

Millheim on the L. C. & S. C. R. R., has a population of 600. It is a thriving business center, and controls the trade of an average radius of over eight miles, in which the Journal has a larger circulation than all other county papers combined.

AT THE SERPENT'S MERCY. A Startling Adventure With an Anaconda.

One morning my friend Wilson and I found ourselves amid a wild but stupendous piece of Mexican scenery. All of a sudden we were startled by a scream—a shriek that came from none but the throat of a frightened woman—and we stood still, so full of terror and wild alarm had been the cry. There was in front of us a rock. On one side led a path, on the other the same. From the other side of this barrier seemed to come the cry. All was stillness, and we dashed each on either side of the rocks.

I arrived first on the spot, a cleared space hemmed in by rocks, and my eyes beheld what till then had never so extended their sockets with horror. On the ground beside a boulder, against which one exquisite bare arm, clasped with a jeweled bracelet, was stretched, lay a young Mexican girl, of astonishing loveliness, her wonderful beauty veiled by a mass of black, wavy hair, that fell in a perfect cloud to her feet. She lay as still and white as one dead, on the solid rock.

Horror froze me at the sight. At the opposite side of the enclosure, and fifty feet away, was one of the largest serpents I ever saw. He was wriggling down from the rock, and his filthy head was already slowly approaching the girl.

I was so engrossed with the horrid scene that I did not notice Wilson, who had suddenly emerged from the other entrance to the spot, and had started back with a loud exclamation, utterly overpowered by what he beheld.

The monster serpent—which I at once took for a species of anaconda—was slowly extending his slimy length toward his prey, his neck seeming to stretch like a mass of rubber out of the frightful folds on the rock; for the head and neck elongated, yet the horrible coil did not decrease. His short forked tongue darted forth venomfully, and his wicked dull eyes snapped with diabolical eagerness, yet he steadily came on.

Serpent and girl were hardly sixteen yards apart, and the girl still lay as lifeless, to all appearance, as if the vital spark had fled.

"For heaven's sake, save her—drag her away!" yelled Wilson.

In his excitement, he drew his revolver, and fired a shot at the head of the snake, which had no effect.

The sound of his voice and the crack of the shot, brought me to my senses, for I was standing like one paralyzed. With a spring or two I stood between the serpent and the girl, the attention of the former luckily a trifle distracted by Wilson's rash shot. I acted quickly, and the case seemed a desperate one.

A thrill seemed to go to my fingers, and as I touched the form of the girl, she was wondrously beautiful; yet she lay as motionless, every molded contour of her figure in repose, white and rigid, classic as a marble statue of innocence itself.

I took the inanimate form of the girl in my arms and rushed away from the maw of the huge snake. In my excitement I could not help shuddering at the frightful presence of the serpent. Few would willingly be so near such an object, and, whether by intuition or superstition I know not, there seemed to be a full fascination, horrible but irresistible, in the creature's presence. I rushed past Wilson with my burden. A torrent was at hand. I laid my frail burden on a mossy bed, while Wilson came to the spot opportunely, bringing with him a hatful of cold water.

A gentle application of this the first time produced no effect. A second and third, more violent, seemed fruitless. She lay like one dead. We became alarmed. Was she really dead? We bore her to the side of the boiling torrent, and poured the icy torrent on her pure forehead. All of a sudden she seemed to return to the possession of her senses. She started up, started as us in affright, gazed about her, and then seemed to be trying to recall to memory the cause of all that had befallen her. All at once she clasped her hands to her face, and with a wild shriek of terror she fell into my arms, crying out:

"For Dios, la anaconda!" Then she fainted again. The frigid encounter with the serpent had absolutely crazed the poor girl. Water was again applied, and this time she awoke with less difficulty than before. We watched the dark eyes unfold with no little apprehension. She regarded us with the same vacant stare. I said as smoothly as I could:

"Don't fear, Senorita, you are among friends." She seemed to gather her senses and take courage. After a little while she was enabled to explain to us that she lived in the neighborhood with her father and family, that she had straggled out among the mountains further than usual on the present occasion, that she had set down to rest, and that all of a sudden her appalled vision encountered the ugly head of the serpent advancing toward her. She screamed and fainted. We had arrived on the spot a moment later, and the reader knows the rest.

We told her we were English travelers, that we could have no greater pleasure than to befriend her, and that we would see her home. This we did, and having received the warmest thanks of herself and relatives, we started to look again after the serpent.

We found our way to the opening among the rocks by the same route as before. The snake had left the top of the rock, and his mass of coils were folded mostly at the south side of the cleared space; while his bossy head, with its muddy yet twinkling eyes, and its slowly forked tongue, lay just where the girl had lain when I reached her.

The animal was either sunning himself or plotting more mischief in a state of deliberative repose—perhaps both. In size this was the largest specimen I ever saw, and as large as any truthful descriptions I ever heard narrated. And regarding the size of the reptiles as related by adventurers, yarnstretchers, and even by the majority of enthusiastic naturalists who have a possible reputation for veracity, let me advise the reader always to allow for several breadths in them—especially hair-breaths and those mauls out of the whole cloth.

The monster was in my excited fancy the largest snake I had ever seen. It was, I may safely say with every regard for verity, as large round as a man's body, and this in his ante-breakfast condition. We stood looking at him with distended eyes, as he lay in the sun, his back in the light gleaming like burnished brass. His was a case that admitted of small delay. Should we attract his attention we might not be objectionable to his palate for a repeat.

"Hist!" says Wilson; "let's get in front of him if we can."

"So as to get a good chance at his eyes?"

"Yes; creep after me—still. He's in admirable position."

We found ourselves on the top of the rocks at the opposite side of the enclosure. The monster had not stirred. As we raised our rifles he began to twinkle his wicked eye at us, seeing us for the first time. Even as we raised the hammers of our weapons he began to wriggle preparatory to a motion toward us. Evidently he thought he should not be cheated out of his breakfast after all.

"Now, my boy, and look alive as soon as you fire! One, two, three—Bang went both our pieces simultaneously. The smoke rolled out. We ran along the road till we could see the effect of our shots. Both bullets seemed to have taken effect. The creature had drawn back as if stunned, with the blood flowing from his head, and his eyes apparently demolished. It was only for a moment, and then—well, I never before had an idea of the ferocity of sudden motion. He drew his immense length together, and then like a black thunderbolt, let himself fly into the air, at the cloud of smoke, with a force that made the joints and folds of his coat to snap. Then he fell back and commenced to writhe and twist, uttering a peculiar, venomful hiss, and a cry like an infant's.

While we reeled, rage and pain seemed to get the mastery over him. He began to strike himself with his fangs, thrash about and raise a most frightful commotion and a terrible dust. He grew every instant more violent. He would raise himself almost erect in his tail, then fall suddenly, and twist and bite himself in his agony.

We could not get another shot till he became more quiet. So we waited.

"See, he is trying to escape!" cried Wilson.

It was even so. He rattled at headlong speed down the mountain, over everything. We got on a tall rock, where we could overlook the scene.

A few hundred yards down the rock descent was a precipice overhanging a densely-foliated valley, at least four hundred feet below. In his present mad, blind course the serpent must go over its edge!

We stood, the spectators of the coming tragedy. And he did go over in our full view. What a fall was that! How many tons weight I dare not guess. Down, down he fell, coiled in a ball, a dense, black wriggling mass. There was a small pond or stagnant pool in the valley, and it chanced to be directly below our blind aeronaut. I almost shut my eyes as the seconds passed, and the tremendous mass neared the ground. The next instant there was a splash that sent the water high in huge jets, and I emptied the pond, throwing out alligators, water-snakes and other aqueous monsters, and at the bottom, deep in the mud, lay the serpent. He writhed still, but the water came in and filled the pool again, and drowned him.

HANGED FOR BUELING. How a stop was put to the Practice in the State of Illinois.

I know but one instance of a man having been hung for killing another in a duel. In 1830, two young fellows living in Belleville, St. Clair county, Ill., had a personal quarrel. It seemed to be impossible to reconcile them, and their friends determined to get up a sham duel between them, hoping that the ridiculous issue of the affair would bring them to their senses. One of them, Alphonso Stewart, challenged the other, William Bennett, to meet him on foot. Bennett accepted the challenge, and the parties met near the village. It is said that Stewart was in secret and that Bennett was not, but believed it to be a reality. In any event, after the guns had been handed to the principals and they turned to take their positions, Bennett, who claimed that he suspected some sort of trickery, rolled a bullet into his gun. The seconds, hardly able to keep their faces straight, concluded the arrangements, and at last gave the word. The rifles exploded almost simultaneously. Bennett, of course, remaining untouched, Stewart fell to the ground mortally wounded, and expired shortly afterward in great agony. Bennett was at once arrested, put upon trial, convicted of murder in the first degree, and sentenced to be hanged. His friends made the most strenuous efforts to have him pardoned. Failing in this, they tried to have the sentence commuted. But the Governor remained firm against all entreaty. On the day appointed for his execution, Bennett was hanged in the presence of an enormous crowd. This was the first and last duel ever fought in the State of Illinois. The hanging of Bennett put a stigma upon the practice, and it has been looked upon with abhorrence ever since.

Among the inmates of the Massachusetts State Prison is an old man, a college graduate, and once a trusted estate and controlled trust funds. Two years ago it was found that thousands and thousands of dollars had disappeared in ruinous speculations and that he had for years been a forger, until there was almost nothing left of the hundreds of thousands that had been entrusted to him. Not only had he ruined his clients, but his brothers and his old father and uncle. And yet in prison he speaks of nothing but his honor, his innocence and his honesty. It required thirty-eight hours of starvation to bring to compliance with the rules of the prison. He was taken to court the other day to give evidence in some real estate transactions and was very much annoyed at the presence of an officer with him and remonstrated at the unnecessary trouble they were taking. "I have been engaged so largely in real estate transactions that I shall be called out of prison often as a witness, and I hate to trouble you so to come with me," said he. "If the warden would only tell me what court I was wanted in I could just as well come alone and return after court. I have nothing left now but my honor, and if I should lose that, why God help me." This is not morbidly. What is it.

A CUP OF COLD WATER.—In one of the terrible battles in Virginia a union officer fell wounded, in front of the confederate breast-works, and while he was lying on the ground and crying piteously for water, James Moore, of Barke county, N. C., a confederate soldier, leaped over the fortifications, came in hand, and crawling up to the poor fellow gave him a drink. The wounded man took out his gold watch and offered it to his benefactor, but it was refused. He then asked for the confederate soldier's name and the two men parted. Moore subsequently lost a limb in one of the Virginia battles and returned a cripple to his home. The Raleigh News now tells the sequel to this strange adventure. A few days ago Moore received from the union soldier to whom he had given the cup of water a letter announcing that the sum of ten thousand dollars would be paid to him in four annual installments.

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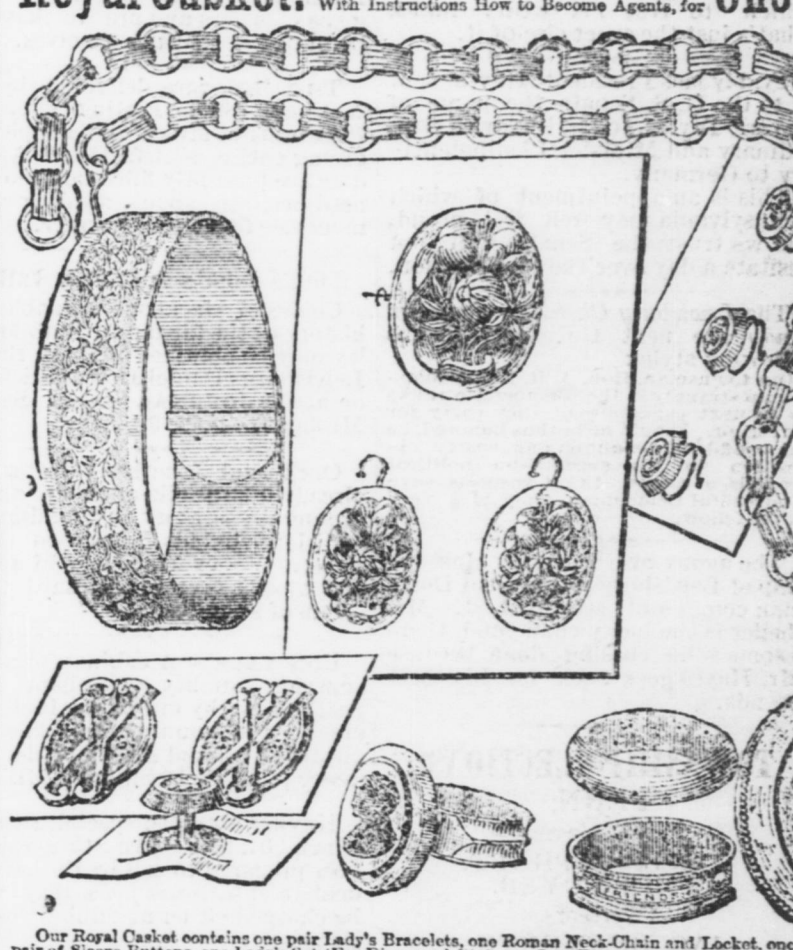
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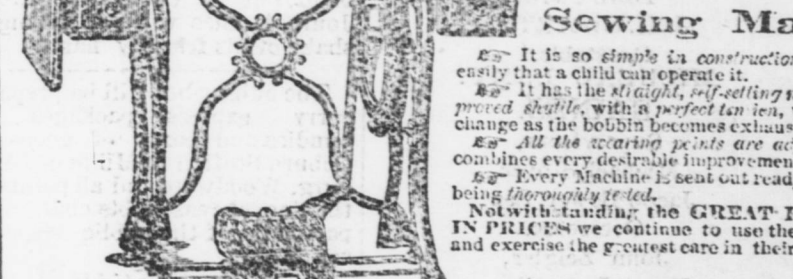
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