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CHESTERTOWN, MD., MAY 2, 1903

GREEN'S CLOSE CALL.

Saved From The Gallows By Telephone Order—Governor Smith's Action.—Story of Execution And Commutation Of Death Sentence To Life Imprisonment In The Penitentiary.

A Special Dispatch to the Baltimore Sun from Easton, Md., April 24, said—Early this morning Sheriff Alexander C. Mortimer, of Talbot county, received a telephone order from Governor Smith, in Baltimore, not to hang Lewis D. Green, colored, as the death sentence had been commuted by the Executive to imprisonment for life in the penitentiary. This message was received a few minutes after 7 o'clock this morning, just as the Sheriff was making final preparations for the execution at 10 o'clock A. M., and the condemned prisoner was engaged in his cell with a colored minister at his devotions. In the room where the Sheriff responded to the telephone call were sheriff Mortimer's wife, his sister and a niece. The caller was Gen. Francis E. Waters, who told the sheriff that Governor Smith wanted to talk to him from the Governor's office in Baltimore.

The sheriff responded: "All right, sir."

Then came another voice: "I am Governor Smith. I have decided to commute the death sentence of the the colored man in your custody—Lewis D. Green—to life imprisonment. Do you understand?"

Sheriff Mortimer—perfectly, sir, and thank you for the good news.

Governor Smith—Don't hang the man. His sentence is commuted: I will send the papers to you at once.

Sheriff Mortimer hung up the receiver with the ejaculation "Thank the Lord!" and, turning to the ladies in the room, told them of the turn affairs had taken, of which they already had an inkling by some of the questions the Sheriff had asked before the telephonic conversation was quite concluded.

All preparations for the execution were immediately suspended, and the glad tidings communicated to the prisoner, the Sheriff saying: "Your sentence has been commuted: you will not be hanged; you will go to the penitentiary for life."

The announcement seemed to strike the prisoner dumb. He did not change a muscle of his face, but silently put his hand through the grating of the door to receive the Sheriff's congratulating grasp.

When he recovered a little from the stunning effect that the sudden revulsion of feeling had occasioned, he simply said:

"Well, Mr. Mortimer, it is the very mischief either way. But I am grateful to the Governor, to you and to the many friends who have stood so well by me through all my trouble."

Encouraged To Hope.

Last night when the Sheriff made a detail of deputies to guard the courthouse green, through which the prisoner was destined to pass from the jail to the armory where he was to be hanged, some of the residents of Easton, fearing the gathering of boisterous crowds of people, advised that the prisoner be hanged at dawn, to avoid excitement. It was the sheriff's intention to do so, but at the last moment Green asked him to make the hour 10 o'clock. The prisoner had seen his sister from Philadelphia, who encouraged him to hope. She said she felt "something would happen," because she had sent letters to Governor Smith from one of the Governor's schoolmates, and the Governor had said in reply: "I will do what is right." It was a lucky thing for Green that his sister had faith and that she had inspired him with hope. But for her faith the "glad tidings" from the Governor would have come too late.

The prisoner's sisters, Lucy Wilson, of Philadelphia, and Louisa Gibson, of Bellevue, were quickly informed of the happy turn of affairs, and went to the prison. They saw their brother a changed man, laughing and chatting and shaking hands. The news had quickly spread over the town. Gen. Joseph B. Seth, the prisoner's counsel, and many other influential citizens went to the jail to congratulate him on his narrow escape.

A Good Sister.

Thursday night Mr. Wilson, of the law firm of Seth & Wilson, saw the prisoner. Green told him he had nothing to say against anyone, but he thought the judges of the court had not been as easy on him as they might have been. The only request he had to make was that his sister, Lucy Wilson, of Philadelphia, should take charge of his three children, and that he should not be executed until she arrived. She did arrive last night about 8 o'clock, and had an interview with Green which buoyed him up and inspired him to ask for a 10 o'clock hanging, instead of execution at dawn—an all-important change of hours for him, as it turned out.

Green received the balance of the money from Mr. Wilson for the sale of the prisoner's little property at Bellevue. This money he gave to Lucy Wilson, with which to pay his funeral expenses. Such of his property as had not been disposed of was given into her control for the benefit of the children. The prisoner was perfectly composed throughout these interviews. While with Mr. Wilson he smoked a cigar.

All the incidents of this case, covering a period of 15 months, have been dramatic. The central figure, a burly black, had by good conduct, honest dealing and thrift, gained the confidence and esteem of hundreds of influential white people. In a fit or desperation he killed his paramour, Carrie Price, a colored adventuress from Baltimore, who had acquired a controling influence over him, and attempted to kill himself. The deed was done at Oxford in February, 1902. At the May term of court he was convicted and sentenced to death. The case was taken to the Court of Appeals on exceptions. The court below was sustained. The Governor fixed the date of execution for April 3. Extraordinary efforts were made for commutation of sentence. The Governor granted a reprieve for three weeks, which ended today, and three hours before the time fixed by the Sheriff to hang the prisoner personally ordered the stay of execution and granted commutation of the death sentence.

THE GOVERNOR'S ACTION.

A Deed Of Clemency Done By Personal Order.

Governor Smith was on the bay Thursday night. It was a sleepless night for him. He was coming up from a business trip to the South. The steamer arrived at Light street wharf shortly before 7 o'clock in the morning. The Governor took a cab and drove at once to the long-distance telephone and gave the order for stay of execution.

Proper verification of the authenticity of the message was supplied. The Sheriff informed the Governor that preparations were then being made to carry the death sentence into effect, and Green would probably have been hanged in a very short while but for this timely outstretching of the hand of mercy over the long-distance wire by the pardoning power.

The formal order of commutation properly signed and sealed, was promptly forwarded to the Sheriff, through the Secretary of State, Hon. Wilfred Bateman.

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Total Admitted Assets	137,148 11
Total Liabilities	25,518 76
Surplus	11,639 35

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