

***JOSEPH
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***THE TEXAN
STAR***

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The Texan Star

The Story of a Great Fight for Liberty

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PREFACE

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"The Texan Star," while a complete story in itself, is the first of three, projected by the author, and based upon the Texan struggle for liberty against the power of Mexico. This revolution, epic in its nature, and crowded with heroism and great events, divides itself naturally into three parts.

The first phase begins in Mexico with the treacherous imprisonment of Austin, the Texan leader, the rise of Santa Anna and his attempt, through bad faith, to disarm the Texans and leave them powerless before the Indians. It culminates in the rebellion of the Texans, and their capture, in the face of great odds, of San Antonio, the seat of the Mexican power in the north.

The second phase is the coming of Santa Anna with an overwhelming force, the fall of the Alamo, the massacre of Goliad and the dark days of Texas. Yet the period of gloom is relieved by the last stand of Crockett, Bowie, and their famous comrades.

The third phase is the coming of light in the darkness, Houston's crowning victory at San Jacinto, and the complete victory of the Texans.

The story of the Texan fight for freedom has always appealed to the author, as one of the most remarkable of modern times.

THE TEXAN STAR

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CHAPTER I

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THE PRISONERS

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A boy and a man sat in a room of a stone house in the ancient City of Mexico, capital in turn of Aztec, Spaniard and Mexican. They could see through the narrow windows masses of low buildings and tile roofs, and beyond, the swelling shape of great mountains, standing clear against the blue sky. But they had looked upon them so often that the mind took no note of the luminous spectacle. The cry of a water-seller or the occasional jingle of a spur came from the street below, but these, too, were familiar sounds, and they were no longer regarded.

The room contained but little furniture and the door was of heavy oak. Its whole aspect indicated that it was a prison. The man was of middle years, and his face showed a singular blend of kindness and firmness. The pallor of imprisonment had replaced his usual color. The boy was tall and strong and his cheeks were yet ruddy. His features bore some resemblance to those of his older comrade.

"Ned," said the man at last, "it has been good of you to stay with me here, but a prison is no place for a boy. You must secure a release and go back to our people."

The boy smiled, and his face, in repose rather stern for one so young, was illumined in a wonderful manner.

"I don't want to leave you, Uncle Steve," he said, "and if I did it's not likely that I could. This house is strong, and it's a

long way from here to Texas."

"Perhaps I can induce them to let you go," said the man. "Why should they wish to hold one so young?"

Edward Fulton did not reply because he saw that Stephen Austin was speaking to himself rather than his companion. Instead, he looked once more through the window and over the city at the vast white peaks of Popocatepetl and Ixtaccihuatl silent and immutable, forever guarding the skyline. Yet they seemed to call to him at this moment and tell him of freedom. The words of the man had touched a spring within him and he wanted to go. He could not conceal from himself the fact that he longed for liberty with every pulse and fiber. But he resolved, nevertheless, to stay. He would not desert the one whom he had come to serve.

Stephen Austin, the real founder of Texas, had now been in prison in Mexico more than a year. Coming to Saltillo to secure for the Texans better treatment from the Mexicans, their rulers, he had been seized and held as a criminal. The boy, Edward Fulton, was not really his nephew, but an orphan, the son of a cousin. He owed much to Austin and coming to the capital to help him he was sharing his imprisonment.

"They say that Santa Anna now has the power," said Ned, breaking the somber silence.

"It is true," said Stephen Austin, "and it is a new and strong reason why I fear for our people. Of all the cunning and ambitious men in Mexico, Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna is the most cunning and ambitious. I know, too, that he is the most able, and I believe that he is the most dangerous to those of us who have settled in Texas. What a country is

this Mexico! Revolution after revolution! You make a treaty with one president to-day and to-morrow another disclaims it! More than one of them has a touch of genius, and yet it is obscured by childishness and cruelty!"

He sighed heavily. Ned, full of sympathy, glanced at him but said nothing. Then his gaze turned back to the mighty peaks which stood so sharp and clear against the blue. Truth and honesty were the most marked qualities of Stephen Austin and he could not understand the vast web of intrigue in which the Mexican capital was continually involved. And to the young mind of the boy, cast in the same mold, it was yet more baffling and repellent.

Ned still stared at the guardian peaks, but his thoughts floated away from them. His head had been full of old romance when he entered the vale of Tenochtitlan. He had almost seen Cortez and the conquistadores in their visible forms with their armor clanking about them as they stalked before him. He had gazed eagerly upon the lakes, the mighty mountains, the low houses and the strange people. Here, deeds of which the world still talked had been done centuries ago and his thrill was strong and long. But the feeling was gone now. He had liked many of the Mexicans and many of the Mexican traits, but he had felt with increasing force that he could never reach out his hand and touch anything solid. He thought of volcanic beings on a volcanic soil.

The throb of a drum came from the street below, and presently the shrill sound of fifes was mingled with the steady beat. Ned stood up and pressed his head as far forward as the bars of the window would let him.

"Soldiers, a regiment, I think," he said. "Ah, I can see them now! What brilliant uniforms their officers wear!"

Austin also looked out.

"Yes," he said. "They know how to dress for effect. And their music is good, too. Listen how they play."

It was a martial air, given with a splendid lilt and swing. The tune crept into Ned's blood and his hand beat time on the stone sill. But the music increased his longing for liberty. His thoughts passed away from the narrow street and the marching regiment to the North, to the wild free plains beyond the Rio Grande. It was there that his heart was, and it was there that his body would be.

"It is General Cos who leads them," said Austin. "I can see him now, riding upon a white horse. It's the man in the white and silver uniform, Ned."

"He's the brother-in-law of Santa Anna, is he not?"

"Yes, and I fear him. I know well, Ned, that he hates the Texans—all of us."

"Perhaps the regiment that we see now is going north against our people."

Austin's brows contracted.

"It may be so," he said. "They give soft words all the time, and yet they hold me a prisoner here. It would be like them to strike while pretending to clear away all the troubles between us."

He sighed again. Ned watched the soldiers until the last of them had passed the window, and then he listened to the music, the sound of drum and fife, until it died away, and they heard only the usual murmur of the city. Then the

homesickness, the longing for the great free country to the north grew upon him and became almost overpowering.

"Someone comes," said Austin.

They heard the sound of the heavy bar that closed the door being moved from its place.

"Our dinner, doubtless," said Austin, "but it is early."

The door swung wide and a young Mexican officer entered. He was taller and fairer than most of his race, evidently of pure Northern Spanish blood, and his countenance was frank and fine.

"Welcome, Lieutenant," said Stephen Austin, speaking in Spanish, which he, as well as Ned, understood perfectly. "You know that we are always glad to see you here."

Lieutenant Alfonso de Zavala smiled in a quick, responsive way, but in a moment his face became grave.

"I announce a visitor, a most distinguished visitor, Mr. Austin," he said. "General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, President of the Mexican Republic and Commander-in-chief of its armies and navies."

Both Mr. Austin and the boy arose and bowed as a small man of middle years, slender and nervous, strode into the room, standing for a few moments near its center, and looking about him like a questing hawk. His was, in truth, an extraordinary presence. He seemed to radiate an influence that at once attracted and repelled. His dark features were cut sharply and clearly. His eyes, set closely together, were of the most intense black that Ned had ever seen in a human head. Nor were those eyes ever at rest. They roamed over everything, and they seemed to burn every object for the single instant they fell there. They never met

the gaze of either American squarely, although they continually came back to both.

This man was clothed in a white uniform, heavy with gold stripes and gold epaulets. A small sword at his side had a gold hilt set with a diamond. He wore a three-cornered hat shaped like that of Napoleon, but instead of the Corsican's simple gray his was bright in color and splendid with plumage.

He was at once a powerful and sinister figure. Ned felt that he was in the presence of genius, but it belonged to one of those sinuous creatures, shining and terrible, that are bred under the vivid sun of the tropics. There was a singular sensation at the roots of his hair, but, resolved to show neither fear nor apprehension, he stood and gazed directly at Santa Anna.

"Be seated, Mr. Austin," said the General, "and close the door, de Zavala, but remain with us. Your young relative can remain, also. I have things of importance to say, but it is not forbidden to him, also, to hear them."

Ned sat down and so did Mr. Austin and young de Zavala, but Santa Anna remained standing. It seemed to Ned that he did so because he wished to look down upon them from a height. And all the time the black eyes, like two burning coals, played restlessly about the room.

Ned was unable to take his own eyes away. The figure in its gorgeous uniform was so full of nervous energy that it attracted like a magnet, while at the same time it bade all who opposed to beware. The boy felt as if he were before a splendid leopard with no bars of a cage between.

Santa Anna took three or four rapid steps back and forth. He kept his hat upon his head, a right, it seemed, due to his superiority to other people. He looked like a man who had a great thought which he was shaping into quick words. Presently he stopped before Austin, and shot him one of those piercing glances.

"My friend and guest," he said in the sonorous Spanish.

Austin bowed. Whether the subtle Mexican meant the words in satire or in earnest he did not know, nor did he care greatly.

"When I call you my friend and guest I speak truth," said Santa Anna. "It is true that we had you brought here from Saltillo, and we insist that you accept our continued hospitality, but it is because we know how devoted you are to our common Mexico, and we would have you here at our right hand for advice and help."

Ned saw Mr. Austin smile a little sadly. It all seemed very strange to the boy. How could one talk of friendship and hospitality to those whom he held as prisoners? Why could not these people say what they meant? Again he longed for the free winds of the plains.

"You and I together should be able to quiet these troublesome Texans," continued Santa Anna—and his voice had a hard metallic quality that rasped the boy's nerves. "You know, Stephen Austin, that I and Mexico have endured much from the people whom you have brought within our borders. They shed good Mexican blood at the fort, Velasco, and they have attacked us elsewhere. They do not pay their taxes or obey our decrees, and when I send my officers to make them obey they take down their long rifles."

Austin smiled again, and now the watching boy thought the smile was not sad at all. If Santa Anna took notice he gave no sign.

"But you are reasonable," continued the Mexican, and now his manner was winning to an extraordinary degree. "It was my predecessor, Farias, who brought you here, but I would not see you go, because I love you like a brother, and now I have come to you, that between us we may calm your turbulent Texans."

"But you must bear in mind," said Austin, "that our rights have been taken from us. All the clauses of our charter have been broken, and now your Congress has decreed that we shall have only one soldier to every five hundred inhabitants and that all the rest of us shall be disarmed. How are we, in a wild country, to protect ourselves from the Comanches, Lipans and other Indians who roam everywhere, robbing and murdering?"

Austin's face, usually so benevolent, flushed and his eyes were very bright. Ned looked intently at Santa Anna to see how he would take the daring and truthful indictment. But the Mexican showed no confusion, only astonishment. He threw up his hands in a vivid southern gesture and looked at Austin in surprised reproof.

"My friend," he said in injured but not angry tones, "how can you ask me such a question? Am I not here to protect the Texans? Am I not President of Mexico? Am I not head of the Mexican army? My gallant soldiers, my horsemen with their lances and sabers, will draw a ring around the Texans through which no Comanche or Lipan, however daring, will be able to break."

He spoke with such fire, such appearance of earnestness, that Ned, despite a mind uncommonly keen and analytical in one so young, was forced to believe for a moment. Texas, however, was far and immense, and there were not enough soldiers in all America to put a ring around the wild Comanches. But the impression remained longer with Austin, who was ever hoping for the best, and ever seeing the best in others.

Ned was a silent boy who had suffered many hardships, and he had acquired the habit of thought which in its turn brought observation and judgment. Yet if Santa Anna was acting he was doing it with consummate skill, and the boy who never said a word watched him all the time.

Santa Anna began to talk now of the great future that awaited the Texans under the banner of Mexico. He poured forth the words with so much Latin fervor that it was almost like listening to a song. Ned felt the influence of the musical roll coming over him again, but, with an effort of the will that was almost physical, he shook it off.

Santa Anna painted the picture of a dream, a gorgeous dream of many colors. Mexico was to become a mighty country and the Texans with their cool courage and martial energy would be no mean factor in it. Austin would be one of his lieutenants, a sharer in his greatness and reward. His eloquence was wonderful, and Ned felt once more the fascination of the serpent. This was a man to whom only the grand and magnificent appealed, and already he had achieved a part of his dream.

Ned moved a little closer to the window. He wished the fresh air to blow upon his face. He saw that Mr. Austin was

fully under the spell. Santa Anna was making the most beautiful and convincing promises. He himself was going to Texas. He was the father of his people. He would right every wrong. He loved the Texans, these children of the north who had come to his country for a home. No one could ever say that he appealed in vain to Santa Anna for protection. Texans would be proud that they were a part of Mexico, they would be glad to belong to a nation which already had a glorious history, and to come to a capital which had more splendor and romance than any other in America.

Ned literally withdrew his soul within itself. He sought to shut out the influence that was radiating from this singular and brilliant figure, but he saw that Mr. Austin was falling more deeply under it.

"Look!" said Santa Anna, taking the man by the arm in the familiar manner that one old friend has with another and drawing him to the window. "Is not this a prospect to enchant? Is not this a capital of which you and I can well be proud?"

He lifted a forefinger and swept the half curve that could be seen from the window. It was truly a panorama that would kindle the heart of the dullest. Forty miles away the white crests of Popocatepetl and Ixtaccihuatl still showed against the background of burning blue, like pillars supporting the dome of heaven. Along the whole line of the half curve were mountains in fold on fold. Below the green of the valley showed the waters of the lake both fresh and salt gleaming with gold where the sunlight shot down upon them. Nearer rose the spires of the cathedral, and then the sea of tile roofs burnished by the vivid beams.

Santa Anna stood in a dramatic position, his finger still pointing. There was scarcely a day that Ned did not feel the majesty of this valley of Tenochtitlan, but Santa Anna deepened the spell. Could the world hold another place its equal? Might not the Texans indeed have a glorious future in the land of which this city was the capital? Poetry and romance appealed powerfully to the boy's thoughtful mind, and he felt that here in Mexico he was at their very heart. Nothing else had ever moved him so much.

"You are pleased! It impresses you!" said Santa Anna to Austin. "I can see it on your face. You are with us. You are one of us. Ah, my friend, how noble it is to have a great heart."

"Do I go with your message to the Texans?" asked Austin.

"I must leave now, but I shall come again soon, and I will tell you all. You shall carry words that will satisfy every one of them."

He threw his arms about Austin's shoulders, gave Ned a quick salute, and then left the room, taking young de Zavala with him, Ned heard the heavy bar fall in place on the outside of the door, and he knew that they were shut in as tightly as ever. But Mr. Austin was in a glow.

"What a wonderful, flexible mind!" he said, more to himself than to the boy. "I could have preferred a sort of independence for Texas, but since we're to be ruled from the City of Mexico, Santa Anna will do the best he can for us. As soon as he sweeps away the revolutionary troubles he will repair all our injuries."

Ned was silent. He knew that the generous Austin was still under Santa Anna's magnetic spell, but after his

departure the whole room was changed to the boy. He saw clearly again. There were no mists and clouds about his mind. Moreover, the wonderful half curve before the window was changing. Vapors were rolling up from the south and the two great peaks faded from view. Trees and water in the valley changed to gray. The skies which had been so bright now became somber and menacing.

The boy felt a deep fear at his heart, but Mr. Austin seemed to be yet under the influence of Santa Anna, and talked cheerfully of their speedy return to Texas. Ned listened in silence and unbelief, while the gloom outside deepened, and night presently came over Anahuac. But he had formed his resolution. He owed much to Mr. Austin. He had come a vast distance to be at his side, and to serve him in prison, but he felt now that he could be of more use elsewhere. Moreover, he must carry a message, a warning to those who needed it sorely. One of the windows opened upon the north, and he looked intently through it trying to pierce, with the mind's eye at least, the thousand miles that lay between him and those whom he would reach with the word.

Mr. Austin had lighted a candle. Noticing the boy's gloomy face, he patted him on the head with a benignant hand and said:

"Don't be down of heart, Edward, my lad. We'll soon be on our way to Texas."

"But this is Mexico, and it is Santa Anna who holds us."

"That is true, and it is Santa Anna who is our best friend."

Ned did not dispute the sanguine saying. He saw that Mr. Austin had his opinion, and he had his. The door was

opened again in a half hour and a soldier brought them their supper. Young de Zavala, who was their immediate guardian, also entered and stood by while they ate. They had never received poor food, and to-night Mexican hospitality exerted itself—at the instance of Santa Anna, Ned surmised. In addition to the regular supper there was an ice and a bottle of Spanish wine.

"The President has just given an order that the greatest courtesy be shown to you at all times," said de Zavala, "and I am very glad. I, too, have people in that territory of ours from which you come—Texas."

He spoke with undeniable sympathy, and Ned felt his heart warm toward him, but he decided to say nothing. He feared that he might betray by some chance word the plan that he had in mind. But Mr. Austin, believing in others because he was so truthful and honest himself, talked freely.

"All our troubles will soon be over," he said to de Zavala.

"I hope so, Señor," said the young man earnestly.

By and by, when de Zavala and the soldier were gone, Ned went again to the window, stood there a few moments to harden his resolution, and then came back to the man.

"Mr. Austin," he said, "I am going to ask your consent to something."

The Texan looked up in surprise.

"Why, Edward, my lad," he said kindly, "you don't have to ask my consent to anything, after the way in which you have already sacrificed yourself for me."

"But I am not going to stay with you any longer, Mr. Austin—that is, if I can help it. I am going back to Texas."

Mr. Austin laughed. It was a mellow and satisfied laugh.

"So you are, Edward," he said, "and I am going with you. You will help me to bear a message of peace and safety to the Texans."

Ned paused a moment, irresolute. There was no change in his determination. He was merely uncertain about the words to use.

"There may be delays," he said at last, "and—Mr. Austin, I have decided to go alone—and within the next day or two if I can."

The Texan's face clouded.

"I cannot understand you," he said. "Why this hurry? It would in reality be a breach of faith to our great friend, Santa Anna—that is, if you could go. I don't believe you can."

Ned was troubled. He was tempted to tell what was in his mind, but he knew that he would not be believed, so he fell back again upon his infinite capacity for silence. Mr. Austin read resolution in the closed lips and rigid figure.

"Do you really mean that you will attempt to steal away?" he asked.

"As soon as I can."

The man shook his head.

"It would be better not to do so," he said, "but you are your own master, and I see I cannot dissuade you from the attempt. But, boy, you will promise me not to take any unnecessary or foolish risks?"

"I promise gladly, and, Mr. Austin, I hate to leave you here."

Their quarters were commodious and Ned slept alone in a small room to the left of the main apartment. It was a bare

place with only a bed and a chair, but it was lighted by a fairly large window. Ned examined this window critically. It had a horizontal iron bar across the middle, and it was about thirty feet from the ground. He pulled at the iron bar with both hands but, although rusty with time, it would not move in its socket. Then he measured the two spaces between the bar and the wall.

Hope sprang up in the boy's heart. Then he did a strange thing. He removed nearly all his clothing and tried to press his head and shoulders between the bar and the wall. His head, which was of the long narrow type, so common in the scholar, would have gone through the aperture, had it not been for his hair which was long, and which grew uncommonly thick. His shoulders were very thick and broad and they, too, halted him. He drew back and felt a keen thrill of disappointment.

But he was a boy who usually clung tenaciously to an idea, and, sitting down, he concentrated his mind upon the plan that he had formed. By and by a possible way out came to him. Then he lay down upon the bed, drew a blanket over him because the night was chill in the City of Mexico, and calmly sought sleep.

CHAPTER II

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A HAIR-CUT

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The optimism of Mr. Austin endured the next morning, but Ned was gloomy. Since it was his habit to be silent, the man did not notice it at first. The breakfast was good, with tortillas, frijoles, other Mexican dishes and coffee, but the boy had no appetite. He merely picked at his food, made a faint effort or two to drink his coffee and finally put the cup back almost full in the saucer. Then Mr. Austin began to observe.

"Are you ill, Ned?" he asked. "Is this imprisonment beginning to tell upon you? I had thought that you were standing it well. Can't you eat?"

"I don't believe I'm hungry," replied the boy, "but there is nothing else the matter with me. I'll be all right, Uncle Steve. Don't you bother about me."

He ate a little breakfast, about one half of the usual amount, and then, asking to be excused, went to the window, where he again stared out at the tiled roofs, the green foliage in the valley of Mexico and the ranges and peaks beyond. He was taking his resolution, and he was carrying it out, but it was hard, very hard. He foresaw that he would have to strengthen his will many, many times. Mr. Austin took no further worry on Ned's account, thinking that he would be all right again in a day or two.

But at the dinner which was brought to them in the middle of the day Ned showed a marked failure of appetite, and Mr. Austin felt real concern. The boy, however, was sure that he would be all right before the day was over.

"It must be the lack of fresh air and exercise," said Mr. Austin. "You can really take exercise in here, Ned. Besides, you said that you were going to escape. If you fall ill you will have no chance at all."

He spoke half in jest, but Ned took him seriously.

"I am not ill, Uncle Steve," he said. "I really feel very well, but I have lost my appetite. Maybe I am getting tired of these Mexican dishes."

"Take exercise! take exercise!" said Mr. Austin with emphasis.

"I think I will," said Ned.

Physical exercise, after all, fitted in with his ideas, and that afternoon he worked hard at all the gymnastic feats possible within the three rooms to which they were confined. De Zavala came in and expressed his astonishment at the athletic feats, which Ned continued with unabated zeal despite his presence.

"Why do you do these things?" he asked in wonder.

"To keep myself strong and healthy. I ought to have begun them sooner. The Mexican air is depressing, and I find that I am losing my appetite."

De Zavala's eyes opened wide while Ned deftly turned a handspring. Then the young American sat down panting, his face flushed with as healthy a color as one could find anywhere.

"You'll have an appetite to-night," said Mr. Austin. But to his great amazement Ned again played with his food, eating only half the usual amount.

"You're surely ill," said Mr. Austin. "I've no doubt de Zavala would allow us to have a physician, and I shall ask him for one."

"Don't do it, Uncle Steve," begged Ned. "There's nothing at all the matter with me, and anyhow I wouldn't want a Mexican doctor fussing over me. I've probably been eating too much."

Mr. Austin was forced to accede. The boy certainly did not look ill, and his appetite was bound to become normal again in a few days. But it did not. As far as Mr. Austin could measure it, Ned was eating less and less. It was obvious that he was thinner. He was also growing much paler, except for a red flush on the cheek bones. Mr. Austin became alarmed, but Ned obstinately refused any help, always asserting with emphasis that he had no ailment of any kind. But the man could see that he had become much lighter, and he wondered at the boy's physical failure. De Zavala, also, expressed his sorrow in sonorous Spanish, but Ned, while thanking them, steadily disclaimed any need of sympathy.

The boy found the days hard, but the nights were harder. For the first time in his life he could not sleep well. He would lie for hours so wide awake that his eyes grew used to the dark, and he could see everything in his room. He was troubled, too, by bad dreams and in many of these dreams he was a living skeleton, wandering about and condemned to live forever without food. More than once he bitterly

regretted the resolution he had taken, but having taken it, he would never alter it. His silent, concentrated nature would not let him. Yet he endured undoubted torture day by day. Torture was the only name for it.

"I shall send an application to President Santa Anna to have you allowed a measure of liberty," said Mr. Austin finally. "You are simply pining away here, Edward, my lad. You cannot eat, that is, you eat only a little. I have passed the most tempting and delicate things to you and you always refuse. No boy of your age would do so unless something were very much wrong with his physical system. You have lost many pounds, and if this keeps on I do not know what will happen to you. I shall not ask for more liberty for you, but you must have a doctor at once."

"I do not want any doctor, Uncle Steve," said the boy. "He cannot do me any good, but there is somebody else whom I want."

"Who is he?"

"A barber."

"A barber! Now what good can a barber do you?"

"A great deal. What I crave most in the world is a hair-cut, and only a barber can do that for me. My hair has been growing for more than three months, Uncle Steve, and you've seen how extremely thick it is. Now it is so long, too, that it's falling all about my eyes. Its weight is oppressing my brain. I feel a little touch of fever now and then, and I believe it's this awful hair."

He ran his fingers through the heavy locks until his head seemed to be surrounded with a defense like the quills of a

porcupine. Beneath the great bush of hair his gray eyes glowed in a pale, thin face.

"There is a lot of it," said Mr. Austin, surveying him critically, "but it is not usual for anybody in our situation to be worrying about the length and abundance of his hair."

"I'm sure I'd be a lot better if I could get it cut close."

"Well, well, if you are taking it so much to heart we'll see what can be done. You are ill and wasted, Edward, and when one is in that condition a little thing can affect his spirits. De Zavala is a friendly sort of young fellow and through him we will send a request to Colonel Sandoval, the commander of the prisons, that you be allowed to have your hair cut."

"If you please, Uncle Steve," said Ned gratefully.

Mr. Austin was not wrong in his forecast about Lieutenant de Zavala. He showed a full measure of sympathy. Hence a petition to Colonel Martin Sandoval y Dominguez, commander of prisons in the City of Mexico, was drawn up in due form. It stated that one Edward Fulton, a Texan of tender years, now in detention at the capital, was suffering from the excessive growth of hair upon his head. The weight and thickness of said hair had heated his brain and destroyed his appetite. In ordinary cases of physical decline a physician was needed most, but so far as young Edward Fulton was concerned, a barber could render the greatest service.

The petition, duly endorsed and stamped, was forwarded to Colonel Martin Sandoval y Dominguez, and, after being gravely considered by him in the manner befitting a Mexican officer of high rank and pure Spanish descent, received approval. Then he chose among the barbers one

Joaquin Menendez, a dark fellow who was not of pure Spanish descent, and sent him to the prison with de Zavala to accomplish the needed task.

"I hope you will be happy now, Edward," said Mr. Austin, when the two Mexicans came. "You are a good boy, but it seems to me that you have been making an undue fuss about your hair."

"I'm quite sure I shall recover fast," said Ned.

It was hard for him to hide his happiness from the others. He felt a thrill of joy every time the steel of the scissors clicked together and a lock of hair fell to the floor. But Joaquin Menendez, the barber, had a Southern temperament and the soul of an artist. It pained him to shear away—"shear away" alone described it—such magnificent hair. It was so thick, so long and so glossy.

"Ah," he said, laying some of the clipped locks across his hand and surveying them sorrowfully, "so great is the pity! What señorita could resist the young señor if these were still growing upon his head!"

"You cut that hair," said Ned with a vicious snap of his teeth, "and cut it close, so close that it will look like the shaven face of a man. I think you will find it so stated in the conditions if you will look at the permit approved in his own handwriting by Colonel Sandoval y Dominguez."

Joaquin Menendez, still the artist, but obedient to the law, heaved a deep sigh, and proceeded with his sad task. Lock by lock the abundant hair fell, until Ned's head stood forth in the shaven likeness of a man's face that he had wished.

"I must tell you," said Mr. Austin, "that it does not become you, but I hope you are satisfied."

"I am satisfied," replied Ned. "I have every cause to be. I know I shall have a stronger appetite to-morrow."

"You are certainly a sensitive boy," said Mr. Austin, looking at him in some wonder. "I did not know that such a thing could influence your feelings and your physical condition so much."

Ned made no reply, but that night he ate supper with a much better appetite than he had shown in many days, bringing words of warm approval and encouragement from Mr. Austin.

An hour or two later, when cheerful good-nights had been exchanged, Ned withdrew to his own little room. He lay down upon his bed, but he was fully clothed and he had no intention of sleep. Instead the boy was transformed. For days he had been walking with a weak and lagging gait. Fever was in his veins. Sometimes he became dizzy, and the walls and floors of the prison swam before him. But now the spirit had taken command of the thin body. Weakness and dizziness were gone. Every vein was infused with strength. Hope was in command, and he no longer doubted that he would succeed.

He rose from the bed and went to the window. The city was silent and the night was dark. Floating clouds hid the moon and stars. The ranges and the city roofs themselves had sunk into the dusk. It seemed to him that all things favored the bold and persevering. And he had been persevering. No one would ever know how he had suffered, what terrific pangs had assailed him. He could not see now

how he had done it, and he was quite sure that he could never go through such an ordeal again. The rack would be almost as welcome.

Ned did not know it, but a deep red flush had come into each pale cheek. He removed most of his clothes, and put his head forward between the iron bar and the window sill. The head went through and the shoulders followed. He drew back, breathing a deep and mighty breath of triumph. Yet he had known that it would be so. When he first tried the space he had been only a shade too large for it. Now his head and shoulders would go between, but with nothing to spare. A sheet of paper could not have been slipped in on either side. Yet it was enough. The triumph of self-denial was complete.

He had thought several times of telling Mr. Austin, but he finally decided not to do so. He might seek to interfere. He would put a thousand difficulties in the way, some real and some imaginary. It would save the feelings of both for him to go quietly, and, when Mr. Austin missed him, he would know why and how he had gone.

Ned stood at the window a little while longer, listening. He heard far away the faint rattle of a saber, probably some officer of Santa Anna who was going to a place outside a lattice, the sharp cry of a Mexican upbraiding his lazy mule, and the distant note of a woman singing an old Spanish song. It was as dark as ever, with the clouds rolling over the great valley of Tenochtitlan, which had seen so much of human passion and woe. Ned, brave and resolute as he was, shivered. He was oppressed by the night and the place. It seemed to him, for the moment, that the ghosts of stern

Cortez, and of the Aztecs themselves were walking out there.

Then he did a characteristic thing. Folding his arms in front of him he grasped his own elbows and shook himself fiercely. The effort of will and body banished the shapes and illusions, and he went to work with firm hands.

He tore the coverings from his bed into strips, and knotted them together stoutly, trying each knot by tying the strip to the bar, and pulling on it with all his strength. He made his rope at least thirty feet long and then gave it a final test, knot by knot. He judged that it was now near midnight and the skies were still very dark. Inside of a half hour he would be gone—to what? He was seized with an intense yearning to wake up Mr. Austin and tell him good-bye. The Texan leader had been so good to him, he would worry so much about him that it was almost heartless to slip away in this manner. But he checked the impulse again, and went swiftly ahead with his work.

He kept on nothing but his underclothing and trousers. The rest he made up into a small package which he tied upon his back. He was sorry that he did not have any weapon. He had been deprived of even his pocket-knife, but he did have a few dollars of Spanish coinage, which he stowed carefully in his trousers pocket. All the while his energy endured despite his wasted form. Hope made a bridge for his weakness.

He let the line out of the window, and his delicate sense told him when it struck against the ground. Six or eight feet were left in his hand, and he tied the end firmly to the bar, knotting it again and again. Then he slipped through the