

HOW KEMMLER DIED.

"Electrocution" Not Wholly a Success.

Two Shocks Required to Extinguish the Last Spark of Life.

The Doomed Murderer Meets His Fate with Wonderful Courage.

An Appalling Scene When the Victim Began to Return to Consciousness After the First Shock.

AUBURN, N. Y., Aug. 6.—The trial of a new means of taking human life, while prompted by humane motives, has resulted in a sickening spectacle presented by a pinioned wretch, at whose vital center was kept pounding for some moments an alternating current of electricity which, though it ultimately destroyed his life, subjected the criminal to a torture of which no living being has knowledge, and which none can describe. Imperfect registry of the current pressure or faulty contact of the electrodes prevented instantaneous death. The reader may gain some conception of the process of this killing when the statement is made that the person whose body should be shaken into fragments could not have suffered such pain as did Kemmler, whose nerve cells and tissues were disintegrated not in a flash, as designed, but by the relatively slow strokes of the electric hammers upon them. Whether the blood yet retains its normal consistency or whether it is partially or wholly fluidized by the divorce of oxygen from the blood corpuscles, can only be determined by the autopsy.

With the conclusion of the speech he turned his back on the jury, took off his coat and handed it to the warden. This disclosed the fact that a hole had been cut from the band of the trousers down, so as to expose the base of the spine. When the coat was off Kemmler turned in the direction of the door through which he came into the room, and began to unbutton his vest; at the same time the warden drawing the interfering drape of his shirt through the hole in his pants and cutting it off, so as to leave a little surface of the flesh against which one of the electrodes was to press, absolutely bare. Warden Durston called attention to the fact that it was not necessary to remove the vest, and Kemmler calmly buttoning it again, carefully arranged his necktie.

"Don't hurry about this matter," said the warden; "be perfectly cool." He was perfectly cool—by all odds the coolest man in the room.

SUFFERED NO PAIN.

AUBURN, N. Y., Aug. 6.—After there remained no doubt that the current had done its fatal work, Dr. Fell said, "Well, there's no doubt about one thing; the man never suffered an iota of pain." In after consultations other physicians expressed the same belief. It was some mitigation of the horrors of the situation to believe this.

Some doctors disagreed with this view, and doubted his death when his chest moved and sounds issued from his lips.

THE AUTOPSY.

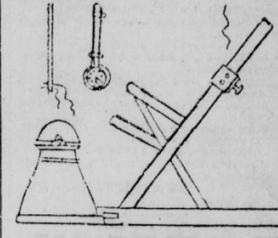
The autopsy began at 9 o'clock. It was found when the body was spread out on the table that very severe rigor mortis had set in. There was little relaxation, and it was with difficulty that the corpse was straightened out. On examination it was found the second electrode burned through the skin and into the flesh at the base of the spine, making a scar nearly five inches in diameter. The heart, lungs and other organs were taken out and found in good healthy condition, and will be preserved for future examination. The brain also was taken out. It, too, will be examined.

thumbscrew which held back the chair in place and began to lower it so that the rubber cap which had the saturated sponge pressed against the top of Kemmler's head.

THE DOOMED MAN'S NERVE.

The warden assisted in holding Kemmler's head. Kemmler said, "Oh, you had better press that down, partner, I guess; press that down." So the head piece was unclamped and pressed further down. While it was being done Kemmler said, "Well, I want to do the best I can; I can't do any better than that."

Warden Durston took in his hand the leather harness which was to be adjusted to Kemmler's head. It was a muzzle of broad leather straps, which went across the forehead and chin. The top of the strap pressed down against the nose of Kemmler until it flattened it down slightly over his face. The harness was put in place, Dr. Spitzka who was standing near the chair, said: "God bless you, Kemler," and the condemned man answered, "Thank you." Soft-



Death Chair.

ly the door leading into the room where the switches were arranged was partly opened and a man stood in the doorway. Beyond him there were two other men. Which one of them was to touch the lever and make the connection with the chair was not known. Warden Durston said it never will be known. The dynamo in the machineroom was running at good speed and the voltmeter on the wall showed a little more than 1000 volts. The warden turned to the assembled doctors and those immediately around the execution chair and said: "Do the doctors say it is all right?" "Hardly a minute had elapsed since the adjustment of the straps. There was no time for Kemmler to have weakened then, if his marvellous courage had not been equal to the test of a further delay, but there was no fear that he would lose courage. He was as firm in the chair as before he entered the room."

THE FIRST SHOCK.

small hole in the skin at the base of the thumb on the back of the hand. There was nothing strange in this alone, but the little rupture was dripping blood.

"Turn the current on instantly. The man is not dead," cried Spitzka. Faces grew white and forms fell back from the chair. The warden sprang to the doorway and cried "Turn on the current." But the current could not be turned on. When the signal to stop had come, the operator had pressed the little button which gave the signal to the engineer to stop the dynamo. The dynamo was almost at a standstill and the volt metre registered an almost imperceptible current. The operator sprang to the button and gave a sharp quick signal. There was rapid response, but it was not quick enough to anticipate the signs of reviving consciousness. As the group of horror-stricken witnesses stood helplessly by, all eyes were fixed on the chair. Kemmler's lips began to drip spittle and in a moment the chest began to move and from the mouth came heavy stertorous sounds, quickened and increasing with respiration. There was no voice but that of the warden crying to the operator to turn on the current, and the wheezing sound, a half groan, which forced itself past the tightly closed lips, sounded through the still chamber with ghastly distinctness. Some of the witnesses turned away from the sight.

ONE FAINTED.

The scene seemed a long time in reaching the climax. In reality there were but 73 seconds in the interval which elapsed between the moment when the first sound issued from Kemmler's lips until the response to the signal came from the dynamo room. It came with the same suddenness that marked the first shock which passed through Kemmler's body. The sound which horrified the listeners about the chair was cut off sharply as the body once more became rigid. The slimy ooze still dropped from the mouth and ran slowly down the beard and on to the gray vest. Twice were there wrenches of the body as the electricians in the next room threw the current on and off. There was no mistake this time about the killing. The dynamo was run up to the highest speed, and again the full current of 2000 volts was sent through the body. How long this was kept in action no one knows. To the excited group about the chair it seemed an interminable time. Dr. Daniel, who thought he had an approximate idea of the time at least, said it was four and a half minutes in all. The warden's assistant who stood over the dynamo, said on the record signal the machinery was run only three and a half minutes all together.

No one was anxious to give the signal to stop. All dreaded the responsibility of offering to the man a chance to revive or give again at least those appearances of returning animation which startled and sickened the witnesses a few minutes before. As the anxious group stood silently watching the body, suddenly there rose from it

A WHITE VAPOR.

Bearing with it the pungent and sickening odor of a body burning. Again there were cries to stop the current and again the warden sprang to the door and gave a quick order to his assistant. The current was stopped and again there was a relaxation of the body. No doubt this time the current had done its work, if not well at least completely. Dr. Fell who stood by the side of the special correspondent of the Associated Press, turned and said: "Well, there is no doubt about one thing, the man never suffered untold-of pain." In after consultations other physicians expressed the same belief. It was some mitigation of the horrors of the situation to learn this, but the mitigation was extremely slight when it developed at another point that some doctors disagreed very materially.

DOCTORS AT VARIANCE.

Was Kemmler dead when the chest moved and the lips gave forth those strange ghastly sounds? Was he breathing or was there an involuntary and phenomenal movement of the chest muscles? Some of the eminent experts in attendance said to an Associated Press correspondent while the body was still warm in the chair that there was no doubt these were signs of returning animation; that respiration, for respiration they believed it to be, was growing stronger, and that in time if the current had not been turned on again he would have revived. Others, among them Dr. Spitzka, stated with equal positiveness of conviction that the first shock killed Kemmler instantly. Doctors Daniels and Spitzka, the fathers of electrocution, believe that Kemmler was dead, but they think the current should have been continued longer than 17 seconds, which was the official time of the first contact. There is no way in which a positive determination of the question can be made. It will always remain unsolved.

OTHER DETAILS.

Something Wrong with the Machinery—A Bungling Job.

AUBURN, N. Y., Aug. 6.—Associated Press.] Kemmler had gone peacefully to sleep in the night and had slept soundly and was snoring still at 5 o'clock when he was awakened by one of his guards. Pastor Houghton, who attended Kemmler and Prison Chaplain Yates were with him. They read to him from the Bible and he prayed with them. He dressed himself without aid in a suit of gray mixed goods. His hair he combed and brushed with great care. His shoes were well polished and while he made himself finally tidy the warden and a tall stranger, who is a deputy marshal in Buffalo, entered the cell. The warden explained to Kemmler that he must have the top of his head shaved. The prisoner demurred. He had taken great pains in dressing his hair and beard, as he explained to the warden, he did not want to be disgraced. Kemmler's hair is a dark brown and wavy with a hyperion curl that fell on his forehead. Of this he was proud. In the shadow of death his vanity asserted itself. His hair however, was cut, but the curl was saved and, as the sequel proved, with no good results. The shaven spot was 2½ by 1½ inches in size, and was not really shaven but was cropped fairly close.

While this was proceeding the witnesses examined the chair. The death belt was run by the dynamo, and the incandescent test lamps in the ante-

chamber glowed faintly. "How feebly they burn," exclaimed Dr. MacDonald, who was the only one who got into the ante-room, and that while ignorant of the warden's desire to keep its secrets inviolate. In response to Dr. MacDonald's comment, Electrician Davis remarked that there was "something wrong about the machinery down there," referring to the dynamo end of the circuit. This remark took place before the electricizing. It is well to remember, and was undoubtedly as true a few minutes later when the bolt was applied to Kemmler.

The condemned man, after having his hair cut on top his head listened to the reading of the warrant by the warden. When the current was first turned on the least unhappy of all in the room was Dr. Southwick of Buffalo, the father of electricizing in capital cases and who has been studying and been working upon the subject since 1881. "There," he exclaimed, as he strode away from the chair to the knot of witnesses at the other end of the room, "there is the culmination of ten years work and study. We live in a higher civilization from this day. But even while he spoke a quick sharp cry went up from those yet closely watching about the silent figure in the chair. There had been a movement in the breast of the man whom all had believed had died one minute and 47 seconds before. The harrowing scenes attending the second electrocution followed.

The doctors in general declared that the man from the very first contact was beyond consciousness and some thought that the action which startled all and sent the warden away with a white face to order the current renewed, was only reflex muscular action. Not so one physician, who declared that he would stake his name that he would bring Kemmler back to consciousness and life with brandy and hypodermics. Meantime one of the witnesses, Mr. G. G. Bain of Washington, D. C., had fainted and lay upon the bench where he was being fanned.

When finally the electric mask was removed Kemmler's eyes were found to be half closed and without the glassy stare common to eyes in death. The lids were lifted and tests of the pupils with bright light were made. There was no contraction of the pupils.

Where the mask had pressed the forehead there was a livid mark, the mark of the law's righteous desecration. The nose and region of its base was a deeply livid hue. Purple spots soon began mottling the hands, arms and neck, and the doctors said he was surely dead. One of the Buffalo doctors seven minutes after the straps were removed cut the skin at the temple for a microscopic specimen of the dead man's blood. It was immediately examined and found slightly coagulated. On the electrodes being withdrawn from contact with the body, hair adhered to the rim of the upper disc. Drs. McDonald and Shady examined the head. They found there was a deep circular imprint on the top of the head made by the

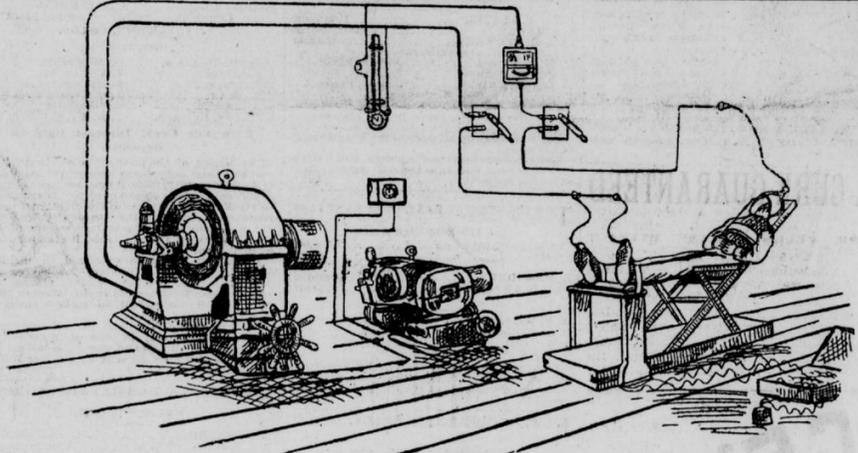
sharp pressure of the electrode's rim. The spot where a tuft of Kemmler's hair had been cut off just before death was found to constitute not more than one-third of the area of contact with the electrode and close examination disclosed that the edges of copper within the electrode had slightly burned the scalp just where the head had been cut. Had not Kemmler's desire to avoid disfigurement by the cutting off of his hair prevailed, contact would have been more perfect and the chances of instantaneous death would have been very much greater, and possibly the disfigurement which he dreaded would have been avoided. As to the causes of the failure to kill Kemmler instantly, there is said by all physicians to be no doubt that consciousness was stricken from the brain instantly. The fact that he was not instantly killed is the result of improper contact or insufficient voltage or pressure.

Warden Durston says 1700 volts were first applied to Kemmler. When questioned tonight by an Associated Press correspondent if the 20 incandescent lamps on the circuit were burning when the bolt was discharged into the murderer, he stated that they were. They should not have been. The moment before switching the current into Kemmler the test lamps should have been cut off. Each lamp consumes 50 volts, hence 20 took 1000 volts at once out of the current sent to Kemmler. That left 700 volts to cause death. The best authorities state that 15 per cent. of a current is stopped at the points of contact, and that 85 is thus expended in the body. Eighty-five per cent. of the 700 volts not consumed today by the test lamps is 590 volts of pressure. This is not enough to surely kill instantly with good contact and that of today was not perfect. The warden says all was working right this morning, though last night at midnight his appliances were in such order that he was not certain whether the execution would take place today, even though he had summoned his guests to the prison at an early hour this morning. Warden Durston has been through a terrific ordeal, and the knavery of men has been pressed upon him so much where he least expected, that he scarcely knows whether to trust himself. We will approach the electricizing of Fish here with more light.

The consensus of opinion among witnesses here today is that there is not the slightest doubt that a human being may be instantly killed by 1000 volts applied through a perfect contact and continued 20 seconds.

Frightful Railway Accident.

VIENNA, Aug. 6.—(A railroad train was thrown from the track today near Pilsen, Bohemia. The car rolled down an embankment into a marsh. The stoker and several passengers were killed. Eight persons were injured. Most of the passengers were emigrants bound for the United States.



The Execution Room.

WONDERFUL NERVE.

Kemmler's nerve was something wonderful. He never faltered. He directed the adjustment of himself in the chair and counseled the warden to moderation to secure perfect safety. The shock was given at 6:43½, and was continued about 18 seconds. Two minutes after the current was cut off there was evidence of respiration. As soon as possible the current was returned and then cut off. Again respiration was evident, after a few moments. Saliva came from the mouth; the chest heaved; there was wheezing in the throat. The shock was again put to the prisoner, who, the doctors remarked, was unconscious from the moment of the first shock. After a short time smoke appeared at the base; his

FLESH WAS BURNING.

The spectacle was most trying. The man, the doctors said, suffered no pain, however. The warden says the voltage at first shock was 1800 volts, which run down to a point not named. After a third contact of four minutes the man was declared dead. The warden's certificate of death was then signed by all present and the party broke up at 7:30 to meet at 8:15, when the body would be ready for the autopsy.

When the mask was taken off the face the eyes were found half open, and his expression, while not normal or placid, was not horrifying.

TAKING THE CHAIR—KEMMLER MAKES A SPEECH.

Warden Durston stood at the left of the chair with a hand on the back of it. Almost at the moment Kemmler took his seat he began to speak in quick, short periods. "Now, gentlemen," he said, "this is William Kemmler. I have warned him he has got to die, and if he has anything to say he will say it." As the warden finished, Kemmler looked up, and in a high voice, without any hesitation, and as though he had prepared himself with the speech: "Well, I wish every one good luck in this world, and I think I am going to the good place. The papers have been saying lots of stuff that isn't so. That's all I have to say."

ANOTHER ACCOUNT.

Details of the Execution—A Sickening Scene.

AUBURN (N. Y.) Aug. 6.—(By the Associated Press.)—Kemmler sat down in the electric chair as quietly as though he was sitting down to dinner. Warden Durston stood on the right and George Vieling, of Albany, on the left. They began immediately to adjust the straps, the condemned holding up his arms so as to give them every assistance. When the straps had been adjusted about the body the arms were fastened down and then the warden leaned over and parted Kemmler's feet so as to bring the legs near the legs of the chair. While the straps were being arranged, Kemmler said: "Take your time. Don't be in a hurry. Be sure every thing is all right." Two or three times he repeated these words. Warden Durston reassured him with the re-



Fatal Cap.

mark that it would not hurt him; that he (Durston) would be with him all through, but it was not fear that Kemmler felt, it was rather a certain pride in the exactness of the experiment. He seemed to have greater interest in its success than those who had made preparations for it, who were watching its progress, and its final fatal conclusion. When the strap had been adjusted the warden placed his hand on Kemmler's head and held it against the rubber cushion which ran over the back of the chair. Kemmler's eyes were turned to the other side of the room. Before, they had followed the warden in his movement about. Then the doomed man made a few remarks in a perfectly clear, composed tone of voice: "Well good luck" was one of them, and "Durston, see that things are all right" was another. Vieling unfastened the

At the warden's request Dr. Fell stepped forward with a long syringe in his hand and deftly wetted two sponges which were at the electrodes, one on top of the head and the other at the base of the spine. The water which he put on them was impregnated with salt. Dr. Spitzka answered the warden's question with a shout of "All right" which was echoed by others about him. "Ready?" said Durston again and then "Good bye." He stepped to the door and through the opening said to some one in the next room, but to whom will probably never be known with certainty, "Everything is ready." There was an almost immediate response and at 6:43 the electric current was turned on.

There was a sudden convulsion of the frame in the chair. A spasm went over Kemmler from head to foot. He was confined by straps and springs that held him so firmly that no limb or other part of the body stirred more than a small fraction of an inch from its resting place. The warden gave it for a moment an expression of pain, but no cry escaped from the lips; which were free to move at will, no sound came forth to suggest that consciousness lasted more than the infinitesimal fraction of a second—beyond the calculation of human mind. The body remained in a rigid position for seventeen seconds. The jury and witnesses who remained seated up to this moment came hurriedly forward and surrounded the chair. There was no movement of the body beyond the first convulsion. It was not a pretty sight, the man in his shirt sleeves bound hand and foot, body and even head, with the heavy frame work pressing down on top of the skull.

Dr. McDonald held a stop watch in his hand and as the seconds flew by he noted their passage. Spitzka looked at the stop watch and as the tenth second expired he cried out "Stop!" other voices cried "Stop." The warden turned to the doorway, called out "Stop" to the man at the lever. A quick movement of the arm and the electric current was switched off. There was a relaxation of the body in the chair. "He's dead," said Spitzka calmly.

COMING BACK TO LIFE.

Dr. Balch was leaning over the body looking at the exposed skin. Suddenly he cried out sharply "Dr. McDonald, see that rupture." In a moment Drs. Spitzka and McDonald had leant over and were looking where Balch was pointing at a little red spot on the hand that rested on the right arm of the chair. The index finger of the hand had curved backward as the muscles contracted and scraped a

London Clothing Co.

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