

FIEND BURNED AT THE STAKE FOR ASSAULT AND MURDER.

Will Clark Meets His Fate at Corinth, Miss., Before Five Thousand People.

Confessed the Crime and Told of Other Murders and Robberies of Which He Had Not Been Suspected—Said He Deserved the Punishment.

Corinth, Miss., Sept. 28.—Writhing in the flames of fagots piled high by hundreds of citizens, Tom Clark, alias Will Gibson, a young negro, was burned at the stake here at a late hour to-day. Clark had confessed to one of the most atrocious assaults and murder in the history of north Mississippi, and said that he deserved his awful fate.

On Aug. 10 last Mrs. Carey Whitfield, the wife of a well-known citizen, was found dead in her home. Investigation showed that the lady had been assaulted and her head was practically severed from her body, a razor having been used in the bloody work. Both Whitfield and his wife were related to several of the most prominent families in the south, and the indignation of the people knew no bounds. Corinth and the surrounding country was scoured in an effort to apprehend the murderer, but diligent search failed to disclose his identity. Two detectives from Chicago were employed, but their efforts were fruitless. Several suspects were arrested, but in each case an alibi was proven. A committee of twelve citizens were named to continue the search for the murderer, and these men have been very active in their work. On Monday last it became known that Tom Clark, a negro living near here, had had trouble with his wife, and the latter threatened to disclose the secret of a crime. Officers apprehended the woman, and she told enough to warrant the belief that Clark had murdered Mrs. Whitfield. Clark was arrested and on yesterday was brought before the committee of twelve in Corinth. The negro finally confessed to the murder, and also told of other crimes that he had committed. He said that several years ago he killed two men on an excursion train in Mississippi. He told of an outrage perpetrated by himself upon a negro woman, and also of the theft of \$1,500 from a physician at French Camp, Miss. Clark said that he had never been suspected of having committed any of these crimes, and had covered up his tracks in a way to deceive the officers of the law.

After hearing the confession the committee decided that the negro should be hanged from a telegraph pole in the street. Clark said he deserved death, but asked that the execution be delayed

until to-day, so that he could have a farewell interview with his mother and brother who lived in Memphis. The request was granted, and the two relatives were telegraphed for, but it was learned that they were in Mississippi.

Meanwhile the news of the negro's arrest and confession spread rapidly over the surrounding country and to-day's incoming trains brought hundreds of people into the city to witness the execution. The crowds became so great that at midday the main street of the town was ordered cleared and the announcement was made that it had been decided to burn Clark at 3:30 o'clock in the afternoon. This statement caused much excitement and surging crowds of people began to gather about the place selected for the enactment of the awful tragedy.

At 2 o'clock pine fagots and larger pieces of wood were carefully laid about an iron rod which was driven deep into the ground, and half an hour later it was announced that all was in readiness.

At 3 o'clock the prisoner, heavily manacled, was taken from the jail by a posse of armed men, and, followed by a large and excited crowd of men and boys, was led to the east gate of the negro cemetery, which is situated in the western part of the city. Fagots and wood had been piled high around the stake and the negro was securely fastened to the iron rod. Clark was asked if he cared to make a statement. He again said that he deserved the fate prepared for him, and asked that a letter be delivered to his mother and brother. He appealed to his brother to raise his children properly, admonishing them to beware of evil companions. Finally all was in readiness and the word was given to fire the funeral pile. The husband and brother of Clark's victim stepped forward and applied torches, and in a moment the flames leaped upward, enveloping the trembling negro in smoke and fire. The clothing of the doomed man was soon ignited and as the flames grew hotter the skin began to parch. The negro moaned piteously at this juncture and the agonizing look upon his face told of the awful torture he was undergoing. Finally his head fell forward upon his breast and in a few minutes all was over. The flames were fed by the crowd until the body was burned to a crisp. Then the gathering in an orderly manner dispersed and the town assumed its normal condition.

The Committee of Twelve and many of the representative citizens of Corinth vigorously opposed burning the negro, and argued that he should be hanged. J. H. Henning, of Birmingham, Ala., brother of Mrs. Whitfield, would not consent to this proposition, and insisted that Clark should be burned. More than 5,000 people witnessed the gruesome tragedy, among whom were many women and children.