

TOWNSEND COOK'S FATE.

DETAILS OF THE EXECUTION.

PROMPT PROCEEDINGS IN LYNCH LAW.

The Assault on the Jail at Westminster and the Hanging of Mrs. Knott's Assailant—Unavailing Intervention of Attorney-General Roberts—Scenes at the Fatal Oak—The Coroner's Inquest. [Special Dispatch to the Baltimore Sun.]

WESTMINSTER, MD., June 2.—A little blackboard was hung outside the Western Maryland Railroad station in Westminster sometime before daylight this morning with the bulletin:

"Cook, the colored ravisher of Mrs. Knott, was lynched here at 1.30 o'clock this morning. He confessed his crime."

The information was not new to many, for it was generally known throughout the surrounding country that Townsend Cook, colored, who had brutally assaulted Mrs. Carrie V. Knott last Saturday at her home on the county road leading from Mount Airy to Waterville, two miles from the latter place, was hanging dead and half naked from the limb of a white oak tree on the farm of Thomas Stevenson, one-half mile from Springmill Station, on the Western Maryland road, and one and one-half miles from Westminster.

The prisoner was taken from jail here shortly after one o'clock by an armed and masked posse, numbering, according to the calmest estimates, at least forty men, who battered down the doors of the prison, secured Sheriff George A. Shower and then raided cell No. 5, in which Cook was confined. A rope was slipped around the culprit's neck, then he was dragged into Court street and lifted into a two-horse covered wagon, which was driven rapidly away in the direction of the Liberty-street road. An hour later half of the town, some on horseback, many on foot and not a few driving substantial teams, were traveling in the direction of the lynching scene, where a ghastly corpse, with two bullet wounds in the back of the head, swung with pendulum-like motion in the fresh, sweet morning breeze. Every one, save the officers of the law, seemed pleased, none more so than the colored people, who were outspoken and even vehement in their denunciations of Cook. Some of the people say that the lynchers had a fair representation of men of color among them. This, however, cannot be substantiated, as the whole arrangement for the deadly errand was so carefully planned and the participants so cleverly hidden by black calico masks, which enveloped face and neck, that those with whom they had dealings are unable to identify them. It is an accepted fact, however, that the majority of the raiders came from the vicinity of Mount Airy.

The raid was wholly unexpected, though Sheriff Shower and his deputies, John A. Mackintosh and Israel Zebra, with a number of citizens, had taken ample precautions for the safety of Cook on Saturday and Sunday nights. They heard it said he would likely be taken from their custody on one or the other evening. For a time the plan was conceived to lock Deputies Mackintosh and Zebra with the colored man in one of the fire-proof vaults in the courthouse. This was abandoned because the quiet and order that reigned until midnight seemed to warrant the belief that no attack would be made. Everything was as still as a funeral house. A big bright moon, with its still rays, lit up every nook and corner, and made it appear foolhardy in the eyes of the watchers for any gang to attempt violence lest they be detected.

Sheriff Shower and his friends waited until 12 o'clock, but no visitors called on them. With good-natured remarks and a merry laugh over what they considered unnecessary vigilance the company separated, the sheriff going to his bed chamber and the others to their respective homes. Mr. Zebra, who, like Mr. Mackintosh, also does constable duty, was apprehensive of danger. Earlier in the night he saw a dispatch which intimated that the jail would be besieged. Several times he tried to get telephone communication with Mount Airy to ascertain the feeling in that locality, but failed to get connection. This more than ever aroused his suspicions. Both he and Mackintosh knew Sheriff Shower to be a man of undoubted courage, who would, as long as able, defend his charge. They were, consequently, anxious to be on hand. Zebra went to the railroad telegraph office and gave instructions to the operator to be summoned at once from his house if any strange men showed up. Mackintosh, in company with Mr. William L. Seabrooke, sauntered down to Main street and loitered around for awhile.

Suddenly the attention of Mackintosh was attracted by the heavy tread of a cavalcade of horses as they turned out of Liberty street and crossed the railroad track on Main street. He only awaited an instant to see the phalanx

horses as they turned out of Liberty street and crossed the railroad track on Main street. He only awaited an instant to see the phalanx headed by a single rider, who wore a short mask, which only half covered his gray whiskers, advance in the direction of the jail on Court street, in the rear of the courthouse, four blocks away. Not a word came from the horsemen. They followed their leader with the precision of a well-drilled military command. They wheeled well, and in their actions were governed by the pantomimic directions of the one in front. Mackintosh made for the jail on a dead run, and so did Seabrooke. Before they could reach their destination silent riders were beside them and compelled them to halt. In the coolest possible manner the strangers dismounted and told their captives it would not be healthy for them to go further. Mackintosh, at the muzzle of a revolver, was headed towards his home and made to accelerate his speed in that direction. He was evidently recognized as one of the officers of the corporation, Seabrooke, who was not a total stranger either, for a few of them called his name, protested for awhile until one of the gang slapped him in the mouth. He attempted to resent, but the glistening barrels of a dozen pistols caused him to change his mind.

By this time Mr. Zebra was on his way to the jail. He got as far as the wooden paling which surrounds the structure when he was halted. Though he gave it out that he was a friend, the vigilantes would not permit him to advance a step. In the meanwhile they threw out pickets, who lined Court street from the office of Attorney-General Charles B. Roberts to the jail, two hundred yards away. Groups of Westminster people stood around powerless and covered by the weapons of the posse, some of whom were now on foot.

The remainder of the story is best told in the words of gentlemen who figured conspicuously in the affair. To a SUN correspondent Sheriff Snower said: "It was not later than 12.45 o'clock when three men wearing dominoes came up the steps of my dwelling, which is in front of the jail. One of them rapped on the door, and I went to a window to see who it was. I failed to recognize either of the party. Then I asked, 'What do you want?' The leader replied, 'We want to get in.' I said to them, 'Gentlemen, it is impossible; you cannot get in.' 'Well,' said they, 'we will burn the jail.' 'Go ahead,' I answered; 'you'll have to do that before I will surrender any prisoner.' At that the speaker of the trio blew a whistle, and instantly 10 or 12 men similarly disguised came into the yard. The spokesman ordered them to guard the jail on the sides and back, so no one could escape. He instructed two of them to seize heavy pieces of timber which were in the front yard and commence to ram down the dwelling door, which is also the main entrance to the jail, as you have to pass through my hallway to reach the cells. They obeyed him without a word. It was but the work of a few minutes until the panels were smashed in and the crossbar shivered into splinters. My wife and family were greatly alarmed. I did not wait to quiet them, but jumped for the hallway to obstruct the men. As soon as the door fastenings gave way they pounced on me and pinioned my arms to my side. The leader asked in deliberate tones for the prison keys. I told him I did not have them. Then they dragged me to the front porch and with a revolver to my head threatened to blow my brains out if I did not give up the keys. My only answer was for them to shoot, as I would never at the cost of my life betray my trust. We parleyed for at least fifteen minutes, until finally a tall fellow came out with the keys, which he had discovered in the jail. They led me then into the corridor and insisted on my designating where Cook was locked up. I declined. It was not much trouble for them to find it, as there were only two prisoners incarcerated. The fellow, with the keys, who was in advance, suddenly saw Cook through the iron bars, and, with an oath, sent a bullet whizzing into his cell. The ball went wide of its mark and imbedded itself in the frame of a window. The cell was unlocked and a rope with an ordinary slip-knot thrown around his neck. He wore a striped pair of cotton pants, a check shirt, a blue coat and vest and an old slouch hat. His feet were bare. The only words he offered to speak were to have time to put on his shoes, which were under his cot. They started to drag him, when he exclaimed: 'I ain't got my shoes on.' The big fellow in command quickly retorted: 'You won't need them where you are going.' With evident satisfaction they forced him down the steps and into the road. He was then thrown into a low set covered wagon drawn by two horses.

"The gray-bearded chief ordered 'All ready! Get your horses, boys.' Then the vehicle, closely guarded, drove rapidly away, followed by two other wagons, which were included in the party. Four of the masked men remained with me. They took my revolver, after which they seemed to await a signal, which at last came in the sound of a pistol shot, which vibrated through the town on the clear night air. At this they took to horse and galloped off. When Cook was led from his cell he appeared merry and cool. A devilish smile played on his lips as he passed me."

"Yes, I saw that look," vouchsafed Mr. Zebra, "though I was thirty feet away from him. He was game. I asked one of the band if they had got him and he replied, 'You bet, and we are going to use him.'"

While all this was in course of action at the jail Attorney-General Charles B. Roberts was pleading with a portion of the band near his house on Court street to spare the life of Cook and let the law take its proper course.

Mr. Roberts said to the chief of the band:

any one to see Cook. I thought there would be an outburst of feeling in the locality which, if checked in time, might not result in anything serious. Later in the day I learned that Westminster people were talking in a manner which indicated their intention of giving assistance to a mob if the jail should be attacked. This made me solicitous. I renewed my caution to the sheriff. Yesterday, however, I considered the worst over, and so informed Judge Smith, who coincided in my belief. We both were of the opinion that the anger of the people had spent itself, and that popular feeling was quieted. I told Sheriff Shower in case any violence was attempted to send for me, no matter the hour. I was awakened this morning by my wife, who said some one was calling loudly for me. I distinctly recognized the voice of Mr. Seabrooke, who came to inform me of the raid. I dressed hurriedly and went into the street. Before I had traveled fifty yards four men with drawn revolvers and wearing dominoes called on me to stand. From one of them came the query, "Friend or foe?" "A friend, to be sure," was my return of the salutation. Without explanation or ceremony they closed on me, and one gentleman, with apparent indifference, pushed a long pistol-barrel against my throat. After I had brushed it down I said, "Gentlemen, you know me. I am your friend, Charles B. Roberts, attorney-general of this State. I come to protect you against yourself."

"Oh yes! we know you Mr. Roberts," they answered, "and we voted for you, but that's another matter, and we do not need any protection."

"Yes, you do. Before tomorrow's sun will set you will regret this. For Heaven's sake, gentlemen, consider your action. You know as well as I do that if you take that negro and kill him you are committing murder."

"That's all, very well," one of them spoke up, "we have our wives and daughters to protect."

"I grant that," I answered, "but the very thing you are about punishing this negro for is what you are doing—violating the law, taking into your own hands the supreme authority vested only in the courts." This reasoning had some effect, for the man with the pistol so uncomfortably close to me exclaimed in reassuring words, "We are friends of yours, Mr. Roberts."

"Well if you are," I continued, "do not be guilty of murder."

"What do you want to do?"

"I desire to get as far as the jail to see Sheriff Shower."

"Go on!" I did so and got close enough to see Mr. Shower in the hands of his captors; when I was compelled to halt again. This time my interlocutors were more determined. Though they knew me and spoke my name, still they refused to listen to my pleading in behalf of the established law. Their reasoning was given by one who said "what's the use of talking, we have no safety for our wives and daughters. Only today another colored man outraged a little white girl near Poplar Springs. We must protect our own and we are going to do it, law or no law."

"I beg of you not. The law is your only justifiable means of avenging your wrongs. Hand this negro over to me and I will see that he gets a trial fair, square, and at the same time satisfactory to you. He will be certainly hung as if you do it. You think this lynching a terrible punishment. How much more would be the suffering and misery if Cook were convicted and made to live for a time in dread of the fate which awaited him. You know I have just returned from Annapolis, where I went to prosecute Cooper, the Baltimore county ravisher."

"Yes," interposed one of the party, "and what's done with him? He's got two lawyers fooling with his case until we don't know what's going to be done with him."

"Do be calm, gentlemen," I replied. "You are now in passion. Calm deliberation is wiser. You can then see how more effectually you will serve your purposes by listening to me. They would not and turned away. Cook was brought out and hustled away, followed by the mob. For the first time I reached the jail and went in to see Sheriff Shower, who had been released."

Attorney-General Roberts thinks the maskers numbered fifty. He says they were armed with shooting weapons ranging from a cheap toy pistol to a formidable Colt's navy revolver. They were well drilled and executed orders silently and with such celerity that they won the admiration of those who witnessed their maneuvers. There was no loud or boisterous language, little, if any, cursing, and perfect obedience. They took entire possession of Court street from Mr. Roberts's mansion to the jail. When Cook was secure, the horsemen rode on a gallop to Main street, thence to Liberty street, to the scene of the lynching. Before turning Liberty street one of the number fired the signal shot for Sheriff Shower's guards to release him. The noise awakened State's Attorney David N. Henning, who resides on Main street. Some one on the sidewalk hurriedly shouted to him the facts of the occurrence. He at once commenced to do the best he could. The hour was approaching 2 o'clock.

Constable Zebra got a posse and followed the maskers out Liberty street. When he came up with visible tracks of them daylight was faintly struggling in the east. Mr. Zebra found four dominoes. He saw the fresh signs of horses' hoofs along the road, and followed them until within one-half mile of Springmill Station, on the Western Maryland Railroad, and one and one-half miles from Westminster, on the Ridge Road. Here is the farm and quarry of Mr. Stevenson. The land is rolling and picturesque.

A short distance from the road in the field are a number of white oak trees. From the nearest, dangled the corpse of Cook. The only garment he had on was his pants. His check shirt, torn in ribbons, fluttered from his waist in the wind. Down his back trickled a thick stream of blood, which saturated that part of the rope on the back of his neck, and continued to his hips, where it was soaked by his clothes. At the base of the tree were his

A thick stream of blood, which saturated that part of the rope on the back of his neck, and continued to his hips, where it was soaked by his clothes. At the base of the tree were his coat, vest and hat. The marks of horses' hoofs were all over the ground. Around his neck was a stout piece of clothesline and a hitching strap. These were tied to a halter, which in turn was fastened to another piece of rope, the whole depending from a dog chain, which was wrapped around the limb of the tree. Cook's head was at least ten feet from the bough. It was evident that one of the maskers climbed the tree, made firm the knot in the chain, and after Cook was in mid-air shot him in the head, as the balls had a downward tendency through the scalp.

Constable Zebra was the first on the spot. With a nail holding it to the trunk of the tree was a narrow slip of paper, not over an inch wide and probably four inches long. It was folded double. On one side were the words, in scrawling handwriting, "He confessed his crime." Mr. Zebra took possession of the paper. When the paper was opened it was seen that it was a straight cut of a bill head. In the left upper corner, printed in ink, was the head, "Law Office of Milton G. Urner, Frederick, Md." Below appeared in bold writing these words:

"H. H. Dem—
Watersv—
Enclosed—
Receipt—"

Then came detached words and letters which had been cut from the body of the original manuscript, which was evidently a receipt for money collected. The note is in the possession of Mr. Zebra.

Constable Mackintosh came along with a wagon. He got Mr. John Thompson to cut down the body, and reserved the chain, ropes and hitching strap. Subsequently there was such a demand on him for pieces of the rope that he had to cut it in small pieces and distribute them. Justice Crapster, acting coroner, swore in a jury, Milton Schaeffer, foreman, who, after viewing the remains, adjourned to the courthouse to await the post-mortem examination. The corpse was placed in a wagon on a litter of straw, and under the care of Constable Mackintosh conveyed to the morgue, where Doctors James P. Summers and Winfield K. Fringer examined the body. The indentation made by the rope around the neck was very marked. The bullet wounds in the head were simply local and in no way related to the negro's death, which was caused by his neck being broken.

Cook was about 21 years old, 5 feet 10 inches in height, copper-colored, well knit, wiry frame, and had a brutal-looking face. He was a laborer in Carroll county, and worked around Watersville and Mount Airy. The crime for which he suffered death was committed last Saturday afternoon, full particulars of which appeared in THE SUN. Mrs. Carrie V. Knott, wife of John Knott, was knocked down by him with a club and otherwise brutally assaulted in her own house on the Ridge road, between Mount Airy and Watersville. Her husband was at work in a field a mile off at the time. Mrs. Knott is the mother of a thirteen-months-old child. She was in a serious condition for two days, but according to a telegram last night was reported as slowly improving.

The body of Cook, unless claimed, will be buried by the county. The jail, from which he was taken, is a two-story stone building, secure looking and heavily barred inside. The residence of Sheriff Shower is directly in front of it, as is the case in the Maryland penitentiary. There are eighteen cells, nice and clean. Mr. Shower is now serving his first term as sheriff, he was formerly a deputy. Three years ago the prison took fire. Mr. Shower on that occasion showed his bravery by rescuing, single-handed, sixteen prisoners, who escaped without a scratch.

Sheriff Shower, Drs. Fringer and Summers, and Messrs. Seabrooke and Zebra were the witnesses before the coroner's inquest. They testified to the above facts. State's Attorney Henning conducted the examination of witnesses. A verdict of death by hanging at the hands of unknown parties was promptly rendered.

Mr. John Hood, of Mount Airy, tax collector for Franklin district, heard the posse pass his door both on their way to and from the lynching. He thought nothing of this, as it was understood around Mount Airy the attack was to be made tomorrow night. Business was entirely suspended here today. At the street corners groups of men and boys discussed the affair. The balance of opinion seemed to have it that Howard county men did the lynching. A dispatch from Mount Airy declares that there is no truth in the assertion made by the lynchers to Attorney-General Roberts that a little girl had been outrageously assaulted near Poplar Springs by a negro.