

LAMBERT AT LAST PAYS THE PENALTY

THE MURDERER OF BAKER KAIRER HANGED
IN THE CAMDEN COUNTY
JAIL

PROTESTED INNOCENCE TO THE END

HE SAID STEVENS FIRED THE
FATAL SHOT

The Execution Devoid of Sensational Features—Lambert Walked Firmly to the Gallows—History of His Remarkable Case.

Nicholas Theodore Lambert died on the gallows in the Camden county jail yesterday. He was hanged for the murder of William G. Kairer, a well-to-do cracker baker, of Camden. His death closes a case that was remarkable chiefly for the extraordinary efforts to save the condemned man from the gallows. Lambert was a bad man. From his youth up he had been a criminal. He had served time in prison for burglary and admitted while awaiting trial for murder that he had robbed a score or more of houses in and around Camden. But he denied that he had fired the shot that killed Kairer. He went to the gallows with this denial upon his lips. He claimed that Josiah Stevens, who was associated with him in the Kairer robbery, was the real murderer.

Yesterday was the fourth date that had been fixed for Lambert's execution. Once he was reprieved by Gov-



The Murderer.

ernor Werts. Twice the United States Supreme Court interfered and postponed, the hanging. The law finally claimed its victim after every ordinary and several extraordinary procedures had been resorted to to avert the death penalty.

Firm in the Face of Death.

Lambert's death was devoid of sensation, as executions go. He walked to the scaffold without assistance. He did not flunk in the face of death. There was barely time for a whispered good-bye to the Sheriff and he was launched into eternity. He was hanged on the gallows that ended John Hill's life about three years ago. It was erected in an unused and half-finished room on the top floor of the county jail building at the northwest corner of Broadway and Federal streets. The death chamber is directly over a part of the jail that is being fitted up for the use of female prisoners.

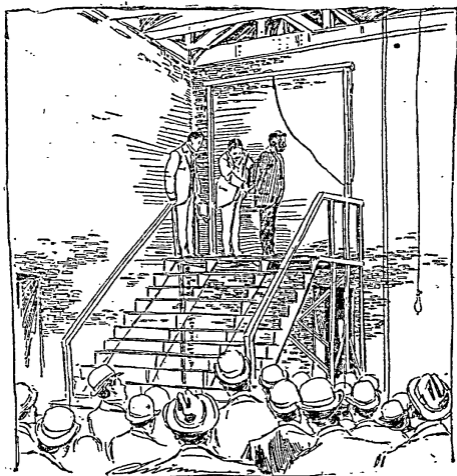
The scaffold stood over against a blank wall. On the other side windows let a flood of light into the bare room. Overhead were the gaunt rafters supporting the roof.

The heart-rending farewells between the condemned man and his mother and other relatives and friends had been uttered the night before. As the time drew on toward midnight the condemned seemed to realize for the first time that there was no further hope of escaping the death penalty.

"I can't sleep," he said to Constable Hunter, one of his death watch. "I feel oppressed, as if there was a heavy weight inside. I hope I will be able to walk to the gallows."

At 1 o'clock Lambert sat down at a little table in his cell and for three hours he was busy with his pen writing farewell letters. There were six of these missives. The longest one was to his counsel, Lawyer John G. Semple, who had made such a gallant fight to save him. He thanked his lawyer and reiterated his assertion that he did not fire the shot that killed Kairer. One of the letters was to Mrs. Isabella Shipley, a resident of South Camden, who had displayed great interest in his case. The others were to personal

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LAMBERT ON THE GALLOWES.

LAMBERT'S EXECUTION

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friends. In all these missives Lambert gave expression to his religious faith and the belief that he had divine forgiveness of his sins.

Ready for the Rope.

About 6 o'clock the spiritual advisers of the condemned man entered his cell. They were colored ministers, Reva. W. H. Yocum, Thomas Als and H. C. Ashley. Under the soothing influence of prayer Lambert grew calmer, and when his breakfast, which consisted of half a dozen fried eggs, potatoes and coffee, was sent in from a restaurant opposite the jail, he ate heartily.

At 9 o'clock the suit of black clothing that had been ordered for his execution a year ago, was brought in and he dressed himself for the gallows. A barber had shaved him and trimmed his hair the previous night. He did not put on a collar.

The persons who were to witness the execution, in all less than forty, gathered in the sheriff's office shortly before 10 o'clock. There was a jury of twelve appointed by the court, a similar number of special deputies, the sheriff's regular assistants, Sheriff's Wriggins, of Salem county, and Townsend, of Burlington county, and a few newspaper men. At 10 o'clock Sheriff Barrett led the way into the jail and piloted the witnesses to the death chamber. They walked through an iron-lined passageway in the jail proper, then through a door into the corridor on the Federal street side, and up three flights of stairs to the place of execution.

This was the route that Lambert took a few minutes later when he walked to his doom. Chairs had been placed at each landing and there was one on the scaffold, for use in case the condemned man collapsed, but they were not needed. At five minutes after 10 Sheriff Barrett started down the stairs to fetch the victim, and the audience in the death chamber talked in whispers while they waited. Lambert was awaiting the summons. His hands were manacled behind his back, and with the ministers in front, the Sheriff at his side and Constables Hunter and Gardner, of the death watch at his back, he started on the walk to the gallows.

On the Scaffold.

It was but a step from the doorway of the execution room to the foot of the flight of steps leading to the platform of the gallows. Lambert did not halt or look up. He and the Sheriff walked with firm tread up the steps. The Sheriff had declined assistance. He was cool and knew just what to do, although it was his first execution.

Lambert took his station on the trap-doors directly under the cross-beam. His gaze was fixed on the blank wall directly in front and his back was toward the spectators. He wavered slightly as the Sheriff slipped the noose over his neck. Then, just as the black cap was drawn over his face, he whispered:

"Good-bye, Sheriff. God bless you."

"Good-bye, Dory," was the response, and the next instant the Sheriff took a step to one side, pulled a lever, the big trap-doors fell with a crash, and the colored murderer was dangling in midair.

The fall was about eight feet. It is not probable that Lambert's neck was broken, but the convulsions were slight. His legs had not been plioned, but they were not drawn up in the death agony. It was 10.13 when the drop fell. Five minutes later Under Sheriff Sell unlocked the handcuffs and the arms hung listless at the side of the dangling body. At intervals a convulsive tremor shook the body, but these soon ceased, and at 10.27½ physicians pronounced life extinct.

Home to the Grave.

The body was allowed to hang for ten minutes longer before it was taken down. In an adjoining room an undertaker was waiting with the casket that, like the death suit, had been ordered a year ago. On the lid was a silver plate bearing the inscription, "Nicholas T. Lambert. Died December 19, 1893. Aged 24 years, 2 months, 19 days."

Lambert had requested that the doctors should not mutilate his body, and Sheriff Barrett saw that his wishes in that respect were carried out. In the afternoon the corpse was taken to the Johnson Colored Burying Ground, on the road to Merchantville, and interred in a grave that had been prepared for it.

The crowd of several hundred people that had gathered about the jail melted away soon after it became known that Lambert had paid the penalty of his crime. None of the relatives of the murderer or his victim were present at the execution.

LAMBERT'S CRIME

A Remarkable Fight to Stave Off the Death Penalty.

William G. Kairer was murdered about 5 o'clock on the morning of December 5, 1893, at his residence, 429 Beckett street, Camden. Previous to this there had been a score or more of burglaries in Camden and vicinity, and the police seemed unable to catch the bold burglars.

Mr. Kairer's eldest son, William G. Kairer, who with his wife occupied the second story front room of the house, was awakened by the noise of some one trying to force open his door. The young man leaped out of bed and rushing into the entry saw and struck at a man hastening down the stairs. Then he aroused his father and they made a search of the lower part of the house.

As they stood under a gas jet in the parlor the wooden blinds of the front window were dashed open and three shots were fired. The elder Kairer was shot through the heart and fell dead in his son's arms.

For weeks mystery shrouded the murder. In this time many suspects had been arrested by the police and all but one had been released. That one was Theodore Lambert, well known as a crook and known to be a desperate burglar.

The first evidence directly connecting him with the crime came through a confession made by Josiah Stevens. He told a Philadelphia detective that he was concerned with Lambert in the robbery, but that Lambert had the revolver and fired the fatal shot. This led Lambert to make a partial confession, in which he blamed the shooting on Stevens. He insisted up to the last that Stevens borrowed his revolver and fired the fatal shot.

Both were indicted. Lambert was tried on June 13, 1894, and was convicted on the 15th. Sentence was deferred until after the trial of Stevens, which took place on September 26. He was acquitted.

Lawyer John L. Semple, who had been assigned by the court to defend Lambert, applied to Chancellor McGill for a writ of error. This was refused. The Governor granted a reprieve from December 13 to January 3, 1895, on December 4, just one year from the date of the murder. On December 13—the day Lambert was to have been hanged—the Board of Pardons heard the case and refused to interfere.

Supreme Court Justice Garrison was asked for a writ of habeas corpus. This was peremptorily refused. Next Chief Justice Beasley was appealed to. He likewise refused. To Judge Dallas, of the United States Court, in Philadelphia, Semple now went. He referred the case to Judge Green, of the United States District Court at Trenton.

The hearing was set down for January 2, the day before Lambert was to be hanged. Lawyer Semple went to Trenton to find Judge Green, but the latter had gone away.

Lawyer Semple at once jumped a train for Washington, hunted up Justice Shiras, and induced him to issue a stay pending an appeal to his Court. Lambert's lawyer got back to Camden in time to serve Justice Shiras' order on the Sheriff an hour before the time fixed for the execution.

The next move in the remarkable case was the dismissal of the appeal by the United States Supreme Court. Governor Werts at once issued a second death warrant fixing the execution for June 27.

A writ of habeas corpus was refused.