

MRS. FARMER DIES IN CHAIR

Woman Electrocutted at Auburn Prison.

CONFESSES GUILT.

Pathetic Interview With Doomed Husband.

LAST HOUR SPENT IN PRAYER

James Farmer, who is also under sentence of death for a share in the killing of Mrs. Sarah Brennan, is allowed to see his wife before she pays the penalty—she is driven in a carriage to the men's "Death Row," and the pair remain together for about an hour—current of 1,840 volts and seven and a half amperes used by State electrician. James Farmer asks priest to have the body decently buried.

Auburn, N. Y., March 29.—While her husband, James D. Farmer, himself under sentence of death, sat in an adjoining cell in the men's ward, Mrs. Mary Farmer was electrocuted today in the state prison here for the murder of her neighbor, Mrs. Sarah Brennan, of which both were found guilty. There was no hitch in the electrocution.

Mrs. Farmer and her husband met in final communication at daybreak today, the woman being taken over to the men's prison for the interview.

Mrs. Farmer wore to the chair a plain black dress the skirt of which was bifurcated to facilitate the adjustment of the electrode upon the leg. She was attended by one of the two women who have watched her day and night since she came to Auburn prison. Before she went to the chair Mrs. Farmer made a confession of her guilt to her spiritual adviser, Father J. J. Hickey, who attended her in her last moments.

Brought from the woman's prison to the receiving cell in the condemned row, Mrs. Farmer bade farewell to her husband and was then lodged in the cell that adjoins the execution chamber to await the call to the chair.

James Farmer, the husband, also under sentence of death for the killing of the Brennan woman and whose case is now before the court of appeals, was taken to another part of the prison that he might not hear the witness on the march of his wife to her death.

The wretched woman showed no evidences of collapse, though the last words between herself and husband, separated in their parting interview by heavy bars and an impenetrable screen, were affecting to the two women attendants and the captain of the guard.

As the law does not permit it, there was no farewell embrace when the time came for separation. When the steel door of Mrs. Farmer's cell had closed and James Farmer, weeping, had been led away the woman fell upon her cot and wept for a few moments and then began to pray. Father J. J. Hickey, pastor of the Holy Family church, visited Mrs. Farmer and prayed with her. The priest administered the last sacrament and offered prayers for the dying before the short march to the execution chamber.

In the subdued light of early morning Mrs. Farmer dressed for her execution. She clothed herself in a prison gown and waist and then carefully arranged her hair. A woman attendant bifurcated the gown to the knee and slit the stocking so that the electrode might be applied to the limb. A lock or two of hair was clipped from the woman's head in order to form a perfect contact with the electrode.

The prison building was quiet when Mrs. Farmer, accompanied by the two women attendants, Dr. John Gerin, the prison physician; Father Hickey and Warden Benham, was brought down from her cell on the second tier of the women's building.

Across the silent yard the woman and her escort walked to the end of the men's building, where a carriage was in waiting to drive them to the entrance of the "death row." It was only a short drive along by the cloth shops and other prison departments, but the fall of the horse's hoofs and the crunching gravel in the roadway told the prisoners in their cells the story of what was happening in the yard below.

The carriage with Mrs. Farmer and her attendants came to a stop, and the door leading to the condemned row was opened. Once inside the door was closed, and Mrs. Farmer was placed within a cell in the receiving room, and her husband was sent for. It might have been an hour before Captain Patterson, who, with the two women attendants, were in the room, gave a quiet warning that the time had come for the parting.

There was an inaudible word spoken, a last greeting, the shuffling footsteps of a woman as she was being led along the dark and narrow corridor and the closing of a cell door next to the exe-

ution chamber. Farmer was then led away, and Mrs. Farmer was taken to the death chamber.

Father Hickey and an assistant led the death march. The leg electrode was adjusted by Captain Patterson, and the two women nurses assisted him. When all was in readiness State electrician Davis turned on the current, which measured 1,840 volts and 7 1/2 amperes.

The autopsy on the body of Mrs. Farmer was performed by Dr. Edward Spitzka of Philadelphia and Dr. Charles Lambert of the Pathological Institute, Ward's Island, New York. James Farmer asked Father Hickey to take charge of the body, and the priest will have the body decently buried in St. Joseph's cemetery.

The list of official witnesses of the execution was as follows:

Exra B. Bellinger, sheriff of Jefferson county, Watertown, N. Y.; Dr. Edwin A. Spitzka, Jefferson Medical college, Philadelphia; Dr. Charles I. Lambert, Pathological Institute, Ward's Island, New York; Dr. P. M. Donovan, Canandaigua, N. Y.; Dr. E. M. Sommers, assistant superintendent of St. Lawrence hospital, Ogdensburg, N. Y.; Dr. Fred M. Boyle, Buffalo; Dr. H. M. Westfall, Moravia, N. Y.; Miss Agnes Baird, Troy, N. Y.; Miss Margaret T. Byrne, Auburn, N. Y.; E. H. Thomson, Auburn, N. Y.; William H. Smith, Watertown, N. Y.; Carl S. Brandebury, New York; M. R. Fletcher, New York; Frank E. Davis, South Butler, N. Y., and William C. Bell, Auburn, N. Y.

Mrs. Farmer was the second woman in this state to die in the electric chair. Mrs. Martha Place, who killed her daughter in Brooklyn, was the first, she having been put to death March 20, 1890, in Sing Sing prison. Exceptional efforts were made to save Mrs. Place from the chair, but Theodore Roosevelt, then governor, refused to interfere.

In denying the application for executive clemency in the case of Mrs. Farmer, Governor Hughes said:

"A most careful examination of the facts in this case leads to the conclusion that the conviction was just. The murder was most brutal and was unattended by any circumstances affording the slightest basis for extenuation or appeal to sympathy on the prisoner's behalf."

The crime was committed on the morning of April 23 in the Farmer home in the town of Hounsfield. Four days later the body of Sarah Brennan, wife of Patrick Brennan, was found in a trunk in the rear room of the Brennan home, into which the Farmer family moved two days following the killing.

The motive of the murder as established by the prosecution was to gain possession of the Brennan home. In October last a deed of the property was executed from Sarah Brennan to James D. Farmer, Mrs. Farmer impersonating Mrs. Brennan and forging her name to the document before a Watertown notary. A few weeks later the Farmer woman, again impersonating Mrs. Brennan, executed a bill of sale of the personal property in the Brennan house.

The Brennans and Farmers lived side by side. Mrs. Brennan and the Farmer woman were intimate friends. On April 23 Mrs. Brennan was last seen entering the Farmer home. Between 10 o'clock and noon Mrs. Brennan's skull was crushed with a blunt instrument and her face mutilated almost beyond recognition.

Mrs. Farmer's execution will be the last early morning execution at Auburn. Superintendent Collins has authorized Warden Benham hereafter to conduct electrocutions at 6 o'clock in the evening rather than at 6 a. m.

COMMERCE COUNCIL MEETING

Discusses Needs of Trade With Secretary of Commerce and Labor.

Washington, March 29.—The first of a series of meetings of the National Council of Commerce and Labor with the national council of commerce took place today in the department over which the secretary presides. Secretary Nagel expressed much interest in the work of the council, which was organized during the term of his predecessor, Secretary Straus. Plans for extending the usefulness of the council were discussed.

The council bears the character of a national chamber of commerce or board of trade, furnishing the secretary with information as to the needs and conditions of various industries.

About fifty large bodies belong to the council, including such organizations as the National Association of Manufacturers, the American Cotton Manufacturers' association and the Cattle Raisers' association.

FIENDISH WIFE MURDER.

Negro Almost Decapitates Woman and Then Mutilates Body.

Kingston, N. Y., March 29.—Daniel Ford, a negro employed on the Ashokan dam, murdered his wife in their home at that place.

Ford almost decapitated his wife with a razor and then disemboweled her. The crime followed a quarrel resulting from the wife's discovery that he had drawn his pay and squandered it.

Ford escaped, but was arrested at Arkville.

FOUND DEAD UNDER CLIFF.

Missing Lawyer Probably Stumbled Over Forty Foot Bank.

Dunkirk, N. Y., March 29.—Bert E. Farnham, a prominent lawyer, was found dead at the foot of a forty foot cliff at Laona.

He disappeared last Tuesday, and it is believed he accidentally stumbled over the edge of the cliff.

"LEST WE FORGET!"

Market Street, Philadelphia, to be Repaved with Wood, Stone or Asphalt.

MARKET STREET BUSINESS MENS' ASSOCIATION PREFER WOOD.

The Hemlock Paving Block Freshet in the Dyberry and Lackawaxen.—An Ill Wind that Blew the Boys Some Good.

For some time past the question of repaving Market street has been the special bone of contention among the usually peace loving people of Philadelphia. That something must be done, and done quickly, to put that business thoroughfare in creditable condition has been conceded by the parties most immediately interested—those who will have to foot the bills,—but there seems to have been a radical difference of opinion as to the material to be employed, asphalt, granite and wood each having their strenuous advocates.

Finally contractors were invited to submit bids, and last week the Department of Public Works opened the various sealed offers handed in. While the bids demonstrated that wood paving would be virtually the same in cost as granite block, the amount asked for asphalt was far cheaper than for either wood or granite block. In some instances a number of bids for wood block surface were below the prices asked for the better grades of granite block. Bids for asphalt as low as \$1.94 a square yard were submitted, while the cheapest price of wood block was \$3.16, and of straight granite block, \$3.00.

After the proposals were opened and referred to be scheduled, Mayor Rebyrn declared that the paramount question was to obtain a pavement which would prove lasting and be a credit to the city in every way. Great consideration, he said, should be given to the selection of the character of paving. This matter will be taken up in a few days, so that the contract may be awarded early this spring.

Meanwhile the Market Street Business Men's Protective Association has publicly placed itself on record as favoring wood blocks. It has also declared flatly that it will accept full responsibility for such a pavement, and the Philadelphia Inquirer declares that the expressed wish of this body should be the last word on the subject, as it gives the city the best authority for going ahead with the wood paving.

It must be remembered, however, adds the Inquirer, that the merchants demand that the city assume responsibility for the quality of material used and the manner of laying it. The Association is a body of responsible men acting in good faith. Its members as individuals will benefit most largely by an adequate paving or suffer most through a poor makeshift. Their enormous business investments are most closely associated with the public interests in this particular district because it is on the public they must depend for returns. They want this great commercial artery placed in the best possible shape and the city administration should see that it is done.

We are a little curious to know just why this prominent association of Philadelphia has taken such a fancy to wood blocks for pavement purposes. The best authorities on road making, whose opinions have been crystallized in encyclopedias and general books of reference, seem to entertain no such preference. One says: "Wood pavements have been used for roads more as a makeshift than with serious thought of permanence. Wooden blocks, sawed in lengths of seven or eight inches, and laid end up will stand a great deal of wear, but exposure to alternate moisture and drying heat rots them in the course of a decade or two. Chambers speaks of 'blocks of wood with the end up and blocks of cast iron' as having been tried for paving purposes. 'The wooden block is delightfully easy and not noisy, but in wet weather it is exceedingly slippery. Cast iron is too hard, and causes too much jolting.'

But Philadelphia is not without an experience of its own with wood block pavement. Something like sixty or perhaps more years ago, the city experimented in that direction; not, if our recollection serves, very much to the satisfaction of its inhabitants. The hemlock from which the hexagonal blocks were sawed proved to be not all of the same texture or durability, and in a very short time, the streets were filled with ruts and holes fringed with slippery and menacing splinters, annoying if not absolutely dangerous to man and beast. The practical test thus made, resulted in the cancelling of an order for more blocks; and the loss of a market which followed led to the episodes which give a local trend to our reminiscent article for this week.

In 1784 occurred what was known as "The Battle of the Kegs," on the lower Delaware; in 1787 what was called "The Pumpkin Flood," strewed the lower valley of the Susquehanna with the pumpkins of the unfortunate Connecticut settlers at Wyoming, and in the late '40s the "Paving Block Freshet" astonished the residents along the banks of the Lackawaxen.

The story of "The Battle of the Kegs" may be thus briefly told: In January, 1784, some Whigs at Bordentown, N. J., where Francis Hopkinson, one of the

signers of the Declaration of Independence resided, set afloat a number of kegs filled with powder and furnished with machinery in such a manner that on rubbing against any object in the stream they would explode. These were the torpedoes invented by David Bushnell, of Connecticut. The British vessels in Philadelphia had been hauled into the docks to keep clear of the ice, and thus escaped any injury from the torpedoes. One of the kegs exploded, however, near the city, and produced intense alarm. Not a stick or a chip was seen floating for twenty-four hours afterward but it was fired at by the British. This circumstance afforded the theme for Hopkinson's poem, "The Battle of the Kegs." The "Pumpkin Flood" was occasioned by incessant rains along the upper waters of the Susquehanna, resulting in an inundation of the plains of Wyoming, which drove the settlers to the hills and swept away nearly all their possessions, the pumpkins being buoyant and floating in the rushing waters to almost incredible distances down the stream. The "Paving Block Freshet" came about in this wise: Deacon Homer Brooks the pioneer of the family, and his second son Ezra, built in 1842, a sawmill on the point near the Dyberry Falls, (now Tanner Falls) almost directly in front of the residence of William F. Riefler, in Dyberry township. The former had been engaged in general lumbering for fourteen years previously, scoring and hewing wharf timber for the Philadelphia market, which he ran out of the Dyberry and Lackawaxen in single rafts and down the Delaware in what was called a "double Delaware," being made up of four "colts" lashed together. When the new mill was built the firm engaged in the manufacture of shovel and hoe handles, and later, Charles W. Torrey, of Bethany, took a contract to furnish Philadelphia from it with hemlock paving blocks, polygonal in shape, about a foot in diameter by eight inches in thickness. Several consignments of these symmetrical segments were sent down on rafts, and for a while seemed to make an ideal pavement. There was no noise from clattering hoofs or whirling wheels. Horses secured a good footing on them; the draft of loaded vehicles was reduced to a minimum; pleasure carriages glided over them without rattle or jar. But, like the Deacon's "One Hoss Shay" when they collapsed they went to pieces all at once. They became slippery to a dangerous degree in wet weather; they warped and split and splintered; they got curvatures of the spine, and presented a hump-backed appearance from end to end of every street in which they were in use. Then came a natural revulsion of feeling as to their merits and a reversal of the popular judgment in their favor. A stop was put to further delivery of the blocks, just at a time when the Dyberry sawmills had perhaps thousands of them ready for shipment.

Shortly afterward an unusually high freshet occurred in the stream on which the mill was located. Both branches of the Dyberry came down from the hills "loaded for bear," and when they joined forces swept everything before them. The mill dam, the mill and the hundreds or thousands of paving blocks, yielded to the irresistible flood. Much of the wreck soon found the bottom, but the hemlock blocks danced gaily on the surface, as if on their way to the Quaker City to fill a rush order. When they reached Honesdale another "Battle of the Kegs" scare was narrowly averted. The Lackawaxen was filled with the bobbing, whirling mass, filling all with curiosity and some with apprehension as to their origin and object. The great body soon passed; but loiterers straggled along for days, and indeed, it was years before the last of them were seen. Such as were caught in eddies, or on sandbars, or among bushes by the receding of the first flood, were dislodged by the rising waters of the next; and so on for many years.

Needless to say that this river flotam was a godsend to many of us town-boys of that period. We carried the six-sided chunks up the cliffs, (there were very few houses on the Ladywood lane side of town in those days,) and sent them bounding back down the steep hillsides for another splash into the river. Like Jim Smiley's "Jumping Frog," one block didn't seem any better than any other block when they were "tetched off" for their race down the long slopes; but oftentimes there was a wide difference in the time required for them to reach the bottom. They frequently followed eccentric courses, moreover, "took the bit in their teeth" so to speak, and, deflected by a stone, or some other obstruction, would scoot off in some entirely unexpected direction: one especially flagrant runaway crashing through the roof of a kitchen thought to be entirely out of the range of danger. In the river we nailed cleats across their tops and made for ourselves capital floats from which to fish and dive; and, for the more venturesome, sometimes to go over the "foundry" or "Kimbly mill" dams. And then what a blessing they were when the injunction came to "let your kindling wood ready for the morning!" They were so exactly the right length when riven and so easy to split with!

And so ended the first chapter of the Philadelphia Wooden Pavement story.

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