

THE EVENING NEWS

Wednesday, December 7, 1870.

JAMES HAGUE

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A desperate attempt to break from the State Prison, in Nevada, was made on the morning of the 1st inst., by four men, named respectively, McClure, sentenced to imprisonment for life for murder; William Shea, imprisoned for five years for grand larceny; Thomas Heffron, in for life, for robbery; and Michael Loon, a thief from White Pine, in for two years.

The following account of the affair is from the *Carson Appeal* of the 2nd:

"When Theodore Hawkins, one of the guards, unlocked the grated door to let out the kitchen hands, McClure struck him on the neck, knocking him clear off the floor. He was followed by Shea and the other two, all making a rush at Jake Whipple, captain of the guard, McClure attacking him with a butcher-knife, from which Whipple fortunately escaped with nothing worse than a cut across the inside of his right hand—a lucky escape considering that McClure cut through the rim of his hat and drove his knife through his coat and pantaloons, just grazing his side. Wellington Bowen, A. Lowe and A. Biggs, members of the guard, got the alarm and rushed to the scene of conflict. Heffron grabbed Biggs and prevented him using a gun which he had in his hand. Lowe, as well as Biggs, got an ugly blow on the head from an iron knuckle in Heffron's hand, and then Bowen turned loose with his revolver, shooting McClure through the head and again through the breast, killing him almost instantaneously. About this time Jim Miller and Frank Rockwell, two others of the guard, who were sleeping in a little apartment adjoining the guard-room, jumped out of bed and rushed into the melee. Miller came first, and soon found himself half stunned from a blow from Heffron's big fist, and while he and Biggs were struggling with Heffron (who is a tremendously powerful man) Bowen shot Heffron just below the right shoulder blade and he was glad to cry quits; in the meantime—it is impossible to tell exactly when—Shea, who had a shotgun, made of a piece of lead pipe in a wool stocking, dealt Bowen a terrible blow on the head, almost knocking him out of time, but not quite, for he turned in a moment after to bear on the old scoundrel's belly, inflicting a wound which put an end to his assault and which is likely to kill him. Immediately upon doing this bit of good shooting, Dingman, the inside guard, had a perilous time of it. He stood alone on the prison side of the outside grating, and he stood by his post like a hero. Garnet (one of the Gold Hill foot-pads—the "Sacramento Blacksmith") seeing Dingman in his plight and supposing him unarmed, rushed on him, seized him by the beard and attempted to drag him away, but the brave little captain had a derringer in his coat side pocket, and he brought it to bear on the old scoundrel's belly, inflicting a wound which put an end to his assault and which is likely to kill him. Immediately upon doing this bit of good shooting, Dingman slipped out of the outer grated door, fastened it, rushed to the armory, seized a gun and mounted the roof just in time to prevent Pat Hurley and other prisoners from effecting an escape through the skylight. One or two other shots were fired in the fight, and it is probable that one of them, by Whipple, is what caused the wound in McClure's left arm. Of course this struggle occurred in very much less time than it takes to relate it, and Gov. Sligherland and Deputy Warden Mason, who occupy rooms in the second story of the prison building, back, only had time, after being aroused, to get to the scene of conflict in time to witness the final triumph of the guards.

Dr. Lee, who was sent for immediately, bound up the wounds which he found upon the guards, and then turned his attention to the prisoners. McClure as we said is dead; Heffron is shot just back of the left shoulder; the ball ranging up toward the neck (serious, but supposed not mortal); Garnet is shot in the left side, between the eleventh and twelfth ribs, the ball ranging downward (probably fatal); Shee is shot two inches below the navel, the ball ranging down into the pelvis (not so hopeless as Garnet, but the probabilities much against his recovery.) We believe that these particulars cover the main features of the story, as we are obliged to compile it from what all hands tell us. The guards certainly showed a good deal of promptness and effective courage, as well as no mean qualities as fighters, in this hand-to-hand conflict.

McClure, the man that was killed, was Captain of the guard of the San Quentin State Prison while Challis was Lieutenant-Governor of California. He subsequently went to ranching in Lander County, while engaged in that business, got into trouble with a man whose name we have forgotten, and killed him. He was tried, convicted of murder in the first degree and sentenced to be hanged. He got a new trial, was convicted of murder in the second degree and was sentenced to the Penitentiary for life. The guards say that he led the assault yesterday morning and fought like tiger. He never said a word from the time the fight began; nor after he received his death wound. He doubtless concocted the plan of escape, acted by agreement as its leader, and resolved to be free or die in the attempt."

Shea subsequently died from the wounds received in the affray, and it was expected that Garnet would follow suit.

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