REINHARDT'S LAST DAYS.

THE STATEN ISLAND MURDERER WHO IS TO DIE ON FRIDAY.

The Story of a Crime that for a Long Time Mystified the Police—The Prisoner's Pets—How he Passes the Days and Nights.

Unless intervention in the form of a reprieve from Gov. Cornell prevents, Edward Reinhardt, who is under sentence of death for the murder of Mary Ann Degnan, or Reinhardt, his reputed wife, will be hanged on Friday next, between the hours of 9 and 2 o'clock, in the shadow of the east wall of the jail of Richmond County. If the hanging takes place it will be the second in the history of Staten Island.

The crime of which Edward Reinhardt was convicted was committed in Stapleton on the evening of July 19, 1878. He and the young and pretty woman who met her death at his hands lived on the ground floor of a small double frame house in Gore street, Stapleton. Reinhardt kept a fancy goods store in the little front room. He also did some work as a shoemaker, having a kit of shoemaker's tools. In his spare moments he made ice cream, and, putting the churn in a half barrel of broken ice, rolled it up to the pleasure resorts on the east shore of Silver Lake, which is about a mile inland in a direct line from Stapleton. He was in the habit of covering the top of the churn and the barrel with a strip of carpet to ward off the sun's rays.

The young couple seemed to live unhappily, and the other tenants frequently heard the sound of angry words in their rooms. On the afternoon of the 19th of July the young woman ran into the room of a tenant, Mrs. Herborn, in evident alarm. Reinhardt followed her closely. Returned on his heel, without a word, and returned to his rooms. His wife followed him soon afterward. Several hours afterward Mrs. Herborn heard her cry out, "Mrs. Herborn!" but there was no further sound. Reinhardt's store was closed early that evening. He was heard at work with a saw in his rooms early the next morning. Soon afterward he stepped out into the yard and called loudly:

"Get up, Mary, if you want to see your mother to-day."

Then he retreated his rooms. Soon afterward he borrowed a wheelbarrow from one of his neighbors, saying that he wanted to take a half barrel of crockery up to his sister's house. He intended to move, he said, and his wife had gone to visit her mother in Newark. As he was pulling the barrow, with a half barrel covered with a strip of carpet tightly nailed down on it, away from the house, the barrel fell off. It gave out a heavy, dull sound. Reinhardt hastily replaced it on the barrow, and went on his way. He was not seen again in Stapleton for some days.

Three weeks later three boys, who were tending cows on the east shore of Silver Lake, found a half barrel partly protruding from the ground. They pulled in the edge of the carpet nailed over the top, and saw a human body. Fearing foul play and a fever breeding, they hurried to the constable of Stapleton, told him of their discovery. The barrel and its contents were taken charge of by the late Coroner James Dempsey of New Brighton. The body was that of a young woman, about to become a mother. It was clad only in underclothes. Under the advanced condition of the body seemed to depend, for the face was unrecognizable, what appeared to be quick lime having been sprinkled over the body to hasten decomposition. A wound upon the head, made, apparently, with a blunt instrument, had produced a fracture of the skull.

A short distance from the place where the bodies were found, Coroner Dempsey that he saw a man digging a hole near where the body was found, on the 18th of July. The man said that he intended to bury a dog in the hole. Several men who were repairing the road in front of the residence of Mrs. Herborn, and living in houses near Silver Lake, said that they saw a man wheeling a barrow, on which there was a half barrel, covered with carpet, down toward Silver Lake, on the afternoon of the 19th of July. The description that Keyniel and the other men gave of the man they saw fitted Reinhardt. Mrs. Blake that Reinhardt was the man. He found Reinhardt living in rooms in Broome street with a young girl, Pauline Dittmars, whom he had married on the 13th of July. Reinhardt was taken to Staten Island, and identified by the men. The relatives of the dead girl were summoned as witnesses at the Coroner's inquest, and her aunt identified the chemise found upon the body as one that she had made. But the identification was afterward shaken by cross-examination at the trial of Reinhardt for murder, in May, 1879, and a juror of Richmond County said, last evening, that the jury before whom Reinhardt was tried, one of the jurors told him, would probably have disagreed had Reinhardt not gone on the witness stand and admitted that the body was that of his wife. He denied that he had killed her, and said that taking some medicine that she had obtained from a physician on the evening of the 19th of July, and that fearing that he would be accused of killing her in order to free his relations with Pauline Dittmars from all embarrassment, he concealed her body. The jury convicted Reinhardt on the 23d of May, and Justice Dykman sentenced him to be hanged on the 11th of July. An appeal was taken to the Supreme Court, General Term, which affirmed the judgment. Reinhardt was then again sentenced to be hanged on April 2, 1880. The case was then taken to the Court of Appeals, and that tribunal affirmed the justice of the sentence and remitted its decision to the Supreme Court, General Term, on which Reinhardt was arraigned for a third time to have the death penalty pronounced against him, and his execution was fixed for Jan. 4, 1881.

"I am probably the only man," said Reinhardt on Saturday, as he stood at the door of his cell, "who was ever sentenced to death three times and lived to tell of it. The hardest part of it all to bear, though, is the suspense. No human being can realize what I have suffered from suspense in the twenty-seven months that I have been confined here. But the time is growing shorter every hour now, when the matter will be settled one way or the other, perhaps forever. I have learned something of the law since I have been here, and I have seen the section of the statute which my counsel says entitles me to a writ of error and a stay of proceedings. This provides that, after the Court of Appeals has affirmed a conviction, the remittitur—you see I have learned some of the technical terms of the law—as the notice of affirmance is called, shall be sent to the court in which the conviction was obtained, and that this court shall again pass sentence. Now, I was tried and convicted in the Court of Oyer and Terminer of this county, yet I was resentenced in the General Term of the Supreme Court in Brooklyn. This, my counsel assures me, was error, giving me the right to apply for a stay pending appeal. But if this application fails I suppose that there is no power on earth except that of the Governor to save me."

He stepped back into the cell for a moment, so that the shadow of the barred door hid the expression of his face. Then he advanced again to the grating, and said, his lower lip quivering slightly as he spoke:

"If the end must come, why I'll try to face it. I think that I can do it. But, after all, you know, it is not an experience that most people would like to go through."

He tried to smile, but the effort only made his pale, worn face seem more haggard. Just then a cloak gray cat climbed half way up the door, and looked appealingly at Reinhardt. He opened the small grating through which his food is ordinarily passed to him, and the cat slipped through and rubbed caressingly against his leg.

"It's a her mate," he said, pointing to another gray cat, that lay in a snug ball in the centre of his cot. "They are a great deal with me, perhaps because I pet and feed them."

Reinhardt was dressed as an amateur sailor might have been. He wore a blue flannel yachting suit, with a knot of blue silk handkerchief at his throat. His short cloth trousers were of blue flannel. He has grown fleshy since he has been in the jail, but after the failure of his daring attempt to escape in September, he began to lose color and weight. Since then a watch has been kept night and day upon his cell which is on the ground tier. One of the two deputy sheriffs who are his guardians said yesterday that although Reinhardt tries to have a smile and a ready word for those who visit him in the day, he seems to feel his situation in the long hours of the night. He is wakeful, and is often heard singing drowsily. In the morning his eyes frequently look as though he had wept during the night. But he rarely speaks of his crime, and then only in a non-committal way.

The Rev. Mr. Muir of the Baptist Church of Port Richmond went with County Clerk Hart on Saturday to Reinhardt's cell. Mr. Hart reminded Reinhardt that his position was every moment growing more serious, and suggested that he seek spiritual consolation.

"I have a smile for every one," Reinhardt said, sweetly, "but no one knows the terrible struggle on my feelings."

When Mr. Hart returned alone a moment afterward, and handed him six cigars of a brand which Reinhardt is particularly fond, he brightened up.

Sheriff Conner has determined to hang Reinhardt in an enclosure of planking built out from the east side of the jail. The Sheriff has examined the gallows that has done service in the Tombs here for years, is satisfied with it, and the understanding is that it is to be sent down to the Richmond jail to-day.

Yesterday Reinhardt's counsel made application to Judge Pratt of the Supreme Court for a writ of prohibition staying the execution. The Judge refused to grant the writ. As a last resort Reinhardt has sent the following letter to Gov. Cornell:

"To His Excellency, the Governor of the State of New York:

"I am confined to my cell under sentence of death for a crime of which I am entirely innocent. I do believe that the proceedings would have been different had my counsel been allowed to be heard in the Court of Appeals. I feel—you know I am no lawyer—that I have not been given a fair trial. I have now been in jail two years, and have suffered more than any pen can describe. I have never had a friend to speak a word in my behalf. I have never had the means to employ counsel to do what should be done for me. I have never had a dollar in my hands. We shall be judged by the way we treat the poor. We shall have to ask God for mercy. I ask you, in the name of that God before whom we shall stand, if you feel that I have paid the full penalty of my crime, that you will give me the right to appeal for a stay pending appeal. But if this application fails I suppose that there is no power on earth except that of the Governor to save me."

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