

John H. Mardes (- 14 Jul 1869)

The Evening Star, July 15, 1869

Dreadful Homicide In The First Ward The Steward of a Vessel Stabs the Mate The Wounded Man Dies Six Hours After the Occurrence

Last night about 11 1/2 o'clock, a man named John Mardes received a horrible wound resulting in death, at the hands of James Kelly, under the following circumstances. Both men were employed on the schooner Agnes Ann, which is owned by Capt. Robert M. Miller, and used for hauling white sand from Tangier Sound to this city for the Maryland Freestone Company; Mardes as mate and Kelly as steward. It appears that while going down the river on the 3d day of July they were amusing themselves wrestling, and Mardes getting rather the best of Kelly, the latter became very much enraged, and wanted to fight, which was avoided, however, Mardes saying he did not wish to hurt Kelly, who retorted by saying that he would get even with him (M.) before long. There seemed to be no variance between the two from that time until last night. The schooner returned here last Friday evening. Yesterday afternoon, Kelly went over to Georgetown and purchased a large sheath knife, which was noticed on his return by all on board, who thought there was no use for such an article in his line of business. About 11 1/2 o'clock last night, Capt. Miller while asleep in his bunk was aroused by a scuffling noise, and looking out saw Mardes and Kelly together in the cabin, and Kelly in the act of drawing the knife above mentioned from the abdomen of Mardes. Blood and water in large quantities followed the withdrawing of the weapon and Captain Miller immediately sprang to seize Kelly, who ran out of the cabin, and going ashore, fled hastily up the street. Two colored deck hands immediately started after him, and going a short distance met Officers Harris and Tighlman, who learning the circumstances, joined in the chase, and captured Kelly near the corner of 19th and G streets. Blood was flowing at the time from his right wrist, which, as he was left handed, it is supposed he cut in withdrawing the knife from Mardes' wound. He was taken to the Fourth precinct station, and there kept until this morning. In the meanwhile medical aid was summoned for the wounded man on the schooner. Several physicians refused to come, but finally Dr. E. De W. Breneman, a skillful surgeon, arrived, it being then about half-past one o'clock. He found Mardes suffering much, with a large wound in the left side of the abdomen, through which the intestines protruded, the main interesting being nearly severed. The severed intestine was sewed up with silver wire by Dr. Breneman, and the bowels returned, but the wounded man had lost so much blood that the most skillful services could be but of little benefit to him. Rev. Father Mackin, assistant pastor of St. Mathew's (Catholic) Church, was sent for, and administered religious rites to the sufferer, who died at twenty minutes to 6 o'clock this morning. Mardes, before his death, and in the presence of witnesses, requested that all his property be given to his niece, Miss Alice Johnson, daughter of his sister, Mrs. Olive Johnson, residing in the Seventh Ward--saying that he had made no will, but desired his wishes in regard to the disposition of his property to be carried out.

Deceased was a single man, and about 35 years old, while the prisoner is about 45 years old, both being residents of this city. The body of the deceased was put in ice in the schooner's cabin, where he died, and Coroner Potter notified. He was holding an inquest as our report closed.

The prisoner, who was brought down to the vessel today, to await the result of the inquest, seemed perfectly stolid in his demeanor, and before the arrival of the Coroner coolly chewed his quid of tobacco, at the door of the cabin which contained the dead body of his victim. He acknowledges having committed the deed in an altercation between himself and Mardes.