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## JUSTICE VINDICATED

The Last Act in the Awful Drama—Two Souls Swung into Eternity.

Ernest and Alexis Blanc Hanged by their Necks Till Dead.

The Last Confession of the Young Murderers, Written and Signed by Themselves.

Four Thousand People Present—Perfect Order Reigned Throughout the Day.

"Foul deeds will rise Though all the earth o'erwhelm them to man's eyes."

Ernest and Alexis Blanc, the murderers of poor Martin Begnaud, were hanged yesterday between the hours of 2 and 3 in the afternoon. People began to arrive in town Thursday, when an unusually large number of strange faces were noticed on the streets of Lafayette. Since the early hours of Friday it was clearly apparent that the crowd attracted by the hanging would be the largest ever seen in the town. The wall which had been erected around the scaffold to comply with the law was of such a height that those who were not contented with looking at the unfortunate young Frenchmen before the fatal drop, climbed trees and roofs of houses in order to be able to witness the end of the awful drama which was about to be concluded.

It is estimated that there were fully 4,000 people present. Every town from New Orleans to the Texas line was represented. So many were hanging in the trees on the court-house square that Alexis facetiously remarked that "those trees were full of fruits." Most of the people impatiently waited for the hour of the execution while others applied to the sheriff to let them visit the Blancs, but as that officer had his hands full with more serious duties he could not always attend to the visitors. With few exceptions the immense throng behaved well, occasionally some who had probably imbibed too freely of alcohol, made themselves disagreeable. At about 12 o'clock Sheriff Broussard went to his office where he deputized the following citizens to assist him at the execution: D. A. Cochrane, Aurelien Olivier, J. O. Broussard, Alex D. Verrot, Hamp Benton, Aurelien Patin, Israel Prejean, Rodolph Roy, Geo. Melchoir, J. W. Broussard. The following gentlemen who were present took their oaths as witnesses: D. Doucet, J. T. Mulhern, Simeon Begnaud, Jean Begnaud, Leo Judice, Jean A. Begnaud. The sheriff requested the witnesses to be at the jail at half past one o'clock, while the presence of the deputies was required there an hour earlier.

The night of April 1st was the last time Ernest and Alexis Blanc enjoyed the restorative influences of balmy sleep. They were very cheerful, as much so as it was possible for two human beings to be, with such a dreadful fate staring them in the face. They recognized and cordially greeted all comers; even some persons they scarcely knew, they remembered and addressed politely. Showing that their mental faculties were in perfect order, their pulse beat normally, and there was not a quiver of the muscles. Nothing indicated that their animal instincts shrank from the ordeal they were shortly to undergo, while the moral part of their beings was not profoundly affected as they indulged in some of the ghastliest jokes that ever fell from human lips. For instance when questioned about their early training and the studies they preferred at school, Alexis expressed a preference for history and geography, which was in unison with what he said on a former occasion that his boyish ambition had been to be a marine and that the works of fiction which he remembered with peculiar gusto were those of Gustave Aymar which dealt with adventures among the Indian tribes of North America, while Ernest said that he had no particular penchant for any study at school unless it was that of (with a laugh) gymnastics, but that he would shortly have an opportunity to practice gymnastics in a sort of trapeze performance, a serio-comedy in which he and Alexis expected to be the chief actors with a howling rabble as an audience. They kept up a running fire of badinage.

Ernest drew a picture, not a muscle of the finger twitching, representing a highwayman with a cocked pistol and dirk, holding

up a poor chap who was on his knees before them. This picture they showed to Mr. Simeon Begnaud, but upon this gentleman turning away with apparent disgust, they both assured him there was no intention of reproducing anything like a picture of their crime, and on Mr. Begnaud's advice they tore it up. They answered all questions quickly and intelligently.

When urged to lie down so as to get as much rest as possible to prepare for the ordeal they had to go through the next day, they insisted on sitting up and chatting until after 1 o'clock in the morning. Even after retiring they spoke and joked with each other until exhausted, when nature threw around them the mantle of charitable oblivion.

They told the sheriff to arouse them at 5 a. m. which he did, but they begged to be allowed to sleep a little longer and they dozed off until 5:30. They did not break bread until they received holy communion at 8 o'clock. Then visitors began to arrive and the scenes of the day before commenced. They were perhaps a trifle less full of levity, but they still indulged in humorous sallies. Their color became a little heightened towards noon, but they yet displayed that marvelous composure they manifested from the time of their arrest.

At one o'clock Father Knapp, a Dominican friar, who is holding a mission here, came in to render the last sad rites of consolation of mother church. The father, who is exceedingly handsome, made the scene the more impressive. His stalwart figure, clothed in cassack, his classic face beaming with kindness and humanity, will long be remembered. The silent moving of the lips as if impelled by inward prayer, asking, doubtless, the Great Jehovah to pardon the youthful criminals and temper the morbid crowd was noticeable.

When Father Knapp arrived the prisoners were about to take a bath, which they did with scrupulous care, washing their feet and bodies in a tub. They put on neat garments which Sheriff Broussard had provided for them, and when dressed they were a very handsome pair of young men. Being offered collars they refused to put them on, Alexis saying that he did not want to place any obstruction in the way of the rope. A short while after Father Knapp entered the cell and remained with them.

At 1:45 Sheriff Broussard read the death warrant. They listened to that document with perfect composure. Under the tutelage of Father Knapp their faces lost some of their levity, though Ernest frequently smiled while talking, and Alexis' eyes maintained their glitter and his voice its usual vivacity, the only evidence of any unusual strain was an occasional gulping on the part of Alexis as though a lump formed in his throat, while Ernest was observed to moisten his lips with his tongue.

At 2:04 the march to the gallows began, in the following order: 1st, the holy man



Sheriff Broussard.

of God. 2d, Sheriff Broussard with Alexis, 3d, Ernest with Deputies, Israel Prejean and Alex Billaud.

The two brothers walked up the stairs with a firm tread. When they reached the summit of the scaffold they knelt when they were blessed by Father Knapp who recited the act of contrition with them.

Ernest then in a clear, well modulated voice, addressed the crowd in chaste French the substance of which was the caution to young men to avoid evil books which might have a tendency to start them on the down grade of a criminal career, as it had done for them. He counselled them to follow strictly the tenets of religion and the advice of their parents.

As soon as Ernest concluded his remarks, Sheriff Broussard adjusted the fatal noose around Ernest's neck and then he placed it around Alexis'; he quickly covered the brothers' faces with the black caps, tied their legs, and before many were aware of it, the engine of death was set in motion and two lifeless bodies were launched in space.

The drop fell at 2:10 and at 2:14 all muscular tremor had ceased, both necks being dislocated by the fall. They unquestionably lost all sensation the moment the drop was sprung. The slight bodily movement of the bodies for four minutes after being mechanical. The last mechanical spasmodic movement of Alexis was a stiffening of the right arm.

At 2:23, 13 minutes after the drop fell Coroner A. R. Trahan, Drs. Webb and Mouton, pronounced Ernest and Alexis Blanc dead and the bodies were lowered,

placed in coffins and carried to the court-house where, upon examination by Dr. Trahan and his assistants, it was ascertained that their necks had been dislocated.

With the exception of the detaching of a plank, which the Sheriff immediately replaced, there was nothing to mar the harmony of the dismal scene.

Thousands were admitted to view the bodies as they lay in front of the court-house in their white covered pine coffins. The discoloration of their faces had commenced to pale and to assume the waxen hues of death.

During the afternoon the bodies were taken to the Catholic church and were given decent burial.

Too much credit cannot be accorded Sheriff Broussard, who, in the conduct of this case from the inception to the end, carried out every detail so successfully. His dealings with the large crowd were characterized by firmness and good-humor. The law prohibited



Deputy Sheriff Mouton.

a public hanging and he performed the execution in private, as far as it was humanly possible to do so. The wall surrounding the scaffold was 14 feet high, the upper halves of the bodies of the criminals being visible. A great load has been lifted off the sheriff's shoulders.

The following is a literal translation of a portion of the manuscript given by the Blancs to Mr. Thomas Mouton. It was written by Alexis and signed by both. It is a full history of the crime and a sketch of the murderers:

SUNDAY, Feb. 28, 1897.

At this moment I am incarcerated in the jail at Lafayette. Through the bars of my cell I am able to see only a small spot of the green earth. The weather is beautiful; the sun lights the town with its golden rays, none of which shine on me, confined in my dismal cell. But why are we here, without hope and with the scaffold as the only alternative? It is because we have committed a crime, the penalty of which we must pay with our lives.

A few years ago, it was in Paris, France, that our beloved mother breathed her last after a long and painful illness. Poor mother! How she must have suffered, if from her heavenly abode she looked down upon us and followed us through our lives. We were left alone on earth, two unhappy orphans with no parents to guide us. We were then, one 16 and the other 15, years old. By the sale of a few household articles we realized a little money. Considering our position we decided to leave France as we had no reason to remain there. We journeyed through Belgium, visiting Brussels, Bourges and Anvers, and finally boarded a steamer bound for New York where we landed on the 24th of August, 1893.

Immediately after our arrival there, the love for adventure took possession of us and having enough money we departed for St. Louis, passing through Norfolk, Cincinnati, Indianapolis and Louisville, arriving at St. Louis, where we soon spent all our money. Being penniless, we entered upon a life of privation and misery. For two months we had little to eat and sometimes nothing at all. After several efforts to secure employment, a farmer near St. Louis gave us work and a home; we remained there all winter. With the approach of spring, our adventurous spirit again took possession of us, and not having been paid in money we did not care to remain where we were. Then we packed our belongings and left for New Orleans, and a month later reached that city, having suffered much from cold and hunger. But in that

French city, we received not much more hospitality than in the American cities, and we crossed the river and continued our journey having nothing in view but the procurement of employment. It is in this way we arrived at the home of old Col. Boudreaux and for two years we worked on his plantation following the pursuits of farming. It was a life of tranquility, sweet and honest, which we regret having discarded to follow the evil promptings of ambition; the love of fortune, and the desire for gold which the devil suggested to us through the leaves of a book entitled the "James Boys." It was by reading this book we were led to steal. Why work in the field? Why walk behind a plow? And at the end of the year receive not enough to buy clothes to put on our backs?

To rob one of his gold in a single night appeared to us much easier. The birds had eaten the crops and we were discouraged. Then to put our new plan into execution we bought two revolvers and made two poignards of files. After being well armed we decided to rob Martin Begnaud and eight days afterwards we were on our way determined to execute our project. For two days we hesitated, but the third, (the day following the election) April 22, 1896, we fully succeeded. That night we arrived at Scott at 9 o'clock. All was calm and quiet. Nearly everybody in the town were asleep, with the exception of those in Simeon Begnaud's saloon. It was yet too early to begin our work and we sought refuge in the tall grass along the railroad, watching the movements of all those who were in the saloon. Shortly after the doors of the saloon were shut and everyone went home. We saw Martin Begnaud going toward his store. The time to act had come. It was then or never. We walked hurriedly to the store, but we arrived too late, the door having already been closed. We knocked at the door. Martin Begnaud came and asked, "who is there?" "It is

us," we responded; then entering the store we bought a pack of tobacco, stating that as we worked all day we could not come earlier. We conversed upon different subjects before an opportunity presented itself for an advantageous attack, he being behind the counter. We were about to leave when the idea came to our mind to ask him to show us some rat traps, for which he had to come from behind the counter, and now the opportunity for which we had long awaited came. He showed us the traps, and after explaining how to use them he leaned against the counter. His back was turned to us and when he turned around he found himself facing the revolver and dagger of Alexis. He was so surprised that he leaped towards us in a vain effort to disarm us. "Do not move. If you do you are dead," Ernest replied pointing his pistol closer to his head. Paralyzed by the fear of being shot or pierced with a dagger, he remained quiet. It was then that Alexis shut the door which was opened. We then told him: "Now, Martin, all that we want is that you open your safe in order that those crisp bills may pass from your safe into our pockets." Without saying a word he walked to that small piece of iron furniture, whose contents have excited more than one human mind. Five minutes later the safe was opened and it was with some difficulty as he trembled very much before he found the combination. It was then, without further to do about the money, we began to tie his hands and to entwine his body with calico to make him more secure, and after conducting him to his room we tied his feet and made him sit on his bed. I remained near the bed, the pistol in my hand watching every movement of the un-



Ernest Blanc.

fortunate prisoner, while Alexis ransacked the safe with as much sangfroid as a banker does his own. Despite the gag Martin could speak distinctly and it was at this moment that he said: "Why do you treat me in this manner? Had you asked me to give you some money I would have done so." But I replied, "You are saying this because you are caught." Alexis then said he had to tell him where were the keys of those two little drawers. Martin replied: The keys are in one of the opened drawers, and furthermore, one of drawers contains only private papers while the other contains some gold." Alexis returned to the safe and found but one key which opened the drawer containing the gold; he searched for the other key, but could not find it, but being satisfied with the money he had found, he believed Martin's word that the other drawer contained only papers. After waiting impatiently near the bed about fifteen minutes I walked over to where my brother was to see if he had finished rifling the safe. I noticed on the floor near the safe two sacks filled with money while Alexis' pockets were puffed with bank notes. We were discussing the manner in which we would tie him so that he could not give the alarm before morning, when he said:

"Do not destroy my account books nor my private papers, without which I cannot make a living." In the silence of the night this sonorous voice appeared probably stronger than it really was and impressed us with a feeling impossible to express, and we rushed to his room and I (Ernest) stabbed Martin who was sitting on his bed. How many times I stabbed him I know not, nor did I ever know. All that I remember is that Martin uttered a smothered groan after the first plunge of the dagger, which was certainly mortal. Without losing any time we walked out of the house and fled along the railroad track to our cabin. After arriving, the first thing we did was to bury the money, and conceal our bank-notes and weapons, and we burned all clues. The next morning when we heard of the crime we were with Col. Boudreaux in his orchard picking Japan plums. The old colonial was stupefied. We feigned to be equally affected. A short while after we were informed that the sheriff would arrive on the scene with blood-hounds to track the murderers. We had not thought of blood-hounds before and this information caused us some uneasiness, and the consequence was we remained in our cabin all day. At four o'clock in the afternoon the dogs, after trailing around the store, seemed to take a trail along the railroad which they followed to the place where we left the track the night before. We were very much relieved when we felt sure that the dogs had lost the scent. After staying one week without being suspected and making believe that we had received some money we left on the 12:40 train for New Orleans with the stolen money strapped around us. Immediately upon our arrival in New Orleans we bought valises and going to a hotel soon relieved ourselves of our belts. The next morning we left for Atlanta, thence to New York where we rested several days before taking our departure for Europe. After six days of traveling we arrived at Southampton, England, and the next day we were at Havre, France. We purchased new clothes and lived several days there indulging in the best of wines and the finest of French cooking. Dressed as

Princes, and loaded with gold, we made our triumphant entrance into Paris, where we lived as millionaires, rode fine horses, visiting all the theatres, and continuing to indulge in good wines and associating with pretty women. Soon tired of

this life of dissipation we again desired to travel. After visiting Belgium and England we boarded a steamer for New York City arriving there on the 12th of July. We had already spent the greater portion of the \$3,000. Then we commenced our journey across the United States, visiting Chicago, St. Paul, Helena, Portland, Sacramento, San Francisco, Los Angeles, El Paso, Salt Lake City, Ogden, Omaha, Council Bluffs and St. Louis. In the latter city we spent the remainder of our money, each one having ten dollars, we took the Frisco line on foot, passing through Missouri, Arkansas, Indian Territory and Texas, and followed the Texas Pacific as far as Mexico, where we rested a few days. All along the route we tried to get work, but failed. There was nothing for strangers to do. It is in this manner that we reached Lafayette on January 2, 1897. Knowing so many people there we thought it would be easy to find employment. We knew that we were risking our necks, but being so miserable, did not care very much.

The day after our arrival at Col. Boudreaux's we received a visit from the sheriff who arrested us and conducted us to prison, and being interrogated by Sheriff Broussard and others, we confessed our crime, and the same day we were conveyed to New Orleans for fear of mob law.

We remained in the city a month and a half and on the 10th of February, 1897, we were brought to Lafayette for trial. The trial was fixed for the 17th of February but postponed to the 25th. The trial lasted two days and half a night and we were condemned to hang after eloquent pleadings of our attorneys. We are now awaiting the day of our execution, thinking that it is hard to die so young, but God's will be done. To Mr. Thomas Mouton, March 3, 1897.

ERNEST BLANC, A. BLANC.

Buy your heating, window shades and curtain poles from Mouton & Hopkins.

The Grandest Remedy: Mr. R. B. Greeve, merchant, of Chilhowie, Va., certifies that he had consumption, was given up to die, sought all medical treatment that money could procure, tried all cough remedies he could hear of, but got no relief; spent many nights sitting up in a chair; was induced to try Dr. King's New Discovery, and was cured by use of two bottles. For past three years has been attending to business, and says Dr. King's New Discovery is the grandest remedy ever made, as it has done so much for him and also for others in his community. Dr. King's New Discovery is guaranteed for coughs, colds and consumption. It don't fail. Trial bottles free at Wm. Clegg's drug store.

The People's Cotton Oil Mill closed a very successful season last Wednesday at 12 o'clock. For five months the mill was run day and night with very few stops. The officers and stock-holders of this company have every reason to be pleased with the first season of their mill. Not only those who are pecuniarily interested in this enterprise but every resident of the town has been benefited by the operation of this manufacture. The sum of \$350 has been paid weekly in salaries and wages alone, to say nothing of the money disbursed for seed. The cotton seed oil mill has been a source of considerable revenue to our people and it should gratify everyone interested in the welfare of the town to know that it is an assured success.

Manager Blossat informed The Gazette that it is the intention of the company to enlarge the warehouses so that enough seed may be had to enable a longer run next season.

If you need any printed stationery, we would like to furnish you with some of it.

Your smiling countenance is always agreeable to Leon Florey. Give him a call.

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