

THE LYNCHING OF GREEN.

The Story of His Crime—The Excitement That Followed the Lynching.

For about 86 hours from 10 o'clock last Tuesday morning the citizens of this town have passed through a trying ordeal, brought on by the excitement that followed the lynching of Asbury Green, the negro convicted for rape upon the person of Mrs. Howard Tolson, of Kent Island. The heinous crime was committed about 9.30 o'clock on the night of the 28th of February, at the home of Mrs. Tolson during the temporary absence of her husband. Although months had elapsed since the crime had been committed and the brute was incarcerated in the county jail since the day following its commission, there were few people in the county who knew that such an outrage had been committed upon the person of one of the most virtuous and respectable women of the county.

The investigation at the preliminary hearing before the justice of the peace on Kent Island was anything but thorough and purposely so, because the husband and father of Mrs. Tolson were not willing that the detestable and horrible facts should be given to the public. The only charge there made was "an assault with intent to rape." It was upon this charge that Green was committed and the citizens of Kent Island and of the county also believed that to be the extent of the crime. Thus the matter rested until the grand jury was sworn in last Monday week. The jury in the discharge of its duty brought out the facts and the community was astonished at the brutality and extent of Green's offense.

His trial followed a few days after his presentment and indictment when the horrible facts were reluctantly wrung from the victim in the presence and hearing of an assemblage of white and colored people which filled the court room. The stoutest hearted of sturdy men shed tears as Mrs. Tolson told, in tears and between sobs of sorrow, the torture she endured in the hands of the negro.

It is needless to state that conviction speedily followed the trial, which lasted but a single day. The defense set up was an alibi. Two or three negroes were found who could account for Green's movements from 9 o'clock that night until about half past ten, but did not know of his movements at any other period of the day or night. It was self-evident to the jury that these witnesses were manufacturing their evidence to suit the occasion.

The trial was conducted in the presence of a full bench—Judges Robinson, Wickes and Stump—who agreed upon the sentence before court adjourned the day of the trial. The sentence was passed last Monday about noon by Judge Stump, the only one of the three Judges present. Judge Stump merely pronounced the unanimous opinion of the full bench when he sentenced Green to the penitentiary for 21 years. The reasons given by Judge Stump for imprisonment instead of the death penalty will be found in the court proceedings.

It goes without saying that the populace was disappointed at the punishment meted out to Green, and groups of citizens, residing in the different sections of the county, could be seen in many places, discussing the situation. Vague rumors were afloat that Green would be taken from the jail and hung, but very few of the citizens of the town gave them any credence. They were regarded as mere idle rumors.

Three hours after the court adjourned Monday there was not a dozen countrymen in town, which fact did much to con-

tradict the rumor of lynching. As the evening advanced Sheriff T. B. Turner was advised to increase his deputies for fear an attempt might be made to take Green from the jail. This he did. Beside deputy sheriff T. Frank Seward, the following were sworn in as special deputies, J. M. Simonds, J. V. Coursey, James Seward, George Rimmer, John Seward and Elises Yates. Sheriff Turner retired for the night about 10 o'clock believing his prisoner safe.

About an hour after midnight a call was heard from the outer gate. Deputy Coursey responded. The night was very dark and Mr. Coursey could only see the individual who made the call. He told Coursey that he wanted the deputy sheriff Frank Seward, who, not suspecting anything wrong, at once responded when informed by Coursey. Upon reaching the porch a mob of masked men rushed up the steps and demanded the keys of the jail. Seward refused to deliver them. Whereupon the spokesman quietly informed him that he did not wish to do him bodily harm, but would have the keys at any cost. They then siezed deputy Seward, threw him to the floor, and forcibly took the keys from his pocket. By this time about two dozen masked men armed with guns, pistols, rifles and axes, commanded the surprised deputies to keep quiet at the penalty of their lives. They kept quiet. The corridor and cell doors were unlocked and Green recognized. A long rope was at once placed around his neck, one end of which was siezed by a number of men and the poor wretch was dragged from his cell, down the corridor, through the private office of the sheriff to the front door and thence down the porch steps to the street. The mob turned down Broadway, still dragging its victim, whose suppliant outcries, it is said, were piteous indeed. Upon reaching the peach orchard of R. Hopper Smith, about 300 yards from the jail, the rope was thrown around a limb of a large peach tree and the body of Green left dangling in the air.

Green, it is said, was more dead than alive when the orchard was reached. A number of shots were fired in the air and the mob quietly dispersed, some going in one direction and some in another. The parties who did the lynching came to the town in carriages, on horse back and in boats. They were evidently from a distance, but from where is the question. This much good can be said of them, wherever they where from, their behavior was becoming and orderly. This is not usual when a mob enforces punishment for crime. Their number is reported to be from 150 to 250 and all armed and determined. In less than a half hour after taking the keys from deputy Seward not one of the party could be seen in town.

A jury of inquest was summoned Tuesday which rendered the following verdict:

"Certain parties, feloniously, voluntarily and of malice aforethought, dragged from the county jail the said Asbury Green, did kill by strangulation and dislocation of the spinal column and by hanging to a tree, said parties being to the jury unknown, and did then and there kill and murder the said Asbury Green."

The body of Green was removed to the basement of the jail where it remained until Wednesday when it was buried by the sheriff and his deputies, the colored people refusing to touch it or permit one of their race to touch it.

There was considerable excitement in town Tuesday night from the fact that it was rumored that some of the exasperated and desperate negroes intended to fire the town. The threats came chiefly from the negro women who seemed to take the lead and urge the men on.

The Good Will Fire Company whose members organized themselves into a committee of safety, patrolled the town and maintained order. Why the colored people should be incensed against the white people of Centreville is a conundrum. Not one of the citizens of Centreville had anything to do with lynching Green, nor did they know anything about it, yet they have the blame as well as the grave responsibility to bear. They heard it rumored but did not believe it. All who heard it advised the sheriff to guard the jail. It is no evidence that the people of Centreville took part in the lynching, because the deed was committed here.

Without stopping to think, the ignorant and prejudiced blacks, concluded at once from this bare fact that the white people of Centreville committed the deed. This conclusion does the whole people of the town great injustice and the more learned and influential of the colored people ought to see it and correct the error the majority of their race here has fallen into. Convince the colored people of this fact and all local excitement over the lynching will cease.

We are glad to state that it has ceased to a great extent. Unless there is something done, said to encourage excitement peace and quiet will reign in the future.

COMMENTS OF THE PRESS

The following comments on the Lynching of Green last Monday are taken from the Maryland and Delaware press:

In order to calm popular excitement the court very judiciously explained, in passing sentence, the weak points of prosecution and the strength of the defense. This should have sufficed to reconcile the popular mind to orderly methods and procedure, which are so necessary to public security, and it was believed this object had been accomplished. The lynching must be, therefore, to some extent a surprise to the orderly majority of the community in which it occurred, and it is a reflection on the bench, the members of which stand irreproachable for fairness and ability in the minds of all their fellow-citizens. Mob violence under all conceivable conditions is to be condemned, though there may be some circumstances under which resort to it is more excusable than under others. No palliation is to be found for it after a fair and impartial trial, and the sentence of the prisoners by a court in whom the community reposes perfect confidence.—*Baltimore Sun*.

Where there is conclusive proof of such a crime as that with which Green was charged, the penalty of death is none too severe. It is a crime that merits the extreme punishment that the law can inflict; but in this case the mob had no shadow of excuse, and we cannot believe that the act will be approved by any good citizen of Queen Anne's. To approve it, would be to approve of an insult to the bench, of setting aside all law, turning justice into a farce, and putting a masked mob in place of peace and order.—*Baltimore American*.

A man who commits rape, whether white or black, ought to be hanged—and if he could be hanged twice it would be no more of a punishment than he deserves—but he ought not be hanged, or done to death in any manner, without the authority of law. The moment that you concede for any purpose that the law may be set aside, that moment you throw aside the sole foundation stone of civilized and peaceful society.—*Wilmington Morning News*.