

(No Model.)

2 Sheets—Sheet 1.

W. HANLON.
BEHEADING BLOCK AND AX.

No. 420,995.

Patented Feb. 11, 1890.

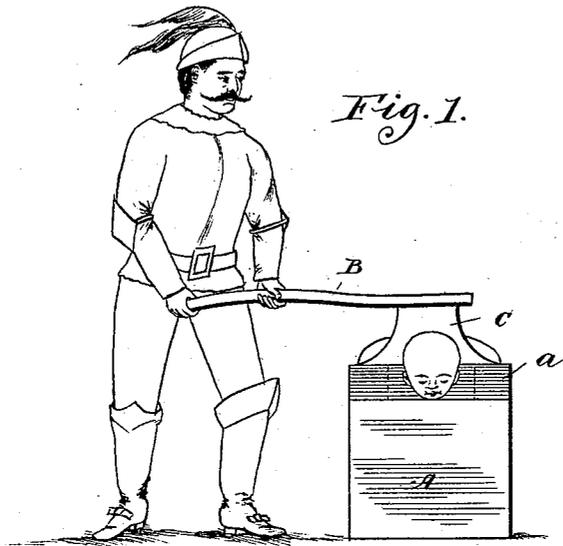


Fig. 1.

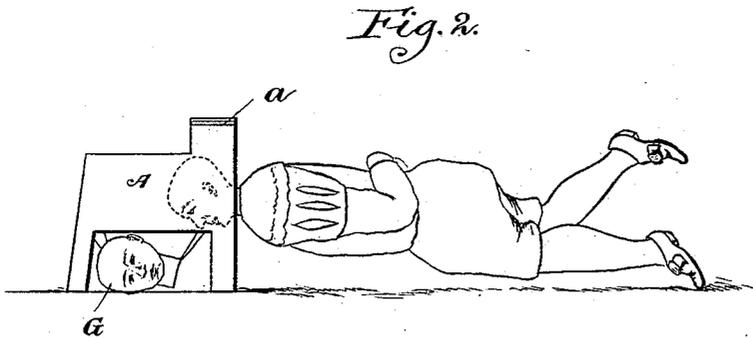


Fig. 2.

Witnesses.

E. J. Mann

R. G. O'Connell

By,

Inventor,

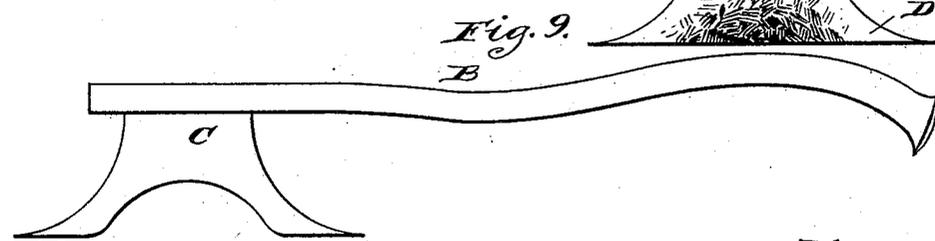
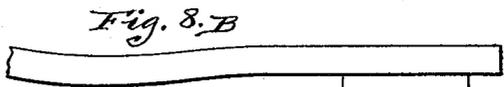
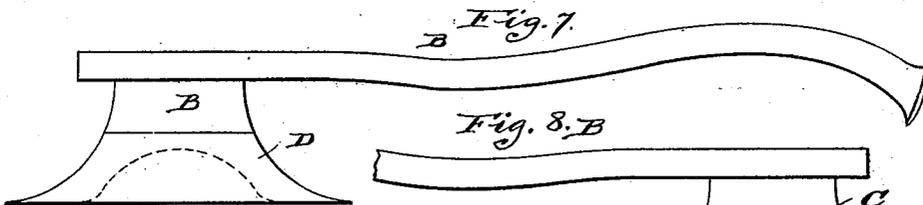
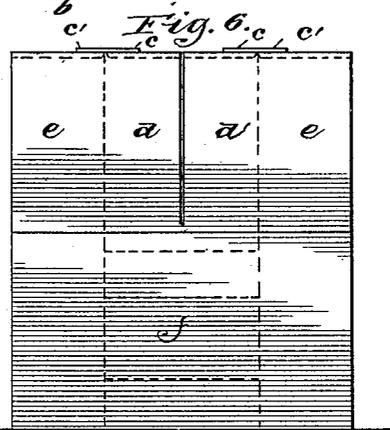
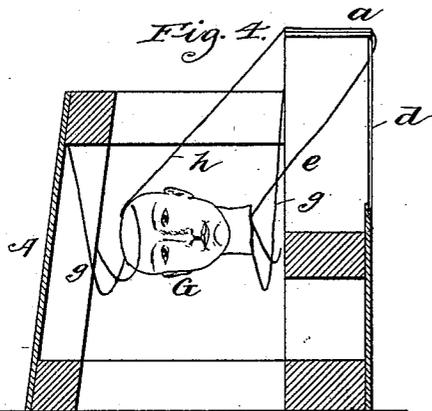
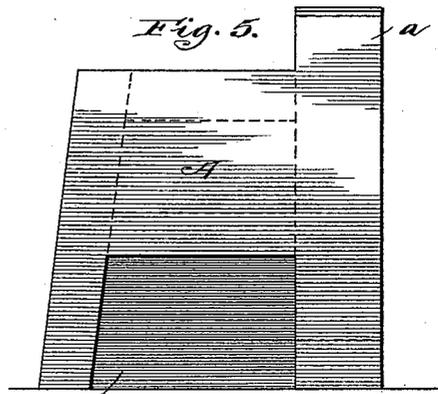
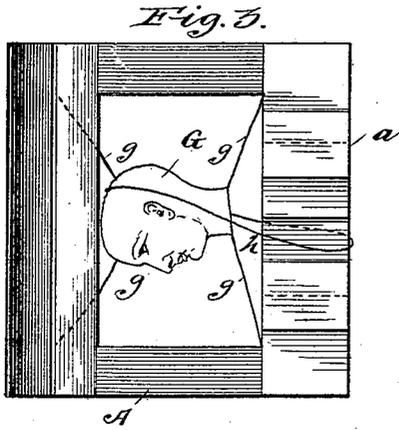
William Hanlon

Elliott & O'Connell
Attys.

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Witnesses,
J. J. Mann,
R. C. O'Connell,

Inventor,
William Hanlon
 By *Elliott & O'Connell*
 Attys.

UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE.

WILLIAM HANLON, OF COHASSET, MASSACHUSETTS.

BEHEADING BLOCK AND AX.

SPECIFICATION forming part of Letters Patent No. 420,995, dated February 11, 1890.

Application filed November 26, 1889. Serial No. 331,710. (No model.)

To all whom it may concern:

Be it known that I, WILLIAM HANLON, a citizen of the United States, and a resident of Jerusalem Road, Cohasset, in the county of Norfolk and State of Massachusetts, have invented a certain new and useful Beheading Block and Ax, of which the following is a specification.

This invention relates to a beheading block and ax to be used upon the stage in a theatrical performance or other entertainment, a part of which is the supposed beheading of a victim selected for that purpose.

The object of this invention is to produce upon the stage in the presence of an audience and under full light an illusive beheading so nearly realistic that as the victim's head lies upon the block the descending ax and block give forth the natural thud of a blow, and the blade appears to actually sever the neck of the victim, and after the seeming separation of the head from the body both simultaneously fall, the body to the floor and the head apparently through the block to an opening at the base thereof at a point removed from its natural position, both in distance and angle, and all this without the employment of reflectors, such as are commonly used for illusive acts of this general character.

A further object of this invention is an illusive headsman's block of such character that no injury can occur to the supposed victim, and that after the illusion has been produced his body will be free to imitate the contortions of death after beheading; and finally to produce certain other realistic effects by certain details of construction hereinafter shown and described in the accompanying drawings, in which—

Figure 1 represents a front elevation of a headsman's block with the ax and the head of the victim in the position when the victim first receives from the executioner the blow of the ax; Fig. 2, a side elevation of the same, showing in dotted lines the head of the supposed victim and the position of his head and body after the completion of the beheading act, with the dummy head in full view of the audience through the opening at the base

of the block; Fig. 3, a top plan view of the block, showing the dummy head suspended therein above the base-opening of the block and in position to be released by the supposed victim as his head descends to within the block after the blow of the ax; Fig. 4, a vertical section of the block, more fully showing the position of the cords suspending the dummy head; Fig. 5, a front elevation of the same; Fig. 6, a rear elevation of the same; Figs. 7, 8, and 9, side elevations of the headsman's ax employed in connection with the block.

The headsman's block A consists, essentially, of a box or frame having in front elevation, as near as may be, the outline of a real headsman's block having the usual neck rest or piece extending along its rear, but provided with an opening *b* near its base. The upper edge of the neck-piece is flat and essentially formed by two flexible strips *c*, rigidly held at their outer ends by clamping-plates *c'* or other suitable fastening devices, so that the inner and meeting ends of said strips shall be free to be pressed apart when depressed. Said flexible strips are preferably made of rubber, but may be made of any other material, and may extend entirely across the upper edge of the neck-piece instead of a portion of it, as shown, and in either construction to be secured by any well-known means, permitting their inner ends to have the flexure before described. In any event, however, the width of the space the flexible strips bridge should be less than the width of the headsman's ax, hereinafter described, so that the extreme ends of the ax will strike the ends of posts *e e*, (indicated in dotted lines in Fig. 3,) in order that the ax may produce an imitation of the dull thud of an ax striking a solid block or neck-piece.

The upper half of the block, including the neck-piece, may be formed of sheets of rubber *d d'*, secured on three sides to the frame of the box, with their meeting edges in close proximity to each other, and below these sheets of rubber with a board *f*, in order that the block may, so far as an audience is concerned, appear to be solid on this side; but, as will presently be seen, it will be no substan-

tial departure from the essence of my invention to have the rear end of the block entirely open, although the closing of it is desirable in order that the illusion may be as perfect as possible in carrying the block on the stage or to persons sitting at one side of the stage in view of the end of the block. In other words, all sides of the block may be or seemingly appear to be closed; but as its essential feature in appearance to an audience is a solid block supported on legs (as is the appearance produced by the opening *b*, see Fig. 5) and a solid neck-piece or a neck-piece of such a character that the victim may, when struck by the ax, imitate the actions of a beheaded person, it is obvious that the essential features of the block lie in the front thereof and in the flexible neck-piece, even when the other parts of the block are an open frame.

The ax employed in connection with this block consists of a handle *B* of the usual form, having secured thereto a blade, also of the usual form in outline, but composed of a forked piece *C*, covered with sheet-rubber *D*, as indicated in Fig. 7, the edge of which forms the edge of the blade between the forks thereof, the said rubber, however, being so united that the entire blade appears to be a single piece of metal, as indicated in Fig. 8. The distance between the forks substantially conforms to the width of opening in the neck-support of the block, so that as the ax is brought down upon the block the ends of the forks will strike on the ends of the posts *e* and the rubber portion of the blade be directly over the opening.

Suspended within the block—that is, back of its front side, and preferably by four cords or wires *g g*—is a dummy head *G*, the lengths of the cords being such that when distended and suspending the dummy head said head will lie on or be suspended in close proximity to the floor and exposed in the opening *b* of the block, the dummy head being held in an elevated position above said opening by means of a cord *h*, looped over one of the flexible strips of the neck-rest, as shown in Fig. 4.

In operating my invention, and in order to give it effect by working up the mind of the audience to the proper pitch, an imprisoned clown has pronounced upon him the sentence of death by a knight, whereupon a number of knights and attendants, executioner, &c., enter the prison, bringing in the head-block and the ax. After some struggling the clown is compelled to lay his head across the neck-piece in the positions indicated in Figs. 1 and 2, whereupon the executioner steps up and, poising the ax in mid-air, suddenly brings it down across the neck of the clown with seemingly tremendous force, and in any event sufficient force to cause the prongs of the blade to strike with a dull thud on the end posts. As the rubber portion of the blade strikes across the neck of the clown,

it of course yields; but in so doing has the appearance of passing through the neck of the clown, who at that time forces his neck and head downward until his head is within the block, as indicated by the dotted lines in Fig. 2, the elastic strips forming the edge of the neck-rest immediately assuming their original position as soon as the neck of the clown has passed between their ends. The same instant that the clown's head enters the block the cord *e* is released from the strip *c*, whereupon the dummy head drops to the position shown in Fig. 2, and then the clown, with his head still in the block, contorts his limbs and body, in imitation of a beheaded person, and while doing so the curtain drops, when he may lift his head out in the same direction it entered, or draw it straight away from the block if the opening between the standards is wide enough, as may be the case. With the use of rubber flaps *d d'* the neck of the clown will pass between them, and to persons having a view of the end of the block they serve to conceal the head and produce an as realistic effect as to the audience directly in front of the block. Of course this by-play leading up to the execution, and also the character of the personages engaged, may be varied to any extent, for it is used merely for the purpose of adding solemnity and realism to the act.

Having described my invention, what I claim, and desire to secure by Letters Patent, is—

1. In an executioner's head-block, the combination, with the body of the block, of a neck-rest provided with an opening closed by flexible strips, substantially as described.

2. In an executioner's head-block, the combination, with the hollow body thereof provided with a front opening next its base, of a neck-rest the top of which is formed by flexible strips opposing each other at their free ends, substantially as described.

3. In an executioner's head-block, the body or front thereof provided with an opening next its space inclosed on its rear end with flexible sheets, in combination with a neck-rest rising above said block and having its upper face formed by opposing flexible strips, substantially as described.

4. In an executioner's head-block, the hollow block provided with an opening in its front face next its base and upon its rear end, flexible strips forming a neck-rest, a suspended dummy head within said block, and a cord *h*, connected with said head and the neck-rest, substantially as described, whereby when the neck-rest is depressed the dummy head will be released and fall before the opening in the block, as set forth.

5. In an executioner's head-block, the combination, with the body of the block, of a neck-rest composed of parallel uprights and opposing flexible strips secured at their upper ends and bridging the space between

them, of a headsman's ax the blade of which
is bifurcated and flexibly covered, substan-
tially as described, whereby when brought
down upon the neck-rest the forks of said
5 blade will strike upon the posts thereof and
the flexible covering bridge the space be-
tween said posts and have a yielding contact

with the object to be beheaded, substantially
as described.

WILLIAM HANLON.

Witnesses:

P. C. HEYDRECK,
J. F. WALTHER.