

THE LAST OF HOPKINS.

HE EXPIATES HIS DOUBLE MURDER BY DEATH ON THE GALLOWES.

INCIDENTS CONNECTED WITH HIS LAST DAYS ON EARTH.

Scenes on the Gallows—The Rope Breaks Rendering It Necessary to Carry Him Back to the Scaffold and Hang Him a Second Time.

FORMER EXECUTIONS IN CENTRE COUNTY.



Thursday of this week, the 20th of February, 1890, will long be remembered as the day on which William Seely Hopkins, the murderer of his wife and mother-in-law, was hung in expiation of his atrocious and cowardly offense.

Most of our readers have become familiar with the details of the foul offense for which Hopkins was justly made to answer with his life. It happened on a beautiful Sunday morning, September 20th, 1889, in the town of Philipsburg, this county, about the time the church-goers of that place were repairing to their respective places of worship.

The particulars of this family massacre, and how he subsequently tried to kill himself with the same pistol with which he had slain the two women, have already been fully published as have also the particulars of his arrest, incarceration, trial and conviction. The last act in the bloody tragedy was the one performed on the scaffold on Thursday when the curtain was forever dropped on the drama of Seely Hopkins' misguided life.

He was so extraordinary a criminal, evincing such a reckless indifference to his impending fate, and deporting himself with such unvarying bravado, that something concerning his early life and his doings antecedent to the crime that landed him on the gallows, may be interesting to the reader.

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the 23d of March, 1887. It was not long before family jars arose attended by the marital infelicity which ended in the killing of his wife and mother-in-law.

INCIDENTS PRELIMINARY TO THE EXECUTION.

Mr. Gault and his partner, Mr. Stover, employed most of their time on Monday in setting up the gallows which Centre county finds necessary to have on hand for the execution of her murderers. It had been previously framed and all its parts adjusted at the workshop of its constructors, and in that shape was hauled to the jail on Monday morning.

While it was being put together Hopkins was watching the operation from his cell window and was disposed to take a jocular view of the proceeding. He called down to the workmen to make the scaffold strong as he intended to come down to inspect the work.

On Tuesday Hopkins' well-maintained bravado received a shock when he was taken down from his cell to see his coffin and examine the scaffold. When his eyes fell on the coffin his face grew white and his limbs trembled.

Byers was tried before Judge James Riddle, in Bellefonte, at the November term of Court, 1892. At his execution on the 13th of the following month, which was a public one, as was the custom at that time, a large concourse of people was present, including many of the rough characters employed at the iron works.

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he expressed much satisfaction. He then presented his brother with a \$2.50 gold piece on which was engraved "February 20, 1890," as a remembrance which was certainly a ghastly one, as it bore the date of his execution. He requested his attendant, Clel Bamford, to pass around the cigars, which being done, the party sat down to smoke and engaged in conversation on general subjects.

The following are the jurors officially selected by the Sheriff to witness the execution: Joseph Barton, of Unionville; J. B. Sebring, of Loveville; William Houser, of Bellefonte; W. E. Landon, of Philipsburg; D. B. Kunes, of Eagleville; Cephas Granley, of Rebersburg; D. H. Rhule, of Spring Mills; I. N. Gordon, of Bellefonte; Samuel Aley, of Jacksonville; W. F. Reynolds, Jr., of Bellefonte; Dr. Dunwiddie, of Philipsburg, and Samuel Benison, of Marion.

THE FINAL SCENES.

Hopkins spent a comfortable night immediately preceding his execution, his spiritual advisers being with him until 12 o'clock, when he retired and slept for four hours and woke up apparently refreshed and in good spirits. He ate his breakfast, which consisted of a piece of toast and two eggs, at half after five, with a decided relish.

The procession to the gallows started from the jail at 10.10, moving to the gallows through a crowd of some 200 spectators. He was attended by Sheriff Cooke, Captain Clark, Clel Bamford, Sheriff Leahy, of Clinton county, Deputy Sheriff Wilson, Rev. J. P. Sarvis, of Pleasant Gap, and Rev. T. A. Long, of Howard.

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the case, but that he finally died from strangulation. After hanging for fifteen minutes he was pronounced dead by Dr. Dorworth, the prison physician, and the body was taken down and placed in the coffin that was waiting for its reception. The breaking of the rope, which was caused by the parting of one of the upper strands, was a horrible episode in this revolting tragedy.

Hopkins' body was taken in charge by his brother and brother-in-law, who left with it for Rochester on the 4.20 p. m. train.

CENTRE COUNTY'S OLD TIME EXECUTIONS.—The execution of Hopkins, which will be closely followed by that of Andrews, invests with interest on account of previous executions in this county, which were remarkably limited in number, there being but two, both occurring at an early period in the county's history.

The first was that of a negro named Daniel Byers, which took place on the 13th of December, 1802, very shortly after the formation of Centre county. Byers was found guilty of murdering a mulatto named James Barrows, who was in the employ by John Dunlop, the offense having occurred on the 15th of October, 1802.

This murder took place in the neighborhood of Bellefonte, near Dunlop's, afterwards Valentine's, ironworks, afterwards Valentine's, ironworks, James Barrows, the victim, was a free mulatto, a wagoner of John Dunlop, proprietor of the iron works. It may be of interest to our readers to learn that at that time negro slavery existed to some extent in Pennsylvania, and that the murderer Daniel Byers, or Black Dan, as he was called, was a slave owned by a Mr. Smith, of this neighborhood.

The execution of Monks, which was public and attracted a large crowd, was conducted by Sheriff John Mitchell. Probably with the object of imparting solemnity to the occasion, but which must have had rather a comical appearance, William Armor, a celebrated actor of that period, played the Dead March under the gallows before the culprit was swung off. Some time after the execution it was reported, and many people believed it, that Monks was seen alive, and for years he served as a spook with which to frighten children. His case furnished the subject of much doggerel verse.

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It May Be Too High.

The cost of maintaining prisoners at the Huntingdon reformatory is shown by the bills rendered to the various counties to be at the rate of fifty-five cents per day. This is about three times the cost of maintaining prisoners in the eastern penitentiary, and in many of the counties the officials say this rate is too high.

BRAKEMAN KILLED AT WAYNE.—D. W. Irvin, a freight brakeman, aged about 25 years and unmarried, was instantly killed at Wayne about 8 o'clock Monday morning. He jumped from the pilot of the engine and was running forward to open a switch when he tripped and fell across the rail, the engine passing over him.

troop, leveled McCamant with a blow of his sword, cutting his cap-ribbon through. The disturbance being quieted, William Petrikin stepped up to the half-hung culprit and said: "Dan, you have always been a good boy; go up now and be hung like a man." After this complimentary and encouraging advice Dan's head was again put through the noose and he was hanged without any further interruptions.

From our present point of view it is a curious circumstance connected with Black Dan's trial, that, in accordance with the law at that time, the jury in the verdict that consigned him to the gallows fixed his value as a slave at two hundred and four teen dollars.

The second execution in this county, and the last previous to that of Hopkins, was that of James Monks, which took place in Bellefonte on January 23rd, 1819, he having been convicted of the murder of Reuben Guild, at the November term of court, Judge Huston presiding. The Monks case was a celebrated one and excited intense interest throughout central and western Pennsylvania.

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In the trial, which excited intense interest, Etting, Bradford and Blanchard represented the Common wealth, and Norris, Burnside and Potter were Monks' counsel. Robert McGonegle, Anthony Klechner, Ephraim Lamborn, John Johnston, Frederick Shenck, Absolem Liggett, John Sherick, William White, George Granley, Samuel Wilson, Henry Barnhart and William Johnston, were the "twelve" good and lawful men" who composed the jury, all of whom have long since been as dead as the prisoner when their verdict consigned to the gallows, the last of them, Samuel Wilson, of Potter township, having died on the 18th of September, 1890, at the age of ninety years.

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The Flood Tide of Profligacy.

From a Washington Letter of Col. McClure to the Times.

"It is no longer a secret that we are on the eve of a flood tide of national profligacy. Many Republicans deplore it, but all fear that it cannot be restrained. The new rules break down all the barriers which have held public thieves and jobbers of every hue at bay, and they are now beginning to crowd the lobbies of the hotels and to cast their nets to hold Congressmen in their meshes. Mr. Cramp, the big Republican ship builder of Philadelphia, said to me in this city several years ago that there had been a complete revolution wrought in naval contracts under President Cleveland. Said he: 'I bid for vessels to-morrow, and will get the contracts if I am intitled to them, regardless of politics, and there is not one of the old naval jobbers who hindered honest contractors in the past to be seen now in Washington.' Mr. Cramp received several important contracts, although he voted against Cleveland, but when he now comes to obtain contracts he will see the jobbing vermin of the Robeson and Chandler rings thick around him and ready to ply their vociferous as of old. They regard it as a restoration, and from Nat McKay up or down, they are here or coming and expect a return to the profligate days when an honest ship builder like Mr. Cramp could obtain no contracts. Secretary Tracy and the President doubtless do not mean to invite a restoration of thieves and profligates, but President Arthur did not mean it, and yet it came.

"It is now in no measure doubtful as to the fate of the surplus. It will be appropriated, and more than the surplus, unless the few wise leaders shall be much more successful than is now expected. The new pension bills, which none of the leaders really favor, but which all must support, will alone more than destroy the surplus. Even the most conservative pension bill that is considered as likely to pass would require an increase of fully \$100,000,000 the first year it gets into operation; and whether the service pension bill, or the dependent pension bill shall be adopted, fully \$1,000,000,000 will be required to fulfill the provisions of the new pension legislation. It is probable, also, that the door will again be opened for new arrangements in pensions, and if so, that alone will add \$150,000,000 to the pension expenditure in one year. Even Speaker Reed has taken the alarm at the pension tide, and clandestinely opposed the new rule giving the pension committee special right to the floor. Under the most economic pension legislation now possible, not only the entire surplus must go for new pensions, but it is probable that pensions alone will produce a Treasury deficit in 1891 and that new taxes must be imposed to increase the revenues to the standard of expenditures."

"The party in power is committed to the southern educational scheme. The Senate has passed the Blair bill by a decided vote, only to be defeated in the House, but now the House dare not defeat it on a square vote, and under the new rules a vote cannot be prevented. It calls for some \$70,000,000, and that profligacy may be accepted as inevitable. True it does not take the whole sum at once, but the faith of the government will be given for \$70,000,000, and it must be paid. Then consider how jobbers and party leaders are to be pressed for Rivers and Harbors; for public buildings in every village of political importance; for State claims amounting to hundreds of millions which have accumulated on the records of the House, and for many scores of millions wanted for coast fortifications, the navy, etc., and where is the tide of jobbing and waste to stop?"

The Horrors of Siberia.

CHICAGO, Feb. 17.—A communication has been received here from George Kennan, addressed to the Associated Press. It says: "I have received from two independent sources in Siberia copies of the order of the Russian prison administration by virtue of which Madame Nagzedha Sigida seems to have been flogged to death at the mines of Kara last November. It is as follows: 'On the steamer Nizhni Novgorod, of the volunteer fleet, which is to sail from the port of Odessa on the 20th of March, 1888, there is a party of 528 convicts banished to the island of Saghalien. Among these criminals condemned to penal servitude are the political offenders Vassili Volnot, Sergo Kuzniz, Ivan Meisner and Stanislaus Khrenofski. In notifying you of this fact, the chief prison administration has the honor to respectfully request that you make arrangements to confine these political offenders not in a separate group by themselves, but in the cells of other (common criminal) convicts.

"In making such arrangements it is desirable not to put more than two political into any one cell containing common criminals. In making these arrangements for confining these political in prison and employing them in work no distinction whatever must be made between them and other criminals except in the matter of surveillance, which must be of the strictest possible character. Neither must any difference be made between them and other convicts in respect to punishments inflicted for violation of prison discipline. 'You will not fail to inform the Chief Prison Administration of the manner in which the above named political offenders are distributed on the Island of Saghalien and to forward reports with regard to their behaviour.

M. GALKIN VRANSKOY, Director of the Chief Prison Administration."

Up to the time when this order was issued some difference had been made in Siberian prisons between the treatment of political offenders and the treatment of burglars, highway robbers and murderers.

Both classes were confined in the same dress and fed fetters, but the political were isolated in cells specially set apart for them and were virtually exempt from corporal punishment. They did not enjoy this exemption, however, by virtue of any law. Theoretically, and legally they were liable to the same punishments that were inflicted upon common criminals, namely, 20 to 100 blows with the "trods" or the "plet" (a heavy whip of hardened rawhide with a number of lashes.)