

Then the miners sat down, smoking after the fashion of Indians, and waiting for Hogan to speak.

"Men," said Hogan, after a long pause, "you all know who the thief is, and you know the sneaking crime he has committed. Here we are, all honest men trying to get to the Klondike. We have only enough provisions to carry us through, and yet a thief who has come along without his proper share is stealing from us. I move we hang this man, and do it quick."

Abner Davis was the next speaker: "I don't care a —for the bacon, and you all know that. It's the principle of the thing I am kickin' about. He could have shared my camp fire if he had asked it. It is not becoming for me to vote, bein' the plaintiff, so I won't vote, but I want to say that I believe that all such varmints should be strung up."

Others among the miners spoke in favour of Martin's execution, and a vote was taken. Two scraps of paper were given to each man. One was marked with a cross which meant death. The other was left blank; this meant life.

The votes were cast one by one into a hat, and one by one they were drawn out and read by Hogan. "Death! death! death!" fell monotonously from his lips. "Death! death! death!" and then "life," the only one in the entire number of ballots.

"The majority decides in favour of death," said Hogan; "there is only one vote in favour of life, and I would like to know the name of the white-livered person that throwed it in."

Then there was a commotion. Into the circle of firelight stepped Ferry, the thin-faced boy with the cough. His face was as white as death.

"It was me," he began, in a voice that was half a whisper; "it was me. I throwed it in. Don't do this thing, men. Let Martin go. God will reward you for it. That poor man is trying to get to the Klondike. He has sold all he has on earth to do it. He has a wife and baby at home. It was only an error of judgment. He did not have enough provisions, and has even spent the nights catching fish to eke out his store. He tried to buy provisions from you and you know it."

"Yes, it was me that done it, and I would vote for the life of a dog under the same circumstances. I would vote for any one of you if you were going to be killed by your—your bro—brothers."

Then Ferry broke down in a fit of coughing, and put his handkerchief to his face. When he took it away it was streaked with blood.

"He'll know better when he grows up," was the only comment made by the miners, as they began preparations for the execution. On the outposts of civilisation affairs of this kind are quickly arranged.

It was not a noisy crowd that wended its way up the hill. There was nothing of the frenzied, maddened mob about it. The miners were orderly and cool, and the leader carried a rope.

Under the sheltering arms of a pine, with his face gleaming in the moonlight, Martin lay asleep. The black silhouettes of his executioners were all about him.

One of them, said to have been Bernard Giers, roughly waked the sleeping man with his foot. "What's up? What's the matter, boys?" queried Martin, sitting up and blinking sleepily.

"Git up," replied the leader, roughly. "We stand no stealing in this camp. Your time has come. We'll teach you a — good lesson."

Martin rose to his feet. His face shone in the moon-hine like carved marble. Twice he tried to speak and twice his voice failed him.

"Do you want to leave a message to your friends?" asked the leader.

"No," said Martin, in a half whisper.

"Do you want to pray?"

"No," replied the doomed man.

"If there is anything you want to say, say it quick," said the spokesman.

A slip-knot had been made at the end of a long rope, and the noose was put over Martin's head. He was then led out from under the pine tree and under the full light of the moon.

For a while he stood silent. In that brief interval his executioners could hear through the troubled flow of the pine forests the mournful run of wild wolves in the wilderness about the camp.

"Boys," Martin began in a faltering voice, "I ain't a bad man and I ain't a natural born thief. You know how it is when a man mortgages all, starts for the Klondike and sees that he can't get there. No matter whether you hang me or not my life ain't worth much. I don't care, only for my—my—"

Here Martin's voice broke and faltered. Then he threw his head back and continued abruptly: "I've got a thousand pounds of stuff at Skaguay, and I'll promise on my life to carry it in here for you if you'll—"

"Enough of that," interrupted the leader. "It would not save you even if the stuff was here. You stole the bacon and you know it."

"Then wait just a minute, boys. Will you let me look in my knapsack?" asked the doomed man.

Permission was given, and Martin, after rummaging around for a moment, brought the faded photograph and lock of baby hair. These he kissed reverently and placed in his bosom, turning his back on the men to do so.

Then he was taken down to the shore of the lake. It took less than a minute to lash two slender pines dressed for masts in a forked upright, and to drop another mast from a rock on the bluff over between the forks.

While these preparations were being made, Martin sat on a stone, waiting.

"Come, now," said the leader; "off you go."

"May I write a message, boys?" asked Martin.

"Yes, but be quick!" was the short response. "It's time we wuz in bed."

Martin took a soiled letter from his pocket and kissed it tenderly. He then tore it up, saving only the envelope.

He pulled off one of his rubber boots, and, placing the envelope on the sole of it, wrote in the moonlight the following:

"Hoping that with the money I might make in the Klondike, sacrifice would go out of the door and love return through the window, I left you. Kiss Ted, but never tell him.—G.D."

That was all. It was only a few words, but it was Martin's life history. It contains volumes to those who will know and understand.

It was written slowly and carefully and with many pauses. He showed the note to the crowd, saying: "Boys, will some of you please send this back to the newspapers?"

Then he stood up manfully and announced his readiness. His hands were tied together behind him with a pack strap.

There was a hurried command, a hard swing at the rope and it was all over. All except the weeping of Ferry in the darkness.

"Come, boys, let's go to bed," said Hogan. Then the party of executioners went back to camp, rolled themselves in their blankets and went to sleep, while down on the margin of the lake the black thing that was once a man, with human hope, love and ambition, swung idly in the wind.

With the envelope, bearing Martin's last message, his executioners sent back to Juneau a rudely written letter excusing their act as best they could.

Martin's body is still hanging on the shores of Lake Bennett, unless it has been taken down lately.

On the other side of the envelope on which Martin wrote was his name and the postmark "St. Louis."

The news of his hanging was brought to Juneau by Captain Martin, of the steamer Sea Lion, and Stephen A. Hall, of Seattle.

## O A M A R U.

### AN EVENING IN FLOWERLAND."

(From the *Oamaru Mail*, November 26.)

THE periodical entertainments provided by the Catholic community in Oamaru are always looked upon in the light of assured successes before a note is sung or a word spoken. This success is due to the thoroughly intelligent preparation which is always bestowed upon anything which it is intended to produce. Last night's operetta, "An Evening in Flowerland," was no exception to the general rule of excellence, and the large audience which attended at St. Joseph's school were accorded not only a musical treat—a feast for the ear—but also a pretty pictorial representation—a feast for the eye. "An Evening in Flowerland" is one of those pretty little conceits which, dressed in tuneful music, form such admirable media for youthful vocal display. The argument is as follows:—The flowers meet in a secluded dell in the forest to choose their queen. A person discontented with the world seeks, in the same place, retirement from its cares and disappointments. The flowers tell of love and duty; and the recluse—learning that to fill well the station allotted by Providence is to be happy—resolves to return again to usefulness and contentment among his fellow-creatures. Of course the theme lends itself to scenic accessories of an elaborate nature, and these were attended to with a wealth of profusion of flowers and evergreens, and by bright and pretty dressing. After a capital descriptive recitation by little Miss Reid, the operetta opened with the chorus "We are the flowers," which was well sung. The choruses throughout were very nicely taken, evidencing great care in preparation. Perhaps the most popular effort was the full coronation march with its accompanying action and effects. "Say, where is our favourite lily?" was also excellent. Miss A. Smith, dressed in Robinhood costume, took the part of the Recluse, singing her numbers really well and in excellent tune. Miss Nellie McSweeney was the Rose (ultimately the Queen), and she also acquitted herself admirably, not only in her solos, but also in the concerted numbers. Misses M. Maxwell (the Lily and the Dahlia), M. McSweeney and N. Cagney (Crocuses), K. Smiddy (Japonica), K. Ford (Sunflower), H. Ryan and B. Wright (Heliotrope and Mignonette), T. Maxwell (Violet), and May Gilligan (Hollyhock) were also well cast, their singing throughout being of a high order, wonderfully good indeed, in many cases, for such youthful performers. A chorus of beather bells by eight little mites was a pleasing item, and the pretty little dance with which it was accompanied was deservedly encored. Miss Hannon played all the accompaniments for the operetta, and her sympathetic playing was a great help to the performance. In addition to the operetta a number of other musical items were given. Miss Maud Proctor sang "The carnival" in a sweet and expressive manner, and Mrs. Lynch, for a sympathetic rendering of waiting, received a hearty encore, responding with the tuneful "Kerry dance" and retiring amidst a shower of floral tributes. Miss S. Hall (Dunedin) played "Capricante," a florid concert piece. Her execution was brilliant, but style a trifle mechanical. Miss J. Fagan's solo, an arrangement of "Traviata," was, on the contrary, most expressive, and was the musical treat of the evening. Concerted piano duets (for two instruments) were also played, Messrs. A. Toohey, K. Fagan, J. Fagan, S. Hall, M. Duggan, Robin, K. Hannon, and M. Paton taking part therein, and both being most effective and pleasing performances. Messrs. Hall and Fagan acted as accompanists. At the close of the performance the Very Rev. Dean Mackay came forward, and, in proposing a vote of thanks to the performers, said that the concert had surpassed anything he had heard before. It surprised him and he did not think it could be beaten in the Colony. It was a source of great gratification to him and must also be so to the parents, showing, as it did, what those who devoted their lives to the developments of the talents of the young could achieve (prolonged and hearty applause).

"GET ON THE SOIL, YOUNG MAN; GET ON THE SOIL."

P. LUNDON, WHITENIX CHAMBERS, AVENUE, WANGANUI. Land, Estate, Insurance and Financial Agent; Valuator, General Commission Agent. Labour Bureau. Hotel Broker. Cook's Tourist Agent.