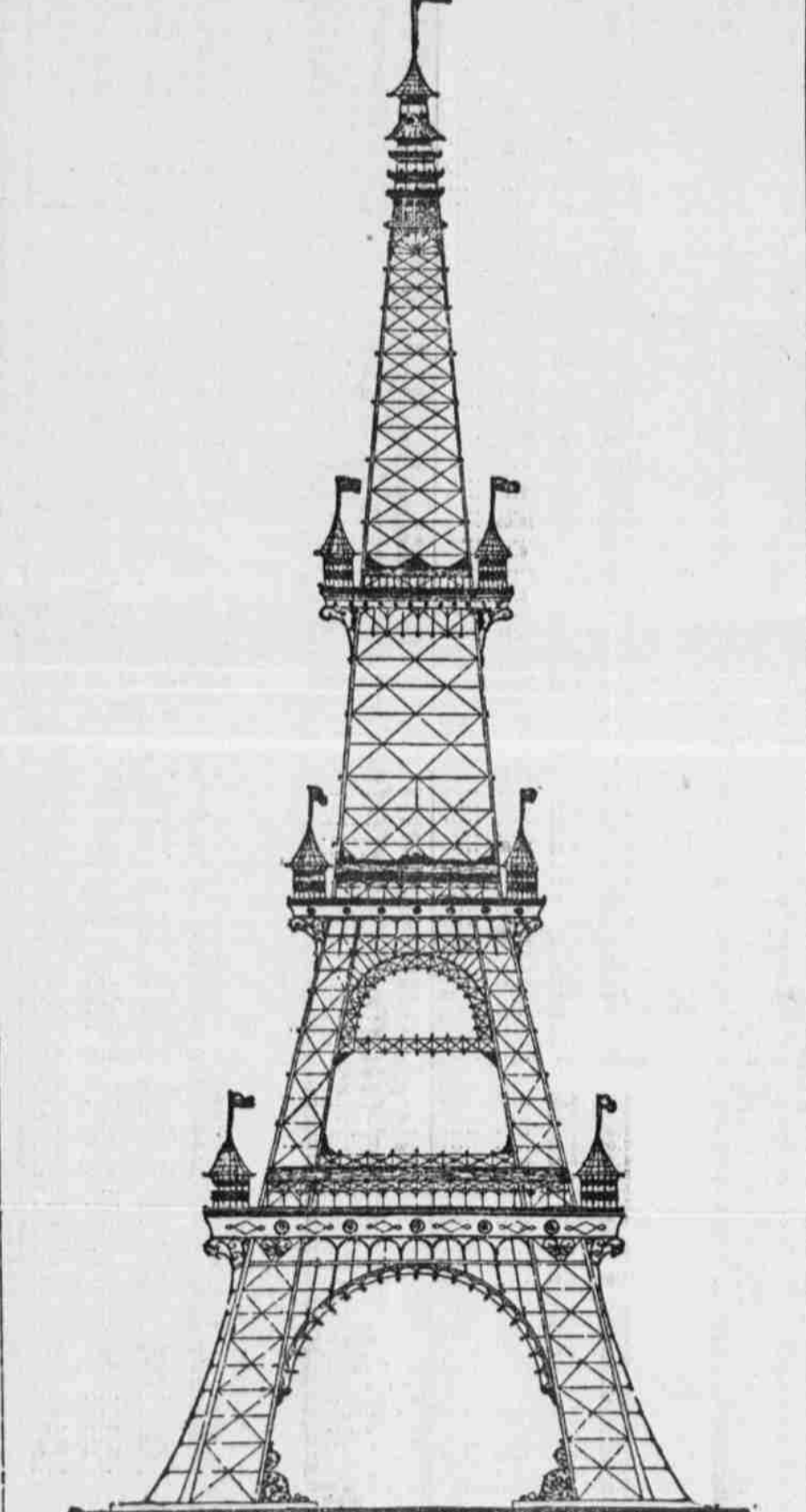
"But whom did you draw it from?" asked Mr. Myers.

Mrs. Lewes pointed solemnly to her own breast and said: "From myself."

This old story is brought to mind by a paragraph in Mrs. Annie Field's "Days with Mrs. Stowe," in the current Atlantic Monthly, from which it appears that Mrs. Stowe was the friend who identified Lewes with Casaubon.

In the summer of 1869 Mrs. Field called upon George Eliot at her home in St. John's Wood, in London. The novelist expressed the great love and admiration which she felt for her American contemporary. "Many letters had passed between Mrs. Stowe and herself and she confided to us her amusement at a fancy Mrs. Stowe had taken that Casaubon in 'Middlemarch' Lewes. Mrs. Stowe took it so entirely awes. Mrs. Stowe took it so entirely for granted in her letters that it was impossible to dispossess her mind of the illusion. Evidently it was the source of much harmless amusement at St. John's Wood."

HIGHER THAN EIFFEL.



From an eyrie altitude of 1,150 feet Chicago proposes to look down on the rest of the world. A tower which surpasses in height the Eiffel structure of Paris is projected by the citizens of the Windy City, and already land on which to build has been secured and actual work begun. This cloud disturbing structure is the outcome of a patriotic desire by Chicagoans to fly the American flag higher than any other banner in the world. The structure is to be known as the City Tower, and as an attraction it will outrival anything ever before undertaken, except the World's Fair. The base of the tower is to be 326 feet square, and it will occupy an entire city block. At the base, from the four corner supports, each of which is 50 feet square, will rise arches 200 feet across and the same in height.

These arches will support the first landing, which will have 90,000 square feet of flooring, where 22,000 persons can be accommodated at one time. There is a distance of 225 feet from the ground to this first landing. After passing the first landing there is no other landing until one is another 225 feet up in the air. There, at a height of 450 feet, there is to be a platform 150 feet square. This second platform is about as high as the top of the Great Pyramid of Egypt, or the Washington monument. Six hundred and seventy-five feet above the ground is the third landing, far higher than any building in Chicago. At an elevation of 1,000 feet above the earth is the fourth landing, and from these stairs lead up to the very top of the tower.—From the Chicago Dispatch.

up an' see me, if it's only fer a day? That's fer her father," said Aunty.

The writer paused.

"If I'd listen at her Aunt Lulu I shouldn't never have let her go with him. Tell her I'm a-comin' down ter see her. He beats her with his crutch and don't give her nothin'." "Don't think hard o' me 'cause I didn't send you anything Christmas. I was away from home two months water-bound."

The mistress laid down her pen.

"Oh, Aunty, what a story!"

"It's jest ter satisfy her, honey, so

Why He Couldn't Lie.

Of an eminent person whose great subtlety of mind was being discussed, Huxley said that the constant over-refinement of distinctions in his case destroyed all distinctness. Anything could be explained away, and so one thing came to mean the same as its opposite. Someone asked: "Do you mean that he is untruthful?" "No," replied Huxley, "he is not clear-headed enough to tell a lie."

A Singular Form of Monomania.

There is a class of people, rational enough in other respects, who are certainly monomaniacs in desiring themselves. They are constantly trying experiments upon their stomachs, their bowels, their livers and their kidneys with trashy nostrums. When these organs are really out of order, if they would only use Hostetter's Stomach Bitters, they would, if not hopelessly insane, perceive its superiority.

A Complete Educational System.

No educational system is complete that does not include instruction in religion and art,—the two chief sources of appeal to the emotions. For obvious reasons we Americans have been compelled to leave religion outside the ordinary school and college curriculum, and this practically the case with the plastic arts.—September Atlantic.

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