

BRICK SLAYER IS LIKENED TO JUNGLE BEAST

Ferocity Is Reflected in Nixon's Features.

BY CHARLES LEAVELLE.

Beneath an alley fire escape policemen and detectives stand three and four deep. From a fifth floor window others lean out and call: "Let him come."

Handcuffs click. A slouchily dressed colored youth detaches himself from the crowd of detectives and begins making his way up the side of the building, effortlessly. At the second floor, where the fire escape begins, he poises himself lightly and swings over on to it.

"Look at him go," says a policeman. "Just like an ape."

By the time this has been said the youth has swung himself over the sill and is in the fifth floor room where two years ago he raped and murdered with a brick Mrs. Florence Thompson Castle. As detectives watch he shows in pantomime how he committed the crime, one of the five savage murders he has confessed.

Comes from Little Town.

The Negro youth is Robert Nixon. He is 18 years old and comes from a pretty little town in the old south—Tallulah, La. But there is nothing pretty about Robert Nixon. He has none of the charm of speech or manner that is characteristic of so many southern darkies.

That charm is a mark of civilization, and so far as manner and appearance go, civilization has left Nixon practically untouched. His hunched shoulders and long, sinewy arms that dangle almost to his knees; his out-thrust head and catlike tread all suggest the animal.

He is very black—almost pure Negro. His physical characteristics suggest an earlier link in the species.

Ferocious Type.

Mississippi river steamboat mates, who hire and fire roustabouts by the hundreds, would classify Nixon as a jungle Negro. They would hire him only if they were sorely in need of rousters. And they would keep close watch on him. This type is known to be ferocious and relentless in a fight. Though docile enough under ordinary circumstances, they are easily aroused. And when this happens the veneer of civilization disappears.

Nixon was docile enough yesterday afternoon as he stretched in the rays of the warm sun that streamed through the windows of the detective bureau. He leaned back in the deep leather chair to which he was manacled in the office of Chief of Detectives John L. Sullivan.

He began to talk about the days in

Tallulah. He went to school. He played hookey. He always was whipped the next day. But he didn't mind that.

Always a Thief, Says Sheriff.

He liked school all right, but he wasn't crazy about it. He avoided chopping and picking cotton. He always got jobs driving cars and minding children. He never worked on a river boat. Man, that is hard work. Yes, he got into trouble now and then.

On Chief Sullivan's desk lay a letter from Sheriff A. J. D. Sevier, of Madison parish, Louisiana. "Nixon has always been a thief," wrote Sheriff Sevier. "He has been on the prowl since he was 6."

Nixon continued telling about his youth. Yes, he stole—lots of things. Brass fittings, anything he could sell; anything that was loose. He got into jail. His employers got him out. [It is a southern custom that you stand by your colored help when they run afoul the law in minor offenses.] And when he got out of jail his mammy whipped him.

State Is Handicapped.

"We are handicapped in this state by having no institutions for handling juvenile offenders," Sheriff Sevier's letter continues. "When they are as young as Nixon we can do nothing but advise that their parents whip them, or whip them ourselves. There should be a juvenile home or reformatory, but there isn't."

As he talked yesterday Nixon's dull eyes lighted only when he spoke of food. They feed him well at the detective bureau, he said. He likes coconut pie and strawberry pop. It was after a generous meal of these refreshments that he confessed two of his most shocking murders, those of Mrs. Edna Worden and her daughter, Marguerite, 12 years old, in Los Angeles last year.

He talked animatedly again later, when he told of having been in the movies. He was an extra in "Slave Ship" and "Souls at Sea." He went to see himself in one of these when it was released, then went to work on the other one. And meanwhile he beat Mrs. Worden fatally with a brick, raped her and slew her sleeping daughter.

Ferocity Is Indicated.

Photographs of the Los Angeles murders were the most shocking in the memory of Chicago detectives, they said yesterday. These killings were accomplished with a ferocity suggestive of Poe's "Murders in the Rue Morgue"—the work of a giant ape.

Again the comparison was drawn between Nixon and the jungle man. Last week when he was taken to 4631 Lake Park avenue to demonstrate how he had slain Mrs. Florence Johnson, mother of two small children, a crowd gathered and there were cries of: "Lynch him! Kill him!"

Nixon backed against a wall and bared his teeth. He showed no fear, just as he has shown no remorse. He stood in a snarling attitude until police took him indoors and the crowd was ordered away.

A Different Personality.

It is different with Earl Hicks, Nixon's companion of May 27 in the Johnson murder. Hicks is 19 years old and is of lighter skin. His background is much the same as Nixon's

—he comes from the river town of Greenville, Miss.—but as a personality he is vastly different.

He has made no attempt to hide his fear. He is fully aware that he is in grave danger of going to the electric chair. Nixon either doesn't realize the gravity of his position or doesn't care. He will worry about the chair when the time comes. Hicks has worked hard in his day. Though he is known in his home town as a thief and a pickpocket, he has never before been connected with a crime of violence.

He has been implicated with Nixon only in the Johnson murder. Hicks did not figure in the coast murders, the Castle murder, nor that of Miss Anne Kuchta, student nurse who was raped and beaten to death in the Chicago hospital last Aug. 20.

Burglary Primary Object.

"Nixon has prowled dozens of rooms occupied by men and has left without harming them," one detective said. "He turned rapist when the opportunity presented itself, but his primary object was burglary. He is not a moron in the common sense."

Nixon dwelt lightly or not at all on his crimes yesterday. The ordeal of confession was over. He felt purged. He stretched in the warm sunshine that came through the window and smacked his lips as Chief Sullivan allowed him to order his supper—more pie, more pop, and some good sandwiches; good sandwiches this time. He didn't want any more like those last ones.

And on Chief Sullivan's desk, in the same sunlight that bathed Nixon, Sheriff Sevier's letter still lay. "It has been demonstrated here that nothing can be done with Robert Nixon. Only death can cure him."