

ndrix, Walter Frances, C. Strong, John S. H. Coburn, Keating, Jr., James Glenn, Frank Stoops, Wm. D. Keating.

ardsmen were summoned from town, but a list was made out in necessity.

are the proceedings relating to the management and distribution of the prisoners. On January 13th, 1893, Mr. T. E. W. Crew was elected captain of the guards; meeting called to order by Capt. T. E. W. Crew. Moved and seconded that Jos. H. Weer act as secretary. Moved that each district choose their own lieutenant. Moved and seconded that Jack Spear act as lieutenant for first district, Archie Hepbron as lieutenant for the second district, third district represented by Mr. Thomas Mullen, fifth district by Harry Frances, all carried. Moved and seconded that each lieutenant take the names of each man. Districts are divided and names taken by each lieutenant. Moved and seconded that each district furnish 10 men at each watch of one-half hour. Moved and seconded that every man when off duty remain in and around the court house. Each guard to bear visible arms so as to show his authority. Lieutenants take charge of men; first district called out ten men; second district called out ten men. Moved and seconded that the meeting adjourn subject to the call of Capt. Crew.

About seventy men were on guard at different times during the night around the court house and jail.

The jail officers were: Sheriff E. J. Plummer, Deputy Frank S. Plummer, Watchman John H. Greenwood, T. C. Pote, Thos. Stork, Jerome Rambo, Wm. Stevens, John Prettyman and Robert A. Carter.

The Last Night.

State's Attorney William M. Slay, who prosecuted the cases, visited the prisoners about six o'clock and bade them good bye.

Harrison W. Vickers, who assisted in the prosecution, went to see the men several days ago, and standing before Williams' cell, told him that he had done all in his power to secure his conviction, but he had only performed a duty, and had personally no unfriendly feeling against any one of them. Williams replied that he had no hard feelings against him, and reached his hand between the iron bars and asked Mr. Vickers to shake hands with him.

A report became current about 7 o'clock that Brooks had made a full confession, but was without foundation.

At six o'clock Rev. H. R. Sargeant entered the cells of the men and baptized them and held religious services. Revs. Queeley and Dennis remained with the prisoners singing and praying, and Rev. A. A. Murray continued with them during the night. All wrote letters except Comegys. Some of the letters were to be mailed to relatives and friends, and some of them fell into the hands of newspaper men, and contained the oft-repeated statements of innocence. All of them wrote affectionate letters to Watchman Greenwood. Brooks made one of the most eloquent and remarkable prayers possibly ever heard in the Kent county jail. At frequent intervals the men and Comegys offered fervent prayers. At 12 o'clock Comegys retired and was soon asleep; Brooks was writing and Moses Brown was preparing to light a cigar for a smoke before retiring, saying that he felt happy and sure of Heaven, and had nothing to keep him awake. Williams said: "Before this time to-morrow I expect to be in a better place than this. I am ready to die, and feel sure that I am saved." During the night he gave a full account of his proceedings on the night of the murder of Dr. Hill and on the following morning, but protested his innocence. At 12:30 Williams retired, but did not go to sleep, but in response to Brooks' question whether or not he was asleep, he said no, but he had "turned in." Brooks then called: "Moses, what you doing, boy?" Moses answered: "Writing."

A FATHER'S APPEAL—STILL HOPING AGAINST HOPE.

At 1:30 o'clock Mr. Samuel J. Hill and his son entered the corridor of the jail, everybody having withdrawn except the guards. The hope was entertained that the prisoners might be induced to make a statement and divulge their knowledge of the murder. The grief-stricken father of Dr. Hill first approached the cell of Brooks, who had just finished praying. Mr. Hill said almost beseechingly: "Brooks, you only have a few hours to live, and I don't want you to die with a lie on your lips, but tell me all you know of the killing of my son." Brooks said: "Indeed, Mr. Hill, I know nothing about it, I did not see the doctor that night. If I knew anything I would have told long ago." Mr. Hill said impressively "tell the truth, Brooks, you will soon meet the doctor at the judgment bar of God, and if you tell the truth he will be glad to see you, but if you lie he will turn his back upon you." The man reiterated his denial of any knowledge of the crime and said that if he saw the doctor on the night of the murder, he did not know him. He told of the details of finding the cuff and button.

Then the interested questioner went to the cell of Williams, who was soundly sleeping. "Williams," he said, "do you know me?" "Yes, Mr. Hill, I know you," came the prompt response. "Fletcher," said the earnest questioner, "you have only a few more hours before you meet my son at the bar of God. Tell the truth, and have some one there to help you. Tell me all you know about the murder. Williams said: Indeed, Mr. Hill, I know nothing of it. I had nothing against the doctor or anybody else. I have known you ever since I was a little shaver, and have known the doctor for five years, and, indeed, I had nothing against him, and do not know anything about it. I met the doctor on the street that night about 20 yards from his house, and stepped to one side to let him pass, and when he looked up and saw me, he said, 'Hello, Fletcher,' and I said, 'How do doctor,' and I never saw him any more. I know I have got to die, and it would do me no good to lie about it, but, indeed, I know nothing about it. I told the boys if they knew anything against me to tell it, and I would be glad of it, and would not hurt them. I liked the doctor, and do not know anything about it. I wish I could tell you something, and as God's in heaven I would do it."

After some difficulty Moses Brown was awakened, and the anxious father made the same touching appeal for some light as to the killing of his son. He said, "Moses, do you know me?" and received the answer, "Yes, Mr. Hill." But only a positive denial was given to his eager questioning.

Then Comegys was awakened, but most positively disclaimed any knowledge of the crime, and the aged parent, with tears in his eyes and a heart crushed by disappointment, left the jail without scarce uttering a word to numberless questions.

During this interview, a noise on the porch of the jail gave rise to the rumor that lynchers were near, and excitement ran high for a moment, but was soon over.

The Last Morning.

After Mr. Hill's visit, the men rested but poorly, but none of them except Comegys arose until seven o'clock. Rev. A. A. Murray spent the entire night in the corridor with the prisoners, and as soon as the men arose religious devotions were commenced.

Each of the prisoners seemed impressed with the fearful import of his situation, but had no word of revelation to make relative to the harrowing crime which they were so soon to expiate upon the gallows.

Brooks, with tears in his eyes, said: "Indeed, I am to die an innocent man; I know nothing of the killing of Dr. Hill."

Comegys insisted that he could not lie, that he was innocent, and knew nothing of the crime.

Williams stood unflinchingly before his questioners, and insisted upon it, that he was an "innocent boy." "I had nothing against Dr. Hill and did not kill him, and knew nothing of the murder."

Brown, with a serious smile, said that he was happy. He was saved and was ready to go. "I am innocent, and God must be my judge." Just before 10 o'clock Brooks sent for Mr. Donahue, and it was expected that he would unbosom himself of the terrible secret which he possessed, but a crowd gathered round, and with tears on his cheeks, he said that he only wanted to bid him good bye.

During this scene Sheriff Plummer was busily engaged in his bed-room arranging the fatal nooses to be used in the execution. Surrounding the jail, Capt. Crew had his guards patrolling to preserve order. No signs of an outbreak or disorder, however, could be seen in any direction.

No signs of an outbreak or disorder however could be seen in any direction. A large number of persons gathered on the street opposite the jail but perfect quiet prevailed. Curtains were placed over the corridor windows to prevent the intrusion of curious persons. The sound of merry sleigh bells stole in through the dimly lighted and gloomy corridor, but made no impression upon the doomed men, and thus with reading their bibles, praying and talking with those present the tedious hours stole on.

Brooks said in his prayer: "Oh, Lord Jesus, look at my condition, I pray thee. Thou art a God of mercy; thou art a fountain of light for my soul; thou hast warned me; thou has pleaded my guilty cause. Oh, Heavenly master, I thank thee for thy kindness. This may be the last time I bow down to thee."

"Master Jesus, come this way, I pray Thee, and anoint me with the anointment of Thy love. Oh, Lord, I ask Thee to make a pure heart, if it is Thy blessed—in thy righteous will. Reach down Thy lily-white hand, and snatch me from a burning hell. Keep me in the love of Thee every moment of my life, and let me not get astray. Take care of me while I lay down to my sleep, oh Lord, that I may wake up in Thy righteous Kingdom. Oh Lord, turn my mourning into joy, and my hell into a heaven. Oh Lord, have mercy upon those who have no mercy upon themselves. Look upon the servant who ventures to call upon thee," and then followed the Lord's Prayer.

The Drop Falls.

Just as the large hands on the town clock marked twenty-eight minutes of one o'clock, Sheriff E. J. Plummer pulled the trigger, the drop fell and Fletcher Williams, Charles Brooks, Moses Brown and Frisby Comegys were ushered into eternity on the scaffold for the murder of Dr. J. Heighe Hill, near Millington, on the night of April 23d, 1892. The men walked to the scaffold without a quiver of the lips or tremor of the limbs to mark fear, and stood patiently to allow the black caps to be placed over their heads.

The nooses were promptly adjusted and the men shot through the trap. Williams died without a struggle, and in a few minutes all signs of life were gone. Brown was stiff at first, but after about half a minute drew his feet up and gave some signs of a struggle, which was soon at an end. Brooks died a painful and most harrowing death. The rope slipped just a little too far to one side, and though the man at first remained comparatively motionless, after fully a minute he commenced to writhe and draw up his legs and hands. Comegys struggled from the first, and died by far the most agonizing death of any of the men.

A short religious service was held, conducted by Revs. B. A. Queeley and F. S. Dennis, the spiritual advisers of the men, and A. A. Murray, of Edesville. None of the prisoners showed any signs of giving away, and protested their innocence to the last. About three-quarters of an hour before the prisoners started to prepare for the scaffold, Mr. J. S. Hill and his son were admitted to the cell alone, still hopeful of securing some confession of the

particulars of the crime, but each of the prisoners most stoutly protested his innocence.

At 12:03 o'clock, the sheriff gave A. I. Dugan the order to prepare the men for the scaffold.

Brooks' cell was first entered. Brooks was standing at the door, and simply stepped back and was perfectly calm, and was pinioned by Messrs. Dugan and Storks, and while Brooks was being pinioned the other three men were singing. Williams, Brown and Comegys were then successively prepared to meet their fearful doom. While Comegys was being prepared the others were brought into the corridor, and Brooks asked Williams, "How do you feel?" receiving the answer "all right." Brown, somewhat weakening, stood before the cell of Comegys and said: "Gentlemen, I am going for nothing, God knows I am."

He was told to keep his nerve and said "I am, I have enough left." Short scripture texts were read by the ministers and at 12:28 the procession was formed for the gallows. Father Sargeant, B. A. Queeley and F. S. Dennis went on the scaffold with the prisoners. After having hung for twenty minutes the men were cut down at the order of Dr. W. Frank Hines, and examined by Drs. W. F. Hines, John. L. Wethered, of Philadelphia, and C. W. Whaland, J. Horton Kelley, Dr. T. H. Cooper and several other physicians were present.

The bodies were taken in charge by Undertaker John N. Dodd, placed in two wagons, and taken directly to the Alms-house burying ground, where the interment was made. The ministers state that the men all gave every evidence of penitence. The large number of persons who had gathered, became unruly before the execution took place, and a number of boards were torn from the fence, surrounding the jail-yard, and an entrance effected by many persons intent upon seeing the details of the execution.

It is to be regretted that after every possible precaution on the part of Sheriff Plummer, two of the men apparently suffered greatly in the struggle for life.

The gallows worked like a piece of clock work. Mr. Samuel Hill, the father, and two sons, were in town, but did not witness the execution.

And thus ended a drama which has fastened the eyes of the world upon our little commonwealth.

Governor Brown's Position.

In speaking of his action in commuting the sentences, Governor Brown said: "After my visit to Chestertown last week I made up my mind to commute the sentence of the four boys to imprisonment for life. While holding this view I communicated it to no one, fearing if the impression got abroad that the boys were not to be hanged the people of Kent county might in their excited condition resort to some extreme measures. The reasons that influenced me were many. In the first place I had been told that the boys were strong, robust and well-developed physically; that their dispositions were naturally vicious, and that if not punished for this crime their inclinations would sooner or later prompt them to another equally as brutal. I found the boys to be puny, weak striplings, physically incapable of committing a crime of this kind if left to themselves, and without sufficient intelligence to appreciate what a conspiracy meant. I am satisfied that whatever part they took was prompted by the older heads, and, while they may have stood by and witnessed the crime, they did so not because they sanctioned it, but because they had not sense enough to protest or go away."

"While in Chestertown, I was given a great mass of confessions made by the prisoners under various circumstances. Many of these confessions were not submitted to the court at all, and had no part in aiding that tribunal in reaching its conclusions. All these papers I have carefully examined, and I find them very conflicting. I do not question the verdict of the court. Technically, the verdict was a just one, based on the evidence submitted. When the case came before me, however, I was not tied down by close rules of law and practice, but was privileged to take a broader view and judge of it more as a court of equity than as a court of law. Taking this view, I cannot say that conspiracy was fully established, and without this the boys cannot be said to be equally guilty with the men."

"I have acted in the case and feel no regret at the conclusion reached. If I have erred it is on the side of mercy. I am glad that the boys were brought safely to Baltimore, and sincerely hope that no similar case will come before me during the remainder of my term."