

CHARLES N. SMITH murders dau - sis-in-law (ex-baseball-player here)

Source: Crawfordsville Review 12 October 1895 p 1

Very many lovers of base ball remember Chas. N. Smith, who several years ago was connected with a base ball team organized here. He was employed for a time at the coffin factory. He left here some 7 years ago, but lately has resided at Decatur, Ill. About 3 weeks ago he went home and in a mad freak, murdered his five-year-old daughter and a sister-in-law. He was arrested and pleaded guilty at once to the charge of murder. On Monday last he was sentenced to be hung. At the close of the evidence the judge asked Smith if he had any statements to make. The latter said: "If I am sentenced to be hanged, which I hope I will be, I would like to have it on the 16th of February. I have a reason for it." "If you have a statement to make as to what was your reason for committing this murder," said the judge, "I would like to hear it." "I borrowed the gun on purpose to go down and kill Lady – I mean my wife – and the baby," replied Smith. "I understood if I came up and pleaded guilty I would be hung and I am willing to do it. But I would like to have my time put off until that day. I am willing to face anything and anybody." "When a man commits murder," said the judge, "he puts himself in a position to be hanged, to be sent to prison for life or for a term of not less than 14 years. I can see why the sentence is left to the discretion of the court. There may be reasons, circumstances, in which a man may have been injured in his family, his person, his property. There is not much light on this case as to the relations between husband and wife, but it appears that he was welcome at the house and frequently ate there. No ill-feeling against him is shown. He comes here and pleads guilty to killing his child. I cannot see how a man can have ill feeling enough against a five-year-old child to cause him to want to kill it. I cannot understand how a child of that age can do a man serious harm. He must be lost to all sense of social duty unless he is out of his head. I can not find any excuse for this murder. This is a case that calls for the extremist penalty. If Mr. Smith has anything to say in extenuation of his crime or why the sentence should be passed on him, I would like to hear it." Smith made no reply. The judge then sentenced him to be hanged on Friday, Nov 29. Smith heard the sentence unmoved and said, "Thank you," quietly. At the last word of the judge there was an outbreak of applause and a shriek from the prisoner's wife, the mother of the murdered girl. "Oh, the slayer of my child has got what he deserved," she cried. Thank God, he has got his dues. I am so glad; I am so glad." She was taken from the court room shrieking and sobbing. Her father went around shaking hands and saying, "That's all I wanted." Smith went out through the excited crowd the calmest one there. February 16 is the baby's birthday. - kbz