

Murder Trials in Franklin County.

MALONE, Franklin Co., Saturday, Aug. 5.

To the Editor of the New-York Daily Times :

Not having seen in any of your City papers an account of the trials which have excited so much interest throughout the Northern part of the State during the last few weeks, I purpose to lay before your readers a brief statement of the circumstances connected therewith. JAMES M. BICKFORD and THOMAS COOK, of Dickinson, in this County, the former at present only 21 years of age, and the latter not yet 18, were indicted jointly for the murder of JOHN B. SECOR, of Westchester County, on the 6th day of June, 1853. They were arrested on the 8th of that month, and have remained in jail at Malone ever since. The deceased, in company with WRIGHT VAN TASSELL, had come to these parts to purchase horses; they had obtained six, and early on the morning of the day mentioned, were pursuing their way through the forest in the town of Franklin, each leading two horses and riding a third, when a rifle-ball fired from a thicket by the wayside struck down SECOR who was a short distance in advance of his companion. The annals of crime present few more revolting exhibitions of depravity than that which is seen in BICKFORD, who, as the evidence shows, formed and deliberately executed the design of murdering a stranger for the purpose of robbing him. As soon as the shot was fired, BICKFORD stepped out of the bushes, and was seen for a moment by VAN TASSELL, who addressed him, demanding "whether that was an accident or done on purpose." The murderer did not answer, but retired into the woods. VAN TASSELL, alarmed, and having no means of defence upon his person, made haste to escape from the scene. He reported the sad occurrence to several other persons, who immediately visited the body, and found that it had been robbed. The prisoners, who at once became suspected, were followed and arrested near the Burke Station on the Northern Railroad, 20 or 25 miles from the place of the murder. BICKFORD, when taken, was reclining under a tree, and at a distance of about 15 feet from him were found the watch and pocket-book of SECOR, the latter containing a large amount of money. SECOR's watch-key was found upon his person.

The trials took place at Malone, in the Court of Oyer and Terminer, before Hon. A. B. JAMES, Justice of the Supreme Court, Hon. JOHN HUTTON, County Judge, and Messrs. WALLACE and HOLLISTER, Justices. The proceedings commenced on the 19th of July, and continued ten days. Mr. PADDOCK, (District Attorney,) Mr. STETSON and Messrs. PARMELEE and FITCH appeared for the people; and Messrs. MYERS, FLANDERS, HOBBS, and TAYLOR for BICKFORD. Messrs. FOOTE, HOBBS and CANTWELL were subsequently assigned by the Court as counsel for COOK. The prisoners were tried separately. The greatest credit is due to the District Attorney for the perseverance and skill which he displayed in procuring and arranging the testimony for the prosecution. Not a circumstance of the minutest description was suffered to pass unnoticed. Every step taken by the prisoners, from the time they left Thomasville, their residence, until they arrived at the woods where they lay in wait for the travelers, and after the murder up to the moment of their arrest, was traced with singular accuracy. On the part of BICKFORD it was attempted to impugn, to some extent, the evidence of VAN TASSELL, by getting up absurd hypothesis, the only effect of which, however, was to excite popular indignation. BICKFORD's defence was necessarily of a very meagre character, though the most that was possible was made of it by the learned leading counsel, Mr. MYERS. In this case, after the charge from the Bench the Jury retired, and after an hour's deliberation, returned a verdict of guilty! The prisoner received the announcement as he also did the impressive sentence pronounced by Judge JAMES, with the same stoical indifference which had marked his demeanor from the first. COOK interposed no defence whatever, but through his counsel made a statement in Court, confessing himself to have been guilty as an "accessory after the fact," but denying all previous participation in the crime. The Jury in finding him guilty, as principal in the second degree, recommended him to the clemency of the Governor. Both prisoners were sentenced to be hung on the 22d day of September; but there is good reason to believe that COOK's sentence will be commuted to imprisonment for a term of years in the State Prison. It is understood that the members of the Court, the prosecuting counsel, the relations of the deceased SECOR, and the public generally, will sign the application which is now being prepared on his behalf. It is reported, I believe, moreover, that BICKFORD will make a full confession, the effect of which will be to confirm the declarations of COOK. The impression, indeed, is universal that the latter was entirely under the influence of the former, and the victim of the circumstances in which he was placed. He has just made a more elaborate statement upon oath, of the same purport as the first, a copy of which I send you herewith.

BICKFORD is a person who has had the advantages of a tolerable education, and has been a school-master in this county. His appearance, however, unredeemed by neatness of dress, is that of a desperado. COOK is totally uneducated, of simple and frank manners, and apparently quite incapable of conceiving or executing by himself any offence so heinous as that of which he stands convicted.

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