

The Star,

AND CONCEPTION BAY SEMI-WEEKLY ADVERTISER.

Volume I.

Harbor Grace, Newfoundland, Friday, July 5, 1872.

Number 15.

JULY.

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MOON'S PHASES.

FULL MOON.....	2nd, 9.22	A. M.
LAST QUARTER.....	9th, 8.55	A. M.
NEW MOON.....	17th, 1.13	P. M.
FIRST QUARTER.....	25th, 1.37	A. M.
FULL MOON.....	31st, 5.2	P. M.

NOTICES.

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May 14. tff.

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THE EXECUTION OF PAT- RICK GEEHAN.

HIS LAST CONFESSION.

(From the Morning Chronicle, July 1.)

ELEVEN O'CLOCK, A. M.

At eight o'clock this morning Patrick Geehan, convicted of the murder of Garrett Sears, suffered the extreme penalty of the law, within the precincts of the Penitentiary.

The scaffold was erected in the open, walled-in space on the West side of the building, and is a solidly built structure, most perfect in its mechanical arrangements.

Soon after the condemnation of the prisoner, it became apparent that the ministrations of the attending clergymen and pious women were having their effect upon him, and he gradually became perfectly resigned, admitting the justice of his sentence and his willingness to die. With his mind thus composed, he went to his death as resignedly, as it is possible for mortal to go.

For some time past he has slept quietly at night, and such was the case last night. He slept quietly and peacefully, knowing that slumber would no more come to him until he slept his last sleep.

Early this morning he was visited by the Rev. Dr. Howley, the Chaplain, by Father Doutney, and four of the Nuns, who prayed with and for him unceasingly, and later by Father McCreath. Geehan gave his whole attention to the ministrations of these holy men and women, and they had the satisfaction of knowing that their labors were rewarded by the complete penitence of the doomed man. At seven o'clock, Mass was said by the Rev. Dr. Howley, and the Communion was administered to Geehan, after which the brief remaining time was occupied in prayer until a few minutes to eight, when Geehan was waited upon by the officials, and his arms securely bound by a white sash—he expressing the wish that his hands be kept free so that he might shake hands with the Nuns and the clergymen.

At a minute or so to eight Geehan walked out through the lower door into the yard, with a firm step. His face was very pale, but bore an expression of perfect resignation. He was supported on each side by the Rev. Dr. Howley and Father Doutney. As he stepped out through the door, he gave one glance at the few officials and others present, and then cast his eyes to the ground, keeping them so fixed as he ascended the scaffold. Quickly, calmly, and resignedly he took his place upon the drop when his legs were bound, and after a few words from the clergymen he shook hands with them, a white cap was drawn over his face, and he quietly awaited the end. A white handkerchief was waved, the bolt was drawn and the body of Geehan fell a distance of about four and a half feet. At first no motion was apparent in the body, but presently there was a convulsive twitching, then a gentle drawing up of the knees, and lastly a fluttering in the whole frame—all of which did not continue more than fifty to sixty seconds—and all was over. The neck was not broken, but death virtually took place immediately upon the fall. There could have been no suffering after the first instant, the rest being a mere nervous, convulsive motion, usual in similar cases. The resignation of Geehan, his freedom from suffering, and the excellence of the mechanical arrangement of the drop, are subjects of much satisfaction.

After the body had hung half an hour, it was gently lowered into its coffin, and carried into the cell which Geehan had occupied, where it was examined by Drs. Crowley and Simms, who pronounced life extinct. The necessary legal certificates were then signed, and the melancholy tragedy closed.

The Sheriff and the officials of the prison deserve the highest credit for the humane and delicate manner in which their duties were performed. Inspector Foley with a large detachment of Police, was present, but happily there was no occasion for their services. Not more than half a dozen people were assembled outside the Penitentiary gate, the only interest being taken in the execution showing itself by the small knots of people sparingly congregated in the fields on the other side of Quidi Vidi Lake.

Geehan, a few days since, had a final meeting with Johanna Hamilton in presence of Dr. Howley. He asked her forgiveness for any blame which she might attribute to him, which she readily accorded.

Geehan was dressed in his prison clothes. His grave has been dug near the North-West Angle of the Penitentiary Building, and his body will be interred to-day.

(From the Morning Chronicle, July 2.)

We received last evening from Rev. Dr. M. F. Howley a communication, of which the following is a portion. The part remaining unpublished is the confession of Johanna Hamilton, which we shall give to the public in our issue of to-morrow, together with a second letter from Dr. Howley containing a statement concerning the unfortunate man Geehan. Some of these documents are not yet in our possession; but even if they were, to publish the whole in one publication would have been more than we could have accomplished since eight o'clock last evening.

Dr. Howley's first communication commences as follows:—

CATHEDRAL, St. JOHN'S, Newfoundland,
July 1, 1872.

SIR,—So many false and uncharitable rumors have gone abroad concerning the unfortunate Geehan, who this day suffered the awful penalty of the law, that I think it my bounden duty to make a few remarks upon the melancholy affair, in which I had been called to take so prominent a part. The old maxim *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*, would seem to be reversed in this case, and *nil nisi malum* would appear to apply more appropriately to our citizens. No one appears to have aught but evil to say of poor Geehan. Perhaps when they read the subjoined statement, made on the threshold of eternity, they will somewhat mitigate their anger, and drop a tear or a prayer over the memory of the man. I must firstly then say that the report in your paper of yesterday contains a true account of the sad proceedings, as far as you witnessed and learned from me. Moreover I can add, that from the first time I visited Geehan, shortly after his imprisonment, I found him the same respectful, submissive person. He never made use of a violent, harsh or vituperative expression against anyone. His conduct was always the same in the presence of the good nuns, who visited him every day since his condemnation, and the wardens of the prison can testify the same. He felt the keenest anxiety for having dragged the poor girl Johanna Hamilton into the trouble, and for having, in a moment of anger, as appears below, endeavored unjustly to criminate her. I have had occasion over and over again to examine both most minutely and separately upon every circumstance of the case, and found them consistent (though unaware) in all matters connected with the tragedy. I have the original documents signed by the prisoners in presence of witnesses, with full permission to use them. I should be very far from doing so were it merely to satisfy the morbid curiosity of the multitude, but under the circumstances I feel it necessary for the vindication of persons connected, and especially the unfortunate girl Johanna Hamilton, who, though she may be frail and weak, and guilty of defaults of a kind which are to be condoned before a tribunal higher than that of men, still it will appear had no hand in the shedding of a fellow creature's blood and is more to be pitied than blamed. The character she has gained for herself in the prison is one of gentleness, simplicity, and gratitude for the slightest favors received, with a continued and heart-breaking repentance for her sins, and sorrow that she did not at first state the whole truth instead of risking her own life to save Geehan.

On the 14th of June I obtained the following free and voluntary statement from Geehan in the presence of Messrs. R. Raftus, Barrister, and P. J. Scott, Attorney:—

"PENITENTIARY,
June 14th, 1872.

"I, Patrick Geehan, hereby solemnly declare that there never was any plot or conspiracy between me and Johanna Hamilton to get rid of either Mrs. Geehan or Garrett Sears. I never up to the time of Garrett Sears' death said one word to her on such a

subject, nor did any conversation ever take place between us to that effect."

"(Signed) PATRICK GEEHAN."

MICHAEL F. HOWLEY, D. D.,
R. RAFTUS,
PATRICK J. SCOTT, } Witnesses.

On the 23rd of June, he wished to make a full statement in writing and have it published; but as I thought it might be with a lingering hope of reprieve, I refused, telling him I could hold out no hope, and he had better make up his mind to die and prepare himself for the awful moment. I gave him time to consider, and called on the next day, 24th. I told him that if he wished to make a public confession he could do so, but that the better way would be to make it now, and leave it closed till after his death, and for his last few hours to turn his thoughts to God. He freely consented to abide by my counsels, when I wrote down verbatim from him, the following statement, which being concluded, I called in the Keeper, and in his presence demanded of Geehan if the statement in that paper was his last confession, if it were true and voluntary, and he answered in the affirmative and signed it in our presence. It is as follows:—

GEEHAN'S CONFESSION.

PENITENTIARY, St. JOHN'S, Newfoundland,
June 24th, 1872.

My wife was of a cross and peevish temper. Every year up to the last four I used to have a quarrel with her. For the last four years I let her go her own way. I used to be afraid I'd do something I'd be sorry for. I had a first cousin, Michael Connors, was at me for five or six years to leave her altogether. If not I'd be sorry for it. I'd always take it amiss of him to be advising me so. I thought it would be a disgrace to me. Herself and Sears couldn't agree at all. They'd be always fighting. My best couldn't keep them asunder. When I'd be out they used to fight. 'Tis often she used to come to a neighbor's house to bring me home to make peace. He was as savage as a beast in his manner. I said often to the neighbors that I was supporting hell on earth to have the like of him in my house. Still if I turned him away I'd have to turn her too. She couldn't bear to have him away, and still they could not agree together. I have his bed and box out twice, and she brought it in in spite of me. It ran in my mind to put him out of the way at Labrador where nobody would know anything about it, and still I couldn't find it in my heart to do so. When I came home last fall I never saw them so united. They'd be always discoursing together, same as a young married couple. I thought in my mind that there was something that was not right betwixt 'em. I was afraid of them. (He here stated many family quarrels tending to show a state of things which I do not feel necessary to publish. One case in particular showing that his fears were not unfounded. He then continued.) This was in my mind ever since. I could not trust her. I had many other reasons also for not trusting her. When I saw them so great together, I thought of her actions before, and I said I was not safe.

On the morning of the 20th November, I was putting out nets on the fence, and I had a barrow of twine. I called out to one of them either Johanna or Mrs. Geehan, to come and lift up the barrow. She came and lifted it and brought it to the fence (i.e. Mrs. Geehan). She went back to the cellar and found a bottle under a pile of old twine, with about a naggin or so of rum in it. I put that there myself, for she used to be always javing me about it, although I wasn't in the habit of taking too much. I used to take a little drop about my work. She didn't like me to have it unknownst to her. She took it up and went into the house with her hands abroad. "I'll make a holy show of you," says she. I followed her in and took the bottle from her, and put my hands on her shoulders and gave her a couple of shakes. I did not strangle or choke her, I set her in the chair and left her there, and went out. I gave her no cause for death. I did not put my fingers on her throat. [He said, on close examination, that his fingers or thumbs might have gone near or touched her throat, but not at all so as to strangle her.] Johanna Hamilton was out about somewhere during this time, I think she was at the brook. After I was out I bethought