

BEN HANCE'S RIDE TO DEATH.

Judge Lynch Holds Court for the First Time in St. Mary's.

About 2:30 o'clock Friday morning, a party of unknown men broke into Leonardtown jail, and taking therefrom Benjamin Hance, colored, charged with an attempted felonious assault upon Miss Alice Bailey, carried him about a mile and a-half from the Town and hanged him to a tree.

Before the Coroner's Jury, Mr. C. John Clements, jailer, gave substantially the following account of how the jail was forced and the prisoner secured:

"About 1:30 o'clock, Friday morning, I was awakened by some one rapping at the jail door. I asked, 'who is there and what do you want?' The answer came, 'we have a prisoner for you.' To the question, 'who is he?' the reply was, 'John Johnson.' I said that I did not believe them, and after some further parleying, was told that they had come after the prisoner (Hance) and I was ordered to give up the keys. This I refused to do, and the lynchers then proceeded to break in the outside jail door. This was soon done, and cautioning me to remain in my room, a rush was made up stairs, and after about an half hour's hard work, the door of the prisoner's cell was forced. Hance made no outcry, but went along quietly. Men were stationed to guard my room."

After securing Hance, the lynchers took him to a locust tree in the Court House yard and were making preparations to swing him up when Dr. John T. Spalding, whose wife was very sick, and who was standing at the gate of his residence, crossed over to the Court House fence and remarked:

"Gentlemen, I see what you are about to do, but my wife is very sick, and if you hang him there, you may destroy two or three lives."

Not a word was answered, but the party left, and with their prisoner passed through the turn-stile and around by Dr. Spalding's towards the gate that lets into Mr. Key's farm-yard. Here, apparently, their horses were rendezvoused, and about this spot Hance was placed upon horseback and swiftly carried out of the Town, Mr. Jos. Milburn and other residents along the road being aroused by the noise of the cavalcade as it swept by.

Near the gate that leads into the farm of the late John F. Wathen, on the road to Newtown Neck, is an old witch-hazel tree leaning over the roadway. Here

BEN HANCE'S RIDE TO DEATH ENDED, and the rising sun of June 17, 1887, looked down upon his corpse swinging in the morning breeze—a grim example of the penalty St. Mary's men with wives, daughters and sisters exact for crimes like Hance's.

WHAT OCCURRED AT THE TREE.

The Baltimore Sun's reporter gives the following account of the last act of the tragedy:

"After leaving the Court House yard, Hance was taken to a persimmon tree on Lawrence Avenue, but time was pressing,

and it was feared that it might be necessary to leave Hance, if they hung him there, before they were certain that life was extinct, and that some one might cut him down. For this reason he was placed on horseback behind one of the lynchers and his legs tied under the horse's belly. While the captain and his men pushed on rapidly with Hance on horseback two men were still at the jail to see that the jailer did not pursue, and a guard also was continued at the armory. The ride was to an unfrequented road about two miles from Leonardtown, where a witch-hazel tree, with an arm overhanging the road, was found suitable to lynching purposes. When this tree was reached Hance was pulled off the horse. His hands being tied, he could not break his fall, and the sand into which he fell stuck to his hands and left side. Up to this time Hance had not uttered a syllable since the attack on the jail began. He was told to get up in a buggy stationed under the fatal limb, and answered, 'Boss, untie my hands and I will get up.' Said the captain, 'Never mind about that; put your foot upon the hub and we will help you up.' This was done, and a noose was put about the man's neck. One of the men got up the tree and made the rope fast, pulling it pretty tight about Hance's neck, but not tight enough to prevent his talking.

"'Are you guilty of ravishing this girl or not?' was asked."

"'I am guilty, and ought to be hung, I suppose. Send word to my friends to take charge of my body and bury it in Sacred Heart graveyard.'"

"'Do you want to pray?' was asked."

"'May God Almighty have mercy upon my poor, sinful soul,' was the answer."

Then the leader called all the men and made each one take hold of the rope, while he, on one side, and an assistant on the other, lead the horse down the road, taking the buggy from under Hance and leaving him dangling over the road. There was no struggling beyond the working of the legs. The lynchers staid until Hance's pulse showed he was dead. It was broad day when they left. The lynchers said they hung Hance to save Miss Bailey the mortification of relating her story in court, and also from fear of his getting off."

The rope used was a common leading-line, the man's arms were secured behind his back by a rope from elbow to elbow, the right hand was tied to the right foot, and as the body swung there with the head pulled to one side and the blood dripping from the nose and staining the white sand underneath, it was a gruesome enough sight to satisfy any lover of horrors.

The jury returned to the village and after hearing testimony were unable to agree upon a verdict and were discharged.

Mr. and Mrs. Clements thought that they recognized the voices of W. T. or Sherkliff Bailey and W. V. Waters, and thought if

they heard the same voices under similar circumstances they would again know them. Joe Dorsey, colored, swore that horses he thought he knew as Mr. Waters' passed him on Spalding street and Mr. A. D. Kaiser swore that the same gentleman's horses passed him on Fenwick's street.

Several other witnesses were examined, among them Messrs. Joe F. Neal, William C. Drury, Harry Spalding, Drs. John T. Spalding and Billopp and John Rustin. The gist of their testimony is incorporated above. Mr. Spalding testified that he was told before the jail was assaulted that it was to be done, but refused to give the name of his informant for fear of criminating him. He was committed to the custody of the Sheriff, until the jury was discharged, after which, he could no longer be held. Mr. S. has since, we hear, expressed a willingness to give the name of his informant who merely told him that he thought the lynchers were coming. Dr. Billopp's testimony was unimportant. The doctor said, in substance, that he was returning from the Head of the Bay when he heard the tramp of horses coming down the St. Joseph's road and kept a lookout to see what was going on.

Mr. Peter H. Abell was the first to discover the body. He was coming out of the Neck and on his way to Mr. Washington Goldsborough's whose wheat he was to help cut. Peter took a cross cut to his destination and sent Mr. John Dawson to notify the proper authorities.

Messrs. Clarence Drury and Francis King carried the notification to Sheriff Greenwell's residence that the prisoner had been taken from the jail.

The BEACON of the 2nd instant contains the following account of the crime which cost Hance his life:

Friday night, the 27th ultimo, Benjamin Hance, colored, was committed to our county jail on warrant of Justice John C. Hurry, charged with an attempt to commit a felonious assault upon the person of Miss Alice Bailey. The prisoner, it appears, met the girl on the road leading to Stone's wharf, asked her the way to the landing and then made indecent proposals to her. The girl started to run and Hance ran after, caught her and threw her down, but owing to her screams and desperate resistance he failed to accomplish his purpose. There is considerable excitement over the affair, and we hope for the county's sake that the offender will be given a speedy trial and, if convicted, be promptly punished. The young lady is a daughter of Sherkliff Bailey, a worthy farmer of the St. Joseph's section. The scene of the attempted outrage was near Mr. John V. Camalier's gate.