

PITTSBURG, TUESDAY, APRIL 29, 1890.

THE ELECTROCUTION

Everything Ready for the Judicial Thunderbolt at Auburn.

KEMMLER WAITS A SPARK

That Will Mark a New Era in Legal Punishment.

THE NEW DEATH-DEALING DYNAMO

And the Awful Chair That Play a Part in the Tragedy.

SOME NICH POINTS TO BE DECIDED

(CORRESPONDENCE OF THE DISPATCH.) AUBURN, N. Y., April 27.—Kemmler, who will have the distinction of being the first man killed by a judicial thunderbolt, has now closed the last week of his life. Within 24 hours in all probability his body, after being struck by lightning and carved by doctors' knives, will be moldering under a mass of quick lime somewhere within the prison yard.

The day and the hour of the execution are kept a profound secret. Warden Durston's pride is involved. He said again and again that those authorized shall know it. He may do the deed if he likes in the presence of electric light or under glaring gas burners. The seventy-seven men in all must be witnesses. These men the Warden proposes to have on hand in ample time before the fatal hour. They will be cautiously gathered within the prison walls.

When the moment arrives they will be marched down into the gloomy corridor in the basement of the prison. From there they pass through an ante-room into the execution room itself. A door from the

execution room opens into the close quarters set apart for men condemned to die. They are very simple, these apartments. The door from the execution room opens into a narrow little hall or passage. This hall is lighted by a heavily barred window high in the wall. On the outside this window is on a level with the beautiful green lawn of the front prison yard with its gay flower beds and shrubbery. Creeping vines cluster about the window on the gray prison walls, and the constant twitter of birds can be heard even within the condemned man's cell.

The two keepers, William Wemple and Daniel MacNaughton, who set as Kemmler's death watch, sit in the narrow passage to which this window gives light. As you enter from the execution room there is a door of massive iron grating on your right. This door opens into a still narrower passage. It is not over 12 feet long, and just wide enough for a man to enter. This is the little lobby of the two cells which have been specially built for condemned murderers. They are side by side, these two cells, and their walls are of solid steel. The doors are of heavy steel latticed bars. All the daylight which gets into them is reflected from the opposite dead wall, and even when the door is open the light is flung wide open and the day without is of the brightest, this light is dim and sickly. There are gas burners in the lobby in front of the cells, however, and these can be lighted when needed.

Kemmler occupies the cell nearest the door into the keeper's room. There is an iron bed in it, fastened to the iron floor. There is a chair also and a little stand. Upon the wall in a corner is a box wherein Kemmler keeps his Bible, the letters which he has addressed to his wife, and a few little trinkets. Next to this box, with a pencil attached to it, hangs a slate. On this slate, Kemmler has written the date of his execution, and never less than now. He has nothing to do but wait. He has been told that he will be placed in a cell, and that something will instantly and without pain kill him. This he implicitly believes. All the discussions and theories as to terrible tortures, the accounts of the fearful

dumb animals which have been experimented on in the cause of science.

Mrs. Durston has repeatedly impressed upon his mind that he is not to utter a word. "The worst for you, William," she said to him, "will be when they come to put you in the chair. If you struggle to put you in the chair. You must never utter a word for that, and then the rest will be nothing. You will know nothing of it."

"Yes, ma'am," he replied in the simple drollery which is so repulsive to Mrs. Durston. "I know that I shall not be afraid to go into the chair. I will do all I can to help you all in it and make it as little trouble to you as possible. You have all been very kind to me—you and Dr. Durston and Daniel, and I will do just the way you want me to."

Daniel is Mr. McNaughton, one of the death watch. He has always liked Daniel, because he has told him that the stories in the Bible were true, whereas Wemple, the other watchman, whom he always calls Bill,



1—Front of north wing, Auburn prison. 2—Window which lights ante-room occupied by Kemmler's death watch, and also, by reflection, Kemmler's cell. 3—Execution room. 4—Electric wires passing from dynamo over prison roof to the execution chair.

is something of a seceder in religious matters. In fact at one time poor Kemmler was tossed about by bad doubts. The good seed which the good Daniel sowed in his watch, the bad Bill uprooted when it came his turn, and Kemmler (this was some months ago) flutated alternately between rank skepticism, as represented by Bill, and the rigid Scotch Presbyterianism inculcated by Daniel. It was Mrs. Durston's influence that calmed his mind and changed his doubts into a strong faith.

The task which the poor woman had at the outset was an arduous one, indeed. The man's moral nature was almost unbroken. He had never even heard of the story of the Savior, and when Mrs. Durston read it to him for the first time it reached him as a fresh and interesting piece of news. "If I had known about that Savior," he said, "I never would have killed her. I would have let her go away from her."

This was the first time he ever expressed regret for his crime or admitted that he would do otherwise under the same circumstances.

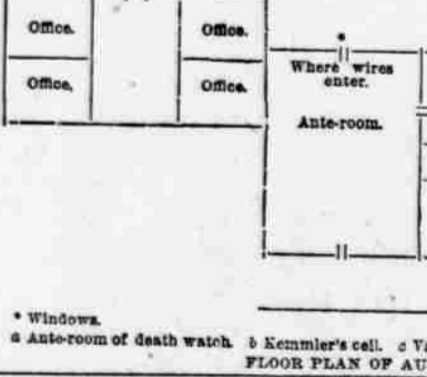
"I should have killed her anyway," he had always said. "It had to come some time, and it might as well have come then as later."

A noteworthy streak in a man of such a nature as his is a fondness for flowers. Mrs. Durston gave him some pansies one day last week, and he was greatly delighted. "They are just like little faces looking at you," he said.

ALL IN READINESS.

The Death-Dealing Dynamo a Pittsburg Product—Playing With Lightning—Some Nice Points to be Determined—Quick Work Expected—The Murderer's Last Chair Described.

The execution ceremonies proper will probably be an affair of but a few minutes. The preparations are now substantially all



FLOOR PLAN OF AUBURN PRISON.

made. The chair itself has not been placed in position, and will not be until a very short time before it will be needed. All the wires are up, however, and the connections made. The dynamo is in the hollow veranda in the west extension of the prison house. It is a Westinghouse dynamo, and can be run up to 2,000 and more volts of an alternating current. It differs in no respect from any other dynamo of the Westinghouse pattern. It will be set in motion by a belt from a shaft which provides machinery in the shops of the same building. The wires pass from the dynamo room to the prison, and so over to the front of the prison. There they pass down the outside of the prison walls and enter the window in the room next to the execution room. They pass down the walls of the execution room a sufficient distance to be easily connected with the

The execution room is about 18x25 feet in size. It was formerly used as the reception room for prisoners—that is to say, the room where they were shaved, bathed and clad in the prison garb. There is a stationary bath tub to the right of the door as you enter, and the barber chair formerly stood next to it. This from one shaft which provides machinery in the shops of the same building. The wires pass from the dynamo room to the prison, and so over to the front of the prison. There they pass down the outside of the prison walls and enter the window in the room next to the execution room. They pass down the walls of the execution room a sufficient distance to be easily connected with the

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Warden Durston is confident from his observation on the experiments made on horses and cattle that death will be as from a thunderbolt, and that scarce a muscle will twitch.

The question of the switch lever by which the current is to be turned on to the wires where they are shined, bathed and clad in the prison garb. There is a stationary bath tub to the right of the door as you enter, and the barber chair formerly stood next to it. This from one shaft which provides machinery in the shops of the same building. The wires pass from the dynamo room to the prison, and so over to the front of the prison. There they pass down the outside of the prison walls and enter the window in the room next to the execution room. They pass down the walls of the execution room a sufficient distance to be easily connected with the

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ordinary handle is not wholly free from danger, and Mr. Durston has had one constructed especially for the purpose. It is of rubber, and he may possibly take the additional precaution of wearing a rubber glove.

Another nice thing to determine will be the length of time the current should remain on. It is hardly possible for doctors to feel for a man's pulse or heart beat while he is part of a chain of lightning, and it will be necessary to know that death actually occurred before the current is shut off. Yet, if the current remains on, there may be the horrible features of roasting and burning which have been incidental to so many deaths by electricity. This will be a question for the experts to determine. Warden Durston, however, does not look for any difficulty on that point. Ever since he saw the horses and other animals killed in the prison by the same dynamo he has had unbounded confidence in its death-dealing powers. It is his opinion that death will occur with the quickness of a flash of light. The whole transaction, according to his calculations, will be done over in less than five minutes, and he is, on the whole, well for the success of the event.

Warden Durston will swing around the fatal lever. And then, what? The answer to that question is something the scientific world is just now awaiting with lively interest. On it hangs, in all probability, the issue of legal execution by electricity. Notwithstanding all the fatal accidents, notwithstanding the successful experiments on horses, cattle and dogs, the fact remains that the execution of Kemmler is to a material extent an experiment. It is not beyond the possibilities that when Warden Durston lets loose his lightning on that condemned wretch there may be a scene of horror down there in the gloomy basement room such as will rival or transcend the most ghastly deeds ever done in the name of the law upon the scaffold. What absolutely positive assurance is there that the chair and sponge contrivance will kill instantly? It has never been tried. How is it certain that the current applied may not merely cause Kemmler to writhe and shriek in just such agony as numbers of men and beasts have undergone when accidentally bit by a powerful electric current? The experiments said to have been made are to be repeated, under the difference in the amount of electric resistance differs in different people, and contrivances for measuring that resistance are far from faultlessly accurate. All this injects an element of uncertainty into the tragically to be enacted next week which gives it a supreme interest. The strong probability is that some of the mishaps indicated will occur, and that the execution will be all that the framers of the



WARDEN DURSTON.

Next to them, and side by side, are two levers. One of them throws the current into the lights, and the other is the fatal switch which throws a bolt of lightning upon a single wire trailing up the wall and along the ceiling to a point a little back of the center of the room, whence it dangles ready to be attached to the wire of the chair. The two levers are upright, with their handles toward the floor and about on a level with the operator's elbow. The handles are of wood, but it is probable that when they are

used pieces of rubber garden hose will be slipped over them, and if Warden Durston takes the advice of most people he will wear on his hand a rubber glove. The levers play over an arc of about six inches. The connection is formed by shoving them forward. They work easily, but not loosely. The chair itself is also in complete readiness. It stands locked up in the paint shop of the furniture factory in company with the two other chairs designed respectively for Sing Sing and Dannemora. All have

law believed it would be instantaneous, painless, sure. It might be said that he, that if it is not, if it results in one of the unhappy contingencies suggested, it will be through no fault of Warden Durston. The electric chair is designed to be properly and well his terrible task, Warden Durston has done. The responsibility he is under he fully appreciates, and it was upon him, therefore, that the blame of any ever follows him will have all the advantage of his experience, and will little appreciate the difference between the weight of the burden that which has fallen upon his shoulders.

Although all the essential details for the execution itself have been completed, there is still much to be done. The amount of labor and embarrassment which nobody would envy him. The pressure brought to bear upon him for admission has been something beyond belief. The law distinctly designates what number shall be present, and the appointment of only a portion of these lies absolutely with the Warden. The Director, however, has been invited also one Judge of the Supreme Bench of the State. Then comes two doctors, two electrical experts and a jury of twelve persons. These will be invited also to the Warden himself, make up the total of twenty-seven. It is safe to say that Mr. Durston has received personally at least a hundred urgent applications for the few places within his power to assign. To say nothing of the still greater number which have been brought to him through prominent State officials. In fact, this branch of the matter has been about enough to make life a burden to him.

The subject, however, has not allowed greatly to annoy him. When it was a question of killing Kemmler, he made out a list of those to whom he intended to give invitations. To all of those persons, with few exceptions, he again sent invitations last week. Several of them, either because they are beyond reach or for other reasons, are unable to be present this year, and their places have been supplied by others. The list, however, remains to a great extent the same as that decided upon a year ago.

There will, of course, be an autopsy, and it is not expected that it will reveal anything startling, or of need, value to medical science. As to how soon after death the autopsy will be performed is a point of interest. The case of Mrs. Bender Bishop in which her husband was killed by this question. It will be remembered that in Bishop's case the doctors maintained that the dissection of the brain and nervous system revealed great promptness was necessary, as changes were very rapid. It is probable that this fact will govern the doctors in their autopsy on Kemmler. If, by no means in the case of Kemmler, he shall take place in the night, then Kemmler may be killed, dissected and buried in quicklime between the setting and the rising of the sun.

The finishing touches have now been put on the little room in which the execution is to take place. It has been painted a light gray color and thoroughly cleaned. There is not an article of furniture in it save the iron bath-tub in which prisoners were at one time secured on their admission to the prison, and an iron sink by the wall close to it. These are firmly fastened to the floor. On the wall opposite the windows are a number of gas and water pipes. These have been painted the same light gray as the walls. From the center of the ceiling there hangs a plain gas fixture with two

arms and two burners. The two iron-barricaded windows are high up in the front prison wall above the head of a mass of ordinary size. Between is built a board frame-work about six feet wide and five feet high. The boards are joined together like the boards of an ordinary floor. On them is fastened an electrical apparatus. There is the common electrical bell button. This signals to the dynamo room to stop or go ahead. Next to it is the voltage meter, tube of brass about two feet long, surmounted with a glass cover and dial face, with a delicate steel pointer traveling around its face like the single hand of a usual gas gauge. Wires connect this with a box about three feet high, six inches wide and as many deep, which is fastened to the wall next the voltage meter, and is in fact a part of its mechanism. Next to this is nailed a board bearing a double row of ordinary electric light burners. There are 12 lights to each row—24 in all—and they are as close together as they can conveniently be put. They, too, are to indicate the intensity of the electric current. When turned on they fill the room with a blinding blaze of light.

CAN'T PAY THE PRICE.

Select Council Objects to Increased Rates for Natural Gas.

A NEW FUEL TO BE SOUGHT FOR.

The Sewerage Question Causes a Long Discussion.

MEASURES PASSED BY CITY SOLONS

Both branches of City Council met yesterday afternoon. The only features which excited more than passing interest among the municipal legislators was a general sewer ordinance in the lower house and the Philadelphia Company's increased rate for natural gas, which came up in the local Senate.

The gas question came up on the award of the contract to the Philadelphia Company for fuel for pumping stations at \$20,000 an increase of \$20,000 over last year. Mr. T. A. Gillespie said he had been connected with the Philadelphia Company for five years, but he was not with them now, and he had no hesitancy in saying that the price asked was cheaper than coal.

Mr. A. C. Robertson said the furnace could use only gas, and the company therefore had the city in a hole, but after the contract was approved he presented a resolution, which was passed, instructing the Chief of Public Works to make an investigation of patents for manufacturing fuel gas from slack, and which could be used at a lesser cost than natural gas at the present rates.

The first matter brought up at the next meeting will be the sewer ordinance which was settled by the next time a contract had to be made.

Mr. Robertson presented a resolution, which was adopted, authorizing the Chief of Public Works to pay \$1,720 additional for the sewer ordinance in the city of Pittsburgh, which was approved by the Board of Public Works to make an investigation of patents for manufacturing fuel gas from slack, and which could be used at a lesser cost than natural gas at the present rates.

Among the new measures introduced into this branch were ordinances granting the Chief of Public Works a salary of \$3,000; establishing the position of Court Officer, whose duty it will be to prepare all criminal cases in which the city is interested for court, at a salary of \$1,500; amending the charter ordinance by transferring the Police Magistrate's office to the Second Police Magistrate's district.

Mr. McCord presented a petition asking that the seat of John R. Murphy, representing the Thirty-third ward, be declared vacant, as he had moved out of the district. The matter was referred to a special committee consisting of Messrs. Wilson, Doyle and Miller.

A communication was received from the Controller announcing that the Duquesne and the Birmingham Traction Companies had accepted the provisions of the ordinance recently passed for the city of Pittsburgh, and an agreement was read between the city and both of them, by which the latter lease 30 acres of land on Kuch's Hill to the Department of Public Safety for parking cars and horse hospital purposes, on condition that the taxes are paid.

The ordinance amending the Sixth Street Bridge company's charter for the purpose of amending Mr. Lambie, placing the matter under the supervision of the Chief of Public Works, and the ordinance will be reprinted.

A HEALTH MEASURE.

Common Council Passes an Ordinance Providing for General Sewer Connections—Father, a Sewerage Deal Center—Preparing for Uncle Sam's Generosity.

In the common branch Mr. Bigham, Chairman of the Committee on Public Works, presented an ordinance requiring property owners to connect their premises with public sewers.

Mr. MacGonigle offered an amendment allowing property owners to connect their premises with public sewers, on condition that the taxes are paid.

Mr. Bigelow said the measure was asked for in the interest of the public health, and was a necessary one to keep the city in good sanitary condition.

Messrs. Donley and Flinn advocated the original ordinance on the same ground taken by Mr. Bigelow. After some further discussion Mr. MacGonigle's amendment was adopted by a vote of 25 yeas to 11 nays.

The negative vote was cast by Messrs. Angloch, Gallagher, Kearns, King, Miller, McCarty, MacGonigle, O'Connor, O'Donnell, White and Wright.

Mr. Bigham presented the report of the viewers on the opening and widening of Diamond street from the Diamond square to Smithfield street, as previously published. He also presented a remonstrance signed by Marshall Boss, George V. Marshall, Elizabeth Abernethy, Mary Gates, Annie E. Brown, Caroline S. Hays, Annie M. Bissell, Sarah Arthur Jones, Jane H. Steel, William Barker (trustee), William J. Sawyer and Isaac Craig. The remonstrance was filed and the viewers' report approved.

The viewers' report on the opening and widening of Cecil alley was then presented and approved.

In the absence of Mr. Carnahan Mr. Bigham reported for the Survey Committee that Mr. Carnahan had been elected chairman. He presented an ordinance for the vacation of Hillwood street and moved its indefinite postponement, which was agreed to. Mr. Bigham also presented ordinances establishing the grade of Negley avenue, opening Alder street, Collier square, E. Breed street, relocating South Thirtieth street, changing the name of Barton street to Morewood avenue, all of which were passed.

READY FOR A CONINGENCY.

Mr. Bigham also presented the ordinance locating Municipal place in the court along side of City Hall. Mr. Bigham said that every member of Council knew that the city could not pay for the street and that the ordinance would have been out into city squares long ago. The object of this ordinance was to so arrange that Congressmen Dalzell could introduce a bill in Congress to give the ground to the city. The ordinance passed.

Mr. Ferguson, from the special committee on the violation of the ordinance relative to the running of trains on Liberty street, reported in favor of sending the resolution to the chief of the Department of Public Safety for enforcement.

Mr. Mullan moved to refer the resolution

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The viewers' report on the opening and widening of Cecil alley was then presented and approved.

In the absence of Mr. Carnahan Mr. Bigham reported for the Survey Committee that Mr. Carnahan had been elected chairman. He presented an ordinance for the vacation of Hillwood street and moved its indefinite postponement, which was agreed to. Mr. Bigham also presented ordinances establishing the grade of Negley avenue, opening Alder street, Collier square, E. Breed street, relocating South Thirtieth street, changing the name of Barton street to Morewood avenue, all of which were passed.