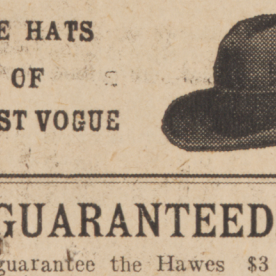





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A GALLOWS MYSTERY

John Lee's Remarkable Experience on the Scaffold.

FACED DEATH THREE TIMES.

And Three Times the Trap, Which Had Previously Been Tested and Found in Good Working Order, Refused to Open When the Bolt Was Drawn.

One of the most remarkable scenes ever witnessed on the gallows took place in England in the last century. Early on the morning of Feb. 23, 1888, a considerable crowd of people gathered before the grim front of Exeter prison. It was a silent crowd, shivering in the keen wind that blew around those frowning walls on that dull, misty morning, and its eyes were all bent on a flagstaff which stood bare. They were waiting for a flag to be hoisted—the terrible black flag which should announce that justice had been done on a murderer.

Inside the prison a warder stood ready, holding in his hand the cord which should hoist the hideous black drapery lying on the ground at his feet, but the signal did not come. Instead of it there arrived an excited prison officer.

"The flag will not be hoisted. Lee will not be hanged today," he said.

John Lee, the prisoner whose death signal that crowd had awaited, had had one of the most remarkable escapes from capital punishment recorded in our prison history. To this day it remains somewhat of a mystery how John Lee lived so many years after the events of that terrible morning.

"I had a dream," the wretched man wrote to his sister the day after his fearful experience on the scaffold—"I had a dream on Sunday night (the night before the day fixed for the execution) that the scaffold was not ready and that they had to make another. I told the officers that were on watch over me at 6 o'clock in the morning, but I did not think it was coming true. But it did. It was the Lord's will that I should live."

John Lee did not exaggerate his awful experience. At 8 in the morning of that February day he had been led from his cell to die. In what had been the coach house of the prison the gallows had been erected. Beneath was a deep pit covered by the closed doors, which, when the condemned man was placed in proper position, should, at a signal from the executioner, fly open, a bolt being withdrawn by an assistant pulling a lever. The whole arrangement had been tested several times and had worked satisfactorily. But now, with John Lee standing there with the cap drawn over his face and the hangman's rope around his neck, the door doors beneath his feet would not give way! Berry made the fatal signal, the assistant pulled the lever, the bolt flew back, but the doors kept their place. Then warders rushed forward and stamped with their feet upon the doors. They remained firm. Lee was led aside, and carpenters were called in to saw some of the woodwork away. Again all was ready. The clergyman once more came to the words, "In the midst of life we are in death." Again the signal was given, the lever was pulled, but the doors refused to part.

John Lee stood there before them alive! Three times did that happen. For no fewer than eighteen minutes Lee stood there tasting the agony of momentarily expected death.

Then the white cap was taken from his face and the rope from around his neck, and he was led back to prison, while the jail authorities hastily conferred as to what should be done. A telegram was dispatched to the home secretary, Sir William Harcourt, informing him of the extraordinary occurrence and requesting instructions. Later the undersheriff proceeded to London to interview the secretary.

"I felt," said Sir William Harcourt later in the house of commons, "that it would shock the feelings of every one if this man were called upon to again undergo the pangs of imminent death, and I consequently signed a respite during her majesty's pleasure."

Eased His Conscience. An amusing story is related of John Hopkins. Honesty was evidently one of the fundamental traits of his character. On one occasion he was sent by his mother to borrow a fathom of a neighbor. The good neighbor gave him the fathom and at the same time offered him a piece of pie.

"No, thank you. I don't want any pie," said the red faced boy as he started home. Halfway there the pie and his conscience were too much for him. He wheeled about and knocked again at the neighbor's door, his face redder than ever. "I told you a story," he explained; "I did want that pie."

A Last Resort. First Farm Servant—Why did the farmer's wife give you notice? Second Farm Servant—She said I was no good for anything. I couldn't even mind the sheep. So I am going into the town to be a nursemaid.

Riches are like sea water, the more you drink the thirstier you become.—Schopenhauer.

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Plans and specifications may be seen at the Office of the Station Agent at Amherst, N. S., and at the Chief Engineer's Office, Moncton, N. B., at which places forms of tender may be obtained.

All the conditions of the specification must be complied with.

D. POTTINGER, General Manager.

Railway Office, Moncton, N. B., May 18th, 1907.

May 22—d111.

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