

Supplement to The Bohemia Nugget.

THE LINN MURDER

CLAUDE BRANTON'S CONFESSION MADE PUBLIC.

Written a Couple of Days Previous
to His Hanging—His Life
Reviewed.

The readers of the Nugget are conversant with the circumstances which led up to the hanging of Claude Branton, at Eugene, Lane county, on the 12th inst., he having murdered John A. Linn during the early part of 1898. Prior to the execution Branton wrote a confession which he directed should be made public at a certain time after he was hung it was given out on Tuesday, the 23d inst.

The young man, Courtland Green, mentioned by Branton, is now in the state penitentiary serving a life sentence as an accomplice in the murder.

The full text of the confession is as follows:

"Eugene, Oregon, May 6, 1899.—Rev. E. M. Patterson, dearly beloved brother in Christ:

"I, by the will of God, according to the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus put forth my strongest efforts in an appeal to all who are out of Christ, by sketching a brief history of my own perilous, selfish, blasphemous, unholy life, that by my downfall others may be greatly benefited and flee from those things, and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness, fight the good fight of faith and lay hold on eternal life. This is expedient for you for we are all called but not compelled.

"I will undertake to anchor a buoy in this narrow river of life and put a light thereon so that others may look on it while traveling this dangerous road and not come in my tracks, or else they be dashed against the same jagged rock when least expected and their cargo of hopes be sunken and their soul left floating in ruin over the precipice of everlasting destruction—the violent wave of justice will sweep them into the death jaws of the law and there in sorrow they will reap the bitter fruits of violating man's laws, and in horror will be led to the gallows, there to speak their last words of woe in shame and disgrace.

"After reading my brief history they will realize the necessity of Solomon's proverb, to 'keep the heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life.'

"One accused of the law is universally and individually looked down on as being a brutal blood-thirsty murderer belonging to the lower elements next to the animal and is spurned with scorn and contempt. This is wrong; consider lest thyself fall in perdition though you may be born of a mother so pure. You all live in glass houses and don't know it until they are broken in and like lightning your many friends have fled and only one remains to rescue your aching heart from the unceasing haunts of despair.

"I am this sixth day of May, 1899, 23 years old, was born near Waltersville in this county and lived my childhood days as happy as ever a child lived amid luxuriant pleasures, thus prattling and playing with my brother and sister, cared for by a dear loving mother's hand, strolling through orchards and meadows green, among the beautiful flowers; every breeze was odor, every noise was music. Pure, innocent, loving children whiling away those happy days of childhood that are gone forever.

"At the age of 11, I moved with my parents to Camp Creek. I found I was fondly attached to my old home. I soon made many friends at that place. I stood at the head of my classes in school, and was well liked by all of the scholars. We moved back to our old McKenzie home when I was 14. I felt the same regret of leaving that place. With the consent of my parents I satisfied my imaginative mind by taking a trip across the Cascade mountains alone over six feet of snow. I returned wiser than I left for I had imagined any place was better than home for the past year. My father corrected me and I left home the same year. Was gone a year but all the time I wished I had not left,

though I was well cared for at my sister's. I met my brother Clarence, he asked me to go home with him. I went and father asked me to stay. It did not seem like home at first. I longed to be back at my sister's. I was soon settled and happy at home again until I was 18. My brother Clarence wanted to go to California. With no object in view but to be with him I went along. We were innocent and ignorant out in the world alone. We experienced many hardships, loneliness and sorrow, but not despair. Sickness brought us back. We prepared in one year to go again. Before leaving I met my heart's idol. We went but I myself could not stay, and would not let my brother stay. With hard pleading I turned him homeward again, though his prospects were bright.

"I spent two years of pure bliss and happiness worshipping the idol of my heart. The happiness unsurpassed by any earthly joy, even those days of childhood. True love is rare, known but once, and never forgotten; but alas, my youthful lust for trifling with other girls and an occasional moonshine buggy ride with other men's wives through gossip of others scandalized my lover, and through parental influence, she desired to dissolve our vows, which we did through tears, with many a bitter sigh. She carried away a heart I had opened to her as true as ever beat in any man's breast. From that very day the clouds of despair began to gather around me. I was slighted by old friends and spurned by strangers. I could hear people say, 'He has trifled with another heart.' The winds and rippling brooks seemed to murmur against me. All nature in her gay beauty whispered loneliness in my ears as I roamed through forests and over plains.

"I had just passed my twenty-first birthday, and had lived free from tobacco, whiskey and cards, and all debasing habits save one: I was too intimate with the strange women Solomon warns us against. I had loved my friends and every lady with the kindness of a brother. But I had been encouraged by my lusts against my mother's will and teaching to trifle with the hearts of women, and that marriage was only planting a tree of trouble which I must shun. I can only speak thus of my passion which thought it was marking out to me the road to happiness, to warn other parents of this road to vainglory and destruction, for her house inclineth unto death and her path unto hell.

"One year previous to this, while I was twenty, I was preparing for future comforts where I was accounted most worthy by all, when the news came to me that my parents had separated, which I laid to heart with grief for it was the first sorrow I had ever known.

"I had friends everywhere except at my old home. One of my dearest friends at Condon offered me 2000 head of sheep to take me where I wished and keep them for him on shares. I also had other good offers. My brother was so good and kind to me and told me just anything I wanted to do he would help me. If I wanted the sheep he would help me and we would do the best we could with them. It seems now to me like my folks knew I was not feeling just right for they did all they possibly could for me, but I did not feel worthy of their love for what I had done before.

"Mr. Linn wanted me to bring him a stallion from the valley here and take his band of horses on the shares. I would not promise, but he gave me \$120 in gold and said: 'Go down and get the horse. This will pay your expenses; and I don't want you to take those sheep for I have something better for you. If you want take it, I will pay you your price for the horse.' I came down after him in February, 1898. The people treated me with the same coolness, which went to my wounded heart, like smoke to the eyes. I felt like I could never overcome those fault-finding people by pure living. For the past three years I had tried to atone for my conduct the two years previous, but found the people would not allow me to, so I resolved to end my miserable career, for I had never been sick or dependent in any way since I was very young and was under no obligations to live for any one, not thinking my death would hurt any one as much as I had disgraced my people. I even thought my fami-

ly would be better off without such a wretched member. I meditated on my way of destruction and looked on my open grave (I had not sought against any person)—I aimed to write a note stating I was sorry for my conduct those two years and have tried to atone for it the three succeeding ones by living a pure life, and if I cannot be respected in my own neighborhood I will bid you all farewell.

"My bleeding heart yearned warm companionship, when a friend, Courtland Green, asked me if he could not go with me over the mountains. He said he was my friend and showed it in such a redeeming manner that he gained my true friendship, such as never dies without great cause. I picked up courage once more to try to battle with this dark, sad world.

"Before leaving for Condon in March I discovered an invisible defect in my horse. I had recommended him to Mr. Linn just as one of the best farmers in Lane county had recommended him to me. I even laid awake of nights wondering what to do about it. I thought I would sell the horse and send Mr. Linn his money, but he was depending on the horse and nothing remained for me but to go to him and explain to him the defects, as I did. I went to work for another man for \$35 per month and board, but Mr. Linn wanted me to go with him and run the horses and he would buy a ranch and we all would take up land, but I did not want to leave the man I was working for. He stayed all night with me and said he could not get along without me and he would pay me bigger wages for my services than I was receiving. I went as quick as I could get a discharge.

"Courtland Green was working near town and would come to my house every Sunday, and give my little sister candy to keep away from me so we could talk. He would try to get me to enter into partnership with Mr. Linn and let him kill Linn and take his part of the property. He always said the old man would feel better dead than alive anyway. One time, just to please Green, I said I would not tell anybody if he did kill him, but I cannot do what you say. The old man had been my friend, and since I had worked for him he treated me so mean I did not like him any more, but had no idea of helping to destroy him. He wouldn't settle with me, anyway, but he just kept trying to get me to enter into some kind of partnership business or take his horses on the shares. His mistreating me so many times and Green's winning talk soon got me to consent to his destruction in a brutal way, for he was a man apparently of no heart. He left me dying on the range once and when he saw I did get in he seemed mad and said I gave you due warning of that animal (the one that kicked me). I told Courtie and we swore vengeance against him. After all his good propositions were rejected, he wanted to come with me to Crook county and go into business. He wanted to be my benefactor, I know; but Green had my heart, and for the promise I had made to him, I did not want Linn to go, for I knew he would want me to keep it, and I did not feel like aiding him in committing such a horrible deed. Clarence wanted me to settle with Linn some way, so he went with me to him, but Linn insisted on coming to Crook county with us first. Then if I would not accept his generous offer, he would settle. I rejected my noble brother's advice and accepted Courtie as my idol. Despite the sickening sensation, I allowed him to exact any promise he wished from me, thinking something would happen so he could not carry out his resolution.

"After all preparation was made for a start, Linn asked me to see Mr. Monroe and ask him if he would pay a personal note before it was due. Mr. Monroe said he would pay it if I just would wait till the next day, and said he had something to say to me. We talked for a couple of hours. In the meantime he told me not to have anything more to do with Linn, for he was a man of no principle, and so on. I promised in good faith that I would settle at Squaw creek and go no further with him, as Monroe said he would be sure to insist on it. When we got to Squaw Creek, Mr. Linn offered me a bill of sale on half his horses and full partnership in all the rest of his belongings, and all inducements possible to get me to stay, and

then said it was Green keeping me blinded from a good start in life. My promise to Mr. Monroe, together with Green, and the promise I had made him, prompted me to absolutely refuse all of Mr. Linn's propositions. He said he was expecting to get me to take the horses at least and run them myself. So I told him I would run them myself without him. Then he kindly asked my reasons, and I told him that a friend told me; then he had to know who it was, and if Green was not the cause of it. So I told him who it was, but denied Green having any thing to do with it. My heart sank within me and I offered to take his horses back for him, though he had some of his own accord. He refused to go back or let me have the horses either by myself. Clarence suspected through Courtie what was up, and was investigating and abusing him absurdly. I thought, and saying he would go straight and tell it. I told him not to get excited and make something out of nothing, that I did not feel any the best toward the old man myself, but nothing serious should happen to him. Rather than be too fast, he tried to end all possible violent intention by separating the trio. His earnestness and nobility almost exacted a confession from me, but the past two months of laboring under the burden of deceit had borne me unconsciously below the grasp of honor, like a dog followeth his master I was following my unworthy idol.

"Clarence went out with me and saw Mr. Linn. We told him just to say how he wanted to settle, we were not particular how, but it must be done. He was generous in his settlement and made me a present of two head more. Then said he had no friends or money and was away from home, and asked if he could travel with me. Courtie said: 'You have friends while Courtie and I am here, and can travel with us.' Clarence left us, charging us to do the right thing, to which we promised.

"That night Green seemed to be more conscious of the awful deed than I, and insisted on letting it go. But I, in firmness of mind, and prompted by the fact that I had betrayed the confidence of my friend, Mr. Monroe, and it would come to his ears, and I would rather confront death than be found out to be a traitor, blinded from the faintest glimpses of realization of such act, with Green's consent, I pulled the fatal trigger that meant more than mortal mind can realize.

"As the morning dawned it raised the old gloom and temporary wave of insanity or despair that vain hopes and evil imaginations had graven in me, leaving me to realize the awful deed in innumerable depths of sorrow. Then I saw the world in all its glory, the air sweeter, the sky bluer, the foliage prettier—all just to increase my unendurable terror. To think I had driven a man out of this beautiful, bright world forever into eternity. Grief was in my heart so abundantly I could not have lied to save my life. My first impulse was to come back there at the age of 45 (that was his age) and shoot myself. I thought of my mother and longed to be at her feet, never to get a mile from her. Some divine power was accusing me every minute. I had to tell some friends who thought the world was hard to live in, of the peace, rest and purity of an innocent man and the unutterable misery and villainy of the guilty, and of the bright world and the blessings for the innocent, which they should be thankful for, over the sin-cursed guilty person. Everything murmured shame and guilt in my ears.

"When I left my folks for the last time unaware to my mother and children, I slowly rode off with tears in my eyes. Going over my old stamping ground, the unceasingly guilty haunt never left me. In Arkansas I consulted a ticket agent about a life policy for a railroad tour, aiming to fall between the wheels of the train, but it looked so plain I knew they would not pay it (the policy). I came back to be of any use I could to my folks, taking the chances of being betrayed by my friend Green, for there are no successful criminals. They way live and escape death at the hands of the law, but there is an infallible, unceasing haunt worse than death, that will take time to overcome to any degree, and say the least. My desire to be at home and live a pure life was greater than my fear of the gallows.

"I have been wavered around by divers of advisers, and now sit here in two days of death thinking God that I have had the opportunity of learning His Word and not hid behind the dark gloom of despair, but the world is bright, with the roads plainly marked to me to life or destruction. But for the desire to live and teach this necessary doctrine of God's I would be more willing to go; in spite of my pretended weakness I have inhibited through deceit to a purpose of no avail. I am at last in the hands of a pure and just God awaiting my love and judgment, which, without great mercy, would be eternal damnation.

"I have given you but a frail glimpse of my conscience-accused corruption, pain, misery and wretchedness, which incessantly follows the guilty of such crimes. I have given you a brief sketch of my experience previous to the deed, not for fame or clemency in the unworthiness of the grave, but for I have many dear to me who do not believe me guilty of such a deed; but Jesus says: 'Forsake all, come and follow me.' So I write this with good intent, that many may turn from their wicked ways and walk in the paths of righteousness, and to show how easy a person may fall into perdition unaware. 'Watch the heart with all diligence,' and never despise the chastening of the Lord. It is profitable for you in this sin-cursed world. If I had been chastened to obligation by the reproof-rod of God, I would have lived through that gloom of despair that settled on me from the high winds of imagination and come out in the bright world happy; to never be dragged down again. If this world were pure we would have less need of chastisement. God is of infinite mercy and if he can save me he can save you all.

"One should not faint even at death, though it is an incomprehensible error through which we all must pass, yet it is not to be shunned, for it is a necessary end. Without death in this mortal world, the innumerable and indescribable haunts of sin would render it undesirable. Death brings us closer in touch with the spiritual world than any earthly thing. Our fathers have died and warned us: 'Why should we not die for others? We certainly are not created to dread and fear from our birth to our death. No! We should establish our hearts in grace, and we will live in pure bliss and happiness, fearing nothing.'

"Strange to say, people cannot bear the way to peace and happiness. They quarrel, fight, swindle, war and strive in vain glory for the riches of this world, and when they are gained they are the most miserable of all men. There is a short, easy, quick way to happiness. Dear friends, will you take the right road? Come! I will show you how to go. It may look hard to keep the way through this tall, dense forest of sin you cannot see through, but if you will start and keep going you will find that the road is smooth and easy; but if you go out in the forest of sin you will lose the road of virtue and get tangled in the briars of temptation and fall from grace. Better is it to be of a humble spirit with the lowly than to divide the spoil with the proud. The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against which there is no law. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, but help your despondent brother rise. Turn not away from him. You may be driving him to his early grave. Treat the young ladies as sisters with all purity. Care for the little ones. Respect the elderly women as mothers, and come with me, boys, for I have been one with you. Now I know both roads. Come take advantage of my experience. You are on the wrong road, for the road 'tomorrow' or 'another time,' leads to the town of 'never.' There is a way that seemeth right to man, but the end thereof is death.

"In honor of my parents I will set of a truth, I was a bright and promising little boy. In due justice I ask you to treat my brother, Clarence, like the noble good fellow he is, and the rest of my family likewise.

"One more day and I will swing into eternity; there hoping to meet my benefactor and kneel to beg his forgiveness. Come, boys and girls, wake up to a lively hope, and meet me in the brighter world. Good-bye."