

# FRANK'S ASSAILANT BEFORE GOVERNOR

Declares He Thought by Killing  
Frank He Would Prevent  
Attack on Prison.

## NO BLAME FOR WARDENS

But Prison Reforms Will Be Urged  
Upon Legislature—Frank  
Continues to Improve.

*Special to The New York Times.*

MILLEDGEVILLE, Ga., July 24.—William Creen this morning told Governor Nat E. Harris that he tried to kill Leo M. Frank last Saturday night because he believed that in so doing he would rid the Georgia State Prison of a man whose presence would result in the attack by a mob on the prison and loss of lives in a battle with the guards.

This opinion, he said, he had formed in reading newspapers. He asserted that his attack was inspired by no one, and was made simply because he himself felt that it was his duty to kill Frank.

Governor Harris stated, following his talk with Creen, that he did not hold Warden James E. Smith or other officials responsible. He said he proposed to see if prison conditions were up to the standards of the resources of the State of Georgia, and that he would send a special message on the subject to the Legislature soon after his return to Atlanta.

"I don't like it," he said, in referring to the prison situation.

Creen told his story to Governor Harris in the presence of Adj. Gen. J. Van Holt Nash. Unmanned for the first time since his attack on Frank, Creen was closeted with the Governor in the room adjoining that in which Frank lies wounded. All doors leading from the room were bolted.

Creen's story, as repeated by the Governor and General Nash, substantially was:

"I had heard talk of the danger of Frank being kept here.

"I felt that as long as he was here there was danger of the prison being attacked. I was afraid the guards and the people making the attack would shoot at each other and people be killed, so I came to the conclusion that it was my duty to save the people from the danger to which Frank's presence exposed them. I determined that Frank was subjecting us to danger, so decided that I would kill him."

"When did you conceive this idea?" asked Governor Harris.

"A few days before it happened," replied Creen. "I studied over it and decided to carry my plan out."

"Now tell the Governor the truth, Creen," said Governor Harris. "Was there any suggestion made to you from the outside?"

Creen fell to his knees and raised his hand. "I swear that I never talked of the Frank case to any one inside or out of the prison before or after the attack."

"Did you mean to kill him?" Creen was asked.

"I did," he replied calmly. "I felt it was my duty."

Asked where he obtained his knife, Creen replied that he had slipped it from the kitchen on the Friday night before he attacked Frank and had hidden it in his cot.

After Creen's talk with the Governor the newspaper correspondents were called in to hear Creen's statement in reference to charges that he had been beaten by prison authorities.

In the presence of correspondents Governor Harris asked him whether he had ever been whipped here.

"No," was the answer.

Creen bared his back, which was said to have been scarred from floggings. There was no evidence of his ever having been beaten.

"Have you ever been mistreated here in any way?" Creen was asked.

There was no answer, but the Prison Commissioners and the Governor stated that Creen, a few minutes before, had told them he had no fault to find.

"I propose to find out," Governor Harris said. "Why one inmate of the prison would attack another, and how. With the facilities here, I don't see how any one could have prevented this attack on Frank, unless the prisoners were provided with separate cells. I am not blaming prison officials."

Asked whether he thought Creen crazy, the Governor replied that he thought him "weak-minded."

Several convicts were questioned briefly by the Governor and Commissioners, and all expressed the belief that Creen's action was the result of no influence in or out of the prison.

To set at rest the reports that Frank has not been seriously wounded, the Governor and Commissioners saw Frank's wound dressed. They did not question Frank, merely watching the physicians, leaving the room as soon as the surgeons had finished.

"There is no doubt about the fact that Frank was seriously wounded," said Governor Harris.

The condition of Leo M. Frank this morning continues good. He rested well last night and is declared to be steadily recovering.

Following the talk with Creen the Governor and members of the Prison Commission met behind closed doors in the office of Warden Smith. They called in Charles W. Dyer, trusty on night duty in the prisoners' sleeping quarters, and questioned him about Creen's attack on Frank.

Dyer merely stated that he was off duty at the time of Creen's attack and was asleep on his cot near Creen, and that he knew nothing of the attack until it was over.

Dr. W. J. McNaughton, serving a life term for murder in Emmanuel County, will be freed if the wishes of his fellow-prisoners at the Georgia State Farm are carried out. Today Governor Harris was presented with a petition for clemency for McNaughton, signed by 137 of 150 prisoners in the main building.

"Not a man to whom the petition was presented refused to sign it," said the prisoner who circulated the petition.

The petition was inspired by the quick action of Dr. McNaughton in saving the life of Leo M. Frank when his throat was slashed last Saturday night by William Creen. But for the work of Dr. McNaughton Frank would have died.

Dr. McNaughton was convicted of poisoning W. J. Flanders, a wealthy patient. It was alleged McNaughton and Mrs. Flanders were unduly intimate and planned the murder of the woman's husband. McNaughton was found guilty, but Mrs. Flanders was never tried.

Bessie Lucile, six-year-old daughter of Edgar Stripling, Georgia's Jean Valjean, has obtained Governor Harris's promise that her father shall be freed.

As the Governor stood in the lobby of the prison this morning, the little girl dashed up to him and clasped his hand.

"Governor, let my papa out," she said.

"We've nobody to work for us, and mamma's sick. Won't you please let him go home?"

"Tell your papa," said the Governor.

"that I'm going to let him out before my term of office expires. I can't just say when, but I'm going to let him out."

The news was rushed to Stripling, who has been here about two years, following his arrest at Danville, Va., where he had for many years, under an assumed name, held the office of Chief of Police, following his killing of J. B. Cornett in Harris County, some fourteen years ago.