

THE SUN.

BALTIMORE WEDNESDAY, DEC. 4, 1880.

JOE VERMILION'S BODY.

Out Down from the Bridge Where
He Was Hanged.

HOW THE LYNCHERS DID THEIR WORK

The Prisoner Taken Sweating and Howling
to His Place of Doom—His Burial.

His Crimes and His Brothers in Jail—

The Inquest and the Jury's Verdict.

When daylight came yesterday morning at Marlboro', Prince George's county, Md., it revealed the body of Joe Vermillion dangling from one of the top lengthwise bars of the red iron bridge which spans the Patuxent between the railroad station and the town. As said in late editions of *The Sun* yesterday, he had been hanged there five hours before by a masked mob, which had taken him from the county jail, dragged him through the main streets of the town and along the public road a-quarter of a mile to the bridge where he was hanged. The sun came up only to bring out more fully the details of the work of the lynchers. The corpse was bare to the waist, while the back was hacked and torn by the stones of the road along which the man had been dragged, resisting, cursing and shouting. He wore the iron chains with which he had been bound to the floor of his cell. His neck had been cut and mangled by the rope, which was tied into a perfect hangman's knot, and his tongue protruded an inch or more. Passers-by stopped and gazed at the corpse, but only for a moment.

THE BODY CUT DOWN.

At seven o'clock the body was cut down and an inquest was held by Justice Harris, at which all the details of the mob's work were told. Deputy sheriff and keeper of the jail, Mr. J. J. Ridgeway, told how the prisoner had been taken and carried off. He said he was awakened at 2:30 o'clock by a voice, which he supposed to be that of Constable Mitchell, who lives in the neighborhood. Mr. Ridgeway was told that there was a prisoner on the outside. As soon as the jail door was opened the mob crowded in and rushed him into a corner of the corridor.

THE MOB IN THE JAIL.

All the invaders wore masks, and all were armed. One held Mr. Ridgeway by the arm and another leveled a pistol at his head, at the same time demanding the keys to Joe Vermillion's cell. He refused to give up the keys, and told the crowd to shoot if they wished. Then his lamp was taken from him. Guided by its flickering light the mob mounted the steps and in an instant were at the door of Joe Vermillion's cell. A single blow of a small hammer broke the lock of the cell. When Mr. Ridgeway found he had but three guards he said to the one pointing a pistol at him, "I know you. You had better get." The man then left, joined the mob upstairs, and a confederate took his place. The shackles by which Vermillion was bound to the floor were broken by a sledge-hammer. As soon as he was released the prisoner wrenched off an iron sash from the window and made a furious attack upon his assailants. He was soon overpowered, but not until he had brought blood, which was smeared over the iron slats of the cell door and the sash. A rope was tied around his neck, his feet and hands were bound, and he was dragged down the steps, out of the jail, and thence into the street. There he again resisted, and two men, one at his feet and the other at his head, dragged, shoved and carried him to the bridge, the mob accompanying on horseback. Vermillion's cries and curses rang out as he was dragged along, and awakened the residents, who raised their windows and peered out to learn the cause of the noise.

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In the cells adjoining that occupied by Joe Vermillion are his brothers Edward, John, Jr., George and Lloyd. Two of them in a cell looking out on Main street, had been awakened upon the approach of the lynchers, and they yelled to Joe across the corridor to be ready. They say they also warned Mr. Ridgeway not to open the jail door, but the warning was not heard. All the brothers begged the mob not to harm Joe, but their appeals fell upon deaf ears. Their cries for mercy were still ringing through the cell when their brother was dragged out. Then Mr. Ridgeway was released and aroused several of his neighbors, but no pursuit was made, as it was feared the mob would use their pistols to repel an attack.

THE JURY'S VERDICT.

The mob's first halt after their start from the jail was at an elm tree near the home of Sandy Dent, colored, but some one was approaching, and they moved on. An attempt was made to throw a rope over a limb of a tree. After all the details of Vermillion's death, as far as ascertainable, had been heard by the jury they rendered a verdict that he had met his "death by lynching by parties unknown to the jury."

THE BURIAL IN THE JAIL YARD.

After the inquest the body was removed to the county jail, where it was laid out in the lower hall just inside of the iron door which Jailer Ridgeway had opened in the morning in expectation of receiving a new prisoner. There the body was reviewed during the day. Those present at the jail were the retiring sheriff, Darnall, the new sheriff, Richard W. Beall, whose duties began yesterday, and a number of deputy sheriffs. A stained pine coffin, purchased by the county, was brought by the undertaker, Cranford, who, with Sheriff Darnall and others, placed the body within and screwed down the lid. Sheriff Darnall, Mr. Cranford and Mr. John Farr carried the remains to the west of the jail, where a grave had been dug seven feet from the jail wall and directly beneath the window of the cell from which Vermillion had been forcibly taken. The body was lowered into the grave by ex-Sheriff Darnall and Deputy Sheriff Robert Wells, and the earth was thrown in by colored men. No service of any kind was held, but from the windows overlooking the scene gazed Edward and John Vermillion, Jr., brothers of the dead man, weeping piteously. The other two under arrest, George and Lloyd, were in the cell upon the same floor, but upon the opposite side of the hallway.

COMPANION GRAVES.

The grave is by the side of that of Michael Green, a colored man, who was lynched at Upper Marlboro' eleven years ago for assaulting a white child. Next Green's grave are the graves of the five men who were executed for the murder of Mr. Lyle, who was a government contractor during the war, and who had in his possession a large number of sheets of shipplasters of small denomination, which were considered to be of unold value by the ignorant murderers, who killed to rob. Next to theirs is the grave of Mary Wallace, who killed her own child, and was hanged in the jailyard. The whole plot is hardly over 50 feet square.

WHO THE DEAD MAN WAS.

Joe, who was hanged, was about five feet five inches tall. He was 27 years old, and the youngest of the family but Lloyd, who was 23. He was of lithe, powerful build. He had extraordinary courage, and was of a nature that resented a supposed injury upon the moment it was offered. He had a small black beard growing upon his cheeks, lip and chin, black eyes and rather good-looking face. None of his brothers would be considered anything but good looking, but it would be found that they had received no education. The dead man had figured frequently in the courts of Prince George's county. He was a native of Anne Arundel county, and when only six years old was tried at Annapolis for stealing corn from Mr. Thomas Clark. He recently escaped from the House of Correction, having thirteen months of his time to serve for threatening the life of his father. When last arrested he was particularly ugly in his behavior. Before he would consent to accompany the officers he had to be roughly handled. He pleaded not guilty, and said he was not in the county at the time. He was sent to jail to await the action of the grand jury and immediately placed in irons after resisting the officers. As there was no evidence to implicate any one else, the charge of arson against the other Vermillions was dismissed, but thirteen citizens of Mulliken's neighborhood swore out peace warrants against each of the other Vermillion boys and they were placed in jail in default of \$500 bail.

WHAT THE VERMILION BOYS SAY.

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A reporter of THE SUN visited the jail last night. No sooner had the front door swung open than the voices of the Vermilion brothers on the second floor were heard in terrorized accents appealing from above. "Who's that?" shouted one. "Ye ain't goin' to do nothin' to us are ye?" cried another. "Is that you, Mr. Ridgeway? Don't let them hurt us," said a third. "All right," said Ridgeway. "It's nobody but myself and some friends." Mr. Ridgeway is a small, slight man, not much over five feet two inches. He is 65 years of age, and was in the Confederate army. John Vermilion said: "Father is 70 years old. I am the eldest son being 39 years old. We never got no schoolin', 'cept me, what had five months of it. Joe threatened my brother-in-law, Charles H. Bell, and I think he burned his house. He tessed to us all here in de jail dat he done all de burning what he has been accused of. He said, Don't be uneasy, I'm de man wet done all de harm, and I will say it fore de court.' I believe we has been bad because we have had no mother for eighteen years. Dere was four or five among de lynchers dat I am almost certain I know, 'specially one dat was a man dat I think dat I used to work for, but I won't tell his name now."

A SKETCH OF THE FAMILY.

The Vermilion family consists of a father, John Vermilion, who is an ex-convict of the Maryland penitentiary; his sons, John, Jr., Lloyd, George, Joseph and Edward. They all live in the vicinity of Hall's Station, in Queen Anne's district, six miles north of Marlboro', on the B. and P. Road. They have lived in the vicinity four years on land given them, by Mr. James Hamilton, a prominent citizen, who has made it the point of his kindness that none of the boys should ever visit their father's house. Mr. Hamilton has said he had seen the boys there time and again, and had called their father's attention to the visits. The reason for this condition of outlawry has been that the residents for miles around have never felt safe because of the supposed acts of the sons of old John Vermilions, as barns had been entered, tobacco had been stolen, harness in stables had been cut up in a spirit of wanton malice, and the responsibility for these acts had been generally attributed to the Vermilion boys.

TRYING TO DRIVE THEM AWAY.

It was in a desire to urge the emigration of the whole family of Vermilions that the following episode occurred. On the night of November 22, John Vermilion, who lived near Hall's Station, Baltimore and Potomac Railroad, and who was well known to the court officials of Prince George's county, was forcibly taken from his home and tied to a tree. The unknown visitors then removed his furniture and set fire to his log-cabin. Fearing bodily harm, the man promised to leave the vicinity immediately, whereupon he was released and left for parts unknown. A number of young men living near Hall's and Covington were arrested on November 23 and tried before Justice Ryan, who ordered them released. On Monday, November 23, considerable excitement prevailed near Mulliken's Station, on the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad, because of the burning of two large barns and a tenement house, which were fired by incendiaries. The Saturday night before, almost at the same hour, the buildings were seen burning in different parts of Queen Anne's district. On the theory that the buildings were set on fire out of revenge, it was determined to arrest the whole family of Vermilions, who had taken up their residence at Beading's Station. The constables took the prisoners at the point of revolvers after they had been ordered to throw up their