



E2844

Control









## DRAMAS OF THE DOCK

# ***THE LIBRARY OF CRIME***

*Large Crown 8vo. Cloth. 5s. net each.*

**MASTERS OF CRIME**

**GUY B. H. LOGAN**

**DRAMATIC DAYS AT THE OLD BAILEY**

**CHARLES KINGSTON**

**CELEBRATED CRIMES**

**GEORGE DILNOT**

**THE BENCH AND THE DOCK**

**CHARLES KINGSTON**

**FAMOUS CRIMES AND CRIMINALS**

**C. L. McCLUER STEVENS**

**A GALLERY OF ROGUES**

**CHARLES KINGSTON**

**FROM CLUE TO DOCK**

**C. L. McCLUER STEVENS**

**ENEMIES OF SOCIETY**

**CHARLES KINGSTON**





THE AUTHOR

# DRAMAS OF THE DOCK

*True Stories of Crime*

BY

GUY. B. H. LOGAN

Author of

"Rope, Knife and Chair," "Guilty or Not Guilty,"

"Masters of Crime," etc.

'Murder seems to be my one bad habit:'

*Stewart Northcott*

LONDON:

STANLEY PAUL & CO. (1928) LTD.

**PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN  
AT THE ANCHOR PRESS, TIPTREE, ESSEX**

To  
F. TENNYSON JESSE  
to whom the  
author is beholden for  
much help and encouragement





## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
Introduction - - - -	xiii
I. NO. 4, EUSTON SQUARE - - -	I
II. THE DOUBLE MURDER AT CHELSEA - -	41
III. JAMES BLOMFIELD RUSH - - -	69
IV. THE NORTHAMPTON TRAGEDY - - -	95
V. MURDER AND MUTILATION - - -	117
VI. A MANCHESTER MYSTERY - - -	137
VII. THE NORWICH HORROR - - -	155
VIII. THE ACCUSER ACCUSED - - -	175
IX. WAS ROBERT EMOND MAD ? - - -	199
X. THE CASE OF RICHARD GOULD - - -	221
XI. THE OLD TOLL-GATE MURDERS - - -	241
XII. DRAMA OF THE ASH FLATS - - -	261
XIII. SOME "ATTRACTIVE" MURDERERS - -	277



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

The Author - - - - - *Frontispiece*

	PAGE
James Bloomfield Rush - - - - -	72
Stanfield Hall - - - - -	80
Potash Farm - - - - -	84
Emily Sandford - - - - -	88
Scene of the Murder, Northampton - - -	104
A Group of Models in the Chamber of Horrors of the New Tussaud's Exhibition - - -	144
Norwich Castle, where Sheward and Rush were hanged	160
Stinie Morrison, Leon Beron, Patrick Mahon - -	192
Wm. Henry Podmore and John Robinson - -	224
Calcraft, who hanged Walter Miller - - -	256
Marwood, who hanged Charles Peace - - -	256
Luke Blackburn's Cottage - - - - -	264



## INTRODUCTION

THE cases of murder dealt with herein have been selected because they seem to present unusual features, and have not been previously treated by my fellow labourers in this particular field of research. I do not believe in tilling the same ground.

The most notorious crime is not always, or even often, the most interesting.

Crippen's murder of his wife, the expensive and expansive Belle Elmore, has become a classic in its way, but, shorn of the romantic element, involving the unhappy little doctor's flight with his typist and subsequent dramatic capture, it strikes one as having been a sordid and rather commonplace affair. Crippen was not a heroic figure, and there was something of the farcical about this ordinary domestic tragedy.

Similarly, George Joseph Smith, who schemed a new and entirely original method of murder, and who made a business of insuring and drowning his wives, was, apart from his dark deeds, an uninteresting and even vulgar personage, and his performances with cheap tin baths have been so often and so fully described that nothing fresh can possibly be said about them.

I have preferred to tell the stories of less well-remembered malefactors, and, for that purpose, have turned to the murder records of the nineteenth century, a soil rich in sensational and interesting crimes. The

Euston Square murder, a fascinating case of drama and mystery, was a favourite and general topic half a century ago, and the story of that eccentric spinster, Miss Matilda Hacker, whose remains had lain so long in the coal cellar of number four in that grim and sombre thoroughfare, abounds with strange and dramatic incidents.

James Blomfield Rush is a more familiar figure in the dark corridors of crime, though his atrocious attempt to exterminate the Jermy family took place eighty years ago, and he has not since been a popular favourite with the crime historian. I have endeavoured to relate the facts of the Stanfield Hall tragedy from a new angle, and to throw fresh light upon a complicated case of intrigue, passion, and long-nurtured revenge.

I have attempted to show that James Greenacre was not the monster that contemporary opinion held him to be, and that his murder of Hannah Brown, apart from his subsequent attempt to dispose of the body, was rather the result of accident than preconcerted design. I found in the Northampton murder all the ingredients for a tale of mystery and horror, and am disposed to think that this case will be new to many. I have included in the series an unsolved Manchester murder, as strange and weird an affair as any in our criminal annals, and have been able to bring forward fresh facts in connection with other once notorious felons.

In the previous century there was little of that perverted sympathy with convicted murderers which is such a disturbing factor in these days. A Podmore, convicted on evidence which could leave no doubt or misgiving in any ordinarily intelligent mind, would have

had short shrift fifty or sixty years ago, when the public sympathy was with the victim rather than with the murderer, and except in the case of Lipski, I know of no agitation at that period for the reversal of the jury's verdict and the sentence of the law.

The Abolitionists of to-day may not be in the majority, but they are much more vociferous and persistent than those who still think that the savage and deliberate murderer should pay the extreme penalty of his crime. I would not, for my part, do away with capital punishment, but I think there are varying degrees of murder and that justice should be tempered with proportional discretion.

Murder for gain is the worst form of all, and in these cases there is no excuse for sentimental pity. Whoever sheddeth man's blood for profit, by man let his blood be shed.

GUY B. H. LOGAN.





## DRAMAS OF THE DOCK



## CHAPTER I

### NO. 4, EUSTON SQUARE

THE people of England, always glad and ready to be thrilled, were provided with two first-rank sensations in the year 1879. No sooner had they got over the shock caused by the discovery of human remains in the Thames, which led up to the arrest and trial of Kate Webster for the murder and mutilation of her mistress, Mrs. Thomas, at Richmond, than news was received of the finding of a woman's skeleton in the coal cellar of a house in Euston Square. The latter discovery was the first act of a very remarkable and sensational drama, and the "Euston Square Mystery" soon became the one topic of conversation among lovers of the bizarre and the horrible. The house, number four in that rather dismal and forbidding Square, was surrounded by gaping crowds "from early morn to dewy eve," and often far into the night, though there was nothing to reward their pertinacity other than the comings and goings of detectives and policemen.

It was enough, however, that a particularly gruesome and mysterious murder had taken place within its dark and gloomy walls, that the remains of an unknown female had been found in very singular circumstances, and that

the house was the depository of more than one grim secret. It was in the occupation of foreigners, and the lower class Englishman or woman of that period believed "foreigners" to be capable, as a general rule, of almost any atrocity. Rumour, with its thousand tongues, soon began to be busy with the name and reputation of the tenant of the dwelling, and extraordinary stories were spread abroad reflecting on his conduct and actions. The people of the district looked daily for the arrest of Mr. Severin Bastendorf, professing to regard that inoffensive alien as a kind of monster, another Sweeney Todd, with a taste for murder, and an objectional habit of hiding the bodies of his victims, male and female, in his coal cellar. His house was in a state of siege for some days, and he had to obtain police protection when it was necessary for him to go out. Altogether he had, until the public attention was diverted into another channel, a very uncomfortable time of it.

It was a strange coincidence that the trial of Kate Webster for murdering her mistress should have been so quickly followed by that of Hannah Dobbs for a very similar crime. The guilt of the big, powerful, hard-faced Irishwoman was never really in doubt from the first, though Kate Webster put the authorities to some trouble and inconvenience on account of the various statements she made accusing others, and she was convicted and hanged with the least possible delay. Her final confession, describing the crime, acknowledged the justice of the sentence, and expressly exonerated Church, Porter, and a man unnamed, whom she had previously declared to be the murderer of her mistress.

The case of Hannah Dobbs was not nearly such plain

sailing. A long time had elapsed since the death of the elderly spinster, whose skeleton, with a decaying rope round its neck, was found in the Euston Square cellar, and it could not be exactly determined on what day and by what means she had been slain. The circumstances as regards the woman, Dobbs, were extremely suspicious, as I shall presently show, and that she had some guilty knowledge of the murder can, I think, be taken for granted, but the evidence put forward on behalf of the prosecution was not conclusive, and after a particularly cautious summing-up by the judge, the jury, equally careful, returned a verdict of "Not Guilty." The buxom, smiling, and complacent prisoner, much less like the popular conception of a murderess than Kate Webster, of Richmond notoriety, was accordingly released, though the surprises and sensations of the case did not end with her discharge.

Not prudent enough to let well alone, this woman began a kind of publicity stunt of her own, and wrote and caused to be circulated a pamphlet which purported to give a true account of the murder. As a document it was unworthy of serious attention, much less belief, for it was packed with sensational and incredible disclosures, and it accused, without ambiguity, her late master, Severin Bastendorf, who, incidentally, had been her lover, of having slain the unfortunate Miss Hacker, and compelled her, Dobbs, to become his partner in the crime. She declared, in a vague and indefinite way, that this was not the only murder he had committed.

It must be admitted that Bastendorf was not a very reputable person, and the statement he made after the

woman's trial was so palpably and demonstrably false that he was, following on her acquittal, charged with perjury. I shall examine this part of a most mysterious business presently, and will now proceed with a recital of the main facts, so far as they were ever discovered.

Severin Bastendorf, whose nationality did not transpire, was by trade a bamboo worker, and he also dealt in second-hand furniture. He moved into the house, No. 4, Euston Square, in March, 1876, with his wife and four children, and opened a workshop at the back of the premises, four or five boys being employed by him in his business. As the house was a large one, and the family did not require all the rooms for their own use, Mrs. Bastendorf proposed that they should let some of them as furnished apartments. This plan necessitated the engagement of a domestic servant, and a comely, fresh-faced young woman, a native of Bideford, in Devonshire, whose name was Hannah Dobbs, applied for the situation and secured it. That was in September of the same year.

The girl was a stranger to Mrs. Bastendorf—I think that can safely be assumed—and Mr. Bastendorf treated her as a stranger to him, but this was a mere subterfuge on his part. They had met before, and in circumstances not particularly creditable to either. That, however, is beside the point at the moment, but it is necessary to state at this place that Hannah Dobbs had not been long in Mr. Bastendorf's service before she attracted the attention of that person's brother, Pietri Bastendorf, known as Peter, who made no secret of his admiration and regard, and kept company with the young woman in the approved manner. He soon came to consider

himself as more or less engaged to her, and he accompanied her on a visit to her parents at Bideford on one occasion, when the damsel introduced him as her affianced husband. Peter Bastendorf had a latch key to the house in Euston Square, and was a constant and welcome visitor.

The Bastendorf ménage was, by all accounts, a curiously conducted one. Mrs. Bastendorf appears not to have bothered her head at all about the lodgers, and to have left them to the care and attention of the pleasant-visaged Hannah, who interviewed them on arrival, arranged for their rooms and their meals, and even collected their weekly rent. Her husband, as was natural, had still less to do with them, and this gentleman, in the intervals of bamboo working, which business he appears to have rather neglected, was away a good deal, off and on, and spent his leisure in somewhat mysterious visits to the country. He was fond of shooting, and on one occasion he returned to the domestic hearth with the carcase of a wild boar in his possession, parts of which he afterwards had salted for food.

How he obtained this interesting and unusual trophy of the chase I am unable to disclose. He said something about having been "shooting in Dulwich Woods," but as the wild boar has been extinct in England for some centuries, and none were roaming about Dulwich as recently as fifty years ago, we are entitled to assume that Bastendorf acquired his specimen by some other means. Hannah Dobbs was regarded rather as a friend of the family than as a domestic drudge, and if Severin Bastendorf seemed to be a little kinder to her than was altogether discreet, his wife does not appear to have



observed this or to have objected to it if she did. The girl was good and quick at her work, clean in her habits and person, and rather a favourite with her master's young children. The lodgers in the house were quiet and orderly persons, rents were regularly paid via Hannah Dobbs, and everything, on the surface, appeared to be smooth and straightforward.

On the 9th of May, 1879, some months after Hannah had left their employ, Mrs. Bastendorf informed her husband that she had let two of the upstairs rooms to a couple of maiden ladies who would, on all grounds, prove themselves desirable tenants. These newcomers, it appeared, required a coal cellar for the purpose of storing away their own fuel—they had ordered a ton of coal towards the winter supply—and Mrs. Bastendorf wanted the middle cellar cleared from the rubbish that had collected there during the two previous years. Her husband raised no objection to this, and ordered one of the boys he employed to empty the cellar referred to—there were three in the basement of the house, below the street level—and to give it a rough clean out.

The boy started on the work that afternoon, and soon came upon a leg bone of a human body. Even to his inexperienced eye it could be nothing else, and a further search revealed in a corner of the cellar a human body, lying on two pieces of decaying oilcloth, in an advanced stage of decomposition. The police were informed, assistance obtained, and the remains taken out and carefully examined.

It was at once assumed, and with reason, I think, that a murder had been committed. Apart from the fact that a cord, resembling a clothes-line, was found

tightly fastened round the neck of the corpse, suggesting death by strangulation or hanging, it could not reasonably be supposed that concealment of the body would have taken place if the unknown had come to a natural end. The person who finds a grisly skeleton in his coal cellar is, I imagine, justified in assuming that it was placed there in order to hide and ultimately destroy the evidence of a great crime.

In this case, the body had been fully clothed, and the bones of a foot were found in a rotting boot. There were no marks of violence on the skull, or, indeed, on any of the bones, and nothing to show of what the unknown had died, apart from the cord. Pieces of that cord were embedded in what remained of the neck at the back, but they crumbled away at the touch. The body was that of an elderly female, and there was a tuft of lightish brown hair at the back of the skull. It suggested that the hair had been worn in short curls or ringlets. The doctors who examined the body thought that it had lain there two or three years, that it was that of a woman five feet four inches in height, and that she had suffered from a slight curvature of the spine.

The Bastendorfs, informed of this startling and unpleasant discovery, professed themselves unable to throw the slightest light on the mystery.

Mrs. Bastendorf stated that she had been in the cellar on several occasions and had seen a lot of rubbish there. The body had been covered with a quantity of coal dust, and it would not have been possible for anyone to see it on a merely casual inspection. No one associated with her was or had been missing, and she knew no person answering to the description of the remains. Her

husband said that he had noticed and remarked upon an unpleasant odour about the house in the autumn of 1877, but it had passed away, and the fact had gone from his mind. He had some remembrance of a large bone being found some time before, but he had assumed that to be from the wild boar already referred to.

An Inspector Hagan was placed in charge of the case, and it was, for some obscure reason, at first assumed that the remains were those of Hannah Dobbs herself, she having left her situation in rather a hurry. That young woman's hair, too, was said to have been of a light brown colour. Search was therefore made for the fair Hannah, who was soon run to earth and discovered to be serving a short sentence of imprisonment for a petty theft.

Leaving Miss Dobbs for the moment, let us trace the steps that were taken to establish the identity of the body.

Mr. and Mrs. Bastendorf were freely questioned as to their former lodgers, and at last mention was made of a certain "Miss Huish," who had taken an upstairs room, immediately below the one occupied by the children, at a date in September, 1877. They could not, apparently, relate very much with reference to this person, who, they said, was attended and waited on entirely by their former servant, Hannah Dobbs. She had not stayed at the house very long—about three weeks according to the rent book—and had gone away very suddenly after paying three weeks rent, amounting to £1 16s., through Dobbs, who had brought down a five-pound note and taken the change to the lodger. They had not seen "Miss Huish" go away, but Dobbs had told them of her

departure in a cab. They had some vague recollection of the lady's appearance; she was elderly, stooped a little, dressed in a showy and juvenile way, and had a mincing gait and an affected manner and speech.

Inspector Hagan seems to have come, accurately enough, to the conclusion that the body found in the cellar was that of this person, but he got the first corroboration of this view after an interview with Hannah Dobbs in the Westminster correction house—a prison which has long since disappeared.

Hannah received the Inspector "most politely," as Fragon used to sing, and evinced no uneasiness at his questions. To a great extent she confirmed the statements of Mr and Mrs. Bastendorf, but she declared that the real name of "Miss Huish" was Hacker, and she supplied, in a perfectly candid way, so far as could be judged, some interesting details of that lady's life at No. 4, Euston Square.

Miss Hacker, she said, was an old woman who wanted to be taken for a comparatively young one. She was very eccentric and very mean, and Hannah cited as an example her habit of sending for the cheapest ale. "She would ask for half a pint of porter, which was three farthings, and, when sending me with the jug, always demanded the farthing change. I didn't like to go to the public-house for it, and Mr. Bastendorf went on two or three occasions to fetch her supper beer."

Asked for her account of the circumstances in which Miss Hacker—or Huish—had left her lodgings at number four, Hannah declared that, to the best of her recollection, she went away on a Sunday in October, 1877. She thought that she was out with the Bastendorf children

in Hyde Park on that afternoon, and that Mr. Bastendorf on her return informed her of the old lady's departure, and handed her a shilling, which, he said, the latter had left for her.

This story both the Bastendorfs most indignantly denied, and certain circumstances coming to the knowledge of the police, the apparently frank Hannah came to be regarded with considerable doubt and suspicion.

The first thing to be done, however, was to establish the identity of Miss Hacker, beyond all question, with the remains found in the cellar. The lady, who was about sixty-eight years of age when she disappeared, was a member of a well-known Canterbury family, and in her youth really had some pretensions to good looks. She told one of her numerous landladies, in the simpering way that she affected, that she and her sisters had been called the "Canterbury Belles," and that the "officers of the garrison at Dover had made them their frequent toast."

Perhaps she was hard to please or the officers referred to were not matrimonially disposed, but certain it is that not one of Miss Matilda's admirers had the courage to marry her. They do not seem to have gone beyond the mild flirtation common to garrison towns in mid-Victorian days, although the lady had small private means, property at Canterbury bringing her in a sum of £130 per annum. She had, however, a rooted objection to the payment of rates and taxes—quite an amiable weakness, which most of us must admit to—and she left her native town in consequence of some dispute about a water rate. She also had a grievance with reference to an assessment of the rateable value of her property, and

she indignantly went off to London, where she seems to have taken rooms at various addresses in different assumed names. She dressed very shabbily within doors, but her outdoor finery, wholly unsuited to a person of her age, was of a kind to excite derision in the breasts of the small boys who saw her tripping along Mornington Crescent in a smart bonnet and high-heeled shoes. She always carried a shopping bag, though her purchases were on a most modest scale, and it was said that she made a kipper last for two meals.

About May, 1876, she was living at a house in the Crescent just named as "Miss Sycamore," and on September 24th, 1877, she took up her abode at No. 4, Euston Square, which house she certainly never left alive. She occupied a room on the second floor.

She was certainly alive on October 10th in that year, for on that day she wrote a letter to a Mr. Cozens, who was a tenant of hers at Canterbury, requesting him to send her a remittance for the rent due to her from him. The reply was to be addressed to her by certain initials at the Post Office, Holborn. Mr. Cozens answered that letter on the day he received it, but his communication was never claimed, and after lying at the Post Office for a month it reached the Dead Letter Office, and was then returned to the sender.

Mrs. Bastendorf took Inspector Hagan up to the room which Miss Hacker had occupied, and pointed out to him a large, dark, forbidding-looking stain on the carpet. She declared that it was not there when the room was let to Miss Hacker, and she said she had scolded Hannah Dobbs for allowing the lady to leave without paying for the damage. The girl, she said, had made no remark,

but appeared a little confused. Efforts had certainly been made to wash out the stain, for, as Inspector Hagan perceived, the colour of the carpet had run. There was a corresponding stain on the floor below and it was just by the foot of the bed. The stained portion of carpet was, on Hagan's instructions, cut out and subjected to chemical analysis. It proved to be the stain of human blood, and medical opinion was that about four ounces of blood had been expended.

It therefore seems probable that the poor old woman was attacked in her own room and stabbed to death. A cord was then tied tightly round her neck, and the body either thrown over the banisters of the staircase, to cause death by hanging if some remnants of life remained to her, or dragged down the stairs to the cellar in the basement. It seems most improbable that Hannah Dobbs could have accomplished all that by herself, and I do not think that she did.

The view of the police authorities, however, was favourable to the Bastendorfs and hostile to Hannah Dobbs. It was argued, with some show of reason, that Severin Bastendorf would have betrayed a reluctance to having the cellar cleared if he had known that the body of the murdered woman was concealed there, whereas, on the contrary, he was perfectly ready and willing to have this done. The same applied to his wife, who, though she made a most unsatisfactory witness at the subsequent trial and was reproved by the judge, seems to have been really in a state of ignorance as to the "goings on" in her own house. Evidence implicating Dobbs, however, came in thick and fast, and she was arrested and charged with the murder.

Shortly after the disappearance of Miss Hacker, Hannah Dobbs was in possession of a watch and chain which now proved to have been the property of the old lady. The watch had been made by a Canterbury jeweller, Warren by name, and had been given to Miss Hacker by her father forty years before. To account for the possession of this watch, Dobbs, who throughout showed herself a most accomplished liar, had first told an elaborate story of the sudden and unexpected demise of an uncle who had left her several articles of some value. She also had a ring which was found to have belonged to Miss Hacker, and the story of an uncle having bequeathed the watch to her was quite untrue.

Miss Hacker, like other spinsters of uncertain age, with much time on their hands and a vivid imagination, had a Dream Book which she constantly consulted. It provided her in a mild way with the thrills and emotions her aimless life had missed. If a certain dream indicated the advent of a rich and handsome husband the old lady was delighted, though such could happen only in an age of miracles. After she vanished from Euston Square the Dream Book was in the keeping of Hannah Dobbs, who also derived some occasional satisfaction from its perusal. One wonders if she ever dreamed that she would, before long, be charged with and tried for murder.

After the trial it became known that she had been in possession of almost the whole contents of Miss Hacker's wardrobe. She made frequent visits to the shop of a dealer in second-hand clothes, and there sold garment after garment which had belonged to the old lady. The woman who purchased the silk dresses and lace petticoats did not come forward until too late to give evidence;



she had not associated the person who sold the garments with the woman accused of the murder.

Later on, however, when her statement could not be made available, she positively identified a portrait of Dobbs as the woman who had come from time to time with articles of raiment. She said: "I first saw the woman in November, 1877, but I can't remember what day. She was rather 'flashily' dressed, and I got the impression from her appearance, manner, and speech, that she was a 'fast' woman. She gave a name, and said that she lived at an address in one of the Squares. She stated that a relation had recently died and had left her all her clothing. She didn't care, she said, to wear a dead person's things, and she wanted to sell the garments. She came five or six times. The photograph I have been shown is that of the person referred to, and is a very good likeness."

As regards the watch, Dobbs asked a Mrs. Spiers, the mother of Mrs. Bastendorf, to have it cleaned for her, and later she pawned it at a shop in a street just behind Euston Square. The police also discovered that a box belonging to Dobbs, which was detained by a Mrs. Wright—at whose house the girl had lodged after leaving the Bastendorfs—in default of rent, contained articles that former landladies could prove to have been earlier in the possession of Miss Hacker.

When Hannah Dobbs was taken from Westminster prison to Bow Street for the first examination, she was in charge of a warder named Robert Burnley, and their cab was followed all the way by curious and excited crowds. "The noise was great," said Burnley, in giving evidence at the trial, "and I may not have caught the

prisoner's exact words. She chatted all the time, though I advised her not to talk about the case. She said, 'Why should I not talk about it? I am innocent, and have nothing to be afraid of. It will not surprise me if it comes out that the murder was committed by a Mr. Finlay, who lodged in the house about that time. He had a seven-chambered revolver and was a queer sort of man. He once told me he had a secret, and he offered me £50 to go to America with him.'

This, by the way, was only one of the many wild statements made by Dobbs. This one was palpably false and absurd, for Mr. Finlay, it was ascertained, had left the house in Euston Square before Miss Hacker arrived.

The trial of Hannah Dobbs took place on July 2nd and 3rd, 1879, the judge being Mr. Justice Hawkins, afterwards Lord Brampton. For the Crown there appeared the Attorney-General and Mr. Gorst, Q.C., and Messrs. Mead and Geoghegan represented the prisoner, who presented a wholesome picture of good health, and, apparently, mental serenity. She was a demure looking female, twenty-five years old, with very fair hair, a good complexion, and a plump figure.

No impartial person who studies the evidence in this case can feel any surprise at the acquittal of the prisoner. Apart from the possession of the property of the dead woman nothing was put forward to connect her definitely and directly with the crime. The Attorney-General advanced the theory that the murder had been committed on October 14th, 1877, when Mr. Bastendorf was at Erith and his wife at the house of a relation. He asked the jury to believe that it was the prisoner who informed

the Bastendorfs of Miss Hacker's departure during their absence, and said that she was able to pay the three weeks' rent that was owing and bring down a five-pound note for that purpose because that lady was already dead and Dobbs had access to her cash-box.

It will be seen, however, that this theory was founded entirely on statements made by the Bastendorfs, who may have had their own reasons for wishing to cast suspicion on their old servant. Even if we cheerfully subscribe to the view that Hannah Dobbs was an inveterate liar, have we any good reason to suppose that the Bastendorfs, especially the two men, were telling the truth? The prisoner throughout declared that she was out with the children on the afternoon that the deceased was supposed to have left the house, that the Bastendorfs told her of the old lady's departure on her return late in the afternoon, and that she was handed a shilling, left by Miss Hacker as a tip. That story is at least as credible as the other.

Inspector Hagan, in cross-examination, had to admit that the prisoner had given him every possible assistance, and that it was largely thanks to her that the identity of the body was so quickly established.

Mr. Mead made a powerful and impassioned speech on behalf of his client. He pointed out that it had not been conclusively proved that the deceased had been murdered. Supposing her death to have occurred from natural causes, might not some avaricious person, returning to the house and finding the body, have decided to conceal the latter in order to acquire the dead woman's belongings? Could the jury accept the theory of the Crown that this young woman, alone and unaided, had

stabbed the deceased in her room, hanged or strangled her, and then dragged the corpse downstairs to the cellar in the basement, and all this with four young children in an upstairs room? He had no wish to accuse the Bastendorfs, but was it not possible that the prisoner's account of the watch and how she came by it was a true one? It was a fact that she had lied about it at first, but she may have uttered the untruth about her uncle in order to divert suspicion from Severin and Pietri Bastendorf.

She now declared that Severin gave her the watch and other presents, and that, Mr. Mead submitted, was at least a possible explanation. It was clear that she and Severin were on terms unusual between master and servant, and there was the evidence of Pietri Bastendorf to show that he had noticed familiarities between them, and had complained to each of them about it. The prisoner had shown no disinclination to discuss Miss Hacker, and had given all the information in her power. But for her statements the identity of the skeleton discovered in the cellar might never have been established. He submitted that there was no case to go to the jury, and asked for the prisoner's release, the charge not having been brought home to her.

The summing-up of Hawkins was unusually cautious. The judge contented himself with a mere recapitulation of the evidence adduced, leaving every question to the sole consideration of the jury, but those in court familiar with his methods regarded his address as being, on the whole, decidedly favourable to the prisoner.

There were, it was said, several well-known betting men in court, and these, making wagers amongst

themselves as to the likely result, laid 7 to 4 or 2 to 1 on an acquittal. Gambling on a person's life, and that person a woman, strikes one now as a curious and unpleasant demonstration of "sportmanship."

The jury retired at 7.55 p.m. and returned at 8.20. They found the prisoner "Not Guilty."

Hannah Dobbs, very pale and half fainting when the jury returned into court, breathed a sigh of intense relief, and the colour returned to her cheeks almost immediately, though she applied to her nostrils the smelling-salts handed to her by a considerate wardress. Throughout the trial she had behaved with the utmost decorum, and the impression she gave was an agreeable one rather than otherwise.

She could not, however, as I have said, leave well alone. She was introduced soon after the trial to a Mr. Purkiss, at that time the proprietor of that then extraordinary production, the *Illustrated Police News*, a weekly paper which dealt, by means of crude illustrations, with crime and criminals. She intimated to this person that she wanted to write the story of her life, and give a real, true and particular account of the "Euston Square Mystery," which still loomed large in the public mind.

The opportunity, from the Purkissian point of view, was too good to miss. Hannah Dobbs wrote the stuff, got a newspaper hack to sub-edit it, and took it to the *Police News*, whose editor undertook to print and publish it in the shape of a pamphlet, to be sold to an eager public at a penny per copy. It had an enormous sale, and I remember as a small boy, ten years old, getting hold of a copy of this weird and lying concoction.

It was packed with the most glaring absurdities. It

represented Euston Square as a kind of secret murder house and the Bastendorfs as sheer ogres. It talked of other dark crimes committed there, but in a manner so wild, silly and incoherent as to render the whole thing laughable rather than fearsome.

Parts of it, however, were true, and this remark applies to the portion of the work describing her meeting with Severin Bastendorf, and her relations with him while she was in the service of a lady living in Torrington Square. She and a fellow domestic were cleaning the front windows one morning. Bastendorf, that gallant bamboo worker, passed, like the good Samaritan, on the other side, gave them the glad eye, and asked if they wanted any help. They said, laughingly, that they did, and they so encouraged Severin's advances that he came that way again and yet again, and eventually seduced the frail Hannah during a Saturday trip to Brighton. Hannah Dobbs declared that she was induced to take employment with the man's wife, the real reason being that the intimacy should be continued in his own house. It seems hardly possible that Mrs. Bastendorf should have suspected nothing, but we must suppose this to have been the case. It is clear that his brother, the equally mysterious Peter, did.

Hannah, in fact, was a most accommodating young lady, and, according to her own admission, "obliged" both brothers. Peter, however, resented Severin's attentions to the young woman and complained about them. Severin Bastendorf, on seeing the *Police News* pamphlet, brought an action for libel against Purkiss as publisher. In his sworn affidavit he most positively denied ever having seen or heard of Hannah Dobbs before she entered his service, and this statement led to a charge

of perjury against him. Evidence was called to prove that he had known her while she was in the employment of a Mrs. Pearce in Torrington Square, and that his immoral relations with her then began. Severin Bastendorf accordingly received a sentence of twelve months' hard labour, but later on he got some consolation in the shape of £500 damages for the libels contained in the Purkiss pamphlet as to his part in the murder. What became of Hannah Dobbs afterwards I do not know.

It is almost impossible to effect any reasonable or passable reconstruction of this mysterious crime.

That Hannah Dobbs was concerned in it I have no doubt at all, for on no other grounds can we account for her possession of all the poor woman's portable property; but that she committed the actual murder, with no male assistance, seems very improbable. Pietri Bastendorf had a key to the house, and the two of them may have agreed to do away with the old lady, thinking that the cash-box contained more money than it did. It is possible that Severin was involved as well, but I hardly think that likely. Is it probable that he would, in that case, have kept the body in his own coal cellar?

*The Times* honoured this case with a leading article, from which I extract the following :

"There is, of course, nothing in the finding of the jury to show whether the verdict was given on the ground that the technical evidence of murder was incomplete, or on the ground that the material evidence against the prisoner was insufficient. Possibly, both considerations were allowed their due weight; but it is clear that the former, at least, must operate equally in favour of any other person who may hereafter be accused of the crime, while the latter points to a suspicion of some of the evidence given at the trial. In any case, it is morally certain that a hideous crime has been committed, and that justice is still at fault in endeavouring to discover its perpetrator."

One pauses to wonder if Mrs. Bastendorf forgave her errant spouse his lapses with the housemaid, and how the poor Bastendorf children fared in after life. Did Hannah Dobbs betake her buxom person to a distant colony, and there, in an assumed name, marry and settle down? Did that elusive enigma, Peter, remain faithful to his false Hannah, and did he ever say anything to throw light on the whole dark mystery?

I cannot answer my own questions. Half a century has elapsed since the "Euston Square Mystery" thrilled London, and a mystery it still remains.





## CHAPTER II

### THE DOUBLE MURDER AT CHELSEA

IN one of my earlier books, *Masters of Crime*, I gave a brief and necessarily incomplete account of the double murder by Walter Miller at Chelsea in 1870. Not being satisfied that I had done anything like justice to a very intriguing story of crime and mystery I determined to return to the subject when occasion served, and to write a much longer and fuller version. That purpose I have fulfilled in the following pages, and I am to blame if the reader does not consider the case one of the most interesting in the whole catalogue of crime.

The startling nature of this murder mystery caused great excitement in London sixty years ago. The newspapers, with one accord, devoted columns of their space to the event and the subsequent developments, and even the sudden outbreak of war, like a bolt from the blue, between France and Prussia, could not altogether quench the excitement incidental to the brutal murder of Mr. Huelin and his housekeeper.

The guilty person, a plasterer by trade, could not have had the advantages of education, and he must have been comparatively ignorant and illiterate, but he certainly possessed intelligence much beyond the average for his station in life, and though his crime itself was

rather a stupid one, his craft and cunning were such that he was able to plan a clever, adroit, and all but convincing defence. That he alone was guilty there can now be no doubt at all, but he was alert and inventive enough to throw up such a smoke-screen to cover his nefarious proceedings as to at one time raise serious doubts of his culpability. His plot was so artful and well contrived that many people came to the conclusion that he was merely the tool of some principal in the business, and this was the line of defence adopted at the trial.

Walter Miller was, in fact, an artful and designing man, in addition to being covetous and cruel, and his desperate attempts to escape the gallows, his subtle tricks and evasions, his scheming mind, and his unrelenting attitude, combine to stamp him as a very remarkable criminal indeed.

The Rev. Elias Huelin, an aged French Protestant clergyman, assistant-chaplain at the Brompton Cemetery, was the owner of considerable house property, and lived at No. 15, Paulton's Square, Chelsea, his housekeeper, an elderly woman named Ann Boss, being the only other inmate. Mr. Huelin was also the owner of a house in Wellington Square, Chelsea—No. 25—but that was empty in May, 1870, and some repairs were being done there. Employed about the house on this work was a Scotchman named Miller, a jobbing plasterer and bricklayer, thirty-six or thirty-seven years of age, who had previously been engaged by Mr. Huelin on odd jobs.

Miller was constantly expressing his discontent at his circumstances and aspiring to be something better than he was. He lived with his wife at 26, Seymour Place, Brompton, and the character he bore with her

relations and his neighbours was that of a discontented man, constantly complaining of his poor wage and his inability to "get about and enjoy himself," as, he said, "other men seemed able to do."

A man named James Smith, a painter, was also employed by Mr. Huelin, and Miller was constantly voicing his complaints to him.

On one occasion, a few days before the tragedy, when Mr. Huelin, in Miller's presence, happened to take a lot of gold from his pocket when paying wages, the Scotch plasterer seemed quite excited by the sight of so much loose cash. He said to Smith, when the two men were left alone, "Jem, he's got a nice little lump there. I should like to get him downstairs, settle him, and take what he's got. I'd then cut it to America." On another occasion, when the housekeeper, Mrs. Boss, showed some sovereigns in her purse when paying one of the workmen, Miller made a similar remark when she had gone. "Jem, she's got a tidy lump, hasn't she? I should like to get it and go to America."

Smith thought at the time that this was idle talk and that Miller meant nothing serious. It did not occur to him to warn Mr. Huelin or Ann Boss, nor did he have any idea that Walter Miller was really contemplating deliberate murder.

Mr. Huelin was, so far as could be ascertained, last seen alive on the morning of Monday, May 9th, 1870. He was then noticed going down the King's Road from his residence at Paulton's Square towards his untenanted house in Wellington Square. He had with him, as usual, a favourite dog, and in the course of that afternoon the dog, who was very much attached to its master, was

seen running home to Paulton's Square. A night or two later the dog was howling most piteously outside the house, but no one came down to let it in. A neighbour, aroused by the continual yelping, knocked at the door of the house repeatedly, but without avail. He was somewhat alarmed at this strange silence within, for it seemed unlikely that both Mr. Huelin and the house-keeper would go away, leaving the house unattended and the dog uncared for.

Mr. Huelin, however, was known to have relations in Lincolnshire, and as he had expressed the intention of going to that part of the country for rest and change of air, his absence caused no positive alarm or fears for his safety.

On that same Monday Walter Miller called at the house of a man named Edward James Payne, a labourer, and engaged him to dig a drain in the Wellington Square house. The drain was dug beneath a water closet, and Miller instructed Payne to burrow in such a way that the hollow should be under some paving stones, which, he said, he did not want disturbed.

On the Monday night the Paulton's Square house was actually entered by the police, who found it insecurely fastened, but nothing to arouse suspicion was then seen, and a neighbour having said that it was "All right," the matter was only reported at the station. The house being found secure the next day it was taken for granted that there was nothing wrong.

The murders, in fact, were discovered by an accident, and through the prompt action of one man.

On the Wednesday night Walter Miller went to a man named Henry Piper, a van proprietor, living in

Marlborough Road, and requested him to call at 15, Paulton's Square, to remove some goods. Piper himself went with one of his vans, and Miller admitted him. I will give the former's statement in his own words :

" Miller said he had some luggage he wished to have removed to Fulham. He said, ' Follow me down,' and he led the way into the front kitchen, and got some rope. There was a large wooden box against the wall, and he appeared particularly anxious to cord it himself. I took the rope from him and began to do it myself, but in passing the rope underneath I got my hand all over blood, and then I saw a pool of blood on the floor by the box. I asked him what was the meaning of that, but he made no reply, and, taking off his coat, threw it on the blood and began soaking it up with his feet. I asked the charwoman who stood by if she knew anything of the blood, and she said she did not. A young woman was with Miller, but she appeared frightened and left the house. I have not seen her since. Miller picked up his coat and walked upstairs, and he told me to go back and cord the box. I replied that I should do no such thing, and that I did not mean to lose sight of him. We walked together into the street and I gave him into custody, but he ran away. We gave chase and he fell down on his face. On the way back to the house he took poison."

The name of the housekeeper was Harriet Myddleton, and she, on being questioned, stated that a gentleman, apparently a Frenchman, had called at her house on the previous Saturday and asked her to go and take care of the house in Paulton's Square. She added that she knew Miller well and he was not the man who engaged her. This was a handsome tribute to Miller's skill and

disguise, for, as it afterwards turned out, he and "the Frenchman" were one and the same person.

Let us, however, continue the story from the point where Piper left off, and in the witness's own words.

Constable Coales, 194, T. Division, said: "About ten o'clock on Wednesday evening, May 11th, I was on duty in Paulton's Square, when Piper, accompanied by Miller, came to the top of the square where I was standing. Piper said he had been employed by the prisoner to take a box away, and as he believed there was something wrong he wished me to go with him back to the house. We walked down to the house, the prisoner in the middle. When we got to the house he would not come in, and I then told Piper to fetch another constable. He sent his man for one. About three minutes after the man had gone Miller became very restless. He could not be quiet, but began to walk backwards and forwards past the houses, and I kept close to him all the time. About three minutes afterwards, as we walked to Dawes Street, he suddenly made a bolt, threw off his hat and coat, and darted away.

"I pursued him, in company with Piper, and we called 'Murder!' and 'Stop thief!' as loud as we could. He ran to the bottom of Dawes Street to Lombard Street, when he was retaken. I then waited while the box was opened in the presence of an inspector, who ordered me to take the man to the station. There he was searched, and £10 in gold, 9s. and 9d. in silver, and 5½d. in bronze was found on him; also a corkscrew, two knives, pipe, spectacles and case, three gloves, a common ring and an abstract of a title deed for 24, Wellington Square, Chelsea. The title deed was covered with coagulated blood."

When, in Miller's presence, the box was forced open, it was found to contain the dead body of Ann Boss, who had very clearly been murdered. She was in a sitting posture, the neck still tied tightly with the cord which had been used to strangle her. Blood had issued from the mouth, a circumstance which the murderer had not reckoned with and which alone led up to the discovery.

Miller was in an extraordinary state of agitation during the opening of the box. He collapsed on a chair, shaking from head to foot, with the perspiration streaming off his forehead. His wits had temporarily forsaken him, and he either could not or would not attempt any explanation at that stage. Later, however, when the second discovery was made in circumstances almost as dramatic, his crafty brain began to work, and a defence, previously provided for and carefully planned, was advanced to embarrass the authorities and confuse the issue. He did not, it is true, get away with it and his sole guilt was clearly established, but the trial brought out many instances of the man's powers of invention, dissimulation, and disguise.

Mrs. Boss had last been seen alive at noon on the Monday, when a man delivered the milk, and she had been dead at least forty-eight hours when her corpse was discovered. The cord about her neck was part of the same cord which Miller had produced for the purpose of tying up the box. Piper said afterwards that the man's face went ashen when his attention was called to the blood which had oozed through the crevices; his surprise and alarm were greater even than Piper's own. He had killed her by strangulation in order to avoid the appearance of bloodstains, and yet here was an accusing pool



of blood beneath the box to cry aloud his guilt and bring him to destruction. It is scarcely to be wondered at that he lost his nerve.

It was at first supposed that the young woman who was in the house when Piper arrived with his van was in some way implicated in the crime, and she was apprehended in a very short time.

She turned out to be quite innocent of any knowledge or complicity in the crime. Like other murderers, Patrick Mahon for example, Walter Miller, after his dual crime, dreaded to be alone, and he sought in questionable society to forget his guilt, if only for the moment. He spent his evenings in the vicinity of Leicester Square, treating the damsels who made that neighbourhood their nightly resort, and drinking an incredible amount of brandy-and-soda, which imbued him for the time being with a spurious courage and a false sense of security.

He invited this girl, whose name was Elizabeth Green, to the house in Paulton's Square, and they were enjoying a meal together, cold beef and ham and a salad, washed down with a bottle of wine, when Piper arrived. The discovery of the blood beneath the box frightened the girl out of her wits, and she ran from the house when the van proprietor threatened to fetch the police.

Miller, still in a state of partial collapse, was taken to the Chelsea Police Station in a four-wheel cab. On the way he managed to swallow a quantity of laudunum which he had purchased to induce sleep—one can well understand his nights being disturbed—and he was very ill when he arrived at the station, though the amount of the poison he swallowed was not enough to kill him. He became very drowsy, and special efforts were made

all that night to keep him awake. He looked very ill when he was brought before the magistrates next morning, charged with the murder of Ann Boss, and, being unable to stand, was accommodated with a chair.

From an eyewitness's account I extract the following description of the prisoner's appearance.

"Miller presented an aspect of great dejection. His deathly pallor and sunken eyes, his wild look and clammy brow, his twitching head and clenched teeth, all spoke to the severity of the ordeal he was enduring. His face assumed a truly hideous expression when certain evidences of his alleged guilt were brought forward. He is a tallish man, with sandy whiskers and moustache, but there was some indication of an attempt having been made to dye these. He speaks in a husky voice, with a strong Scotch accent. His wife was in the court, but he took no notice of her."

The discovery of the body of Mrs. Boss excited in the minds of the authorities a strong suspicion that Mr. Huelin had also been made away with, and a further visit was paid to the house in Wellington Square, which was searched from basement to attic. A battered and blood-stained hat, known to belong to Mr. Huelin, was found in the kitchen, but the most minute examination failed to disclose what the police had expected to find, *viz.*, a secret grave. Independent witnesses had declared that the old clergyman—he was eighty-four years of age, though very active for his years—had really intended to visit friends in Lincolnshire, and the police began to think that he might be there.

When, however, they learnt that nothing had been seen of him in that part of the country they reverted to

their original suspicions and returned to the house in Wellington Square. This time they brought with them the man Payne, who had come forward with his story of having, on Miller's instructions, dug a kind of trench for the purpose of laying some drainpipes, and Payne was able to show the police inspectors the exact spot where the work had been done.

As a place of concealment the hole had been most cunningly contrived. It had been dug in the kitchen under the foundations of the house itself, beneath the very paving stones, and there was nothing to show that any such trench had been burrowed. As a secret grave it was a great improvement on that prepared by the Mannings twenty-one years before in Miniver Place, Bermondsey, for it was impossible for anyone to discover a trace of it.

Spades and pickaxes were hurriedly sent for, and the excavation, after some delay and difficulty, laid bare. They came upon the fully clothed body of Mr. Huelin, lying in a huddled position on his back, with one arm across his breast and the other bent beneath him. There was a ghastly wound on the back of his head, which was caved in, and the face was covered with dried blood.

It was not difficult to reconstruct the crime. The murderer had called at the house in Paulton's Square on the Saturday evening, and had asked Mr. Huelin to come to 25, Wellington Square on the Monday and inspect the small repair work the plasterer had been engaged upon.

Accordingly, the old clergyman, accompanied by his dog, had set out at about eleven o'clock on the Monday morning to walk the short distance between the two

squares. Actually, however, he went by omnibus. Miller admitted him, and, on some pretext, induced the old man to go down to the kitchen.

Observing the hole that had been dug Mr. Huelin may have angrily demanded to know why it had been made and what it was for. If so, they were the last words he ever uttered, for Miller, standing behind him with distorted countenance and dilated eyes, struck him down with a tremendous blow of the spade, using the edge of that implement. The one blow probably killed the old man instantly, but the murderer, to make sure, had jumped into the hole and struck again and again with all his strength. An empty bottle that had contained brandy was found in the trench—Miller had already begun to require Dutch courage. He then robbed the body of his victim and filled in the hole. I may add that he had dug a hole in the back garden with the intention of burying the body there, but had abandoned that plan as more likely to lead to ultimate discovery.

Mr. Huelin had a good sum of money on his person, but not nearly enough to make, in Miller's opinion, so great a crime worth while. He knew that a considerable amount of loose cash was kept in the Paulton's Square house, and this he determined to get hold of. It could only be done by slaying the old woman in charge of the house, whose savings, too, would be worth having.

Mr. Huelin's dog was whining for admission all this time—his master had left him on the steps outside—and Miller, going to the door, tried to lure the animal into the house, intending to destroy it. The dog, with the instinct of its kind, seemed to sense danger or to be inspired by a dislike and distrust of the villainous Miller,

and it could not be induced to enter the premises. After some time, its master failing to appear, it trotted off to the house in Paulton's Square. It was in the backyard when Miller turned up there later that same day, but, somehow or other, darted past him into the street. Later it was heard howling outside, but, by that time, both its two old friends, master and servant, were dead.

Miller had come provided with four yards of strong cord. The old woman knew that he worked for Mr. Huelin, and made no difficulty about admitting him. She kept a bottle of spirits on a shelf in a cupboard, and, being a hospitable soul, she may have invited Miller to have a dram. To reach it she would have to stand on a chair, with her back to her visitor, and he seized the opportunity as she stepped down to throw a running noose over her head and round her throat. He then drew the cord tight and by it dragged the poor woman about the room. She was slowly strangled, and he then packed the corpse in the big wooden box which stood under the window, and which he had observed as suitable for the purpose on the occasion of a former visit.

The question here arises to whom did Miller intend to send the box with its ghastly contents?

Piper said that it bore a card with an address at Fulham, and Miller had previously told him that its destination was there. It subsequently transpired that Miller had arranged to rent a small house, then vacant, in the Fulham neighbourhood, and he had given the agent an assumed name. He would have received the box, and, in some way or other, probably by secret burial, have disposed of the corpse. All Miller really wanted, however, was to gain time. It was his purpose to convert

some of the property in the Paulton's Square house into money, and to fly to America with his plunder. He knew that discovery could not be long delayed, but hoped to be then on the high seas, securely disguised, a new life before him.

With the discovery of Mr. Huelin's body all now seemed plain sailing for the police, and Miller's trial a mere formality. His guilt seemed to be established and the case "a walk-over" for the Crown.

But they had not reckoned with the ingenuity and imagination of the versatile Mr. Miller.

That wily Scotchman had prepared in advance a line of defence which was a tribute to his matchless cunning and powers of dissimulation. His purpose was to draw a red herring across the path of investigation, to make it appear that though he might be, to a certain extent, an accessory after the act, he was, more or less, an innocent accessory.

Like Henry Wainwright a few years later, he had been caught in the very act of despatching the body of a murdered person from one place to another; he was in possession of a corpse for which it was necessary to account. Wainwright, apprehended while he was removing the remains of Harriet Lane from his Whitechapel warehouse to a place in the Borough, was quite unable to explain their possession, but Miller, though not nearly so well educated as that notorious brushmaker, was much more crafty and resourceful. He had his explanation ready and pat, after he had got over the first shock of the discovery.

His account of the affair was something like this :

"Appearances, as I am all too painfully aware, are

against me, but I swear I am not the murderer of the person whose body was found in that box. Nor had I anything to do with the slaying of Mr. Huelin. I am the innocent victim of a French gentleman, a relation of Mr. Huelin, whose name I do not know. This person came from Jersey, I believe. It was he who instructed me to have that box corded and sent to the address at Fulham. He was after Mr. Huelin's money, and I am convinced that he is the murderer of the old man and of Mrs. Boss. I met him several times, and if you make enquiry you will find that he has been seen and spoken to, and that there really is such a person. It is true that I was alarmed when I saw the blood that had come from the box, and that I tried to escape. I was as much surprised and shocked as Piper was. I was afraid I should be suspected. Find that Frenchman, and you'll have the murderer."

The police, quite reasonably, were disposed to scoff at this statement, which seemed to be the last desperate expedient of a guilty man. Nevertheless, they did make enquiry, and it then transpired that the mysterious and elusive Frenchman was not precisely a myth, that there was such a person, and that he had been paying visits to several people who knew Mr. Huelin well. It began to look as though it were barely possible that Miller was the willing or unwilling confederate of someone who coveted the old clergyman's entire property. The woman, Harriet Myddleton, who was in the house when Miller was arrested, declared most positively that she was engaged to act as caretaker of the Paulton's Square premises by a foreign gentleman, apparently a Frenchman, who, anyway, was certainly not Miller. She knew

the latter quite well and he was not the man. Other people, too, came forward to speak of the peculiar proceedings of a Frenchman, and Miller continued to protest his innocence.

It was awkward for the latter that he had instructed the man Payne to prepare the improvised grave in which Mr. Huelin's body had been found, but the prisoner had an explanation even of that. The Frenchman had told him that he had power to act for Mr. Huelin, who had gone to friends in Lincolnshire, and would not be back for some weeks, and that the old man wanted the hole dug for the laying down of new drainpipes. He—Miller—had merely carried out instructions and had been paid for the work.

The prisoner's hypocrisy was nearly as remarkable as his capacity for deception.

About a fortnight after the painful discoveries in Paulton's and Wellington Squares, when the London newspapers were still full of the double crime, all England was shocked and horrified to hear of the awful series of murders perpetrated at Denham, near Uxbridge, by a tramp calling himself John Jones, or Jenkins, whose real name was John Owen. This wretch, at an early hour on a Sunday morning, butchered with a sledgehammer the entire Marshall family, seven persons in all, including four young children. He then plundered the cottage at his leisure and went off to Reading, in which town he was captured three days later.

Miller, hearing or reading of this in prison, professed great detestation at the brutality of the seven-fold crime.

"What a horrible thing," he said, smugly, "to kill mere children in that cruel manner!"



To batter in the head of an old man and to strangle an aged woman were, apparently, venial offences in comparison, but, then, Miller took this line throughout. He was, on his own showing, a perfectly inoffensive person, the victim of a combination of unlucky circumstances. It was proved at the trial that he had gone home immediately after the murder of Mrs. Boss, which followed directly on that of Mr. Huelin, had eaten a hearty dinner with his wife and child, and, according to a Mrs. Sibley, who lodged in the same house, had "laughed and joked in his usual manner."

Miller, however, even before the trial, was a restless, uneasy, and morose prisoner. His solicitor, I believe, advised him that his story of a Frenchman could not possibly pass muster, and strongly urged him to abandon that perfectly hopeless line of defence, but the prisoner insisted on that part of the case being put before the jury, and his counsel were instructed to that effect.

The trial took place at the Central Criminal Court before Lord Chief Justice Cockburn on July 13th and 14th, 1870. Mr. Poland and Mr. Beasley conducted the prosecution, and Mr. Collins and Mr. St. Aubyn appeared for the defence.

*The Times* report describes the prisoner as "a lithe-looking man, about thirty years of age, rather above middle height, with light hair and complexion." He was not in a good state of health and was allowed to be seated throughout the proceedings, which he watched with the closest attention.

The trial disclosed many new facts of a startling and sensational character, particularly as to the accused man's attempts to pass himself off as a nephew of Mr. Huelin.

The old gentleman really had a nephew, who, incidentally, inherited the Lincolnshire farm and three-fourths of the whole estate, and he was present in court to prove that he was not in or near London at the time the murders were committed. The young woman, Green, whom Miller, masquerading as the Frenchman, had brought to the house in Paulton's Square, was also there to give her evidence, and she was the object of a good deal of curious scrutiny.

A Mr. W. H. Sansom, of 132, King's Road, Chelsea, proved that he was well acquainted with the late Mr. Huelin. He last saw him on the Monday morning, May 9th, at about eleven o'clock. He alighted from an omnibus proceeding towards Knightsbridge, and the witness saw him turn into Wellington Square.

This testimony was confirmed by a Mr. T. H. Walker, who happened to see the old clergyman on the steps of No. 24 in the square. He was then in the act of going into the house.

The man Payne gave important evidence. He said he had known prisoner as a working plasterer for three years. During all that time Miller had worn whiskers, but when he saw him in custody the latter had shaved these off, and had dyed his beard and moustache a dark colour. The witness then described the circumstances in which he had, on the prisoner's instructions, dug the hole in which the body of Mr. Huelin was found. He had pointed out to the accused the difficulty of laying a drainpipe in such a place and such a way, but Miller had replied that "the old man wanted it so." The prisoner watched him at the work and never left him for a moment. He was to come again the next morning

to finish the job, but when he got to the house there was no reply to his knock and ring. He heard of the discovery of the housekeeper's body in Paulton's Square, and then went to the police with his story of the hole dug in the other house. He pointed out the exact location of the hole and the body was found.

John Hunt, the square keeper at Paulton's Square, said he saw Ann Boss cleaning the step at seven o'clock on the morning of Monday, May 9th. He never saw her again alive. At about nine o'clock on the Tuesday morning he saw the prisoner go into the house, and he hurried after him, intending to speak. Miller was admitted by the charwoman, Myddleton, and the door was shut and bolted behind him.

Sidney Ball, a baker, of 200, Fulham Road, deposed to having called at 15, Paulton's Square, between twelve and one o'clock to deliver bread. He both knocked and rang, but could get no reply. The last time he saw Mrs. Boss was on the previous Saturday, when he called with bread in the usual way.

W. Arthur, a painter, lodging in the same house as the prisoner, had known him, he said, four years. On the Monday Miller had new and stylish clothes on, and the witness said to him, "Why, you are a regular swell." He told the prisoner, however, that he "had made rather a guy of himself by having his whiskers off." He then had a moustache only and a bit of hair on the chin. Before then he had worn a full beard all round.

The charwoman, Harriet Myddleton, declared that she had known Walter Miller three years. On the Monday night she was at home at Sidney Mews, Fulham Road, and in bed when, at 12.30, she heard a knock at the door.

She went down and saw a gentleman, like a Frenchman, who asked her in broken English if she knew Paulton's Square. He said he was Mr. Huelin's nephew and asked her to look after No. 15 in the Square. He gave her a key to the front door. She thought by his speech and his unsteady gait that he was slightly intoxicated. The next morning she and her daughter went to the house, but could make no one hear, and they then opened the hall door with a key. There was a large wooden box in one of the basement rooms. It was painted green and was locked. At nine o'clock that same morning the prisoner came to the house, and she admitted him. He had a large woollen scarf round his throat and over his mouth, and a cap drawn well down over his eyes. She asked him what was wrong and he said that he had a sore throat. He told her that Mr. Huelin had gone away, and Ann Boss with him.

At ten o'clock on the Wednesday night the previous man, the one she had taken to be a foreigner, arrived in a cab with a young woman whom she had never seen before. He was then wearing large spectacles, and again appeared to be under the influence of drink. He invited the cabman in to have a glass of wine, and he and the young woman sat down to a meal of cold meat. Presently the man Piper came along with his van, and she was present when the blood was discovered underneath the box. Piper asked if she knew what the box contained, and she replied that she knew nothing about it. The prisoner insisted on Piper cording up the box, but the latter refused, and he followed the prisoner upstairs. The girl then took alarm and ran out of the house. This witness declared that the prisoner, still speaking in broken

English, said: "I vill go for von police. I vill fetch von police," and he then rushed out of the house, Piper following him. The witness added that at first she thought the man with the foreign accent and Miller were two different persons, but she was now satisfied that the Frenchman was the prisoner disguised.

Mrs. Myddleton was an uneducated woman, and Miller's queer mixture of French and German words may have deceived her for the time being, but it is rather remarkable that she did not recognise Miller in his disguise, for she knew the latter well. Neither, for that matter, did a Mrs. Evans, a less illiterate person, who called at the house in Paulton's Square to pay five pounds rent to Mr. Huelin. She saw the disguised Miller, who "in a foreign accent," said that he was acting for Mr. Huelin, and expressed himself as perfectly willing and ready to receive the money and give a receipt.

The lady, however, was not satisfied. The man's look and behaviour struck her as strange, and she thought he had been drinking. She declined to part with her five pounds, and said that she would await the return of Mr. Huelin. She considered it suspicious that the man did not, apparently, know her name or in which of Mr. Huelin's houses she lived.

A Mr. W. H. Pilditch, a builder, with a business in Fulham, deposed to prisoner calling on him on Tuesday, May 10th, and enquiring the rent of a vacant house he had to let at that time. The witness agreed to let him have that house at twenty-five pounds a year. The prisoner spoke like a foreigner, and said that he intended to set up as a teacher of languages. (It was to that empty house that the box containing the poor old woman's body had been

addressed, and there is no doubt that Miller would have buried the body in the back garden there but for Piper's refusal to remove the box from Paulton's Square.)

T. Herbert, a cab driver, spoke of picking up a fare in the West End on the Wednesday night and being told to drive to 15, Paulton's Square. The man, who was accompanied by a young woman, appeared to be a foreigner. He had an imperial and a light moustache, and was well dressed in a black jacket, grey trousers and a light waistcoat. He was intoxicated at the time, but could walk all right. Being asked to look at the prisoner in the dock the witness said he was positive that he was the man who used his cab to drive to Paulton's Square that night.

Elizabeth Green then gave evidence. She said that on that Wednesday night, May 11th, she was selling cigar lights in a street off the Haymarket. The prisoner passed her, and she asked him to purchase a box of vestas. He said, "Don't bother about the lights," and then invited her to a public-house for a drink. Being cold and hungry, she was glad to accept. First he took her to a shop and bought her a hat, jacket, and boots. He took her to Chelsea in a cab after they had had several drinks, and she was not quite sober when she arrived at the house. He wanted her to have some wine when they arrived, but she declined. When the box was tilted up and blood found she became alarmed, and ran out of the house. Later she was asked to identify the man at the police-station, and she picked out two other men before recognising the prisoner.

Piper also gave evidence, and it was clear from his

testimony that he got very little assistance from the policeman, Coales. He told the latter that there "was something very wrong afoot," that blood had oozed from the box, and warned the constable that the prisoner would try to get away. Coales, however, refused to lay hands on him, and when the prisoner bolted the people who were passing made no attempt to stop him, though he, Piper, was pursuing him and calling "Murder! Thief!"

The prisoner ran nearly half a mile, and then, slipping on the kerb, fell on his face. The witness "collared" him, and the constable came up. They then returned to the house. A police-inspector was sent for, and the green box forced open with the kitchen poker.

Piper was publicly thanked and received a reward of fifty pounds. It was entirely owing to his firmness and presence of mind that Miller was secured and the double crime laid bare.

The prisoner's leading counsel, Mr. Collins, had a thankless task, of which, however, he acquitted himself as creditably as the circumstances allowed for.

He asked why Miller should have employed a man who knew him well to dig the grave in the Wellington Square house? If he had meant to bury in it the body of Mr. Huelin would he not have prepared the hole himself? Was not that fact favourable to his own contention that he had the hole dug on the instructions of someone else, whose dupe he had been throughout?

Within an hour of the murder of Ann Boss the prisoner was at home with his wife, and, according to the witness, Mrs. Sibley, laughing and joking, "full of his fun." Did that look like guilt? He then changed his shirt, but it was significant that not a speck of blood

was found on any garment that he had in wear. The prisoner, from first to last, had declared that he was the tool of a man who said that he was the nephew of Mr. Huelin. He—Mr. Collins—was bound to say that there was no evidence of that, and he was only repeating the prisoner's own statement. He made no charge against any nephew of Mr. Huelin—God forbid he should! It did seem probable, however, that another man was involved. Mrs. Myddleton, who knew Miller well, had sworn at the inquest that the Frenchman who called on her was not Miller, and Mrs. Evans could not say that the man she had seen at the Paulton's Square house was the prisoner.

Much of the evidence for the prosecution he was not in a position to contradict, but what he rested his case on was this, that there were two men visiting the two houses of the deceased, one representing himself as the nephew of Mr. Huelin, and the other the prisoner, who was merely carrying out the other's orders. Property—of a kind—belonging to the murdered man was found in the prisoner's possession, but the coat might have been a gift from the deceased, and the title-deed was not of the slightest use to the prisoner. He—counsel—had called a respectable witness, who had been at one time a partner of the prisoner's in a small business. That witness had declared Miller to be a good-tempered and humane man, and one not at all likely to commit these most atrocious crimes.

Mr. Collins concluded an able speech by saying that the case was still surrounded by mystery, that doubts and difficulties abounded, and that his client was entitled to the benefit of them.



The judge's summing-up was hostile to the prisoner, but how could it be otherwise? He pointed out that "the Frenchman and the prisoner had been proved to be one and the same man. The man who had imposed on the credulity of Mrs. Myddleton and Mrs. Evans was still passing himself off as a foreigner and a nephew of Mr. Huelin when, on the discovery of the blood, he ran from the house. That same man was brought back by Piper and the policeman, Coales, and he then dropped all further pretence and was discovered to be Miller. There never had been a Frenchman in the case. There was only the prisoner impersonating one."

The jury were only in consultation ten minutes, and then returned with a verdict of "Guilty."

The judge, addressing the shrinking prisoner before passing sentence, made a short speech which, according to *The Times*, deeply impressed those in court "by reason of its awe and dignity."

He said that no sensible person could entertain the least doubt of the sole guilt of the prisoner, and the jury had only done their plain and obvious duty. The murders had been of a revoltingly ferocious character, and he knew of no language to express his horror of such a crime. "You had recourse to the most subtle contrivances to effect your end and to conceal the heinous wickedness of which you have been guilty."

Miller then attempted to address the court, but was hurried out of the dock by the warders in attendance. The Lord Chief Justice then addressed the witness Piper, and warmly commended him on "the admirable service he had rendered to the cause of justice."

Walter Miller paid the penalty of his crimes on

August 1st, 1870, the execution taking place in Newgate Prison. He was long remembered there as a morose, sullen and intractable felon, who died utterly impenitent. To the end he denied that he was guilty of the murders, and persisted that he had been confounded with another man.

He was wont to wax very indignant with anyone who showed a disinclination to accept his story—though it was quite impossible of belief—and his attitude was that of a much maligned person and the victim of a miscarriage of justice. From the first the authorities had feared that he would commit suicide if afforded the slightest opportunity, and the closest watch was kept on his every movement day and night.

His wife was with him on the Tuesday before the date of execution, and she gave birth next day to a third child, which, at Miller's request, was brought to Newgate by a nurse for him to see, though the sight of it occasioned him no emotion. He refused all religious consolation and declined the pious offers of the Ordinary of Newgate, the Rev. Lloyd Jones, saying he "didn't want any humbug of that kind."

The execution was timed for 9 a.m. and, shortly after 8 o'clock, the condemned man, evading for a moment the vigilance of the warders, ran his head full-tilt against the stone wall of his cell. He was partially stunned, and was then laid on a mattress to recover. Later, with a nasty cut on his forehead, he was placed in a chair, and from this he refused to budge when the hangman entered to pinion him. It is probable that his limbs would not support him, for he was in the last extremity of fear and anger. He was borne to the scaffold by four warders,

and thus, still seated in his chair, was "hanged by the neck until he was dead."

There was no last minute confession, Miller being an obdurate and unrelenting murderer. I may add that Piper was, by special permission, allowed to attend the execution.

Miller was an odd mixture of subtlety and stupidity. He had intelligence, but no wisdom. His confidence in his own powers of deception was supreme and he was genuinely furious and indignant at being found out. He had that complete insensibility which, with vanity and selfishness, is the distinguishing trait of all great murderers, and could go straight from a double slaughter and be "full of his fun." He was cunning enough to provide himself, in case of detection, with a plan of defence, but too stupid to perceive that it was full of dangers. His "Frenchman" could only have imposed on persons even more ignorant and illiterate than himself. He had not insight and imagination enough to see that the complete disappearance of his two victims would not go unchallenged, that awkward enquiries would be made and suspicion inevitably descend on him. He went about with a title deed of which he could not possibly make any use, and carried with him a worthless pair of spectacles and case belonging to the old woman he had slain.

He lost his nerve completely at the first breath of suspicion, made a feeble and futile attempt to get away, and attempted suicide, forgetting that "suicide," as a great American lawyer once declared, "is confession." His whole edifice of lies and evasions crumbles to the ground at the trial, and a jury takes only ten minutes to find him guilty. He keeps up his pretences to the

very end, when even he himself must have wearied of them and ceased to believe in their efficacy. And he dies the death of a coward, full of repinings and complaints at having been found out.

There have been few more detestable murderers than Walter Miller.



## CHAPTER III

JAMES BLOMFIELD RUSH

THE place was a comfortably furnished parlour in an old farmhouse at Wymondham, a small town near Norwich ; the time six o'clock on the evening of Tuesday, November 28th, 1848. Two persons have the house to themselves, the other members of the family having gone to a concert at the nearby town, and they are seated at tea.

The persons concerned are a young woman about twenty-five years old, of refined and ladylike appearance, dressed in the severe and hideous fashion of the period, and a man old enough to be her father, but whose manner towards her, though affectionate enough, is not exactly paternal. It is slightly patronising at times, and his tone, while fairly kind and courteous, is that of a sultan addressing a favourite member of his seraglio. Observe this man well in imagination, for, in his way, he is rather a remarkable person, and something that he did that same night, only an hour or two after the tea drinking, covered his name with infamy for all time.

He appears to be a man of from fifty to fifty-five years of age, and his rather bushy hair is already flecked with grey. He is a powerfully-made man, with strong, but rather coarsely-moulded limbs, and somewhat below middle height. His shoulders, which are slightly inclined

forward, support a short bull-neck, on which a large and massive head, which a craniologist would declare indicative of the possession of strong animal passions and much intellectual power, was firmly set in such a way as to render it difficult for him to look straight before him. His mouth, and the general formation of the jaw and the lower part of his face, betray great determination and an unflinching will. He is dressed in sober and decent black, and his appearance is altogether that of a respectable and well-to-do yeoman.

The young woman, outwardly the very acme of prim propriety, seems to be downcast and ill-at-ease, and her companion makes no attempt to rally her drooping spirits. He, too, appears thoughtful and uneasy, and the hand with which he holds out his cup and saucer for more tea visibly trembles. There is a tense attitude in that homely sitting-room, an air of suspense and expectancy, an atmosphere of dread and suspicion. There would appear to be a skeleton in the cupboard of this early-Victorian household, and, if one can judge by the dejected attitude of the girl and the repressed passion of the man, the skeleton is rather a grisly specimen and has been rattling its bones somewhat loudly.

Slouching in a clumsy and cumbersome attitude over the tea-table, the man suddenly remarks that he has been thinking a great deal about the story of the Scottish chief, alluding to the well-known anecdote of Robert Bruce before Bannockburn, who, in observing a spider fail six times in endeavouring to gain a beam in the ceiling, and succeed the last, said, "Well, I have failed several times. I will now try again, and I dare say I shall succeed." "And," says the man, "I, too, have tried five

or six times. I may succeed in my object this time also."

At about half-past seven that same evening this man goes out. He goes on as strange and weird an errand as any man ever did, and before his return to the farm at between nine and half-past nine he has done a deed which will make his name a byword and a reproach while memory lasts. He has made history, even if it be only criminal history. He has done something which will turn the eyes of all England upon the little town, hardly more than a superior village, in which he and his forbears have lived for many years. He is a marked man from that hour. He has become notorious, if not exactly famous.

For the man at the tea-table is James Blomfield Rush, auctioneer and land-surveyer, of Wymondham, Norfolk, and the girl is Emily Sandford, late governess to his children, and now his mistress, and, up to a point, his pliant tool.

At Stanfield Hall, Wymondham, there lived at that time a Mr. Isaac Jermy and his family. This person had been Recorder of Norwich and was a gentleman of fortune. His father, the Rev. Mr. Preston, died in October, 1837, and Mr. Jermy then took the name and arms of that family and inherited the estate of Stanfield Hall. In the immediate vicinity of the Hall, which was a capacious and imposing mansion, was Potash Farm, of which James Blomfield Rush was tenant. Mr. Jermy had also two farms at Frelingham, on the other side of Norwich, one of them in the occupation of Rush, and



the other of the latter's mother, who, it may be added, died a few weeks after her son's arrest on the gravest possible charge. Including the Potash property, therefore, and the Stanfield Hall Farm, James Rush was the tenant, if not at once, at different times, of four farms belonging to Mr. Isaac Jermy. It should be explained here that Rush was a widower, with two daughters and a married son.

In 1844, Mr. Jermy advanced to Rush considerable sums of money on Potash Farm by way of mortgage, and one of the deeds connected with this transaction, dated September 20th, 1844, was of considerable bearing on the crimes with which Rush was charged four years later.

This deed set forth that £5,000 was charged on the estate by mortgage at 4 per cent; making an annual charge of £200 and was to run until November, 1848, when, on the 30th, the money became due. On the 28th of that month, in that same year, Mr. Jermy was done to death in the manner presently to be described.

James Rush, from the very start, was an unsatisfactory tenant, and disputes with Mr. Jermy began almost at once. In October, 1847, the latter put in some distresses, and brought an action against Rush for miscultivation of the farm, so that no good feeling existed between the parties, particularly on the part of Rush.

In fact, it was proved that the latter had expressed himself with the utmost hostility towards Mr. Jermy, and was once heard to declare that "it would not be long before he served him with an ejectment for the other world." It was also established that he said, speaking of Mr. Jermy and Mr. Clarke, a solicitor concerned with



JAMES B. RUSH.



the former, "Damn them; I will 'do' for them at the first opportunity."

Rush also caused to be printed and distributed in Norwich and the district a most scurrilous pamphlet, purporting to be the report of the trial of the action brought by Mr. Jermy in March, 1848, in which he violently attacked that gentleman's character and conduct, though, as a matter of fact, he had treated his truculent tenant with great patience and forbearance.

Rush also printed a review of the case, "Jermy against Jermy, as to who is the right owner of the Stanfield Hall and Frelingham estates," in which he sought to support the claims of two persons, Larner and Thomas Jermy, made after the demise of Mr. Preston, to those estates. This Thomas Jermy was a cousin of Mr. Isaac Jermy and his claim was really an illusory and impudent one. He had no money to fight his case, such as it was, but Rush's hatred of the family at Stanfield Hall was so intense that he went to a great deal of trouble and considerable expense, the latter of which he could ill afford, to support this bogus claim and thus put Mr. Isaac Jermy to considerable trouble, cost and inconvenience.

As a proof of Rush's malevolence I quote three passages from his precious pamphlet. They are as follows :

"That fellow, Jermy, has no right to the Stanfield Hall property. He knows it and he knows that I know it as well. His whole conduct in keeping possession of the estate and taking the name of Jermy, and his behaviour to the poor people who have a right to the property, has been most villainous and disgraceful to any man with any pretensions to respectability, and I shall be happy to prove it whenever I have the opportunity to do so."

And,

“Why I have published this is that someone who has money may come forward and see justice done to this poor man, Thomas Jermy, who is the real owner, and who is only kept out of it by want of means to employ counsel, and to have it brought to trial.”

And again,

“I hope someone will come forward and oust this fellow, who has not half as much right to the property as I have. I hope this may be done by the steps I have taken, and am about to take. If there is truth in the Bible, such villainy is sure to be overtaken, and that when it is least expected.”

These extracts reveal the state of the writer's mind towards the owner of Stanfield Hall. I may add here that Rush was made bankrupt in May, 1848, and that he regarded the fact in the light of another grievance against Mr. Jermy. “That fellow” had used his influence with his creditors, he declared, to make them take action.

At some time in the year 1847, Rush had gone to London on a visit, and while there had advertised for a governess-companion for his young daughters. There were some five or six applicants for the post, and of these he selected a Miss Emily Sandford, an attractive and modest-seeming girl, whose father had been a clerk in an extensive house of business. Under a solemn promise of marriage he succeeded in seducing this young woman, and she afterwards went to live with him, first at Stanfield Hall Farm, and, later, at Potash Farm. They shared the same bedroom, off and on, and Emily Sandford gave birth to a child, of which Rush was the father, while that personage was in Norwich Gaol, and awaiting his trial.

She was, perhaps, the most important witness at that trial, and Rush, as he listened to her evidence, spoken

with evident truth and sincerity, must have wished that he had kept his word to marry her, for a wife need not testify against her husband.

Such was the position of affairs on November 28th, 1848.

At about eight o'clock that night Mr. Jermy was sitting alone in his dining-room. His son and daughter-in-law were in the drawing-room preparing for a game of picquet, and the servants were about their several duties.

It was Mr. Jermy's custom on a fine evening to stand at the porch for a few minutes and smoke a cigar, and he did so on the night referred to, though it was cold and dark and the extensive grounds and the moat before the house were enveloped in a white mist.

Mr. Jermy left the dining-room and proceeded to the hall door. The moment he opened it and came upon the porch before it a man darted forward and, without a word so far as is known, discharged a gun or pistol loaded with slugs at him, blowing his heart nearly to pieces and breaking several of his ribs. He fell and instantly expired.

Immediately after this the same man, who was attired in a loose garment like a cloak with a cape to it, entered by a door on the same side of the house, but further down than the hall door, and proceeded along the passage, in which, as he went, he dropped two papers. On his way he encountered the butler, whom he pushed back into the pantry. Mr. Jermy, junior, had by then come out of the drawing-room to ascertain the cause of the report, and he encountered the intruder at the door leading into the hall. The stranger again presented his fatal

weapon, it was discharged, and the younger Jermy fell down dead in the hall.

Mrs. Jermy was at this time still in the drawing-room. She left it and proceeded towards the hall, passing over or just by the dead body of her husband. She screamed at the sight, and her maid, Eliza Chestney by name, ran to her and, taking hold of her by her gown, exclaimed, "Good God! my dear mistress, what is the matter? For God's sake, don't go!"

They went down the passage to the staircase hall together, and at the doorway saw young Mr. Jermy prone on the floor. A man then appeared, apparently coming from the dining-room door, with what looked like a short gun or pistol in the right hand and up to the right shoulder. He levelled the weapon at the two women and fired. Neither of them fell, and the villain fired again, when Mrs. Jermy's arm was seen to whirl in the air. She then ran upstairs. Eliza Chestney was also hit, and she twisted round several times and fell down. She had been seriously wounded in the leg near the hip. Mrs. Jermy's injured arm had to be afterwards amputated. The murderous intruder then proceeded along the passage, and went out by the same door at which he had entered the house.

The horror and excitement which these dreadful happenings occasioned in that peaceful household can be imagined. The assistance of a Mr. Gore and his son was quickly obtained, the alarm-bell on the roof of the house was rung, and a lad on horse-back sent for a doctor. The latter, on arrival, found the bodies of Mr. Jermy and his son laid out in the dining-room. The wound of the former was in the left breast.

The fourth, fifth, and sixth ribs were shattered, and the force of the charge carried away the entire body of the heart, passed through part of the left lung, and lodged in the muscular part of the back, posterior to the spinal column.

The wound in the body of the younger Jermy was small, a little above the nipple of the right breast, but, as in the case of his father, it was of a nature to cause instant death.

Rush had left Potash Farm—and Emily Sandford—at about half-past seven that night, and he returned in something less than two hours, when the girl heard him at the porch door. She asked, “Who is there?” and he replied, “It’s only me; open the door.” The girl undid the bolt and passed into the parlour, Rush going straight to his bedroom upstairs. In a few moments he came down without his coat and shoes, and she then observed that he was very pale and in a great state of agitation. She asked him, in much alarm, if anything was the matter, and he said, “No, nothing; if any enquiries about me are made in the morning you must say that I was only out of the house ten minutes.”

She asked him if she was to sleep in the bedroom they usually shared, and he said, “No, in your own.” There was a fire burning in his room, which he must have lit during the few minutes he was upstairs. Shortly before three o’clock the next morning he came to her room, and, in an excited manner, said, “You must be firm. If anyone asks you how long I was out last night you must say only ten minutes.”

Emily Sandford then asked him what had happened, and he replied, “Nothing; at least, you may hear of something in the morning.” She asked him several times



“for God’s sake what had he done” and why his hand trembled. He said his poor mother would be ruined, and he showed her a secret hiding-place beneath a plank in a cupboard in the parlour where he kept his valuable papers. He took up this plank, and showed her how to raise it by a chisel in case of fire.

In the meanwhile, a kind of conference was being held at Stanfield Hall, which was overrun by policemen from Norwich. Four of the five persons who had seen the intruder that night had already voiced their strong suspicion, amounting almost to conviction, that the man was Rush in disguise. The latter had often been to the Hall, and was quite well known to the servants. He knew the layout of the house and how to get in. James Watson, the footman, was almost positive on the point, and Eliza Chestney said she knew the man was Rush by his peculiar carriage and the way he turned his head. “He has a way of carrying his shoulders,” she said, “which cannot be mistaken, and he keeps his head a little on one side.”

The first constable on the scene was George Pont, stationed at Wymondham, who picked up on the hall side of the lobby five slugs, or irregular pieces of lead, which had been fired from the pistol the murderer carried. Many similar slugs were extracted from Mr. Isaac Jermy’s body. The ramrod of a larger pistol was also found in the hall.

Nine or ten other policemen arrived during the night, and, after some consultation between themselves, the magistrates present ordered several of them to go to Potash Farm and take Rush into custody. The officers, headed by Pont, seem to have taken extraordinary

precautions in effecting the capture. They arrived at the farm at three o'clock in the morning and stood at intervals round the house.

Presently Pont heard a dog bark faintly, and then he saw a youth named Savory, who was employed by Rush about the place, go from the back premises to the kitchen with a light. He shortly afterwards returned and came into the yard, still having the lantern with him, and the constable apparently thought it time to act. In Pont's own words, "I sent him with a message to Mr. Rush, and he came back with a reply. Mr. Rush came down to the kitchen after the message, and I went in. I said 'You must consider yourself my prisoner on suspicion of having murdered the two Mr. Jermys last night,' and he replied, 'The two Mr. Jermys murdered! I don't like these handcuffs. God knows I'm clear of that.' I searched him, and, among some other papers, I found a pocketbook containing a cheque, dated November 25th, 1848, made out for forty-nine pounds in favour of the prisoner by a man named Cambler."

(During the trial Rush asked to be allowed to inspect the pocketbook and he was permitted to examine it in the dock. Though many eyes were upon him all the time, he actually succeeded in secretly securing the cheque, which he managed to hide within the lining of his hat. Later, when he was informed that it would probably have been used for the benefit of his children, he calmly produced it, but the concealment of it in full view of so many people was indeed a tribute to his artful character.)

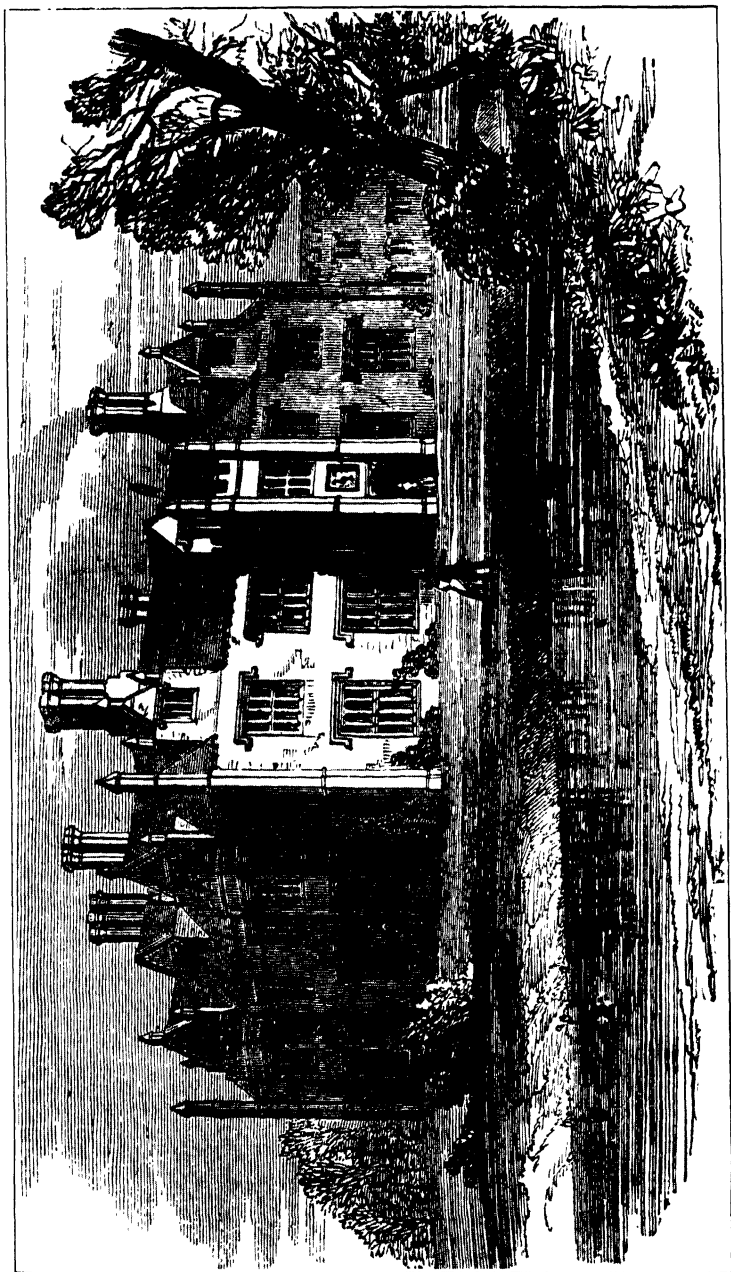
Two double-barrelled guns were found in a locked closet upstairs, and a wig, as well as some other false hair. The clothing Rush had worn the previous night was

never discovered, and he had unquestionably found time and opportunity to do away with it after the murders, though how or when could not be ascertained.

When in his bedroom, which was also searched in his presence, Rush talked volubly to the policemen, and he said, "It was about eight o'clock when the affair happened, some of you say?" whereupon one of the constables, a man named Mortar, replied, "No one said it but yourself." At this the prisoner appeared for the moment to be greatly confused.

That the crime was premeditated and had been in contemplation for some time was proved by several incontestible facts. Rush had been out on mysterious errands between the hours of six and eight o'clock on several evenings prior to the murders, and these he explained by saying that he was "keeping an eye open for poachers." He caused the path leading to Stanfield Hall from Potash Farm to be covered with fresh straw right up to the greensward, so that no impression of a foot could be visible from the farm up to the hard gravel outside the mansion. Three persons resident in the neighbourhood of the Hall came forward to declare that the accused man had on several days preceding the murders made repeated enquiries of them relative to the presence and movements of Mr. Jermy.

There was a clear motive, too, apart from the feelings of hatred and desire for revenge by which Rush was animated. If Mr. Jermy had been alive on Thursday, November 30th, 1848, he would have had a legal right to take immediate possession of Potash Farm and put its three occupants in the street. Rush had forged Mr. Jermy's name to a deed cancelling the mortgage. How



STANFIELD HALL.



he made poor Emily Sandford a participant in these frauds I shall show presently, but it is clear that he had had everything to gain by the death of Mr. Jermy before November 30th. If the latter were alive at that date the deeds were worthless, for Mr. Jermy would have instantly repudiated his signature to them. If he was dead, the fact that they were forgeries would have been much more difficult to prove.

These murders created a tremendous sensation in Norwich and round about, and the trial of James Rush was looked forward to with eager interest. Mrs. Jermy's health was ruined, and she had to suffer the loss of her injured arm. The maid, Eliza Chestney, was in a critical condition for several weeks. She was brought to the court in a litter closed with curtains, and escorted by a body of police to protect her from the curiosity of the crowd. Emily Sandford was placed in an institution pending the trial of her seducer, and while there gave birth to a child.

The prisoner conducted himself well in prison, and, according to reports that found their way into the local press, was serenely calm and confident. He continually protested his innocence, and expressed himself as certain of being able to clear himself. He insisted on conducting his own defence, and I may say at once that, clever and crafty as he was in some ways, that defence was a perfect masterpiece of stupidity and ineptitude. He was allowed an extraordinary amount of latitude by the Judge on account of his being unrepresented by counsel, and he took advantage of that to not only put forward a palpably false and obviously silly "explanation" of the murders, but to indulge in frivolous and time-wasting

cross-examination of the various witnesses. His questions were nearly all on points utterly irrelevant, and those he addressed to Emily Sandford were in the worst possible taste. It is no exaggeration to say that Rush's conduct of his own case contributed in no small degree to his conviction.

The trial commenced on March 29th, 1849, in the Court House of Norwich, before Mr. Baron Rolfe. Mr. Sergeant Byles, Mr. Prendergast and Mr. Evans were counsel for the prosecution, and the prisoner, "confident in his own abilities and resources," to quote his own words, defended himself.

The building and the open space around the castle was packed with a mass of eager spectators, and the seats on the Bench and in the galleries were crowded by "the principal nobility and gentry of the eastern counties." The Bishop of Norwich himself was present.

The prisoner was brought into the dock in the custody of the governor of the gaol and of a turnkey, and advanced with a firm but rather shambling gait to the bar, where he deposited a large sheaf of papers. According to a chronicler of the time, "His features were regular and set, but his hands trembled excessively, which might, however, be habitual. He was rather slow and deliberate in his movements, and the curious twist of the neck, which made him hold his head a little to one side, was very noticeable. Having by permission of the Judge seated himself, he glanced round the court with close attention, and nodded to two or three persons near the dock."

In his opening speech for the Crown Mr. Sergeant Byles was frequently interrupted by the prisoner, though

it was a statement of studied moderation. However, the learned counsel brought out some new facts which tended to throw a fresh light on the motive for the crime.

He stated, for instance, that on October 10th, 1848, Rush, accompanied by Emily Sandford and his servant Savory, drove over, though it was so late that the night was quite dark, to Stanfield Hall, and went in to see Mr. Jermy, leaving Miss Sandford at the bridge leading across the moat round the house. He could not state what transpired at that interview, but Rush returned to the Potash Farm while Emily Sandford proceeded in the gig to Norwich, where she took lodgings at Stacey's, in Theatre Street. While she was staying there the prisoner came over and asked her to sign a paper which purported to be a memorial of an agreement by Mr. Jermy to let to James Blomfield Rush the farms lately occupied by him for twelve years for £300 a year, reserving the right of shooting and the use of bedroom and sitting-room to his son. She hesitated to do so, but as Rush told her it was only a copy she put her name to it as witness.

Subsequently, as it appeared, she became uneasy at having done so, and kept a copy of a letter she had addressed to him about it. He appeared angry with her, and remonstrated with her for writing on such a subject, and destroyed the copy. On November 21st he gave her some more agreements to sign, one, dated October 10th, purporting to be an agreement to let the £5,000 remain on the Potash Farm for three years beyond the term of the original deed at four per cent., signed by Isaac Jermy and the prisoner, and the other, dated the 21st, by which the latter was made to cancel



the mortgage altogether. The signature, "Isaac Jermy," in each case was a forgery.

The direct evidence against the prisoner, said Sergeant Byles, would be that of Eliza Chestney, Watson, the butler, and Read, the cook at Stanfield Hall, but there was another piece of direct evidence in the papers left in the hall by the murderer. They were in a disguised hand, written on the outside covers of a book, and were as follows :

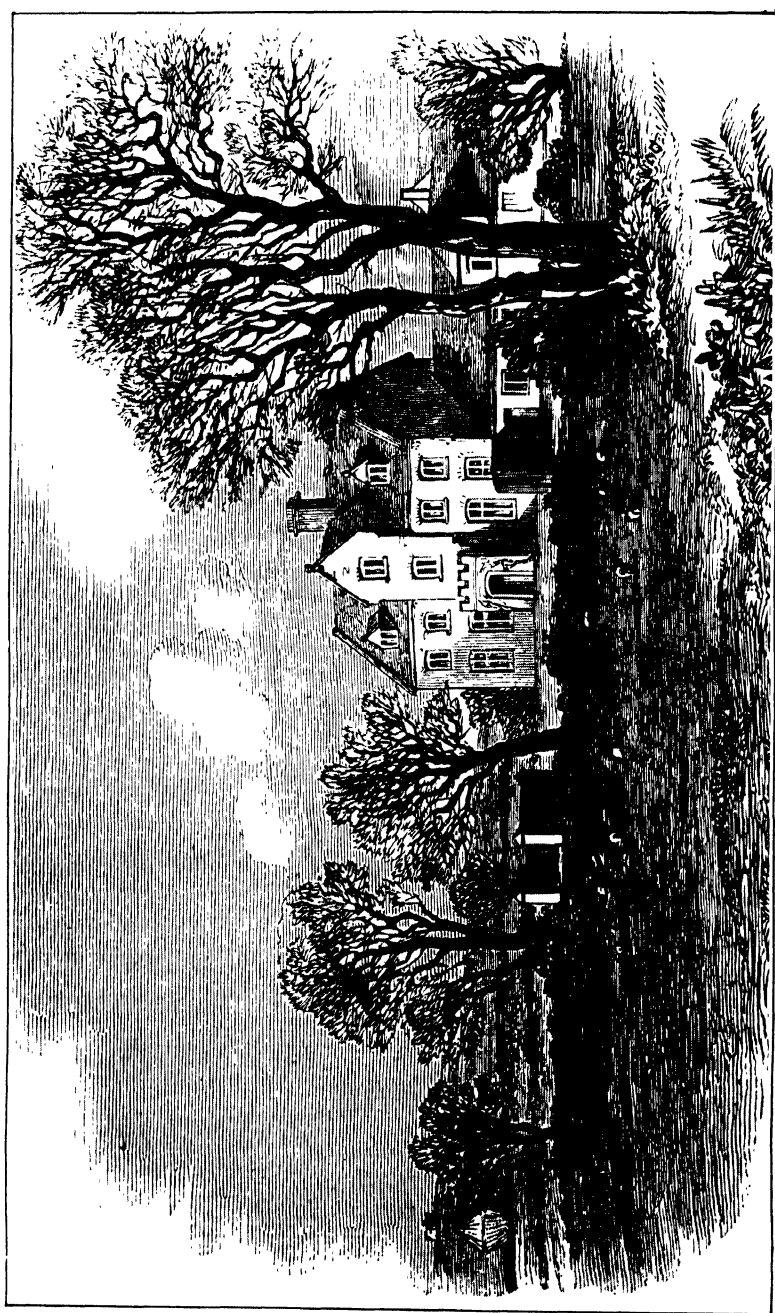
*There are seven of us—three outside and four inside the Hall all armed. If any of you attempt to leave the premises you will be shot dead. Therefore all of you keep in the servant's hall, and you shall not be touched.*

*(Signed) J. Jermy, the owner.*

The object of these papers, Counsel went on, was to make it be believed that the parties who perpetrated the outrage were Thomas J. Jermy and another man, but both Jermy and Larner had gone back to London and were miles away from the Hall on the night in question. Persons well acquainted with the prisoner's handwriting would declare the writing of this notice was that of Rush, though obviously disguised. The paper on which they were written had formed apparently the covers of a book, and among the prisoner's property had been found two books, the covers of which were similar.

The first important witness was James Watson, in the service of the late Mr. Jermy.

He said that he had seen the prisoner often at the Hall, which he used generally to enter by the side door. When he entered he went first to the servants' hall, but





he knew all the rooms of the house quite well. The staff consisted of a groom, six female servants, and himself. In the entrance-hall there was no light, but a log fire was kept burning there during the winter months. On the evening of November 28th, at about a quarter after eight, he heard a report as if from the outer porch, on which side of the house his pantry looked.

At the door leading into the staircase-hall he saw a man coming from the direction of the side door. He was only three feet away from the witness, who saw him go to the staircase-hall door. It was opened by young Mr. Jermy, who came along the passage and had got to within three feet of the door when the man pointed at him a gun or pistol and fired. Mr. Jermy fell backwards on the mat before the door. The witness then went into the pantry, and from there he heard two reports in quick succession. He went out, and then saw Mrs. Jermy run, wounded, to the back staircase. He also saw Chestney lying wounded in the lobby. There were now on the wall marks as from the discharge of firearms. The man he saw was low in stature, stout, and had his face covered. He believed then, and he believed now, that it was Mr. Rush. The man wore a black cloak and he had in his hands what appeared to be two large pistols.

The prisoner put some entirely irrelevant and pointless questions to this witness, as he did to Eliza Chestney. She looked very ill, but she gave her evidence clearly, and the accused man gained nothing by his fatuous and futile cross-examination.

She was asked if she could form any notion of who the man was who shot her, and she replied that, having

particularly observed his head and shoulders, she had no doubt in her mind as to the identity of her assailant. The head of the man was flat on the top, with the hair set out, or bushy at the sides. The shoulders were very wide.

"Whom," asked Mr. Prendergast, for the Crown, "do you believe the man to be?"

The witness, after a dramatic pause, pointed her finger at the prisoner, and said, quietly :

"That man."

Margaret Read, the cook, relating the incidents of the fatal night, said that she heard the reports, which were followed by screams, and she saw Mrs. Jermy running to the servants' hall crying out, "We shall all be murdered." She then saw a man seven yards behind Mrs. Jermy with a large pistol in his right hand. He was a low, stout man, and the witness thought it was Rush. He was of the same height, size and carriage.

"On Emily Sandford being called by the usher the most intense anxiety and excitement was manifested throughout the court. Every eye was turned on the door at which she was expected to appear, and as she came in with feeble and tottering steps, draped in a black dress, whose ample folds did not, however, conceal the outlines of her slender and emaciated figure, a movement of some feeling closely allied to regret ran through the audience.

"The prisoner fixed his eyes on her with a severe and watchful scrutiny, and his hands shook in every fibre. When she got into the witness-box she raised a thick crêpe veil which had previously concealed her face, and turned a look full of anguish—almost of despair—upon the prisoner. Her features were pale as death, the lips parched and white, and her whole appearance that of one who was worn away with grief."

I extract the above from a report of the trial which

appeared in a Norwich newspaper, and it was, judging by other accounts, a faithful description of what must have been a painful and emotional scene.

Rush, in an attempt to overawe the witness before she could begin her testimony, then rose, and, addressing the Judge, said, "I must make an observation, my Lord. I have a higher power than yours to cite to this witness. She knows that I am not guilty of the charge laid to me. I cannot help it, my Lord; I must say so. But in every respect I am quite willing she should speak the truth."

Mr. Baron Rolfe reproved the prisoner, and said that if the witness did not speak the truth she would be "subject to the pains and penalties of perjury in this life, and to punishment in the next."

Rush then said, in a loud and truculent tone: "I wish her well to consider what evidence she is about to give."

The Judge: "You do yourself no good by that observation."

Rush: "I cannot help it, my Lord; I must prove my innocence."

There is no need to recapitulate the evidence given by this witness. It was, of course, fatal to the prisoner's always slender chance of an acquittal, and it was given with every appearance of truth and sincerity.

She described what occurred between her and the prisoner on the evening of the murders. Rush had purchased a ticket to admit five for a concert to be given at Norwich by Madam Duleken that night, but he complained of not feeling well and asked Emily to forgo the entertainment and stay at the farm with him. He gave the ticket to his son James, and said the latter could

take his wife. The prisoner was gone from the house that night for something under two hours. She heard, but did not actually see, him leave the house, and she went back into the parlour after unlocking the porch door for him on his return, so she could not say if he had any disguise on. He could have removed it, if he had, when he went straight upstairs to his room. (The cloak was here produced, and the witness identified it as belonging to Rush. It was bought in London, and was kept in his room. It had a very narrow cape to it.)

The prisoner's cross-examination of this material witness was utterly beside the point, and seemed to have no other object than to cause her pain and embarrassment. He was frequently rebuked by the Judge, who, on one occasion, said: "I can't allow you, prisoner, to hurt the feelings of the witness in this manner. All this has no bearing on the case, and were you defended by counsel you would not be permitted to put such questions at all."

I give below one typical question and the poor girl's reply.

Rush: "From what you have seen of my character, and of my attention to my religious duties, can you, speaking solemnly before God, think that I could be guilty of this crime?"

Emily Sandford: "You always were amicable in temper to me, and I never knew you otherwise to anyone else. You had prayers read every morning at Potash."

Later, the prisoner began to question the witness on the terms of their relationship, and pressed her for replies on most intimate matters, requiring her to say whether it was not agreed that they should occupy separate







rooms after the birth of the first child, and whether he had not himself suggested that one of his daughters should sleep with her in future. The indignation of the whole court was so moved at the man's behaviour that hisses and loud cries of "Shame" arose, which were with difficulty repressed.

Rush tried to suggest that the girl was animated by sentiments of vindictiveness because he had not married her, and to this he got a reply which put even this hardened sinner to the blush.

Speaking with marked emphasis, Emily Sandford said: "I told you when you broke your promise, that before you died you would repent of not keeping your word to marry me. I told you that you would never prosper after breaking such a promise. You swore most solemnly to marry me."

This long trial did not terminate until late on Thursday, April 5th, on which day the prisoner concluded his long, rambling and almost incoherent address to the jury. The case he put forward to account for his two hours' absence from his home on the night of the murders was a tissue of falsehoods and palpable absurdities, but, even so, it was, perhaps, the best explanation he could advance.

He admitted to being out that night, to have heard the shots, and to have returned to Emily Sandford alarmed and agitated. The murders he attributed to "a man called Joe," to a lawyer whose name he did not know, and to one "Dick," who, whether acting on behalf of Thomas Jermy and John Larnier or not, were in combination to "seize the property." He knew they were to make the attempt on the 28th, and he went out to ascertain to what lengths they were prepared to go.

He told Emily Sandford to say that he was only away ten minutes because, having heard the shots, he feared that mischief had been done, and that he might be suspected on account of his being on such bad terms with Mr. Isaac Jermy.

Rush concluded his speech with an impassioned appeal to the jury, and said :

“He desired and expected only justice at their hands, and he asked them this for the sake of his poor little children, who were destitute of a mother, and who were looking to them to return their father to his home.”

The Judge’s summing-up was a model of lucidity, and he was as fair to the prisoner as the circumstances permitted. He pointed out, however, as he was bound to do, that though Rush, on his own statement, was aware, from hearing the shots, that something dreadful had occurred at the Hall he did not say a word about it when he was taken into custody, and did not bring forward his story of “Joe” and “the lawyer” until after weeks had elapsed. Rush constantly interrupted Mr. Baron Rolfe during his speech, but the latter continued to treat him with extraordinary patience and consideration.

According to *The Times* report, the prisoner, during the entire charge, sat with his head forward and his hands resting on the front of the dock. His face wore a drowsy expression of fatigue and vacant ferocity.

The jury were not in consultation more than six minutes, and the foreman, amidst breathless silence, returned the verdict “Guilty.”

Rush, in a deep tone of voice, said : “I am innocent all the same, and God Almighty knows it.”

It was the custom at that time for the Judge to make

a long speech when passing sentence, and Baron Rolfe availed himself of the opportunity to the full. His address to the prisoner was, however, eloquent and dignified, and I wish I could quote it in full.

After denouncing the guilty man and expressing detestation of his crimes, he said :

“ To society it must be a matter of perfect indifference what your conduct may be during the few days of life that remain to you. No concealment of the truth in which you may continue to persevere will cast the slightest doubt upon the propriety of the verdict. No confession you can make can add a taper-light to the broad glare of daylight guilt disclosed against you. I can only conjure you by every consideration of interest that you employ the short space of life that yet remains to you in endeavouring by penitance and prayer to reconcile yourself to that offended God before whom you are shortly to appear.”

The prisoner at the close of the sentence was immediately removed. He preserved his firmness to the last, and as he passed out of the dock, closely guarded by turnkeys, he was observed by some gentlemen who stood near him to smile.

His conduct in the condemned cell was, on the whole, good, but it was no doubt prompted by a desire to show that he was at complete ease of mind and body. His conscience was clear, he said, and he had nothing to reproach himself with. His constant saying was, “ Thank God I am quite comfortable ; I eat well, drink well, and sleep well. I am perfectly easy in my mind.”

He asked to receive the sacrament, and sent for the clergyman whose services he had been in the habit of attending. He always resented, however, any word

that suggested a belief in his guilt, and when told that his protestations could not be accepted he became furiously angry, and requested the reverend gentleman "not to come there again to upset him." When confession and repentance were urged on him by the prison chaplain he said: "God knows my heart; He is my judge and you have prejudged me." To the governor of the prison he said, on the morning of the execution: "I am innocent, and the real criminals will be known in two years."

The place of execution was the terrace in front of the ancient keep of the Castle at Norwich, a commanding spot, overlooking a large open space, densely crowded with spectators. Rush moved along with great firmness, and his determined expression had not changed. He was the same resolute, unwavering being who for six days fought for his life in a court of justice, though oppressed not only by the conviction of his own guilt, but also by the knowledge that it was being so clearly brought home to him. His step never faltered, and he went unflinchingly to his doom.

On catching sight of the gallows he lifted his eyes to heaven, raised as far as he could his pinioned hands, and shook his head mournfully from side to side. "The pantomime," wrote a spectator, "was perfect, conveying as clearly as words a last protest of his innocence, combined with resignation to his fate."

He then mounted the scaffold, but turned his back to the people, and the hangman, fastening the rope to the beam, adjusted the noose to his neck. The unhappy man even at that dreadful moment did not lose his calmness and fortitude. "This does not go easy," he said,

“put the thing a little higher—take your time—don’t be in a hurry.” Those were his last words.

Thus died this notorious malefactor, of whom it may be said that nothing became him so well in life as his conduct when departing from it. He had no real religious faith, however, though he hypocritically professed piety, and the probability is that he was fortified by the conviction that there is no hereafter.

Many strange stories were told of this great offender, and it was said of him that, while there was no crime of which he was not capable, there were very few of which he was not guilty. His father had died from a gunshot wound in very singular circumstances, only James Rush being present at the time, and the death of his mother was sudden and mysterious. He may even have contemplated the murder of Emily Sandford after she had been made an accessory in his forgeries, for while she was in lodgings in Norwich he brought her half a pint of brandy, desiring her to “take a little now and again for her heart.” The girl invited him to have some, and herself declined to drink any of it when he hurriedly refused. He then was at some pains to get the brandy back, and he poured it down a drain.

After the trial, conviction and execution of Rush, Emily was assisted to emigrate to Australia with her brother and her child, but misfortune still attended her, for the brother was accidentally drowned in landing from the ship. As to her subsequent career history is dumb.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE NORTHAMPTON TRAGEDY

THE murder of Annie Pritchard by Andrew G. MacRae in the year 1892 is now all but forgotten, though there must be many people in Birmingham, where the victim lived, and in Northampton, where she was done to death, who knew both those persons and remember them well. The case was a most interesting one, and I have long wanted to include it in my series of true crime stories, but it never arrested the public attention to the extent that many less exciting and mysterious murders have done. The Northampton tragedy has never had its historian, and references to it are few and meagre. It occurred at the time when attention was almost universally directed to the evil exploits of that strange and sinister creature, Neil Cream, and a little before the murderous career of the infamous Deeming was disclosed to a shocked and horrified world.

It was, moreover, a provincial crime, and therefore one to which the London newspapers devoted comparatively little space. The murderer had not the arresting personality of the two miscreants just named, and his life story was never bared to the public gaze. The case remained obscure to the very end, although it had all the elements of the dramatic and the trial extended over



four days. It began and ended in mystery, for certain of the facts have never been explained, and we do not even know for certain whether there was not a second victim, whether the accused man stopped short at the one crime. Another life remained unaccounted for, and though it is all but certain that Andrew MacRae had the guilt of a second murder on his burdened soul, the body of his baby victim was never found and we can only guess at the fate the child met with.

Those who have read or remember something of the murder for which Henry Wainwright, the Whitechapel brushmaker, suffered death in 1875, will be struck by the uncanny similarity between that case and the one I am about to describe. The Northampton tragedy of 1892 reproduced many of those features which lifted the earlier crime out of the common run of such things: some of the circumstances were identical. The defence put forward on behalf of Wainwright might have been used, word for word, allowing for the different names of places and persons, in the case of MacRae. The motive was the same in both, the means similar, and the relations in which the victim stood as regards the murderer were precisely the same. History never repeated itself with such fidelity as in the tragedies which cost Wainwright and MacRae their lives.

On Saturday, August 6th, 1892, a labourer passing along the high road from Rugby to Northampton became suddenly and distressingly aware of an offensive smell. It seemed to poison the very air at one particular spot behind a high hedge, and the man very sensibly arrived at the conclusion that it would require something more obnoxious than a dead dog or other small animal

to produce so pestilential an effluvia. On the other side of the hedge bordering the road was a deep ditch, screened from observation, and, peering over, the man observed a large package half submerged in water and covered with rank vegetation. That the dreadful odour proceeded from this package his nose at once perceived, but his stomach revolted at the idea of opening it, and he went his way.

Other foot passengers along that road, however, having complained of an evil smell, and the first man having mentioned the circumstance to a publican at East Haddon, in which parish the ditch was situated, the local police took action, and on the Sunday evening the package was recovered from the spot where it lay, opened, and examined. It contained the headless, armless body of a woman, partially clothed, and in an advanced state of decomposition. It was wrapped in several folds of sacking, which sacking bore a label, "MacRae, Northampton, L. and N.W.R.," and with the body was a quantity of lime. The woman's feet were bare. They had been tied together and then pressed backwards, and the body was thrown forward so as to occupy the smallest possible space. It had on it, amongst other garments, two skirts, and these and the underwear were of good quality. The remains were those of a well-nourished woman of slight build, in height between 5ft. and 5ft. 5in., and their appearance suggested that she had been well cared for and of a decent position in life.

The spot where the package was found was within a quarter of a mile of Althorp railway station, and it was at first regarded as likely that it had been brought to that

station by train and conveyed to the spot, a lonely and secluded one, under cover of darkness. No report had reached the police of any woman missing from the neighbourhood and it was believed that if murder had been done, as seemed likely, the victim was a stranger in the district.

The discovery caused great excitement in Northampton and round about, and hundreds of people for days after came to view the place where the package had lain. A minute search was made in the hope of recovering other parts of the body, especially the head, as most likely to lead to identification, but nothing came of this, and the inquest, which opened in the small parish hall of East Haddon, was "on the remains of a woman unknown, supposed to have been murdered."

The only possible clue to the identity of the victim besides the coarse canvas in which the body had been placed, and the sack, were the clothes she was dressed in, but more important still as a guide to the murderer was the name "E. MacRae" on the sacking. The police quickly learnt that a Mr. Edward MacRae was in business in Northampton as a provision dealer, that he lived at Crick, near that town, and that he had recently rented a warehouse in Dychurch Lane, near the General Post Office. This person was questioned, and declared that he knew nothing of the package or the label, that he had no knowledge of any missing woman, and that he could throw no light on the circumstances at all.

There the matter for the time being rested, but the Northampton police were very active in their investigations, and were slowly but surely building up a case

of great suspicion against a certain man. They were not a little hampered in their enquiries, as usual in such cases, by wild and unfounded reports and rumours, all of which had to be probed and sifted, and this interference by many amateur detectives and other cranks made their task no lighter. The bloodthirsty exploits of the mysterious "Jack the Ripper" had not been forgotten in the district, and many people attributed the crime to that notorious miscreant, forgetting or ignoring the fact that the elusive Whitechapel murderer never took the trouble to make away with the bodies of his victims, but left them where they died, to be discovered by the first passer-by.

Andrew G. MacRae—the name was often spelt "M'Rae" at the time—was a married man with two children, and from 1885 to 1890 lived in the Highgate Road, Birmingham.

Next door to him resided a family named Pritchard, consisting of several sisters and brothers, orphans, to whom the eldest girl, Annie Pritchard, acted as a kind of mother. Their father had not left them totally unprovided for, the brothers were in regular jobs, and Annie added to the small family income by dressmaking. She was a rather superior-looking girl, well spoken and well read, about 5ft. in height, with blue eyes and light brown hair. She became very friendly with Mrs. MacRae, living next door, and was constantly in and out of her house.

Whether, however, these frequent calls were prompted by friendship for Mrs. MacRae is doubtful, and the

neighbours rather ascribed them to a growing inclination to listen to the flattery and receive the attentions of that woman's husband. Andrew was not a bad-looking man at that time, though more discriminating eyes than Annie Pritchard's might have detected something sly and secret about his furtive glance and insinuating air. They had one or two tastes in common and sang duets together in Mrs. MacRae's small parlour. That lady seems to have countenanced and even encouraged this odd kind of friendship, but not so Annie's brother, who, on certain things coming to his knowledge, scolded his sister and remonstrated with Andrew, pointing out to the latter the impropriety of his conduct as a married man.

The interference of well-meaning relations in a case of the kind often does more harm than good, and so it was in this instance. Annie Pritchard's infatuation was the talk of their immediate circle, and it did not perish from inanition when, in the year 1890, Andrew MacRae obtained employment at Warwick. The girl visited him there on many occasions. In March, 1892, he obtained a position in Northampton as assistant to his brother, and in that capacity he was given the keys and the entire control of the warehouse in Dychurch Lane.

I should mention here that Annie Pritchard had, for a time, been "keeping company" with a certain "Guy Anderson," who plays the same rôle in this case as "Mr. Frieke" did in the case of Henry Wainwright. At the trial of the latter the defence suggested that Harriet Lane was still alive and had gone off with Frieke, a former lover, though her body had been buried beneath the

flooring of the murderer's warehouse. Similarly, the counsel defending Andrew MacRae tried to make out that the body found in the ditch was not that of Annie Pritchard at all, that she was still in the land of the living, and that she had joined Guy Anderson abroad.

This Anderson, however, really existed. He was a lithographer by trade, and was at one time engaged to be married to Annie Pritchard. He seems to have cooled off, however, in the autumn of 1890, and he left Birmingham twelve months before the body of his old sweetheart was found in a roadside ditch. Nor did he return to this country to give evidence at the subsequent trial.

On March 17th, 1892, Andrew MacRae wrote a post-card to the London and North Western Railway requesting them to remove certain luggage from the Pritchard's home in Birmingham. The luggage consisted of a large tin box and a sewing machine, and it was consigned by Annie Pritchard herself to "Mrs. Anderson, 33, St. John Street, Northampton."

A few days before this Andrew MacRae took lodgings at that address in the name of Anderson, saying that he required them for self and wife. He was then a perfect stranger to the landlady of the house, who, of course, had no knowledge that Anderson was not his name, and that his real wife was living in Birmingham with her children.

On March 22nd, Annie Pritchard left her home in Birmingham, bidding her brothers and sisters good-bye, and stating that she was going to Liverpool to be married to Guy Anderson. That was a deliberate untruth designed to cloak her real intention, which, quite obviously,

was to join her lover, MacRae, in Northampton. Probably the latter himself suggested the subterfuge, for he naturally had every reason to keep from his wife the knowledge of his intimacy with the confiding Annie, who was at that time six months advanced in pregnancy.

I have no doubt at all that the man had already decided on her murder. His wage with his brother was only thirty shillings per week, plus a small commission, and he could not possibly have afforded to "run" two houses on that. Furthermore, the girl in that condition was an incumbrance and a constant reminder of his own imprudence. He had determined on her removal from his life. I daresay he argued in his own mind that it was the only way out, for even murderers must, I suppose, try to excuse their own brutality, and his victim, unsuspectingly, or at his instigation, took every step possible to make her fate more certain. Her friends, believing her story about Guy Anderson, would naturally make no special enquiry if they ceased to see or hear of her for some time. They would assume that the pair of them had carried out their intention of proceeding to America. That was exactly what the intending murderer wanted.

Annie Pritchard joined MacRae at the lodgings in St. John Street, living there as his wife, Mrs. Anderson. Whether or no he was able to keep his brother in ignorance of this liaison it is impossible to say, but it is probable that the latter was aware of it. He was living in the same town, or, to be exact, at a small village so near to it as to be almost a suburb, and he must surely have wanted to have his brother's address in case of

anything cropping up in the business which required that brother's immediate attention.

Edward MacRae, indeed, played nearly as peculiar a part in the business as Thomas Wainwright did in the case of Harriet Lane. He was called at the trial as a witness for the Crown, but his evidence was so plainly prompted by a desire to shield and save Andrew that counsel for the prosecution demanded the right to treat him as a hostile witness, which right, by the way, the Judge refused. That Edward MacRae had anything to do with the murder I do not believe, but that he committed perjury in an effort to save his brother from a shameful death is likely enough. His was a dreadful position, for the crime was committed on his premises and the victim's body placed in one of his sacks. He ran some risk of being charged as an accessory.

On March 26th a man named James Fearley, a commercial traveller, was on the station at Northampton awaiting a train when he was accosted by a young woman.

"Excuse me, sir, for the liberty I take in addressing you," said this girl, "but did I hear you ask for a ticket to Liverpool?"

Mr. Fearley, rather wondering, said yes, he had booked to that town.

"Then I wonder if you will do me a small kindness," the stranger went on. "This letter is to my relations, and I particularly want it to have the Liverpool post-mark. Will you be so good as to post it for me when you arrive?"

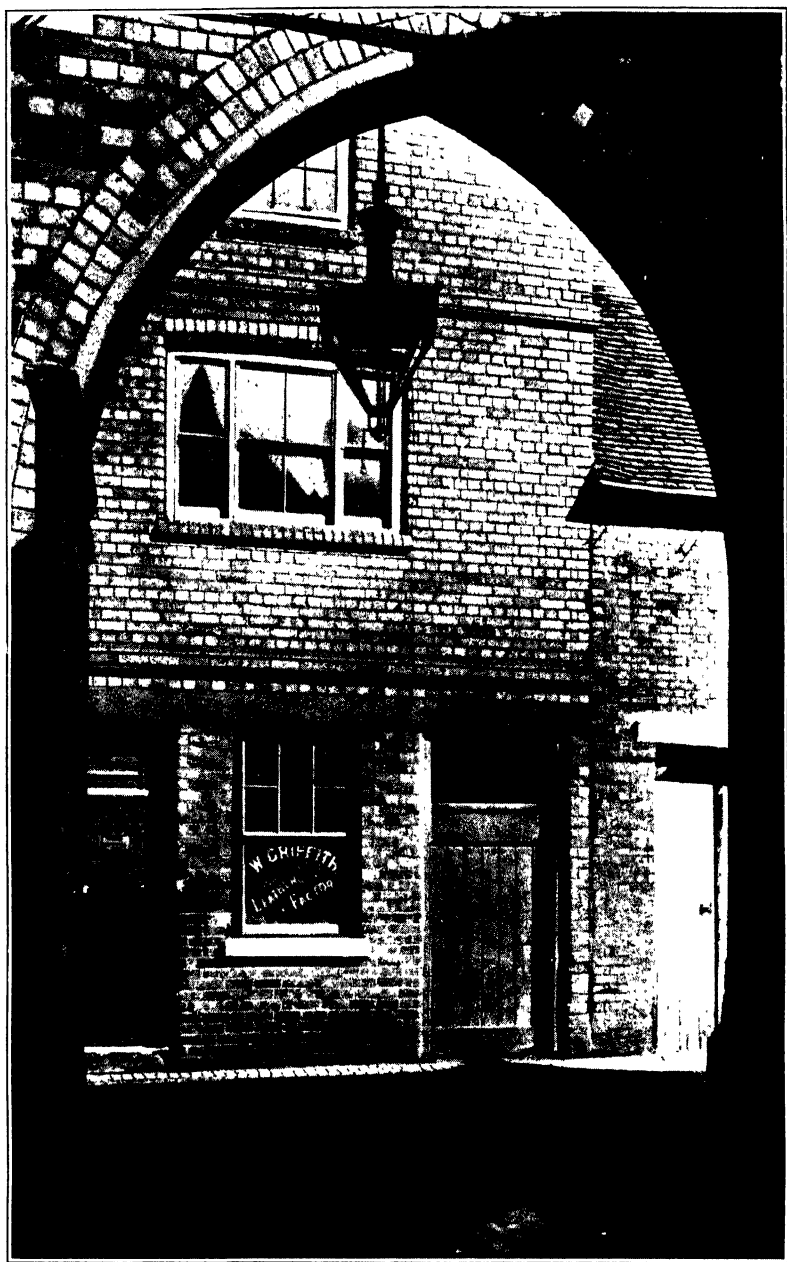
The man good-naturedly agreed, took the letter, and posted it in Liverpool on the Monday. It was



received by the family of Annie Pritchard on March 29th, and, as they had preserved it, the counsel for the prosecution was able to produce it at the trial. Mr. Fearley identified the letter as the one he had posted. It was certainly in the handwriting of Annie Pritchard.

It purported to be written in Liverpool on March 28th, and it stated that she was now married and was about to sail with her husband to New York. She expected, she said, to be back in England in six months' time, and to then settle down in some place near Birmingham. Meanwhile, her relations were not to worry if they did not hear again for some months. The letter was signed "Annie Anderson."

This letter virtually sealed the unfortunate woman's fate. If, as we may suppose, it was more or less dictated by the perfidious Andrew, one wonders what inducements he used to persuade the girl to practice such deceit. What did she think was to be the end of it all? She was in trouble by a man who could not possibly marry her, who ran the risk of exposure and a prosecution for bigamy if he did. She was hopelessly compromised, and in the toils of a man who had no means to support her. Guy Anderson had gone out of her life and was no longer available. What promises or suggestions did Andrew make to persuade her so easily to fall in with his crafty plans? Was this capable young woman of twenty-five years so helplessly infatuated with her married lover that she could deny him nothing? Could she not even dimly perceive that some sinister motive lay behind his anxiety to account in advance for her disappearance?



SCENE OF THE MURDER, NORTHAMPTON.



On June 23rd Annie, still passing as "Mrs. Anderson," gave birth to a boy at the lodgings in Northampton. The landlady suspected nothing, and the nurse who attended the woman in her confinement afterwards declared that "Mr. Anderson's" conduct was that of the ordinarily dutiful and affectionate husband. His "wife" made a good and quick recovery, and on or about July 18th she informed the mistress of the house that they would be leaving in a day or two. On the 20th "Anderson" directed the removal of the luggage from the lodgings to the warehouse in Dychurch Lane, and that evening he, Annie and the baby left John Street, a girl friend carrying the infant. That friend was dismissed when they came to the Post Office, immediately behind which was the warehouse, and told to go home. No one ever saw Annie Pritchard or her baby alive again.

At about half-past nine on the following morning, July 21st, Andrew MacRae called in the Lord Palmerston tavern, where he was well known, and had a couple of drinks. The person who served him with this refreshment commented on his fatigued appearance.

"What's up?" asked this person. "You look as though you had been 'on the tiles' all night."

"Nearly as bad," said MacRae, gloomily. "My brother left word for me to boil some bacon, and I have been at it all night with no one to help me."

The explanation served for the time, and it should be stated here that Edward MacRae, when giving evidence at the trial, confirmed the statement that he had instructed his brother to boil some hams, and he added that he knew the work to have been done.

No one appears to have seen Annie Pritchard and her baby actually enter the warehouse on the night of July 20th, and MacRae had laid his plans so warily that the most careful and minute examination of the premises revealed no signs of a double crime having been committed there. Some calcined bones, said to have been part of a human hand, were found, and a peculiar, fatty liquid in the copper contained some long hairs of a light brown colour. The medical evidence as to these bones, however, was far from convincing, nor were the doctors able to even guess at the cause of the woman's death. Yet all the circumstances pointed to the accused man having lured, on some pretext, the unhappy girl and her infant to the dark and lonely warehouse and there murdered them. He had the place to himself and plenty of time in which to cut up the body, prepare the package, and remove all traces of the horrible work. MacRae was a cunning, resourceful, and determined criminal, and his destruction of the head of his victim was calculated to delay identity and to make it impossible to ascertain the cause of death.

The night of July 21st he also spent at the warehouse, and the next day he took lodgings for himself alone, in his own name, at Dalrymple Road. He had Annie Pritchard's luggage removed there from the Dychurch Lane premises, and gave the landlady small articles, including a purse, which had been Annie's property. He said that he had bought them at a sale. On July 22nd he sold to a clothes dealer in the town Annie Pritchard's wearing apparel, including a mantle she was known to have worn on the night she disappeared. On July 25th he bought a quantity of

lime, which, on his instructions, was delivered at the warehouse.

The next day he went to a cab proprietor in the town and said that he wanted to hire a trap. This was supplied him and driven round to the warehouse, where he took it over. He brought the trap back after being out in it for three hours, and Mr. Ward, the proprietor of the mews, observed that the horse was in a distressed state on its return and sweating very much. The place where the body had been found was six miles from Northampton.

All these facts, making up a case of strong suspicion, came to the knowledge of the police, and Andrew MacRae was secretly watched in case he should take fright and escape. The man stood his ground, however, and his manner during this time betrayed no particular fear or anxiety. Asked, however, to whom the woman's garments he had been selling belonged, he said that his wife had sent them to him, which the police knew to be untrue, the clothing having already been identified as belonging to the missing Annie. He was arrested and charged with the crime.

At first he denied all knowledge of Annie Pritchard, but on being identified as the "Mr. Anderson" to whom she had let her rooms by the landlady at 33, St. John Street, he was compelled to admit the double life he had been leading. He declared that Annie, so far as he knew, was alive and married to Guy Anderson.

The trial commenced on November 17th, 1892, but the proceedings were rendered abortive and came to an early and abrupt conclusion on account of one of the jurymen having "separated himself from his fellows" by going out of court to post a letter. The jury were

accordingly discharged, the defaulting juryman fined fifty pounds, and the assizes adjourned until December 20th.

At the second trial the Judge was Mr. Justice Kennedy, and Mr. Buszard, Q.C., and Mr. Ryland Adkins appeared for the Crown. Mr. Walter A. Attenborough led for the defence, having as junior Mr. R. S. B. Hammond Chambers. The court was besieged by eager spectators from an early hour, and the desire to be present at the trial was greater than on any previous occasion in Northampton. There were rumours that the case for the prosecution might break down and that "sensational revelations" could be looked for. The prisoner presented a dour front to the court and pleaded "Not Guilty" in loud and confident tones.

Mr. Buszard opened the case in a speech of studied moderation, and outlined the facts as already related. His task, however, was one of some difficulty, for though it could not be doubted that murder had been done, it was no certainty that his guilt could be brought home to the prisoner.

In the first place, he had to convince the jury that the remains discovered in the ditch were those of Annie Pritchard, which the defence, it was rumoured, would deny. In the second, he had to make it clear that she had been murdered—not an easy thing to do with no medical evidence to support it. And thirdly, he had to show that the woman could only have been slain by the prisoner at the bar, as to which there was, from the circumstances of the case, some uncertainty. Andrew MacRae was himself, it has been said, extraordinarily confident of an acquittal. In an interview with his brother before the trial, he said, "They have to prove, firstly,

that Annie Pritchard was murdered, and then that I murdered her. How can they do either or both?"

It was purely a case of circumstantial evidence, Mr. Buszard submitted, but the evidence pointed irresistibly in one direction. It showed the prisoner to have motive, time, and opportunity to commit the deed. The actual crime was, no doubt, enveloped in mystery, but the evidence would establish the fact that the body found was that of Annie Pritchard, that she had borne a child of which the prisoner was the acknowledged father, that he had lived as her husband in an assumed name, that she had left their lodgings with her baby in his company, that she had been seen with him near the warehouse, that no one ever saw her alive again, and that MacRae had been dealing with her property, knowing that she could never return to claim it.

The remains had been found in sacking which bore the name of MacRae, and to which the prisoner had access. The body was clothed in two skirts which had been identified as having been worn by Annie Pritchard, and the prisoner had given a false account of how her property came to be in his possession. He had given no reason for hiring the horse and trap on July 26th, and had only supplied a vague and uncorroborated account of where he went with it and what he did. Was it not a fair inference that he had conveyed the remains of his victim in the trap to the place where they were afterwards discovered?

Edward MacRae deposed that in March, 1892, he engaged the prisoner, his brother, to act as manager for his provision business at thirty shillings per week. He



himself resided at Crick, and was only in Northampton twice a week. On July 20th, the supposed date of the murders, he told the prisoner to get some bacon washed, and that was done. Six or seven weeks before the discovery of the body he—the witness—had sold to a tramp two similar pieces of sacking, bearing labels with his name on them.

This statement caused a great sensation in court, and Mr. Buszard submitted that the witness had “turned hostile,” and he expressed a wish to cross-examine him, but the Judge ruled against him.

A Birmingham detective gave evidence as to having endeavoured to trace Guy Anderson, a lithographer, who had “courted” Annie Pritchard for eighteen months, but he had left the hardware capital a year before the murder and was believed to be abroad.

Harriet Barrell, a nurse, stated that she had attended Annie Pritchard, whom she knew as “Mrs. Anderson” during her confinement. She could swear to the two skirts found with the body as having been the deceased’s property and frequently worn by her. She also identified the clothing sold by the prisoner. On July 22nd Andrew MacRae, still calling himself “Mr. Anderson,” came to her house, and said that he had sent “his wife” to her home at Birmingham for a month’s stay. On September 3rd she saw him again and enquired after “Mrs. Anderson.” The prisoner replied, “She is not so well as she was. She is staying at New Brighton, near Liverpool, with her sister.”

Lizzie Pritchard, the deceased’s sister, said that she had known the prisoner seven years. He had lived next door to them in Birmingham. She last saw the deceased

on March 22nd, 1892, when she left home, taking with her two boxes and various dresses. The keys found on the prisoner belonged to the witness's mother, and were in Annie's possession when she last saw them. She also identified the book, glass, and other things sold by prisoner as having belonged to her sister Annie. The flyleaves of the books had all been torn out since she last saw them.

Mr. Hodgson, a draper, said his premises abutted on the prisoner's in Dychurch Lane. One day in the summer, between the 18th and 27th of July, he noticed a very dense smoke, which was very offensive, coming from the warehouse. He had never observed smoke from the warehouse at any other time.

The medical evidence was of little value. The charred fragments of bones found beneath the copper in the warehouse were parts of a human hand, but they might, for aught the doctors could say, have been there since a date long preceding the murder. As regards the body, decomposition had set in to such an extent that it was impossible to ascertain the cause of death. There was nothing about the remains inconsistent with death on July 20th.

The speech for the defence was so confusing and incoherent as to be practically meaningless, and counsel's object seemed to be merely to bewilder the jury. He claimed that the woman's death might have resulted from natural causes, accident, suicide or by the hand of another, though how the body could, in the first three cases, have put itself into a sack, and found its way to a lonely ditch, he did not attempt to explain. The whole speech was packed with inconsistencies and contradictions

of the same kind, and it was impossible to make head or tail of it.

Mr. Attenborough's case for the prisoner, so far as one could understand it, took the line that Annie Pritchard was yet alive, and that she had gone off with her old admirer, Guy Anderson. Why, in that case, she should leave behind all her raiment and other belongings, including a family Bible she had always greatly treasured, he did not say. Nor did he throw the slightest light on what the woman did or where she went after leaving the lodgings with MacRae on July 20th. His argument was that Annie Pritchard's apparently unaccountable behaviour was due to the strict necessity she was under of keeping secret from Anderson the knowledge of her intrigue with the prisoner. In that case she certainly would not have the baby with her when joining Anderson, but counsel made no attempt to explain what had happened to the child if it was left with MacRae to dispose of. Why the body should have been clothed in two skirts which had belonged to her if it was not that of Annie Pritchard the prisoner's counsel failed to explain.

He was on firmer ground when referring to the absence of any bloodstains in the cellar or on MacRae's clothes, but it must be remembered that the man was at liberty for some time after the discovery of the remains, and had every opportunity to make away with anything likely to imperil his safety. It was a pity, from his point of view, that he did not also destroy the belongings of his victim, but that lapse may be accounted for by the fact that he was earning only a paltry wage, that he was hard up, and that the few shillings the poor girl's goods brought in meant much to him, in addition to which he believed himself secure.

The Judge summed up carefully and impartially, and the jury were in consultation for one hour and forty minutes. They then returned into court, and, amidst a tense and profound silence, pronounced the prisoner guilty.

Asked if he had anything to say why sentence of death should not be passed on him, MacRae made a rambling and halting speech, declaring that all the evidence was false. He said the verdict had no terrors for him because he was innocent, and he warned the jury that they "would have the verdict on their consciences as long as they lived." The witnesses, he added, were perjurers and the jurymen murderers.

Mr. Justice Kennedy said that the prisoner had been given a scrupulously fair trial, and the jury had evidently given the closest attention to such points as his counsel had been able to raise. He did not see how any intelligent person who had listened to the evidence could doubt that the prisoner had deliberately taken the life of the unhappy woman who had trusted herself and her future to him. The disappearance of the infant that had been born as the result of the intrigue had not been the subject of that enquiry, but there could be no reasonable doubt that, by some means or other known only to himself, he had removed by violence his own offspring. The crime of which he had been found guilty was an atrocious one, and he could hold out no hope of mercy on this earth. He could only trust that the condemned man would use such little time as remained to him in prayer and repentance. He then passed sentence in the usual form, and the prisoner, whose face wore a very scowling expression during the Judge's remarks, was removed.

Andrew MacRae was executed on Tuesday, January 10th, 1893, at Northampton.

The convict persisted right to the end that he had been unjustly convicted, and he was encouraged in this attitude by the continual efforts of his relatives, particularly his brother Edward, to throw doubt on the evidence and to obtain a reprieve. In this frame of mind he refused to make anything in the way of a confession or to throw any light on the circumstances of the murder. He protested his innocence to the many relations who came to visit him in prison, and wrote a long letter on those lines to his mother, who was dangerously ill at Rugby.

Mr. Attenborough, the senior counsel for the defence at the trial, prepared a statement on the condemned man's behalf, and the then Home Secretary, Mr. Asquith, gave it his personal attention, but, after consultation with the judge who tried the case, declined to interfere. This decision met with the approval of the people of Northampton, who were under no illusions as to MacRae's guilt or the atrocity of the crime. Still, the obdurate criminal refused to confess, and he told the chaplain that he "went to his death a murdered man."

Billington was the executioner, and the proceedings were carried out very speedily and without a hitch. A huge crowd gathered in the streets surrounding the prison, even though the morning was wet and there was melting snow in the streets. As the black flag was hoisted there was a loud cheer from the crowd, and general satisfaction was expressed that the brutal murder of Annie Pritchard and her child had been avenged.

The editor of the *Northampton Daily Echo*, Mr.

Francis Graves, was kind enough to furnish me with interesting details of this execution from which the above facts are taken. He wrote me : " Public opinion certainly held that MacRae was the criminal, and, as far as I know, nothing has ever come to light which casts a doubt on the justice of the sentence."



## CHAPTER V

### MURDER AND MUTILATION

DURING the Napoleonic Wars and for some years afterwards the dreaded and detested name of "Boney" was used to frighten children—"Be quiet, or 'Boney' will have you"—and the personality of that great military genius inspired a fear that was queerly mingled with contempt. The masses of the population in England looked upon the "upstart Emperor" as a kind of Sweeney Todd or Spring-Heeled Jack, and his name was used to scare the ignorant and vulgar herd.

In much the same way a few years later the name of "Greenacre" became a kind of synonym for contempt and detestation. No murderer in the entire history of crime in this country was so despised and reviled as this more or less respectable tradesman, and the reception he met with from the populace when he was seen upon the gallows made an extraordinary impression upon all who witnessed it. He was received with howls of execration from a mob that was thirsting for his blood, and there was hardly a man or woman there who would not have gladly and cheerfully assisted to tear him to pieces.

The dreadful scene outside Newgate on April 2nd, 1838, inspired that remarkable poem, "The Execution,"



which is one of the gems of the *Ingoldsby Legends*, and many well-known literary men of the period made it the occasion for a denunciation of the whole system of public hangings.

The conduct of the crowd was unbelievably shameful, and even the man about to suffer a violent and degrading death looked upon the concourse with a glance of contempt. The spectacle appeared to have attracted all the scum and riff-raff in London, and the whole night preceding the event was made hideous by the ceaseless and senseless din and by the general display of human depravity. Foul men and fouler women brought their vicious and neglected children to the spot, and danced and sang, and drank and raved the whole night through. Every window within view of the prison and the Old Bailey was crowded with gloating spectators, all there to "see a man die in his shoes," and all indulging in the roughest horseplay, and, in many cases, the worst debauchery. No attempt was made to restrain the exuberance of the people, and the police, such as they were at that period, were neither able nor willing to interfere. It was such a scene as Dante might have included in his *Inferno*.

And yet the scandal of such sights persisted for many, many years after Greenacre looked upon the scene with such disfavour. The execution of the Mannings twelve years later was the occasion for a similar display of national shame. The powerful hand of Charles Dickens was then raised against it, but the State was not yet prepared to reform the scandal out of existence. The public execution of a malefactor was supposed to deter others from pursuing a similar life of crime, and

the authorities of the time were too stupid, too supine, and too unimaginative to see that it had precisely the opposite effect.

The English people, however, have always been inspired by a hatred and dread of the process of dismemberment. There have been many murders more atrocious in design and execution than that of which Greenacre was unquestionably guilty. The people might have forgiven him an act of violence that was almost certainly unplanned and unpremeditated, but for the mutilation and concealment of the remains that followed there was no hope of pity, mercy or pardon. Greenacre was hated and feared because he cut up the body of his victim, just as Theodore Gardelle and Catherine Hayes did years before, Sheward, of Norwich, some years later, and Patrick Mahon only a few years ago.

The method, however, has not often been resorted to by English murderers, though it has been, unhappily, quite common on the Continent. Human remains have been found in England in circumstances pointing to murder and the culprit never discovered, but these cases are rare. The Seine has given up the bodies, intact or in pieces, of many more murdered persons than the Thames. The English people shrink from the act of dismemberment, and regard it with a natural horror. A Kate Webster only shocks and startles us once in a generation, a Henry Wainwright is conspicuous by his very rarity.

The account given by Greenacre of the deed for which he suffered was, almost certainly, a true one; he probably acted without thought and on the angry impulse of a moment. If, finding himself with the dead body of Hannah Brown on his hands, he had there and then

given himself up to justice, he might not, as times were then, have escaped hanging, but he would not have become the object of detestation which he was then and has been ever since.

On December 28th, 1837, the police were informed that the mutilated trunk of a female had been found near the Pine Apple tollbar, in the Edgware Road, and a constable of the S division named Samuel Pegler was sent to investigate.

He instantly repaired to the spot, and found a sack in the pathway, near some flagstones, which was then being guarded by the two men who had found it. On opening it he discovered the body of a female destitute of legs, thighs and head. Near the sack were lying a worn child's frock and some rags. The sack and contents were conveyed to the stationhouse, and, upon a more minute examination, a quantity of fine mahogany shavings were found in the sack, which, together with the rags, were much stained with blood.

A coroner's inquest was subsequently held on the body, and a verdict of wilful murder returned against some person or persons unknown. There was nothing whatever either about the sack or the remains to render identity at all likely.

On Saturday, February 2nd, 1838, a human head, that of a female, was found in the Regent's Canal, Mile End, and the announcement of this discovery following so soon upon the finding of the headless trunk caused great excitement in London. On the Monday following the basket containing the head was taken from the stationhouse to the poorhouse, and there the surgeons proceeded to compare the head with the trunk; they found the parts

to correspond in every particular and declared themselves positive that they had both belonged to the same individual.

On February 7th, at about half-past eleven in the morning, two labourers were employed in cutting osiers in a marshy piece of ground situated close to Coldharbour Lane, Camberwell, which was then, like Brixton, quite a rural part and not much frequented.

They observed what they took to be a bundle tied up in a piece of coarse sacking and hidden beneath a heap of weeds and rushes.

"I can't explain why," said one of the men afterwards, "but as soon as ever I see'd that bundle I came over queer like. I had a kind of dread of it, and yet I felt I must see what it contained. I thought of that there head found Mile End way, and I says to my mate, 'William, just you stand by whiles I opens this. I want a witness, d'ye see, in case we find something that ought not to be there.'"

The man's prescience proved to be well founded, and I may add that his "mate" afterwards spoke of and confirmed the curious premonition.

The cord round the bundle was cut with a knife, when, to their horror and consternation, the legs and thighs of a human body dropped from the sacking.

They were so thunderstruck at this confirmation of their forebodings that for some time they were unable to utter a word and continued to stare in mute dismay, first on the mangled remains before them and then on each other.

Within three hundred yards of the spot was the Brixton Police Station, and at length, the spell being broken,

one of the men rushed off to give the news while the other stood by the "find." In five minutes or so constables arrived and took possession of the remains.

A surgeon residing in the neighbourhood was then sent for and examined the limbs. It was found that one of the thighs had been cut from the body close to the hip joint, and that the other had been separated lower down, so that a portion of the upper part of the thigh must have been left attached to the body in the form of a stump. The large size of the legs and thighs suggested that the woman had been big and muscular, and the feet were very clean and well-cared-for. The upper portion of one of the thighs, near the hip joint, appeared to have been gnawed by a rat, but the limbs were not greatly decayed, and the murder must, it seemed, have been a recent one.

The limbs were so large that other doctors expressed doubts as to whether they came from a woman at all: two or three, however, gave it as their deliberate opinion that they belonged to the body of the woman found near Paddington in the Edgware Road.

One morning, on a day early in February, a respectable-looking man, middle-aged and rather tall, entered a public omnibus on the Surrey side of Westminster Bridge and rode as far as Aldgate Church. No one in the conveyance paid him any particular attention, but they would, without doubt, have done so if they had known the contents of the small bundle, wrapped in a large red handkerchief, which he very carefully held on his knees. Inside the bundle was the head of a female, and the man was on his way to a lonely spot he knew of on the bank of the Regent's Canal. There he cast it into the water, and it was afterwards fished out by the man who looked

after the floodgates there. It had got between the gates and was causing an obstruction.

Several women were reported mysteriously missing, but the case to which the police attached most importance was that of a person named Hannah Brown.

This woman's disappearance had not been notified to the police, who, indeed, had never even heard of her, but a Mrs. Elizabeth Corney, the wife of a shoemaker living at 46, Union Street, near the Middlesex Hospital, called upon Inspector Feltham, of the T division, and put certain facts before him. Her statement was as follows :

"I knew a person of the name of Hannah Brown. About a year and a half ago she came to live with me. She got her living by washing, and had a mangle. I understood she was a widow. The day before Christmas last a man came and took her away for the purpose of marrying her, as I understand, and I have not seen or heard from her since. Before she went she sold her mangle and other things. In a conversation I had with her she told me that her intended husband had plenty of furniture of his own, and that she was to have the proceeds from the sale of her own furniture for pocket-money. The man alluded to brought a coach for her and assisted in putting her trunks into it. Before they drove off I asked her for the keys of her apartment. She replied that she would, on the Tuesday following, call and bring me the keys, together with the week's rent, which would then be due, and this I believe she would have done if she had been permitted, but she went away, and I have seen no more of her. The reason she gave me for not giving up the keys was that there was furniture in the room that was not her own. A few days later

the keys were brought to me by a boy who said that a man, a stranger to him, had asked him to deliver them. I then unlocked the door of the room she had occupied but found nothing in the room but an empty birdcage. I never received the week's rent."

Now, in the ordinary way, there was little in this report to warrant further enquiry. There was nothing strange in a washerwoman going away to "better herself" by a marriage or in bilking her landlady of a week's rent.

Mrs. Corney, however, was asked if Hannah Brown was a large, stout woman, and she said, yes, she was. Was there anything particular about her appearance? Mrs. Corney remembered that she "had a slit in one of her ears, which had been fresh pierced, and there was a mark on one leg occasioned by the bite of a dog."

This revelation caused Inspector Feltham to bestir himself. The murdered woman bore just such marks as had been described, and the officer then asked for some further particulars about the man who had gone off with Hannah Brown.

"His name," said Mrs. Corney, "is, I believe, Greenfield or Greenacre—the latter, I think. He is between forty-five and fifty years of age, with smooth hair brushed back from his forehead, clean-shaven, and has rather full and prominent eyes. I never heard where he lives."

A Mrs. Hannah Davies, the wife of a cabinet-maker and upholsterer, living at Bartholomew Close, West Smithfield, was able to throw further light on Hannah Brown and her projected marriage.

This person declared that she had known Brown for five years. She had formerly been in domestic service, and had worked for the same family as her—Mrs. Davies's

husband's sister. She was in the habit of frequently calling to see Mrs. Davies, who last saw her on December 22nd. She then said that she was about to be married to Mr. Greenacre. The two women talked the matter over, and it was then arranged that the wedding should take place on the 25th of that month, that Hannah Davies's daughter should be bridesmaid, and that Mr. Davies should give the bride away. It was also agreed that, after the wedding, the party should dine at Mr. Davies's house. Greenacre came the same evening and expressed his approval of these plans. In the course of the evening Mrs. Brown happened to mention that she and her "intended" meant to emigrate to America, and Greenacre said, "Yes, I have reason to think that we should do well at Hudson's Bay." The affianced pair left the house that evening, arm in arm, at ten o'clock.

They were to be married in St. Giles' Church at ten o'clock on Christmas Day, but, meanwhile, apparently something went wrong. One or other of the enamoured pair appeared to have cooled off at the last moment. The wedding finery had been procured, the wedding feast prepared, the guests invited, and all was in readiness for this union of two loving hearts and hands. The bride, however, was not forthcoming.

Instead, there arrived at Mrs. Davies's house on Christmas Eve the bridegroom-elect in a state of great agitation and some distress.

He asks if Mrs. Brown has been there, and is answered in the negative. He stammers and gulps a little, appearing singularly ill-at-ease, and at last announces that the marriage is "off," at any rate for the present. Pressed to explain, he adds that he has been investigating the



affairs of Mrs. Brown, and has found that the lady has deceived him. She has no property, as she had led him to suppose, except the four or five pounds derived from the sale of a few sticks of furniture—and the mangle. “She’s an impostor,” says the indignant swain, “and, with all respect to you, Mrs. Davies, I am well rid of her. How glad I am that I ascertained the truth in time. It would never do to plunge headlong into poverty.”

Mrs. Davies, rather wondering at all this, is disposed to be sorry for the disappointed suitor, who declined her pressing invitation to come in and drown his sorrow in the flowing bowl. “I shall never believe a woman again,” says Mr. Greenacre, dolefully, “after being so deceived.”

And away he goes in a great hurry, leaving the good lady to explain that “Greenacre had cried off” and to wonder what was Hannah Brown’s version of the circumstances. She never saw that person afterwards, however, and for a very good reason, the woman being dead.

Both Mrs. Corney and Mrs. Davies were taken to the Paddington Workhouse, where they examined the head that had been found. They had no doubts of its being the head of their friend: the hair, teeth, and eyes were, they said, an exact resemblance, but the head was so mutilated that neither woman was prepared to swear to it. Hannah Brown, they said, was forty-five years of age; her hair was light brown, intermixed with grey.

It was obvious that Greenacre must be found without delay and asked if he could throw any light on the disappearance of Hannah Brown. It was thought that the most effective way of inducing him to speak freely

would be to apply for a warrant for his arrest, and this was granted by the Marylebone magistrates.

Inspector Feltham proceeded that same evening to Carpenter's Buildings, Lambeth, the man's last known address, for the purpose of executing it, but the bird had flown and the people of the house were unable to say where he had gone. They spoke of an intention on his part to go to America.

The following evening Feltham resumed his search for the suspected man, and this time luck favoured him. At a late hour, and after much difficulty, he ascertained that Greenacre, with a female companion not his wife, was lodging at No. 1, St. Albans Street, close by the house he had just vacated.

Feltham arrived there at ten o'clock that night, accompanied by an officer of the L division. The landlord of the house answered the door, and said that the prisoner lodged in the front parlour, but that he was then in bed. The inspector knocked at the door indicated, calling the man by his name, and Greenacre asked who was there. At this point I think the inspector may be allowed to tell his own story, which was as follows :

"I said, 'I want to speak to you,' and he asked, 'Who are you?' I replied, 'Never mind that; I want to say something to you.' I then heard him get out of bed, and, at the same time, he said, 'Wait till I get the tinder-box.' I heard him rumbling about, and I then opened the door, which was only on the latch, and went in. The room was in darkness. I said, 'I am an Inspector of Police, and I hold a warrant for your apprehension on suspicion of having murdered Hannah Brown.' He was in his shirt. A light was shortly brought by the

landlord, and I then read the warrant. I then asked him if he knew Hannah Brown. He replied, 'I know no such person.' I asked him if he had never been asked in church to a woman of that name, and he replied, 'I don't know, you have no right to ask me the question. You had better be careful what you say, as I shall mention your questions elsewhere!' On turning my eyes round, I perceived a woman in bed, and in the act of concealing something under the clothes, which turned out to be the watch I here produce. I then said to her, 'Get up, for you also must go along with me.'

"She said, 'I have a child in the adjoining room, and that must go also.' The man was in the act of drawing on his trousers when I searched the pockets and found this small watch and leather purse, the latter of which contained a sovereign. I also found in other parts of his dress a bunch of keys, a pair of silver spectacles, and several letters, none of which, however, throw any light on this affair. I also found several pawnbrokers' duplicates for silk dresses, etc."

Feltham then sent for a coach and conveyed them all to the stationhouse at Paddington Green. The woman, a decent-looking person, of homely appearance, and about forty years old, gave her name as Sarah Gale. I may add that she was charged with Greenacre, tried, and convicted, but that the sentence was afterwards commuted to penal servitude for life.

The most careful research has failed to reveal any incriminating evidence against this woman, and she seems to have been punished for no other or better reason than that she was in the man's company when he was arrested. The watch which she had "tried to conceal" was her

own, and there was nothing to indicate that she had ever heard of or seen the victim or had any guilty knowledge of the murder. She was a former mistress of Greenacre, who seems to have invited her to rejoin him after the crime, perhaps in that desire for company and fear of solitude which characterises some murderers. Greenacre declared most solemnly again and again that the woman was entirely innocent, and the sentence which was passed upon her seems to have been most savage and unjust.

Feltham, when giving evidence before the magistrates, stated that there were four boxes in the prisoner's room in St. Albans Street, all corded up, and that Greenacre said with reference to them, "It's a good job you've come—I should soon have been off to America."

Early in the morning following his arrest he made a most determined effort to end his life. A strange choking noise was heard in the cell the prisoner occupied, and, on a constable repairing thither, Greenacre was found hanging by a handkerchief. He was cut down, and life was restored with much difficulty. To the warders the man said, "What's the use of living with a howling mob yelling out for one's blood? I'm treated as though I were a mad dog."

It was obvious that Greenacre intended to confess, and his first statement was made to Mr. Rawlinson, one of the magistrates, who, informing him that he had decided on a remand, asked if he had anything to say.

Greenacre, who had conducted himself with great decorum, though ill and in pain from his throat, then spoke as follows :

"A great many falsehoods have been told about me.

I will now state the facts. It is true that I was to have been married to Mrs. Brown, and there are circumstances about it which may cost me my life, but this female by my side is in no way implicated in the affair. When I courted Mrs. Brown she told me she could, at any time, command from three to four hundred pounds, and I told her I was possessed of property to some amount, which was not the case, so that there was duplicity on both sides.

“On Christmas Eve, Mrs. Brown came to my lodgings in Carpenter’s Buildings, and she was the worse for liquor. We had tea together about eight o’clock, and she sent out for some rum, which she drank in her tea, and which made her worse. I thought this a favourable opportunity to press her regarding her property, when she confessed she had none. I expressed my displeasure at being deceived, when she made a laugh of the matter, and said I was as bad as she was, as I had similarly deceived her. She then began to sneer and laugh, at the same time rocking herself backwards and forwards in her chair, when in a rage I gave it a kick, and she fell backwards in it to the floor.

“Her head came in contact with a clump of wood behind her, and she struck herself with great violence. This alarmed me very much. I took her by the hand and lifted her up, and found to my astonishment that she was dead. I concluded that I should be set down for a murderer. I was greatly excited, and came at length to the resolution not to call anyone in, but to dispose of the body in the manner which has been so fully before the public, thinking it would be the safest and most prudent plan.”

(At this relation, delivered in a perfectly cool and detached manner, a thrill of horror ran through the room, and it was some time before silence could be obtained. There was a further display of excitement when the prisoner went on to describe the mutilation of the body, as to which it is not necessary to enter into details.)

"No other person," the calm, cultivated voice went on, "but myself witnessed the scene I have related, or had any knowledge of the disposal of the body. Some days afterwards, when I had put away the body, I invited this woman by my side, with whom I had formerly lived, to come back to me, which she did, and we were apprehended together, but she knows nothing of the death of Mrs. Brown or of the disposal of the body. Upon making enquiry, I found out that, though she had no right to, Mrs. Brown, who bore an indifferent character, had attempted to obtain a silk gown in my name at Mr. Smith's, a tally shop, in Long Acre."

The prisoner in speaking frequently put his hand to his throat, and appeared to be in much pain.

The female prisoner said that she was entirely innocent of any participation in the affair, and that the watch, dresses, etc., found in her possession were her own. At the end of the examination, which lasted five hours, both prisoners were remanded, and again Greenacre had to run the gauntlet of an infuriated crowd. Some of the less responsible newspapers represented him as a monster of iniquity, and even his appearance was maligned. He was described as a most repulsive and even revolting-looking man, whereas, in reality, he was of mild and intelligent aspect, with clear, full and penetrating eyes.

It was said that he had strong Radical and Republican opinions, that he was a crony of Arthur Thistlewood, and was concerned in the Cato Street Conspiracy. His countenance was rather rugged, but there was nothing in it to suggest ferocity. He was by trade a cabinet-maker, and a good and reliable workman.

The trial of Greenacre and Gale came on at the Central Criminal Court on March 28th, 1838, when they were both found guilty of the murder.

The man, to the last, persisted in his assertion of the accidental nature of Hannah Brown's death, but he admitted in a subsequent statement that the circumstances were not exactly as he had described them to the magistrates at Marylebone.

He stated in this second and more accurate confession that Mrs. Brown and he had arrived at his house in Carpenter's Buildings on Christmas Eve ; after which, and while she was washing up the tea-things, he questioned her with regard to the property she had represented herself as being possessed of. He was very much exasperated on learning the true state of affairs, and upbraided her for a deception which he himself was also guilty of, but she only jeered at him as "a fortune hunter" and a fool for being "so easily taken in." He took up a piece of wood he used as a rolling-pin, but which was originally a roller for silk, and in the heat of the moment struck her a sort of swinging side blow on the right eye. She fell to the floor insensible, and, believing her to be dead, he left the house, and did not return for an hour after. He then found that she "was really gone," and he formed the resolution, which he immediately began to carry out, of severing the head from the trunk, and the limbs also,

and disposing of them in the places where they were found.

On being asked how he accounted for the fact that the neighbours in the two adjoining houses heard nothing of the altercation between him and the deceased, or the noise occasioned by her fall, he replied that "the houses on either side were perfectly still at the time, and he judged that, being Christmas Eve, the inmates had gone to market, and he was strengthened in that supposition by hearing some children cry as if they had been left alone."

He was then questioned as to the absence of any blood-stains on the floor of the room in which the murder took place, and he said that, though much blood flowed in cutting up the body, he was able to soak it up with a large piece of flannel, and then wash out the remaining stains.

The defence of "accident" is, of course, common in cases of this kind, and the person implicated describes the subsequent dismemberment as being prompted by fears of being suspected of murder. That was the story told by Sebastian Billoir in the famous French case of the "Woman of Clichy," and only recently in this country by the man Robinson, who packed his victim in a trunk and left it in the parcels office at Charing Cross. Some of these explanations have been actuated by a desire to minimise the guilt of the person concerned, as in the instance of William Sheward, of Norwich, but Greenacre's story was, in all probability, as near to the truth as one could expect. There is no evidence that he contemplated or planned the murder of the woman, and many of the facts seem to bear out the statement that she was struck an unlucky blow in the heat of the moment.



The subsequent horrors were, of course, beyond pardon and wholly inexcusable, but that Greenacre was really the cold-blooded, ferocious ogre he was represented to be there is no reason to believe, though the legend persists to this day.

James Greenacre was executed on April 2nd, 1838, and I take the following from a newspaper account at the time :

“ At an early hour last night, the Old Bailey and the space around the angles of Newgate, were thronged with a clamorous multitude, including almost as many women as men, and amongst the latter, persons apparently of every grade in society, though, as in all such cases, the great mass was of the lower order. Hundreds spent the night sleeping on the steps before the doors of the prison, the opposite shops, and St. Sepulchre’s Church ; and all who had procured places at the windows, commanding a view of the execution, made sure of their seats by occupying them several hours before the dismal preparations commenced. There were not at any time of the night, less than 2,000 people in the street.

“ So great was the anxiety to procure a commanding site that several persons remained all night actually clinging to the lamp-posts ! Any house that had still a seat, undisposed of, informed the public of the vacancy, by announcing the fact on large placards posted on the walls, and forthwith the rush of competitors was greater than on any former occasions. The populace did not seem in the slightest degree impressed with reflections upon the dreadful crime of the murderer, and the awful punishment by which he was about to expiate it.

“ The interval was spent in jokes and amusement. It was for some time apprehended that Greenacre would, after all, be executed at Horsemonger-lane, instead of Newgate, and this diversity of opinion certainly caused the crowd to be less dense than it would otherwise have been. At length, at half-past three, the suspense was ended by the opening of the gates of the courtyard, and the appearance of the workmen with boards, for the erection of the scaffolding.

“ The plaudits and rejoicing of the vast multitude at this moment, were such as to reverberate through the prison, and had the effect of rousing the condemned man from a deep sleep, in which he had been wrapped for nearly five hours. After he had washed himself,

and performed an act of apparent devotion, he betook himself to writing in order to finish some letters, which he had begun over-night, one of which was addressed to the woman who was convicted with him.

"As the morning advanced, the multitude became consolidated into one vast aggregate, through which neither coaches, cabs, nor any kind of vehicle, could make their way but with difficulty.

"Greenacre came forward as the bell tolled the hour of death. He was preceded by the venerable ordinary, Dr. Cotton, reading the prayers for the dead. The convict was totally unmanned—all his fortitude had left him—he was unable to speak—his lips quivered as if he were vainly endeavouring to articulate the responses after the clergyman, and one of the officers was obliged to support him or he would have fallen. He neither turned to the right nor to the left, and his eyes were closed as he was led along the narrow passage which leads from the cell to the platform.

"On his appearance outside, he was greeted with a storm of terrific yells and hisses, mingled with groans, cheers, and other expressions of reproach, revenge, hatred, and contumely, but he answered nothing to the last questions put to him, nor did he seem in any way moved; indeed, he could not have been more depressed by the horrible reception.

"He said not one word of hope, repentance, or reconciliation. When the dreadful uproar had, in some degree, subsided, Greenacre bowed towards the venerable ordinary and the sheriffs, and seemed to want to thank them, but he could not speak. At length he faintly uttered his last sentence, with a final look of contempt at the crowd, 'Don't leave me long in the concourse,' and scarcely had the last syllable fallen, than the signal was given, the spring was touched, and at 8.10, Greenacre died without a struggle.

"He left no dying directions, save that his spectacles should be given to Sarah Gale. The crowd seemed as though they could never satisfy themselves with gazing on the hanging murderer. The women were, if possible, more ruthless than the men. As the period for taking down the body approached, a fierce conflict ensued between the two crowds, one leaving the place of execution, and the other rushing towards it. The pressure became so great in the narrow passages that several fell in a state of exhaustion, and some narrowly escaped being trampled to death."

Comparisons between murderers may be odious, but

it is hard to resist the conclusion that there have been many worse, more savage and more callous, than James Greenacre, though his name has been handed down to us as that of a monster. The knife with which he cut up the body was for many years in the possession of John T. Tussaud.

I extract the following from the *Chronicle* section of the *Annual Register*, under date January 12th, for the year 1844 :

“ Sarah Gale, the companion of the notorious Greenacre, who, as an accessory after the fact, was sentenced to transportation, is living at Port Philip as assistant in a confectioner’s shop. She is described by a person who recently saw her in that colony, as having regained her health, and looking very comely. The haggard appearance at her trial showed the relics of a countenance of considerable attractions.”

## CHAPTER VI

### A MANCHESTER MYSTERY

THERE is a house in the Harpurhey district of Manchester at which, on a day early in the January of 1880, hundreds of curious and morbid people came to stare. The neighbourhood was then only partly built over and there were small, but neat and comfortable semi-detached villas on only one side of a quiet thoroughfare, known as Westbourne Grove, off the main road. The place had not altogether lost its rural aspect, and barren spaces and rank fields still abounded. The despoiling hand of the builder had, however, descended heavily, and the traces of his work were everywhere. The road was dark and badly lit, and the house the people came to stare at was the last in the Grove. It was the scene of a most mysterious crime—a crime which, baffling at the time, has remained unsolved ever since, and it brought tragedy into the lives of two old people whose days had been passed in placid and uneventful serenity up till then.

If you had happened to have passed down Westbourne Grove, Harpurhey, on any fine day in the summer of 1879 you might have seen and observed, either entering or leaving that particular house, with its trim, well-kept front garden and its neatly-curtained windows, a comely, buxom, fresh-faced girl, eighteen or nineteen years of

age, who was in domestic service there, or you might have noticed her passing the time of day to the tradesmen who called for orders at her master's dwelling. Your eye would have been caught by her bright glance, her pearly teeth, and the wealth of beautiful black hair which she dressed so becomingly. So happy and contented did this young girl appear to be, and so infectious her smile, that you might have been forgiven if you, too, although a perfect stranger, had exchanged a merry word with her as you went by. You would have experienced a sense of surprise and horror if a voice had whispered in your ear, "That girl is Sarah Jane Roberts, soon to be the victim of an unknown murderer."

A Mr. and Mrs. Greenwood, elderly people, in a fair station of life, lived at that house in Westbourne Grove, and the girl had been with them as housemaid for ten months when she was struck down by an unknown hand. Her family were natives of Oswestry, in Shropshire, where Hugh Roberts, her father, had been in business for himself as a maltster. He had eight children, the three eldest being sons, the fourth a daughter, and the fifth Sarah Jane, who would have been nineteen years old in March, 1880. The family had removed to Pembroke, and until March, 1877, when she went to Manchester, this girl was in the service of Mr. John Brace, of Pembroke Ferry, near the docks, by whom she was much respected and esteemed.

Everyone who had known her, indeed, spoke highly of Sarah Jane. She did her work well and cheerfully, was always particularly clean and neat in her appearance, was regular in her attendance at church, and led a quiet and orderly existence, without, so far as was known,

having any desire for such small social gaieties and distractions as Manchester offered at that time. She was very reserved in disposition and did not make friends easily, but Mr. and Mrs. Greenwood were very fond of her, and she was hardly treated as a mere servant. Mrs. Greenwood, in particular, made quite a pet of the pleasant, well-spoken girl, who was so attentive to her wants, and so cheerful and respectful.

Jane Roberts did not encourage male admirers, though there was no lack of them. The young man who brought the matutinal milk to Mr. Greenwood's house admitted, after the murder, to having kissed her at the front door on one occasion, but it happened to be Christmas Eve and, therefore, a special and privileged occasion. If any other young fellow had ever enjoyed a like experience or had been on even greater terms of intimacy he was never discovered. It was one of the most baffling features of the case that the girl had, apparently, no secrets, and, so far as could be ascertained, not an enemy in the world.

Nevertheless, the point must be emphasised that she was of a reserved nature, and it is almost certain that her mistress was not in her confidence to the extent that good lady supposed. We may be quite sure that she was not struck down at random, that there was a motive for the murder, and, much more than that, that she herself admitted her assailant to the house. Why he made her the victim of his ferocity, whether the motive was jealousy, revenge, or a desire for plunder, we cannot even guess, but the murder was a deliberate one, cunningly planned and remorselessly carried out.

It was committed on the evening of January 7th, 1880. Jane Roberts had been that day in her usual health and

spirits, going cheerfully about her work, and attending to her invalid mistress with her customary care and devotion. Shortly before noon a Mr. Cooper, who had been Mr. Greenwood's partner when the latter was in business, and who was a frequent visitor, called at the house, and was admitted by Jane Roberts.

As he wiped his boots on the mat, he noticed a letter lying on the floor, to which he called the girl's attention. It was lying with the addressed side downwards, but when Jane picked it up and examined the envelope, she merely said, "It's for Mr. Greenwood." Mr. Cooper noticed that it bore no stamp, and it had, it seemed, been put under the door or pushed through the opening for letters.

However, Jane Roberts did not deliver the letter to her master until after he had discussed his business with Mr. Cooper and the latter was gone. Mr. Greenwood received and opened it while he was having tea in his wife's room, she being then in bed.

This all-important letter read as follows :

January 7th, 1879.

*Mr. Greenwood, I want to take that land near the coal yard behind the druggist's shop, Queen's Road. I will pay either monthly, quarterly, or yearly, and will pay in advance, and I will meet you to-night from five to six o'clock at the Three Tuns, corner of Churnet Street, and will tell you all particulars. I don't know your address or would have posted it.*

*Yours, etc.,*

*Oldham Road.*

*W. Wilson.*

The letter was addressed simply, "Mr. Greenwood," and though the writing was fairly good, there were signs

that the person who had penned it was of poor education. He—or she—had made a mistake in the year: the date should have read “January 7th, 1880.”

It is scarcely surprising that old Greenwood was not impressed with this communication. In the first place, the writer had omitted to give any address other than the vague “Oldham Road,” and it was clear that he did know where Mr. Greenwood lived, for, otherwise, he could not have delivered the note. Why not call to discuss the business? Why arrange a meeting in a public-house?

Mr. Greenwood knew no Mr. Wilson, but it was clear that “Mr. Wilson” was familiar with his affairs, and was aware that he had some land to let off the Queen’s Road. Nevertheless, the old gentleman was reluctant to keep the appointment, and told his wife that he didn’t think it was any use to go. Mrs. Greenwood, however, with a woman’s eye to business, viewed the offer in a different light, and advised her husband at least to go round and hear what the man had to say. It was a fine evening, and the Three Tuns was only a mile away.

Greenwood, persuaded against his will, went off to keep the appointment, leaving his wife and Jane Roberts alone in the house, and, having arrived at the inn, asked at the bar if any person had been inquiring for Mr. Greenwood. No one had, it appeared, and a further question revealed the fact that Mr. W. Wilson was unknown to the people of the house. The old man went out and strolled about for a quarter of an hour, and on returning asked if Mr. Wilson had called. The waiter said there had been no enquiry for Mr. Greenwood, and the old man, rather put out at having ventured on a fool’s errand,



declined to wait any longer, saying that if Mr. Wilson wanted him he must go to the house. "You can give him that message," said the old man. "If he wants to see Greenwood he must come to Westbourne Grove." He left the inn at 6.49 precisely. As he approached his house he saw a small crowd of people assembled round it, and others hurrying to the scene. The sight of two policemen at the gate startled and alarmed him, and he pushed his way through the gathering crowd.

Leaving him to learn the cause of the excitement, let us see what happened after he left the house to keep the appointment with the elusive Mr. Wilson.

At half-past five, while Mrs. Greenwood was still in bed, the milkman, one James Partington, called at the house, and Jane Roberts smilingly took in her usual supply. The young man had an extensive round, and he only remained on the step a minute. He saw no one in the road at the time.

Mrs. Greenwood had recently been ill, and though not exactly confined to bed, she did not rise until the evening. She got up at ten minutes to six by her clock, and the girl assisted her to dress. Then, remarking that she would wash up the tea-things, Jane Roberts went down to the kitchen, leaving her mistress in a chair by the fire.

A few minutes afterwards—from five to ten—Mrs. Greenwood heard a knock at the door—a single knock—and also heard the girl open the door, close it softly, and proceed along the lobby to the kitchen. It struck her at the time that Jane's footsteps were softer than usual, but that was merely an impression. She was unable to say whether the girl was accompanied by anyone, but

she was rather disposed to think that she was not alone, that she had admitted some person, who stealthily followed her through the passage to the kitchen.

In any case, Mrs. Greenwood thought nothing of the circumstance, and picked up a book she had been reading. She heard the kitchen door shut to, and there was silence in the quiet house.

In five or six minutes, however, that silence was broken by a woman's piercing scream—a scream of horror and deadly fear. It appeared to come from the kitchen, and was of a nature to chill the heart and affright the ear. Mrs. Greenwood got to her feet and, shaking all over, listened in consternation and terror. However, she was not devoid of courage, and, summoning all her resolution, she ventured out upon the landing. She leaned over the stair rail, and cried out, "Jane, what's the matter?" There was no answer, but the next moment she heard a second shrill scream, fainter and weaker than the last, and her heart sank. Only an agonising dread and despair could have caused such screams as had assailed her ears.

The old lady was staggered by the second shriek. She stood, trembling, on the landing for a few seconds, and then, hearing no other sound from below, crept down the stairs to the passage. She did not dare to go alone to the kitchen, but made her way to the front door, opened it, and sent a shrill cry of "Murder!" out into the night.

The Reverend Mr. Cadman lived in the adjoining house, but he was out at the time. Mrs. Cadman, sitting in her front parlour, had heard the terrible screams, and going to her garden gate saw Mrs. Greenwood in a great

state of terror and agitation. The two women, feeling there was safety in each other's company, went into the kitchen, and saw Jane Roberts lying face downwards on the floor, her head smashed in and blood streaming from her wounds.

Mr. E. A. Halling, school-board officer for the district of Crumpsall, lived in Watts Street, a few yards from Mr. Greenwood's house. Watts Street ran at right angles from Westbourne Grove, and at that time there were houses on only one side of the roadway. Opposite Mr. Halling's house, across the road, was a clay pit, then three or four feet deep in water.

Mr. Halling was at home that evening before six, and was sitting in the front room with his little boy on his knee. He heard the two piercing shrieks, which were followed by the angry barking of the dog in Mr. Cadman's back yard. The whole family then present heard the screams, and Mr. Halling, putting the child down, listened intently. He distinctly heard someone rush past his front door, and then followed immediately the sound of a person splashing his way through the water in the pit.

Mr. Halling said to his wife, "There are a lot of children at play out there, and one of them has fallen into the pit." He ran to the door, but could see nothing, and at that moment Mrs. Cadman's servant came up and told him of the murder. He at once armed himself with a stick and went over to Mr. Greenwood's house. The girl was still on the floor, and Mr. Halling picked her up, placed her on a chair, and supported her. In five minutes, however, without uttering a sound, her head dropped back upon his shoulder and she died.



A GROUP OF MODELS IN THE CHAMBER OF HORRORS OF THE NEW TUSSAUD'S EXHIBITION.



Before I describe the efforts made by the police to solve this atrocious murder, let us examine all the circumstances, and see if we can throw any light on the crime.

In the first place, the decoy letter, the writer of which was clearly either the murderer or his accomplice.

It is certain that the letter was written and delivered with one purpose only : to get Mr. Greenwood away from the house so that the murderer should have only two women to deal with. Greenwood was seventy years of age, but hale and hearty, and his presence in the house would have rendered the brutal design much more hazardous. He had to be got out of the way, and the letter succeeded in that object.

The question at once arises, however : Did Jane Roberts know the writer of the missive, and was she aware of its contents ? Supposing that the poor girl had been willing to make an appointment with an admirer or a male acquaintance, is it not probable that she would want Mr. Greenwood to be away from the house ? The presence of Mrs. Greenwood was of less consequence because she, on account of illness, was more or less confined to her room. With her master away, the girl and her unknown friend would be uninterrupted. It was even possible, therefore, that Jane Roberts herself placed the letter where it was seen by Mr. Cooper.

Against that theory, however, is the fact that Jane was not known to have any male friends in Manchester. No one had ever seen her with a man, and she had never spoken of any special admirer. It is true she was in the habit of receiving a great many letters, and some of these were afterwards found in her trunk, but they

were mostly from relatives and none was of an amatory nature.

On the other hand, a sister who arrived in Manchester two or three days after the murder stated that Jane had written her some few weeks before a letter in which she spoke of being in fear of some person unnamed. This sister also said that on one occasion when she came to visit Harpurhey a man accosted her, having mistaken her for Jane. She thought nothing of the incident at the time, and was unable to describe the person, who was a perfect stranger to her.

The theory of the police, especially at first, was that poor Jane was more of a flirtatious disposition than her friends suspected, and that she had perhaps encouraged the attentions of a married man. The murder was not at all unlike the famous Peasenhall case in some particulars. The doctors, however, established the fact that the girl was *virgo intacta*, and there was no evidence whatever of any criminal assault having been attempted.

Jane Roberts may, of course, have had an admirer unknown to her friends. Even at that period, fifty years ago, when they were less contemptuous of authority than they are now, young women knew how to keep their own counsel, and this girl was rather reserved than otherwise. There was no reason why she should discuss her secret love affairs with her master and mistress, or let her parents at Pembroke know of them. Another theory discussed at the time was: Was the murder prompted by a desire for plunder?

Mr. Greenwood was well-to-do. He kept a certain amount of money in the house, and he had some good old silver plate. It is just possible that Jane Roberts

had made the acquaintance of a thief, that he had prevailed upon her to allow him an hour's "courting" in the kitchen, that he made a proposal that he should rob the house, and that he struck the girl down when she indignantly threatened to denounce him.

The difficulty of the detectives engaged night and day upon this strange case was the absence of all clues. How was the murder committed and with what weapon? What transpired between the girl and her assailant before she became aware of his murderous purpose? Was he a rejected sweetheart, instigated by mad jealousy? Had he a grievance against the girl, and a consuming desire for revenge? Where did he go when, on hearing Mrs. Greenwood give the alarm, he darted from the house at the back? Was he a comparative stranger to the district that he dashed into the clay pit in the darkness?

If there were no clues, however, there was the usual crop of wild rumours. It was said that two men had been seen loitering near the house at various times on the day of the murder, though no description of these was available. A disgraceful and utterly unfounded report was spread to the effect that Mr. Greenwood had paid the girl the most marked attentions, and that his wife was very jealous of her maid. Even Mr. Cooper, Greenwood's ex-partner, did not escape the general calumny. It was hinted that he had given to Jane Roberts the letter that had lured Greenwood away from the house. The milkman, Partington, too, was suspected, though he was half a mile away from the house and engaged on his round when the tragedy occurred, and did not hear of it until two hours later.

The country round Harpurhey was only half built



on at that time and but sparsely populated, so that there was every chance of the miscreant getting away without being seen. The clay pit was emptied and searched, but no weapon that could have inflicted the injuries was found.

The murder, so mysterious in character, created the greatest excitement, and crowds of people besieged Greenwood's house for some days after the event. The girl's parents arrived in Manchester on the Saturday following, and attended the inquest, which was held at the New Inn, Harpurhey, the coroner being Mr. Price. The funeral of Jane Roberts, who was buried at the Harpurhey Cemetery, close to the scene of the crime, drew a vast concourse.

The inquest threw no new light upon the murder. Mr. Greenwood was closely questioned, and most indignantly denied the base rumours which had been spread concerning his relations with the dead girl. He had told her that he might remember her in his will, but he had said that with the knowledge and approval of his wife, who was exceedingly fond of Jane and thought most highly of her.

Dr. Skinner and a surgeon named Pinder, who had examined the body, described the terrible nature of the girl's injuries, and said that she had been felled by a smashing blow over the right eye with some heavy, blunt instrument, probably a hammer. She had been struck other violent blows on the head while lying on the ground. There were no signs of any struggle.

It was strange that neither the sound of the blows nor of the girl's fall was heard by Mrs. Greenwood, but it is possible that the matting on the kitchen floor deadened

the noise. That the murderer fled the moment he had accomplished his horrid purpose is certain, but it was, perhaps, as well for Mrs. Greenwood that she did not enter the kitchen on hearing the screams and catch the ruffian in the very act. That he would have killed the old lady as well if her presence interfered with his escape to safety cannot be doubted.

In the absence of any other likely clue, the police concentrated all their faculties on the decoy letter. Five thousand lithographed copies were made by Messrs. Daniel Owen and Co., of Cardiff, and circulated by the authorities, but nothing came of this.

An anonymous letter, signed "One who can give evidence," was received by the editor of the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, and published in that newspaper. It declared that the writer was in a position to throw light on the affair, and even to give the name of the assassin, but that he was unwilling to come forward owing to a discreditable incident in his own past which he feared to have raked up. It was not of a criminal nature, but it involved the honour and the welfare and happiness of others. The letter finished up as follows :

*I hold a responsible and respectable position near Manchester, which I do not feel inclined to sacrifice, although it would bring a criminal to justice, but when it is no longer the practice to expose a witness's private life, which has nothing to do with the case, then I will come forward and say what I know about this unfortunate affair.*

The authorities were disposed to attach some importance to this communication, if only because it bore

out their own theory that there was probably more than one person in a position to denounce the murderer if he or she cared to come forward. Someone must have been aware of the man's friendship or love affair with Jane Roberts. Attempts were made to learn the identity of the anonymous letter-writer, and he was assured through the agony columns of the Manchester and Newcastle newspapers that his secret should be respected, but no more was heard from him, and it may, of course, have been a hoax.

In the meanwhile, the inquest proceedings had been brought to an end, and all that the coroner's jury could do was to return the verdict customary in such cases, "wilful murder, by some person or persons unknown."

Then, however, when the case was still shrouded in mystery, startling news came from Plymouth which seemed to promise a solution of the crime.

Two men, strangers to the place, arrived suddenly in that town, and took a lodging with a Mrs. Sprague. They were common-looking, illiterate men, of the labouring class, and appeared to have very little money. They gave the names of Lacock and Heald, the latter being a small and slightly-built man, who, according to their landlady, seemed to "have something on his mind." They lived very sparingly and very rarely left the room they shared; Heald, indeed, never went out at all, and the other man only to purchase what small provisions they wanted. Two letters came for Heald during the week they were there, and both contained a small sum of money.

Exactly why good Mrs. Sprague's suspicions were aroused did not transpire, but they had clothes with them

which, she said, were "evil-smelling," and, apparently, stained with blood. They seemed to be more or less in hiding, and Heald had told her that they came from Manchester. Putting two and two together, and making more than four of it, Mrs. Sprague came to the conclusion that she had beneath her roof the Manchester murderer, and, on the eighth day of their stay, she went to the Plymouth police.

The men were seen and questioned, and both, Heald especially, seemed to be singularly ill-at-ease. They admitted having come from Manchester, and the man Lacock, who was probably a little mad, even went so far as to make a "confession" of the murder. They had, he said, scraped acquaintance with Jane Roberts a few days before the crime, and had planned the murder and robbery, which, however, was actually carried out, he said, by Heald alone.

As they rather answered to a vague description of two men said to have been watching Mr. Greenwood's house, they were detained pending enquiries, and then some letters which Heald had written to a domestic named Ellison in Manchester, asking her to accompany him to Australia, were recovered, and the writing found to be similar to that of the decoy communication.

The men were brought from Plymouth to Manchester by Sergeant Wallace, but only Heald was brought before the magistrates there. To the general surprise and disappointment, he was charged with perjury only, and remanded.

It transpired that he had given a false account of himself to the emigration officer when applying for an assisted passage to Australia. He had said his name was Watts

and that he was a single man, whereas he was really Robert Heald, aged thirty, a labourer, married, with one child.

Heald, who appeared to be very dejected, said that he could account for his time on the evening of the murder. He was at the house of a Mr. John Fowsey, of Rochdale Road, Manchester, with whom he intended to sail for Melbourne, and this statement the prisoner's wife and another person confirmed. So, later, did Fowsey himself.

In a word, Heald's alibi was foolproof, and it became apparent that he was in no way concerned in the murder. He was released on February 3rd, 1880, and the charge of perjury abandoned. The magistrate expressed the opinion that he had "suffered enough."

Let us hope, then, that Mr. Heald—or Hailed, the name is variously spelled in the newspapers of the day—got safely to Australia, and that he took with him the true and lawful Mrs. H., and not another young woman. I daresay Mrs. Sprague felt a twinge of regret and disappointment when she found that she had not harboured an interesting malefactor after all.

From that day to this the Manchester murder of 1880 has remained a mystery.

Assuming the perpetrator to have been a young man at the time, he may yet be alive, still hugging his guilty secret to his breast, or, if he died, he may not have unburdened his soul to any priest or doctor. Very few murderers, having remained unknown and unsuspected, suffer, apparently, such pangs of conscience as one might expect. Not all are like the Norwich wife-murderer, William Sheward, who was compelled to confession eighteen years after the event, and whose story follows

this. The man who slew poor Jane Roberts was made of stouter material than the Norwich pawnbroker. He may have married, reared a family, and died quietly in his bed, no one dreaming that his was the hand that snuffed out that young life. Murder's "miraculous organ" was dumb in this case, at least, and has been dumb ever since.

Mrs. Greenwood, I have heard, never recovered from the shock, and died shortly afterwards. Mr. Greenwood left the neighbourhood of Harpurhey, and went to live with friends.



## CHAPTER VII

### THE NORWICH HORROR

LATE on the night of January 1st, 1869, Inspector Davis of the P division of the Metropolitan Police was on duty at the Walworth Station in the south-east district of London when a constable ushered into the office an elderly, respectably-attired man who seemed to be in the last stage of dejection, and who had expressed a desire to "speak with the officer in charge." The inspector looked the stranger over with the eye of experience, and came to the conclusion that he had been drinking, though still able to speak plainly and to stand straight.

The man said: "I want to speak to you. I have a charge I wish to make against myself."

Inspector Davis, as a matter of habit and routine, produced his notebook, and intimated that he was willing to hear him. "What is it?" he asked; "explain yourself."

The stranger hesitated, and then said: "For the wilful murder of my first wife at Norwich."

Nothing ever startles the average police officer, and this inspector expressed no horror or surprise at this rather lurid and unusual statement. Instead, he merely enquired if the man had given due consideration to the very serious nature of the charge?



The self-accuser then said: "I have; I have kept it for years, but can keep it no longer. I left home on December 28th, intending to destroy my life with a razor I have in my pocket."

Thinking that he had to do with a lunatic, Davis's first business was to secure the razor, which was handed over with an alacrity that suggested that the man was not sorry to part with the means of self-destruction.

The stranger then continued: "I have been to Chelsea by the steamboat intending to commit suicide, but the Almighty would not allow me to do it."

He then broke down completely, began to sob, and to speak in disjointed sentences and at intervals.

Feeling sorry for the miserable object before him, Davis expressed the hope that he "might sleep it off." He said, "I daresay you will find it all a delusion."

"No such luck," groaned the other. "You had better take my charge in writing." He then proceeded to dictate these words:

"I, William Sheward, of Norwich, charge myself with the wilful murder of my first wife. Signed, W.S."

He was then placed in one of the cells, where he passed a restless and uneasy night.

Early the following morning Davis saw him again, and asked him if he remembered his statement of the night before. "Perfectly well," replied the prisoner.

He was then asked for particulars as to how and when the murder was done, and he replied, "Yes, I will tell you. It was on the 15th of June, 1851. The body was cut up, and I believe a portion of it is still preserved with spirits of wine at the Guildhall, Norwich. You will find it is quite true; they know all about the case at Norwich."

The inspector asked next how and when the body was found, at which question this self-confessed murderer shuddered, and said that "it was too horrible to talk about."

He also explained how he had gone to the house in Richmond Street, Walworth, where he met his first wife, and how that visit had so revived the affair in his memory and so preyed on his conscience that he felt compelled to give himself up.

Asked for his address, he said he kept the Key and Castle public house, St. Martin's-at-Oak, Norwich, and that he was living at St. Martin's-at-Palace in that town when the murder was done.

By this time the Walworth police had convinced themselves of the man's sincerity; he obviously meant what he said. Accordingly, the Norwich police were communicated with, and they confirmed the fact that the city had been the scene of a horrible and mysterious murder in the year stated, that remains of a female had been found in various places there, and that the guilty person had never been discovered. Neither, it appeared, had the identity of the victim.

The report that a confession had been made by a man in London caused unbounded excitement in Norwich, where the murder had been almost forgotten. Eighteen years is a good slice out of a lifetime, and youths in 1851 were middle-aged men in 1869. The prisoner had been a quiet, reserved man, and was not known to a wide circle of his fellow-tradesmen. Those who did know him or had met him in business were disposed to regard the confession as a "bogus" one; the man did not appear to be of the stuff of which atrocious murderers are made.

On the other hand, there remained in the land of the living a few who remembered that Sheward's wife had certainly disappeared at the time when various portions of a female body were being picked up all over the town.

William Sheward was about sixty years of age when he gave himself up. Until the year 1838 he had lived in London, working as a tailor, and there he met his first wife, whose maiden name was Martha Francis. She was a native of Wymondham, Norfolk, the small town which the exploits of the late Mr. J. B. Rush rendered notorious. Martha Francis was some years older than Sheward, for whom it appears she acted as housekeeper while the man was living at Greenwich.

In 1838 the pair of them came to Norwich and took a small house in Bar Street, where Sheward set up as a tailor. He next removed to White Lion Street, where he went or was made bankrupt. His next move was to St. Giles Street, Norwich, and thence to St. Martin's-at-Palace, where he was living in 1851. In the summer of that year Mrs. Sheward vanished from human ken, and contemporaneous with that was the finding of human remains, a circumstance which created much excitement in the eastern counties. Another Greenacre seemed to have been at work in the city of Norwich.

The earliest discovery was made on Saturday, June 21st, 1851, when a young man found a hand in a road leading to Lakenham, a suburb of Norwich. About three hundred yards from the spot where the hand was discovered a foot was picked up. These finds provoked so much excitement that diligent further researches were made in the vicinity, with the result that pieces of

flesh, bones, etc., were discovered at Hellesdon, another suburb, and elsewhere on Sunday, June 22nd, Monday, June 23rd, Tuesday, June 24th, Wednesday, June 25th, and Thursday, June 26th. The view taken by the medical men who examined the remains was that they were of a young, adult female, and no one, not even her relatives, associated them with the elderly Mrs. Sheward, whose disappearance, moreover, was never reported to the police. The parts were placed in spirits of wine, and kept for some time at the Guildhall.

Further remains were found a little later, and a blood-stained shirt was picked up on Mousehold Heath, near Norwich. The last discovery was that of human bones on July 2nd, and as another murder took place during that month at Holkham, not far away, to distract the public attention, the excitement aroused by these discoveries gradually subsided.

And, assuredly, no one suspected the meek, taciturn and inoffensive Mr. Sheward, who betrayed no signs of a guilty conscience, then at any rate, and was apparently able to explain his wife's absence to the satisfaction of her friends.

It was observed, however, that Sheward, hitherto an abstemious man, had commenced to drink rather more than was good for him at about this time, and he became depressed and morose when, later on, carrying on the business of a pawnbroker in King Street, near St. Peter-per-Mountergate Church. On February 14th, 1862, Sheward married a woman with whom he had previously lived, and by whom he had two children.

In August, 1868, however, he abandoned the "avuncular" calling, and disposed of his stock to another

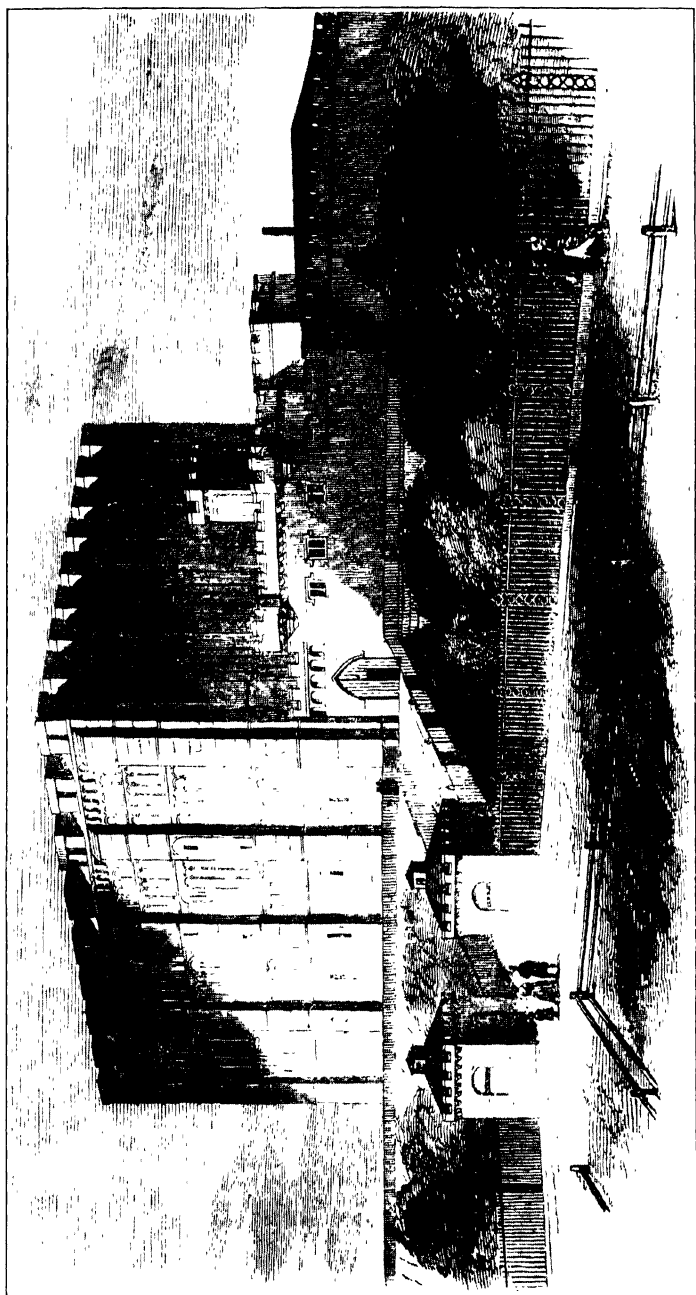
pawnbroker. He then removed to the Key and Castle Tavern, setting up as a publican in a small way.

About the time of Christmas, 1868, Sheward expressed a wish to visit London, where his sister resided, and he left Norwich for the capital on Tuesday, December 28th. Where he stayed or what he did on arrival did not transpire, but on New Year's Day he walked into the Walworth police-station, and confessed to the crime.

Cooling his heels day after day in a prison cell, Mr. Sheward, finding his conscience less troublesome, began to repent his precipitate action, and to call himself several kinds of a fool. He had preserved his grim secret for eighteen years, and no one had for a moment suspected him. The murder, indeed, had been forgotten, and the guilty man was perfectly safe. Accordingly, the prisoner, relieved of the depressing influence of drink, suddenly retracted his confession and declared that he "had imagined the whole thing." He pleaded "Not Guilty" at the trial, which was taken at the Norfolk Assizes, before Mr. Baron Pigott.

Mr. O'Malley, Q.C., led for the Crown, and Mr. Metcalfe appeared for the prisoner, an insignificant-looking man, with a very lugubrious expression of countenance. He appeared to have only a languid interest in the proceedings, and, for the most part, to be lost in dreary meditation and repose.

Inspector Davis, to whom Sheward gave himself up, was the first witness, and, being cross-examined as to the man's state of mind at the time, said that he seemed much depressed, and sobbed and moaned. He stated that he had had no food for two days, and that he could not eat. The witness gave him food and coffee, and he drank the



NORWICH CASTLE,  
where Sheward and Rush were hanged



coffee, though he ate nothing. It was half-past ten at night when Sheward walked into the police-station.

Charles Johnson deposed that he was a wood dealer, thirty-four years of age. He lived at Trowse in 1851. In the summer of that year his dog found a human hand in Lakenham Lane, sometimes called Miss Martineau's Lane. The hand was found in a small plantation, just off the road at Bracondale. The spot was about a mile and a half from Tabernacle Street, where the prisoner lived at that time. The witness's father took the hand to the police-station in Norwich. The same dog afterwards found two other pieces of flesh in the Hellesdon Road, about a mile and a half from Tabernacle Street in the other direction. The police took possession of them.

Richard Fryer, stationmaster at Sevenoaks station, in Kent, said that he was living in Norwich in 1851. He knew a young man named Robert Field, since dead, who was clerk to Mr. Merry. He lived on the road from Bracondale to Carrow-bridge. One Sunday afternoon in July of that year the witness went to Mr. Merry's with Field. His garden bounded St. Peter's, Southgate Church Alley. They found a human hand in some long grass near a clump of trees. It was a left hand, and had evidently lain there some time. The ring-finger was missing at the second joint. He took it to the Guildhall and left it there. Anyone going up Church Alley could have thrown it into the spot where it was found. The hand was rather a large one for a female, so far as he could remember.

Thomas Dent, a woolstapler, living at Trowse, Mill-gate, said his dog, a spaniel, picked up a human foot in



Martineau's Lane on a Sunday in June, 1851. It was taken to the police station at the Guildhall.

Henry Layton, a greengrocer, living in Finsbury, London, gave similar evidence. In 1851 he resided in Southgate Church Alley, Norwich, and worked at the mills near the Abbey. A small boy came to him and said that he had seen a human foot in the churchyard. The witness went with the boy to the spot, and they carried the foot to the Guildhall. The foot was a little decomposed, and might have been there some days.

John Flaxman, who was a police-constable in June, 1851, said that he was at the station when a human hand was brought there, and that he was instructed to search for other remains. He searched in Stowger's field and found three pieces of human flesh there, which he took to the Guildhall. The constables who accompanied him had since died. In his opinion the fragments of flesh came from the breast of a woman. He heard that a bloodstained shirt had been brought in, but he did not see it. There was talk, too, of a sleeved waistcoat, but witness did not see that either.

Charles Grimes, living at St. Martin's-at-Oak in 1851, heard of the finding of a hand and of bones on the Sunday and of a foot on the Wednesday. He himself about that time found two pieces of flesh, part of the breast and the navel, near Stowger's field, and handed them to Futter, the constable.

Futter also gave evidence. He said that he searched the lane known as "Martineau's" in June, 1851, found a piece of flesh on the bank facing the lane, and took it to the station. He also searched Hangman's Lane, and in a field, now Heighman Road, found a piece of flesh,

six inches long and two wide, just over the bank. There was some hair on it of a sandy colour.

Charles Forster, James Carter, and Robert Leach also deposed to finding fragments of a human body in the summer of 1851, but the reader will agree with me that enough has been said of these gruesome discoveries.

Edward Peck, an inspector of police in June, 1851, gave much more interesting testimony. He described the excitement prevailing at the time, and said that almost every second person in the district came to the police-station with bones that had been found in various parts of the city. These bones were all those of animals. The human remains spoken of were kept about a month in the earthen and glass vessels in which they were deposited, and then buried in the vault beneath the Guildhall. They were exhumed in his presence after the prisoner had made his confession. He remembered the handbill that was printed and exhibited in the shop windows offering a reward. It ran thus :

“City of Norwich—Supposed Murder—Several parts of a human body, etc., supposed to have been recently murdered, and to be that of a young female between the ages of sixteen and twenty-six years, having been within the last few days found in the environs of the City of Norwich, information is requested to be given to the Chief Constable, at the police office, Guildhall, Norwich, of all females who may have been recently missing, together with any particulars which may lead to the detection of the person or persons who committed it,” etc.

Several applications, the witness proceeded, were made about females who had been missed. He had some faint recollection that a young girl from a factory was said to have been absent, and that her friends had not heard of her from some time.

William Peter Nichols, surgeon, said: "I remember being called in June, 1851, to examine some human remains. I have examined some remains recently, and believe them to be the same. On June 21st in that year I had the assistance of Dr. Dalrymple and Mr. Norgate, and we examined them together. The dorsal and lumber vertebræ, the sacrum, a portion of the left thighbone, the right tibia and fibula, the left fibula, the right hand, the right foot, a portion of the right humerus, one patella, and various portions of muscle and skin were available for examination, and, as far as I could judge, these all belonged to one body. I came to the conclusion that they came from the body of a female. We also came to an approximate opinion as to the age of the female. It was an adult, but had the appearance of youth, showing it was not an old female. I think in my affidavit I swore to the age as being not more than twenty-six.

"The well-filled under structure of the skin, its delicacy, the foot of a person not accustomed to hard labour or to heavy shoes, led me to that conclusion. The appearance of the skin and the flesh, however, is not inconsistent with the age being fifty-four. I should say she must have been in good health from the well-sustained structure of the flesh. I think a woman who has had a family would probably exhibit more symptoms of aging than one who has not. This person must have had a very delicate skin and a very fair complexion—the sort of complexion generally going with fair hair. It struck me that the feet, the hands, and the pelvis had been immersed in some fluid, possibly hot water, but not a corrosive fluid. We had only a portion, about half the pelvis. It seemed to have been rudely sawn through,

first in one direction, then the other, in two places which did not meet, and then it was broken up. That is not the way it would be done in a dissecting room. The woman could not have been more than five feet one or two inches. We came to the conclusion as to the age, twenty-six, because the bones were perfect and in a normal condition.

“There was no appearance of disease. The first foot I saw, on June 21st I think, suggested death within a week. I have no doubt I did say that the individual to whom those remains belonged might have been dead a fortnight. I did not know when the murder was committed. I did not test the weight of the bones, but those of an aged person are considerably lighter than those of a young person, but not between the ages we are speaking of. My opinion as to the age resulted from all the matter brought before me. I cannot undertake to say unequivocally that the flesh was that of a female body, but I judged so from the skin, and the pelvis I examined was undoubtably that of a woman.”

Dr. Dalrymple, another surgeon practising in Norwich in 1851, confirmed the previous witness in most particulars, but added some details of his own. It was impossible, he said, to declare that all the remains belonged to one body, but the backbone, the sacrum, and the pelvis undoubtedly did come from the same body, for they joined on and fitted exactly. It was the body of a full-grown person; there was nothing inconsistent with the portions being from the body of a woman fifty-four years of age. The general condition of the flesh was that of a person extremely well-nourished, and the cartilages of the knee-caps, etc., were fresh.

Hannah Law, the wife of a labourer, was a child at the time that the prisoner married her aunt. They lived at St. Giles's, where Sheward was in business as pawnbroker, and she often visited at their house. She remembered going to see the prisoner and her aunt after they had moved to a house under the Bishop's Walls. It was just before the opening of the Great Exhibition of 1851. She never saw her aunt again, and did not ask any questions about her when she called on the prisoner and his present wife in King Street about twelve years before his arrest.

Dorothy Hewitt, an aged widow, sister to the deceased, deposed that she last saw the latter in Bar Street after the Shewards had moved from St. Giles's. "That," said the old woman, "was about seventeen years ago, and I have not heard from her since." She went to the prisoner's house in King Street afterwards, and said, "I shall be very much obliged, Mr. Sheward, if you will tell me where my sister is." He replied, "Mrs. Hewitt, she can write to you if she likes." The deceased was a light-complexioned woman. In cross-examination, the witness said, "I do not know that my sister ever went by any other name. I do not remember that she was living in Chancery Lane with a gentleman named Worseldine. I never went to Greenwich with my sister and Mr. Hill."

(The precise object of this cross-examination was not apparent, but there was throughout the case a vague suggestion that Mrs. Sheward, having tired of her husband, had gone off with another man, though nothing in the way of evidence was offered in support of this theory.)

William Bunn, a labourer living at Wymondham, said that he had married the twin sister of the first Mrs.

Sheward. He gave some interesting particulars as to the disappearance of that good lady, and how the prisoner accounted for it).

The witness went to his house in King Street on purpose to enquire after Mrs. Sheward, he having heard that the prisoner and his wife had separated. It was said that she had gone away to London. The witness said, "Will you be so kind as to tell me the last words your wife said to you when she went away?" Sheward told him that her last words had been, "I will never write to you or my sisters. Never." The witness stopped to dinner on that occasion, and he noticed that Sheward seemed very uneasy. His hand shook so that he could hardly carve the meat at dinner. Bunn then asked him what was wrong, but the prisoner, though he must have heard him, made no reply. Before that, Sheward said that his wife had gone to London by the train. The witness had heard talk of a Mr. Worseldine, but knew nothing of that person, nor had he ever heard that Mrs. Sheward went by that name. He never heard his wife say that Worseldine was transported. He believed Worseldine was a carpenter in London. Before she was married she was a very good friend to his—witness's—wife, and used to send her gifts of clothing and shoes. That was about the time that the witness heard of Worseldine in association with the deceased. A Mrs. Fisher, an aunt, left the sisters a little money.

Eva Elizabeth Hewitt said that the prisoner's first wife was her aunt. She was present when Mrs. Bunn, wife of the previous witness, said to the prisoner: "I have come to ask you what you have done with my sister," to which Sheward replied, "I have done nothing with your sister; she went away and left me penniless." Mrs.

Bunn then said, "You are a false man, my sister never went away and left you."

John Francis, an inmate of the Norwich Union, was married to a sister of the deceased. He went to the prisoner's house some time after the death of Mrs. Fisher as the payment of the small legacies was held up by the non-appearance of Mrs. Sheward, and he asked if the latter was going to claim her share from Mr. Cann, the solicitor. The prisoner said, "Very well; if I see my wife, I'll tell her."

A letter written by the prisoner on the subject of this legacy was produced by Mr. E. C. Baily, a solicitor, who had succeeded to the business of the late Mr. Cann. It was dated March 24th, 1853, to Mrs. Bunn, at Holly House, Wymondham, and was as follows:

*Mrs. Bunn,*

*I am sorry to hear of Mrs. Fisher's death, but your sister not being in Norwich at the present, I shall not take any part in arranging of affairs; therefore you need not expect me, nor send to me any more.*

*William Sheward.*

Sarah Balson said: "I was married in March, 1850, and we went to live in a house in Tabernacle Street, St. Martin's-at-Palace. In January, 1851, the house next ours, before that untenanted, was taken by a man and woman. The woman was of fair complexion, and had golden hair in ringlets. I saw her last on Whit-Sunday, June 8th, 1851, when I took into her a part of some custard I had been making. I do not remember seeing her after that, but I saw the man."

John Bird deposed that he resided in St. George's, Middle Street, Norwich, in 1851. In the summer of that year the prisoner hired from him three unfurnished rooms, and he came to occupy them at Michaelmas in that year. He was then alone, but two women came to visit him, and the present Mrs. Sheward was one. He gave the prisoner notice to quit in February, 1853, not approving his conduct as regards one of these women. A twelve-month later the prisoner was occupying a house in King Street.

Several witnesses were called to speak to their knowledge of the second Mrs. Sheward, and of the prisoner's acquaintance and intimacy with her since the year 1851.

Mary Leigh's depositions were then put in, the witness being too ill to appear in court. She had known both the prisoner and his second wife for about thirteen years, and had nursed the woman through two confinements. At those times, in 1856 and 1859, they were not married. Mary Leigh, however, was a witness at their marriage in the Registrar's office at Norwich on February 13th, 1862. The marriage with Martha Francis took place on October 28th, 1836.

In his speech for the defence Mr. Metcalf reminded the jury that the confession made by the prisoner in London had been revoked, and that he now said it was untrue. Sheward may not have been intoxicated at the time, but he was undoubtedly under the influence of a long course of drinking, and he had imagined the whole thing. Except for his confession there was no case against him. It was most unlikely that he would make away with his wife in the manner supposed in a house situated in a row of a



crowded suburb. There was not the least evidence of murder or of where the body could have been cut up. As for the discovery of the remains in the way alleged, what was more probable than they might have been portions of a subject used for dissection by an unskilful hand, secretly obtained and secretly got rid of, after they had served their purpose, so hastily as to be easily found in the way described? It was, after all, quite possible that Mrs. Sheward had gone off with her old lover, Worseldine, and had since died in foreign parts.

The jury were an hour and a quarter in deliberation before they returned with a verdict of "Guilty," and the prisoner, on being asked the usual question, sighed deeply, and remarked in a low tone, "I have nothing to say."

I shall give his subsequent confession presently, but I may say here that even the publication of that detailed statement did not altogether eradicate the impression that he might be innocent after all. That impression, indeed, still exists, and I have read and heard arguments on the subject even comparatively recently. My own view, based on the complete and final disappearance of the woman at a time when human remains were being found all over Norwich, is that Sheward murdered his wife and cut up her body. The motive was obscure and Sheward's confession throws little light on that part of the case. She was, however, fourteen or fifteen years older than the man, she had an uncertain temper, and she was close with money. It is probable that her William, already tired of her, had met a younger and more attractive female, and that he made a quarrel over a box of money the pretext for depriving her of life. It is extraordinary that none of her relations ever thought of reporting her

strange effacement to the police, and that they never instituted any real enquiry.

Sheward was a quiet, silent, and well-behaved prisoner after his conviction, and plainly resigned to his fate. A few days before his execution on April 20th, 1869, in Norwich Castle, he made the following confession :

*City Gaol, Norwich, April 13th.*

*In the year 1849, November, I placed a box of money, having £400 in it, in Mr. Christie's possession, for him to take care of for me.*

*In the year 1850 and to June, 1851, I drew from that box £150, during which time my wife wanted me to bring the box home. Mr. Christie asked me if he might make use of the money. My wife seemed determined to fetch the box herself. I knew he could not give it to me.*

*On the 14th of June, 1851, Mr. Christie asked me to go to Yarmouth to pay £1,000 to a captain of a vessel laden with salt, to enable him to unload on the Monday morning. On Sunday morning, the 15th, I was going to Yarmouth on the above errand. She (my wife) said to me, "You shall not go. I will go to Mr. Christie and get the box of money myself, and bring it home."*

*With that a slight altercation occurred. Then I ran the razor into her throat. She never spoke after. I then covered an apron over her head and went to Yarmouth. I came home at night and slept on the sofa downstairs.*

*On the Monday I went to work ; I left off at four o'clock and went home. The house began to smell very faint ; with that I made a fire in the bedroom and commenced to mutilate the body. Kept on until half-past nine p.m. I then took some portions of the body and threw them away, arriving home at half-past ten. That night slept on the sofa again. Went to work*

*again the next day ; went home about four o'clock and did the same. The same the next night.*

*On Wednesday carried some more portions of the body in a pail-basket to another part of the city.*

*Thursday—work same, and returned early. The head had been previously put in a saucepan and put on the fire, to keep the stench away. I then broke it up and distributed it about Thorpe ; came home and emptied the pail in the “cockey” in Bishopsgate Street, with the entrails, etc. I then put the hands and feet in the same saucepan, in the hope that they might boil to pieces.*

*On Friday I went to work, and went home early and disposed of all the remains of the body, hands and feet included, that night, because I knew I should not be able to be home on Saturday until late.*

*On the Sunday morning I burnt all the sheets, nightgown, pillow cases, and bed-tick, and all that had any blood about them. The blankets, where there was any blood, I cut in small pieces, and distributed them about the city, and made away with anything that had any appearance of blood about it.*

*The long hair, on my return from Thorpe, I cut with a pair of scissors into small pieces, and they blew away as I walked along.*

*I also state I never saw or knew my present wife until June 21st, 1852, twelve months after the occurrence.*

*I hereby give authority to place the above facts before the Home Secretary and Baron Pigott ; but I request that this may not be published at present.*

*Taken in the presence of the undersigned, this 13th day of April, 1869, 2.45 p.m.*

*William Sheward.*

*J. Godwin Johnson, visiting Magistrate.*

*Robert Wade, Chaplain of the Norwich City Gaol.*

*John Howarth, Governor of the said Gaol.*

Sheward bore himself with remarkable calmness and fortitude on the gallows, merely expressing a hope that his present wife would be spared any revilings or derision because of his shameful end. He said that he was tired of life and deserved to die.

He was, however, in some respects as insensible and callous as most murderers of his type. His conscience urged him to confession and expiation after many years, but he could, nevertheless, recite the horrible details of his butchery without a blush or a tremor, and refer to the murder as a mere "occurrence." That part of the confession which bears on the motive for the crime is so incoherent as to be meaningless, though it is probable that Sheward killed his wife in a sudden burst of passion and rage, and that the deed was not premeditated.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE ACCUSER ACCUSED

THE Stepney Murder, which was one of the sensations of the year 1860, is often referred to, being of a kind to live in memory and story, but the only accounts of it that I have ever seen have been rather bald and inadequate. The full and true facts were remarkable enough to have justified the inclusion of the case in the "Notable British Trials," but, for some reason or other, no one has yet undertaken that task. Be mine the hand to rescue the story from comparative oblivion, and to relate the true circumstances attending the trial, conviction, and execution of a very notable malefactor. The case had its peculiar features, and the justice of the verdict and sentence was much disputed in legal circles at the time. It was thought in some quarters that the case for the prosecution had not been proved, that the evidence was far from convincing, and that the facts were still enveloped in a good deal of mystery.

There was, however, no sympathy with the condemned man on the part of the general public, and very little pity. Not a hand was lifted or a voice raised to save him from the gallows, it being the popular belief that James Mullins was not only guilty of a particularly brutal murder, but had also endeavoured to fasten his own culpability on

the shoulders of an innocent man in order to obtain the large reward that was offered for the discovery of the assassin.

The British people have a natural dislike of informers and an inherent distrust of "blood money." When Mullins, by means of a trick, tried to divert suspicion from himself by implicating Walter Thomas Emm he practically sealed his own fate, and the public conscience was stirred against him from that hour. But for that fatal error, the outcome of fear and greed, it is quite likely that his guilt would never have been brought home to him.

The victim of this strange tragedy was a widow named Mary Emsley, who was about seventy years of age, and who resided in Grove Road, Stepney.

She was the widow of a builder and house speculator, who, seeing the possibilities of the district, had in his lifetime run up a large number of small, mean houses in Stratford, Bow, and Bethnal Green. At his decease he left his entire property to his widow, who was consequently in receipt of a large income, which was said to be at least £5,000 a year.

Mrs. Emsley was not a pleasant person. She was a woman of extremely parsimonious habits, and stinted herself of everything save the bare necessities of life. The houses which formed her property were mostly let to families of working men at weekly rentals, and she was inexorable in demanding that these should be forthcoming at the moment on a Monday morning that she or her agent called to collect them. She dwelt alone in the Grove Road house, which was her own property, and the only domestic help she allowed herself was that of a

charwoman who occasionally came in to clean the place.

Whatever her eccentricities, however, she was particularly acute in the management of her house property, herself purchasing the necessary materials for repair and decoration whenever she could pick up a bargain, and employing jobbing workmen—persons not in regular employ—in doing the necessary work. The old woman, who really trusted no one, personally collected as many of her rents as she could manage ; for the rest, she employed irregular agents, first one and then another. She was extremely cautious and timid, and there were only a few persons that she would admit to the house. In the evening, when she had closed her shutters and locked her door, she would never, or only very rarely, admit any person, however well known to her. She was, moreover, of violent temper, and when put out sulky and morose.

Mrs. Emsley was last seen alive about seven o'clock on the evening of Monday, August 13th, 1860 ; two persons living in the opposite house then observed her sitting at her bedroom window. On the following days, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, numerous persons called at the house, wishing to see her on various matters of business, but their knocks and rings were unanswered, and, assuming the old woman to be out, they went away. The continued silence of the house, however, and its unaltered appearance from day to day, occasioned some comment among the neighbours, none of whom, however, were much alarmed thereby. Mrs. Emsley's eccentric habits were widely known, and it was thought that she might be away on business in connection with some houses she owned in the Balham-Tooting district.



Yet if ever a woman invited the attention of a potential murderer this one did. She was known to be rich and miserly and to live alone. She was reported to keep large sums of money in a house not very securely guarded, and she was old and not very robust or active. The neighbourhood, even then densely populated, was a rough one, and reports of Mrs. Emsley's opulence might easily have reached the ears of vicious and unscrupulous persons. All things considered, it was rather remarkable that Mrs. Emsley was not murdered much sooner than she was.

Among the persons she occasionally employed was a man named Emm, a shoemaker by trade, living in Emsley's brickfields, Bethnal Green. This man collected her rents in some districts and looked after that property, and he seems to have been trusted to some extent by the old woman, to whom he used to bring sums of money from time to time.

On Friday, the 17th, the fourth day after the widow had been last seen, this person went to Mr. Rose, a solicitor who had sometimes acted for her, and to a Mr. Firth, who was connected by marriage with Mrs. Emsley, and made a statement to them, the result of which was that they gave the police authority to force an entrance to the house.

They knocked at the front door, but receiving no reply went through the adjoining house and entered by the garden door at the back. In a front room on the second floor was the body of Mrs. Emsley, her head near the doorway, and the body, in fact, so close to the landing as to prevent the door being shut to. She was lying at full length on her left side, and it was quite clear that she

had been brutally murdered. There was a large opening in the back of the skull extending deeply into the brain, and that injury seemed to be the result of repeated blows, and was quite sufficient to account for death. The doctor who was called in stated that small portions of the skull were carried completely through the interior substance of the brain. There were several other wounds—one of which, inflicted over the left ear, which had driven in the whole of the temple bone on that side, would also have caused death. There was also a lacerated wound above the left eyebrow. She had apparently been dead three or four days.

In front of her was a bundle of wallpapers, and she had two pieces under her arm. There was a large pool of blood round the poor woman's body, and on the landing outside was a bloody footprint pointing from the room. There were also splashes of blood on the walls. The front door of the house was latched and not bolted, and the most careful examination of the premises revealed nothing to indicate that there had been a forcible entry. The bed appeared not to have been slept in and the old woman was fully dressed. This and other circumstances pointed to the murder having been perpetrated on the Monday night between the hours of seven o'clock, when she was last seen alive, and eleven o'clock, which was her usual hour of retiring, and it was thought that the murderer must be some person sufficiently known to and trusted by the old woman as to induce her to admit him to the house.

The motive was clearly robbery. The rooms had been ransacked and some property stolen, but it was impossible to say to what extent the miscreant had enriched himself.

It is improbable that he secured much cash, for the police came upon a sum of forty-eight pounds in notes, gold and silver secreted under some wood and coal in the coal-cellar, and there may have been other hidden hoards.

The reconstruction of the crime, in fact, pointed to some person, perfectly well-known to Mrs. Emsley, having called at the house—it was number nine in Grove Road, by the way—at some time after dark, which would be about ten o'clock, being admitted, and then taken to the room upstairs to view the paper hangings there. The old woman was in the act of showing these patterns to her visitor when he suddenly took advantage of her back being momentarily turned to strike her a terrific blow with some instrument like a plasterer's hammer. Other blows were inflicted after she had fallen to the floor, the edge of the hammer causing the injury above the eyebrow.

The most diligent enquiries on the part of the police failed to bring to light any circumstance which might lead to the apprehension of the murderer, and the original reward of £100 was increased to £300. On September 8th, a man named James Mullins came forward with information which promised to have the effect of clearing up the mystery.

Mullins, a man fifty-eight years of age, was by trade a bricklayer and plasterer, who had formerly been in the police and the Irish constabulary. He was described as being "of intelligent and rather prepossessing appearance" in one account of the trial that I have seen, but, if so, the model in the Chamber of Horrors at Tussaud's rather belies him. He was somewhat bald in front, with a high forehead, but his straggling locks, turning grey at the sides of his head, his ragged whiskers, and the somewhat wild,

staring expression of his eyes, were not calculated to impress one favourably. The desperate, haggard aspect he presented at the trial may not, however, have been his habitual appearance.

Mullins had been fairly regularly employed by Mrs. Emsley on various odd jobs, and he was well acquainted with the man Emm, who, thinking that something had happened to the widow, had first given the alarm. Sergeant Tanner, of the detective police, who had the case in hand, had first interviewed Mullins on August 28th, when he was brought to the police station that enquiries might be made of him. On September 8th, a few days after the reward offered had been increased to £300, the man called at Tanner's house in Wood Street, Stepney, and intimated that he had a statement to make concerning the murder.

He said that he now had suspicions of a person he thought was the guilty party, and that he had been watching the man in question. Tanner asked to whom he referred, and he replied, "Emm." He said that that morning he went to Emsley's brickfield at five o'clock to watch Emm, pretending to be picking herbs. He then saw Emm come out of his house and go to a ruin fifty yards away and bring out a large parcel, which he took indoors. He came out again in ten minutes, and appeared to be looking about him. He had a small parcel in his hand, about the size of a pint pot. Emm, he said, went to a shed close by, adjoining his house, and, going inside, remained about two minutes, and came out again without the parcel. Tanner asked what he thought the parcel contained, and Mullins replied that he could not say. Mullins then proposed that they should go to the field that night, but the detective said he could not do that until he had seen

his superior, Inspector Thornton. Mullins asked him to do nothing in the matter without him, and Tanner said he would send word to the informer's address at Oakham Street, Chelsea, next morning. Mullins knew of the reward, and said, "If this goes off all right I'll take care of you."

Sergeant William Thomas, also of the detective police, went next morning to 11, Oakham Street, leaving Inspector Thornton and Sergeant Tanner in a cab outside the house. Mullins was there and he said, "Thomas, I took you to be Tanner when I saw you drive up. You know I am clever in these matters. I have been working day and night to discover the murderer of Mrs. Emsley, and I have found him out." Thomas said, "Whom do you suspect?" and Mullins replied, "The man Emm, who gave evidence at the inquest. No one had better opportunities than he had, as he was in the habit of taking to Mrs. Emsley small sums of money, and would be admitted at any time." Thomas asked if the old woman would have admitted him—Mullins—and he answered, "No; she would have called to me from the window or the area."

The four men, Thornton, Tanner, Thomas and the informer, then drove to Emsley's field, where they saw "the ruin" which Mullins had referred to, and the shed adjoining. The brickfield, though private property, was an open one which any person could always enter. When they reached the field they saw Emm and a man standing at the opposite end of it from Emm's cottage. Mullins was told to remain where he was, and Tanner and Thornton went to Emm and told him they had information against him, but did not say that Mullins had supplied it. Tanner

searched his cottage, in the presence of his wife, and afterwards the shed, but could find nothing.

He went from the cottage to so inform Inspector Thornton, when Mullins came forward and said, "You have not half searched the place. Mrs. Emm stood all the while with her back to you. Come, and I'll show you."

Tanner said, "No, we don't want Emm to know that you are our informant." They then walked towards the shed again, and when they were close to it Mullins said, "Look there; now pull that b—— slab," pointing to a large stone slab in the shed. Sergeant Thomas then looked behind the stone and brought out a parcel which was tied with a piece of string that might have been the string of an apron. It contained three small spoons and one large one. The small spoons were stamped with the letters "W.P." There was also a cheque, which had been mentioned in the handbill offering the reward, drawn by Pickering and Co., and two lenses. Mullins asked if they had found anything, and rubbed his hands and laughed with unholy glee when he was told that they had. The policemen took both Emm and Mullins to the station. The former was charged first, and then Inspector Thornton addressing Mullins, said, "And you, too, will be detained and charged on suspicion of being concerned in the murder."

Mullins went very white with anger and apprehension, and said, "Is this the way I am to be served after giving you the information?" He was searched, and they found his shoe tied with a piece of waxed string.

Mullins would appear to have had a temporary lodging at 33, Barnsley Street, though his wife and children lived at the house in Oakham Street, Chelsea, which was kept

by a man named Kelly. The police went to the former address first, and had to break open the door of Mullins's room, which was locked. They found on the chimney-piece a bit of tape exactly corresponding to the tape with which the parcel found in the shed was tied. The ends of the tape corresponded exactly with each other. A piece of wax and a hammer were also found in the man's room, while at Oakham Street they got from Mullins's wife a spoon marked "W.P." It was of ordinary metal and practically worthless, but it was of the same kind as the two found in the parcel, though not so much used.

Inspector Thornton and Sergeant Tanner were intelligent police officers, and something in Mullins's conduct and manner at the time of the parcel incident convinced them of his complicity in the crime, whereas the behaviour of Emm, who appeared to be staggered by the accusation, was much less open to suspicion. It seemed to be likely that the person who had made up the parcel had placed it behind the stone slab with the express view of its speedy recovery. The articles it contained were of no value, and the cheque, which had been handed to Mrs. Emsley on the very day of the murder, that is, the Monday, was of no use to the person who had stolen it. If Emm had been the murderer, was it not much more likely that he would have destroyed these tokens of his guilt? Mullins, on the other hand, might have preserved them with no other object than to incriminate the innocent Emm. The one certainty of an otherwise doubtful case was that the person who had made up and hidden the parcel was concerned in the murder, and there were not lacking circumstances which indicated the informer as the person who had placed it where he meant it to be found.

It was, for instance, tied with waxed string. Mullins, as a plasterer, had no use for cobbler's wax, but Emm was a shoemaker, and would use it in his trade. The expoliceman, greedy for the reward and eager to direct suspicion from himself, had carefully provided himself with cobbler's wax to fasten the parcel with waxed string.

Emm, as I shall show presently, was luckily able to satisfy the police as to his movements on the Monday night and the Tuesday morning, and he was speedily released from custody. Later on, Mullins also produced evidence in proof of an alibi, but his witnesses, being his own sons, were interested parties, and they involved themselves in many contradictions and inconsistencies at the trial.

There was, however, one circumstance which pointed in the most marked manner to Mullins's guilt, and which the defending counsel was quite unable to explain away.

Mrs. Emsley, on the day of the murder, had called at the house of her niece, Mrs. Elizabeth Gotz, and had dined there at about one o'clock. Mullins came to the house while the old woman was there, and had asked for a particular key, a key of peculiar design, which he received and took away with him. That same key was found, with others, in a basket on a table in the old woman's bedroom, and a fair inference was that Mullins had called at the house that evening to return the key. How else did it get back to the basket?

The direct evidence arrayed against the prisoner at the trial, evidence which was called to prove him at or near the house on the fatal evening, was not altogether satisfactory, and, as will be seen presently, the judge



rather found fault with certain parts of the case for the Crown. His impartial summing-up was rather favourable to the accused than otherwise, though the fatal defect of the case remained throughout—if Emm did not put the parcel where it was found who else but Mullins could have done so?

In this connection I will quote from Emm's evidence as a witness for the Crown, which evidence established his alibi :

“I am a shoemaker by trade, and live in Emsley's brick fields, Bethnal Green. I collected Mrs. Emsley's rents, and did odd jobs for her. On Sunday, the 9th of September, I was taken into custody charged with having in my possession a parcel belonging to the deceased. I never put the parcel into the outhouse, and had nothing whatever to do with it. I never saw it until it was produced in my presence by Sergeant Thomas. On the afternoon of the previous Monday I saw the deceased for the last time at the the end of Barnsley Street, Stepney. After that, on the evening of the same day, at about nine o'clock, I went in a pony-cart to Bromley and Stratford, and got home about half-past eleven. My wife, a woman named Buckle, and a man named Rumbold accompanied me, and, in proof of this statement, I tender the toll ticket we got that night. On the solemn oath I have taken I had nothing whatever to do with the murder of Mrs. Emsley. It was at a quarter-past nine on the Tuesday morning that I got up, being unwell, and it was a quarter or twenty minutes past ten when I left my cottage. My wife and daughter were there. On the day the parcel was found I never went into the outhouse. I went to No. 9, Grove Road on the Wednesday, and was unable to enter. On

the Friday, thinking something was wrong, I gave information to Mr. Rose."

The three persons who had accompanied Emm on this journey to Stratford corroborated his statement, and I may add that his daughter, Susannah, and his son, a boy ten years old, both swore to having seen Mullins in the brickfield on September 8th, when the parcel was alleged to have been placed in the shed.

The trial of James Mullins took place at the Central Criminal Court on Thursday and Friday, October 25th and 26th, 1860, before the Lord Chief Baron and Mr. Baron Martin. Mr. Sergeant Parry conducted the case for the prosecution and Mr. Best appeared for the prisoner, who pleaded "Not Guilty" in a loud and confident tone. A mass of evidence was produced, some of it not very relevant to the issue, and I shall only give the important parts of this testimony.

A Dr. Gill, who was the first medical man to examine the body of the deceased, described the nature of the wounds, and said that a plasterer's hammer found at the prisoner's lodging was the kind of implement that could have inflicted the injuries. Upon comparing the edge of the hammer with one of the wounds above the eyebrow of the victim it exactly corresponded and fitted. He saw the body on the Friday in the middle of the day, and what he observed was quite consistent with the death of the woman by blows on the previous Monday. He could not speak to a few hours, or even to a day, either way.

Several witnesses, neighbours of the deceased, deposed to having seen her at the window between seven and eight o'clock on Monday evening, August 13th; and one had noticed at twelve o'clock that night that the

shutters were still open. This was so unusual that she noticed it particularly.

These witnesses further stated that on the following days they saw several persons call at the house and knock repeatedly without result. One of these callers was a boy who had to deliver a letter to Mrs. Emsley. He called at the house at 8.30 on the morning of Tuesday the 14th, and another was the son of Emm, who was sent by his father to get some brass taps, pursuant to an arrangement made the previous day. A man also called there at 10 a.m. on the Tuesday with a view to inspecting some paperhangings the old woman had for sale, but could make no one hear.

Mr. Carryer, of Pickering and Carryer, manufacturing chemists, said he was one of Mrs. Emsley's tenants. He drew the cheque found in the parcel on Monday, the 13th, and gave it to the deceased at noon on that day. It was dated the 14th, but that was a mistake. It had never been through his bankers and had never been paid.

Mr. Joseph Biggs, resident at 25, Pollard's Row, Bethnal Green, said he knew Mrs. Emsley, and was in the habit of calling upon her on Sunday evenings. He did so on Sunday evening, August 12th. Deceased had deposited her plate with him, and he recognised as her property a silver pencil-case, which, at her request, he had returned to her some four months before the murder. (This pencil-case, on which a minute spot of blood was found, was sold by the prisoner's wife a day or two before his arrest.) The two lenses found in the parcel had belonged to Mrs. Emsley and witness had seen them at her house.

Mrs. Elizabeth Gotz identified the pencil-case as the

property of her aunt, Mrs. Emsley, and said that the teaspoons, marked "W.P.", which was a trade mark, also belonged to her. She also spoke as to the key, which, in witness's presence on the Monday, the deceased handed to the prisoner.

Elizabeth George said that she had attended Mrs. Emsley as charwoman. She usually went there on the Saturday. On Saturday, August 4th, a quantity of paperhangings arrived, and Mullins carried them upstairs. The prisoner usually called on Saturdays to be paid for such work as he had done, and he came to the house on the Saturday before the murder, when the deceased handed him six shillings. The teaspoons produced were exactly like those belonging to the deceased, but she would not swear to them.

John Raymond, a tailor, stated that he saw the prisoner on the evening of Monday, August 13th, coming out of a men's lavatory at the end of Grove Road. It was then about ten minutes to eight o'clock. On coming out the prisoner went round by the Earl of Aberdeen public house, which would lead to No. 9, Grove Road. The man wore a billycock hat, and he was certain it was Mullins.

If the evidence of John Mitchell, labourer at the docks, could be credited, the prisoner must have stayed in the house several hours after committing the murder, for this man swore to seeing him coming across Stepney Green at five o'clock on Tuesday morning. He said he saw his face quite distinctly. His pockets were very bulky. The prisoner looked very excited and trembled all over.

(This witness was subjected to a severe cross-examination, but he stuck to his statement. He said that he went

to the house of detention, and there picked out Mullins as the man he had seen. He had not heard of the reward that had been offered when he made his statement to the police, but he admitted that he "expected to get a portion of the reward.")

William Rowland was in the habit of doing work for Mrs. Emsley. On Monday, August 13th, he saw the prisoner at work in one of her houses. On the Friday he saw him again at the house of a Mr. Gaffing, and the latter spoke of an old woman having been found dead in Grove Road. Mullins "fell into a tremor, and his countenance changed when he heard this." On Wednesday, September 5th, he saw the prisoner at the house of a Mr. Cooper, and "found he was very much changed in appearance." He never saw him in a billycock hat.

Robert Friar, barman of a public-house in Chelsea, swore to buying a pencil-case from Mrs. Mullins. It was not straight, and he bent it straight. He also cleaned it as it was very dirty.

Ann Cooper deposed to the prisoner and his wife having lodged at her house in Orford Street, Chelsea. On the day before they left to go to 11, Oakham Street, a boot was thrown out of the window into the backyard. It was the boot produced. (This boot, supposed to belong to Mullins, was said to correspond with the bloodstained impression on a piece of board cut from the landing of the deceased's house, but the evidence with respect to this was not very convincing, and the judge advised the jury not to attach too much importance to it.)

Dr. Gill, recalled, said that he had examined the boot with a microscope, and found three human hairs in different parts of it, one between the sole and the welt.

The hair corresponded with that of Mrs. Emsley, some of which he had in his possession. The doctor, in cross-examination, agreed that human hair was used by plasterers. A spot of blood was, he said, on the pencil-case, which he had examined under the microscope, but he could not swear to it being human blood.

Such, in brief, was the case for the Crown, to rebut which the prisoner's counsel, Mr. Best, made an impassioned speech.

His rhetoric enabled him to rather weaken much of the testimony that had been given, and he was particularly hard on those witnesses who had professed to have seen the prisoner either on his way to or returning from the house at the time of the murder. He censured the police for having made only a superficial search of Emm's premises, and though he was careful not to deliberately accuse the latter, there ran through the whole speech a suggestion that the alibi should not be relied on, and that Emm might be guilty after all. He said that the evidence he should call to establish an alibi for Mullins was quite as trustworthy as that called on behalf of Emm. The murderer, he said, must have had stains of blood about his clothing, but Mullins's garments showed no such stains. The cheque, which was in the deceased's possession at noon on Monday, might have been handed by her later that same day to someone else in the way of business. The old lady herself might have given the pencil-case to Mullins to measure something, and he have forgotten to return it. There was no mark of blood on the boot, though counsel for the Crown had claimed that it had left a bloodstained footprint on the landing. If that boot had indeed made the impression on the board, would not

some of the blood have soaked into the leather? Where was the other boot? Why was only one brought forward?

With regard to the hammer, all plasterers used hammers in the course of their trade. There was no proof that a hammer was the instrument with which the murder had been committed, and it was to be observed that the prisoner's hammer bore no marks of blood. "Even if," said counsel, "the prisoner had put that parcel in the hovel, yet, if his witnesses were speaking the truth, he had not committed the murder."

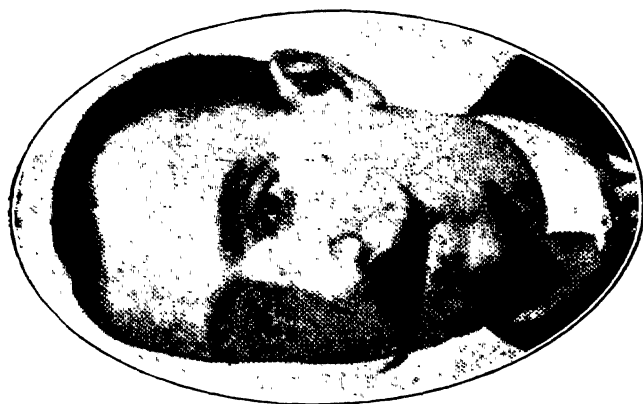
The appalling fact that stared him in the face, and which he would not shrink from, was the charge that the prisoner put the articles into the parcel from the wretched motive of getting the reward; but he appealed to the jury not to be led away by prejudice in such a case as this. He called them not to set up in that court an altar to an unknown god—the god of prejudice—and not to make the man at the bar the first sacrifice, the first victim whose blood would be sprinkled on that altar.

Mr. Best then called several witnesses, including the prisoner's two sons, the effect of whose evidence was to show that Mullins could not have committed the murder if it took place on the Monday night or early on the Tuesday morning. Under cross-examination, John Mullins and Thomas Mullins both contradicted themselves, and the manner in which they gave their testimony was not calculated to impress the court.

Their story was that the prisoner returned to his lodging at 33, Barnsley Street, at a little before seven o'clock on the Monday evening, that he sat with them smoking and talking until eight o'clock, and that he went to bed at nine, John Mullins sleeping in the same room.



STINIE MORRISON,  
a few years before the murder.



LEON BERON.



PATRICK MAHON.





The prisoner, according to John, rose at half-past seven on the Tuesday morning, and spent some time "washing the passage and stopping the nail-holes," whatever that may have meant. The prosecuting counsel, however, called a witness, Caroline Brinson, who was in the house at Barnsley Street all that day, to swear that "the passage ceiling was water-washed on the Thursday, not the Tuesday.

Mr. Sergeant Parry's reply upon the whole case was very powerful. He pointed out the contradictions into which the prisoner's sons had fallen, and which made it evident that they "had been tutored to give this evidence, which, from the beginning to the end, was entirely false."

Whoever put the parcel in the shed, said counsel, must have been the murderer, and he pointed to the distinct manner in which Emm had been cleared.

The summing-up of the Lord Chief Baron was a very cautious one, and, as already indicated, he rather diminished the effects of some of the evidence brought forward by the Crown. He said that in the evidence they had heard there were several matters which did not weigh with him much against the prisoner. The hammer produced was a common plasterer's hammer, and there was nothing sinister in the prisoner having in his possession one of the tools of his trade. As to the waxed string and the tape, he did not attach much importance to them. It was, however, clear that besides Emm no other person than the prisoner could have put the parcel in the shed, and, under the circumstances, it was no wonder that the police at once suspected the prisoner. What could be the object in concealing such comparatively worthless articles as two lenses and some metal spoons? As to the cheque, one would have thought the murderer would have

been only too anxious to get rid of it the moment he came near to a candle or a fire. It was valueless to him, and would furnish damning evidence against any person in whose possession it was found. Did this look like the concealment by a thief, and a murderer, of property which might have been so easily destroyed, or was it a "plant"—something put there to create suspicion against another party?

His lordship then cautioned the jury against placing too much confidence to the supposed recognition of the Prisoner on the morning following the murder; mistakes as to identity were common incidents to legal proceedings. Some stress was laid upon the boot which was said to correspond with the bloody print on the piece of flooring, but before this evidence was accepted the jury must be satisfied that such a similarity existed between the boot and the footprint that the one must necessarily be a copy of the other.

The case against the prisoner appeared to him to rest chiefly on the conclusion to which the jury would come respecting the parcel. Who made up that parcel? The counsel for the defence said that Mrs. Emsley might have parted with the cheque before the murder was committed, but that was no explanation of its being in the parcel. If it was inferred that the cheque might have come innocently into the prisoner's possession, the jury had a right to know how and when he received it.

Upon the whole case, did the evidence, he asked, lead irresistibly to the conclusion that the prisoner alone was guilty? In the words of Lord Tenterden, did it bring to their minds that firm persuasion, that degree of conviction, upon which persons would act in their own

important affairs? If so, it was their duty to act upon this persuasion. It was to the interest of the public that no innocent man should suffer, and it was also to their interest that the guilty should not escape.

The jury, after deliberating upwards of three hours, found the prisoner "Guilty," whereupon Mullins, in a wild and excited manner, made a vehement protestation of his innocence, declaring that the evidence called on his behalf was true.

The Lord Chief Baron, as was the custom at the time, made quite a speech in sentencing the prisoner, and, generally, he supported the verdict, but that there was some lingering doubt in his own mind as to the strength of the case for the prosecution was clearly shown by some of the observations he let drop. He said, for instance :

"I am still of opinion that some of the circumstances urged against you, instead of increasing the weight of evidence for the prosecution, only tended to embarrass the jury in coming to a conclusion," and, "If you can even now make it manifest that you are innocent of the charge, I do not doubt that every attention will be paid to any cogent proof laid before those with whom it rests to carry out the sentence of the law."

The law papers of the period, and the legal profession generally, took up the case of this criminal, and endeavoured to cast doubt on the evidence upon which he had been convicted, if not upon his actual guilt, but public opinion was universally hostile to a man who, it was thought, had endeavoured to put the noose round the neck of an innocent person.

In a statement written by Mullins before his execution he categorically declared his belief that "Emm was

innocent of the murder of Mrs. Emsley," but he threw no light whatever upon the business of the parcel. He made no attempt to explain his possession of the cheque or the other articles, and absolutely ignored that, the most damning part of the case against him. He wrote:

*I make this statement in order to let the public know that my life has been taken away by the most gross and most false swearing evidence that was ever given in a court of justice, all through the hopes of getting money. I say that they have no right to any part of the reward, and I hope they will get none of it."*

To what particular parts of the evidence the convict took exception is not quite clear, but it was known that he was very bitter against the police, Inspector Thornton in particular.

To my mind, the fatal fact against Mullins was the cheque. If he had not placed that in the parcel, the defence could have taken this line: "We admit that the prisoner put the lenses and the spoons in the parcel which he hid behind the slab, and that he did so in the wicked design of securing the reward by the conviction of an innocent man. But that does not mean that he murdered Mrs. Emsley. He had stolen the lenses and the spoons while he was at the house on an occasion some days before the murder—also the pencil-case—and he used them to fasten the crime upon Walter Emm."

The cheque, however, was a different matter. It had only been paid to the old woman a few hours before she was slain, and it could only have been taken from the house by the murderer.

Not until after his conviction was anything said about

James Mullins's criminal antecedents. He had, as formerly stated, been in both the English and Irish police. While in the latter force, he was employed as a spy upon the movements of certain political conspirators, in which he rendered good service, and in tracing the secret instigators of certain agrarian crimes. He was afterwards a sergeant in the K division of the Metropolitan police, from which he was superannuated on a pension of thirty-five pounds per annum.

He then became an officer on the South-Eastern railway, where he was detected in a serious robbery, for which he was convicted and sentenced to six years' penal servitude. While undergoing this sentence in Leicester Gaol his conduct was so bad that he was removed, in 1854, to the Dartmoor prison as "incorrigible." While on their way thither, he and another convict made a desperate attempt to escape, and nearly killed a warder in doing so. On his conviction he forfeited his pension. He was also said to have been concerned in the great gold-dust robberies.



## CHAPTER IX

### WAS ROBERT EMOND MAD ?

THAT admirable writer, William Roughead, has dealt so well and faithfully with famous Scottish criminal trials that I feel a little diffident in relating the story of Robert Emond for fear I should be suspected of encroaching on his preserves. The case in question, however, a very interesting and peculiar one, has, so far as I am aware, never been told, and I am anxious to rescue it from an undeserved oblivion. It cannot accurately be described as a "Great Murder Mystery" for the reason that no doubt was ever entertained as to the guilt of Emond, but there were unusual circumstances about the double crime, and it is extremely improbable that the culprit would have suffered the extreme penalty in these more enlightened times. More than one mad murderer has been sent to the gallows, and Robert Emond, perhaps, was the maddest of them all. There was no excessive tenderness for convicted criminals a century ago, and if any hand was lifted or voice raised to save this homicidal lunatic from the gallows, contemporary chronicles have no account of it. His state of mind, both before and after the deed, was the subject of no enquiry, because it was nobody's business or concern. The man had been arrested, tried, convicted and condemned, and there, so far as the



authorities were concerned, the matter ended. Robert Emond was hanged at Edinburgh, "before," we are told, "an immense concourse of people," and no attempt whatever was made to stay the executioner's hand. The pathologists and alienists would have got to work on him to-day, and would have decided that he was a criminal lunatic rather than a lunatic criminal.

A hundred years ago there lived at a village called Abbey, near Haddington, on the Firth of Forth, a woman of the name of Franks. She was a widow with two daughters, Madeline, aged sixteen, and Katherine, eleven years old, and she had many relatives living in this part of East Lothian. Her husband had been in rather a good station of life, and had left her fairly well provided for as times were then.

Mrs. Franks was a woman of superior attainments, and she was much looked up to in the small town of Haddington, but it was said of her that she was hasty-tempered and sharp-tongued, and she made no attempt to hide her likes and dislikes.

There was one person for whom she had a marked aversion. That was the husband of her sister, Robert Emond, described at his trial as a "grocer and draper," who lived with his wife at North Berwick. She was constantly finding fault with her brother-in-law, who, she said, was careless and unbusiness-like, too fond of the social glass, and indifferent to his wife's comfort and peace of mind. Whether there was any ground for these complaints or not we cannot determine, but certain it is that there was bad blood between Mrs. Franks and her brother-in-law, and that he nursed a sense of grievance and injury. There is evidence, moreover, that she

was the cause of some mischief between Emond and his wife, and that he strongly resented her interference between them. On one occasion he told a friend of his, one John Dunbar, that "there never would be peace between him and his wife while she and Mrs. Franks corresponded."

Early in October, 1829, a fresh cause of disagreement arose between the parties.

Mrs. Franks sent to Emond's house at Berwick some boxes containing clothes and household linen, her property, and when she herself arrived she found that these had been opened. She accused her brother-in-law of having opened them, and did not mince matters in scolding him. There was much hot language, and Emond, patience exhausted, made use of an expression which was almost of a threatening character. "If you don't keep away from here and from your sister, who you are making as cross-grained as yourself, I won't answer for the consequences," he said, and Mrs. Franks repeated this conversation to her friend and crony, a Mrs. Marion Inglis, who was a near neighbour of hers.

Robert Emond, from all one can learn about him, was a morose, sullen man, given to brooding over real or fancied wrongs, which, in his warped mind, became intolerable injuries. He took to neglecting his business, and spent many lonely hours on the seashore, nursing his grievances and encouraging his desire for revenge. Whether or no he meditated murder at this stage cannot be said with any degree of certainty. He had never been a violent or passionate man, but the gloom of his disposition and his habit of exaggerating trifling differences made him all the more dangerous. He stalked about the

countryside and the foreshore of North Berwick a prey to gloomy reflections, and many of his actions at that period pointed to a disordered mind.

A Scottish newspaper of October 30th, 1829, contained the following :

“In the village of Abbey, about a mile from Haddington, resided a widow, named Franks, and her daughter, a girl about fifteen years of age. Their house was about one hundred or one hundred and fifty yards distant from the village, and was enclosed within a wall four or five feet high. The last time the inmates of this dwelling were seen alive was on Monday morning. Early on Wednesday morning a miller, belonging to the village, was surprised by the piteous squeaking of a pig on the widow’s premises. Conjecturing that the woman might be away from home, and that the animal was in want of food, he was induced to investigate the cause of its outcry. Finding no access by the gate, he scaled the wall ; where the first object that presented itself was the body of the widow, lying in the pigsty, with her throat cut, and otherwise dreadfully mangled. The miller immediately alarmed the villagers, several of whom hurried to the scene. On entering the house, they discovered the girl also a corpse, with her head severely bruised, as if by blows from some heavy instrument. It was found on examination that the widow’s marriage-ring, which she constantly wore, had disappeared, and that her ear-rings had been torn out of her ears. It appeared, on investigation, that the elder female had been murdered on the walk in her garden, for traces of blood were discovered on it, over which gravel had been carefully strewn. Her head was almost severed from her body, and was besides greatly contused. The husband of Mrs. Franks’s sister has been apprehended and charged with the crime.”

This atrocious double crime spread consternation far and wide, especially as the motive appeared to be robbery, and it was at first supposed that a ferocious-looking tramp, seen in the district at about the time the murder might have been done, had committed the deed and got clear away. Circumstances, however, quickly

indicated Robert Emond as the miscreant, and he was taken into custody.

The person who first discovered the double crime, one James Storrie, a miller, was never tired for years after of telling the terrible story of his experience.

He said that the terrified squeaking of the pig first aroused his attention, and he climbed over the garden wall to ascertain the cause. He saw the body of Mrs. Franks, fully clothed, face downwards in the sty, and he came to the conclusion that the murderer had picked her up and cast her into the sty after stunning her with a hatchet and cutting her throat. The key of the outer door was lying inside the window of the kitchen. He gave the alarm at once, and on returning to the house with Alexander Dudgeon, another miller, and two or three others, they searched the place and found the dead body of Madeline Franks in the bedroom. She was partly dressed, and he formed the conclusion that the murders had been perpetrated early on the morning of the 26th.

The superintendent of police at Haddington, John Lloyd, was quickly informed of the affair and he went to the place at about ten o'clock on the morning of the 28th. There was no sign of the house having been broken into. He thought that Mrs. Franks had gone down to feed the pigs and fowls, that she was walking in her garden when the murderer came along, and that he was known to her. The poor woman might have left the back door open or ajar, and there was nothing to prevent an intruder from entering the house and despatching the other inmate.

The blood on the floor of the bedroom had been covered by the carpet. There were footprints in the room, not of a naked foot, but of a person wearing shoes ;

they were in different parts of the room, but chiefly about the body of the girl, and they were quite dry.

The room was in confusion, with the drawers open and the contents strewn about the floor. There was a secret place in one of these drawers, artfully contrived, but that, too, was open, and a stranger was unlikely to have discovered it. The footmarks were chiefly as if the person had been going to the door, and one of the marks was the print of an entire shoe. The others were mostly impressions of the heel. They had been made, Lloyd considered, with an iron heel which had a double rim, with small round tacks between the outer and inner rim. All the marks were apparently of the same shoe, and they were a man's size. There were no marks of tacks on the front part of the shoe. Lloyd had secured a pair of shoes belonging to Robert Emond which exactly corresponded with and fitted these marks.

Lloyd was at the murdered woman's house at six p.m. on the day of the discovery when Emond came into the kitchen. The superintendent said: "Robert, you are the nearest relative of the deceased. Will you not go into the room and see the bodies?" The man replied: "No! No!" and backed away towards the door. He appeared to be about to faint, and the police officer got a chair for him, on which he sat down. He seemed much agitated.

"At that time," said Lloyd at the subsequent trial, "there were some women in the room, 'dressing' the bodies. Having been told soon after that the bodies were 'dressed,' I again asked Emond to go into the room, which he did. The bodies at that time were both covered up. Emond did not look at the bodies, nor at the bed

on which they were, but fixed his eyes on the clock, which was at the furthestmost part of the room. Later that night I got instructions to apprehend Emond, which I did. I found him still sitting in the deceased's kitchen. When I told him he was my prisoner, he asked, in a stammering way, 'For what'? I told him he was accused of the murder of Mrs. Franks and her daughter, when he replied, 'Who could say that?''

Later, Lloyd made a search of Emond's house at North Berwick in the presence of the Sheriff and General Dalrymple, and there found a pair of shoes with iron heels. On the following day he compared the shoes with the footprints in the bedroom of Mrs. Franks's house. He also found a blue coat, a pair of trousers, a shirt, and a pair of worsted stockings. There was a dark mark on one of the shoes, in the hollow between the heel and the front of the foot, which resembled blood. There was blood upon the wristband of the shirt, and in the right-hand pocket of the trousers.

Katherine Franks, the other daughter, a pretty and intelligent child, was staying with Emond and his wife, her aunt, at the time of the murders. She was not, on account of her youth, sworn at the trial, which took place at the Court of Justiciary, Edinburgh, before Lord Gillies, on Monday, February 8th, 1830, but she gave her evidence very clearly, and it went to prove that the accused man had been on bad terms with his wife on account of Mrs. Franks.

The girl stated that on the Sunday before the murders she went to church at North Berwick, leaving her aunt and Emond at home. On her return, immediately after church, she found her aunt with her clothes torn and her back wet.

Her mouth appeared to be bruised, but not cut. She did not complain to her niece, and the three of them partook of dinner together. There were no heated words between her uncle and aunt at the meal or afterwards, but he was very silent and only said that his head ached badly. The prisoner and his wife usually slept together, but on that night he went upstairs to another room, and witness slept with her aunt, who was very careful to secure the door inside. She heard no particular noise during the night, and arose at about eight on the Monday morning. She took a cup of tea to her uncle's room, but could not get in, and he did not reply when she called out. The door was not locked, but fastened inside.

Her aunt appeared to be fearful of Emond having done himself some mischief, and she went for a Mrs. Cron and a Mr. Paterson. The latter obtained a small ladder, and entered the room by a window, afterwards admitting witness and Mrs. Cron. Her uncle was not there, but shortly afterwards he came in, and his appearance was such that Katherine was afraid to look at him. "He was wild-like," said the little girl, "and trembling a lot. His eyes were fixed and staring."

He merely said: "How are you all this morning?" and went and sat by the fire. His stockings and shoes were wet with mud, and she saw him brushing them soon afterwards. She asked where he had been that morning, and he said he had been at Dirleton, walking by the seaside. There was no quarrelling between him and his wife that morning, but he continued to sleep in the room upstairs both on the Monday and the Tuesday. The witness, on being shown the shoes, said: "Those are

the shoes he was brushing, and they were wet at the time."

James Paterson, a teacher, of North Berwick, was Robert Emond's near neighbour. His house was under the same roof with that of the prisoner and was approached by the same garden door, which led to the public street. On the Sunday before the murder of Mrs. Franks, Paterson shut the garden door and fastened it inside, but he found it open when he came down the next morning. On that Monday morning he was asked by Mrs. Cron to go to the door of the room where it was thought that Emond was asleep. He went, but could not get in: the door could not be opened on account of something heavy being placed against it. He, however, by means of a ladder, entered at a window in the roof, which window was ten feet from the ground, but there was a barrel standing under it at the time. The bed in the room had not been disturbed or slept in, and the door was found to have been obstructed by a chest, a basket of clothes, and, above all, a table.

The witness saw Emond in his shop that day, but asked no questions. The prisoner seemed very tired and confused, and he said, "This is a terrible business. I am so confused I don't know what I am doing. Mrs. Franks is the cause of every disagreement between me and my wife." At that time no one had any knowledge of the murders, and the witness did not know to what he was alluding when he spoke of "this terrible business."

According to the witness, Emond said that his wife thought to see Mrs. Franks that day, and asked if he was expected to take any abuse from her. He wanted Paterson to make a division of the shop goods, because he could not live any longer with his wife, "on account of the



disturbance Mrs. Franks had caused." He said that he had gone out by the window at five in the morning : had wandered in the fields, but had "been obliged to return to North Berwick."

John Dunbar, another witness, deposed that he had known the prisoner for some years. Emond had expressed himself very forcibly with regard to Mrs. Franks at various times, and, shortly before the murder, told witness that there "would never be peace between him and his wife while she and her sister corresponded." He saw and spoke to the prisoner on the Tuesday—the murder was supposed to have taken place early on the Monday morning—and he seemed much affected. Dunbar asked what was the matter, and Emond sighed and said that "the devil had been very busy with him."

Alison Webster, who lived at Dirleton, a place on the Haddington road two miles from North Berwick, knew the prisoner and she saw him shortly after eight o'clock on the morning of Monday, October 26th. He called at her shop, and asked for a biscuit and a drink of water, which she supplied. His appearance struck her very much—he looked "different than usual." He was, the witness said, "all blood about the mouth, both above and below." His pantaloons were rolled from his ankles upwards; he was agitated and his "tongue faltered." The witness told him that she was surprised to see him out so early, and he said that he had been walking about the coast for two or three hours. She did not perceive any blood upon his clothes.

John Walker, a slater, of North Berwick, declared that he met Emond at a quarter-past seven on the

Monday morning near a place called Fenton. The prisoner was coming from Haddington, and going towards Dirleton. There were two persons with the witness at the time, and they remarked on his wild appearance. One of them said that Emond was "surely mad." His dress was in disorder, his pantaloons folded up, and he carried a piece of checked cloth in his hand. His mouth was dirty; but it did not strike witness that the stains were of blood. He was staggering in his gait and rather out of breath. He did not speak as he passed witness and his friends, and did not even seem to be aware of them.

William Dalgetty, another witness, also saw the wretched man, fresh from the scene of slaughter, during that morning's wild and purposeless ramble. He met Emond at Dremmill, about six miles from North Berwick, and he was then going in the direction of the latter place. The witness observed a wet, reddish stain on his coat, between the elbow and the hand.

A man named Robert Tait, lately released from the gaol of Glasgow, gave interesting evidence.

He stated that he was brought to Edinburgh on November 21st, and put into ward No. 5 of the prison on the Calton Hill. Daniel A. Murray, who was included in the charge with him, was in the same cell. Emond was, at his own request, allowed to sleep in their cell after November 29th. He slept in the same cell with them two nights, on the Saturday and the Sunday, but not on the Monday because the witness was on that day before the court.

The prisoner, who dreaded to be alone, seemed anxious to talk, and he and the witness had long conversations

together. He gave the witness a short history of his life, but said nothing as to his guilt or innocence of the murders. He said that he had always been very strict in the observance of his religious duties, and that he had tried hard to live by the teachings of the Bible. Even when he was serving as a soldier he had lived a decent, sober life. He and his wife had been "quite comfortable" together for a long time, but had then come to quarrelling because she had been stirred up against him by false reports. He did not say who was responsible for these reports, and the witness did not ask. When Emond talked of these matters his mind seemed to be eased—he appeared to be glad to have someone to confide in.

He further said, with reference to the murders, that he had intended going to church on the Sunday to partake of the Sacrament, but his wife had caused a quarrel and he did not go. He said that he left his house that night or early next morning, and did not know to that day where he went or what he did. He knew nothing till he found himself near his own house again in the morning. He could not account for where he had been. He sought aid in prayer, but could "get no utterance and arose from his knees ashamed." He added, however, that his skin was very tender, and that he should account for the blood upon his clothes by saying that he cut himself when shaving.

On the Tuesday morning, after a man named Adams had been tried and sentenced to death for a theft with violence, Emond remarked to his cell-mates that he did not think a thief should suffer death. He said, "If they are so severe with Adams, what will they do with me, if the charge is made out?" Witness, said, "Did you really

do it, then?" and Emond replied, "Oh, yes, I must have. But do not speak of it. The very thought of it goes to my heart like a knife."

He further explained that all he remembered was going to and being in his sister-in-law's house; that he got entrance to the garden from the private road, and from the garden through the windows to the house. "I then," he said, "had some words with her, and—it was done." He said that he was surprised when he heard of the girl being also dead, for he "had no recollection of seeing her at all."

Daniel A. Murray corroborated much of Tait's evidence, and contributed some testimony of his own. He declared that Emond said he had been "driven mad by gossip and slander," and that his sister-in-law had set his wife against him. She had accused him of things he had never done. He also said he wished he had "left those parts before this thing happened," and added that "the devil had got possession of him and driven him to the deed."

The reports of this trial are not very full or lucid, and I am unable to throw any light on what line of defence, if any, was adopted. The only possible defence, of course, was insanity, but there is no evidence that this was ever advanced. The judge's summing-up took the line that the murders had been planned and premeditated, that the accused had determined on having revenge after the quarrel on the Sunday with his wife. He said that the prisoner, whatever his state of mind at the time, had shown cunning in getting rid of the "implements of death," and had taken away the poor woman's wedding-ring and ear-rings in order to suggest robbery as the motive for the crime. He had also disturbed the drawers with that

object. He described the murders as "hideous in their atrocity," particularly the unnecessary and purposeless killing of the girl.

The jury were in consultation for thirty minutes, and found the prisoner guilty.

Asked if he had anything to say why sentence of death should not be passed, Emond pressed a hand wearily across his brow, and said, "My Lord, I am innocent in intention. I had no thought of killing Mrs. Franks when I left my room that morning, still less of injuring my niece. Blood may be on my hands, but not on my soul. I am willing to suffer the penalty. That is all I need say now."

Robert Emond was executed on Wednesday, March 17th, 1830, in the presence of a vast assembly. When I was at Edinburgh about twenty years ago I came across an old broadsheet which purported to give the "last dying speech and confession" of this malefactor. He freely admitted his guilt, but still declared that he had not gone to his victim's house with any idea of murder in his mind. I quote from the confession the following :

"As I hope to be saved by the mercy of Almighty God, I declare that I was deprived of my senses by the anxiety of mind I suffered on account of Mrs. Franks, who lost no chance or opportunity to poison my wife against me. . . . I could not sleep on the Sunday night after having words with my wife, during which, in my anger, I struck her twice, a thing abhorrent to my better nature. I slept alone that night, and barricaded the door in case my wife came up to me and provoked me to a further display of anger. Before dawn on the Monday morning I got up, dressed myself, and left the house by the window. I wandered about, and at seven o'clock or a little after, found myself at Abbey, near Mrs. Franks's house. I knew she rose early to feed the fowls, and I thought I would speak mildly to her on the subject of refraining from stirring up mischief between my wife and myself.

I meant to ask her to keep away from my place. I got into the garden, and entered the house by the sitting-room window, which was not latched. I heard her in the room upstairs, and called out, 'Mrs. Franks, I want to speak with you.'

"She came to the stair rail, leaned over, and said, 'Wait till I come down.' When she descended she was fully dressed, and in a great state of anger. She said, 'You vagabond, what do you want here? Who gave you the right to enter the house in that manner?'

"I tried to speak fairly, but she would not heed my words, and said, 'I believe you have some evil purpose in forcing your way here, and I will apply to the magistrates for protection.' She called me many ill names, and followed me out through the door on to the garden walk. She stood there, continuing to taunt me, and I backed away to the small shed, which was open. I saw a hatchet lying there on a wooden stool, and I picked it up. . . . I don't know what I said and hardly know what I did, but as she turned to go back to the house, I struck her with it on the skull. She fell instantly, without a cry, and I must have taken out my knife and finished her. As the girl was found dead, I suppose I must have gone into the house and murdered her as well, but I was in a kind of haze, and do not remember striking or cutting her. I was in a fearful state after all was done, and I took the wedding-ring off my sister-in-law's finger and pulled out the drawers to make it appear that a robber had broken in and killed them. I wandered about, scarce knowing what I did, but I think I threw the hatchet and the knife into the water from the seawall, and the ring I tossed into a pool of water near Dirleton. I was beside myself and contemplated suicide, but I believed that I would be committing a great sin if I cheated the gallows, desiring to suffer death for my deeds. I have been a great sinner, but I die in the firm belief that there is mercy above for they who truly repent. I freely forgive all trespassers against me, and pray the forgiveness of those I have injured. Robert Emond, March 15th, 1830."

This lucid and coherent statement may seem to be incompatible with insanity, but there are not wanting indications that another hand than Emond's had the drawing of it up. The condemned man had received an average education, as times were then, but he was dull and stupid at times, and the probability is that the chaplain of the gaol

received his verbal confession and converted it into passable English.

Emond's conduct had been eccentric for some time before the tragedy and there was insanity in the family on his mother's side. One cannot quite accept his statement that he had no notion of murdering Mrs. Franks until the impulse overcame him, because the knife he took with him on the fatal morning was a formidable weapon, and he had been seen to grind it to a razor-like blade on the Saturday before.

That he was a homicidal maniac, with lucid intervals, is, I think, the true explanation of his crime, for no even nearly rational being could have committed it. He made no attempt to get away or to destroy his bloodstained clothing, and he confessed his guilt to the first person he felt he could confide in.

Brutal as the murders were, I do not think Robert Emond would have been hanged to-day.

#### "GIVING THE DOCTOR."

Two remarkable criminals, male and female, were hanged at Edinburgh on August 19th, 1829, for a murder committed in circumstances that were, I should think, unique, and the case served for a long time afterwards as a warning to genial and bibulous gentlemen not to drink with strangers. If Mr. Robert Lamont, merchant and farmer, of Glasgow, had acted with a little more prudence and discretion while travelling by steamboat

from Inverary to his native town, and had taken his potatoes alone, he might have lived many more years to indulge his taste for pale ale and bottled porter.

Another salutary lesson, moreover, could have been derived from the case. Persons who entice strangers to drink with them, and who take the opportunity of their backs being turned to mix laudanum in fatal quantities with their drinks, are liable to be accused of murder if their unsuspecting victim dies of the effects, and, like Mr. and Mrs. John Stewart of unhappy memory, they may come to an untimely and violent end.

It would appear that Mr. Robert Lamont, being in sound health at the time, went to a place called Lochgilphead to transact certain business incidental to his calling, and that his cousin, John Lamont, accompanied him to the vessel, *Toward Castle*, by which boat he proposed to return to the bosom of his family. Robert, who was at that time between fifty and fifty-five years of age, had with him a black leather pocketbook which contained ten one-pound notes, a two-pound note of the Leith bank, and seven guinea notes, in addition to some silver money.

At Bute there came on board a man and woman, both fairly respectably dressed, whom I shall introduce to readers as John Stewart, describing himself as a blacksmith, and, as an act of courtesy, because they were not legally married, Mrs. John Stewart, properly Wright, as to whose profession it would be unkind to be too curious.

The lady, aged about twenty-eight, had some pretensions to good looks, and her bold eye appears to have caught the errant fancy of the two Lamonts, especially Robert, who, at that moment, was sitting in “a small place near the steerage,” where it appears drink could be obtained.



Mrs. Stewart lingering a moment by the door of this place, Robert beckoned her to come in, and, after a coy refusal, she complied. Mr. Stewart, however, followed her in and joined the party, remaining, too, in spite of some pretty plain hints to the effect that he was decidedly *de trop*.

John Lamont, owing to the motions of the vessel, feeling unwell, and being obliged to seek the open air, went on deck, leaving his cousin to entertain the interesting couple, which he did so thoroughly that soon they were on the best of terms. In something less than an hour, while John was still suffering the mental and bodily pangs of that distressing complaint, sea-sickness, his cousin appeared on deck, and said: "I have fallen in with fine company; you had better come down and join them."

Thus urged, John Lamont staggered to his feet and accompanied his relation below, when porter and ale were sent for. Mr. and Mrs. Stewart drank, or appeared to drink, their share, and Mr. Robert Lamont, though he remarked that beer was dear at ninepence the bottle, paid for each supply of liquor. Certainly Mr. Stewart was understood to say something about its "being his turn," but as Mr. Robert was at that moment affectionately pressing the lady's hand beneath the table he felt morally bound, no doubt, to continue to pay for the refreshments.

Before long, however, John Lamont, evidently of a weak stomach, again had to seek the ship's side, and he lost an opportunity to caution his breezy cousin against showing his money so freely before the engaging couple. After the boat had stopped at and left Greenock more ale was sent for, and by now a Mrs. Margaret M'Phail, who turned out to be quite capable of drinking her share,

had joined the little party in the “small room near the steerage.”

Mrs. M’Phail presently, when her third glass had been tasted, remarked on the bitter flavour of the ale, and said she had never tasted any so bad. Stewart then offered to drink the whole, but his wife, in a great state of mind, urged him not to, and spilt the contents of the tumbler—only one was used between them—on the man’s breast. She coaxed Robert Lamont, however, to drink some more of the ale, saying: “This is your drink, dearie; drink some more of it.”

When the *Toward Castle* arrived at Paisley, John Lamont went down to see after his cousin. He found him alone, in a state of utter and complete insensibility, sitting with his head between his knees, and unable to move head or foot. John felt his breast for the pocket-book, but it was not there; the obliging Mrs. Stewart had seen to that. John Lamont, in a great state of mind, rushed up to inform the captain, who came below, and a fresh search revealed the pocket-book in a corner of the cabin, with letters and papers scattered about, but all the money gone.

Stewart and his wife—also the woman M’Phail—were taken down to the cabin, the former lady volubly protesting, and after it was discovered that the man had nineteen pounds on him, for which he could not account, he and his wife were locked in the cabin pending the arrival of the boat at the Broomielaw.

There surgeons were sent for, and three of them went to work on the still unconscious Robert, endeavouring to bring him round, but their efforts were unavailing, and he died next morning at half-past five without ever

becoming sensible. John Lamont was also ill and in pain during the night, while Mrs. M'Phail suffered from sickness and drowsiness. That good woman had also been marked down for robbery, but she did not take enough of the drugged ale to render her unconscious, and she was able to give evidence against the Stewarts at the subsequent trial. She described the suspicious movements of the woman when pouring out the ale, and the opportunities the latter had to transfer the laudanum from the small phial she carried to the tumbler of beer. It further transpired that Stewart had no money when he came aboard, and had been previously obliged to pawn his watch in order to pay the one pound required for their passage. A small bottle, smelling strongly of laudanum, was found in the pocket of his overcoat when the man was searched.

To a fellow-prisoner in the tolbooth of Edinburgh Stewart confessed the whole, and described how the drugging of Robert Lamont was effected. He said he carried the laudanum about with him for the purpose of "giving the doctor," to any person he fell in with likely to have money. The phrase was thieves' slang for dosing a victim into insensibility and then robbing him.

The fascinating Mrs. Stewart was an expert at this game, and travelled with him as a kind of decoy. They had not intended to kill Mr. Lamont, but the woman, according to Stewart, stumbled owing to the roll of the ship just as she was in the act of pouring a few drops into the tumbler, and the unfortunate deceased got, in Stewart's words, "enough laudanum to kill a dozen."

Both prisoners were found guilty of the crime of robbery and murder, and sentenced to death. They were "given

the doctor” at the hands of the common hangman, and the woman died with as much coolness and stoical fortitude as the man. In fact, she behaved, we are told, “with great levity in the condemned cell,” and entertained the warders with ribald songs and stories utterly unfit for ears polite. Stewart behaved with rather more decorum until reaching the scaffold, when he “sang and laughed like a lunatic.”

The good old days, indeed! Three lives taken on account of an overdose of laudanum, and one of them a woman’s.

And only, mark you, a century ago!



## CHAPTER X

### THE CASE OF RICHARD GOULD

THE great criminal trial of the year 1840 was, of course, that of the Swiss valet, François Benjamin Courvoisier, for the murder of Lord William Russell, uncle to the Duke of Bedford, at his residence in Norfolk Street, Park Lane. The rank and age of the victim, the peculiar circumstances of the crime, and the conduct of the man accused of barbarously slaying him in the dead of night, all combined to make the case a memorable one and to throw into the shade contemporaneous events of a like nature. Nothing could have been more unexpected and dramatic than the murderer's sudden and secret confession to his own counsel at the very time that the latter, Mr. Charles Phillipps, had the highest hopes of securing his client's acquittal.

There was not, I think, much doubt in any quarter as to Courvoisier's guilt from the beginning, but the case was enveloped in a certain amount of mystery, and was, moreover, so bungled by the police in charge of the investigation that the jury, but for some belated evidence which only came to hand when the trial was half over, might well have hesitated to convict.

Mr. Phillipps was much criticised in legal circles for having gone, it was said, out of his way to solemnly declare his belief in his client's innocence at the very moment

that he had the latter's confession in his pocket, but it must be admitted in extenuation that he had first consulted with the judge, Chief Justice Tindal, who, being informed of the prisoner's statement, advised Mr. Phillipps that he was bound in honour to carry on with the defence and to do his best to secure an acquittal.

That, indeed, was Phillipps' plain duty, but he rather overstepped the bounds of discretion and propriety when using the expression in his address to the jury that "God Almighty alone knew if the prisoner was guilty," for he then knew it himself. Courvoisier was, however, found guilty, and having made what reparation he could by way of a public confession, was executed at Newgate on July 6th. He died a thoroughly penitent man, and, in spite of the dreadful nature of his crime, he had the pity, if not the sympathy, of all those with whom he came in contact.

Of very different stamp was a young man of the same age accused of the murder of Mr. Templeman in the same year.

This was, in many of its incidents, a mysterious case, but I do not feel that I am doing the man who was tried for the crime an injustice if I say that he was almost certainly guilty, and that it is difficult to see on what grounds the jury acquitted him.

An accurate judgment on an event which happened ninety years ago is hard of attainment, but it is not impossible when, as in this case, all the facts have been handed down to us, and we have the evidence, for and against, to weigh up and consider. This murder was accompanied by robbery; it had plunder for its motive. It is as nearly certain as anything can be that the person who entered the

dead man's cottage and committed the robbery was also guilty of the murder ; one cannot separate the two offences. Yet Richard Gould, alias Arthur Nicholson, was found not guilty of the murder, and then, on the eve of emigration to Australia, was re-arrested, tried for the robbery and convicted, a conclusion that, reviewing the case as a whole, appears a little illogical.

The attitude of the authorities at the time, however, appears to have been something like this :

"We think it extremely probable that Gould was concerned in the murder of Mr. Templeman, and he may, indeed, have been the sole perpetrator of that crime. The evidence, however, is of such a nature that it would be dangerous to send him to death on account of it. As, however, he was clearly concerned in the robbery, and we do not think he should be allowed to go scot free, we have convicted him for the minor offence."

Islington, a century ago, had preserved much of its rural aspect, and the parts that lay beyond the famous "Angel" were still open country. There were a number of scattered farmhouses and straw-thatched cottages which were hardly better than sheds in the fields and lanes that lay off the Great North Road.

In 1840 there was living in one of these poor cottages, situated in Pocock's Fields, off the Barnsbury Road, an elderly man of small property named Templeman.

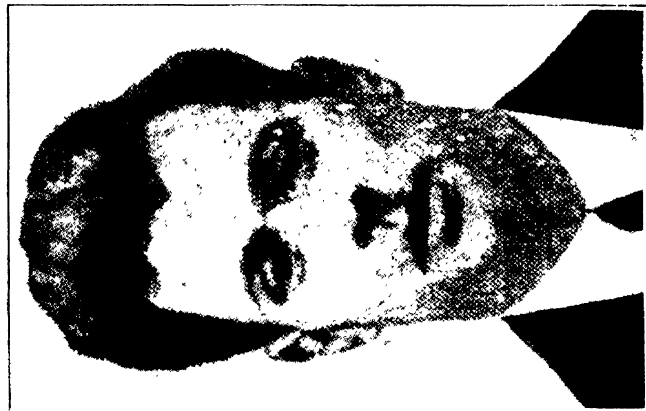
This person came of quite respectable stock, and was of good education and address. Why he lived in an old and dilapidated cottage when his means would have permitted him at least a decent habitation cannot be said, but he had made it his home for some years, and the persuasions of his relations to go and live with them fell on



unheeding ears. Perhaps he preferred his state of independence, and he may have been rather proud of the fact that, in his way, he was "a somebody" in the district. His income, though small, was quite sufficient for his needs, but he liked to be thought better off than he actually was, and he had a weakness for exaggerating his independence into an imaginary state of affluence. He was fond of showing sums of money to his neighbours as evidence of his wealth, and it was thought in the vicinity that he was quite a rich man. On one occasion, shortly before his tragic death, he exhibited a banknote for fifty pounds, but, as it afterwards turned out, this was a spurious note, a specimen of the "Bank of Engraving," and worthless.

On a Monday morning, March 16th, 1840, Mr. Templeman went out to collect the rents of a few small houses which belonged to him, and when he came home in the evening he told a woman who was in the habit of preparing his meals and cleaning his room that he had "a pocket full of silver." The woman left him at shortly before nine, and he was then ready for bed, but when her daughter, early on the Tuesday morning, called at the cottage with some writing-paper he had asked her to procure for him she could not obtain admission or make the old man hear. The door was fastened—there was no means of entrance at the back—and the shutters down.

She went back and told her mother that Mr. Templeman must be ill, and the woman then went herself to the cottage, and, looking through the window of the bedroom, saw the old man lying on the floor, his hands tied together with a cord, a bloodstained stocking



WM. HENRY PODMORE.



JOHN ROBINSON.



WM. HENRY PODMORE.



fastened over his eyes, and his head smashed and bleeding.

Instead of at once informing a policeman, this woman waited until eleven o'clock, when she was visited by her son-in-law, François Cipriani, a Frenchman, employed at Sadler's Wells Theatre, whom she then acquainted with the circumstances.

Cipriani, having a little more humanity and intelligence than his mother-in-law, at once went off to Mr. Herbert Templeman, a solicitor residing in Mortimer Street, Cavendish Square, who was the grandson of the Islington recluse, and the police were then informed and broke into the cottage. Cipriani was taken before the Hatton Garden magistrates and remanded on suspicion, but he was released two days later, there being no evidence against him.

The cottage consisted of two rooms only, both on the ground floor, and these were divided by a thin wooden partition. There was no door at the back and no windows, but there was a window to the room which the old man slept in, and also to the sitting-room. The bedroom window had a curtain over it; the other window was open, and there was a hole in the glass near the button which fastened the window.

Describing his discoveries in the cottage, William Kerr, a constable of the M division of police, said :

"On the morning of the 17th of March I received information of this murder, and went to the cottage of the deceased in company with two sergeants. We found the door fastened inside. I went in through the window of the sitting-room and opened the door, which was single locked. The key was in the door. I saw the body of Mr. Templeman lying on the floor, and there was a pool

of blood close to his head, and the pillow on the bed was bloody. The body was lying close to the bed, with the feet towards the fireplace. He was lying on his back, with his hands tied in front with a cord, and a smaller cord round that. There was a stocking tied behind over his eyes, and I found a corresponding stocking on the floor. I found some of the clothing of the deceased on the sofa in the other room. The body had a shirt on, and the legs were not tied. There was a chest of drawers in the sitting-room. The two top drawers had been forced open, apparently with a chisel. I saw a square box in one of the drawers. It had been prized open and was empty. I picked a tooth up from the floor."

According to the statements of the two surgeons, Mr. Edward Roe and Mr. Land, whom the police called in to examine the body, the old man had struggled a good deal after his hands were tied, for the wrists were galled and the hands blue. There was the mark of a severe blow over the left temple and a cut on the nose, while the lower jaw was fractured on both sides. There were four cuts on the back of the head, and the face was also slashed. The knees were much abraded, as if the old man had struggled very much.

It was the opinion of these doctors that the blows had been inflicted with a blunt, round instrument, probably a bludgeon shaped like a policeman's staff. The jaws might have been fractured with the same weapon. The various cuts, however, had been inflicted by a chisel, or some similar instrument. Two of the teeth had been knocked out, and one was found on the pillow of the bed. There was also found a piece of stick, about two inches long, which had probably been broken away from a larger

stick. This had hair attached to it and was covered with blood. The cut on the nose might have been caused by a person stamping on the old man's face with the heel of his boot or shoe.

It was, in fact, clear that some person or persons had got into the cottage at night by breaking the glass of the sitting-room window and undoing the latch, had attacked Mr. Templeman while he was still in bed, and had then dragged him out, tied him up, and bandaged his eyes while he or they ransacked the premises. The old man probably tried to struggle up and give the alarm, whereupon the murderous attack was renewed, and he was beaten into insensibility and left to die. There was some warmth in the body about the region of the heart, but all the rest was cold.

The police, though they had no particular clues to guide them, seem to have considered from the first that the murderer could be looked for in some person who knew old Templeman and was familiar with his habits, someone who had heard him boasting of his wealth and exhibiting his money. The neighbourhood was a lonely one at that time, though there were cottages near, and the people living there were of questionable reputation. Before many days were over, and after a reward had been offered, a man named Charles Allen came forward with some important information.

His statement to the police was as follows :

“I live at Wilson's cottage, Pocock's Fields, and am a boot and shoemaker. I know the house in which the deceased lived, and it is between three hundred and four hundred yards distant of mine. I know a young man calling himself Richard Gould, though I cannot be sure that this is

his real name. He has lodged with me off and on, and he stayed at my house seven nights before this occurrence. I am confident, from circumstances that occurred, that he had no money up to the 16th of March. On the Saturday night he told me he had no money, but that he would have some on the following day. On the following Monday morning he went out without any breakfast. He wore a pair of shoes which I had made, but they misfitted, and I sold them to him. I saw him nailing them about a fortnight before the murder. They would have lasted a much longer time than a fortnight.

“I saw him again, as near as I can guess, on Tuesday morning about two o’clock. I was in bed with my wife at the time, and as he came in my wife said, ‘Richard, is it early or late?’—I am not sure which she said—and he replied, ‘It is early.’ He then went to his bed. I got up at six o’clock, and he was out of bed between seven and eight. I saw him go to the wash-house, where he remained for twenty minutes or half an hour. He had his coat and waistcoat on his arm, and after he left the wash-house he passed the room where I was sitting and went out. I observed that he had the shoes on which I made, and I saw that they were newly blackened. He returned home at about seven o’clock on the evening of the same day. I had heard of the murder at that time. We had some conversation about it, and Gould said it was a shocking thing, and asked me if the deceased could have killed himself. I said I did not think any man could batter himself about like that, and tie his own hands.

“My suspicions had been previously drawn to Richard Gould by observing a new pair of shoes on his feet. He said that his cousin had given them to him. He then

asked me to go for a slice of bacon and a pot of beer, as he felt hungry, and I said, 'Richard, why not go yourself?' to which he answered, 'You know I don't like to go out,' meaning that an assault warrant was out against him. He gave me a shilling to pay for the things, and said that he had been to his aunt and cousin who had given him some money. He accounted for being out so late on the previous night by saying he had met some friends who had detained him. He went to bed at nine o'clock, and, in consequence of a suspicion I entertained, I fastened his bedroom door, and he was taken by a police-constable that same night. When I bolted him in the room I said he should never come out by me, and he might have heard me say so. The window looked into the garden and was only two or three feet from the ground, but I am bound to say that he made no attempt to escape. While discussing the murder Gould said that if the Mosaic law was correct he had broken all the commandments, for he had frequently committed adultery and was often drunk."

It was not quite clear why Allen should have so readily suspected his lodger, but further discoveries were made which pointed very directly to the young man's guilt. He was seen to go to the wash-house on the morning following the murder, and, after his arrest, a constable found a stocking containing money on a partition which divided the wash-house from the privy. The stocking contained nineteen half-crowns, forty-eight shillings, and seven sixpences. The Allens declared that they never kept any money in that spot, and it was a fair inference that only Gould could have placed it there. Mrs. Allen, too, declared that the stocking belonged to him, and was one of a pair which she had footed for him.



Gould was arrested by James Miller, an inspector of police, at Allen's cottage on the Tuesday night at about eleven o'clock. The young man was in bed at the time, and the officer, knocking at the door, called out, "Gould, Gould, get up and dress yourself." The young man, looking drowsy, then opened the door, and asked to see the warrant, whereupon Miller said he did not require a warrant. Gould asked what he was wanted for, and Miller replied, "I suppose you have heard of the murder? I want you for that." He—Gould—smiled, and said, "If I was as innocent of everything else as I am of that I should not have much to fear."

While he was dressing, the officer asked him what money he had, and he said, "nine shillings," which, on searching his pockets, was found to be correct. Two pawnbroker's duplicates for a waistcoat and pair of trousers were found upon him, and the waistcoat he was wearing was found to be stained with blood. Part of it, too, appeared to have been burnt, and Gould said that his clothes were often stained with blood, as he was frequently fighting, especially when in drink. When he was asked what he had done with his old shoes he said he had thrown them away.

The accused man was, according to reports prevalent at the time, a member of a reputable family, but he had become estranged from his relations on account of his dissolute character and erratic ways. He had received a good education, and was employed as a clerk by a respectable firm, but he took to evil courses, drank and gambled away his wages, kept bad company, and was summarily dismissed when some small defalcations in his accounts were discovered. He then got employment

as a potman, and, being suddenly discharged from that, took to doing any odd job about the streets that offered even a few coppers. He was all but penniless for some days before the murder, but had, apparently, a good friend in a Mrs. Jarvis, who, with her husband, had often assisted him so far as their small means allowed. They had provided him with occasional meals during the time he was lodging with the Allens, and their conduct laid them open for some little time to suspicion that they were concerned in the murder.

In appearance, Gould was a clean, well-set-up, good-looking young man, with an open countenance and an expression rather engaging than otherwise. Throughout the ordeal he was subjected to he preserved his coolness and self-possession to a marked degree, and his frank demeanour at the trial was not without its effect on the jury.

Yet the case against this prepossessing young man, accused of a very brutal murder, was a strong one, and the alibi which he sought to establish extremely weak. In escaping the gallows he must be considered very lucky indeed.

The trial, which occupied two days, began on April 14th, 1840, at the Central Criminal Court before Mr. Justice Littledale and Mr. Baron Alderson, a Mr. Chambers appearing for the prisoner, who followed the proceedings with the most alert intelligence, and frequently wrote notes which he caused to be passed over to his counsel. He was neatly dressed in a drab shooting jacket and dark trousers, and he entered the dock with a firm step and perfect self-possession. He maintained this attitude of ease and assurance even when the most damning evidence

was brought forward against him and his life trembled in the balance. If I give a summary of this evidence, calling attention to the salient points, the reader will be able to judge for himself, and he will, I expect, share my wonder at the verdict returned by a jury composed, apparently, of twelve disciples of the movement for the abolition of capital punishment!

Henry Wright, a potman at the Duchess of Kent public-house, Deverell Street, Dover Road—now the Old Kent Road—said that he had known the prisoner for seven or eight months. On March 12th, a Thursday, he came to the Duchess of Kent at about half-past seven in the evening. He asked for half-a-pint of porter, and threw down a penny, saying he had no more money. The witness drew him a pint of beer and did not look for payment. He—Wright—went off duty soon after, and the two young men, after some more porter at another tavern, walked up the street together. The prisoner then said that he had been ill, and want of money would make him worse. He went on to say that he knew an old man who had money, and that he had seen this person “flashing” a fifty-pound note. “I know he has more than that,” said Gould, “and that he keeps it in a drawer.” He added that he could put his hand on the money, but would like to have a partner, a “right one,” in the business of robbing him, but, he could, he said, do it himself. The witness then asked him where the old gentleman lived, and the prisoner replied, “Oh, not far from home.”

John Richard Jobson, a print colourer, living in Spital-fields, swore that the prisoner, whom he had known five years, came to him on the Friday evening, March 13th, and said he wanted to borrow a “screw,” which was, in

thieves' lingo, a picklock key, and a "darkey," meaning a dark lantern. Asked what he wanted these articles for, he said he meant to "serve" an old gentleman in a lonely cottage. The witness said, "You had better not, you may get transported," to which the prisoner replied that he "might as well get transported for that as for deserting." He said he would let the witness know when he had robbed the old man.

James Rogers, who had known Gould five or six years, described how the latter came to him later that same night and asked for the loan of a "screw" and a "darkey." The witness said, "You might as well ask me for five-hundred pounds as for such things as those."

Mary Ann Allen, wife of the man at whose house the prisoner had lodged, gave important evidence.

She said that Gould had stayed in their house for a week previous to the murder, and during all that time was without money. On the Sunday before the murder he came home about one o'clock and complained of being ill, having had some beer on an empty stomach. He lay down until four or five o'clock, and then came down to the room in which the witness was sitting and asked if she could give him anything to eat. "I said no, and he then said he had earned a shilling when he was out, and sent my little boy for some tea and sugar, and after he had tea he went to bed."

On the Monday morning, Mrs. Jarvis, who lived near, came to the witness's place and asked if the prisoner was up, as his breakfast was waiting for him at her house. Gould got up and went out, and the witness saw no more of him that day. It was half-past two on the Tuesday morning before he came home, and, hearing him come

in, the witness said, "Richard, it's morning." He replied, "Yes, it's early." It was very light from the moon at the time. The prisoner then went to bed, but was up again at half-past seven, and went through her room to the wash-house. She had occasion to go to the wash-house ten minutes afterwards, and she saw the prisoner standing at the table doing something, she could not see what, to the top part of his trousers. She then went back to the sitting-room and the prisoner came in shortly after for a towel, and wiped his face with it. Soon afterwards he left the house, and did not return until a quarter-past seven in the evening.

"I told him," said the witness, "that it was as well that he had come home early, as I would not leave the door open any more at night in consequence of the robbery and murder that had taken place so near us. He said he had heard of it at the Rainbow Inn. My husband then came in, and the prisoner said that he did not feel well, and that he supposed he was horror-struck like the rest of us."

At his request, Mr. Allen went for some beer, bacon, and tobacco, and during his absence the witness again brought up the subject of the murder. Gould agreed with her that it was "a shocking thing," but said he knew very little about it. Mrs. Allen asked him "where he was last night," and he replied that he had called upon his aunt and had been lucky. The old lady had received him very kindly, and his cousin had given him a pair of shoes, which were too big for himself. He had then, he said, gone to the Rainbow, and the witness reminded him that he could not have been there "until that time in the morning." Gould explained that he had "stood gossiping."

The witness saw the stocking in which the money had been found, and she believed it to be one of a pair belonging to the prisoner. He had two pairs of stockings, which she washed for him at Christmas, and she knew them because they were mis-matched. She was quite sure that the stocking found in the wash-house with money in was one of a pair she had previously washed for the prisoner.

John Prinley, landlord of the Rainbow public-house in Liverpool Road, stated that he remembered seeing the prisoner in his skittle-alley on Monday, March 16th. He afterwards came into the tap-room and remained there until a quarter before midnight, when he left in company with four or five other persons. He was at the witness's house again the following evening.

Robert King, a sweep, corroborated this evidence. The prisoner said he had only three halfpence, but he afterwards played a game of skittles for a pot of beer, which he won. That was on the Monday night.

Robert Pizey also confirmed Prinley's evidence, and added that the prisoner gave him a penny to buy a rushlight, which the witness procured and handed to him. (The inference drawn from this circumstance was that Gould required a rushlight to enable him to see when engaged in robbing Mr. Templeman's cottage.)

Mary Elizabeth King also proved that Gould was in the skittle-alley at the Rainbow until nearly midnight on the Monday. He wore a shooting jacket, "similar," said the witness, "to the one he now has on." She saw something sticking out of his pocket, but it was covered and she could not say what it was. It might have been a short stick. The prisoner parted from them outside

the Rainbow, and went off alone in the direction of Mr. Templeman's cottage.

Evidence was called to refute Gould's statement that the shoes he was wearing after the murder had been given to him by his cousin. They bore the marks, "8" and "92," and these were the private marks of a shoemaker, Ralph Wilcox, who had seven shops in London.

It will be seen, then, from this summary of the evidence, that Richard Gould had ample time and opportunity to commit the robbery and murder between half-past twelve, when he left his friends outside the Rainbow, and half-past two, when he returned to his lodging; that he had hidden a quantity of silver money in the wash-house; that he had a motive for the deed in his poverty and desperation; that he bore a bad character, and that he had previously announced to two persons his intention to commit the crime.

Mr. Chambers, his counsel, addressed the jury on his behalf, but there is, unfortunately, no report of his speech available, and we do not know how he dealt with the incriminating facts arrayed against his client. He merely took the line that Gould might have been concerned in the robbery, and yet not be guilty of the actual murder.

The judge's summing up was cautious and colourless. If the jury believed the whole of the testimony given by the witnesses, they would find the prisoner guilty; if, on the other hand, the facts that had been sworn to could in their judgment be accounted for on any other ground than that of his being a murderer they would say so on a verdict of acquittal. "They had an awful responsibility on their hands in deciding upon the fate of a fellow-creature,

and most earnestly did he implore God to direct them to a just and righteous verdict."

The jury then retired, and after a few minutes consideration found the prisoner Not Guilty. The trial lasted exactly thirteen and a half hours.

How this scandalous verdict was arrived at we cannot even guess, and I shall not make any attempt to explain it. It was quickly decided, however, to proceed against Richard Gould on a charge of burglary, and a warrant was made out on a charge of robbing Mr. Templeman's cottage. Gould was seized at Gravesend, on a vessel about to sail for Sydney, and brought before the Bow Street magistrates on May 13th.

Before his re-arrest, however, he had been unofficially interviewed by a detective, Sergeant Otway, who put before him the desirability of his earning the two hundred pounds reward by giving away the name of the real murderer. Gould, after some reflection, said, according to Otway, "No, I can't; I have made up my mind not to say anything about it. I have told one person the whole affair, and will tell no more."

Later on, after more deliberation, he said, "I'll tell you what I'll do; if they hand me one hundred pounds and pay my passage money, I'll give them the names of the parties concerned. I will tell them the name of the person who actually committed the deed."

Sergeant Otway then told him that most likely he should see him again, and he immediately started for London for further instructions and received directions to apply at Bow Street for a warrant.

It will hardly be believed that this ungrateful young villain accused his benefactors, Mr. and Mrs. Jarvis, of



having committed the murder. His "confession" was made to Sergeant Otway in a cell at Clerkenwell prison. The statement, briefly, was as under :

"The robbery of Mr. Templeman was planned between Jarvis, Mrs. Jarvis, and myself. Jarvis and I went to the cottage of the deceased at about one o'clock on the night of the murder, and Mrs. Jarvis kept watch outside. We entered the place through the sitting-room window, and then tied up the old man and bandaged his eyes so that he should not recognise us. Mr. Templeman struggled so that we were afraid that the neighbours would be alarmed, and Jarvis hit him several blows with a loaded stick to silence him."

On the strength of this lying statement, Jarvis and his wife were taken into custody and brought before the Bow Street magistrates, but no evidence was advanced against them, and they were discharged.

Gould's examination on the burglary charge was then resumed. The chief additional circumstance against him was the production of a dark lantern used on the night of the murder, which had been recovered from a pond near the murdered man's dwelling. The prisoner, who had conducted himself with much coolness and cleverly cross-examined the witnesses, went very pale and trembled when the lantern was produced. At the end of that day's enquiry he addressed the magistrates in a fluent speech, and admitted that his charges against Mr. and Mrs. Jarvis were a mere fabrication to obtain the reward and secure his own release. He was then committed for trial on the charge of burglary in the house of Mr. Templeman.

The evidence against the prisoner on this charge was substantially the same as that adduced at the previous trial.

Gould preserved his steadiness of demeanour, cross-examined the witnesses with perfect self-possession, and when called upon for the defence arranged his papers before him like a barrister, and spoke with ease and fluency. He pointed out what he called "discrepancies" in the evidence, and tried to cast discredit on the witnesses. He was very bitter over the circumstances of his recapture, and complained that Sergeant Otway had misled and deluded him.

"Sergeant Otway never came to me at the Compter, but when I had left that prison—where I was amongst strangers and did not wish to be known—the first day I was out of prison, and when the sergeant supposed I had been drinking, at eleven o'clock at night, Otway came to me and took me entirely by surprise. He represented himself not, in the ordinary way, as an officer of police, but as a gentleman from the Secretary of State, the Marquis of Normandy, and offered me two hundred pounds if I would give any information that would lead to the conviction of the parties. What did I tell him? I told him honestly that I knew nothing about it, and that I had nothing to do with it. I told him so more than once, but Otway began to reason with me—that as I was a young man about to leave the country, how serviceable two hundred pounds would be to me, and that, as I had gone through so much trouble over the matter, it would be folly not to make something by it, now that I could safely do so. And as Otway assured me that I could not be tried again, I acknowledge that I was influenced by what he said, and I did make up my mind to tell a lie for the sake of the reward."

The jury, less complacent than the one in the murder trial, was not deceived by the smooth-spoken prisoner,

and brought in a verdict of Guilty on the burglary charge.

Richard Gould was sentenced to be transported, and thus the brutal murder of old Mr. Templeman did not go altogether unavenged after all.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE OLD TOLL-GATE MURDERS

A MILE out of Melton Mowbray on the road to Grantham stood, seventy years ago and for a long time previously, a small cottage, lonely and rather weather-beaten, known locally as the Thorpe toll-house. It was in the parish of Thorpe, a nearby village, and the keeper of the toll-gate was an old man named Edward Woodcock, seventy years of age, who resided there alone. His grandson, a little boy of ten, whose parents lived at Thorpe, was in the habit of joining old Woodcock at the toll-gate at six o'clock every evening and spending the night there to keep him company. Woodcock, in spite of his years, was a strong, healthy man, who had mostly lived an outdoor life, and such work as the keeping of the toll-gate involved was child's-play to him. He made no hardship of having to get up at all hours of the night to take the tolls, and found time to cultivate a delightful little garden at the back of the house. He was a man well-liked in the district, and nothing gave him greater pleasure than to have a crowd of the village children before his door, and to distribute among them the apples from two fine trees in his garden plot. Everybody for miles round had a good word for old Woodcock.

Early on the morning of Thursday, June 19th, 1856,

a man named Alfred Routen, a baker, in business at Ashfordbury, left that place for Grantham, to reach which town he would have to pass through the Thorpe toll-gate. He arrived there with his horse and cart at twenty minutes to four, when it was, of course, still dark. There was no light in the toll-house, and the place was silent, and, apparently, deserted. Routen, descending from his cart, shouted "Gate" two or three times, but no one answered, and on going to knock at the door he perceived it to be half open. Peeping into the room which served as Woodcock's bedroom and office, Routen saw, to his horror, the body of the old man lying on the floor in a pool of blood. He did not stop to make any further investigation, but got back into the cart, whipped up his horse, and drove off to Melton, where he roused Police Superintendent Condon, who immediately returned with him to the toll-house, arriving there at about half-past four.

That official then made a thorough inspection of the premises, having with him John Clayton, the Thorpe constable, whom Routen had also aroused. They found Edward Woodcock dead on the floor as described, with many wounds and cuts about him. They saw on his shirt marks of burning, as if from powder, and afterwards found a pistol ball on the floor. Near the body was a pistol, covered with blood, and a tobacco-stopper. In the adjoining room they came upon the body of the little boy, James Woodcock, face downwards on the bed, with two deep stabs about his loins and his throat cut. A few articles were afterwards found to be missing from the cottage, and a small cash-box in which the old man always kept some money for the purpose of giving change had been taken away.

It was believed that some person had knocked at the door, and thus aroused old Woodcock, who was in his shirt and trousers. The old man had, presumably, opened the door, and stood talking to the person outside, who then, on some pretext, entered the room. The stranger fired at the old man with the pistol found there, but only wounded him, and completed the crime by stabbing him and cutting his throat. The noise may have awakened the boy, who sat up in bed and called out, whereupon the murderer entered that room and nearly severed his head from his body. As both bodies were scarcely cold when Clayton, the constable, arrived, it was assumed that the crime had only just been committed when Alfred Routen drove up to the gate, and that if he had been only a few moments earlier he would have come upon the miscreant in the very act.

Superintendent Condon quickly learnt that a man of the tramp class had been seen the night before in a hovel near the toll-house and, as soon as it was broad daylight, he was able to trace footsteps from that hovel in the direction of the toll-gate, a distance of about three hundred yards. The track crossed two fields, one pasture, the other mowing grass, and ceased in the road before the toll-gate. The track appeared to have been freshly made. Condon then examined the hovel, and a heap of stubble there showed traces of a man having lain down upon it.

Neither the pistol nor the tobacco-stopper belonged to the dead man, and they had been left behind by the murderer.

Suspicion was at once directed to a returned convict named Brown, a desperate character, who had been skulking about the neighbourhood for some days. This

man had an infamous record, including rape, assault, burglary and robbery, and the marvel was that he had not already ended his lurid career on the gallows. He had a brother, William Brown, living in Bedford Street, Leicester, and had rewarded that relative's kindness in giving him food and shelter by going off with his wife, Ann Brown, whom, by threats and persuasion, he had induced to leave her husband. The two of them had left Leicester for a place called Scalford, where they shared a room in a roadside tavern. Brown was known to carry a pistol, and several persons recognised the tobacco-stopper as one they had seen him using.

Superintendent Condon went to Scalford in search of this Brown, but he had left that place on the day of the murder, and Ann Brown professed not to know where he had gone. She declared that he had not been in the neighbourhood for nearly a week, but that statement was palpably false, for several persons had seen and spoken to him, and it was clear that, if she had no guilty knowledge of the murders, she was exceedingly anxious to screen him. A bundle of old clothing, coat, waistcoat, and trousers, much stained with blood, was found in a hedge-bottom at Scalford, and these were known to have been worn by Brown right up to the day of the crime. Yet Ann Brown pretended not to recognise them, and denied at first that she had ever seen them before. Later on, however, she identified the garments, and said she had repaired and altered them for him.

Much surprise was expressed at the time and afterwards that this woman, who was young and not ill-favoured, should have abandoned her husband's home in order to link her life with a vagabond like his brother. John

Brown, of Leicester, was only in poor circumstances, a rag-and-bone merchant, but he could offer her, at least, food and a home, whereas she was, with the other, sure of neither. He was an ex-convict, penniless, lazy, violent tempered, and leading the life of a vagrant. He was disliked and distrusted wherever he was known, and he had treated his brother with base ingratitude. At his mere bidding, however, she seems to have joined him on tramp, and, later, to have done her best to save him from the consequences of his ill deeds. His brother said of him that, with all his truculence and violence, he "had a way with him," was of oily tongue and persuasive address, and so crafty that "you never knew where you were with him."

He does not seem, however, to have planned this crime with much cunning or carried it out with much stealth. To make the authorities a present of such clues as the revolver and the tobacco-stopper provided was reckless to the verge of imbecility, and he seems to have called attention to himself on the day before the murders in all possible ways.

A man named John Carpendale was the occupier of two fields near the Thorpe toll-gate. This man came forward to speak of an encounter he had two days before the murder with a man answering to Brown's description in appearance and dress. He said:

"I was in one of my fields at about six o'clock on the evening of Tuesday, June 17th, when I perceived a man looking over the hedge, watching me intently. He was a wild-looking man, dirty and dusty, and I took him to be a tramp. He presently came into the field off the turnpike, approached me, but said nothing. I asked him what he



wanted, and he replied, 'A good many things, but I'm not likely to get them off you.' He then said that he had come from London to see some acquaintances, and was now going to friends at Timber Hill, which is a back street in Melton. He, added, 'I ought to have been further on the road, but I stopped with old Woodcock an hour or two.' I didn't like his looks, and so I said, 'Don't let me detain you,' but he stayed a few minutes talking about old Woodcock. He said, 'The old chap told me he had neither a wife nor a housekeeper.' I told him that I believed he had a little boy, his grandson, with him at nights, and he then said, 'It is very lonely and very dangerous for the old man to be by himself.' He added, 'I'd have a wife or a housekeeper if I were keeping that bar.' He asked further if the old man went to bed or sat up at nights, and I answered, 'I don't know as to that, but there is occasional night traffic from Grantham and beyond, and the old man has to attend to the gate.' I was going into Melton, and this man walked with me to the town, talking all the way. Though rough-looking, he was a well-spoken man, and I had the idea that he was merely down on his luck."

A man named Francis O'Hare, a fishmonger, saw this same person close to the toll-gate on the Wednesday night. He said, "I was in a field of Mr. Moore's, where there is a shed or hovel. I heard a noise as of someone moving in the shed, and on going in saw a man sitting there in the act of pulling off his shoes. I asked him what he did there, and he said, very coolly, "I am resting a bit.' I said, 'You mean taking your lodgings here for the night?' to which he replied, 'No, I don't. I daresay I might if I was drunk, but I shan't to-night.' I particularly observed

his dress. There was a patch on the knee of his right trouser leg. I did not see any track at that time on the grass, and I think I should have observed it if it had been there. I did not at all like the looks of the man, and felt alarmed at his appearance, though I cannot exactly explain why."

(At the subsequent trial Brown cross-examined this witness with extraordinary skill and ability. He endeavoured to show that the track on the grass was made by the witness himself walking upon it, but O'Hare denied having done so, and said that he did not come from that direction. The prisoner also closely interrogated him as to why his appearance had alarmed him. "Did you think I was going to commit a murder?" he asked, to which O'Hare retorted, "You didn't look as if you would have stopped at much!")

On Sunday, June 22nd, Brown was seized at Wetherby, near York. He had arrived in that town on the Friday night, having come by train from Grantham, and he made his way to a public-house in the main street, where he obtained a lodging. He was then decently dressed in new clothes, and he had some money. He spent all his time in the tap-room, drinking with the customers that were in and out, and showed no reluctance to hearing the murders at Melton Mowbray discussed. To one man he impudently said: "I knew poor old Woodcock and was having a 'crack' with him the day before it happened. It wouldn't have been so—odd if they had taken it into their heads to suspect me."

At about eight o'clock on the Sunday evening he was seen and recognised by a man from Leicester who knew him well, and this person informed the magistrate at

Wetherby, who sent two constables to the public-house to effect his capture.

The moment the officers entered the tap-room Brown attempted to leave by another door, but that was, fortunately, bolted, and the man was seized. He said: "What are you interfering with me for?" He was told that he was wanted on a charge of murder, and he said: "If you mean that old man and the young 'shaver' at Thorpe, I know nothing about it."

On the following Thursday he was examined before the magistrates at Melton. He displayed amazing coolness throughout the proceedings, and showed considerable acuteness in questioning the various witnesses. Addressing the magistrates at the conclusion of the first day's hearing, he remarked, "Gentlemen, I only ask fair play. It doesn't mean that I committed the murder because I spent an hour in that field on the night in question. As to the pistol, I lent it to a man I know called 'Joe' some days previously. I don't know his other name, but he was in prison with me. He said he was 'cracking a crib,' and I was unwise enough to lend him the weapon."

The trial of this criminal took place at Leicester on July 15th, 1856. Extraordinary interest was taken in the case, and there was much eagerness on the part of the public to catch a glimpse of the prisoner, who still exhibited the greatest hardihood and unconcern.

William Asher, a coal higgler, of 40, Bedford Street, Leicester, stated that he knew the prisoner, whose brother, William Brown, lived three doors from him. He saw the prisoner at the brother's house on the night of June 11th, when there was disturbance arising out of

the prisoner's behaviour with Ann Brown, his sister-in-law. William Brown had strong reason to complain of his wife's conduct with his brother, and he told the latter not to come to his house again. Ann Brown sided with the prisoner, and said, in witness's hearing, that she was "ready to go away with the prisoner." The two of them left the house together, and the prisoner, in a threatening way brandished a pistol, and said he had got it to protect the woman whilst on the road, and might God strike him dead if he would not blow out the brains of the first man who touched her, even if it was his own brother. He called the woman "his sister." The witness could not swear to the pistol now produced, although it was like that he had seen in the prisoner's hand.

A man named Moulding, who lived in White Lion Yard, Bedford Street, Leicester, and was a framework knitter, deposed to having seen the prisoner at his brother's house early in June. The next time he saw him was on the 11th June at William Brown's house, and they had some conversation together with reference to the latter's wife. The prisoner denied having run away with her, and said that he "went on the road with her to protect her," and if anybody had molested her or laid a finger on her he would have blown that person's brains out. The witness could not swear to the pistol found in Woodcock's cottage as being the same, but it strongly resembled it. He never saw a knife in the prisoner's possession.

Henry Read and W. Moore identified the clothes found in a hedge-row at Scalford as having been worn by the prisoner.

Ann Brown, the prisoner's paramour, who gave her evidence with great reluctance and avoided the prisoner's

fixed stare, identified the clothing found in the hedge and indicated repairs she had made to the jacket.

Several other witnesses identified more or less completely the pistol and tobacco-stopper found in the gate-house as having been in the prisoner's possession before the murders, and the Chief Constable stated that Brown admitted to having slept in a barn near the Thorpe toll-gate on the night of the 18th. It appeared also that the prisoner who, before the murders, had been miserably poor, had money on him—three pounds odd—when apprehended at Wetherby, for which he had accounted by an untruth.

Brown was not represented by counsel, and himself addressed the jury, pointing out, not unreasonably, that, with the exception of the statements as to the pistol and the tobacco-stopper, the evidence against him was flimsy. He had lent those articles to a fellow-convict, whom he knew as "Pedlar Joe," a week before the murders. As to the clothing, he had discarded the garments because they were old, dirty, and ragged, and he was able to procure other clothes, "thanks to the bounty of a friend." The speech was ably delivered, but it satisfied nobody, the jury least of all, and the judge pointed out in his summing-up that no such person as "Pedlar Joe" had ever been seen or heard of in the district, though, according to the prisoner, that person was a native of those parts and knew the Thorpe gate-house well. The jury found the prisoner Guilty without the formality of leaving the box, and all he said was, when asked the usual question, "All the same I am innocent."

From that attitude of obstinate denial he could not be moved. The execution was fixed for July 25th, 1856, and he gave no trouble in the interval, eating and sleeping

well, and passing the time in writing a history of his "adventures." Ann Brown visited him in prison, and he earnestly advised that female to return to her husband, which, by the way, she eventually did. Let us hope that her one experience in vagabondage was enough for her, and that she conducted herself decently afterwards.

The execution of this malefactor was made noteworthy by the remarkable behaviour of his father, who had attended the trial and seemed quite proud of his son's notoriety.

The amiable old gentleman occupied a seat in the window of a public-house exactly opposite the drop, and remained there during and for some hours before the execution, regaling himself with beer, cracking nuts, smoking his pipe, and chatting with his friends. To these he remarked that the condemned man "always had more spunk than William," and expressed the confident belief that his interesting offspring would "die game." This forecast of the felon's behaviour proved an accurate one, for Brown, on reaching the gallows, smiled and nodded to those about him, and exhibited the utmost indifference to his fate. His father, producing a large black handkerchief with a white border, waved to the doomed man, and shouted, "Never say die lad; cheer up! It will soon be over."

A nice, genial, tactful old soul, Mr. Brown, senior, though his notions of comfort and consolation seem, in the circumstances, to have been primitive!

A double murder of an almost precisely similar character occurred at Aston Clinton, two and half miles from Aylesbury, during the night of November 18-19th, 1822.

The toll-gate at that place had been kept for many

years by an aged couple of the name of Needle, who were supposed to have saved money. They were found to have been murdered while in bed, both having their throats cut, and the house had been plundered. Two men, Thomas Randall and James Croker, were soon after apprehended in very suspicious circumstances, tried, convicted, and hanged for the crime.

#### THE LEDBURY MURDER

THE small town of Ledbury, in the county of Hereford, was the scene of a very mysterious murder on May 17th, 1852, for which crime a young man, a lawyer's clerk, was arrested, tried, and acquitted. The circumstances certainly pointed to his guilt, but they cannot be said to have been of a convincing character, and a careful and conscientious jury declined to convict.

There lived at Ledbury in the year stated a solicitor named Masefield, whose business offices were situated in the main street. His private residence was in another part of the town, and a Mrs. Baker acted as a kind of caretaker at the offices, and slept there at night. Except for the company of a little girl, ten years old, the daughter of a neighbour, Mrs. Baker, who was elderly and a widow, was alone in the house after seven o'clock at night. Occasionally, however, a Mr. Woodford, the solicitor's chief clerk, remained at the offices until a late hour to deal with the correspondence and other matters, and he did so on the night referred to, when Mr. Masefield was away in London.

A young man calling himself John Isaac Jones, though that, it afterwards transpired, was not his real name, was also employed by Mr. Masefield as a clerk, and he had a lodging in the house next door to the offices.

That house was in the occupation of a man named Mr. Bowcott, and Jones slept in a room which he was able to enter or leave without being seen or heard by the other persons living there. He had a latchkey, by which he was able to enter Bowcott's house through the back door at any hour of the day or night. Jones's salary was eighteen shillings a week, paid quarterly, and he was constantly short of money and in debt.

This Jones, twenty-six years old at the time I am referring to, had been abandoned by his parents when he was a young child, and had spent some time in the workhouse at Ledbury. Though entirely self-taught, he was of superior education, as times were then, and was able to secure a position as a schoolmaster at Hereford. Not giving satisfaction in that capacity, he was, for some months, without employment, and was compelled to seek the protection of the parish authorities. Later, however, having need of a junior clerk, Mr. Masefield engaged him, and he had been in daily attendance at that gentleman's offices when there occurred the event which startled Ledbury out of its accustomed calm.

Mr. Woodford, the head clerk, remained at the office until nearly ten o'clock on the night of May 17th. When he left to go to his own home just outside the town the housekeeper, Mrs. Baker, and a friend, a Mrs. Jackson, were sitting in Mr. Masefield's private office, and shortly afterwards Mrs. Jackson got ready to leave. Mrs. Baker was then preparing for bed.



After he had walked a little way along the main street Mr. Woodford met the young man, Jones, who was going in the direction of the house he—Woodford—had just left. That direction also led, of course, to Bowcott's house, adjoining Masfield's premises, and Jones, for anything Woodford knew to the contrary, may have been returning to his lodging. The two men merely exchanged a word or two before bidding each other "good night" and going their separate ways.

The next morning, Bowcott, who supplied milk to Mrs. Baker, knocked at the front door of the house without eliciting any response. He then went to the rear of the premises and tried the back door, but that was fastened.

Returning to the front door, he knocked again, and then he was joined by his lodger, Jones, who had come to commence his day's duty at the office. The latter suggested that Mrs. Baker might have overslept or be ill, and he proposed that stones should be thrown at the window of her room for the purpose of arousing her. He even produced some peas which, rather unaccountably, he happened to have on him, and these and small pebbles were thrown at the window without effect.

Jones then went over to a public-house close by and partook of some brandy, observing that he did not feel well that morning. On rejoining the man Bowcott, he looked through the keyhole of Mr. Masfield's back door, and presently said: "Oh, I have found the key." Exactly how and when he found that key did not transpire, but it was Bowcott's opinion that it was in his pocket all the time. At any rate, he now had the key, and, the door being then unlocked, the two men entered the house.

In the first room they entered they came upon the little

girl dressing herself, and on being asked where Mrs. Baker was the child said she thought she must have gone out. She had glanced in the woman's bedroom and found it empty, and the bed apparently undisturbed. She had not been awakened by any unusual sounds during the night.

Bowcott and Jones, the former much puzzled, then went upstairs, and, on entering Mr. Masefield's own office, found Mrs. Baker dead upon the floor. She was lying upon her back and her head was badly battered, but a later examination of the body by a doctor disclosed the fact that the actual cause of death was strangulation, effected by a thin cord found on the spot. Some attempt had been made to ignite the woman's clothing, but the fire had burnt itself out before it had done more than slightly scorch the body.

When Mrs. Jackson had left the previous night there was nothing except a work-box on Mrs. Baker's table, but it was now spread with a cloth, on which stood a jug containing water, two glasses, and a small basin of sugar. In one of the glasses there remained a little gin and water. It appeared from this circumstance that Mrs. Baker had herself admitted some person to the house after the departure of Mr. Woodford and Mrs. Jackson, and that she and the visitor, whoever it might be, were on friendly terms.

Certain facts coming to the knowledge of the police, and Jones's explanation of them not being deemed at all satisfactory, that young man was arrested and charged with the murder. The trial came on at the Hereford Assizes on August 2nd, 1852, and excited great interest in the county town.

The prisoner, who had lost a leg in an accident some

years before, was a young man, with light hair and sharp features, having nothing repulsive or ferocious in his appearance. He seemed, however, to be of a nervous and excitable disposition, and he fidgeted to such an extent while the case was proceeding as to warrant a mild reproof from the judge. The trial occupied the greater part of three days, and Jones was in a state bordering on nervous prostration at the final stage.

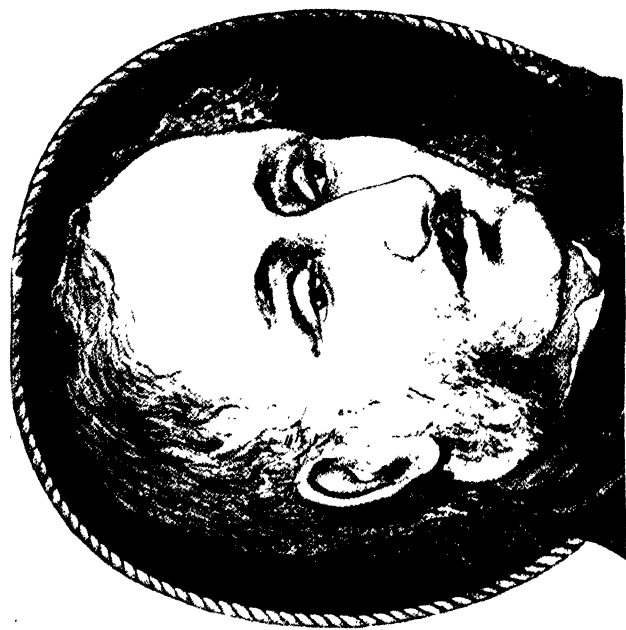
Many circumstances of strong suspicion were urged against him in the speech for the prosecution. It was alleged that the prisoner, having reason to believe that there was a large sum of money in one of the drawers of a desk, had planned the murder and robbery, had gone straight to the house after passing Mr. Woodford in the street, had been admitted by the deceased on some pretext, and had struck her down with a short bludgeon after they had drunk together some gin of his providing.

Whoever intended to rob Mr. Masfield knew where to look for the plunder, for he went directly to the drawer where money alone was kept. The prisoner, a clerk on the premises, had the opportunity of knowing that a large sum of money had been in the house, but he was not aware that a large portion of it had been removed and deposited in the bank that very day. Only one drawer in the desk was forced open, and that was the drawer which had contained the cash. A sum of seven pounds in another compartment had been stolen, however, and a quantity of postage stamps had also been taken.

On March 23rd the prisoner had received a cheque for his quarter's salary. He had paid that money away within ten days of receiving it, and yet had between eleven and twelve pounds in his possession when his box was



CALCRAFT,  
who hanged Walter Miller.



MARWOOD,  
who hanged Charles Peace.



searched after the murder. Postage stamps to the value of nearly one pound ten shillings were also found in the prisoner's box, and a short wooden mallet, resembling a bludgeon, was discovered beneath his clothing on a shelf in a cupboard.

Bowcott, in giving evidence, declared that he went to bed at a few minutes after ten o'clock on the night of the murder, and at that time he had not heard the prisoner come in. In cross-examination, however, this witness admitted that Jones might have entered the house and gone upstairs to his room without attracting his attention.

The next morning the prisoner got up earlier than usual, and his manner seemed odd and agitated. The prisoner had purchased gin in a green bottle from a tavern near Mr. Masefield's house on the afternoon of the murder, and a similar bottle, containing some of that spirit, was found on a shelf over the sink in the scullery of Mr. Masefield's house. The prisoner had declared that he had returned to Greenaway's public-house the bottle in which had been put the gin he had purchased, but this was only partly true. He had taken back a bottle to the inn, but not the one that he had been supplied with.

"It would also appear," said the counsel for the Crown, "that on the 28th of May, some ashes were found in the fireplace of the prisoner's room at Bowcott's which were the ashes of Bank of England notes, and two notes had been stolen from Mr. Masefield's office. Part of the words 'or bearer' were still visible on the ash."

These were the main points in the case against the

prisoner, and they certainly could not be regarded as conclusive. His counsel did not make any particular effort to rebut the evidence adduced, but contented himself with pointing out the insufficiency of the testimony to bring home to his client the guilt of the crime. The prisoner, he said, might have stolen the money and the stamps while alone in the office, and his possession of the latter could not be accepted as proof that he also committed the murder. The deceased was in the habit of taking a little gin and water before retiring at night, and the bottle found in the scullery might be one of her own procuring. It was difficult to believe that Jones would have preserved the bludgeon if it was the implement with which the deed was done, for he had plenty of opportunity to rid himself of it. It was a case of suspicion—of strong suspicion, if they liked—but the jury would not be justified in depriving this young man of life on grounds of suspicion only.

The judge's summing-up was rather hostile to the prisoner, and he called attention to one important fact which came out in evidence. When the murder was discovered the little girl found on the premises was removed to Bowcott's house, and when her father came to fetch her home he asked Jones where the murder was committed, and the latter said, "In the room below Mr. Masfield's office." That was curious, to say the least, for the body was found in the room upstairs, and if the woman was killed "in the room below," how was Jones, if innocent, aware of that?

The jury, however, after consulting for three hours, returned a verdict of "Not Guilty," and the prisoner, exhibiting symptoms of great relief, not unmingled with

surprise, limped out of the dock, and was taken to a retiring room in the courthouse pending the disposal of the crowd gathered outside. The good people of Hereford appear to have been satisfied of the man's guilt, and I should not care to say they were wrong.





## CHAPTER XII

### DRAMA OF THE ASH FLATS

THE history of crime in this country discloses many cases of the murder of lonely couples, men and their wives or housekeepers, from motives of plunder, but there has never been a more terrible drama enacted than the slaying of John and Jane Blackburn at a place called Ash Flats, near Stafford, in the year 1852.

The fearful circumstances which attended the murders, the suspicion which fell upon the nearest relatives of the victims, and the mystery in which the case was for long involved, excited the intensest interest throughout the county. Vast crowds, drawn from places far apart, flocked to the lone hamlet to view the scene of the double crime, and the people almost demolished the premises where it was perpetrated in their anxiety to secure souvenirs of the dreadful event. Wild and conflicting rumours were industriously spread as to the complicity of certain persons, and it was only after some time had elapsed, and with the utmost difficulty, that the truth, or something approaching the truth, was unravelled. For the credit of human nature it is good to know that the son of the murdered couple was eventually exonerated, but not before he had been arrested, charged, and tried for the crime.

In the end, the law was satisfied with one life, and the actual murderer was convicted and hanged, but it is open to question whether justice was evenly distributed, and whether one other, at least, should not have shared the fate meted out to the miscreant, Moore. The case was full of dramatic turns and surprises, and the excitement it aroused was maintained to the very end.

John Blackburn, one of the victims of this barbarity, had formerly been a maltster by trade, but had retired from business, and resided with his wife at a place called Ash Flats, which was about two and half miles from Stafford, off the road from Wolverhampton.

A lonelier, more desolate spot it would be hard to imagine. It was reached by proceeding on the Wolverhampton Road to a place called Moss Pit, where the road divided. The way to the left went towards Penkridge, and the other, to the right—a lane—led to the house where Blackburn lived and which was about half a mile from where the roads divided.

The house which he and his wife, Jane Blackburn, occupied was situated by the roadside. It was some distance from any other human habitation, and consisted of what were formerly two cottages. The old couple, though comfortably off, kept no servant, and lived there alone. They slept in separate bedrooms, at the extreme ends of the house, at the greatest possible distance from each other, and in rooms having no direct communication, so that to get from one to the other it was necessary to descend from the one, to pass through the kitchen underneath and a side room, then through what was formerly

the kitchen and another room of the other cottage, and then ascend a narrow staircase.

A Birmingham gentleman who went to view the scene of the murders a day or two after the discovery wrote in a local newspaper as follows :

“The spot is remote and solitary, the scenery round about dismal and depressing to a degree. The two cottages, now forming one habitation, are of rude stone, wild looking and weather beaten, two storied, with narrow windows and tall, gaunt chimneys. The premises are in some dilapidation and have an uncared-for look, though the murdered man was tolerably well off, and had, I believe, some sixty or seventy acres of freehold land at the Ash Flats, and property in an adjoining parish. The interior of the cottages, especially that of the one on the right as you approach from the lane, has been much damaged by the incendiary fire which the murderers hoped would destroy the entire building, but this damage is mostly confined to the upstairs room which the old man occupied at night. No attempt had been made to fire the room in which his wife usually slept. The whole place still smells badly as of burning pitch or resin, and some inflammable material had been used to fire the room.”

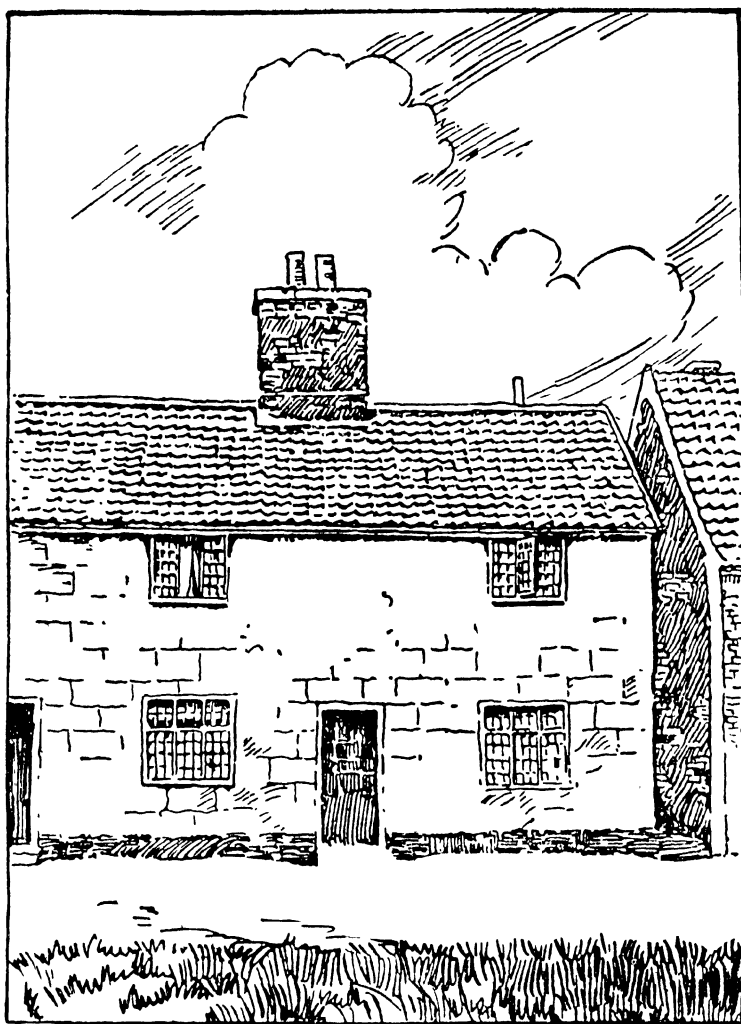
John Blackburn was seventy-eight years of age and his wife five years younger. They had a large family—as many as eight children—and some of them were married and in business. The old man lived in a humble and even dirty state, the house being poorly furnished, though he was at times in possession of considerable sums of money. He was, so far as was known, on fairly good terms with his family, though his penurious habits and disinclination to assist his children were the cause of some complaint among the latter, who appear to have been a rather thriftless lot. One of the sons, Thomas Blackburn, assisted his father in looking after his land, and was frequently

at the house. This man was married and had children.

Old Blackburn and his wife were last seen alive on Sunday, October 24th, 1852. Thomas Blackburn was at the house that morning, and when he left at noon his parents were alive and well. The old man had the day before received a rather large sum of money, paid to him in respect of some land which he had let to a farmer in the district, and this circumstance was known to his son Henry, who, indeed, had been present when the money was handed over. Neither he nor anyone else knew, however, where the old man kept his cash, but it was generally believed in the district that he had a secret hoard of gold and notes somewhere on the premises, and a pocket-book which he carried about with him everywhere often contained banknotes.

Three weeks prior to the murders Henry Blackburn had taken to his father's house a rather savage dog, and when the old man protested against its being left there the former said: "You need some protection, living alone as you do here. The dog will fly at any stranger, and you will do well to have him."

On the morning of Monday, October 25th, a man named Spilsbury, who occupied some land adjoining Ash Flats, left his house at a few minutes after seven o'clock in order to superintend the erection of some barns in one of his fields. From that field it was possible to see the house of old Blackburn, and the attention of Spilsbury was drawn to a volume of black smoke pouring from the upper windows. Supposing the place to be on fire, he quickly obtained the assistance of a farm labourer named Askey, who had a cottage near at hand, and together



LUKE BLACKBURN'S COTTAGE.



they proceeded to the burning house. They were soon joined by some navvies who were at work in the neighbourhood, and the door of the house was broken open with a crowbar belonging to one of these men.

After some delay and difficulty, the fire was partly extinguished, though it still smouldered in one of the rooms upstairs. The smoke was of that black character which belonged to smoke confined for some time without the means of escaping, and a most disagreeable smell pervaded the interior of that part of the dual cottage. There being no sign of the old people, the fear was expressed that they had been suffocated by the fumes, and Spilsbury and others ascended the stairs to the bedroom above as soon as the smoke had sufficiently cleared.

They found that the floor of the bedroom was burnt through, and the bedstead used by the old man was burnt on one side and one of its legs. The bedstead, in fact, at that end, had fallen to the ground. On the bedstead were the bodies of the old couple, not lying lengthwise, as in a state of repose, but the body of the man was on its back on the top of the bed, and the corpse of the woman was lying on its stomach across the bottom of the bed. The bodies were burning ; a peculiar flame still came from them, and the stench was almost unbearable. They were dreadfully charred, and the flames had reduced the limbs to a smouldering and revolting mass.

It was some time before the services of a doctor could be secured and an hour elapsed before the police arrived from Stafford. The persons who had entered the house had, however, already made such discoveries as pointed



to deliberate murder and incendiarism, and medical opinion speedily confirmed this view. The head of old Blackburn was terribly wounded in several places. There were two wounds near the eyes where the skull had been penetrated to some depth. There was a large wound on the right side of the forehead, and a very severe injury on the top of the head.

On the old woman there was found a fearful wound on the right eye and also one on the back of the head, and it was quite clear, although the article was then almost reduced to ashes, that something had been tightly drawn round her throat. There was no doubt whatever that the old people had been most brutally murdered, and that their deaths took place previous to the burning of their bodies.

The bedroom of the old woman at the other end of the two cottages was next examined, but everything there was in order, and there was no sign of any violence having been perpetrated. There was an impression on the bed to suggest that she had retired to rest as usual the previous night, in which case something must have aroused her and caused her to leave the room and descend the narrow stairway. At the foot of the stairs leading to her room was a large pool of blood, and there were also marks of blood on the wall just at the bottom of these stairs. There could be little doubt that it was at that spot that the old woman was attacked and killed; that, hearing a noise, she came down and was there assailed, and her body dragged up the other stairs, and placed on the bed where it was found. The bed had then been saturated with some inflammable matter and set fire to. The mattress was composed of feathers and hay, and some pitch or resin was found in

the débris. Between the knees of the woman was discovered a pitcher and teacup, very much browned by the action of the fire, and these articles smelt as if they had contained paraffin or something similar.

In the fireplace was found the pocket-book of the old man, turned inside out, but how much money this had contained was never known. The circumstances, however, indicated plunder as the motive of these atrocious deeds, though, so far as was known, no other property was taken away, and no attempt made to search the boxes and drawers in the house.

Outside the house at the back was a well, and this was emptied and examined on the day following the murders. In it was found an axe and the house dog with its head smashed to pulp. The animal had probably been held by the hind legs and dashed against a wall, for there were marks of blood on the wall of the house near the well. The axe had hairs and blood on it, and a flat-iron, also bloodstained, was likewise found in the house.

It was impossible to determine at what hours the murders had been committed, but both old people had been to bed, and it was a fair inference that the fire, to have taken such a hold, had been burning some time. A man named Griggs had passed the house at a little after four o'clock that morning. It was then still dark, but the moon was at the full, and Griggs could see the house quite plainly. He expressed himself as certain that there was no smoke issuing from it at that time.

Nor was it possible to ascertain how the murderer or murderers had secured access, but it seemed probable

that more than one person had been concerned and that the miscreants were well acquainted with the premises. The axe was kept in the house and belonged to Henry Blackburn, who used it for chopping timber. The dog usually slept on a rush mat in the passage between the two cottages.

Henry Blackburn arrived at the scene of the murders at about ten o'clock that morning. He had been to Stafford on some business, and heard of the tragic event while he was at a tavern in that town. He seems to have at once become the object of some suspicion, and it was remembered against him that he had been heard to make some observations with regard to his father's close-fisted habits, and to express a regret that the old man had lived so long "to keep other folk out of their dues." He declared that he had not seen his father since the preceding Saturday, when he left for his home at Wolverhampton, that he had gone to bed on the Sunday night at his customary hour, and had got up very early on the Monday morning in order to walk to Stafford. His wife supported this statement, but, other facts coming to light, he was arrested and charged with the crime.

Meanwhile, a man named Charles Moore, an Irish labourer, was constantly dropping hints which seemed to indicate that he, too, had some knowledge, not necessarily guilty, of the fearful deed. His remarks tended to still further incriminate Henry Blackburn, and they also cast some suspicion on a brother of the latter, Thomas Blackburn, who lived at Stafford and was rather a wastrel.

Henry Blackburn was taken into custody on the evening

of the day the murders were discovered and conveyed to prison, though there was not a vestige of evidence against him apart from the mysterious hints of the man Moore. At that time there was dismay and consternation in the neighbourhood of the town, and no real clue could be obtained to the guilty parties.

While the preliminary enquiries were going on, Mr. Hatton, chief of the county constabulary, received on October 28th an anonymous letter in which the writer cast suspicion on Henry Blackburn, but also made references to circumstances which showed that he was either on the spot or had been associated with those who committed the murders. The writer of the letter was not at once discovered, but on November 3rd, and again on the 8th, Mr. Hatton received further anonymous communications, which, with the one first received, were all in the same illiterate handwriting. Mr. Richards, superintendent of the Stafford borough police, also received an unsigned letter in the same hand.

The general purport of these letters was to accuse Henry and Thomas Blackburn, a man named Edward Walsh, and an Irish labourer named Peter Kirwan, of having conspired together to commit the murder. The last letter read as follows :

*“ I admit that I was concerned with the others, but I did not enter the house that night, and never had nothing to do with the killing of old Blackburn and his wife. I stayed outside and saw H. Blackburn and Walsh enter the house. They let themselves in with the key to the back door. I stood by the barn and waited. I heard the dog bark once, but after that he was quiet. Then*

*I heard the old woman give a shrill squeal, and I knew they was doing her some hurt. It was a few minutes after five when they came out of the house, and Henry Blackburn said, 'It was an ill business, but it had to be, as the old ——' meaning his father, 'would have fought tooth and nail for the money.' He also said, 'We had to settle the old woman as well, as she came downstairs, and recognised us.' Walsh said they had put a light to the bodies, and the place would be in ashes in an hour. They gave me two pounds, saying that as I didn't share the risk, I couldn't have no more of the 'blunt' than that."*

On November 12th, when Moore was examined as a witness against Henry Blackburn, he made a long statement, and in coming away from the magistrates' room Mr. Hatton made some observations to him respecting his evidence, when he said that he was confused while before the bench, but offered to write down what he knew. As he said he had neither pen, ink, nor paper, those articles were supplied him and he took them home with him, and on the following day he produced a written statement which convinced Hatton that he was the writer of the anonymous letters.

On charging Moore with the fact he admitted that he had written two of the letters, and made some excuse as to the others, but a strong suspicion now began to take shape in the minds of those in charge of the investigation that he had taken an active and direct part in the crimes, and was at least as guilty as the other men. He, Walsh, and Kirwan were taken into custody, and joined Henry Blackburn in the county gaol, but no evidence whatever was obtained to confirm Moore's statements as regards Thomas Blackburn and Peter Kirwan. The last-named

was arraigned on the Coroner's inquisition, but no evidence was offered against him on the part of the Crown at the trial, and he was discharged from custody.

One of Moore's anonymous letters had made vague reference to a pair of boots and a dagger, and these, blood-stained, were afterwards found in a ditch. The boots were too large for either Walsh or Henry Blackburn, but were found to fit Moore perfectly. The dagger, too, had been seen in the possession of the latter.

When taken into custody, Walsh made a statement which showed that he had a guilty knowledge of what was going to be done at the Ash Flats on the fatal night. The statement was as follows :

"I have known Charles Moore for three months. He is an Irishman, and has been working here as a navvy and excavator. On the Saturday afternoon he and I took our ferrets into the woods, meaning to get some rabbits. While we were out together, he said to me, 'If you will come with me to-night we shall get what will put us over the winter comfortably.' I asked him what he had in mind, and he said, 'The place I mean is the Blackburns. They are a very old couple, and have no servants, either boy or girl, in the house. Their son, Henry, left for Wolverhampton on Saturday, and will not be back until Monday, and we shall be certain to get from eight to ten sovereigns, the price of the cart they are about to buy ; at all events we shall get some money, and, if all fails, we shall be sure to get a bit of bacon.' We talked it over for some time, and again on getting back to my place late that day. My wife, who was listening to the conversation, objected to the plan, and said that Saturday night was a bad one

for such a job, as there would be so many people about, to which Moore replied, 'This will stop them from telling tales,' at the same time holding up a knife to which he had put a new handle. The handle was about fourteen inches long, and had been made from the handle of a hatchet. I made up my mind, on my wife's advice, to have nothing to do with the job, but I reckoned that Moore had carried it out by himself when I heard of the murders on the Monday morning."

That was the position at the end of the preliminary investigation. The authorities were faced with the problem that Moore accused Henry Blackburn, the latter's brother, Thomas, Walsh and Peter Kirwan; and that Henry Blackburn, vehemently protesting his own innocence, charged Moore with the murder of the old couple. In the end, Henry Blackburn, Moore, and Walsh were committed for trial, and the judicial enquiry resulted in the triumphant acquittal of the first named.

The evidence, much of it involved, puzzling, and contradictory, established the fact that Walsh had taken a much more active part in the crime than he had admitted to in his statement. Marks of a burn, for instance, had been found on his left hand, and he attempted to account for this by saying that he had hurt his hand by pulling turnips for a Mr. Brewster, but this was denied by that gentleman, who deposed that Walsh kept an old glove on that hand for a few days after the murders. Marks of blood were also found on the man's breeches, and he had been seen with Moore near old Blackburn's house early on the morning of the murders.

As to the circumstances pointing to Henry Blackburn as being one of the guilty parties, evidence was called to

prove that he had been seen at Ash Flats at a late hour on the Saturday night, and was also met with on the Wolverhampton Road, in company with two Irishmen, at seven o'clock on the following morning. His shoes corresponded with some marks on a field path near Ash Flats, and three stiles in these fields were stained with blood. It further appeared that Henry Blackburn, within a few moments of reaching the scene of the crime, pointed to Charles Moore, and exclaimed, "I give that man into custody as the murderer of my father."

Why this should have been taken to indicate his own complicity is not quite clear, and we may not be far wrong in assuming that the authorities, instead of concentrating their energies on such evidence as was available, preferred to listen and pay heed to the doubtful and misleading rumours and reports which were spread abroad to connect Henry Blackburn with the murder of his parents. Apart from the statements of Charles Moore, who was obviously trying his hardest to shift his own guilt on to another's shoulders, there was nothing whatever to suggest that Henry had any knowledge of or part in the crime. The reason why he accused Moore was because he was informed by his brother Thomas that Moore was to be at the old people's house on the Sunday night, and he thought that the latter might have secreted himself there and committed the murders. Henry Blackburn, in fact, had a complete alibi, for it was conclusively proved that he was at Wolverhampton, thirteen miles from Ash Flats, when the dreadful affair took place, and it is really extraordinary that the police allowed the case as regards him to go to trial.

Moore and Walsh were found guilty and sentenced



to death, but the surprises and sensations of the case were not yet exhausted, for the former, on the day before the execution, made a statement exonerating Walsh and all the others, and declaring that he alone was the actual murderer. He described the deed in the most cold-blooded way, and seemed to have no sense of shame or remorse. He did, however, express his regret at having "falsely tried to swear the lives away of innocent persons," and especially so in the case of Henry Blackburn, who, he said, had never done him any injury, and for whose forgiveness he prayed.

Walsh was respited, although, in the face of Moore's exoneration, it is certain that he knew of and assisted in the crime. It is almost impossible that it could have been the work of one person alone. The whole case was badly bungled by the local police and magistrates, who seem to have at first suspected everybody except the real murderer. If Moore had checked his propensity to write anonymous letters it is just possible that he might never have been accused, though every circumstance pointed to him as having been at least concerned in the crime. Henry Blackburn's innocence could have been established in twenty-four hours if anyone had taken the trouble to test his statement that he was at Wolverhampton throughout the Sunday night. The ineptitude of the police and the obstinate stupidity of the magistrates caused a perfectly innocent man much undeserved suffering and anxiety, and nearly brought about the escape of the real criminal.

This crime bore an uncanny resemblance to the Mirfield murders by the Irish hawkers, Patrick Reid and Michael McCabe, in the year 1847. Each accused the other in

turn, and both were ultimately convicted. McCabe, however, was respited when Reid, as Charles Moore did five years later, solemnly exonerated his fellow criminal, and only Reid was hanged for the murder of Mr. and Mrs. Wraith and their servant.



## CHAPTER XIII

### SOME "ATTRACTIVE" MURDERERS

THE popular conception of a murderer is a repulsive and ferocious-looking being, having in his countenance and bearing all the tokens of a debased mind. Some have answered to this description all too faithfully, but there have been others, men of outwardly attractive aspect and pleasing manners, whom it was hard to identify with crimes of violence. Their features have been good, their expression mild, and, in a few cases, even benevolent, and their demeanour modest and unassuming.

One such was Armstrong, the poisoner, about whose personality there was nothing in the least degree sinister if one excepts the fact that the blue eyes behind the glasses were a shade too close together. Another was Crippen, as inoffensive and insignificant a personage as ever stood trial on the capital charge.

Everyone who knew that unhappy and ill-fated little man, unsuitably married to a vain, loud, and vulgar wife, and always a mere cypher in his own home, agreed that he was not at all of the material from which murderers are made. He was timid, shy, and retiring; patient, too, under the perpetual provocations of his self-assertive spouse. A man less likely to plan and carry out a deed of murder and mutilation it is hard to imagine; the driving power

that urged him on must have been very powerful and insistent. It was not hate for Belle Elmore that made him remove that inconvenient female. He would probably have gone on enduring her disagreeable society to the very last if he had not been moved to desperate action by the consuming passion he had conceived for Ethel le Neve.

That passion made almost a hero of the little doctor—a rather shabby one, perhaps, but still a hero. It enabled him to face a shameful death with something of dignity and courage; it lifted him from the commonplace to the sublime. The rather pitiful Crippen became, because of it, a tragic figure, and it endowed him with the aura of romance. At least he was capable of a great and unwavering devotion, and it is impossible to withhold from him, convicted murderer though he was, our pity and regret.

The handsomest man that ever stood his trial for murder was probably that mysterious person, Stinie Morrison, whose real name was Mucry Bondoman Jaigar.

Tall, erect, and well-proportioned, athletic and graceful, that young Russian had regular features, flashing eyes, and a complexion of flawless ivory. He was the kind of young man at whom you would take a second look if one such passed you in the street.

He conducted himself with perfect decorum while on trial for his life, and the impression he created was favourable rather than otherwise; but the experienced in such matters would have detected signs of suppressed passion in his dark eyes and an intensity of purpose in those unflinching lips. Whether Stinie Morrison did or did not slay Louis Beron that New Year's night in 1911 on Clapham Common I should not like to say, but that he was a man of

violent passions, one who could be ruthless and fierce in certain circumstances, I have no doubt at all.

I am inclined to think that Stinie, though he was associated with the crime, was not the actual murderer. His passionate protestations of innocence were not made merely for the purpose of the trial, in the hope of an acquittal. He continued to make them throughout the dreary years of his life imprisonment, and so conducted himself as to make one believe, almost against one's will, that his was not the guilty hand. To the last extremity of despair and desperation, he rebelled against and denounced the "injustice" of his fate, and he chose to die rather than suffer it longer. He was a violent and dangerous prisoner, hating the rigid discipline which was the result of his own misconduct; at war with fate and with man, denying the existence of a Deity, deaf, as he declared, to his prayers, uttered day and night, that the truth might be disclosed and the real culprit discovered.

He carried this war against his destiny, merited or not, to the last ditch.

Emaciated, haggard, a mere pale phantom of his former self, he died in prison, having starved himself for days on end, but I am told that he declared his innocence with his last conscious breath.

Of very different calibre was the suave, good-looking, and well-spoken Patrick Mahon, of whose guilt, however, there could be no doubt at all. This man was a popular personage at Richmond, where his handsome face and ingratiating manner procured him many friends. These were shocked and dismayed when they learnt that the genial and charming "Pat" had been accused of a particularly revolting crime. "The last man in the world I

should have suspected of murder," said one who knew him well, and, "even now, with all the evidence in proof, I find it hard to believe."

Mahon, however, with all his polish and veneer, was of the true criminal type. He was selfish and pleasure-seeking, vain and extravagant. He had, moreover, the moral insensibility which is characteristic of most murderers, and he was incapable of any real shame or remorse. He neglected and deceived his wife, robbed and cheated his mistress, murdered her when she insisted on holding him to his word, and dismembered her body with, apparently, as little compunction as a butcher carves up a dead sheep.

Watching him in the dock, sleek, *débonair*, and well groomed, full of airs and graces, a poseur to the end, it was difficult to think of him as a brutal murderer, as the slayer of a woman who had, up to a point at least, loved and trusted him. Not until the inevitable appeal was refused did he believe that he would hang. When, at last, he gave up hope, Patrick Mahon reverted to type, and became a sullen, morose, and gloomy convict, dejected of mien and haggard of aspect, a prey to constant terror and despair.

Another presentable murderer was John Robinson, who, in May, 1927, packed the body of his victim in a trunk and deposited it in the parcels office at Charing Cross.

This man was, for his station in life, smart and refined looking. It was never, so far as I am aware, made quite clear what his motive was in killing the Bonati woman, who, according to his own story, which was not disproved, was a perfect stranger to him. He is supposed to have been accosted by her one afternoon on Victoria Station, to have invited her to his office, and there to have struck

her an unlucky blow, when, in her half-drunken fury, she assailed him because he could not give her the present of money she demanded. His version of the affair may, indeed, have been the true one, but there was the dead body on his premises, and he decided, as others of his kind have done, on concealment.

The whole case has always been a mystery to me. I read recently a version of it that attributes the motive to sheer greed. The woman was fairly well dressed, and Robinson, who was hard up, thought she might have money in the bag she carried. So the story went, but I cannot accept this as the true explanation. The woman was a drunken, dissolute, foul-mouthed harpy, who may quite conceivably have given Robinson the length of her tongue when she found that he had no sovereign to give her as the price of her society. Up to the time of encountering the female he had, so far as I know, lived a comparatively harmless life. I have always thought that the charge could very well have been reduced to one of manslaughter, but the means he employed to dispose of the body was, as in the cases of Greenacre, Wainwright, and others, fatal to John Robinson.

A great many people, some of them of influence and authority, somehow contrived to delude themselves into a belief in the possible innocence of William Henry Podmore found guilty of the murder of Vivian Messiter in a Southampton garage.

Podmore, according to those who came into contact with him, was rather a likeable little man—a scoundrel, no doubt, but a scoundrel with qualities that made some appeal. He was a cheat and a swindler in a petty way, and he had basely deserted his wife and child, but there



was a geniality about "Poddy"—by which nickname he often referred to himself in letters and conversation—which rather disguised his true character.

Up to his association with Messiter, he had not been convicted of, or identified with, any act of violence, and had, indeed, the character of a humane and good-tempered man, whatever his other sins of commission and omission. I could never understand, however, the agitation for his reprieve, for the trial, in my opinion, most clearly established his guilt, though the murder may not have been a premeditated one. Messiter had, I think, found him out in two or three petty frauds, and expressed his opinion of his conduct in strong terms. He may have even threatened to prosecute the unscrupulous "Poddy," who, in a sudden burst of anger, struck him down with the borrowed hammer and inflicted fatal injuries.

He left the body in the garage, locked the door, and decamped, his subsequent tricks and evasions being such that it was only owing to their extreme patience and untiring zeal that the police were able to charge him with the crime and secure a conviction. Why so many people should have taken up the cause of this plausible little blackguard is still a mystery to me.

No finger was lifted or voice raised to save the worthless life of Sydney H. Fox, convicted of the murder of his own mother in a Margate hotel, and yet there was, I fancy, more room for doubt in his case than that of Podmore. That he caused, by some method or other, the death of Rosalind Fox, and that he tried to destroy the body by fire cannot be questioned by anyone who studied the facts with care and ordinary intelligence, but the medical

evidence differed as to the cause of the fatality and the means by which it was brought about.

Fox was a crafty and dangerous criminal, with a craze for representing himself as being something better than he was. He affected the public school manner and Oxford style, dressed carefully in expensive clothes—for which he never paid—and tried to worm his way into Society, which did not always detect the imposture. His vanity was consuming and his powers of deception great. He had many of the qualifications which are essential to the adventurer, and his apparently gentle ways, soft voice, and ingratiating address attracted the type of woman, who, herself middle-aged and starved of romance, likes to have a presentable and compliant young man in constant attendance. To women of that class Fox made instant appeal, and if he had possessed intelligence, as well as cunning and hypocrisy, he might not have found himself so desperately situated that murder was, in his distorted view, the only way out.

He was of the class to which that unspeakable youth, Gordon Stewart Northcott, belonged.

The American murderer, however, smooth-faced, good-looking, graceful and gentlemanly in an effeminate way, was even a worse specimen than Fox. His crimes were so revolting that they can only be hinted at, and all I care to say is that he lured to his chicken farm at Wineville, California, such small boys as took his fancy, and there, with the assistance of his scarcely less atrocious mother, butchered and buried them.

The circumstances of this appalling case staggered the American continent from end to end. The murders seemed to be the acts of a madman, and yet, so far as could

be judged, young Northcott was in his right mind, though his perversions had been encouraged by his unnatural parent almost since his babyhood.

A greater liar never encumbered the earth, and it was impossible to keep pace with or make sense of his numerous confessions, retractations, assertions and denials. His cynicism was amazing, and knew no bounds. "Murder," he said, on one occasion, with his girlish giggle, "seems to be my one bad habit."

Sydney Fox was, in spite of characteristics they shared in common, an angel of light compared with Gordon Stewart Northcott.

One of the queerest American murderers was that man of dual personality, Harry Hayward, who was hanged on December 11th, 1895, for the murder of his sweetheart, Catherine Ging, a fashionable modiste, on the shore of Lake Calhoun, in Hennepin County, Minnesota. The back of her skull had been crushed with some heavy, blunt implement, and a bullet wound was found at the back of her right ear.

Hayward was a man of fashion, with more leisure on his hands than was good for him, and his people were wealthy and influential.

He was at the Grand Opera House, Minneapolis, watching the old musical show, *A Trip to Chinatown*, when the news of the murder reached him, and it appeared to plunge him into the deepest horror and distress. He denounced the murderer in unmeasured terms, and declared that he would spend his entire fortune in tracking the slayer down.

Certain facts, however, coming to the knowledge of the authorities, Hayward was arrested and charged with

the crime, his accomplice and tool, Claus T. Blixt, who actually fired the fatal shot, freely confessing to his share in the crime. Harry Hayward's brother, Adry, also came forward to swear to the accused man's guilt.

Harry had insured Miss Ging's life for a large sum, and the murder was planned and perpetrated between them in order to obtain the money. It was proved that he had not arrived at the theatre that night until an hour after the time when the girl had met her death, and that he was seen running from the spot where the body was shortly afterwards found.

The prisoner himself denounced Blixt as a liar and his brother, Adry Hayward, as a madman, and such a tremendous fight did he and his advisers make for his life that the trial lasted for seven weeks. In spite of secret negotiations, the pressure of family influence, and wholesale attempts at bribery, Hayward was found guilty and condemned to death. As he quitted his cell for the gallows, he called to the other inmates of the prison, "Give three cheers for Harry Hayward!" and, being popular with his fellow convicts, for whom he had procured many little extra comforts, the request was heartily complied with.

Previous to his execution Harry Hayward, however, confessed to several other murders, crimes which had been unsolved until then, and as to which he related facts and circumstances which could only be known to the person who was guilty of them. His relatives and friends, who had still professed to believe in him, were aghast at these revelations, for Hayward had always passed as a genial, generous, and humane man, incapable of hurting a fly.

That his life, however, was full of guilty secrets, that he was the willing victim of his own unbridled passions,

and that he killed without compunction or remorse, his own story sufficiently made clear, and yet he was known to have done many kind and even noble actions, and to have been the object of general respect, liking, and admiration. He was the Jekyll and Hyde of modern American crime, and his case and character, remembered and discussed to this day, are beyond understanding. He had everything that life could offer, youth, good looks, wealth, and the esteem of many friends. Yet he had committed five murders previous to the slaying of Catherine Ging, three of them almost without motive, and the other two for reasons that were merely trivial. The clergyman who attended him in the gaol believed that the man was possessed by the devil, but a careful analysis of all the facts of the case strongly suggests insanity.

Blixt, although the actual murderer of Miss Ging, got off with a comparatively light sentence, the facts proving that he and Adry Hayward were completely dominated by Harry, of whom both men went in deadly fear.

THE END





