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THE LEDGER

SEMI-WEEKLY--PUBLISHED TUESDAY AND FRIDAY

A Newspaper in All that the Word Implies and Devoted to the Best Interest of the People of Cherokee County

ESTABLISHED FEB. 16, 1894.

E GUARANTEE THE RELIABILITY
of Every Advertiser Who
Uses the Columns of
This Paper.
BEST ADVERTISING MEDIUM.

\$100 A YEAR.

LIFE SERVITUDE FOR GEO. HASTY.

THE GAFFNEY MAN BEGAN SENTENCE SATURDAY.

Says He Killed the Two Actors in Self-Defense—Declares He Was Not to Blame.

Officer Irby, of the State penitentiary, came up for George Hasty last Thursday and Friday morning left with the prisoner. Quite a number of George's friends went to the depot to see him off. He was looking well and was as cheerful as a man could be under the circumstances. Several of George's friends made him small presents, such as tobacco, cigars, etc. The officer went by way of Charlotte, and the Charlotte Observer of Saturday morning contained the following concerning Hasty:

"The Charlotte city lockup rarely confines within its barred precincts a man who looks less the lawbreaker than does George Hasty, the convicted murderer and the admitted slayer of two men. Hasty arrived in the city yesterday afternoon from Gaffney en route to Columbia, S. C., where he expects upon a life sentence in the penitentiary. Officer Irby accompanied him.

"The sensational occurrence which caused the life tragedy of Hasty and of the two men whom he slew is more or less familiar history to all newspaper readers in this section. It was in December of 1905 that the 'Nothing But Money' Theatrical Company stopped at Gaffney, where Hasty and two brothers were running a hotel. The company spent the night at the Hasty establishment. A young lady member of the troupe charged Hasty with impropriety conduct and this brought on trouble with two male members of the company, Bennett and Davison, both of whom Hasty shot and killed. He claimed that the show men doubled on him and he shot in self-defense. He was tried, convicted of murder in the second degree and sentenced to life imprisonment in the penitentiary.

"The trial, which took place in February of 1906, was a noted one and was a fierce fight between able counsel. An appeal to the Supreme Court was taken, but that tribunal affirmed the action of the lower court.

"It was only last month that the last hope of escape in that direction was cut off. During all this time, a year and two and a half months, Hasty has been a prisoner in Gaffney jail.

"I had forgotten how to walk when I was taken out today," said the prisoner. "The unaccustomed glare of the sun, too, was blinding."

"Have you found prison life thus far worse or better than you expected it would be?" asked the newspaper man with whom he was conversing.

"Lord!" smiled the prisoner. "I had no idea what it would be like. Have you ever been in jail?"

"I never have," the Observer man was forced to admit.

"Well," said Hasty, "you don't know anything about it then. I had loafed about in jail just as you are doing lots of times and thought I knew, but I didn't. I believe if I had to stay in jail where I couldn't work or take any exercise for 12 months longer, it would kill me. I am sure it would. This was said with the same unconcerned cheerfulness which marked his demeanor throughout the interview.

"Hasty stated that he had been in South Carolina for about five years. He is by birth and rearing a North Carolinian. His father still lives at the old home at Randleman.

"The people about Gaffney are all against me," the prisoner admitted. "They seemed to think I just shot the men because I had a pistol and wanted to be shooting at something. I'm sorry for the poor fellows that got killed, but I couldn't help it. If the same circumstances were to come up again I would do all I could to avert trouble, but I would do just as I did before."

History of the Crime.

"The beginning of the life sentence for this young man, who is but 23 years of age, marks the last chapter of one of the most unfortunate tragedies of the State's history. In the work of a few brief moments, as a result of his indiscreet actions toward two young women, George Hasty sent to their death two bright young men, blighted the lives of the two girls who were betrothed to the murdered men and ruined his own life.

"Milan Bennett was musical director of the 'Nothing But Money' company and Abbott Davison was the leading actor connected with the company and its owner. Miss May Bishop and Miss Verne E. Sheridan were members of the company and testified in the trial of the case against Hasty that they were engaged to Davison and Bennett, respectively.

"The company presented 'Nothing But Money' in Gaffney on the night of Dec. 14, 1905, and while in that city the members were registered at a hotel run by Will and Arthur Hasty, in which George Hasty, a brother, was clerk. The young women complained that they had been annoyed by George Hasty, it being claimed that he 'peeped over the transom' attempting to get into the room of one of them.

"They told this to Bennett and Davison, who demanded an apology from George Hasty and a fight ensued.

"Hasty talked very freely to a representative of The State yesterday at the penitentiary. He said that it was a great relief to get out of jail at last and be where he could at least occasionally get a little fresh air. He was fitted up with a new suit of regulation stripes and put to work in the knitting mill. Owing to his present delicate health, however, he may be given other work not so strenuous.

"He has been confined in the jail

at Gaffney for 14 1/2 months. He says that he weighed 168 pounds the day before the killing, but he probably weighs now not more than 135. It was the close confinement that pulled me down," he said, "not because of any worry or loss of sleep on account of the killing of those fellows. Of course I regret that I had to kill them, but I did it in self-defense and it has not worried me a particle. I haven't lost five minutes sleep on account of it."

"He said that his attorneys, Messrs. Butler & Osborne, would do what they could to get him pardoned, and that ex Senator A. H. Dean of Greenville, would assist them when the time came to take action.

"I am sure that I will be pardoned some time," he said. "There will not be any effort, I guess, to get me out this year, probably not before next year or later. There has been a big change of sentiment up there, and I don't think there are 25 men in Cherokee county who would refuse to sign a petition for my pardon."

"The statement I gave at the trial was correct. I don't care to make any change in it. It was all true. It wouldn't have happened if it hadn't been for Davison. When Bennett asked me about it I told him to come into the hall and I would explain it. If I had done anything wrong I was willing to apologize for it, but I wanted to explain to him just what happened between me and Miss Bishop but Davison came up and started the fight, and I had to shoot to save my life. I tried to kill them because they were double-teaming me, and I shot fast and hard; knew how many shots were fired in quick succession and it didn't sound like there was more than two. I turned the pistol on first one then the other."

"He stated that he had made improper pronostics to Miss Bishop but did not say anything to her until after she had given me cause for doing it. It was just after I had gone into room 17 to get something which I had, my pistol and a deck of cards. This Miss Bishop wanted to know what I got, and I told her. She came up to me, put her hand in my pocket and said: 'What is that you have?' I told her it was an orange and offered it to her. She had her hand in my pocket on the orange and leaned me close to me, and then when I made the advance to her."

"When asked why he didn't tell this on the stand he replied: "Because the judge wouldn't let that kind of stuff come out."

"In this statement, however, Hasty disproves his own testimony on the witness stand. The evidence shows that Hasty was asked if he had said anything improper to Miss Bishop, and this he denied flatly. Now he advances an entirely different story. The record shows that Judge Memminger excluded none of the defendant's testimony bearing directly on the case, but that he ruled out the testimony of one Strickland, who would have sworn to things which were alleged to have happened two weeks before the homicide.

"Hasty said that he did not know that Miss Sheridan was in any way unattractive only by what he had been told by that man Strickland of Gastonia, whose evidence was excluded by Judge Memminger.

"Hasty hangs his head and has a very pitiful expression. In talking his voice is barely audible. The long strain has told on his nerves and there was a distinct twitching and nervous fumbling of his stricken hands as he told his story. Not having had any exercise for more than 14 months and no work to do, his skin is very tender and he complained of his hands hurting as a result of the half-day's work he had done in the knitting mill. His neck, too, showed signs of being almost blistered as a result of the rubbing of the rough material of which the convict barb is made.

"As the interview was concluded and Hasty was being led back to his work he added this parting statement: 'Please don't publish anything of what I said which would hurt me with the folks up in Cherokee. They have been pretty good to me, a lot of them, and I am depending on them to help me get out of here. I don't want anything printed which they would not like.'

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"The beginning of the life sentence for this young man, who is but 23 years of age, marks the last chapter of one of the most unfortunate tragedies of the State's history. In the work of a few brief moments, as a result of his indiscreet actions toward two young women, George Hasty sent to their death two bright young men, blighted the lives of the two girls who were betrothed to the murdered men and ruined his own life.

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"On the trial, which began in Gaffney March 1 last year, Hasty put up

the plea of self-defense. The trial consumed four days, the jury rendering a verdict of 'guilty with recommendation to mercy.' Hasty was sentenced to life imprisonment at hard labor. His attorneys took an appeal to the supreme court, which sustained the verdict of the lower court in a decision rendered about the 10th of February.

"Messrs. Butler & Osborne, of Gaffney, and George Johnstone, of Newberry, represented the defendant. Solicitor Thomas S. Sease for the State, was assisted by Senator Ott and Messrs. J. B. Bell and J. C. Jefferies, of Gaffney.

"The citizens of Gaffney came nobly to the assistance of the members

of the theatrical company upon the death of Messrs. Bennett and Davison, throwing open their homes to them and furnishing them all the financial assistance they needed. Later when Hasty was tried for the murder, Miss Bishop and Miss Sheridan were entertained in Gaffney's best homes and the ladies of the town showed their sympathy for the girls and their interest in the case by gracing the court room daily with their presence.

"No. 17411 at South Carolina's penitentiary is a warning to young men to leave pistols, cards and whiskey alone, and above all to treat with proper respect all women."

"George Hasty's future is a blank—Lifetime within the walls of the State prison, wearing a convict's garb and with only convicts as associates—the harvest of a reckless, dissipated youth."

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