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GREAT UNSOLVED CRIMES

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Illustrations

HUTCHINSON & CO. (*Publishers*) *Ltd.*

London

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H. RUSSELL WAKEFIELD

The Green Bicycle Mystery

AT half-past nine, on the evening of July 5, 1919, a farmer, a Mr. Cowell, was driving some cattle along the Via Devana, an old Roman highway some five miles south-east of Leicester, when he came upon the body of a young girl lying in the middle of the road, her cycle beside her. Cowell hurried off to find the local constable, Hall, who sent for a doctor.

By then it was quite dark, and after a cursory examination it was concluded that the girl's death was accidental. But Hall, an intelligent man, was not satisfied, and early next morning made further investigation at the scene of the tragedy.

His doubts were amply justified, for there was a bullet in the road close to where the body had been found. This sent him back to that body hot-foot, and a bullet hole was found just below the left eye.

So it was murder and the hunt was up! But there was precious little scent. The detectives who were put on the case discovered the following facts :

The victim was Bella Wright, then working on the night shift in a Leicester factory; a good-looking, modest girl of twenty-one, living with her parents at Stoughton, a village on the Via Devana, situated between where her body was found and the city. She had cycled off about half-past six in the evening, and had turned up an hour later at the cottage of her uncle, Mr. Measures, in the hamlet of Gaulby, some nine miles east of Leicester.

A young man was with her. By chance Mr. Measures's son-in-law, James Evans, was at the cottage, a miner

with a knowledge of cycles. According to their story Bella told them the man was a perfect stranger to her, and that he had ridden up and spoken to her; and she continued: "Perhaps if I wait a while he will be gone."

However, when she decided to leave he was still waiting outside the cottage. According to them he had said: "Bella, you *have* been a long time!" And then Bella rode away with the young man and was never seen alive again.

Now the experienced eye of Evans had noticed that the green cycle the young man had been riding possessed certain technical peculiarities. Also two little girls stated that they had been accosted by a man riding a green bicycle that same afternoon.

Now a green bicycle was no more than very slightly uncommon in those days, but it was the only clue on which the police had to work. Many unlucky owners of such were interrogated, but all inquiries were fruitless. So the assistance of Scotland Yard was asked for, and granted.

But the Yard's experts were equally baffled. Then occurred one of the most amazing chances in the history of criminology.

On February 23, 1920, a canal boatman was taking a load of coal to the very factory at which Bella used to work, when he saw the tow-rope slacken, dip beneath the surface, and tauten again. And there, hanging from it, was part of a bicycle. It slipped off again and disappeared.

Now cycles were still objects of interest in Leicester, and substantial rewards were still being offered for the discovery of a certain very much "wanted" green one; so the boatman returned next day and dragged about the spot where he had hooked that curious fish. And presently up it came again, and *it was green*.

And there was something else about it; all its more obvious marks of identification had been scraped away. But the machine was a "special order," embodying

certain special features, and as such had an extra identification number on the pillar of the handle-bar bracket. This number was 103648. The hunt was up once more!

By a brilliant but laborious investigation it was discovered that this cycle had been sold to a Mr. Light at Birmingham in 1910. The canal had been dragged again, other pieces of the cycle brought up, and also a revolver holster, full of cartridges, had been brought to the bank. Soon some cycle repairers in Leicester identified the machine as one they had repaired for a Mr. Light, three days before Bella's body was found.

Now this Mr. Light had formerly lived with his mother in Leicester, but was now a master in a school at Cheltenham. There Detective-Inspector Taylor sought him out and put certain questions to him.

To which he replied that he had never owned a green bicycle; that he had not been in the Gaulby district on the day of the murder and that he had never known a Bella Wright. Later he said he had once owned a green bicycle but had sold it years before.

These answers could not be squared with the information possessed by the police, and Light was arrested.

He appeared before a magistrate at the Castle and was committed for trial. His counsel strongly suggested by his cross-examination of witnesses that the defence would be an alibi. But Light had already been identified by Measures and Evans as the man who had ridden up with Bella on the day of her death.

The trial was held at the Castle on June 10, 11 and 12. The judge was Mr. Justice Horridge, counsel for the Crown were the Attorney-General, Sir Gordon Hewart, Mr. H. Maddocks, K.C., M.P., and Mr. Norman Birkett, whose first big case this was. Sir Edward Marshall Hall led for the defence.

The Attorney-General in opening the case stressed the obvious points, but as it happened most of these were beside the point, together with most of the evidence for the prosecution, as will be shown. Some of that

evidence was challenged by the defence; particularly the evidence of the two little girls. Later on the judge advised the jury to pay little heed to it.

The question arose as to whether Light had used the word "Bella," or the word "Hullo" at the cottage. In any case this does not seem to me a point of great magnitude, for surely, even if Bella had never met Light before, she might very well have told him her name on the ride to Gaulby.

Again, there was a sharp discrepancy between the time when Measures and Evans declared the prisoner and Bella had left the cottage and the time put forward by the defence. This was one of the crucial points of the case.

Sir Edward also sharply cross-examined the gunsmith, Mr. Clarke, with the motive of suggesting that the bullet which killed Bella might have been fired from a considerable distance. But for the most part the evidence for the prosecution was allowed to pass.

When the defence was opened it was seen why. For then came that famous surprise, that complete *volte face*. Sir Edward at once called the prisoner to the witness box where he told the following story:

There was no more pretence of an alibi. He confessed he had cycled down the road to Gaulby on the afternoon of July 5, but had talked to no little girls, though he had met a young woman in trouble with her cycle about seven o'clock, whom he had accompanied to the cottage at Gaulby.

He had waited for her till about a quarter to eight and then ridden off with her so far as the junction of the upper road and the Via Devana. There they had separated, he taking the former route, she the latter.

The moment he read of the finding of the body he realised that it must have been that of the girl he had met and that he was the wanted man. This utterly unnerved him, so that he had done the first thing which came into his head.

THE GREEN BICYCLE MYSTERY



Sir Edward Marshall Hall

THE GREEN BICYCLE MYSTERY



Bella Wright and (inset) the cartridges which figured in the case

He had hidden his green bicycle in the boxroom of his mother's house, and subsequently, in October, had thrown it into the canal, together with the revolver holster. The revolver belonging to it he had left behind in France when he was invalided home. That is a very clipped version of the tale that he told.

He was then cross-examined by Mr. Maddocks, the Attorney-General having been called back to London on political business.

He had to confess that he had lied about the whole matter, put the police off the scent, and pursued a policy of subterfuge and concealment all through. Yet to the many searching questions put to him by judge and counsel he always returned the same answer: that he drifted into the course through panic, that he had been dazed and terrified by the connection made between himself and the crime, and that in consequence when he was questioned he had told a tissue of foolish lies.

But after submitting to the frightful ordeal of five and a half hours in the box, his version of what had happened remained unshaken.

Mr. Maddocks, in his closing speech for the Crown, broke no new ground. It was a conventional speech, of its kind, but it contained some serious mis-statements. One was particularly glaring, which had it been true, would have been an almost overwhelmingly strong point in the prosecution's favour.

It was that Bella Wright's body was found within a quarter of an hour of her being known to have been with Light. But that statement is utterly uncorroborated by any evidence.

Light estimated that the length of time between his leaving Bella and the finding of her body was three-quarters of an hour, and no one was in a position to dispute this estimate. (Incidentally the space-time factor in the case is of the highest interest and importance, but it is too involved to be examined here.)

For the rest, Mr. Maddocks stressed the point that all

the accused's actions after the finding of the body were consistent, and consistent only, with his guilt.

Sir Edward Marshall Hall had a task worthy of his powers. His speech was considered at the time one of his finest efforts.

He hammered away at two crucial points. One, that no one had seen the prisoner and Bella on the Via Devana together that evening. Secondly, that there was an absolute lack of motive.

He agreed that his client had shown moral cowardice of the worst type, but he had been shell-shocked in the war, and his one idea had been to save his mother anxiety.

As usual, Sir Edward made some rather far-fetched submissions. One was the suggestion that the bullet found in the road had not been responsible for Bella's death! Perhaps the most fantastic suggestion ever made in a murder trial. A peroration of his usual brand brought a great forensic effort to a close.

The judge's summing-up was impartial, though perhaps slightly favouring the defence. And then trotted out the twelve good men and they were out for three good hours. They were then recalled and asked if there was any chance of their coming to an agreement. The foreman thought so and he was right, for after a few minutes they returned again with a verdict of Not Guilty.

So Ronald Light, his innocence absolutely established, walked out a free man amid the plaudits of the populace.

How did Bella Wright come to her end?

It has been fatuously suggested by an accident. And here it is necessary to introduce another actor into the drama—a certain sable bird, probably a crow or rook, which was found dead and gorged with blood in a field just over the hedge where Bella was found.

It has been solemnly suggested that Bella was killed by a shot which struck her after it had killed this bird. But it is certain that Bella Wright was killed by a .45 bullet

fired at almost point-blank range, almost certainly with a revolver.

Beside the fact that the police made the most searching inquiries and were convinced that no one was shooting in the neighbourhood of the Via Devana that evening, who goes after rooks with an elephant rifle?

Furthermore, what the accident theorists were not aware of is that twelve bloody claw tracks were found leading to and from the body. There were also similar marks on the gate leading into the field. If one thing is more certain than another it is that this bird died gorged from its horrible feast.

No. Bella was murdered by someone who was waiting for her in the dip of the road. Who could that someone have been? She had no men friends.

Well, there are sexual maniacs and "killers." There are always some of that type amongst the tramp class roaming the roads of England. Perhaps one such met Bella at that dip in the road and killed her when she resisted him. It is as plausible a theory as any other.

And that is all there is to be said about this profoundly unsatisfactory case, the secret of which lies buried with Bella beneath a little mound in the Stoughton churchyard.

FRANCIS ILES

Was Crippen a Murderer?

IT is ironical that the name of the man who, of all the classical murderers, was the least certainly guilty, should have become almost a synonym for the word "murderer." It is no less ironical that a man whose chief characteristics were his kindness and gentle charm, should be remembered only as an inhuman monster.

Few murder cases have remained as famous as that of unfortunate little Hawley Harvey Crippen. Many people to-day have never heard of Seddon, whose case, within a year or two of Crippen's, aroused almost as much interest at the time; yet who is there even now who does not think he knows all about Crippen?

In point of fact he knows very little about Crippen: not even the most important thing of all, namely the very great possibility, amounting almost to probability, that Crippen never committed murder at all.

At the time of his tragedy Hawley Crippen was nearly fifty years old. Here is an interesting point for a beginning. I have never seen any statistics regarding the age of murderers, but one would be inclined to say off-hand that few are as old as this.

If murder is in the blood, it will come out before half a century. Moreover Crippen's alleged crime was one of passion. Is not fifty a little late in life to begin committing murder for love? We may bear the point in mind later.

Crippen is usually referred to as "Dr." Actually, he was not a qualified medical man. He underwent a sketchy kind of training in his own country (he was a

native of Michigan, U.S.A.) and in 1883, when he was twenty-one years old, paid a visit to London where he attended several London hospitals in a haphazard way.

The only degree he ever achieved was a diploma in 1883 as an ear and eye specialist at the Ophthalmic Hospital in New York, which may or may not have given him the right to call himself a "doctor," but certainly did not make him one. In view of the profession he was practising in London at the time of his wife's death, this point will also become important.

After obtaining his diploma, Crippen practised during the next fifteen years at a variety of places, including Detroit, Santiago, Salt Lake City, New York, Philadelphia, and Toronto, never staying more than two years in any of them; though whether this was due to restlessness of disposition or inability to make a living, we do not know.

In 1887 he married for the first time; his wife died three or four years later leaving a son who, at the time of his father's trial, was living in California. In 1893 he fell in love with a young girl who was not too young to have acquired a bad reputation even at the age of seventeen. This girl passed under the name of Cora Turner. Her mother was a German and her father a Russian Pole, and her real name was Kunigunde Mackamotzki; so that Cora Turner was certainly a change towards simplicity.

Crippen married her and, in 1900, brought her to London, when he obtained the post of manager of the English branch of a patent medicine firm.

If Crippen really did murder his wife, it cannot be denied that Mrs. Crippen almost brought the deed upon herself. She was not a pleasant woman. Possessed of an almost pathologically swollen vanity, she fancied herself for honours on the music-hall stage; at one time, indeed, she expected to bring the world to her feet in grand opera, though her voice was no better than that

of any of the young women who, at that time, used to sing ballads in the drawing-room after supper.

In any case, arrived in London, Cora Crippen made all preparations to take it by storm. She chose the stage name of "Belle Elmore," she laid in a huge stock of expensive gowns, she joined the Music-hall Ladies' Guild, she did in fact everything except make a success on the stage; for she only appeared on it once, and was then promptly hissed off it by the audience.

Soured by this reception, and the impossibility of obtaining another engagement, Mrs. Crippen proceeded to take it out of the indulgent little husband who had paid for all the gowns, the singing-lessons, the agents' fees, and everything else: for at this time Crippen adored his shrewish wife, believing in her talents when no one else did.

She hen-pecked him unmercifully, quarrelled with him, insulted him before his friends, and did not draw the line at assuaging her wounded vanity with the attentions, and more than the attentions, of other men.

In short, Cora Crippen did what so many stupid, shrewish wives have done before her and literally drove her amiable little husband out of love with her.

And to drive out of love with his wife a man who has been accustomed to love is tantamount to driving him into the arms of another woman. Mrs. Crippen drove her husband into the arms of a typist at his office, Ethel Le Neve.

All this, of course, took time. It was 1900 when the Crippens came to London; it was 1910 when Cora Crippen died; and during those ten years there is no doubt that Crippen's home life was becoming more and more intolerable. Between him and Miss Le Neve there sprang up a love which, on Crippen's side at any rate, was to prove stronger than the fear of death.

And then Mrs. Crippen died.

There is no need to give the events which followed in any close detail, for they are still well known. Crippen

WAS CRIPPEN A MURDERER?



Hawley Harvey Crippen

Associated Press

WAS CRIPPEN A MURDERER?



"Belle Elmore" (Mrs. Crippen)

made blunder after blunder—so incredibly foolish that there is surely some inference to be drawn from that very foolishness. He pawned his wife's jewellery quite openly; some of it he gave to Miss Le Neve, and let her wear it openly; he had even bought the hyoscin from which his wife was to die quite openly from a chemist who knew him well and had signed the book in his own name.

If these were indeed the acts of a deliberate murderer, then surely a more stupid murderer never existed. I suggest that they were not the acts of a deliberate murderer.

Then, by this small detail and that, an inaccuracy here and there, suspicion was aroused among Mrs. Crippen's friends; information was lodged at Scotland Yard, and a Detective-Inspector went to Hilldrop Crescent to interview Crippen.

The Inspector viewed the visit as a formality; Crippen's demeanour confirmed his expectation that it was all nothing but a mare's nest. But three days later a small point took the Inspector up to Hilldrop Crescent again—and Crippen had fled. If Crippen had stood his ground then, neither you nor I would ever have heard of him.

The events that followed roused the excitement of two continents. It was not merely a case of an insignificant little man being wanted for wife murder; every romantic ingredient was present to turn the affair into the greatest of all classical murder hunts.

There was the identification of the pair on the liner *Montrose* by means of the new-fangled wireless telegraphy; there was the fact that Ethel Le Neve was disguised as a boy; there was the fact that the dead wife's body had been not merely buried under the cellar floor, but dismembered first—and dismemberment invariably rouses the public's horror; there was the dramatic chase of the *Montrose* across the Atlantic by Inspector Dew in a faster boat, with the eyes of the whole

world on the race except only those of the *Montrose's* own passengers; there was the love affair which had caused the whole tragedy; and there was finally, the character of Crippen himself as it began to leak out—a gentle, affectionate, mild, precise little man in late middle age, the last little man in the whole world, one would have said, to commit a callous and inhuman murder.

Inspector Dew did reach America first. Crippen was arrested on the *Montrose* when she docked, brought back to England, tried, condemned and hanged. On the evidence before them the jury could have returned no other verdict. Miss Le Neve, tried separately as an accessory after the fact, was acquitted. The letters Crippen wrote to her from prison as he awaited execution are among the most touching documents ever penned.

What, then, is the truth? How can it be asserted, in face of these facts, that Crippen never did commit murder? What considerations, pointing to this conclusion, never came before the jury at all?

It is always easy to argue, on one side or the other. Facts alone can determine truth; and there is one fact in Crippen's case which appears to me insurmountable, in the absence of any greater facts to confute it.

Unfortunately, however, it is a fact of psychology; and psychology, even psychological fact, carries little or no weight in a court of law. Evidence may be given as to character, but it influences little but the sentence. And yet it is character that determines action.

The insurmountable fact is this: there is overwhelming evidence that Crippen was mild, gentle and kindly—and mild, gentle, kindly men simply do not commit murder. That is surely incontrovertible. One does not remain gentle and throwing off the mask, reveal oneself kindly for forty-eight years and then, suddenly as a fiend.

That elementary fact of psychology has been recognised for at least two thousand years. It is, after all, a

long time since the rule was laid down that *nemo fuit repente turpissimus* (no one ever became vile all of a sudden). And there is no evidence that Crippen ever slid at all down the path of vileness; it is just assumed that he took it in one single bound.

Admit that one psychological fact, if to prove no more than that there is something queer behind the scenes here, and instantly the whole case becomes full of difficulties.

Take, for instance, the choice of poison. Very little was known in 1910 about hyoscin, or henbane. It had never been used in a case of murder. It was, I fancy, not even in the British Pharmacopœia. Why did Crippen choose it?

Consider Crippen's profession. He was not a bona fide doctor, nor did he practice as such. He filled a succession of posts in firms concerned with patent medicines. Almost up to his last moments he was engaged in compiling a formula for a patent medicine of his own, to be called *Sans Peine*.

He was, in fact, used to dealing with drugs, but not in the way of the recognised prescriptions: he was used to experimenting with them.

Now put these two considerations together, and look at them in the light of a very curious piece of evidence which was certainly never put forward at the trial, for it was not known then. This evidence takes us from an insignificant villa in London to no less a place than the Royal Palace in St. Petersburg, Russia.

It has been reliably established that, at just about the same time as Crippen was dabbling with hyoscin here, the Court Magician, or Conjuror, at St. Petersburg, a man named Papus, was dosing the Tsar and Tsarina with a mixture of hyoscin and hashish, which was said to produce singularly pleasing effects, the admixture of hashish having been found to neutralise much of the toxic properties of hyoscin. What does this give us? It shows us that at this time, the quacks of Europe

were experimenting with hyoscin, of which all they knew for certain was that it had properties as a narcotic. And Crippen was a quack.

This seems not only to offer a possible explanation of Crippen's very puzzling choice of a drug; but it goes some way, too, to suggest that his intention was not murderous. That suggestion is more than strengthened by the absence of any concealment of the purchase—the last thing, surely, that one would expect with a guilty intention.

Now, it is a theory of my own that dismemberment seldom enters into any plan of calculated murder. That is to say, when dismemberment occurs it almost amounts to proof that murder had not been planned ahead, and shows that the killing was, if not accidental, at any rate decided only on the spur of the moment.

But a poisoning is never decided on the spur of the moment. Therefore a poisoning, followed by dismemberment, which in turn is followed only by ordinary burial, and not by some such method as a piecemeal burning of the body, carries all the appearances of unexpected instead of expected death.

If, further, we admit dismemberment as indicative of an absence of plan, we see more and more evidence to the same effect. When obvious blunder after obvious blunder is made the conclusion is difficult to resist that nothing was thought out in advance.

Yet the use of poison for purposes of murder is equally strong evidence of premeditated planning. The only way of reconciling these opposing factors in the case of Crippen is that he did not intend to kill with his poison.

What, then, did he intend to do?

The late Sir Edward Marshall Hall, who believed strongly in Crippen's innocence, propounded a theory to answer this question which seems to me from every point of view convincing. It was his belief that Crippen, knowing of hyoscin only as a narcotic, used it upon

his wife, not with any intention of killing her, but in order to put her into a drugged sleep so that he could spend the evening with Miss Le Neve.

This, I think, is what must have happened. But Crippen, in his ignorance, either administered an overdose or perhaps mixed his hyoscin with some agent which did not neutralise it sufficiently. In any case he discovered that he had killed instead of drugged, and lost his head. For plainly he did lose his head. Crippen was not of the stuff of which murderers are made.

There is, actually, a piece of evidence supporting this theory which came out at the trial, though its significance was missed then. On the night before her death Mrs. Crippen had some friends in, who left at about midnight. At Miss Le Neve's trial her landlady gave evidence that one night at the end of January Miss Le Neve came home very late in a state of considerable distress, quite horror-stricken, in fact, as if she had suffered a great shock, and the time mentioned was *two o'clock in the morning*. Mrs. Crippen died on January 31. If Crippen had intended to murder his wife he would not have had Miss Le Neve in the house at the time. If Miss Le Neve was in the house, it may be almost certainly said that murder was not intended.

All these considerations convince me that Crippen was innocent of premeditated murder. That he was responsible for his wife's death is, of course, indubitable, and the defence he adopted, of a blank denial of everything, was the worst possible one. At worst he was guilty only of manslaughter.

Why, then, did he not make a clean breast of the facts and plead manslaughter, or even accident?

The answer to that question is one of the most striking features of the whole case. He was in fact pressed to do this, but he refused. His reason was that to substantiate his plea he would have to admit that Miss Le Neve was in the house that night; and, if anything went wrong with the case and the jury did bring

in a verdict of murder, this might have been prejudicial to Miss Le Neve.

He was almost assured of an acquittal from the murder charge if he permitted this defence, but on the quite slender danger of entangling Miss Le Neve he decided upon almost certain death for himself.

I always feel very sorry for Crippen. He has been dreadfully maligned. I cannot believe that he was a monster. Certainly he was, as the late Lord Birkenhead said of him, "a brave man and a true lover."

HELENA NORMANTON

The Crowborough Murder

NINE years ago I was spending an evening in the home of Clarence Darrow in Chicago. Somehow, after discussing several great cases in which he had appeared, we found ourselves talking about Dreiser's novel, *An American Tragedy*.

I vividly remember Mr. Darrow remarking that it was just the sort of crime which could occur in a piously respectable country such as England. It was one of the odd coincidences of life that soon after I returned I was asked to edit a volume in the *Notable Trials* Series upon a case which in numerous respects presented a close parallel to the plot of Dreiser's novel—that of Norman Thorne, in the celebrated Chicken-Farm Murder.

Norman Thorne, who may have committed the crime for which he was hanged, was a young fellow who came from a decent family and had a nice ordinary suburban London upbringing.

Directly his age permitted he enlisted for service in the Great War. Soon after his demobilisation he tried to make a living as a chicken-farmer upon a little piece of land he bought in Sussex. His father assisted him financially, but, like many another chicken-farmer, he got into debt.

Before he left London he had been walking out with a Miss Elsie Cameron and there are plenty of indications that he had become tired of her. In all probability Elsie loved Norman very much more than Norman loved Elsie. About June or July in 1923, relations between them had become intimate.

In November, 1924, Miss Cameron wrote to Thorne and informed him that she was an expectant mother. This was not true; although Elsie Cameron was such a neurotic bundle of fantasies that it is possible that she believed that it was so.

Thorne was perplexed and did not see how to believe in this assertion of pregnancy, but in order to soothe the girl promised to marry her if she were in fact pregnant. He thought it was more likely that she was saying so in order to get him to marry her.

It here becomes of some importance to consider the character and ability of Elsie Cameron. She had been a shorthand-typist, who had started work at fourteen or fifteen years of age but had been out of employment for the six months preceding her death, having had to give up employment because of her neurotic condition.

On one or two occasions she had been brought home from work by her fellow-employees and it was even alleged by them that she had shown suicidal and eccentric tendencies on those journeys. Between January and June of 1923, she was under continuous medical treatment for neurasthenia, depression, loss of energy, lack of self-confidence and failure in concentration.

During that time she was also examined for signs of pregnancy, but as to that the doctor had formed no definite conclusion, although after her death it became certain that she could not possibly have been pregnant. One of her mother's subsequent letters described her as a girl who "might have done something rash."

The proposed marriage was not looked upon with any favour in Thorne's family; she had been very hysterical when at his father's house, and his people seemed to have thought, not without excellent reason, that she would not make a suitable wife for a struggling young farmer.

When at a visit to some mutual friends who lived in Crowborough near Thorne's farm, she behaved in a very depressed sort of way, saying she felt she could

not do anything, not having strength enough even to make her own bed. Another local resident who knew her well described her as "depressed, brooding and stupefied."

One night she had even insisted on her friends taking her to Thorne's hut at about 11 p.m., and it was necessary for Thorne to come back to those friends' home to pacify her enough to persuade her even to go to her own bed that night.

Miss Cameron had in short reached the unhappy stage of life of one under-equipped for normal work and at the end of her financial resources. Her only escape from the economic trap she was in was to marry and to be supported.

Accordingly she had every motive to put pressure on her lover, and in November wrote to him again alleging her approaching maternity. Thorne could hardly keep himself and, in order to save money, had left his lodgings to exist as best he could in one of the huts on his tiny farm.

To add to his difficulties he had become very fond of a local girl of good character and physique, in every way more suited to him, and on November 25, 1924, he wrote to Elsie Cameron telling her that he was then "between two fires," and at a later date sent a letter implying, probably falsely, that he had gone as far with the second girl as he had with Elsie herself.

Elsie's epistolary attitude to all this was that her heart was broken, but her Norman must marry her; and it was arranged between them that on December 6, 1924, she should go down to Crowborough to see him.

She went, in fact, so as to arrive at tea-time on December 5, with a new jumper on and her hair freshly waved. Moreover, she took with her a little suitcase containing her entire worldly possessions, for she did not intend to return. According to the official list this did not even comprise a change of underwear, but did include a baby's frock.

It was an awkward change of plan, because Thorne had an engagement that evening to meet the new love at the station and carry home her heavy parcels.

Somehow, in the course of that afternoon and evening, Elsie Cameron met her death, and certainly the last person to see her alive was Norman Thorne.

According to him, they had tea together amicably ; and as she insisted that she had come to stay at Crowborough for good and all, he went to a neighbour to try to secure her a room. The neighbour was out, so he came back and they had a simple supper together, continuing to discuss their affairs.

At 9.45 p.m. Norman told Elsie that he had to go to meet someone at the station, to which she objected but eventually agreed. He went and returned at 11.30 p.m., when, so he said, he found Elsie dead, hanging from the cross-beam in his hut, her feet just scraping the floor.

His position so terrified him that, instead of rushing out to get medical or neighbourly help, he cut her down, laid her on the bed, and, after desperate rumination, undressed her, burned the clothes she was wearing in his stove, and cut off her head and legs. The head he placed in a tin box and the remains in various sacks.

He buried all these in the nearest chicken run. Her suitcase he buried in the potato patch near the gate. He hid her few pieces of trumpery jewellery in a little tin box and concealed it. Then he carried on just as if she had not come down at all.

The girl's disappearance was soon noted, and her parents set inquiries afoot. Thorne's actions and correspondence at this stage produced an extraordinarily unfavourable impression. He wrote cartloads of lies, and acted even more—in fact, he quite dramatised himself to the police, and was good enough to furnish them with the girl's photograph and suppositions as to where she might have gone or what she might have done.

At one point in the police investigation he was



THE CROWBOROUGH MURDER



Norman Thorne



Photopress

Elsie Cameron

amicably conversing with the officers while he was standing almost over the spot where she was buried.

Unfortunately for him, three local residents had seen Elsie Cameron on the fatal afternoon, and one of them had actually observed her turn in at his gate, so she very rightly took the information to the police. They searched his farm, and found first of all the suitcase in the potato patch at 8.25 a.m. on January 15, 1925. At 9.30 a.m. Chief Inspector Gillan detained Thorne, and told him he would probably be charged with causing the death of Elsie Cameron.

All day long he sat in his cell, and at 8 p.m. that night, after further caution, he made his second statement, telling for the first time the story of finding Miss Cameron hanging dead upon his return. He may or may not have believed that the actual remains had been discovered. They were, indeed, found later, and then reburied normally. Thorne, having been charged with her murder, the body was re-exhumed some weeks later for purposes of the defence.

That defence presented, indeed, a problem to his legal advisers. Probably any man who dismembers a corpse and has even a faint motive for murder is as good as hanged in this country. (And, one assumes, in most others.)

The circumstances here all pointed to the probability of a quarrel at the meeting, perhaps followed by a scuffle or blows. In such a situation, the only hope of saving Thorne's own life might have been for him to plead guilty of manslaughter, so that a jury might have inferred that death occurred unintentionally.

But Thorne was quite obdurate about this and refused so to plead. He stuck to it obstinately that he had never touched the girl and insisted with vehemence that her corpse, if re-exhumed, would demonstrate the truth of the hanging story by the traces of rope-marks to be found on the neck.

Curiously enough, he had severed the head half-way up at the back of the neck, but low down by the breast-bone in front, and had prevented its quick decomposition by burying it separately in a tin, almost as if to keep evidence, which might later be valuable.

At the trial it was precisely upon this condition of the neck that there occurred an almost historic clash of the best forensic medical experts of the day.

Sir Bernard Spilsbury, for the prosecution, could find no physical traces of any rope-marks—only mere traces of putrefied sebaceous glands along the wrinkle which lies across so many women's necks.

The late Dr. Brontë, Dr. Galt and Dr. Nabarro found extravasational marks consistent with rope-marks made by hanging. Between the trial and his death I saw Dr. Brontë several times and discussed this with him. His view never changed, that Thorne was innocent of Elsie Cameron's death and that the rope-marks *were* found by himself and his colleagues. Upon his retirement some little time back the eminent Dr. Galt was also reported in the Press to somewhat similar effect.

Dr. Brontë, in fact, strongly believed that Elsie Cameron was in the very act of staging a sham suicide to be effected at exactly the moment when she heard Thorne returning to the hut, but that she had underestimated her own fast-failing powers of resistance to any nervous shock; so that she may have died quite suddenly, just perhaps at the moment she let herself slip from the chair; or have died shortly afterwards while on the bed after her cutting down, perishing in fact from shock before asphyxiation could set in.

If so, she had of course planned for an effective rescue, and an emotional scene wherein she could exact her own terms. There have been since that date several unintentional deaths with self-made rope-entanglements; for instance, that of the undergraduate John Thain Davidson, which caused so much interest.

Or again, Elsie Cameron may have genuinely meant

to cause her own death and succeeded unusually rapidly—from shock, not asphyxiation.

Against that theory there remains the unpleasant fact that her head, ankles, shins and elbows had a number of bruises all made shortly before death. Some hæmorrhage inside her eyeballs could have been, *per contra*, consistent with the hanging story. Her glasses and locket-chain also were broken. If Thorne's story were true, why should those breakages have happened?

The case is full of medical and other complications, because the contents of the victim's stomach pointed to death having occurred within one and a half or two hours of her supper, which according to Thorne was eaten by them at the not improbable time of ten past nine. That would make her death occur between 10.40 and 11.10 p.m.

Thorne's other woman friend swore that he met her train which arrived at the local station at 10.15 p.m., and was with her and her mother until 11.30 p.m.

If, therefore, he killed Elsie Cameron, it must have been by inflicting upon her multiple injuries just after supper and leaving her in a dying state so as to expire in his absence, while he coolly went off to meet the other girl and behaved in a manner which seems to have aroused none of her suspicions.

The time-table of the whole affair is very puzzling.

I wish space here permitted the inclusion of Thorne's final letters to his parents. They were deeply religious in tone and asserted his innocence unflinchingly until his execution, when all motive for so doing had terminated.

Elsie Cameron was just the sort of neurotic who might have brought about her own death. But if she did so, why did not the innocent Thorne call in neighbourly or medical help, instead of carving her up, burying her, and lying most histrionically about her

disappearance, even posting love-letters to her home for a woman who was already dead?

At all events there was much conflict of opinion at the time. The almost authoritative *Law Journal* wrote that the execution of Thorne would "leave a feeling of profound disquiet in the minds of many people." The late Sir A. Conan Doyle stated: "I am not quite easy about this case."

Many others have written similarly to myself, including a Law Officer in one of our Overseas Dominions. However, the Court verdict did not unduly puzzle a Lewes jury, although the Coroner's jury at the adjourned inquest on Elsie Cameron refused to return a verdict of wilful murder against Thorne even after the same finding by the august Assize jury.

But however Elsie Cameron may have met her death, Thorne certainly died because of it, and, by an odd coincidence, on the day which would have been her twenty-seventh birthday.

Poor young people! In the long run, one pities them both, caught in the grip of forces too strong for either of them.

EX-CHIEF INSPECTOR BERRETT

The Amazing Warsop Mystery

IF ever there was a setting for a perfect crime it was the forest road where I investigated the murder of Samuel Fell Wilson, the Warsop provision merchant, in his car.

I do not suggest that the crime itself, though apparently premeditated, was of the perfect species, and if my own theory is correct it was quite likely that the setting was selected more by accident than design.

But in no other spot could the murderer have found so many circumstances to combine in his favour.

No one in the district took the slightest notice of the sound of the shots which killed Samuel Wilson.

That may seem to you, as it seemed to me, a most amazing thing. Yet poaching was so rife in this area that shots ringing out at any hour failed to attract particular attention.

Every night they were heard at intervals, and the worthy citizens of this Sherwood Forest district just turned over in their beds, not curious in the slightest degree.

Then, by another chance of circumstance—or cunning design—the murderer chose a spot which was known to be used by as many lovers as poachers. There lies the explanation of the fact that for three valuable hours the car containing its grim secret remained upon a grass verge and not one of several miners going to their night shift at a neighbouring colliery troubled to glance into the vehicle.

They thought that there was a love-making couple—not a dead man—in the car.

Let us survey the facts.

Police-Constable Holland, of the Nottinghamshire County Police, was on night duty on September 24, 1930. His beat took him along the country lanes of the Dukeries, past the great estates of the Duke of Portland, about which lie the villages of Warsop, Clipstone, Ollerton and Edwinstone—in daylight a beautiful country of trees, scrub and bracken where rabbits play and people from Nottingham and Mansfield picnic.

From the cross-roads the lane winds downhill to Warsop village. Midnight had just passed. The night was damp and still. As P.C. Holland turned the bend he saw the car.

It was drawn in to the side and stood three feet over the grass border. There were no lights. The officer saw no movement as he approached, and with the casual inquiry of a policeman doing a normal job, he pulled open the door.

Dimly he made out the form of a man. As he switched on his lamp he saw the man was dead. He had been shot. Immediately the officer closed the door and sought the nearest telephone.

After the body had been removed from Warsop it became evident that this was a case of murder.

The body was identified as that of Mr. Samuel Wilson. Most of his money was missing. Mr. Wilson was well known in the district. He was a small provision merchant and drove his car through this mining and agricultural district, taking orders and collecting money due to him. His little car was a familiar sight. The villagers knew him and recognised it. They knew him so well that they could give full details of his habits.

Superintendent Neate, of the Nottinghamshire County Police, went to the scene of the crime and, after a preliminary investigation, it was decided to seek the assistance of Scotland Yard. I went to Warsop, taking with me Sergeant Harris, who was my assistant in the Gutteridge murder inquiries and many other cases.

When the body was discovered Mr. Wilson had been dead for about three hours. He had been shot with a point-twelve bore gun.

In order to time the murder more exactly I sought persons who might have heard the shots. One of the first persons I interviewed was John Copeland, who lived in a caravan in a field almost opposite the spot where the car had been pulled up. He had with him a friend named Leonard White. Their story was a simple one.

Copeland and White had been chatting together outside the caravan. At about 9.15 p.m. they had seen a car coming slowly down the gradient. It was using only sidelights. Then both men had heard the sound of a shot, followed by a second.

"Immediately afterwards," said Copeland, "the lights of the car went out."

"Yes. What happened next?"

"I heard the sound of a person running. Whoever it was ran down the road. Then he stopped running. And that's all."

White, however, had walked to the gate of the field and had looked down the road. Into the light of the street lamp there had come the figure of a man who carried an overcoat over his arm.

That was all they could tell me. I was astonished to find that neither man had thought of investigating the cause of the shots there and then. It seemed to me, a London detective, to be natural that a shot should arouse curiosity and that a man who heard the shooting should seek to satisfy his curiosity.

More particularly did this strike me when I recalled the time—about 9.15 p.m.

It was there I made a mistake. And the reason for their inactivity explains why the murderer of Samuel Wilson still goes free.

Neither man was in any degree curious. Both were familiar with the sound of shooting and like the other villagers were not concerned about it.

There were gamekeepers and police, but, as one man I saw said to me: "It's a big country, gov'nor, and the cops and keepers can't be in two places at once. Sometimes they catch us, but we don't cause any trouble."

I found that shot-guns were common and that nearly every one was a .12 bore.

Samuel Wilson had been murdered less than two miles from his own home and at the end of a day's journey. In that time he had collected various moneys due to him as was his habit. Some of the money was not on the body. Evidently it had been stolen. Perhaps the murder had been committed for robbery.

It reads simply when I say that we were able to follow the exact route Mr. Wilson had followed and to discover how much money he had collected in the day. Actually, this process involved a great amount of detailed work.

He had left home about three o'clock and had been engaged on his round until 8.50 p.m., when he made a call at Clipstone. On his way home from there he met his death. He had collected from his customers £21 14s. 5d. Of this there were twelve £1 notes, five 10s. notes and £7 4s. 5d. in silver and copper. The silver was found in the car, but all the notes were gone.

From Clipstone it was not difficult to follow the dead man's route. He had set off for home. At about 9.5 p.m. he had passed over the cross-roads above Warsop village.

On one corner of this cross-roads there was a refreshment hut run by a Mrs. Hooley. To her, Mr. Wilson had shouted "Good night."

In passing over the cross-roads, the driver of the car had put out his headlights. This was Mr. Wilson's habit. He had done so many times before, and he had told people that he believed by so doing he was able to see other headlights more distinctly and thus prevent accidents.

There was no doubt about the identification. Mrs. Hooley recognised the car, his voice, his mannerism.

Actually, three people saw him pass over the cross-

THE AMAZING WARSOPO MYSTERY



WHO POISONED CHARLES BRAVO?



Charles Bravo

Gooch



Mrs. Bravo

Gooch

See page 45

roads. It was a normal procedure, carried out in a normal manner. Not one of the three noticed if he carried a passenger. Not one had seen any stranger in the vicinity. Yet a hundred yards further down the road, Mr. Wilson was murdered. And for three hours thereafter, his car stood where it had stopped.

It seems impossible that such a thing could have happened. But it did happen. The shooting was a deliberate act. No question of a gun-trigger being caught accidentally as a passenger was getting out of the car. There was a second shot. The lungs were full of shot.

Inspector Cherrill and Sergeant O'Brien, finger-print experts, and photographers from Scotland Yard were called in. The car was searched and a host of finger-prints secured. The prints had to be identified. *Of them all, only one was not identified*—an amazing achievement when one considers how many people had touched the car.

We turned our attention to the man in the overcoat, and it was not long before we found him. Readily he answered my questions and the following investigations confirmed that he was a highly respectable man who had nothing to do with the crime.

But Copeland had told me he had heard the sound of running footsteps. There must have been a second person. The man with the overcoat told me he had been walking down the lane and had seen the lights of the car. He saw the car stop. He heard reports which he presumed were caused mechanically. Then the car moved on and the red tail-light disappeared.

He continued his walk and presently he passed a car drawn up on the grass, but he noticed no one in it. Nor had he seen a soul near it.

The investigations brought to light other people who had seen either the car in motion or the lights. Yet not one single person had seen the murderer.

Some of the men I interviewed were curious types. More than one regarded poaching as a legitimate business.

"I got home from work about a quarter to seven," remarked one.

"But I thought you were unemployed?"

"Pegging, gov'nor," was the bland explanation.

We had now worked on the case for many days and, although we had discovered much, we were no nearer a solution of the problem than when we started. Sergeant Harris and I discussed motives. It was of no avail.

There were people who said Mr. Wilson would give lifts to casual walkers; just as many were quite sure he would not. We were unable to discover if he had picked up a passenger that night.

We ruled out the common "triangle" motive. Mr. Wilson was a good husband and a man who concentrated on his business. We could find no suggestion of a grudge against him. He had not come between a poacher and his game.

Eventually, we decided to adopt the theory that Mr. Wilson had picked up somebody he knew, and that as they drove along a quarrel developed. It became violent so that the car was driven unevenly. It left the road and ran on to the grass. Seeing this, Mr. Wilson applied his brakes. The car stopped.

Whereupon the murderer backed out and, keeping the door open with his body, he fired point blank at the driver.

This done, he grabbed the notes, which, by some means or other, he knew to be in Mr. Wilson's possession. Then he stretched out his arm to switch off the lights. For a few yards the car moved forward, then the engine stopped and, with all lights out, the car remained until it was found.

The murderer then ran along the road. He saw approaching him the man with the overcoat. Hastily he left the road. Perhaps he crouched behind the car, perhaps behind a tree or in the ditch. He waited in his hiding-place until all was clear. Then he escaped, keeping to the fields.

To this theory there is, in my opinion, only one alternative. It is that Mr. Wilson had made a rendezvous with some person at the spot where he ran his car on to the grass verge to get it clear of the road. He then opened the door, intending to get out. In that instant, and before he actually moved from his seat, he was shot dead.

But, against this, there was no evidence to show that he had arranged such a meeting.

The murder was premeditated and obviously by someone who had made a study of Mr. Wilson's habits. It took place in a few seconds.

It has been suggested that the criminal might have been a skilful poacher. There is one significant fact which counters this theory.

The doctoring of sporting gun cartridges is a common practice in this area. A poacher goes out at night and shoots birds at short range. If he used a full charge of shot he would so damage the bird that it would be spoiled for sale.

Consequently, he extracts half the pellets from the cartridge and reloads old cartridge cases with a smaller number of shots. These "home-loaded" cartridges are used by every poacher.

But two fully charged .12-bore cartridges killed Samuel Wilson.

As I read this report of an unsatisfactory case, I am impressed by the fact that it seems a motiveless, vague sort of affair.

There seems to have been little progress made in any direction.

That is just the type of case it was. We interviewed scores of people and learned precisely nothing of first importance. Every opening ended in a blank wall. There was nothing tangible. No clue that led anywhere.

I think that in an urban district we should have been successful. The reason is that the sound of shots would have aroused immediate concern and definite action. It is highly probable that there would have been an arrest.

MRS. BELLOC LOWNDES

Who Poisoned Charles Bravo ?

THERE are innumerable people to whom the death of some other human being may make the difference between carking care and the happiness which absence of money anxiety brings with it. This is why a man or a woman's urgent desire for what the possession of money can ensure has constantly in the past, and will constantly in the future, provide a motive which guides the hand of the secret poisoner.

And such, in my view, was the simple solution of what still remains, after nearly sixty years, an unsolved mystery.

The actual recorded facts in the Bravo case are few and clear. A wealthy and exceptionally attractive young widow, named Florence Ricardo, fell in love, late in the year 1875, with an exceptionally good-looking and popular young barrister named Charles Bravo.

Mrs. Bravo lived in a roomy, comfortable house called The Priory, at Balham—Balham being then little more than a country village within a drive of London.

After her first husband's death Florence Ricardo had had a secret intrigue with a noted physician, Dr. Gully. He was nearly sixty, and she still in her twenties. Only three people were in the secret of this curious illicit love affair.

Two of the three were the young widow's parents, who were so shocked and angered that they refused to see her until after she had at last broken with her elderly lover. The third person in her confidence was a Mrs. Cox, who was both her paid companion and close

friend. She was also fond of Mrs. Cox's children, who were then at school, and they always stayed with her during the holidays.

It was on the advice of Mrs. Cox that Florence took the unwise, if honest, step of confessing her past intrigue to her future husband, and in a letter she wrote after her confession, but before she and Bravo were actually engaged, occurred the sentence :

“Need I tell you that I have written to the Dr. to say I must never see his face again. It is the right thing to do in every respect, whatever happens, whether we marry or whether we do not.”

Mrs. Cox—and to me it has always appeared strange that students of the case have not made more of the fact—actually tried to persuade the young man to tell his mother of his future wife's past affair with Dr. Gully. But Bravo, a gentleman and a man of honour, indignantly refused to follow the advice of his wife's companion.

Incidentally, he was in receipt of a large allowance from his stepfather, who loved him as a son, and had his mother objected to the marriage, that allowance might well have been withdrawn.

The young widow stipulated, and Charles Bravo agreed, that Mrs. Cox should remain in their employment, and the bridegroom also consented “to hang up his hat in his wife's hall.”

Charles Bravo appears to have been a cheerful young man with a good opinion of himself, who took those for whom he cared into his confidence. In a letter to his mother he observed that his “better half” had ordered him to wear “a red flannel garment which is a cross between a kilt, a sporran and a pair of bathing drawers, and which has as many strings as a harp.”

In spite of their mutual passion, which seems to have grown in intensity after their marriage, everything was not really smooth between the couple, and there was to

come a time when Florence Bravo declared on oath and with bitter tears that her husband had been insanely jealous of Dr. Gully.

More than one distinguished criminologist has declared it to be his belief that she invented the tale of this retrospective jealousy to suit her then purpose ; but in several of Charles Bravo's letters there are mysterious allusions which seem to me to bear out her story. Take what is surely a significant admission :

“ MY DARLING WIFE,

“ I know you to be the best of wives. We have had bitter trouble, but I trust that henceforth the sweet peace of our lives will not be interrupted.”

There came a day when Gully admitted that Mrs. Cox had sought him out and begged him to leave Balham. If that was true, and it was never disputed, there could have been no reason for making such a request, except to allay the jealousy of her friend's husband.

Now Charles Bravo had a peculiarity which the world at large agrees to regard with derision and dislike. He was extremely parsimonious, and, as is usual with men and women so afflicted, money seems never to have been long absent from his thoughts. In one of his love-letters he observed : “ I miss you dreadfully, and would willingly give a hundred pounds—if times were not so hard—to have you here now.”

The two had been married about four months when, during a short absence from home, Charles wrote to his wife, “ By putting by the cobs and Mrs. Cox, we could save four hundred a year and be as comfortable.”

He persuaded Florence to offer the lady a year's salary, and a free passage to the West Indies, where she had a little property. But Mrs. Cox refused this offer, and it was arranged that she should stay on at The Priory while seeking for another post.

On the morning of what she later called “ the fatal Tuesday,” that is, on April 18, 1876, Florence drove her

husband to the Temple. There she left him to enjoy a merry lunch with friends. But he came home early, and went out riding. During his ride the horse bolted, and he appears to have been a great deal shaken, both physically and mentally.

Still, he seemed quite recovered, when he, his wife and Mrs. Cox sat down to dinner. The wines served at the meal were sherry and burgundy; the ladies drank sherry and the master of the house burgundy.

After dinner Mrs. Bravo, not feeling well, went up to her bedroom, which was next to that of her husband, and Charles retired to what was called the morning room, to smoke some tobacco which his wife had bought him as a little love-gift. But soon he, too, went up to bed.

He had not been upstairs more than a few minutes when Mrs. Cox and the maid heard him call out, "Florence! Florence! Hot water!" Florence was asleep, but Mrs. Cox hurried upstairs, and, after seeing him for a moment, she woke his wife. Together the two women went into his room to find him lying on the floor, muttering feebly, "I am in great agony."

Mrs. Cox at once sent for a doctor, and Mrs. Bravo suggested another who lived rather nearer, who was also called immediately. On their arrival, Mrs. Cox confided to one of these two doctors the fact that Charles Bravo had told her that he had taken poison, but that he did not wish his wife to know it.

The doctors were alarmed and surprised at their patient's condition, and desired further medical advice to be obtained. Mrs. Bravo eagerly agreed, and sent for a Harley Street specialist, named Royse Bell, who was a great friend of them both.

She suggested bringing yet another doctor, so soon there were four medical men in the house. Royse Bell at once made up his mind that Bravo was suffering from an irritant poison, and he pressed him to say what he had taken.

The only answer he would give, and he said it again

and again, was that he had rubbed laudanum on a neuralgic tooth, and had perhaps swallowed some by mistake.

As time went on the unhappy man became worse and worse, and suffered intense agony; and at last, after Bravo's parents had arrived, his wife, without consulting them, sent for the famous Sir William Gull. After seeing the now dying man Sir William fully agreed with his colleagues that Bravo had swallowed some irritant poison.

He sent everyone out of the room, and, gravely accosting the dying man, exclaimed: "This is not disease, you are poisoned! Pray tell me how you came by it?"

Again came the answer, "I took some laudanum for my tooth."

"You may have taken laudanum, but you have taken something else, and if you die without telling me what it is you did take, someone will be accused or suspected of having poisoned you."

"I am aware of that," answered Bravo, "but I swear that I have only taken laudanum."

The unfortunate man died early on the morning of the Friday after he had been taken ill.

A post-mortem was held, and it was found that the cause of death had been a huge dose of antimony, and it was regarded as practically certain that the poison had been administered in the burgundy he had drunk at dinner.

What was practically a private inquest was held in The Priory within a week of the death. Mrs. Cox, who gave evidence, for the first time publicly revealed that Bravo had used the words, "I have taken poison. Don't tell Florence,"

She declared that he had lived on the happiest terms with his wife, and that she could think of no reason which would have made him commit suicide. An

open verdict was returned, and the matter appeared closed.

But it soon became plain that a considerable number of people who had known Charles Bravo were not satisfied, and the Home Secretary ordered a fresh inquest.

This second inquiry, which opened early in the July following his death, lasted twenty-three full working days; forty-three witnesses were called and examined; and their share in the proceedings cost Charles Bravo's parents and his widow over twenty thousand pounds. But a reward of five hundred pounds, offered by Mrs. Bravo, for information showing where the antimony had been obtained, was never claimed.

When the inquest opened each of the parties interested was represented by some famous counsel, and as the proceedings went on, it gradually became clear that the only person who could have had even a remote interest in the death of Charles Bravo was his wife's companion Mrs. Cox.

But after Mrs. Cox had voluntarily given a signed statement, and was in the witness box, she sprang an astonishingly new piece of information on the world. She declared that when she had first gone into Charles Bravo's bedroom he had exclaimed: "I have taken poison for Dr. Gully. Don't tell Florence."

In firm, quiet accents she further revealed that the young man had been frightfully jealous of the well-known physician.

When questioned as to the reason for that jealousy, she first said that to her knowledge the friendship between Mrs. Ricardo, as she then was, and Dr. Gully had been of an innocent, if indiscreet character; then, only a few minutes later, she admitted that to her knowledge their friendship had not been innocent.

As without doubt Mrs. Cox intended should be the case, the suspicion which had hovered over her now shifted on to the dead man's widow and Dr. Gully.

It was fortunate for the doctor that at the time his wife, though a woman considerably older than himself, was still alive.

Among those present at the second inquest was the late Sir Douglas Strait. That famous lawyer once told me that he had never seen so intelligent and composed a witness as Mrs. Cox during the hours when she was engaged in swearing away her generous friend and kind employer's reputation, and, it might almost be said, her very life.

While apparently willing to say anything that would injure Mrs. Bravo—she went out of her way to state that at one time Florence had promised to marry Dr. Gully, should he become a widower—she refrained from making a single admission that told against herself.

When she was subsequently reminded of the lies she had told, both during Bravo's illness and at the first inquest, she wisely remained silent and "stood as if deeply thoughtful and perplexed."

As to Florence Bravo in the witness box, one of those present wrote afterwards: "It was a horrid spectacle to see a young woman to whom her reputation was evidently dear, having wrung from her by questions as cruel as the rack, an open confession of dishonour."

Of the forty odd witnesses who were heard, Dr. Gully made the best impression. He swore and he was believed, that since his lover's second marriage he had had no communication with her either directly or indirectly.

The jury were absent for over two hours. On their return their foreman announced that of the sixteen jurymen, twelve were agreed that Charles Bravo had not committed suicide, and that he had not met his death by misadventure. In their view he had been wilfully murdered, but they did not consider there was sufficient evidence to fix the guilt on any person or persons.

And now for one possible solution of the mystery. A London magistrate, well known to me in my youth, put down in his diary every story then flying about London connected with the case, and his view was as follows :

Antimony, which was then much used in stables because it had the property of causing horses coats to be glossy, possesses the peculiarity of acting as a violent emetic. It appears that a minute dose was sometimes administered in the servants' halls of Victorian England, by way of a practical joke.

My old friend's view was that a member of the household at The Priory, with of course no thought of poison, had determined to give Charles Bravo an unpleasant quarter of an hour, and had added what was, in fact, a fatal dose of antimony to the water contained in the bottle on the washing-stand, from which, each evening, the young man had the peculiar habit of drinking without the intervention of a glass.

In support of his theory he pointed out that all the servants when called at the inquest had expressed warm devotion to the dead man, although there was ample evidence that his meanness had caused him to be much disliked by those in his employment.

Sir William Gull told my mother that he was convinced of Mrs. Bravo's complete innocence. She died within a year of the tragedy, when still a quite young and beautiful woman.

By this time the reader will, I am sure, realise that I regard it as certain that the person who caused Charles Bravo's death was the one human being in the world who had any reason for wishing him dead. Florence Bravo never saw her treacherous friend after the end of the inquest, but she had already left money to that lady's children, and she did not revoke her bequest.

EX-SUPERINTENDENT PERCY SAVAGE

The Fish Ponds Woods Mystery

OF the many unsolved murder mysteries with which Scotland Yard are called upon to deal, most are crimes seemingly without motive. I could name at least a dozen where, if our probing could have revealed a motive, it would have simultaneously revealed a solution.

It is often an unpleasant yet unavoidable business, this task of endeavouring to find hidden motives. It involves delving into the past years and bringing back to persons memories of things they had long forgotten and would probably prefer to remain forgotten.

Yet all the searching into the past which I did failed to supply me with a motive, beyond petty robbery, for the murder of Mrs. Luard, the wife of Major-General Charles Edward Luard, in Fish Ponds Woods, a beautiful secluded sylvan retreat near Sevenoaks, twenty-six years ago.

It remains an unsolved mystery.

From the very first it was evident that the task of finding the murderer would be extremely difficult, if not absolutely impossible, and this fact only made us all the keener to sift every bit of evidence we could get.

All our work was in vain. The murderer was never caught, as not a scrap of evidence was forthcoming on which we could justify an arrest, and to this day I frankly admit that I have no idea who the criminal was.

Major-General Luard was a distinguished soldier. He was descended from a famous Huguenot family who sought refuge in England from France at the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. For thirty years he

served in various parts of the Empire as an officer in the Royal Engineers, and when he retired in 1887, he went to live in a large and beautifully furnished house at Ightham Knoll, on the main road between the Kentish villages of Ightham and Seal. He was sixty-nine years old, but in spite of his advancing years he was a great sportsman and a great walker, and his tall, upright, military figure made him conspicuous wherever he went.

He and his wife, who was the daughter of a Cumberland magnate, had enjoyed thirty-three years of married bliss. They lived a quiet and happy life in their Kentish home, and were frequently seen roaming through the country lanes, arm in arm "just like a honeymoon couple," as one of the neighbours told me.

A favourite walk of theirs was through the estate of Mr. Horace Wilkinson, of Frankfield Park, Seal Chart, and to get there they took a bridle path through Fish Ponds Woods which border the main Maidstone road.

In the woods was a summer house called "Casa," which belonged to Mr. Wilkinson, who was a great friend of the Luard's. They often had tea in this summer house with Mr. and Mrs. Wilkinson, who were away from home when the tragedy with which I am dealing occurred.

The General was an enthusiastic golfer, and a member of the Wildernesse golf club, and he frequently took this peaceful route in preference to the main road when he went to the golf course.

One afternoon in August, 1908, the General and Mrs. Luard left Ightham Knoll with their favourite fox terrier. The General wished to go to the golf house to fetch his clubs, and Mrs. Luard accompanied him through the bridle path in Fish Ponds Woods. At the wicket-gate, just beyond the summer house, they parted.

The General, with his dog, continued on his way to the golf course, and Mrs. Luard turned back and walked slowly down the bridle path towards her home. That was about three o'clock. It is important here to note that Mrs. Luard wished to reach home early because she

had arranged for a friend, Mrs. Stewart, to take tea with her.

The General arrived at the Wildernesse golf course, collected his golf clubs, and started to walk home by a different route. He walked about a mile or so, and when in the main road a motor car, in which was the Rev. A. B. Cotton, of Shipbourne, overtook him. Mr. Cotton offered to drive him home, and the General accepted the invitation.

He reached Ightham Knoll at 4.30, an hour and a half after he had left his wife at the wicket gate. He was surprised to learn that Mrs. Luard had not arrived. Her friend, Mrs. Stewart, was waiting expectantly in the drawing-room. The General apologised for his wife's absence, and said she would certainly be home within a few minutes.

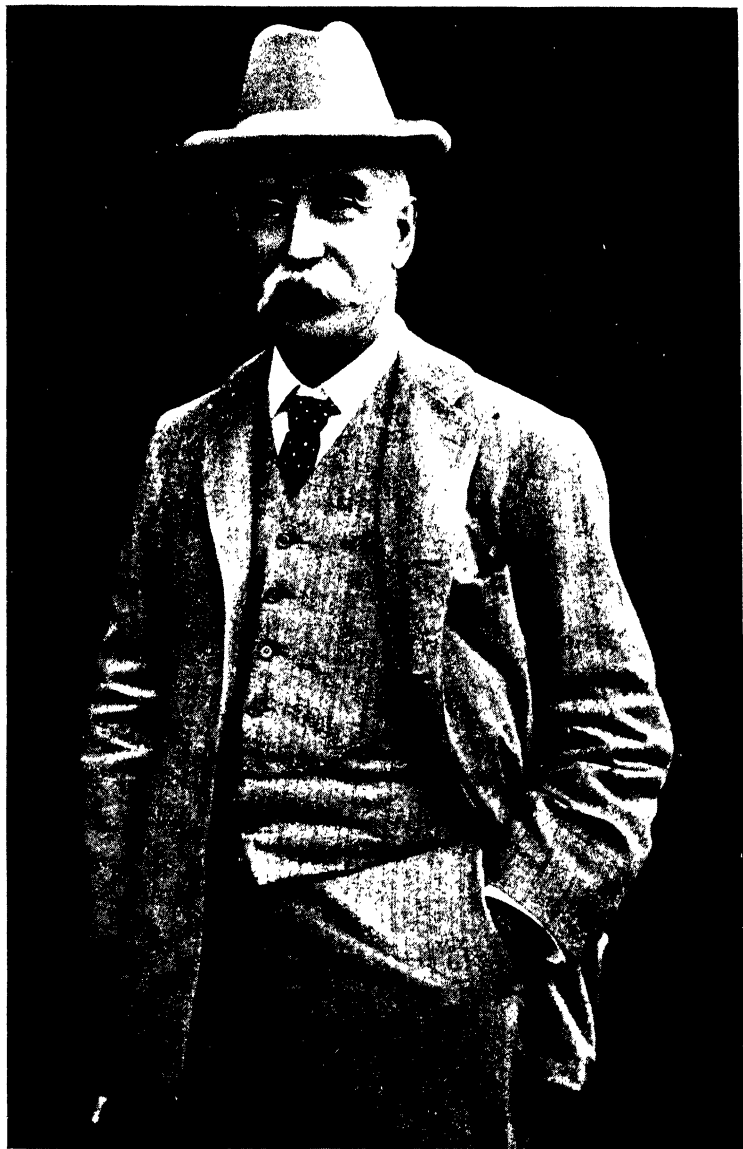
In the meantime, tea was served, but still there was no news of Mrs. Luard. The General became anxious, and said he would go along the bridle path to look for his wife. Mrs. Stewart accompanied him as far as a spot known as Seven Wents, when she had to leave the General and return home to meet a friend at 5.15.

The General went on alone through the woods, and as he approached the summer house, he saw his wife lying face downwards on the floor of the veranda. There was blood on the floor and on his wife's head and face. He saw that she was dead.

Her hat was lying a few feet away, a glove was on her right hand, and the left-hand glove was on the floor, turned inside out, as though it had been torn off her hand. Three gold rings were missing from her fingers, a pocket had been cut out of her dress, and her purse stolen.

General Luard left the body just as he had found it. He walked to Mr. Wilkinson's stables, and told the butler of the terrible discovery. They returned together to the summer house, and later doctors and the local police were summoned.

THE FISH PONDS WOODS MYSTERY



Major-General C. E. Luard

Vandyk

THE FISH PONDS WOODS MYSTERY



The summer-house where the crime was committed.

Dr. Mansfield, of Sevenoaks, arrived in the darkness of the evening and examined the body. Behind the right ear was a bullet hole, and there was another hole of the same size on the left temple.

Mrs. Luard was lying prone on the veranda with her right cheek resting on the pavement. Her head was about a foot from the steps leading into the summer-house, and was in a pool of blood. A large straw hat, trimmed with black ribbon, was lying about a yard away.

At the back of the hat was a dent, and an effusion of blood on the upper part of the head corresponded in position with the dent in the hat. There were bruises on the right cheek, chin and nose. On the ring finger of the left hand there were three small abrasions, and there was also an abrasion on the middle finger—all caused, said the doctor, by the rings being pulled off her hands.

From these facts the doctor was able to reconstruct the crime. He was of opinion that Mrs. Luard was sitting or standing on the veranda when she was struck from behind with a heavy stick or bludgeon, and then shot twice with a small-calibre revolver held very close to her head. The bullet wounds could not have been self-inflicted.

Colonel Warde was the Chief Constable of Kent, and he asked for the assistance of Scotland Yard officers in the unravelling of the mystery. Chief-Inspector Scott and I took charge of the investigation, and when we arrived at Ightham Knoll, the General, who was a great friend of the Chief Constable, had already made a statement in which he had detailed his movements so far as he could remember them and had given the times at which he arrived at various points of his journey to Wildernesse golf course and back home.

He told us that he left his wife at the wicket gate at three o'clock. Two witnesses whose reliability was beyond dispute declared that at 3.15 they heard what sounded like revolver shots. These witnesses were in different parts of the wood at the time, so there could

have been no collusion between them, and they were positive about the exact time the shots were heard.

They were a fifth of a mile away from the summer house, but experiments which we made showed beyond doubt that shots from an ordinary revolver fired near the summer house could have been heard in the places where they stood at the time.

Five minutes after the shots rang through the woods, the General was seen a considerable distance from the summer house walking with his dog towards the golf links, and the golf club steward saw him crossing the green at 3.30. As the murder was committed at 3.15, and the journey from the summer house to the golf links occupied half an hour at a normal rate of speed, it was clear that the General could not have been near his wife at the time she was shot dead.

Who, then, was the murderer? Did a stranger to the district waylay Mrs. Luard in the lonely woods? That was a most unlikely theory, but we tested it as far as we could by interviewing tramps who had been in the neighbourhood and questioning various residents in Ightham, Seal, Ivy Hatch, Shipbourne, and other villages. But we found no one who had seen a stranger hanging about the country-side on the day of the murder.

The crime was, in my opinion, premeditated, and must have been committed by someone who knew of the movements of the General and his wife. The revolver with which the murder was committed was never found, and although there were three revolvers in the General's house, it was proved that not one of them could have fired the fatal shots.

We were never able, in spite of all our efforts, to solve this strange mystery, but unfortunately there were many people who had their own decided views. General Luard received scores of anonymous letters accusing him of the crime. He became broken-hearted.

He went to stay a few days at Barham Court, Maidstone,

as the guest of Col. C. E. Warde, M.P., who was a relative of the Chief Constable. On the night of September 17 he told his host that he was going to Southampton on the following morning to meet his son, who had left South Africa for home on hearing of his mother's death.

In the morning the General walked across the park from Barham Court, crossed the road, and walked on to the railway line. A train approached, and the General threw himself in front of the engine. He left the following pathetic letter addressed to Colonel Warde :

My dear Warde,—I am sorry to have to return your kindness and hospitality and long friendship in this way, but I am satisfied it is best to join her in the second life at once, as I can be of no further use to anyone in future in this world, of which I am tired, and in which I do not wish to live any longer. I thought that my strength was sufficient to bear up against the horrible imputations and terrible letters which I have received since that awful crime was committed which robbed me of my happiness. And so it was for long, and the goodness, kindness, and sympathy of so many friends kept me going. But somehow, in the last day or two, something seems to have snapped. The strength has left me, and I care for nothing except to join her again. So good-bye, dear friend, to both of us.—Yours very affectionately, C. E. Luard.

PS. : I shall be somewhere on the railway line.

At the inquest, the coroner said the General had absolutely accounted for all his movements and showed that he could not have committed the murder. The police had done all they could, but their task had been rendered more difficult by the isolated spot where the murder was committed, and the fact that darkness had set in before the police arrived at the summer house.

Who *did* murder Mrs. Luard ?

It was a foul and deliberate crime and must have been

committed by someone lying in wait for her in those lonely woods where it was so easy to hide from the few people who used them.

Major-General Luard did not commit the crime.

Of that I am certain. He fully accounted for his movements and the times at which he stated he arrived at various stages of his tragic journey were amply corroborated by several independent witnesses.

I am quite certain that only a stranger to Mrs. Luard could have had the cruel and heartless villainy to cut the purse out of her dress pocket and wrench the rings off her fingers as she lay dead on the steps of the summer house.

LEONARD R. GRIBBLE

The Strange Case of Dr. Smethurst.

CRIMINAL history, like most other forms of human activity, is prone to repeat itself.

Probably the most spectacular European *cause célèbre* in the first half of the nineteenth century was the Lafarge case, in which a doctor's oversight resulted in a verdict of "Guilty!" Marie Lafarge was convicted of poisoning her husband mainly upon the results of a chemical analysis in which the materials employed contained more arsenic than was found in her husband's body.

The celebrated French case has its counterpart in the annals of the English courts. Seven years after Marie Lafarge was released, a dying woman, Dr. Thomas Smethurst was arrested for the murder of his mistress, Miss Isabella Bankes, tried at the Old Bailey, and upon such doubtful evidence as convicted the Frenchwoman, found guilty and sentenced to death.

A great outcry in the Press resulted finally in a further reconsideration of the medical evidence and in the grant of a free pardon. The red-whiskered little doctor with the timid eyes escaped the gallows, but not the law; he was rearrested—for bigamy.

He was convicted, served a year in prison, and two years after his release staged an amazing and dramatic come-back; he startled the English public that had almost forgotten him by boldly bringing an action to prove the will of the woman whose death had for a while branded him as murderer.

From this, his last, trial he emerged victor. Presumably he enjoyed the fruits of his victory, amounting

to several thousand pounds, but when he disappeared from public ken he left behind him one of the most interesting records of any man who has slept in the condemned cell and later walked unfettered in the light of day.

Thomas Smethurst was a rather insignificant looking man. Of small build and pale complexion, his red moustache lent his undistinguished features a ferocity which was scarcely reflected in his mode of life. Married to a woman twenty years older than himself, his role, until in middle age he met Isabella Bankes, was that of the traditional hen-pecked husband rather than that of the philandering Lothario.

It is important that one should realise this fact when considering the case for it explains how a biological and temperamental reaction resulted in his bigamous marriage.

A qualified apothecary in 1830, Smethurst later took his doctor's degree at a German university. He returned to London, where he practised for nine years before moving to Ramsgate.

Becoming interested in hydropathy, he wrote a work entitled *Hydropathia*, and, putting his theories into practice, opened a spa at Moor Park, not far from Farnham. Apparently his efforts here were successful, for later he was able to sell the establishment to another medical man and to retire from active medical practice.

Thirty years after the Smethursts were married at Kennington, in the spring of 1828, they were settled in a Bayswater boarding-house; the husband was fifty-three, the wife seventy-three. They had little in common, and one may assume that their days followed each other with the monotonous regularity of a slow march.

The *tempo* changed when Smethurst met Isabella Bankes, and realised that living under the same roof was a woman who could quicken his sluggish blood and fire his thoughts with romance. In her presence he asserted himself, sloughed his inferiority.

She was forty-two, and possessed a natural charm of manner; "winsome" a friendly novelist might have termed her. Compared with the wrinkled and faded wife, she was as a bud about to bloom. Small wonder Smethurst became infatuated; what is more remarkable is the fair one's reciprocation of his fresh-found ardour.

Smethurst, from what is known of him, is unlikely to have gone far without encouragement. Encouraged, he floundered, and sank beyond help.

It was a foolish, insane thing to do, but he did it because his rejuvenation had thrown normal existence out of true perspective. He cut the painter of wedlock and drifted down the stream of romance. But it was a typically middle-aged romance, veneered with a childish attempt at respectability.

To steady their quaking susceptibilities the lovers went through the marriage ceremony at Battersea Church. Afterwards they settled down at Richmond. They were "married" about a fortnight before Christmas.

Three months passed without serious disturbance. On March 27, 1859, Isabella Bankes experienced her first attack of sharp intestinal pains. Hitherto she had enjoyed good health, although subject to periodic bilious troubles. Her "husband" doctored her for a week, but on April 3 he summoned a local man, Dr. Julius.

The Richmond doctor's prescription of a chalk mixture failed to relieve the suffering woman, and two days later her condition was radically worse; she complained of a burning in her stomach. Dr. Julius tried various drugs, without avail.

At the trial, later, he several times stated that Smethurst was keen to give the patient prussic acid "in an effervescing state." Julius's partner, Bird, was called in, and on the 28th, the patient's condition being even more critical, Smethurst procured the services of yet another physician, Dr. Todd.

Todd prescribed copper sulphate and powdered opium, a mixture which evoked a strong protest from Smethurst, who significantly complained that it "produced symptoms of poison."

However, by this time Julius, puzzled to account for the patient's failure to respond to treatment, and doubtless aggravated by Smethurst's continued opposition to his frankly experimental prescriptions, had conceived the idea that the patient's malady was being wantonly intensified.

"On April 30," he said at the trial, "I felt it my duty to communicate with Mr. Penrhyn, one of the Richmond magistrates." The next day Isabella Banks made her will, leaving everything she possessed except a brooch to Smethurst; and on the day following Smethurst, very surprised and very indignant, was arrested and charged with feloniously administering poison.

Barely twenty-four hours later, on May 3, Isabella Banks died, and the charge was changed to murder.

The bewildering and notorious Smethurst case had begun; England awoke to take interest in one of the most baffling triangle dramas ever presented before an English jury.

The post-mortem determined that the deceased was from five to seven weeks pregnant; traces of anti-mony were discovered in the blood and intestines, but no trace of arsenic was found. On the last day of May a coroner's jury set the seal on public opinion by recording a verdict of wilful murder against Dr. Thomas Smethurst.

The trial began on Thursday, July 7, 1859. The jury was discharged and the trial postponed on the next day, owing to the sudden illness of a jurymen. People paused to think, and by the time the second trial opened, Monday, August 15, the public was ready to hear both sides.

Smethurst's motive, the prosecution contended, was

Miss Banke's possessions. She held property of her own valued at between £1700 and £1800, and also a life interest on £5000. Smethurst had induced her to make a will in his favour. The issue seemed clear-cut; the rest was up to the doctors.

Unfortunately the doctors were apparently unable to agree on any single point. Ten doctors appeared on behalf of the Crown and stated that Isabella Bankes was poisoned; seven doctors appeared for the defence and said emphatically that she died from natural causes, dysentery and the effects of pregnancy.

No poison could be traced directly to Smethurst. Julius gave evidence that he had found traces of arsenic in one of his patient's motions. Dr. Taylor, Professor of Chemistry at Guy's Hospital, said that he had found arsenic in a bottle belonging to Smethurst, but had shortly afterwards realised that the discovery was due to impurities in the wire gauze he had used in his experiment.

Attacked by a volley of rhetoric, the chemist wavered and said there must have been arsenic in the bottle. However, he again revised his opinion.

The medical wrangling went on. Doctor after doctor took the stand and poured forth contumely upon those who disagreed with him.

The *British Medical Journal* summed up the situation in the following scathing comment:

“The farce must no longer be exhibited to the world of the three most celebrated toxicologists of the country contradicting each other in matters where there should be no possibility of doubt.”

The “farce” continued for four heated days, and on August 19 the jury arrived at a verdict. “It is my painful duty to record him Guilty,” said the foreman.

Immediately the storm of protest was renewed. Smethurst languished in Horsemonger Lane Gaol, the lonely centre of a cyclone of criticism.

The medical journals of the country adopted a united

front. They stated plainly that they were not concerned with whether Smethurst was guilty or not; what concerned them was that he had not been *proved* guilty by the medical evidence presented at the trial. The usual petitions appeared, and received the customary attention.

But the medical criticism of the result of the trial required—demanded might better fit the case—something more than mere attention. Someone would have to act.

Someone did. Sir George Cornwall Lewis, the Home Secretary, bombarded by imposing-looking "memorials," took an unprecedented step. After considering a fresh report from the judge who sentenced Smethurst he threw the whole issue into the melting-pot by submitting the case to Sir Benjamin Collins Brodie, probably the best-known surgeon in London at that time.

Sir Benjamin returned a carefully prepared report to the Home Secretary, with each point of argument numbered. The report closed: "Taking into consideration all that I have now stated, I own that the impression in my own mind is that there is not absolute and complete evidence of Smethurst's guilt."

The free pardon was not long forthcoming after that; but Smethurst enjoyed no liberty before he was charged with bigamy. His fresh sentence was a year with hard labour.

Three-quarters of a century have passed since the Smethurst case divided the country into two camps of opinion, and to-day the affair appears almost incredible.

It is impossible to imagine such a divergence of opinion among the members of the medical profession in these days; it is also impossible to imagine that any modern jury would record a similar verdict upon such bewildering and unsatisfactory evidence. The psychological and wholly human aspects of the problem seem to have been entirely neglected.

Why should Smethurst murder Isabella Bankes ?

For her few thousand pounds, is the only answer.

But even a cursory examination of the facts is sufficient to make one doubtful. Smethurst had escaped from a life which palled. The woman loved him and trusted him. Evidence of this is shown by that Battersea "marriage," by her living with him at Richmond, by her making her will in his favour.

Suppose he murdered her and secured her money. What was his position then ? He was still burdened by his seventy-four-year-old wife. True, he had deserted her once ; he might again. But he was not the sort of man to go through life companionless, and he was not a hardened philanderer.

He was well on the wrong side of fifty, and presumably, like most men in middle age, desired to take life quietly, to enjoy the placid waters of retirement and reflection. A home with Isabella Bankes offered distinct advantages over his previous life. Why disrupt it ? Why gamble with a certainty ? Smethurst had hitherto played safe with life.

On the other hand, suppose he had in him the makings of a murderer—a murderer, mind, who treads stealthily and warily, not one who slays in passion, in a moment of ungovernable rage.

Suppose poison had occurred to him as a happy method of release—from whom would he desire to be released, the younger woman of charm and means, who had stirred to life a flame he had long thought quenched, or the woman, twenty years older than himself, feeble with age, whose very existence seemed a reproach upon his own ?

I feel certain that had Smethurst been a murderer—a coldly calculating poisoner—he would have murdered Mrs. Smethurst not Isabella Bankes. Such a crime would have solved most of his difficulties, it would have given him a minimum of self-reproach, it would have left him free to enjoy a life which really appealed to him.

But he didn't murder his wife. He ran away. Is not that fact alone deeply expressive of Smethurst's character? He was afraid to trust himself; a coward the cynical may call him.

True, but he was a consistent coward. He called in Dr. Julius after attending his patient alone for only a week: another case of his lack of trust in himself. He also called in Dr. Todd. Remember, he was a doctor. Would a doctor have run such a great risk? The odds against his successfully bluffing two fellow-doctors were enormous.

Smethurst would have been a genius had he succeeded; he would have been a brave man to have hoped to succeed. He was neither. If anything, he was a fool, given to changing his mind too frequently. A review of his life shows how he constantly changed one practice for another, tried new fads and settled nowhere.

He cuts a poor figure, and he commands scant sympathy, but Dr. Thomas Smethurst was no murderer, and, although an English jury convicted him, his guilt was never proved. It remains a credit to English justice that his scrawny limbs did not decorate a gallows.

F. TENNYSON JESSE

The Trial of Madeleine Smith

THE case of Madeleine Smith has a perennial interest for what may be termed mystery fanciers, or, in more modern slang, murder-fans.

And yet, although Madeleine Smith, an old, old woman, died a few years ago in the United States, and one is now, therefore, at liberty to assert the inescapable conviction of all students of the trial that she was guilty, a certain mystery will always hang around this famous trial of 1857. But it is not a mystery of action, but of that strange thing, the human heart.

It was not Madeleine's heart which held mystery. That merely tried to hold its secrets, a very different matter. It is L'Angelier, the victim, who remains an enigma to this day.

I am aware that this statement may bring upon me the wrath of other students of this great trial, but I leave the reader who comes to this article with an open mind to judge for himself.

Madeleine Smith was the eldest daughter of a well-known Glasgow architect. Near her in age came a brother, Jack, and a sister, Bessie. There was a younger boy called James, and a little girl of twelve called Janet.

Only Janet, called by the defence, gave evidence at the trial, although Bessie was with Madeleine when L'Angelier was first introduced to her, and although Jack fetched her back from her father's country house, whither she fled after L'Angelier's death. In fact, the Smith family was protected in every way. Mr. and Mrs. Smith seemed to have taken to their bed and remained there.

L'Angelier was a penniless young clerk from Jersey, a Frenchman and a foreigner to Scottish eyes. It has always been an interesting question what the result of the trial might have been had Madeleine Smith been the friendless foreigner and the dead man the son of a wealthy and respected local family.

Yet Scottish justice is, as a rule, impartial and as good as can be found in this rough-and-ready world, and I think the answer to the undoubted bias in favour of the accused is to be found not so much in the influence of the Smith family as in the fact that L'Angelier had, after seducing Madeleine, proceeded to blackmail her and make her life a misery.

In fact, the verdict of Not Proven might be summed up as meaning: "We'll let you off this once, but don't do it again."

Madeleine Smith was born out of due time. She was beautiful in a handsome, defiant way that was not feminine enough for the period in which she lived. She was a girl of strong physical passion at a time when no woman was supposed to possess such a thing.

She was talented and capable; but arranging the flowers in her parents' home, and, if she were married, being a good housekeeper in her husband's house, was all the mental effort deemed suitable for a woman. In the late war, Madeleine Smith would have driven an ambulance or filled some organising post most admirably.

Pierre Emile L'Angelier, a peculiarly nasty little lady-killer, earning about a pound a week, may have been, and probably was, attracted by Madeleine's bright beauty as she passed about the grey Glasgow streets.

But he also knew that she came of a wealthy family and he pressed a mutual friend, a youth called Robert Baird, to introduce them. Baird asked his mother whether he might bring L'Angelier home one evening when Miss Smith was visiting the house.

But Mrs. Baird evidently thought such an acquaintance unsuitable and declined permission, and the introduction

took place in the street. A clandestine acquaintance ripened between Madeleine and L'Angelier, but it was discovered by the girl's father, and Madeleine attempted to end the acquaintance in the same month that it had begun.

L'Angelier, however, was not to be shaken off, although Madeleine made another attempt to get free of him in July of 1855. Her heart was not in the business of dismissal, however, and the acquaintance continued, growing more and more intimate.

To Madeleine, L'Angelier's foreign origin, his poverty, his flowing whiskers, and his skilful love-making made of him a figure of romance. L'Angelier's mind was set from the first on marriage with this daughter of a wealthy family, and his seduction of her, if seduction it can be called when her passionate nature was more than ready to submit to him, was merely a step in his campaign.

In June of the following year Madeleine became L'Angelier's mistress. The lovers met sometimes in the woods outside her father's country house, sometimes in the house in Blythwood Square to which she used to admit him after the family were all asleep.

And during all this time a series of passionate love-letters went back and forth. He kept all of hers. She kept but one or two of his. Hers were supposed to show a shocking lack of decency, though nowadays they do not seem strange letters for a woman to have written to her lover whom she thought to marry. His show him as the unpleasing mixture of a sensualist and a preacher that he was.

The raptures of the early months began to fade for Madeleine. Her common sense told her that her father (and Mr. Smith seems to have been the very personification of the terrible Jove-like Victorian papa) would never consent to a marriage with L'Angelier.

A Mr. Minnoch, a middle-aged man of good standing and a friend of the Smith family, fell in love with her and asked for her hand. The solid comforts of Mr. Minnoch's

establishment, the charm of being its mistress and a young matron, began to appeal to Madeleine, and her letters to L'Angelier grew perceptibly colder.

He took fright and began to importune her. She definitely tried to break with him, only to find that he refused to let her go, that he even threatened to show her letters—those letters which would damn her for ever in the eyes of her contemporaries—to her father.

Madeleine Smith is not a lovable character, but it is possible to sympathise with the agonies of fear, with the remorse and disgust which must have taken hold of her. She had accepted Mr. Minnoch's proposal in January, 1857, and she still could not get free of L'Angelier.

In February she told him candidly that she no longer loved him, but she could not pique him into returning her letters. She wrote to him imploringly, but to implore a blackmailer's mercy is a singularly useless proceeding.

She then asked the page boy to go to a chemist to buy her a bottle of prussic acid, saying she wanted it to whiten her hands. The chemist, very sensibly, refused to comply with her request.

She next began to write to Emile in the old strain of affection. While writing these loving epistles, making appointments for him to meet her, she was also employed in buying arsenic. She made three purchases in all, giving the usual well-worn reasons—one, the improvement of her complexion by using the drug as a face wash, and the other the even more hackneyed one of wishing to destroy rats.

Her first purchase, as far as is known, was made on February 21, and there is no doubt that L'Angelier's first bad attack of sickness was in the morning of the 19th. This was a strong argument in favour of her innocence.

But L'Angelier had thrice before been seized with sickness of the same description in the houses of his friends, and it may be that his illness of the 19th was not due to arsenic poisoning. But she was in possession of arsenic on the 21st, and L'Angelier was taken extremely

THE TRIAL OF MADELEINE SMITH



William Hodge

Madeleine Smith sketched in Court

THE TRIAL OF MADELEINE SMITH



William Hodge

L'Angelier

ill on the 22nd. Madeleine bought arsenic again on March 6 and March 18.

Madeleine tried to get him to go away to the Isle of Wight for a holiday, but he refused to go further than Bridge of Allan. Now she began to write to him asking him to come and see her, using the most ardent phrases.

The prosecution maintained that she handed him poisoned cocoa from the window of her basement bedroom when he came there by appointment on the evening of March 22.

But the prosecution was never able to prove this meeting. Had they been able to do so, nothing could have saved Madeleine Smith. L'Angelier, recalled from Bridge of Allan by a letter—from whom the letter came could not be proved—left his lodgings that evening in better health, but at half-past two on Monday morning he was ringing the bell of his lodging-house violently.

His landlady helped him to his room, and there he vomited for about two hours. At five o'clock a doctor was sent for, but refused to come, merely suggesting twenty-five drops of laudanum and a mustard plaster.

The landlady continued to attend him, and he became so ill that she insisted on the doctor coming at about seven o'clock. The doctor gave him a little morphia and applied a poultice, making the sapient remark that time and quietness were required. By eleven o'clock L'Angelier was quiet enough, for he was dead.

Now the curious thing about L'Angelier's final agonies is this—although he seems to have known that he was dying, he never accused Madeleine Smith, or, indeed, mentioned her name. He did ask his landlady to send for a Miss Perry, a sentimental maiden lady, who had played the part of go-between for him and Madeleine, but by the time Miss Perry arrived he was dead.

Whether he had been going to accuse Madeleine to her we shall never know. According to Miss Perry's

evidence at the trial he had said to her after his illness on February 19: "I can't think why I was so ill after taking that coffee and chocolate from her." Miss Perry understood her to mean Miss Smith.

He had added: "It is a perfect fascination, my attachment to that girl. If she were to poison me I should forgive her."

L'Angelier was an eminently practical person, and there is little doubt that he would not knowingly have taken poison from the hands of Madeleine or anyone else. And so we can be almost certain that in those last hours of agony on the morning of March 23 he realised for the first time that at least one previous attack of sickness may have been due to Madeleine's cocoa, and that the present one must have been caused by her.

If, when dying, he realised what Madeleine had done and yet refrained from naming the girl he had bullied and blackmailed, so much may, at least, be allowed to him for righteousness.

But why did this contemptible little lady-killer show such magnanimity? It was suggested, of course, by the defence that he might have taken the poison accidentally, or that some other person, not Madeleine, had murdered him, or that he had committed suicide. The last suggestion is the only one not outside of the region of possibility.

However, if he killed himself by repeated doses of that extremely painful poison, arsenic, he remains unique as a suicide. Also, it is far more in keeping with his character to blackmail Madeleine, or to go to her father and demand from him money for keeping silent.

It is, therefore, not only possible, but perhaps even probable, that a certain remorse entered his heart as he lay dying, for there seems no doubt that he knew that he was dying.

He said to his landlady: "I'm far worse than the doctor thinks." His pain and weakness must have been so intense, his knowledge that some lethal substance had

been administered to him so certain, that he can have had but little hope, although he murmured: "Oh, if I could get five minutes' sleep I think I would get better."

Madeleine's name never passed his lips, nor would he give any hint as to the cause of his illness. This reticence and generosity in a man who had hitherto been completely ruthless is the most mysterious thing in the case.

There is no answer to the riddle, although it may be permitted to hope that the solution is to be found in the theory—which must always remain a theory—that regret touched his scheming little heart in his last hours.

L'Angelier's death seemed so inexplicable that an autopsy was held and more than sufficient arsenic to destroy life was found in the body. L'Angelier's effects were examined and Madeleine's letters were found.

She fled blindly and futilely to her father's country house, but came back unprotestingly with Mr. Minnoch and her brother, Jack. All thought of marriage with the respectable Mr. Minnoch was, of course, over for good; and, indeed, when that unfortunate man, who seems to have felt the discovery of her previous passion very acutely, had to give evidence against her at her trial, it is said he never looked towards her.

Yet Madeleine was worth looking at, in her full, sweeping, dark silk dress and her bonnet, which, shaped like a halo, showed the front of her sleek, dark head so that her cameo-like profile and beautiful complexion stood out unshadowed.

Rumour has it that one of the judges was peculiarly susceptible to the charms of a pretty foot and ankle, and that Madeleine sat slightly sideways in the dock, her skirt pulled up a little to display this charm, so exciting to the Victorians.

The trial was chiefly noticeable for the magnificent speeches by the Lord Advocate, for the prosecution, and the Dean of Faculty, for the defence. The latter, Lord Inglis, who was to become Lord Justice-General of

Scotland, made a closing speech which has remained a model to this day.

The strength, the passion, with which he fought every inch of the ground, the brilliance of his arguments and the closeness of his reasoning, remain untouched by time. And if some of his oratory seems a trifle lush and old-fashioned, the same can be said of that of the late Marshall Hall, and still more so of the sentimental periods of Mr. Clarence Darrow, most noted defence counsel in the United States.

Three of the Dean of Faculty's strongest points were :

1. That the prosecution could not show that Madeleine possessed any arsenic before February 21.

2. That there was no proof that L'Angelier had met Madeleine before his attacks of sickness on February 22 and March 22.

3. That it might reasonably be argued that L'Angelier's death placed Madeleine in a very awkward position, as her letters would be bound to be discovered.

There is not, perhaps, much force in the third argument. Madeleine could hardly be in a worse position than if L'Angelier fulfilled his threat of showing her letters to her father, and she may have hoped that if her lover's death passed off without comment the letters would be destroyed. They were, in any case, nearly all signed Mimi, or sometimes even Mimi L'Angelier. But the Dean of Faculty would not have found himself in nearly such a strong position when he argued that there was no meeting between the two on the crucial dates, if a little diary of L'Angelier's had been allowed to be put into evidence.

The entry for February 19 ran : "Saw Mimi a few moments. Was very ill during the night." While that for February 22 read : "Saw Mimi in drawing-room, promised me French Bible, taken very ill."

It was ruled, however, that this diary was inadmissible as evidence of a fact against the accused.

The summing up was admirably fair, but certainly it gave the prisoner the benefit of every doubt and it was, probably, a very relieved jury that returned a verdict of Not Proven.

Madeleine Smith, who had remained the calmest and most unmoved person in court throughout the trial, wrote in a letter to the matron of the prison, that she was not at all pleased with the verdict! In the same letter she complained that the feeling of the people towards her round her home was not as kindly as that of "the good people of Edinburgh" had been.

Apparently she expected to be found Not Guilty and received with acclamation. Even her excellent nervous system, however, found it impossible to bear home life after all the revelations that had been made, and she went to London alone, became a Socialist, and married, the first two steps being rare for a girl of those days, and the third something of an achievement, considering her past.

It is said, with what truth I do not know, that she made an excellent wife, and that her husband was very devoted to her, but that he never allowed her to do any cooking.

There would have been little risk, however, of Madeleine Smith attempting to kill for a second time. She was not a congenital killer, she was merely a woman who knew what she wanted and who, much rarer, knew when she had ceased to want it.

And her resolution was such that she was determined to have her way in both these matters. She was, in short, a woman born at the very worst time in the world's history for such as she; a time when women were not supposed to want much, but were also supposed to want that little long.

"I shall ever remain true to you," Madeleine had written to L'Angelier. "I think a woman who can be untrue should be banished from society."

She had the courage of her change of conviction.

R. AUSTIN FREEMAN

The Peasenhall Mystery

THE difficulty of attempting to solve the "unsolved mysteries" of the past is that you have to work from the facts recorded; and they are usually the wrong facts. But they are all you have. You can't cross-examine a law report.

A criminal trial is not an inquiry into the whole set of circumstances. It is concerned with the specific issue: "Was this crime committed by the prisoner at the Bar?" And if the verdict is that it was not, and no one else is charged, the problem is left in the air with no recorded facts but those that were found insufficient to solve it.

The Peasenhall Mystery illustrates this. Several of the crucial facts are not available. The recorded evidence is concerned with the guilt or innocence of the prisoner at the Bar. No other issues are dealt with, and the facts bearing on those issues have to be inferred.

The case was concerned with the death of Rose Harsent, the pretty and attractive maid-servant of a most respectable couple named Crisp, who lived in an ancient dwelling known as Providence House, in a Suffolk village named Peasenhall. The maid's quarters were, in effect, a self-contained tenement, for her bedroom was over the kitchen and communicated with it by its own little staircase. A door led from the kitchen into the rest of the house, but at night, when that door was shut, the maid's premises were quite isolated.

It was a bad arrangement, for the back door of the house opened into the kitchen; so that the maid could

receive nocturnal visitors without fear of disturbance. And this is what she appears to have been in the habit of doing, as was made evident in the course of the trial. Nor did her proceedings pass unsuspected, for, long before the date of the tragedy, the village of Peasehall seethed with gossip and scandal concerning her and her lovers.

Thus the stage was very effectively set for the tragedy that was presently to be enacted. The curtain was rung up on a certain Saturday afternoon at the end of May, 1902, when Rose received a letter in a yellow envelope bearing the postmark of a neighbouring village and a date of the same day. Its contents were as follows :

“ Dear R.—I will try to see you to-night at 12 o'clock at your place. If you put a light in your window at ten for about ten minutes, then you can put it out again. Do not have a light in your room at 12, as I will come round the back way.”

Let us follow events in the order of their occurrence. It is known that the signal light appeared in the girl's window about ten o'clock that night and, after a short interval, was extinguished ; and it is noted that a violent thunderstorm was raging at the time. The noise of the rain and thunder roused Mrs. Crisp from her sleep, and amid the din of the storm she thought that she heard, faintly and indistinctly, what seemed to her like the sound of a fall, accompanied by a cry, and the breaking of glass. Shortly afterwards she heard the church clock strike twelve.

On the following morning—Sunday—Rose's father, William Harsent, who was a milk roundsman, came to the kitchen door to deliver the milk. He knocked several times, and then, getting no answer, looked in at the window. To his horror, he saw his daughter lying on the floor.

Thereupon he ran round to the front of the house and battered on the door until Mr. Crisp came down.

On hearing the news he, with Harsent, hurried through the house to the kitchen, and there they found the girl lying dead at the foot of the bedroom stairs. She was in her nightdress, which was partly burnt. On the floor, which was flooded with oil, lay the fragments of a broken lamp, an overturned candlestick, a broken medicine bottle, and a newspaper.

The bottle bore a label on which was written: "Mrs. Gardiner's Child." And mingling with the oil on the floor was a pool of blood which had flowed from a wound in the girl's throat and from an irregular, jagged wound in the breast.

The inquest seems to have thrown little light on the mystery. The cause of death was obvious enough, and the time of it was judged to be about midnight on Saturday.

Wilful murder was assumed from the first, but the question was: Who was the murderer? It was ascertained that the girl had had several lovers, two of whom volunteered the information. But the police investigations showed at once that they could all be eliminated as suspects.

As none of the known lovers could be suspected, the police looked round eagerly for a possible murderer, and eventually fixed upon an eminently respectable master-craftsman named William Gardiner. It seems to have been entirely a matter of guess-work; for Gardiner was a man of excellent character and reputation, was happily married and a good father to several children. However, there was no one else, so the police proceeded to prosecute.

Eventually, at the Suffolk Autumn Assizes, 1902, he was brought to trial before Mr. Justice Grantham. The leader for the Crown was Mr. Henry Dickens, K.C., and the counsel for the defence was Mr. Ernest Wild, whose great reputation may be said to have been founded on his brilliant conduct of this case.

The evidence produced by the prosecution was

THE PEASEHALL MYSTERY



Sir Ernest Wild (then Mr. Wild), whose reputation was largely founded on his brilliant conduct of the defence

THE PEASEHALL MYSTERY



Press Portrait Bureau
Sir Henry Dickens (later Common Serjeant), who, as
Mr. Henry Dickens, led for the Crown



Harratt
Mr. Justice Grantham, before whom the trial of William Gardiner
was held

undeniably formidable. That the signal light in Rose's window could be seen from Gardiner's house was proved by a witness who stood talking with the accused at his cottage door about ten o'clock on the night of the murder and had seen the light.

A gamekeeper named Morris who had passed Providence House after the storm deposed to having seen footprints leading from the kitchen door to the road that passed Gardiner's cottage. The footprints showed the impressions of rubber soles similar in pattern to a pair in Gardiner's possession.

There was the evidence of the bottle with Gardiner's name on the label, a blood-stained knife found by the police in his house, and the fact that the envelope of the letter making the assignation was of the same kind as those used by the firm who employed the accused. The handwriting of the letter was also said to be similar to his, but this was not clearly proved.

The theory of the prosecution—largely built up on conjecture—was this: They suggested that the accused had compromised himself badly with this girl and, as she was now pregnant, grave scandals loomed ahead. The only way out was to get rid of her, and it was to this end that he had made this assignation. On the fatal Saturday night he had set forth taking with him the knife, the bottle filled with paraffin, and the newspaper with which to start a fire. This theory was supported by the evidence, and a deadly case against him seemed to have been made out.

But as the defence disposed of one after another of the items of incriminating evidence, this theory became untenable. There was no evidence of any improper relations between the accused and the deceased. The bottle was one which had contained some liniment which the prisoner's wife had given to deceased. The knife had been used by her to gut some rabbits for the Sunday dinner.

The newspaper had been in the prisoner's possession

on the Sunday morning. And, finally, at the very time of the tragedy, the prisoner was sitting—according to his wife's statement—in the bedroom nursing an ailing child. There was a complete alibi.

In the end, the jury disagreed. There was a second trial, and again the jury disagreed; and, as public opinion was by this time strongly in favour of Gardiner, the Home Secretary decided against a third trial.

Thus, the accused was innocent, and as no one else was even suspected, the mystery remained, and still remains, unsolved. What really happened on that stormy night in the kitchen of the old house is a matter of speculation to this day.

Is it possible to construct a reasonable theory? A definite conclusion is impossible since certain vital facts are lacking. We can only re-examine those which are available. When the body was found it was instantly assumed that the girl had been murdered. No alternative seems to have been considered. But was she murdered? Long afterwards a clergyman suggested the possibility of an accident. Let us see whether the known facts will bear that interpretation.

We know that a little before midnight this girl, either in response to a signal or in anticipation of the arrival of her visitor, came down the little flight of stairs to the kitchen. We have seen those cottage staircases, with their steep, narrow, twisting stairs enclosed in a sort of high cupboard, and no hand-rail.

As she came down she carried in one hand a lamp and in the other a lighted candle, and, in addition, she was carrying the bottle and the newspaper. She was thus inconveniently burdened; and if we bear in mind the storm—the lightning and the alarming crashes of thunder—and the fact that it was the dead of night, and that she was on an unlawful errand, we may feel sure that she was considerably agitated.

Now let us suppose that as she was descending those break-neck stairs with both her hands full something

happened to startle her. It might have been a sudden crash of thunder or, jammed up as she was in the narrow stairway, the candle might have set fire to her nightdress.

In any case, she might easily have slipped. Then as she fell with a scream headlong down the stairs, she flung away the lamp to free her hands and came down on the shattered fragments or on the broken bottle, the jagged edges of which inflicted the wounds that were found. If her nightdress was not already alight, the overturned, lighted candle would probably have ignited the paraffin which had splashed up from the shattered lamp.

How does this suggestion square with the known facts? There seems to be considerable agreement. We can only argue the probabilities; thus:

1. Were the wounds such as might have been made by broken glass, or were they characteristic knife wounds? Now, the wound in the breast was described as irregular and jagged. This is strongly suggestive of a broken bottle or lamp chimney. But if one wound was a glass wound that establishes a probability that the other was, too.

2. Was the kitchen door fastened? If it was, that would seem to exclude the possibility of a murderer having entered; for he could not have bolted it after him when he fled. But the behaviour of William Harsent suggests that it was bolted. For, surely, when he saw through the window his daughter lying on the floor, he would have rushed in to see what had happened to her if that had been possible. Instead of which he ran round to the front of the house and battered on the door until Mr. Crisp came down; suggesting that the front door also was fastened.

3. Were there any muddy footprints on the kitchen floor? If there were not, that is strongly against anyone having entered. For it was stated that the roads were deep in mud. But from the other evidence we may fairly infer that there were none. For there was consider-

able conflict of evidence concerning footprints said to have been seen leading from the door to the road. But if there had been footprints inside the kitchen any outside would have had little significance.

Thus the known facts seem to be quite reconcilable with the theory of accident, and no other explanation has ever been offered. Whether the unknown writer of the letter came to keep his tryst, or whether he was kept away by the storm, we shall never know. But the evidence concerning the footprints outside suggests that he did come. And if he did, the events of that night must have been somewhat thus :

The Unknown came to the door just before midnight, made the signal and stood in the pelting rain awaiting the response. He sees a glimmer in the bedroom window as the girl lights her candle.

It disappears ; and then, looking in through the window he sees it reappear on the staircase. Suddenly—perhaps coinciding with a crash of thunder—he hears a cry, a heavy fall and the sound of shattering glass, and then, by the light of the blazing nightdress, he sees the girl lying on the floor and a stream of blood mingling with the spilt paraffin. Stunned by the fall, she seems to be dead.

What is he to do ? He cannot, even if he dared, enter by the bolted door. And he dare not stay. So, with a last horrified glance at the motionless figure, he turns away and vanishes into the darkness.

EX-SUPERINTENDENT CHARLES COOPER

The Blackheath Murder

SHOULD the murder of Louisa Maud Steel be classed as unsolved?

It is one of those crimes which I and my former colleagues at Scotland Yard do not look upon as unsolved although the murderer remains unpunished by law.

When the investigation was several weeks old I was satisfied that I knew the murderer. I do not say we had a complete case, but as my suspect had already been sent to a place where he would be unable to perpetrate any similar crimes, we were never called upon to present it to a jury.

There are details of the investigation which I am not allowed to divulge, but I can go so far as to claim that when I presented my final report on the case to the authorities I was not alone in my conclusions on the question of the identity of the murderer.

Let us trace the events of the fateful night of January 23, 1931. Louisa Maud Steel, an eighteen-year-old domestic servant, left her place of employment—the house of a Miss Andrews, a professor of music, in Lee Road, S.E.—to fulfil a couple of errands in Blackheath Village. She returned a book to a friend of her employer, but did not carry out her second mission, which was to obtain some syrup of senna from a chemist's.

When, at eleven o'clock, she had not returned to the house, her employer became alarmed. Miss Andrews knew Steel to be a steady, well-behaved girl, without "followers." She realised that only an accident or some harm would have kept her out so late.

Her disappearance was reported to the police within a few hours.

Leslie Hall, a lamplighter, was walking across the Heath at 7.40 the next morning to extinguish the lights in Shooters Hill Road. It was raining hard, and there was a strong wind. When he saw what he took to be a bundle of clothes about twenty yards to his left, he did not at first stop to examine them.

Then came a gust of wind, revealing that beneath the clothes was the body of a woman. One glance at the torn clothes and the badly mutilated half-naked body was sufficient. Hall sent a passing cyclist for the police.

Within a short time the victim had been identified as the missing servant. At first there was a suggestion that her body had been brought to the spot in a car, but when I arrived to take charge of the investigation I quickly ruled this out.

I found in reconstructing the crime that everything supported the theory that the murderer had pounced upon his victim while she was walking along the footpath, ninety yards away. He had seized her by the throat from behind, strangled her before she could utter a sound and then dragged her to the spot where the body was found.

As he dragged her, the scarf fell from her throat. This was found about half-way from the path. All her clothes had been torn from her body with the exception of one stocking. The heel of one of her shoes was clutched in her hand.

Her body bore marks of terrible injuries inflicted after death. Within an hour or so London was aghast at the report that another "Jack-the-Ripper" was in its midst.

Actually, beyond the fact that the crime had been committed by the same type of sadistic and sexual maniac, there was nothing to support the statement that this was a "Ripper" crime. No knife had been used, but fearful wounds had been caused by the murderer's boots.

Across the victim's face we could trace the bootmarks of the murderer. The bruised flesh was preserved and these marks were examined microscopically, scientifically measured with special instruments and micro-photographed.

One of my first tasks was to endeavour to trace similar footprints upon the wet turf. I was doomed to disappointment. So many curious people had walked round the body that they had made a circular path, completely obliterating any tracks there might have been.

There was nothing else to give us any line which might lead to the murderer.

Now a murder which has been committed by a reasoning man offers certain ways of approach to other reasoning men. But the realm of the irrational is dark and uncharted

The homicidal maniac strikes from the blue without cause. His tendency is very probably hidden even from those who know him best. There are cases in which he is unaware of it himself. When the fit seizes him, he becomes a different person, with no continuity of memory, and when it is over he has no recollection of what he has done.

I thus realised that it was not beyond the bounds of possibility that the murderer was quite sincerely discussing with other respectable residents of the neighbourhood the possibility of the mystery being unravelled.

Consequently I endeavoured to check up on as many persons living in the district as I could who had at some time been detained in a mental home or had shown at some time signs of any form of mental aberration.

I found several. Three confessed to the crime. Another sent me a postcard telling me where the next body would be found.

One man insisted on remaining in the police station for three days, hoping to convince me that he was a murderer. In this way many preliminary hours were spent in investigating what I proved beyond all doubt to be bogus confessions.

It was while the investigation was in this peculiar state that we received our first concrete clues.

Two other women had been attacked that night at different intervals. And in districts close to Blackheath.

In each case the attack had been made in precisely the same manner. The women had been sprung upon from behind and efforts made to strangle them by drawing the neck of their dresses suddenly backward while counter pressure was made on the back of the head and neck.

By this method, as Sir Bernard Spilsbury pointed out, a victim would lose consciousness in a few seconds and be unable to make any effective resistance.

But, fortunately, both of the attacked women had been able to let out a scream and shake off their assailant with no greater harm to themselves than severe bruising of the neck and shock.

The first attack was made in Manor Park, Lee, shortly after 6.30. Before another hour had elapsed the second attack had been made in Granville Park, Lewisham. Then, somewhere in the region of nine o'clock, came the third and fatal attack on Blackheath.

That the assailant in each case was the same man I had no doubt. The two women who were fortunate to get out of the maniac's clutches gave identical descriptions :

Age 28, 5 ft. 10 in., medium build, loose-limbed, probable weight 13 stone, dressed in dark overcoat, with dark cap pulled down over eyes.

This may seem a vague description to the man in the street, but it gave us something to work upon, as it fitted one or two of our suspects. They were immediately placed under constant observation.

The news of these previous attacks gave me strange forebodings. I feared that the murderer might have reached a permanent dangerous mental state and that if he were not immediately caught he would follow this crime with another.

THE BLACKHEATH MURDER



Louisa Maud Steel

MURDER ON CLAPHAM COMMON



Sicnie Morrison in the dock

Daily Mirror

See page 89

Urged on by the realisation of this fact, we took every possible step to lay our man by the heels. Chief Constable Ashley shared my fears. He gave me every possible man he could spare from the Criminal Investigation Department. From that night, at every few yards on the Heath, there were patient watchers throughout the dark hours.

Every other London park and open space was equally well guarded. I doubt if so many men had ever before been employed in a murder hunt. Some parks could boast of three policemen to every civilian during those tense February nights.

It was at this stage that I received the anonymous post-card telling me that the second body would be found at Lee Green on a certain night.

This particular spot, already well guarded, was surrounded by a well-hidden cordon of police officers from that moment. I took precautions which would have made another crime an impossibility and which would counter the first movement of any attempt.

Imagine the feelings which gripped us when we saw one of our demented suspects approaching the spot. Although those hidden watchers marked his every movement he did nothing to justify any action by us.

I ordered three of my best officers to keep a relentless watch upon the man and for several days and nights they were at his very elbow, until I was able to assure myself that he could not have been the perpetrator of the Blackheath crime.

Tracing an uncommon man led us by uncommon routes to uncommon places. Bizarre theories were probed. The thousands of queer stories that were told me would fill a book. They all had to be investigated.

Bogus confessors to the crime had to be taken to the spot to show us how they committed it. We even had to convince one man that he was actually sitting in the electric chair before we could rid ourselves of him.

For weeks we were checking and counter-checking the movements of this type of individual, all the time afraid

to relax for one moment for fear of a second outrage. Identification parades were held, but to no purpose.

Then came what was to be the first step towards the end of the trail.

I received certain information which caused me to examine the case from quite a new angle. I worked upon this for some days, and each succeeding day I became more convinced that I was at last on the right track.

Identification parades took place and these only went to strengthen the conviction I had already formed. So much so that in the end I had no doubt whatever.

In view, however, of the peculiar circumstances, I am not permitted to go into detail, but I think that in fairness to the public, I should say that the man who in my view was responsible for this terrible crime is now in a State Institution, no more to play the part of a scourge to society.

There is one comment I should like to make as I close the history of this brutal crime.

It is my frank opinion that some system should be instituted by which the actions and movements of those thousands of persons discharged as "recovered" from mental institutions every year should be under frequent observation.

In the year of this murder some seven thousand of such cases were released.

And the man who was my chief suspect had been certified and sent to an asylum some years previously, but discharged as "sane" within a year.

This fact, at least, ought to convince the authorities that some method of supervision is necessary.

If in each police station there were some knowledge of the mental as well as the criminal history of the population of the district, such crimes as the killing of Louisa Maud Steel might be prevented.

J. JEFFERSON FARJEON

Murder on Clapham Common

THERE is nothing human nature in general, and the British public in particular, likes so much as a riddle. The solution, comparatively speaking, is a dull affair. While we guess we are intrigued, but when we know we become apathetic, yawn, and turn to something else upon which to fasten our imagination.

For, despite the materialists, it is imagination rather than reality that provides our significant life, and that in the end determines it for better or worse.

When the editor of the *Evening Standard*, therefore, invited me to bring my own imagination to bear on the famous Steinie Morrison case, and to search for a new theory, I found myself fascinated.

Not that I have any personal interest in this twenty-four-years-old "mystery," saving that Steinie Morrison happened to be released from prison, before his final crime, on my wedding-day. I had no individual role in the case, as did Divisional Detective-Inspector Wensley, who has since given the world his absorbing first-hand account. I did not discover the body of the little Jew Leon Beron under a bush on Clapham Common; I am not related to any of the three cabmen who, at various hours on that gruesome New Year's morning, had Morrison as a fare.

Nor do I perform a service to justice—in so far as this particular case is concerned—by suggesting its frailty.

I may say at the outset that, having refreshed my memory from actual reports of the trial, I am sufficiently

convinced that the jury's verdict of Guilty was irreproachable, that Mr. Justice Darling (as he then was) had reason to pronounce the death sentence unwillingly, and that Mr. Winston Churchill—the Home Secretary of that day—was right to use his prerogative and commute the death sentence to life imprisonment.

But that faint, teasing element of doubt did remain in many minds—the doubt which theoretically is supposed to imply a prisoner's innocence—and out of that doubt, and out of much notoriously incorrect evidence in the witness-box, arose the ocean of protests and wild suggestions that helped to make this case historic, and to rank it with the mysteries of Jack the Ripper, Adolf Beck, Dreyfus and Tichborne.

It is easy for any mind to invent fantastic theories, and many were invented—some with perfect good faith—in the Steinie Morrison case. They were inspired by that tiny element of doubt which must always exist in purely circumstantial evidence, and also by the fact that the prisoner was young, good-looking, palpably courageous, and “had a manner.”

It was suggested that Leon Beron was the victim of some foreign vendetta, and much was made of two S-shaped slashes on the dead man's face; that his real murderers were the gang eventually rounded up in the famous battle of Sidney Street, which occurred at about this time; that Morrison was being used to shield a well-known highly important personage, and was on this account reprieved; even that he was himself the illegitimate son of a well-known highly important personage, and knew he would not be hanged.

Examining these suggestions, and discounting them as too fantastic when viewed in relation to probability and actual evidence, I admit I was hard put to it to find a more reasonable one. I will admit something further.

After a disturbed night in which my fancy roamed too freely, for my pleasure, among the lonely bushes of Clapham Common and sank in a morass of nightmare,

I rose with the intention of committing the unforgivable journalistic sin—informing an editor that I was beaten! But, while I shaved, the ugly pieces of the jig-saw suddenly flew together, giving me the picture I had sought.

So let me now to my task, and after giving you the picture that was revealed to the public in the early days of 1911, add my own new picture to it. Remember, you are not asked to believe my picture. I do not say that I believe it myself. But at least it presents an alternative solution to Steinie Morrison's guilt, which may help to show how carefully the Law has to tread.

The body of the little Russian Jew, Leon Beron, was discovered by a constable at 8 a.m. on the morning of January 1, 1911, under a bush on Clapham Common. Murder was obvious. The body had been dragged from a footpath some ten yards away, and it had received both blows and slashes. The worst and most significant slashes were two upon the face, somewhat resembling the letter S.

Beron had been a strange, mysterious little man. He had come to England many years previously to establish a claim, with two brothers, to property as mysterious as himself. The property was assumed to be immensely valuable, but there seems no evidence that the claim was ever assiduously advanced.

Nevertheless, all three brothers remained in England, and Leon Beron lived simply and inexpensively in the East End. The fact that he was supposed to possess wealth and to carry much of it on his person, gave rise to widespread stories. Beron moved in the shadows, and many of those he moved among were shady.

Steinie Morrison, arrested eight days after the crime, had been one of Beron's associates, and both Morrison's record and the circumstances that led to his trial were pretty damning. He was an ex-convict, having been released from prison on licence only three and a half months previously, and the point that he had failed in his

obligation to report to the police after the date of the murder or to notify a change of address, gave the police an opportunity to arrest him without at first mentioning that he was suspected of a graver offence.

In fact it appears, although the defence contested this, that Morrison himself was the first to use the word "murder" in connection with his arrest, implying his knowledge of the police's suspicion before being informed of it. This was regarded as another black mark.

But further black marks followed in quick succession. They included these main items :

1. That Morrison was identified as having been in an East End restaurant with Leon Beron just before midnight on December 31, and that they had left together.

2. That before leaving, Morrison had collected a long parcel from a waiter which might—or might not—have contained an iron bar.

3. That a cabman identified him as one of two fares he had picked up in the East End at 2 a.m. on New Year's morning and driven to Lavender Gardens, Lavender Gardens being ten minutes from the spot where Beron's body was found half a dozen hours later, and in the district to which Morrison had moved from Whitechapel without notifying the police of his change of address.

4. That the doctor's evidence suggested that Beron had been dead for five hours when his body was found at 8 a.m., thus marking the time of the murder at approximately 3 a.m.

5. That a second cabman identified Morrison as a fare he had picked up shortly after 3 a.m. on New Year's morning, and had driven to Kennington.

6. That a third cabman identified Morrison as one of two fares he had picked up at Kennington Church at 3.30 a.m., and driven to Finsbury Park.

7. That, on January 1, Morrison pawned his revolver,

as though not anxious to have it found in his possession.

8. That a girl he was living with between the date of the murder and his arrest—eight days—declared he was wearing a five-guinea piece on his chain, and Leon Beron was known to have worn a five-guinea piece (the girl subsequently retracted this evidence, causing a first-class sensation).

9. That, after January 1, Morrison had more money to spend than usual.

10. And that Morrison's ultimate attempt at an alibi—namely, that he had been at a music-hall from 9 p.m. till 11 p.m. on December 31, and had gone to bed at midnight—was utterly disproved.

Steinie Morrison swore till his dying day in prison that he was innocent, but on the basis of the above evidence he had small chance of being believed, especially in view of his general character and record. (It should be mentioned that his character and record were not referred to in the case until the attitude of the defence raised the issue.)

Even when a year after the trial a woman made a statement to the solicitors who were still attempting to obtain a revision of Morrison's sentence, and in this statement suggested that a certain man might have been an accomplice, no alteration occurred in the official attitude.

There was no definite trace of this man; no proof of the woman's words. Moreover, the theory that there could have been two culprits had existed in official minds throughout the trial, and Morrison was implicated in either case.

But another incident which was not brought up in the trial does offer a loophole through which imagination may pass into a field of intriguing speculation. Official minds ignored it—this time, they considered in Morrison's favour—because again it proved nothing definitely.

This incident was referred to some years later by Detective-Inspector Wensley in an account he wrote of his association with the Morrison case. It appears that, previous to the crime, Morrison began to mention his intention to somebody who, he believed, might become his accomplice.

Exactly how far Morrison went in this interview I do not know, but in any case he soon found that he had mistaken his man and that there was "nothing doing." Maybe Morrison left before he had completely revealed his purpose.

It may be reasonably assumed, at all events, that the unsatisfactory interview upset him, and made him very uneasy. That is the mildest implication one derives from Wensley's own account.

So much for the facts as revealed to the public, both during and after the trial. Now let me advance my own new theories which, while adhering to such of the known facts as were incontrovertible, would alter their complexion. Let me, in fact, resume the Defence!

I will do so in the form of a little play, in which the *Dramatis Personæ* mainly concerned are:

MORRISON.—Ex-convict. Hard up. Ready to consider any get-rich-quick plan, however daring, however unscrupulous, however homicidal.

BERON.—Something of a mystery man. Moves among crooks. Knows their ways, and some of their secrets. Knows a secret of—

Q. (Q. for Query.)—He is a new character. He does not appear in the original version of the Morrison Case. You may visualise him as a criminal of the worst order. A real "killer." The secret Beron knows is a particularly awkward one, and Beron is making the most of his knowledge. Q. will be quite happy to get rid of Beron.

Z.—A man to whom Morrison talked too much—to discover that he was not the sort of man he had hoped!

And now, up with the curtain, on a play of thirteen scenes.

Scene 1.—Morrison alone. Thinking of his poverty. Thinking of Beron. Thinking of the rumours that Beron carries valuables on his person. Thinking of Beron's small stature. Thinking of robbing Beron. Of—perhaps—having to kill Beron in the process.

Scene 2.—Beron and Q. Q. is just leaving Beron's table at a restaurant, after a worrying conversation with the little Russian Jew. As he moves away Morrison approaches. Q. has seen these two together before. What do they talk about? About *him*? He slips to a table round an angle, and listens.

But they do not talk about him. Morrison is merely trying to pump Beron a little, with affected good-humour, about the valuables Beron is supposed to carry upon him. Beron is close, but the chat increases Morrison's belief that Beron is worth robbing. Q. overhearing, begins to divine Morrison's intention.

Scene 3.—Morrison and Z. Morrison has called to see Z., and Q., his interest now thoroughly aroused, has shadowed Morrison. Morrison has decided to rob Beron, and to have a partner. He believes Z. is the fellow for him.

But he soon discovers his great error. Morrison leaves in agitation, wondering whether he has let the cat out of the bag or not. Maybe Z. knows. Maybe Z. doesn't. But Morrison's agitation would be greater if he realised that Q. knows. Q. again has overheard, and has put two and two together.

Scene 4.—Morrison alone. Calls himself a fool. Decides not to proceed with his plan after all. Too risky after this unsatisfactory interview with Z. Too risky, perhaps, anyway. Morrison has not hitherto included murder among his crimes.

Scene 5.—Q. and Beron. Beron in a very pressing mood. Q. wonders how long this is going on? He wonders, also, how much longer Morrison is going to be before murdering Beron? He wonders whether Morrison has given up his plan?

Well—need that matter? Q.'s idea is born out of the urgency of his situation. He suddenly agrees to pay Beron the sum required—or to hand over a share of spoil—and suggests Clapham Common as the place, and 3 a.m. on New Year's morning as the time of their next meeting.

“Of course, I can trust you, Q.?” says Beron.

“Like your own mother,” replies Q., “but if you're scared of my pretty face why not bring your pal Morrison along? He's just moved Clapham way, hasn't he, so it won't be far off his route.”

“That's a good idea,” says Beron, “but Morrison doesn't know anything about our matter.”

“No, and *you* don't want him to, and *I* don't want him to,” answers Q., “for that would make three in the game. Mention me to him and see what I do to you! But you can leave him somewhere or other for a minute, can't you—and shout for him if you're in trouble!”

“If *I* get into trouble, *you* get into trouble,” smiles Beron.

“Morrison will cover that.”

“Yes, Morrison will cover that quite nicely,” Q. smiles back.

Scene 6.—Morrison and Beron. Cheap restaurant in the East End. Before midnight on New Year's Eve. Beron says he has to go to Clapham Common at 3 a.m., and asks if they can go together. “Who's the girl?” inquires Morrison. (Note: Beron appreciated a flirtation.)

“It *is* a girl,” lies Beron, “so you won't mind waiting round a bit while I see her, will you? I may have some business to discuss with you afterwards.”

“My charge for waiting is a pound a minute, paid in advance,” says Morrison.

“You shall have it,” chuckles Beron, generous in the knowledge that he is going to get something substantial from Q.

They separate, to meet again at 2 a.m. Before leaving

Morrison collects a long parcel from a waiter. It might contain a jemmy—or a harmless New Year's present for his girl.

Scene 7.—Cab. 2 a.m. Morrison and Beron inside, travelling from East End to Lavender Gardens—ten minutes from the fatal spot.

“What about that little present?” asks Morrison suddenly.

“You're in a hurry!” grumbles Beron.

“No time like now, Beron,” answers Morrison, “and it's going to be cold waiting. I've got a girl, too—and you don't want me butting in on yours, do you?”

Beron looks nervous. His agitation is growing. He will be glad when this is over. He sighs, and complies.

Scene 8.—Clapham Common. Just before 3 a.m. Morrison and Beron.

“This is where you wait,” whispers Beron. “I shan't be long.”

“If you are, I'll come after you!” replies Morrison.

“Yes—do!” says Beron.

Scene 9.—The fatal spot on Clapham Common. Lonely now, but shortly to be thickly populated with police, journalists, and public. Beron alone. Looks around anxiously.

“Where's Q.?” he mutters.

Q. springs on him from behind. . . . And, as a final touch to his crime before vanishing, he cynically slashes two S's on his victim's face. S for Steinie.

Scene 10.—The same spot. Morrison and Beron. Beron, lying dead. Morrison, staring down at him, aghast.

Scene 11.—The second cab. Morrison in it alone, riding in a brain-storm from Clapham Common to Kennington. Anywhere, to get away from that spot!

Scene 12.—Outside Kennington Church, 3.30 a.m. Morrison standing dazed. A kindly stranger comes up to him. The kindly stranger is Q., well muffled up and with his hat pulled down over his face. Q. also got

away from Clapham Common in the second cab—or, rather, hanging on the back of it.

“Anything wrong?” asks Q.

“No,” mutters Morrison, swaying slightly.

Q. takes hold of him. “You’ve got a bit of blood on your coat. Hallo, and now I’ve got some of it on mine. Where do you want to get to? Here’s a cab!”

They get in the cab. Morrison mumbles: “Finsbury Park.” Anywhere—that isn’t Clapham!

Scene 13.—Finsbury Park. Morrison and Q. Cab disappearing.

“Well, I’ve not asked any questions,” says Q., “because I don’t mean to answer any—but you take my advice, young man, and say you’ve been at home all night. Happy New Year!”

Exit Q. for ever. The second passenger in the third cab was never identified.

Exit Morrison, to his ordeal.

The above sequence of thirteen unlucky scenes covers the evidence against Morrison which you will already have read in my numbered list.

In his subsequent panic, Morrison might logically have got rid of his revolver (see “7”), and, at the trial, have attempted the alibi suggested by Q. himself (who knew it would be hopeless, after three taxi-rides, to escape the admission that he had been on Clapham Common (see “9”).

The girl’s statement, afterwards recanted, that she had seen Morrison wearing a five-guinea piece might have been a bona-fide error or she may actually have seen the piece if Beron had given it to Morrison in the first cab and if Morrison had forgotten for a while to remove it from his chain.

Or, to develop this point one degree further, Q. might have joined up with Morrison in the third cab partly to assure himself of the facts, partly to give him bad advice, and partly to slip the five-guinea piece on him as a New Year’s gift! As an author, I like this development, but

it may be too fantastic to live outside an author's brain.

In any case, Morrison's private knowledge of the charge against him would have been sufficiently obvious to explain his voluntary reference to it at the police station—an unwise reference, in any event.

You may consider this entire version too fantastic to live outside an author's brain. You may be right. But it is perhaps interesting to wonder whether, had it been boldly advanced from the start as Morrison's line of defence, it could sufficiently have upset the Prosecution to produce another answer to the riddle.

Probably not. But who, with absolute certainty, can say?

J. S. FLETCHER

The Maybrick Poison Trial

IN the August of 1889, being on a walking-tour in the North of England, I turned one evening into the market-place of a very small country town to find a crowd of several hundred people massed before the front of the local newspaper office, in the window of which at that very moment a boy was pasting up a large sheet of paper on which certain words had been written in staring letters. Presently I read those words for myself. They were eight in number—MRS. MAYBRICK FOUND GUILTY AND SENTENCED TO DEATH.

Who was this woman in whose fortunes the folk of that obscure little town, a hundred miles away from the Assize Court in which she had stood her trial for murder, were showing such intense interest that August evening?

Born Florence Elizabeth Chandler, the daughter of an American banker, she had married in 1881, at the age of eighteen, a Liverpool cotton broker, James Maybrick, who at the time of the marriage was a man of forty-one. With him she settled down at Aigburth, and in due course bore him two children.

That the marriage was not a happy one may be gathered from the fact that in its ninth year Mrs. Maybrick took to herself a lover, one Brierley, with whom, in March, 1889, she spent three nights at a London hotel.

Returning from London, she went, next day, with her husband, to the Grand National Steeplechase. Brierley was encountered there; somehow an altercation arose; Maybrick, when he and his wife reached their house, assaulted her, giving her a black eye.

She prepared to leave him at once ; friends intervened, a peace was patched up ; later she claimed that Maybrick had been made aware of, and had condoned, her adultery.

Very soon after this—April, 1889—Maybrick became seriously ill.

Now let us consider what manner of man James Maybrick was. It would appear that this wife had had reason for some time, probably during most of their married life, to complain of his relations with other women : it may be that his infidelities turned her to Brierley.

But—in view of what followed—that is not such an important matter as another which was well known to Maybrick's circle of acquaintance. Maybrick was a drug addict. He was in the habit of perpetually dosing himself with certain drugs such as strychnine and arsenic, probably because he knew them to be aphrodisiac in their effect.

His intimate friends knew this ; his business acquaintances knew it. More evidence on this point might have been given at the trial than was given. I myself, visiting Liverpool a few years after the trial, and making certain inquiries into the matter, was introduced to a chemist who told me that Maybrick was “ in and out of the shop all day long ” seeking a dose of one of his favourite pick-me-ups. And in those doses arsenic figured largely.

Maybrick's illness assumed alarming aspects on April 27 ; he himself attributed it to an overdose of strychnine. He grew rapidly worse ; doctors and nurses were installed ; Mrs. Maybrick, naturally, did a certain amount of nursing.

On May 11 Maybrick died. Two days later a post-mortem examination was made by three doctors, who decided that death was due to inflammation of the stomach set up by some irritant poison. Next day Mrs. Maybrick was arrested, and on the same day the Coroner's inquest was opened and adjourned.

It was resumed on May 28 and again on June 6, when evidence of the discovery of arsenic in the dead man's body was given. The Coroner's jury then returned a verdict of wilful murder against Mrs. Maybrick, who in the meantime had twice been before the magistrates—the first time in her own bedroom.

On June 14 the magistrates committed her for trial, and on July 31 she was placed in the dock at Liverpool Assizes, before Mr. Justice Stephen, and charged with the wilful murder of her husband. The prosecuting counsel for the Crown was Mr. Addison, Q.C., Mrs. Maybrick was defended by that great man Sir Charles Russell, afterwards Lord Russell of Killowen, Lord Chief Justice of England.

What was the evidence against her? A few days before her husband was taken seriously ill, Mrs. Maybrick called at a chemist's shop in Aigburth, and making some remark about flies being troublesome just then, bought a dozen fly-papers.

Two or three days later she called at another chemist's shop in the neighbourhood and bought two dozen fly-papers. All these fly-papers, of course, contained arsenic.

On April 24 she was seen by two of her servants to soak these papers in a basin of water in her bedroom. Her own explanation of this was that she wanted to get a solution of arsenic for use as a cosmetic. Some time previously, according to her plea, an American doctor had given her a prescription for a face-wash, and she had lost it; knowing that it contained arsenic, and having heard from a friend that arsenic could be procured from fly-papers, she had purchased a supply.

There was a certain amount of evidence as to Mrs. Maybrick's opportunities of introducing arsenic into her husband's medicine and food, and in particular into a bottle of meat juice. By May 8 certain members of the household began to suspect that something was wrong,

THE MAYBRICK POISON TRIAL



Mrs. Maybrick



Illustrated Police News

Mr. Maybrick

THE MAYBRICK POISON TRIAL.



Press Portrait Bureau

Mr. Justice Stephen

and Maybrick's brother, Michael (known to the musical world as Stephen Adams, composer of many highly popular songs of the time) was summoned from London.

From the time of his arrival, whether she knew it or not, Mrs. Maybrick was suspect; Michael Maybrick, indeed, lost no time in communicating his suspicion to the doctors.

The evidence for the prosecution spread itself over the best part of four days. Summarised, it amounted to an attempt to prove that Maybrick died of arsenical poisoning, and that the arsenic had been administered to him by his wife.

Sir Charles Russell, as counsel for the prisoner, did his best to bring rebutting evidence and to prove to the jury that—to use his own words—they “had no safe resting-place on which they could securely and satisfactorily justify to themselves that this was a death due to arsenical poisoning.”

It may be that after hearing Sir Charles's speech, and the medical evidence which he called, and if the defence had been left at that, the jury, whatever the Judge's summing-up proved to be, would have been disposed to, and would have returned, a verdict of acquittal. But Sir Charles allowed his client to make a statement.

Mrs. Maybrick spoke, of course, from the dock—in those days prisoners were not allowed to give evidence. She said little except in the way of explanation and of protest.

When she had finished, Sir Charles asked leave to call two witnesses to whom she had made the same statement before the inquest. Mr. Justice Stephen refused the request—as, indeed, he was bound to. And after Sir Charles's closing speech, and Mr. Addison's closing speech, and the Judge's summing up, the jury, having deliberated little more than half an hour, returned a verdict of guilty, and Mrs. Maybrick, having once more protested her innocence, was sentenced to death.

The public immediately turned against the verdict. A

vast crowd, assembled outside the Assize Court, hooted and hissed Mr. Justice Stephen as he passed to his carriage. The newspaper Press expressed astonishment at the result of the trial. Petitions to the Home Office poured in from all parts of the country.

Meetings of protest were held in London and Liverpool. Members of Parliament and men eminent in many professions joined in the widespread agitation so quickly roused on Mrs. Maybrick's behalf : the Queen herself was approached.

Eventually, on what was practically the eve of the execution, the sentence was commuted to one of penal servitude for life. Mrs. Maybrick served fifteen years' imprisonment—at Woking and Aylesbury—and, being released from the last-named prison in January, 1904, left England for America.

I will now venture to give my reasons for considering this to be the most unsatisfactory trial for murder ever held in an English court of justice.

Let us begin with the man who presided over it, Sir James Fitzjames Stephen. He was a man of the greatest eminence in his time—a great writer and authority on criminal law, and as a judge scrupulously just and anxiously considerate to those who came before him. But was he in full possession of his great powers at the time of the Maybrick trial ?

Four years previously, while holding the Assize at Derby—1885—he had suffered a stroke of paralysis, and had had to retire from all work for a time ; two years after he sentenced Mrs. Maybrick to death his mind gave way altogether. Was he fit for his work when he tried Mrs. Maybrick ?

My old friend, the late H. B. Irving, as expert as a criminologist as he was great as an actor, with whom I have discussed the Maybrick affair more than once, and who edited an account of the trial, has this to say about the summing up :

“It is anxious and painstaking, indeed, over-anxious. At times, the Judge seems almost over-weighted by the gravity and difficulties of the case. His grasp of the case is by no means sure, and there are errors in dates and facts and in the recapitulation of the evidence that would hardly have been expected in a judge of Sir James Stephen’s experience.”

Clearly, Sir James Stephen was not—mentally—in a condition to preside over a trial the issue of which was life or death for the unfortunate woman in the dock.

But there was more than this. Unconsciously, no doubt, Sir James Stephen created an atmosphere of prejudice against Mrs. Maybrick. In addressing the Grand Jury (and, of course, his remarks went forth, through the Press *urbi et orbi*), he laid undue, unjustifiable stress on Mrs. Maybrick’s relations with Brierley.

“I hardly know how to put it otherwise,” said Mr. Justice Stephen, “than this—that if a woman does carry on an adulterous intrigue with another man, it may supply every sort of motive—that of saving her own reputation; that of breaking through the connection which, under such circumstances, one would think would be dreadfully painful to the party to it. It certainly may quite supply—I won’t go further—a *very strong motive why she should wish to get rid of her husband.*”

Is there any wonder that millions of people, when the trial came to an end, said that Mrs. Maybrick was being punished for her temporary infidelity, for her three nights’ adultery, and not for murder? Is there any wonder, either, that when the Clerk of Arraignment asked Mrs. Maybrick if she had anything to say why sentence of death should not be pronounced upon her, she answered: “I was guilty of intimacy with Mr. Brierley, but I am not guilty of this crime”?

But there was another atmosphere of prejudice against this unfortunate woman. At the end of the first day’s magisterial proceedings, she was loudly hissed as she left

the court by a number of women who had contrived to secure admission.

She herself so felt that it would be impossible to get a fair trial from a Liverpool jury that she besought her legal advisers to get the venue of the trial removed to London.

It was not until after long and anxious thought and consultation that her solicitors decided to face a trial in Liverpool, and, as a matter of fact, the jury empanelled in her case was not a Liverpool, but a Lancashire jury.

That that jury did what it felt to be its duty, according to its lights, no one who knows anything of our English jury system will doubt, but their verdict did not satisfy a public which could read the evidence, and especially the medical evidence, for itself.

For the medical evidence, to say the least of it, was contradictory. The Home Office expert of those days, Dr. Stevenson, said he had "no doubt that Maybrick had died from the effects of a poisonous dose of arsenic."

But Dr. Tidy, an equally great authority of that period, was just as positive in the other direction—he "completely negated the suggestion of death from arsenical poisoning."

When the trial was over, Mr. Auberon Herbert, in a letter to *The Times*, very pertinently asked whether it was necessary to inquire what irritant may have set up gastro-enteritis in Maybrick, when his stomach had for some days been used as "a druggist's waste-pipe," and was found to contain traces of strychnine, arsenic, jaborandi, cascara, henbane, morphia, prussic acid, papawi, iridin, and all the other medicines that had been administered in the course of his brief illness.

And in a letter to the same newspaper Mr. (afterwards Lord) Fletcher-Moulton probably hit the real truth when he said that Maybrick's death was "due to natural causes operating upon a system in which a long course of arsenic-taking had developed a pre-disposition to gastro-enteritis."

The Maybrick case was admirably summarised, three years after Mrs. Maybrick had disappeared to Woking, in a petition carefully prepared by Lumleys, the solicitors, for presentation to Mr. Asquith, the Home Secretary. I will further summarise it.

1. There was no evidence that James Maybrick died from other than natural causes.
2. There was no evidence that he died from arsenical poisoning.
3. There was no evidence that his wife administered or attempted to administer arsenic to him.
4. The verdict was against the weight of evidence.
5. The jury did not give the prisoner the benefit of the doubt suggested by the disagreement of the expert (medical) witnesses.

But the agitation constantly kept up on Mrs. Maybrick's behalf produced no effect on our Home Office.

Sir Charles (by that time Lord) Russell did everything in his power to effect his client's release, but year after year went by and nothing was done.

It is said that Lord Russell firmly believed in his client's innocence.

Her trial was the most miserable muddle ever seen in an English court of law, and the only good that came out of it was that it helped, in some degree, to bring about the establishment of the Court of Criminal Appeal.

EX-SUPERINTENDENT CORNISH

The Vera Page Case

THE wanton murder of a child is always horrible, and I think that the death of Vera Page was the most terrible case which I had to deal with during my career as a detective.

Late in the evening of Monday, December 14, 1931, Mr. Charles Page, of Notting Hill Gate, went to the local police station to report that his little daughter Vera was missing.

She had, he told the police, returned home from school as usual about half-past four that afternoon. Tea was at half-past five, and the child had gone out again to visit her aunt who lived a short distance away.

She reached her aunt's home safely and left again at a quarter to five, carrying her school swimming certificates with her. She never returned home, and although he made inquiries from friends and relations to whom she might have gone, no one had seen her.

The police made all the usual routine inquiries. The newspapers published her photograph and other details, and on Tuesday an S O S was broadcast. Still there was no news.

Early on Wednesday morning a milk roundsman discovered the body of a little girl lying in a patch of shrubbery in the front garden of a house in Addison Road, Notting Hill. Vera Page had been found.

When we arrived I suspected that we were confronted with one of the most difficult problems which a detective has to face, that unknown and variable quantity, the criminal maniac whose insanity is intermittent. Before I

continue with the story of what followed it is important that something should be understood of the pathological side of this type of man.

In the first place, unless we could obtain definite evidence to the contrary, there was no real reason to suppose that he knew the dead child. He might very well be a stranger not only to her, but also to the neighbourhood.

Perhaps he was a Londoner, but he could equally well have come from some other place. He might have been staying in the neighbourhood, or merely passing through it. If he was suddenly seized with his mania he would probably accost the first woman or girl he came across.

Once the mania had passed, it was quite possible that he would have no recollection of what had occurred. It was not improbable that to his family, relations and friends he appeared a normal man.

It was very likely that somewhere, not necessarily in London at all, there was a man going about his usual everyday occupation with no knowledge that he had recently committed murder. He would read the details of the crime in the newspapers, but he would not know that they had anything to do with him, and therefore he would not do or say anything that might arouse suspicion in the minds of other people.

Our work was to try to find out whether this man had been seen, where he had murdered the child, and whether he had left any clue which could assist us to discover his identity. From the evidence we obtained the following facts emerged.

Vera Page had last been seen alive between five and six o'clock on Monday evening. A school friend had spoken to her outside a chemist's shop not far from her home. The little girl wanted to buy some soap dominoes, which were being shown in the window, for a Christmas present, and she had probably gone to look at them.

We could discover no one who had seen her near, or with a man, but about that time some man must have

spoken to her. The question at once arises as to whether she was in the habit of speaking to strangers.

We were told that she never talked to people she didn't know, but this would probably depend very much on how the strangers spoke to her. If, for instance, he had asked her where she was going, and she had told him "home," he might well have said that "Mummy had asked him to go with her," and she would have gone without hesitation.

Approximately forty hours had elapsed between the time when the child was last seen alive and the time when her body was found. Where had she been during that time?

Medical evidence gave us the information that she had been dead at least twenty-four hours, and probably longer. The body was not rigid; therefore she must have been in a fairly warm place, for it was cold December weather.

It had rained from 3 p.m. on Tuesday until 9 p.m. that evening and Wednesday morning was damp and misty. The child's clothes had absorbed very little moisture, and I formed the opinion that she could not have been lying in the garden for more than two hours before she was found.

This was confirmed by other evidence which showed that if the body had been there before eight o'clock, it would have been seen.

An examination of the clothes gave us little assistance except that there were traces of coal dust and one or two spots of candle grease. Her swimming certificates, which were printed on white paper, and the red beret which she was wearing on Monday evening had disappeared.

We must now set to work on this theory. Between, say, seven o'clock on Monday evening and about the same time on Wednesday morning the child had been somewhere dry and comparatively warm. It was possibly a coal shed or cellar which had been lit by a candle.

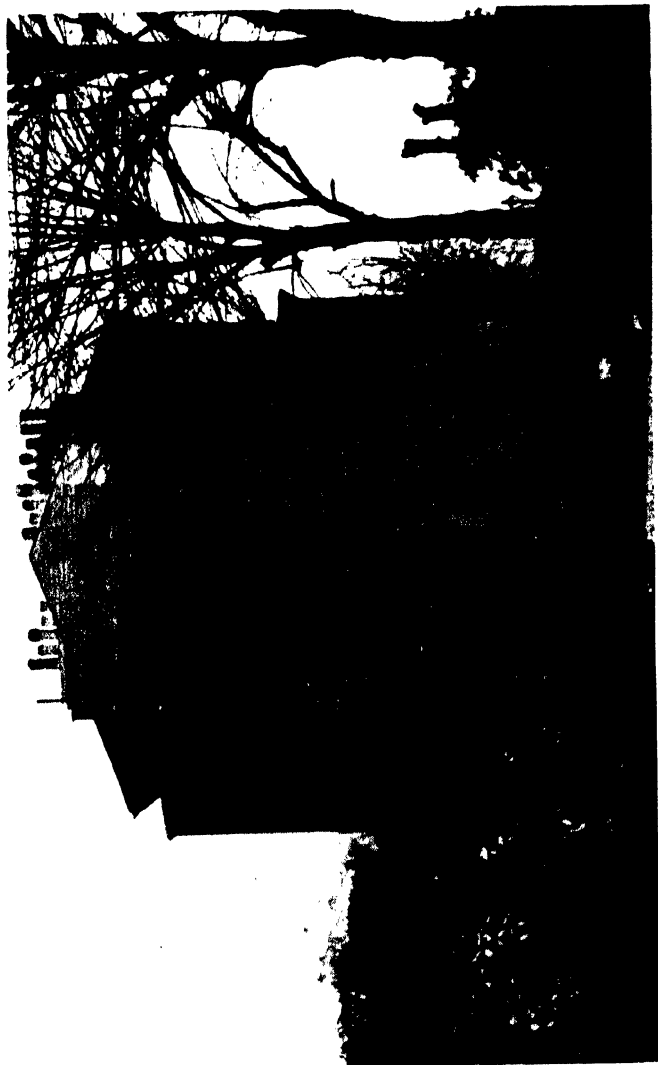
The beret and certificates might be there, or the murderer might have carried them away with him, or

THE VERA PAGE CASE



Vera Page with her parents

THE VERA PAGE CASE



Photopress

Police searching the bushes in which Vera Page's body was found

thrown them away. To find the place where the murder took place, even if it was in the immediate neighbourhood, was no easy task. But we set to work to make exhaustive inquiries, and hoped that some piece of useful information might come in as a result of the widespread public interest in the case.

We then had to try to solve another series of problems. How had the murderer brought the body to the garden from the place where it had been "hidden"? Had he carried it in his arms, brought it in a car, or perhaps on a coster's barrow or even in a perambulator? Had anyone seen him?

Although it was still dark, there were plenty of people about in the streets between seven and eight o'clock in the morning. Why had he chosen that particular place?

There was no attempt at concealment. The body had been laid gently down where the first person who walked along the path by the patch of shrubbery would see it.

To the first two questions we could obtain no answer. No one had seen or heard anything suspicious. To the third question the answer must lie in the psychology of the murderer. He had no reason for choosing that particular road or garden, he made no attempt at concealment either in bringing the body there or when he left it.

All he wanted was to put it away somewhere, and he put it gently down in the first place that seemed suitable. Probably the fact that he might be seen never occurred to him, nor that it would matter if he were.

As far as we could discover he was completely unobserved. But for this chance we might have discovered his identity.

On Thursday evening, December 17, a woman living in the Notting Hill Gate neighbourhood, not far from the garden in Addison Road, brought a red beret to us. This, she told us, she had found, soaking wet, in her area.

Near it were some torn pieces of paper and a bit of candle. The candle end she had used up, the bits of

paper she had thrown away in her dustbin which since then had been cleared. It looked as though these might be Vera Page's beret and her swimming certificates.

Investigation showed that there was also an unlocked and empty coal shed in the area. Was this the scene of the murder? Had the child's body lain in this unlocked shed for forty hours, and had chance again stepped in and prevented anyone from opening the door?

Many of the children in the district were wearing red berets at that time and there was nothing to prove that the one found belonged to Vera Page. The candle end had gone beyond recovery, so had the pieces of paper. The most thorough and minute examination of the coal shed revealed nothing to show that anyone had entered it, or that a body had been left there.

We had one other clue. In the crook of the child's arm when she was found there was a finger bandage composed of boric lint and a piece of bandage. Without any doubt the murderer had had this on one of his fingers when he put the body down in the garden. But the most careful scientific examination of both bandage and lint did not help us, for they were of an ordinary type that could be bought anywhere for a few pence.

So ended this tragic case. No more information that could assist us was forthcoming. We could get no answer to our questions, nor could we answer another: Where had the murderer himself been during those forty hours?

Possibly he had stayed with the dead child. It is, however, more than possible that somewhere the murderer of Vera Page goes about his day's work without any knowledge that he is a murderer.

DOROTHY L. SAYERS

The Murder of Julia Wallace

PERHAPS the most remarkable thing about the murder of Julia Wallace is that from the beginning to end there was no important conflict of evidence. That is what makes it such a fascinating puzzle.

Except for the usual polite medical squabble over *rigor mortis* and a trifling uncertainty about the precise moment of a milkboy's visit, the essential facts were never in dispute. There they were, and you could make what you liked of them. The judge made one thing, the jury made another, the Court of Appeal decided that nothing could be made of them, and so set the prisoner free at the very gallows' foot.

The case has been compared to a detective story; but in fiction the author always supplies one key-incident which cannot possibly be interpreted in more than one way. In the Wallace case everything that the accused said or did might be construed as the behaviour either of an innocent man caught in a trap or of a guilty man pretending to be innocently caught in a trap. It is like a web of shot silk, looking red from one angle and green from another.

William Herbert Wallace was an agent employed to collect payments for the Prudential Assurance Company. He was fifty-two years old and of frail physique, had been married for eighteen years to a wife of about his own age.

For sixteen years they had lived together at 29 Wolverton Street, Liverpool, apparently in perfect harmony. Music, chess and science were the husband's inoffensive

pursuits ; Marcus Aurelius, the gentle stoic, his favourite philosopher.

The wife, delicate and retiring, played the piano, painted in water-colours, and listened with interest while he expounded as best he could, the new theory of atomic physics and the great riddles of the universe.

They took their few quiet outings together and enjoyed an ideal companionship. There was no other man ; no other woman. No one ever heard a harsh word pass between this happily married, middle-aged couple.

At about 7.15 in the evening of Monday, January 19, 1931, Wallace left his house to play a competition game at a meeting of the chess club, held at the City Café, about half an hour away. About the same time a telephone call was put through to the café from a public kiosk just off Wolverton Street, and was answered by the club captain, Mr Beattie.

The caller, who gave the unusual name of "Qualtrough," asked whether Wallace had arrived, said he was too busy to ring up again, and left a message asking Wallace to call on him next day at 7.30 p.m., at "25 Menlove Gardens East," about "something in the matter of his business."

At 7.45 Wallace reached the café and was given the message.

"Who's Qualtrough? I don't know the chap. Where is Menlove Gardens East? Is it Menlove Avenue?"

He entered the address in his note-book and went on to play and win his game of chess. Some time after ten he left the café with a friend, observing that he did not know whether he should keep this odd appointment or not.

On the Tuesday the Wallaces had an early supper at home, and between 6.30 and 6.45 Mrs. Wallace took in the milk from the milk-boy. *This was the last time she was seen alive.*

At 6.45, according to his own statement, Wallace set

out to visit Qualtrough, and between 7.6 and 7.10 he was certainly boarding a tram about twenty minutes' ride from Wolverton Street. A few minutes later he changed trams again, making repeated and detailed inquiries of both conductors for "Menlove Gardens East."

He was put down at Menlove Gardens West and told that it would probably be somewhere in that direction. He replied: "Thank you; I am a complete stranger about here."

Now, in a sense, that was not quite true. Two years previously he had visited a Mr. Crewe, living in that neighbourhood, on five occasions. But since he had always gone there in the dark of the winter evenings it was scarcely surprising that he should not be familiar with all the adjacent streets.

After three and a half years' residence Mr. Crewe himself had no idea whether there was or was not a Menlove Gardens East. Actually, having inquired at a house of a passer-by and of a police constable, Wallace was told by all three that, though there was a Menlove Gardens North, South and West, and also a Menlove Avenue (all of which he tried), Menlove Gardens East did not exist.

Unwilling, however, to lose the chance of a useful commission, he asked the constable where he could consult a directory, adding: "It is not eight o'clock." The constable agreed that it was only 7.45, and told him where to find a newsagent's shop still open. Here Wallace again searched, and asked for Menlove Gardens East, and was told for the fourth time that there was no such place.

It was now getting on for 8.20, and Wallace, remembering that there had been one or two burglaries of late in his own street, began, as he said, to feel uneasy. He took the next tram home.

A little before 8.45 Wallace's next-door neighbours, a Mr. and Mrs. Johnston, heard knocking at the back

door of No. 29. The residents in Wolverton Street made frequent use of their back doors, which all led out into a long entry, running parallel to the street itself.

Going out themselves by the back at a quarter to nine they met Wallace coming down the entry towards his own back door. He greeted them with the rather surprising question: "Have you heard anything unusual to-night?" They said: "No; what has happened?"

He said: "I have tried the back door and gone round to the front, and they are both locked against me." Mr. Johnston suggested that he should try the back door again. He did so; called out: "It opens now," and went in.

The Johnstons, standing in the yard, saw him turn up the gas in the two upstairs back rooms and heard him calling as though to his wife. After about three minutes he came hurriedly out, saying: "Come and see; she has been killed."

Then they all went in, by way of the scullery and kitchen, and in the front sitting-room they saw Mrs. Wallace lying dead on the floor near the unlit gas-fire. Her head had been brutally battered in, and the wall and furniture was splashed with blood. In the kitchen a cabinet had been broken open and a cash-box emptied of its contents (about £4) and replaced on the shelf.

This box was where Wallace kept the insurance money each week, till Wednesday, when he paid it in. On most Tuesdays it would have amounted to £20 or £30, but that week he had paid out about £14 in benefits.

Wallace then ran upstairs to see if anything else had been stolen. He returned almost at once, saying: "There is £5 in a vase; they have not taken that." Mr. Johnston then went for the police.

Wallace and Mrs. Johnston returned to the sitting-room, where they looked round in vain for the weapon. They then noticed that a mackintosh, which Wallace at once identified as his own, was lying rolled up against the shoulder of the corpse, "as though," to quote a

THE MURDER OF JULIA WALLACE



Graphic Photo Union

Mrs. Wallace

THE MURDER OF JULIA WALLACE



William Herbert Wallace

H. A. Smith

police witness, "the body was a living person and you were trying to make it comfortable."

They touched nothing, but went back to the kitchen, relit the fire, which was almost out, and waited. During this time Wallace, who till then had shown astonishing self-control, twice broke down and sobbed. When the police examined the mackintosh it was found to be heavily splashed and smeared with blood all over and also partially burnt. Mrs. Wallace's skirt was stained and burnt also. Upstairs, the bedclothes in the front room, which had not been used for a fortnight, were pushed off the bed and flung about the floor, though no cupboards or drawers seemed to have been disturbed or opened.

One clot of blood was found in the bathroom, but there were no damp towels. A small smear of blood was also found on one of the currency notes in the vase in the back bedroom. There were no finger-prints on the cash-box and no signs of forcible entry into the house. The locks on both doors, front and back, were discovered to be defective, so that they were rather awkward to open.

Wallace said he "thought" the front door had been bolted before he opened it to admit the police, but this point was never quite cleared up.

The police surgeon arrived at ten o'clock and asserted that Mrs. Wallace had by then been dead four hours. Actually, we know she was alive at least as late as 6.30; but *rigor mortis* is always a very uncertain indication, in spite of the dogmatic pronouncements of doctors in detective fiction. It seems unlikely, however, that she was alive much after seven.

Eleven ferocious blows had been struck, and it seemed clear that the murderer must have been heavily spattered with blood. Wallace, now once more "cool and collected," and smoking cigarettes, said he had no suspicion of anybody, and, after making a statement, was sent to sleep, if he could, at his brother's house.

Next day the charwoman who occasionally worked for the Wallaces, reported that two things were missing

from the house since her last visit on January 7 : a small kitchen poker and an iron bar used for cleaning under the gas-fire in the sitting-room.

A minute search of the drains and waste ground in the district failed to disclose these, or any other, weapons. On the 22nd Wallace furnished the police with a list of friends and acquaintances whom his wife might have admitted to the house during his absence.

He was also foolish enough to question Mr. Beattie closely about the exact time of "Qualtrough's" telephone call, remarking : "The police have cleared me." When asked why he had said this, he replied : "I had an idea ; we all have ideas ; it was indiscreet of me."

It was, indeed ; and this explanation did not improve matters. On February 2, Wallace was arrested and charged with the murder of his wife.

The trial opened on April 22, and the prosecution put forward their reconstruction of the crime. Having (for no ascertainable reason) determined to murder his wife, Wallace had himself telephoned to the café in the name of Qualtrough, to prepare himself an alibi for the next day. The voice had been quite unlike his, but he could have disguised it.

On Tuesday evening he suggested a music practice, and asked his wife to light the gas-fire in the sitting-room, which was used only for music and receiving visitors.

Meanwhile, he went upstairs, took off all his clothes (to avoid bloodstains), put on his old mackintosh (to receive bloodstains), came down armed with the iron bar (or poker, or both), savagely killed the poor woman, made a futile attempt to burn the incriminating mackintosh, broke open the cabinet and cash-box to suggest burglary, went up and flung bedclothes about for the same purpose, washed his bloodstained hands and legs, dressed, and rushed away to catch his tram.

After drawing ostentatious attention to himself and his errand, by way of confirming the alibi, he returned, pretended to be unable to get in till he had secured the

Johnstones as witnesses, and then "discovered" the body, preserving all the time a callous demeanour, except for a few crocodile tears in the kitchen.

Now, this story has a good many holes in it, the most obvious being the complete lack of motive. Mrs. Wallace was insured for £20 and had £90 in the Post Office; but her husband had his own bank-balance of over £150, and all his affairs were in perfect order.

There was no evidence of any quarrel. The police surgeon said that the number and violence of the blows pointed to homicidal frenzy. True, Wallace had always seemed eminently sane before and since the murder. "The mind," said the good doctor, "is very peculiar."

But a frenzy carefully prepared for by an alibi twenty-four hours in advance is almost too peculiar for belief.

Then the alibi itself fails in the very first duty of an alibi: it makes no pretence of covering the time of the murder. Wallace never attempted to suggest that he left the house before the milk-boy's visit, though nobody saw him go, and he might have said what he liked.

He made, in fact, no effort to fix the time till 7.45—ludicrously too late to establish the alibi. Then, why his own mackintosh? Why not some garment of his wife's? Or a new mackintosh? Why any garment at all? And why the imbecile attempt to destroy the mackintosh on the sitting-room floor, when there was an open fire in the kitchen?

What did he do with the pokers? They were not thrown away anywhere along his route, and he had no time to carry them far. Why take them away at all? He had only to wipe off his finger-prints and leave them at home if he wanted to support the burglary theory.

As for his having washed himself in the bathroom, there is no real evidence that the murderer ever went upstairs at all, for it turned out that the blood-clot in the bathroom and the smear on the £1 note were quite likely carried there by one of the dozen or so policemen who hovered about the house all night, while the unconvincing

disorder in the bedroom might well be explained otherwise.

But, indeed, every incident in the case might have two explanations, each as plausible as the other.

For example :

Question : How is it that "Qualtrough's" telephone-call was put in at a point about three minutes from Wallace's house about three minutes after Wallace left home? Answer : (a) Because Wallace put it in himself ; (b) Because the murderer watched Wallace out of the house and then telephoned at once from the nearest point.

Question : Why did Wallace make so many inquiries for "Menlove Gardens East" after being told that it did not exist? Answer : (a) Because he wanted as many witnesses as possible to his alibi ; (b) Because he was too careful a man to believe any statement he had not verified, and it was quite possible that Mr. Beattie had taken the address down wrong.

Question : Why did Wallace not display more emotion when the body was found? Answer : (a) Because he was a heartless brute ; (b) Because, as a disciple of the Stoic philosopher he, in his own words, "tried to be as calm and as cool as possible."

And so on, at every point.

You pay your money you see, and take your choice. The judge summed up for an acquittal, calling the prisoner's account of the matter "wonderfully lucid and consistent," and warning the jury, "it is no use applying tests to evidence if none of them really excludes the possibility of the prisoner's innocence."

The jury, after an hour's retirement, found Wallace guilty. Two weeks later, the Appeal judges, "looking very grave," quashed the verdict, on the ground that the prosecution had not proved their case—a decision which made criminal history.

Who, then, murdered Julia Wallace? I think that if

a detective novelist had to make a story to cover the facts it would run something like this :

There was a man—let us call him by his own assumed name of “Qualtrough”—who had got himself into financial difficulties through a dishonesty which, perhaps, Wallace had himself helped to expose. At any rate, he knew Wallace well—knew his habits with regard to the insurance money—knew that if the Wallaces went out together they took the money with them, but that if Wallace went out alone he left it at home in his wife’s care.

He was also a frequenter of the City Café, and so could see by the list of club fixtures that always hung there which night Wallace was due to play chess. This man determined to rob Wallace’s cash-box and throw the guilt on Wallace.

On the Monday night, Qualtrough hid at a point near the end of Wolverton Street which Wallace was bound to pass—by whichever door he went out—on the way to the café. As soon as he saw the little man go past he hurried to put in the bogus telephone-call before Wallace could be there to receive it and recognise his voice.

He may then have taken a taxi or motor-car to the café, arriving in time to hear whether Wallace got the message and meant to keep the appointment. In any case, he would again be in his hiding-place on the Tuesday night, and when he saw Wallace pass he would know that the bait had been taken. Even if Wallace went and returned immediately, Qualtrough had a good forty minutes in hand.

In the meantime, Mrs. Wallace, before sitting down to a quiet evening by the kitchen fire, bethought herself, like a careful housewife, that this would be a good moment to shake out the bedding in the disused front room, to prevent it from getting damp.

It was a January night, and she had a cold ; so, on her way up, she took her husband’s mackintosh from

the hall-stand and slipped it on. While she is stripping the bed the bell rings. She runs down to answer it. The piled-up bedclothes topple over, as is their way, and fall on the floor.

There is a man on the doorstep. Perhaps he gives his own name. Perhaps, if she does not appear to recognise him, he says he is Qualtrough, detained by some accident, unable to get home in time for his appointment, hoping to catch Wallace before he starts. In any case, she asks him to come in and wait.

She takes him into the sitting-room, lights the gas-fire, strips off the mackintosh with an apology and lays it down. Now comes the crucial moment. Perhaps not intending murder (for in that case he would have brought his own weapon), Qualtrough snatches up the handy mackintosh and flings it over her head. But she resists—and in that moment recognises him—calls him by his own name.

That will never do. At all costs she must be silenced for ever! He catches up the iron bar from the fireplace and beats her down. In his terror and rage, he strikes her again and again.

She falls against the gas-fire, burning her skirt, and as he stoops over her the mackintosh swings out and catches fire also. Smoke—smell—fire—the neighbours alarmed—that must not happen! He turns out the gas-fire and stamps out the burning stuff on the hearthrug.

But the coat has been a good friend to him; it has taken nearly all the bloodstains, and now he uses it to wipe his boots and trouser-legs. Has he really killed her?

With a vague hope—a dim remorse—with God knows what confused idea in his mind, he rolls the mackintosh up and thrusts it under her shoulder. But she is dead; and now he must carry out his plan and get away. He goes into the kitchen and breaks open the cabinet with the kitchen poker.

Nothing there. Where, then——? Ah, the cash-box!

That will be the thing! He opens it. Four pounds! Four pounds only as the price of murder! Automatically he takes the money out, automatically rubs his fingerprints from the box and replaces it on the shelf.

Finger-prints! How about the pokers? He forces himself to return to the horrible sitting-room, collects the iron bar, and then I think something—a passing foot-step, a voice in the street—startles him. He extinguishes the light and creeps out the back way, taking the pokers with him.

The two pokers are a difficulty in any solution of the mystery. Somebody took them; and in Wallace to do so would have been madness. Qualtrough could remove them with less danger, especially if he had his own car waiting. Possibly they were taken purposely in order to incriminate their owner.

After the appeal Wallace returned to his employment with the insurance company, who believed wholeheartedly in his innocence. But in Liverpool he was a pariah. He removed to a little house in Cheshire and sought comfort in his garden, his scientific studies, and the fortifying counsels of Marcus Aurelius.

In a diary, which seems to be absolutely sincere, he has recorded his bitter and unceasing sorrow for the loss of his wife. "Julia, Julia, how can I do without you?" "I seem to miss her more and more."

Sept. 14, 1931. Just as I was going to dinner ——— stopped me and said he wanted to talk to me. . . . He must realise I suspect him. . . . I fear I put him on his guard. . . . I wonder if it is any good putting a private detective on to his track?

Oct. 6, 1931. I am dreadfully nervous about entering the house after dark.

In a newspaper article written in April, 1932. I know the murderer. . . . He is capable of, and has reason for, attempting to remove me before I place him in the dock where I stood. . . .

But "that fell sergeant Death is strict in his arrest"; and before Wallace could accomplish this, the "only mission left him in life," he was once more condemned to die, and by this time by a court from whose sentence there is no appeal. When Qualtrough learned of Wallace's death on February 26, 1933, he must have thought himself a lucky man.

And by the way, why "Qualtrough"? If we could know what list, what book, what association of ideas suggested that curious name, we might know to whose mind it was suggested.

ANTHONY BERKELEY

Who killed Madame "X"?

THE case of Madame "X" might have come almost unchanged out of the pages of any modern detective novel.

All the stock ingredients of the mystery story are present—the mysterious woman, with a mysterious past; the mysterious attack by an unknown assailant; the anonymous letters of threats beforehand; the suspicion on the wrong person; the disappearance of the weapon (in this case probably not a blunt but a sharp instrument); and a dozen other details which the detective-novelist looks on as part of his stock-in-trade. Instead of fiction copying fact, fact here definitely copies fiction.

On the night of February 4, 1929, a Mrs. Jackson was returning with a friend, Mrs. Dimick, from a cinema to her bungalow at Limeslade Way, about six miles from Swansea. The time was ten o'clock and the night was a dark one.

Mrs. Jackson and Mrs. Dimick were next-door neighbours. The two women parted at the latter's bungalow, and Mrs. Dimick went indoors.

She had been inside only a few seconds and was still taking off her coat when she heard screams. Recognising Mrs. Jackson's voice, she hurried out, towards the back door of the bungalow occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Jackson, "Kenilworth."

About eight feet outside the back door Mrs. Jackson was lying on the ground in a heap. Her husband was bending over her when Mrs. Dimick arrived, and Mrs.

Dimick thought he was trying to help her up. He said: "Help me to pick her up, Dimmy. I don't know what has happened."

Between them they pulled Mrs. Jackson into the scullery. Mrs. Dimick attended to her, and after a time Mrs. Jackson recovered enough to stand up and walk into the sitting-room. It is doubtful whether she was ever entirely unconscious.

At about midnight Jackson called in a doctor, who took Mrs. Jackson at once to hospital. She lingered there for six days in a semi-conscious condition, and then died. Although asked whenever opportunity seemed to offer, she was unable to tell the police or the doctors who had attacked her. It is most probable that she did not know. A fortnight later Jackson was arrested and charged with her murder.

That is the straightforward story of Mrs. Jackson's death. Behind that story there is another one, anything but straightforward.

The first suggestion of this mysterious background is in a remark made by Jackson to the doctor shortly after the three of them arrived at the hospital. He said: "I have been married to her for nearly ten years, and I still do not know who she is."

Jackson was not alone in looking on his wife as a woman of mystery. Her neighbours and friends found her equally baffling. By them she had been considered at one time a woman of considerable means. The move to the little bungalow "Kenilworth" had been made only a couple of years before her death.

Before that the Jacksons had lived in a much larger house, which Mrs. Jackson, by lavish expenditure, had made into a "miniature palace." Jackson himself was a fish hawker, with a steady but small business, so clearly little of the money thus spent came from him.

Mrs. Jackson had extravagant tastes, and at that time the means to indulge them. She would spend several pounds on flowers for the decoration of her table on a

single day; her clothes were of the smartest and most expensive; she would dispense £1 notes as tips with regal generosity; if any extravagant whim took her, such as hiring a car or a motor-launch for the day, she gratified it instantly.

And the cash? That came to her by post regularly every Wednesday morning—sometimes "a whole bundle of notes," sometimes only two or three pounds.

Mrs. Jackson's own explanation to her friends was that she was a novelist and a journalist. None of them, not even her husband, had any idea of the real truth. For Mrs. Jackson was not a novelist or a journalist, though she certainly conducted a large and lucrative correspondence. She was an unusually successful blackmailer.

It was mentioned during the hearing a few years previously, of a charge of misappropriation that the accused man had parted with a large sum of money to a harpy referred to as Madame "X." The suppression of the woman's name was requested by the police in the hope that some restitution would be made by her in return. It is hardly necessary to say that the police were too optimistic, and the only result was that the woman whose name they so carefully shielded was able to escape the public disclosure she so richly deserved.

Madame "X" was Mrs. Jackson.

Mr. Jackson, apparently, had believed all his wife had told him when they first met, in 1919, and accepted the idea that she was a wealthy woman who did a little journalism and so on just for fun.

There was a curious touch about their marriage; for Mrs. Jackson, objecting to the name of her husband as too ordinary, persuaded him to be married in the name of "Captain Ingram." In 1932, however, Jackson, who had never been very happy about this quite innocent but unnecessary deception, insisted upon being married again in his own name.

Mrs. Jackson was fond of little mysteries connected

with names. She made a great secret of her own birth, occasionally letting out as if by accident that she was the daughter of the Duke of Abercorn.

Actually, as the police were able to establish later by the interesting proof of a deformed finger-nail, she was the daughter of an agricultural labourer in the North of England called Atkinson.

There were, in fact, few points on which Mrs. Jackson ever told the truth, even when it was possible ; and there were many points on which it was impossible for her to be truthful.

When Jackson at last came up for trial, it was obvious that the case against him was of the flimsiest description. Indeed, the prosecution in a trial for murder can seldom have offered a flimsier one. There was, literally, no actual evidence against him at all. The prosecution's whole case amounted really to nothing more than a mild suspicion, and to bolster it up, suggestions were put forward which were quite unwarrantable. The police depended upon these points :

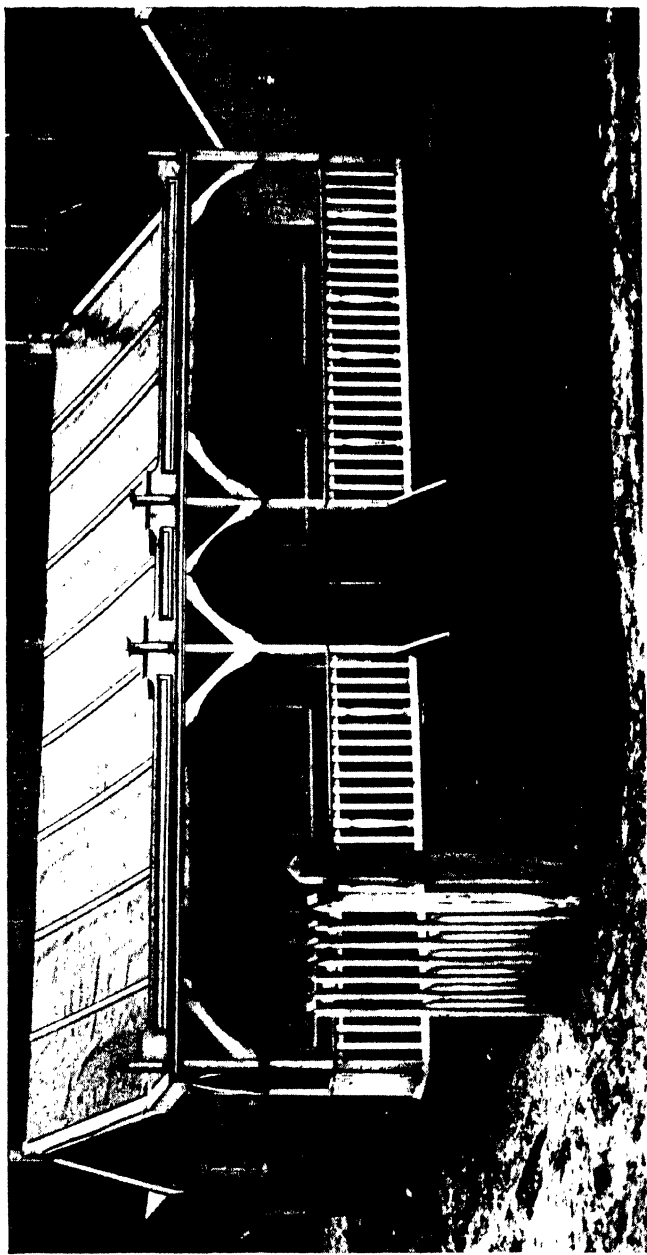
1. The dead woman was not actually wearing her coat at the time of the attack. From the position of the bloodstains, near the hem, it had apparently been over her head with the lining next to the head. The inference drawn by the prosecution was that Mrs. Jackson had entered the house and taken off her coat, and was then attacked by Jackson, who threw her coat over her head to smother her cries and shield him from becoming blood-stained. She then ran out, and fell down outside.

2. Jackson had said on the way to the hospital that he would inform the police, but did not do so.

3. Jackson did not inform two neighbours, who called at the bungalow shortly after the attack, of what had happened.

4. A tyre-lever was found by the police under a cushion in the bungalow.

WHO KILLED MADAME "X"?



The bungalows outside which Mrs. Jackson was found dying

Graphic Photo-Cinon

THE READING MURDER



Philip Yale Dress



Alfred Oliver

That, really, was all the evidence of fact put forward against Jackson. To support it, the police suggested :

(A) That Jackson might have been glad to get rid of a wife who, once a source of income, had now become a liability.

(B) That Jackson had staged a quarrel with his wife immediately on her return, as a prelude to attacking her.

(C) That Jackson had always made a great mystery about his wife, when there was, in fact, no mystery about her at all.

(D) That certain anonymous and threatening letters recently received by Mrs. Jackson had actually been written by her husband to divert subsequent suspicion from himself.

It will be seen that the evidence of fact, with the exception of the curious circumstance about the coat, amounts to just nothing at all. As for the tyre-lever, if Jackson had used this he would hardly have kept it for some time afterwards under a cushion ; moreover, it had to be admitted that there was no trace of blood on it, as, indeed, there was not on Jackson himself ; and rebutting evidence was called to prove that Mrs. Jackson had been seen shortly before using a tyre-lever for some small domestic job.

In proof of the four suggestions, no evidence was offered at all. They were just thrown out, and left at that. Yet one of them is plainly impossible, for there was simply no time for Jackson to have staged a quarrel ; Mrs. Dimick was only a few seconds inside her own house, and certainly not more than a couple of : between parting from Mrs. Jackson and seeing her on her hands and knees outside her own back door. As for the mystery there is overwhelming evidence that everyone who ever came in contact with her knew there was mystery surrounding Mrs. Jackson, and the mystery was none of her husband's making ; in view of this

evidence it is difficult to understand how the prosecution could make this assertion.

Counsel for the defence had little trouble in demolishing this empty case ; but the judge (Mr. Justice Wright) summed up definitely against the prisoner. He pronounced that it was "impossible to conceive that the attack could have been made in any other way" than that suggested by the police ; he made light of the anonymous letters ; he repeated that there was no mystery attached to Mrs. Jackson ; he considered the circumstantial evidence against Jackson to be "very strong" ; and he concluded with these words :

"If any stranger did murder this woman, it must have been done as the result of a deliberate scheme and of set purpose. I have heard no evidence at all which would indicate in any way that Mrs. Jackson had any enemies likely to do her harm. . . . There is no evidence of any secret enemy. That is merely a surmise or possibility, and against that there is all the evidence which the prosecution has produced."

In view of the anonymous letters, and the evidence given in plenty that Mrs. Jackson had appeared actually to fear an attack for at least the past two years, these observations would appear a little surprising. So, at any rate, the jury appeared to think, for, in spite of the plain lead thus given them, they acquitted Jackson.

Who, then, did kill Mrs. Jackson ?

If this case resembles a detective novel in most respects, in one important particular it differs, for there are no clues at all. Whoever killed Mrs. Jackson succeeded in achieving that very difficult feat, the clueless murder. Clueless, that is to say, so far as identity is concerned ; for it is not difficult to reconstruct the crime.

Obviously the assailant was waiting for Mrs. Jackson in the shadow of the house. He attacked her as soon as she had put the bulk of the house between herself and the road.

I think possibly he grasped her by the coat collar, that the coat came off in the struggle, and that the murderer then flung it over her head exactly as the police suggested. It does not take long to deliver a dozen frenzied blows. By the time Jackson, who was in bed, had got down to the back door and Mrs. Dimick had arrived a moment later, the assailant had made off into the surrounding darkness, taking his weapon with him. The whole thing was soundly planned, and flawlessly executed.

Suppose we press the resemblance to a detective story and consider how the detective of fiction would have gone about the job.

As soon as the fact of Mrs. Jackson's profession as a blackmailer became known to him he would have assumed (knowing the rules of fiction) that he had no further to look. Somewhere in that circle, or among the friends or relatives of Mrs. Jackson's victims, the murderer would be found. Perhaps the circle may have been a wide one; but, wide or narrow, to it he would confine his inquiries.

Side by side with this he would puzzle over the murderer's get-away. Was it made by car, by motorcycle, by cycle, or on foot? A car was seen by one witness standing not far from the bungalow with its lights out—so that it had probably nothing to do with the crime.

This murderer was a clever fellow, and he would not make such an obvious blunder as that. Probably he got away by the safest method, on foot for a mile or two first, however he progressed after that. In any case we may assume that the police made all possible inquiries under this heading.

Then there is the weapon. It inflicted wounds of a peculiar character. Two of them might have been made by a blunt instrument, seven were cuts, and the cuts in the coat were of a triangular nature. Surely this is interesting evidence. The police pinned their faith on

the tyre-lever, so we do not know if they considered any other kind of weapon, and, if so, what?

In any case, I am sure of one thing : our detective of fiction would not have let this case go up for trial with such meagre evidence of fact. He would have unearthed some more somehow—and he would certainly have put up a better case.

For on his main point I think we may agree with him without hesitation. Mrs. Jackson was killed by someone, whether victim or friend of victim, connected with her blackmailing activities. And though murder is never justified, can we be altogether sorry that the case of Madame " X " will now remain a mystery for ever ?

J. D. BERESFORD

The Reading Murder

ON June 22, 1929, a Saturday, Alfred Oliver, aged sixty, tobacconist, of Cross Street, Reading, was attacked in his shop some time between 6 and 6.15 p.m., and died from his wounds exactly twenty-four hours later. Money in notes to the amount, as estimated by Mrs. Oliver, of £10 to £12, had been taken from the till, but the silver had apparently been left untouched.

At first sight this crime might appear to be of an all too common type. It was Ascot week and Reading was full of riff-raff from the racecourse. But the evidence given at the resumed inquest, which was opened on October 2 and occupied seven days, was one of those detective stories in real life that hold the public enthralled from day to day.

It is not my duty in this place, however, to tell that particular story.

The central figure at the inquest was an actor, Mr. Philip Yale Drew, who was then performing at Reading in a play called *The Monster*.

Both during the inquest and afterwards Mr. Drew moved in a cloud of suspicion which was entirely unjustified.

Practically no notice at all was taken at the inquest of the various points I am now proposing to set out—points which, in my personal opinion, would have completely dispersed any suspicion attaching to Mr. Drew.

These points are taken from full reports of the proceedings, and so far as I can judge from reading that report, no inference of any kind was drawn from them

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at the time, and most certainly no attempt was made to collate them.

The inquest was formally opened on June 25, and was not resumed until October 2, an interval that most unfortunately permitted the formation and subsequent prosecution of an unsound theory. On this first day of the inquiry the only relevant matter is as follows :

“ Dr. Joyce then gave a list of the terrible injuries (inflicted upon Alfred Oliver). There were thirteen lacerated wounds on the scalp showing dents from one to two inches long. Some were on the front of the head and others on the back. The cause of death was multiple fractures of the skull associated with severe contusion of the brain.”

Now we come to the first day of the re-opened inquest (October 2), from which we gather in the first instance the following necessary information :

Mr. Oliver was found by his wife about ten minutes past six. He was sitting on the floor behind the counter. In answer to the coroner's question : “ Did you ask your husband what had happened ? ” Mrs. Oliver said “ Yes, and he replied ‘ I don't know. ’ He seemed semi-conscious, but recognised me. He was bleeding profusely.”

On the counter was “ a note case with half-a-crown beneath it, and a packet of cigarettes slightly damaged.” (I infer that the note case in question was taken from the till. There is no further mention of it.)

Before he died, Mr. Oliver made the following statements to Chief Constable Burrows :

(1) “ There was a man came in : I thought he was from the Gas office.”

(2) “ I was in the room behind the counter. Mrs. Oliver had gone out, leaving me to clear away the tea. I had an attaché case on the table containing

about £30 in notes and silver which I last saw just before tea, when I got some change for a man. I think he was from the Gas office."

(3) "I was in the shop at six or five minutes past reading a book, *A Day from London to Penzance*. Remember no more."

So far we have dealt only with certain necessary facts that may appear to have no peculiar significance, the kind of detail, indeed, familiar in crimes of this sort. Later on, however, it will be seen that these facts have a definite importance in relation to the inclusive story of the crime I propose to put forward, a story that, if it had been written for a magazine, I should have entitled "The Story of the Very Queer Customer."

We come upon his trail very early in the proceedings, beginning with his call at a butcher's shop at 1.30 p.m. on the day of the murder. The chief point to note here is how very queerly the man behaved.

The witness, a butcher's assistant, said that he came to ask if they had any calves' liver, and then went out again without waiting for an answer. The witness remarked on this at the time and said to the other man in the shop; "That gentleman is a bit of a lad. He is either a *Scotsman* or an Irishman." (My italics.)

The witness continued that he saw the same man again between 5.45 and 5.55 the same evening going in the direction of Oliver's shop.

On the second day of the resumed inquest (October 4) we again hear of what I believe to be the same person. The witnesses here are first a Mr. Windle, who noticed a man in Cross Street that afternoon, and said: "He seemed to be partly drunk, mumbling and gazing at bystanders." Mr. Windle showed how the man pulled round him a coat, which he was wearing over his shoulders in cape fashion, as he disappeared into a café.

The second witness is a Mr. Nicholson, who made a purchase in Oliver's shop at 5.20. He says that he

noticed a man in Cross Street, "staggering about. He had a mackintosh on his arm and it was trailing on the ground. He reeled into a car and then opposite Mr. Oliver's shop 'counted' with his finger all the way down a lamp-post to the bottom."

The Coroner: "He was measuring the lamp-post."

Witness: "I don't know whether he was measuring it; he was pointing with his finger."

Just before the conclusion of the fourth day of the inquest, the queer customer again comes into prominence, on the volunteered evidence of Mr. S. C. Povey, who said: "That he was in Cross Street from 5.5 to 5.25 on June 22. He was looking into an antique shop which was next door to Oliver's, and his (Mr. Povey's) motor-car was drawn up to the curb partly outside the tobacconist's. He saw a man fall against the back of his car and start stroking it. After the man left the car he went up Cross Street till he came to a lamp-post, which he caught hold of and also stroked. He then seemed to 'rumble' what he was doing and went on."

After that we hear no more of the queer customer until the very end of the last day on which testimony was taken by the coroner. The witness here is another butcher's assistant, Mr. Wells, who served in a shop in Cross Street.

Mr. Wells had gone to the police station with his information about twenty minutes to nine on the evening of the murder, and made a statement to the sergeant in charge. In the rush, however, this statement had been overlooked by the police. A police witness said that "he had more people coming to him that night making statements than he could remember."

The statement was found, nevertheless, and after Mr. Wells had given evidence it was read in Court, and agreed in all essential particulars with what Mr. Wells had just said from the witness-stand.

The substance of this statement was as follows:

Mr. Wells had noticed a man behaving rather queerly in the Welcome Café (in Cross Street) at 7.30 on the morning of the murder, being more particularly interested by a curious gesture of his, which he imitated by rubbing his hand and part of his sleeve across his face and then brushing his hair from his forehead. This man spoke to the witness, asking his way to the lavatory, and his accent according to Mr. Wells was: "The same accent as my own only more of a twang—Tyneside." (It will be remembered that the earlier witness had suggested that it might have been Scottish. Near enough.) The witness added that he saw the same man two or three times that day and particularly noticed him at 5.40 walking out from Cross Street into Friar Street.

Finally, before we go on to collate this evidence, we must refer to the evidence of a Mrs. James, given on the second day of the resumed inquest. It must be remembered that Mrs. James was recalling something she had seen fifteen weeks earlier, but two of her statements relate to impressions of the kind that are not easily forgotten.

The first is that she had noticed a man standing just inside the doorway of a tobacconist's shop in Cross Street on the evening of the murder and was able to fix the time positively as just after 6.10 by the Town Hall clock. The second is that he seemed to be muttering and continually wiping his hand across his face.

Mrs. James said that he was wiping blood from his face, and he may, indeed, have done that accidentally. But I would suggest that this was the same habitual gesture seen and described by Mr. Wells in the Welcome Café the same morning.

But Mr. Wells, who had had the clearest and longest sight of the queer customer emphatically denied that he was Philip Yale Drew.

And it must be remembered that Drew could not possibly have been in the Welcome Café at 7.30 on the morning of the murder.

In brief, then, I claim that my case is complete, and

that Alfred Oliver was murdered by a criminal lunatic, a man of about forty years of age, wearing a dark suit, with brown shoes trodden over at the heels (Mr. Wells's testimony), who was in the habit of mumbling to himself, and had an extraordinarily queer habit of stroking things, his face, his hair, the back of a motor, or even a lamp-post.

Also, he had a marked North-country, Tyneside accent. (It is worth noting that some months later a Glasgow man was temporarily arrested by the police on suspicion of having committed the Cross Street murder, but released the next day.)

Let me further check this inference by a consideration of the details of the murder itself. Oliver had thirteen wounds on his head, yet I suggest that the first of these put him out of action. It is a fair inference that there was no struggle.

The scales on the counter were broken, but these may have been knocked over when the murderer was reaching for the till. On the other hand, a packet of cigarettes lying on the counter was only "slightly damaged," and *a fortiori*, there were no wounds on Oliver's hands or arms, as there must have been if he had put up his arms, the inevitable gesture, to defend his head.

What happened, in my opinion, was that the unfortunate Mr. Oliver was knocked out by the first blow, and that the succeeding twelve blows would have been delivered only by a homicidal maniac.

I would suggest further that the murderer had paid a previous visit to the shop some forty minutes or so before the crime was committed, probably just before he was seen playing his demented antics with the lamp-post in Cross Street. (He was seen by Wells walking out of Cross Street at 5.40.)

In the confused statements made by Mr. Oliver he says "There was a man came; I thought he was from the Gas office," and afterwards that he last saw an

attaché case on the table *before tea* when he "got some change for a man. I think he was from the Gas office."

(I assume on the evidence of the inquest that no man from the Gas office had, in fact, been in the shop. If he had, as was easily ascertainable, he would have been called as a witness.)

This first visit then, if I am right, was made earlier, "before tea," and quite possibly the queer customer had walked out again without waiting for the change he had asked for, as he had walked out of the butcher's earlier in the day. But that he was associated in Oliver's mind with the subsequent attack I have no doubt.

The dying man did his best to tell what he knew, and in the uncertain places of his injured brain the man who had earlier called for change was definitely identified with the picture of his assailant.

And how, it may be finally asked, did this very queer customer of mine escape justice? Well, putting aside the fact that the police were on a false trail, I should say that he was precisely the sort of man who would get away. He was probably unaware, for one thing, that he had anything to conceal.

Immediately after the murder had been committed he is, on the testimony of Mrs. James, quietly standing in the door of the shop, making that habitual "stroking" gesture of his, instead of getting away as quickly as possible from the scene of his crime. He had, in fact, the "innocence" of the insane, and it is proverbial that there is a special providence that looks after the lunatic and the drunkard.

Nevertheless, it may be assumed, on sound precedents, that his fits of violent dementia were intermittent. On twenty-second of June he may have been working up for one of his periodical attacks and been sane enough later to get away unnoticed, especially as it is highly probable that in this comparatively sane condition he had no memory whatever of what he had done during his attack—a common feature of this type of mania.

What became of him afterwards we can only guess. He may have been knocked down and killed by a car, or have been sentenced for another crime—or he may have been the man that Arthur Rouse took for a ride?

FRANCIS D. GRIERSON

The Ardlamont Mystery

IT is a raw December day in Edinburgh. Prosperous folk hurrying in the streets shiver involuntarily as the coin of their charity is seized by the blue fingers of the ragged beggar. . . .

But inside the gloomy building they are passing more than one brow is damp with the sweat of a suspense so painful that the atmosphere seems almost suffocating.

It is the High Court of Justiciary.

The Lord Justice-clerk, impassive on the Bench, glances from the pale, cultured-looking man in the dock to the foreman of the jury, which for ten days has listened to the evidence of nearly one hundred witnesses and the arguments of brilliant counsel, and has now to utter a verdict on which hangs a human life.

A wiggled figure breaks the tense silence with a fateful question, and the foreman bends forward a little to reply :

" Not proven ! "

A pause. Then a murmur runs round the court—of relief, of surprise, of dissent, according to the views of those who have heard the tangled story that has been told and debated inside and outside those walls.

A few formalities, and then Alfred John Monson, whose life has hung in the balance for three months, leaves the dock, a free man—free, but with neither the vindication of innocence nor the stigma of guilt.

Such was the closing scene of a case which in its day aroused as great public interest and as keen controversy as any of the notorious trials of history.

In its main outlines the case of the Ardlamont Mystery—as it had been called, because its scene was laid near Ardlamont House, a property in Argyllshire—was neither more nor less sordid or unusual than many others in which, according to the allegation of the prosecution, a desperate need for money was the motive, rather than those of love or revenge.

It was, however, especially noteworthy for its contribution to the age-old controversy regarding the value of circumstantial evidence.

“A witness may lie,” a famous judge has declared, “but if you see smoke coming out of a chimney you may reasonably conclude that there is a fire in the house.”

But, as Professor Hans Gross, the “Father of Criminology,” insisted, it is comparatively easy to accumulate a mass of such evidence, but quite another to decide what deductions may be justly drawn from it.

It was exactly on this No Man’s Land that the battle was fought between the eminent experts called by the prosecution and the defence respectively in the Ardlamont Mystery.

The two chief figures in the case were :

ALFRED JOHN MONSON, a well-educated man of early middle-age, who was accused on two counts of murdering and of attempting to murder

WINDSOR DUDLEY CECIL HAMBROUGH, who at the time of his death on August 10, 1893, was a twenty-year-old lieutenant in the 3rd (Militia) Battalion of the West Yorkshire Regiment.

Cecil Hambrough was the son of Major Dudley Hambrough. The major held a life interest (in Scotland he would be called the heir of entail) in the Hambrough family estates, which were producing between £4000 and £5000 a year, and he also had a prospective interest in other property.

He was not, however, very wise in money matters, and was admittedly in serious financial difficulties when

his son reached the age of seventeen, and it became necessary to think of preparing the lad for the Army career for which Major Hambrough destined him.

The major had had financial dealings with a certain Mr. Tottenham, a London financier, and Tottenham introduced Alfred Monson to him in 1890, with the suggestion that Monson should undertake Cecil's tuition and guidance at a fee of £300 a year.

This was arranged, and Cecil went to Yorkshire, where Monson and his family were living near Ripley.

For some time Major Hambrough and Monson continued to be on good terms, and Monson figured in some rather complicated negotiations aimed at extricating the major from his difficulties. They were not successful, however, and a coolness ensued which ended in Major Hambrough trying to induce his son to return home.

Cecil, however, preferred life with the Monsons to the ups and downs of his father's existence, and refused to return. He had already entered the Militia (in those days a stepping-stone to the Regular Army), and he and Monson were excellent friends.

For some time, it was admitted, both Monson and Cecil had been receiving financial aid from Mr. Tottenham—aid which in Monson's case was necessary, for in August, 1892, he was adjudged a bankrupt.

In the following January he and Cecil tried to raise money on the young man's expectancy in the Hambrough estates, but the effort was not successful.

In May (1893), Monson secured a lease of Ardlamont House, an Argyllshire property in the Kilfinan district to which one could travel by steamer from Glasgow, disembarking preferably at the Kames pier, about five miles from the house. As Monson could not himself contract the lease, it was done in the names of Cecil Hambrough and a Mr. Jertingham, the latter being put forward by Monson as Cecil's guardian, and as sound security for the rent, which was to be £450 for the season, payable in portions.

Monson, his wife and children, and a governess, went to Ardlamont, and Cecil joined them there after finishing his period of training with the Militia.

In July there began attempts to effect an insurance on Cecil's life, and although at first unsuccessful, the Mutual Life Assurance Company of New York and Glasgow finally accepted the young man's proposal for a £20,000 insurance, divided into two policies of £10,000 each. The first premium (£194) was paid by Monson.

Now comes a point which was subsequently to become an important issue in Monson's trial.

The policies were dated August 4, and on August 7 Cecil wrote to an official of the insurance company asking him to deliver them to Monson's wife, to whom he wished to assign them.

Cecil also executed a letter to Mrs. Monson assigning the policies to her

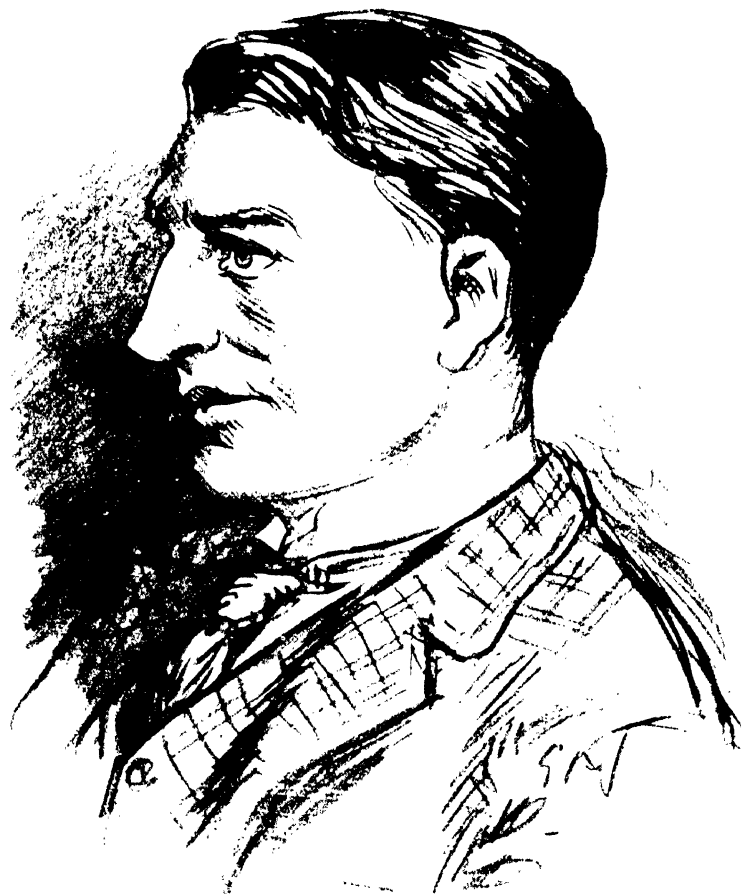
“as security against all liabilities incurred by you on my behalf, and in the event of my death occurring before the repayment of these moneys you will be the sole beneficiary of these policies.”

Here, it may be pointed out—as Monson's counsel did at the trial—that if Cecil died (as he did) before reaching the age of twenty-one, the policy money could not be recovered. As Monson declared that he was unaware of this fact, the suggestion was that the whole transaction was due merely to Cecil's desire to reward those for whose kindness to him he was grateful.

And now there comes into the picture a character whose proceedings formed one of the greatest mysteries in the whole affair.

On Tuesday, August 8, the day after Cecil had written the two letters mentioned, there arrived at Ardlamont a man introduced by Monson as one Scott, who was described as an engineer, who had come to inspect the

THE ARDLAMONT MYSTERY



Illustrated Police News

Alfred John Monson

THE ARDLAMONT MYSTERY



Scott



Illustrated Police News
Cecil Hambrough

boilers of a yacht which Monson had bought on Cecil's behalf.

Cecil, enjoying to the full the opportunities for outdoor sport afforded by the estate, made Scott a welcome guest, and the three men got on excellently.

On the Wednesday (August 9) after dinner, Monson, Cecil and Scott went to Ardlamont Bay to fish. Scott remained on shore, but Monson and Cecil put out in a boat. When they all returned to the house about midnight, Monson and Cecil were wet through, but they laughingly explained that they had had a mishap.

On this incident, however, the Crown later based its charge against Monson of attempting to murder Cecil. It was found that a hole had been cut in the boat. Monson's account of the affair was that in the darkness the boat had struck a rock and capsized. Cecil, who could not swim, clung to the rock, while Monson swam to the shore, obtained another boat and picked Cecil up.

"In fact," said Monson, "so far from trying to murder him I saved his life."

Early next morning (Wednesday, August 10), Mrs Monson, the children and the governess left to go by boat to Glasgow, where they were to spend the day, and soon afterwards Monson, Scott and Cecil set out on what was to be the latter's last adventure.

They were going shooting, and Monson carried a 12-bore shot-gun. Cecil's gun was a 20-bore.

A witness named James Dunn saw them enter a field, and presently they entered a wood and were lost to his sight.

Soon afterwards Monson and Scott returned to the house and informed the butler that Cecil had shot himself accidentally. The butler and other servants hurried with Monson to the north end of the wood, where Cecil's dead body was found, with a gunshot wound in the head. He was lying on his back, with his head to the north, between the edge of the wood and a plantation of trees.

A doctor was called. He saw no cause for suspicion.

Scott then left Ardlamont, and was not heard of again until nearly a year later, long after Monson's trial had ended.

Cecil's body was taken to Ventnor (Isle of Wight) for burial, and no more was heard of the matter until officials of the insurance company, who had been approached by Mr. Tottenham on Mrs. Monson's behalf, began investigations. These inquiries led to the exhumation of Cecil's body, and the arrest of Monson on August 29.

After three months' preparation the case came into court, Mr. Asher, Q.C., the Solicitor-General, leading for the Crown, and Mr. J. Comrie Thomson for the defence.

It was an extraordinary legal battle conducted on both sides with admirable forensic ability that never passed the bounds of the strictest equity. Of the ninety-four witnesses, many were experts. They included Sir Henry Littlejohn, the famous medical authority, Dr. Matthew Hay, Dr. P. H. Watson, Dr. Joseph Bell, Mr. Speedy, a naturalist, and others.

The contention of the defence was that Cecil had been carrying his gun at the "trail," when he stumbled in getting over a fence, and the weapon exploded and shot him. When it was proved (a point which had escaped the doctor who first saw the body) that he had been killed by shot from a 12-bore gun, Monson explained that he and Cecil had exchanged guns shortly after leaving the house.

Monson declared that he and Scott (who could not be called, having disappeared) had not seen the accident happen. They had heard a shot, called out to Cecil, and, on receiving no reply, had walked in the direction of the sound and found the young man lying dead.

"The case is purely one of circumstantial evidence," said the Lord Justice-clerk in charging the jury. "Everything in it depends on inferences to be drawn, and it is quite certain that, in a case where the evidence is purely

circumstantial, if every link in it is a sound link and is well welded into the next, there cannot be a stronger case than that."

The defence argued, with reason, that Monson had no motive for taking the life of a young man on whom his financial future appeared to depend.

There can, one thinks, be no doubt that the Crown failed to prove that Monson killed Cecil Hambrough.

In an English court Monson would have been either acquitted or convicted; as it was, the law of Scotland allowed him to be sent forth under a cloud.

A point made, for example, by the Crown was the position of the dead youth's body. It was argued that this showed that he had been struck by shot from a gun held horizontally. The point was met by the contention that Monson and Scott had moved the body from the spot where they found it.

Another question raised was the distance at which a charge of shot fired from a gun will begin to spread, but competent witnesses were oddly at variance on the point.

When Mr. Scott failed to appear at the trial the Court pronounced sentence of "outlawry" against him. In May of the following year, however, he turned up, figuring in a conjurer's entertainment in an Edinburgh music-hall. While there he appealed to the Court of Justiciary to withdraw the sentence of outlawry pronounced against him, and this the Court did.

So closed the last chapter of the story—leaving the Ardlamont Mystery still as much a mystery as ever.

ANTHONY ARMSTRONG

The Battersea Flat Mystery

TOWARDS dusk one July evening nearly twenty-five years ago a police-constable was on duty in Battersea Bridge Road when he thought he heard something suspiciously like a shot not very far away.

Moving in that direction, his suspicions were soon confirmed by an excited man who ran up and stated that two revolver shots had just sounded in quick succession from an apparently unoccupied flat in Prince of Wales Road, which was a turning at right angles out of the main Battersea Bridge Road.

Going with his informant, the constable was shown the flat—an empty one on the ground floor of the fourth block along from the main road—and at once proceeded to investigate. He soon discovered that the door was not locked, and, entering, his pocket-lamp presently revealed, among tools and materials lying about—for the flat was obviously in the decorators' hands during the daytime—something which seemed incongruous. It was a small empty handbag, and near it a pair of fairly new brown boots.

Obviously the boots did not belong to the decorators ; equally obviously they belonged to someone who had removed them in order not to be heard moving about ; and—the constable looked round warily—even more obviously the man must be still somewhere about.

Search, however, showed the flat empty, and it was not till the door at the back leading into the garden was opened that the owner of the boots—for soft carpet slippers were on his feet—was discovered. He was

sprawling unconscious across the outside steps that led up from the scullery and he was patently dying from the effect of two bad bullet wounds on the right side of the face.

It was apparent at once that this was not suicide, for no trace of the gun could be found—indeed, the only weapon to come to light was a wicked-looking home-made bludgeon of twisted electric cable; and this was in the dying man's tail-coat pocket. Ugly though the word is, murder was the only alternative, but by whom?

The victim was past speech and in fact died very shortly after. So, having notified the police station and doctor, the constable tried to discover something that might throw further light on the murder by questioning the two occupants of the first-floor flat just above.

One of these turned out to be a boy of nineteen who had come to supper; the other was the occupier of the flat, a woman considerably older, with whom the boy's father had been in love for many years. The father was one Thomas Anderson, known on the stage as Atherstone.

Her long association with the latter had led the woman almost to "mother" his two sons (there was a younger who does not come into the story), and she took a great and genuine interest in the elder lad's education and pursuits. Indeed, his visit that evening was for him to discuss and borrow certain books she thought would help him in his studies.

The constable's inquiries resulted in young Anderson admitting quite frankly that he had heard two strange explosions like shots, that he had thereupon looked out of the back window, and that he had actually observed a man climbing away over the wall at the side of the garden.

He could not, of course, have noticed the body, because it was hidden from him by that last flight of an

iron outside staircase which served all four flats in the block as a fire-escape.

At the policeman's request he then went down to see if he could identify the body but was unable to do so. Seeing it again later, however, at the mortuary, he recognised it with some emotion as that of his father, Weldon Atherstone, the actor, who lived in rooms somewhere in the King's Cross district.

It might, at first blush, appear strange that a son should apparently not recognise his own father, but one very probable explanation is that on the first occasion the face was covered with blood and the sole light was from the constable's lantern. No amount of questioning could elicit anything from the woman, who had become very hysterical and upset at the news; nor could any information of value ever be extracted from her.

Investigations were set on foot by Scotland Yard, but with little result. Young Anderson's story of a man getting over the wall was easily proved; first, by a trail of footprints which ran from the point indicated across all the other three gardens and walls to the final wall bordering Battersea Bridge Road; and, secondly, by a witness who, while walking down that road, had actually seen a man come hurriedly over the wall and run away in the dusk.

The footprints, incidentally, were those of small pointed-toed shoes and were in a double track, showing that the unknown had come the same way as he had gone.

Another witness further along the same road had also seen and been startled by a man running soundlessly past; but in neither case had the unknown been particularly noticed. No one else had seen him, and neither revolver nor shoes to match the footprints were ever found.

And those were all the clues; except that examination later of the dead man's diary revealed that, following a head injury a year before, he had been entertaining

wildly jealous suspicions concerning the woman whom he loved.

Indeed, it is not too much to say that he was definitely mentally unbalanced ; and it is pretty well agreed that he believed that night he was going to catch and beat up some rival. With that object he got into the empty flat, changed from his boots to the slippers he had brought in the handbag, and, bludgeon in pocket, was waiting under the iron staircase at the back.

But then what ? No one knows.

Who really killed Weldon Atherstone ? No solution has been discovered, though many suggest themselves. Yet there are so many puzzling points in the story as we know it, that each suggested explanation, while fitting in with some facts, is gravely at variance with others. Moreover, the lapse of years may well have blurred the importance of certain details and given an unnaturally heightened significance to certain others which were fully taken into account at the time.

One possible solution may well be that a burglar, having made his way along through all the gardens from Battersea Bridge Road, suddenly appeared in front of Atherstone waiting under the fire-escape.

The latter, believing him to be the man he was after, promptly attacked him, and, following a brief and bitter struggle, was shot. This is based on the fact that at the time an armed and dangerous gang of burglars from Germany was known to be operating in South London ; but against it must be set the following :

First, professionals do not work at 9.30 on a summer evening ;

Second, these particular flats were not profitable " cribs," and even if they were, why miss three and go straight to the fourth ;

Third, if it was the gang referred to why did only one man come ?

Fourth, not even an armed burglar shoots unless

attacked, and yet the presumed attacker's only weapon was tucked away in his tail-coat pocket.

A second theory, based on the probability of Atherstone being the aggressor, is that the not very accessible weapon found on him could not be his only one; in other words that the fatal revolver was *his*.

In that case, the other man may have been not an armed burglar but merely a little local pilferer, on the look out for unlatched windows or doors. He would be just the sort of person to be wearing pointed shoes, so essential in his work for quiet, swift moving—did he not startle a witness by running soundlessly past?—and he would also be a more likely type to be found sneaking round the back of not very well-to-do flats.

While investigating possible openings he ran into Atherstone, who, under his misapprehension, at once threatened him with his revolver. They struggled; the intruder, terrified, managed to wrest the revolver from his assailant, shot him and made off, unconsciously taking the weapon with him and going back the same way that he had come.

On the other hand, if this suggestion is to hold water, the first set of footprints should have obviously shown a close investigation of the back of the first three houses *before* reaching the fourth, whereas they seemed to indicate that the owner knew just where he was going and went straight there.

Neither of these theories seems to fit in exactly, but since every mystery must have a solution, let us try to see if we can evolve one of our own a little more plausible.

Working on what the evidence of the footprints seems to prove—that the unknown was definitely going to that particular block of flats—we might begin to ask ourselves whether Atherstone's jealousy really was based on something more than the imaginings of a sick brain.

There was abundant proof that he had for some time been making life a burden to the woman in the flat—he

had even accused her of entertaining a rival merely from seeing some faded flowers in the dustbin—but was this all *unfounded* suspicion?

It is not suggested that she had another lover, or she would certainly have warned him not to come to her on a night when she herself had invited young Anderson to supper; but it is possible that, as a well-educated woman, interested in books, music, conversation and other refinements of life, she liked to have congenial friends to visit her and that she had many such friends.

In such an event, it is very likely that her circle of friends, in which circle the wildly jealous Atherstone had no place, was drawn from near by; and with this theory the footprints would seem to fit very well. For narrow-pointed shoes in which a man can run soundlessly strongly indicate indoor pumps worn by one who knew when he set out he was only going a little way.

Atherstone, however, in his then state of mind, would have put the worst construction on the visits of any such friend, and, moreover, his diary tells us that he had begun to watch the house.

So to avoid unpleasant scenes—no doubt at the woman's request—her friends were asked to go by the garden and the iron staircase, until the day when Atherstone's diseased and suspicious brain suddenly remembered this unwatched approach, and fate played into his hands in the shape of that ground-floor flat, left nightly unlocked by the decorators.

Perhaps that fatal night was not the first time he had kept watch (bringing slippers to change into was probably taught by experience), but at last he was rewarded. He wildly threatens the man, whom he believes is a clandestine lover, with his revolver; he is obviously mad, and the other struggles with him in self-defence. They grapple in the dark, the one trying to shoot, the other trying to force the muzzle away.

The latter at last succeeds, but it is forced away towards the other's face, and in the struggle the trigger is squeezed.

Two shots in rapid succession enter Atherstone's face at short range—the position of the wounds, be it noted, were extremely consistent with his having been holding the weapon himself.

Horrified, the other runs back, taking the revolver with its damaging fingerprints, and disposing of it at once, for in his panic his one thought is that no one will ever believe it was an accident.

Later he realises that he can now never tell anyone the truth, for by thus losing his head he has acted as though he were indeed a wilful murderer. And so he decides to keep silent.

This, too, would explain the fact that neither at the time, nor ever afterwards, could any information be got out of the woman. She did not know what had happened, and so knowing nothing, she could say nothing.

Thus no one ever found out how Weldon Atherstone really died.

MILWARD KENNEDY

The Camden Town Murder

WHOM did MacCowan see in St. Paul's Road, Camden Town, just before five o'clock on the morning of September 12, 1907? Upon that question, during the six days of his trial in December, depended the life of Robert Wood, a skilful artist and a man of so singular a nerve that in the dock he made sketches of the Judge.

London was stirred by his trial; anonymous letters showered upon judge and counsel, and a well-known evening paper earned a stern rebuke by calling the jury "the least distinguished part of the picture." Theatre-goers applauded his acquittal.

Emily Dimmock, passing as Mrs. Phyllis Shaw, was murdered on the night of September 11. Bert Shaw, a railway company's cook, coming home about noon on the twelfth, found her in bed, her head almost severed from her naked body. The doors of the two communicating rooms which "the Shaws" occupied were locked. The rooms were in some confusion; there was much blood; Phyllis lay on her side, peacefully, as if killed in her sleep.

She had lived with Shaw for nine months. Before that she had lived by prostitution. Shaw, who meant to marry her, said he did not know that she still followed her trade. In any case, he had been in Sheffield that night and had an unassailable alibi.

What had the police to go upon? Suicide was definitely ruled out. What was the motive for murder? Theft was

a possibility, for there were missing a little money (upwards of two pounds, perhaps), a wedding ring, a gold watch, a silver chain and cigarette-case, and a trinket or so. These have never reappeared. Three other gold rings were not stolen.

But something like a search had been made of the rooms; drawers had been ransacked. A curious feature was a postcard album which had been taken from the front room to the back; it lay on the floor open, with some of its cards scattered beside it.

Phyllis collected postcards—a harmless trait enough; but the album soon took on a sinister significance. The police learnt of a particular card which Phyllis had received, but which had disappeared.

It was discovered a fortnight after the crime, under the lining paper of a drawer.

It was addressed to Mrs. B. Shaw, and it read: "Phyllis, darling, if it please you, meet me at 8.15 at the Rising Sun. Yours to a cinder, Alice." A sketch of a rising sun replaced those words. The reference was obviously to a public house in the Euston Road, where Phyllis was often to be seen. The police concluded that the room had been ransacked for that postcard.

They learnt of its existence from a man named Roberts (like Shaw, a cook, but a ship's cook), who had spent the three nights before the murder with Phyllis, and had given her two guineas. On Monday, September 9, she had shown him that postcard. On the morning of the 11th she received by post a letter and an advertisement.

Phyllis showed Roberts the letter, which read: "Dear Phyllis, will you meet me at the Eagle at 8.30 to-night, Camden Town?—Bert."

She showed him the postcard again and he judged that the two were written by the same hand. Then she set fire to the letter and threw it in the grate. The postcard she put in a drawer, but not the one in which it was afterwards discovered.

Roberts took this story to the police. He had an

alibi for the night of the 11th. The defence did not try to assail the alibi.

When the postcard was found the police issued a facsimile to the Press, who reproduced it, and at once Wood began to establish his alibi. As a direct result he was arrested and charged with murder, yet in fact the alibi was a proof of his innocence.

He arranged with Ruby Young, with whom he had quarrelled (over another woman), that she would swear he had been with her from 6.30 till 10.30 on September 11.

He badgered her about her promise until her nerves were frayed. She consulted a friend and the friend went to the police, and so on October 5, Roberts, the sea cook, was asked and was able to identify Wood as a man whom he had seen with Phyllis at the Rising Sun two nights before the murder.

Two days later MacCowan, an unemployed carman, identified Wood by his walk as a man whom he had seen leaving 29 St. Paul's Road, at 4.48 a.m. on September 12.

At Wood's trial it was not disputed that he wrote the postcard. On September 6, while he and Phyllis were talking at the Rising Sun, a boy came in selling postcards. Wood did not let her buy one; he himself, he said, had more artistic cards and would send her one. She told him not to sign it with a man's name, for fear of trouble with Shaw, and according to Wood, she dictated the name and address.

Did Wood and Phyllis meet for the first time on September 6?

So he alleged; and the Crown called witnesses to prove that they were old acquaintances, and the defence called others to disprove it.

In either case Wood had no motive for murdering her; but the shorter their acquaintance, the harder to imagine one. Though the Judge's own opinion was that they had met before September 6, this did not in any way imply a motive.

Next day Wood encountered Phyllis near Camden

Town Station ; they went together to the Eagle, though Wood denied that he knew that was its name till long afterwards. Phyllis reminded him about the promised postcard, and subsequently he posted it to her. On September 8 (Sunday) the pair did not meet. Roberts and Phyllis were in the Rising Sun and went together to her lodging ; next morning he saw Wood's postcard.

Roberts was again at the Rising Sun on September 9. About 8 p.m. Phyllis came in, and soon afterwards Wood. Before long the pair left, though where they went is uncertain. Ostensibly they were bound for the Holborn Empire, but at about 11.30, when they reappeared in the Rising Sun, Phyllis said that they had spent the time in another public house, the Adam and Eve.

Wood denied this, though admitting that they might have called there ; at his trial he said that he did not know where they had been. In an earlier statement he told a different story : of how Phyllis left the Rising Sun and how later he saw her outside talking to a lame man and how, returning to the bar, she said to Wood, " I hate that fellow," and how, later still, she went for a stroll with Wood, and how she then joined a group of men " of rather racy appearance," one of whom seemed to " command her attention." And then, Wood stated, he saw her for the last time (though at his trial he admitted that he saw her next day) : " Feeling myself to be an intruder, I held out my hand and said good night." Crown witnesses said that Phyllis was nervous of Wood.

Whatever had happened in the interval, Phyllis came back to the Rising Sun, and Roberts went home with her. Next evening (Tuesday 10th) she and Roberts went to a theatre and again he spent the night with her.

Next morning came the letter which, according to Roberts, made the assignation for the Eagle. A witness was called to prove that Phyllis did receive a letter and an advertisement by post. In the grate at 29 St. Paul's Road, the police had found some pieces of charred paper. The handwriting appeared to be Wood's. The Crown

THE CAMDEN TOWN MURDER



*'Lady Diablo of Monte Carlo'—a sketch made by Robert Wood
in prison*

THE CAMDEN TOWN MURDER



Robert Hood



Phyllis Dimmock

alleged that these were part of the mysterious letter. But there was at least a suggestion that Roberts's recollection was shaky. "To-night" was strange in a letter posted the day before, and the use of "Bert" was well-nigh inexplicable; and why tell the girl that the Eagle was in Camden Town?

The Crown reconstructed the fragments of words into a sentence to suit its case; the defence held that the lines on the paper corroborated Wood's story.

For Wood abandoned his first suggestion that the writing on the fragments was an imitation of his; since the same make of indelible pencil had been used for it as for the postcard. But he denied that he had ever written Phyllis a letter: his explanation was that he must have dropped some papers while he was writing that postcard at the Rising Sun, and Phyllis must have taken them.

We come to the last night of Phyllis Dimmock's life. When Ruby Young revealed the falsity of the alibi, Wood had nothing to put in its place. He had, he swore, no assignation with Phyllis, but he met her in Camden Road and took her to the Eagle. He introduced her to a friend of his, Lambert, a bookseller. He left her in a corridor at the Eagle at about 11 p.m. and walked home to King's Cross. He arrived between 11.30 and midnight went upstairs to see his father (who was ill) and to fetch an alarm clock, and so to bed.

What support had his story? Wood's father swore that his son came to fetch the clock at midnight; he fixed the date by a detail which another son corroborated. Furthermore, a jeweller who occupied the basement saw Wood on the door-steps about midnight, and heard him lock the front door after he had entered.

Had Wood an assignation for the evening of September 11? Witnesses (including Lambert) swore that Phyllis came to the Eagle with her hair in curling-pins and that she apologised to Lambert for it. Wood knew nothing about her coiffure; he said she was wearing a hat. It is incredible that he would have introduced his

friend to a girl whom he intended to murder that same night.

When did Wood—and Phyllis—leave the Eagle? The barmaid said that they came in "between 9 and 10"; Lambert said that he was with them for about ten minutes; the barmaid said they left the bar about half an hour after Lambert. On this they might have left a considerable time before 11.

Was Wood at home from midnight onwards? To set against MacCowan's recognition of him as the man at the gate in St. Paul's Road at 4.48 a.m. there was not only the evidence of Wood's family and of the jeweller; the defence produced as a trump card a Tube railway ticket-collector who lived at 26 St. Paul's Road, who walked (he said) with a peculiar swing, who went to work at 4.55 a.m. on September 12, and who had seen another man in the road then. The obvious suggestion was that this ticket-collector was the man whom MacCowan had seen; the road was never well-lit, the night not particularly clear, and at that hour the street lamps had been extinguished.

Lawyers leave nothing to chance; the defence had also called as witnesses several respectable people who knew Wood well, to swear that there was nothing peculiar about *his* walk.

The surgeons said that when discovered she had been dead for about seven or eight hours, which would put the murder at about 4 a.m. Wood had an unquestionable alibi for that hour; the Judge's holding MacCowan's evidence to be crucial, found in favour of Wood on that point.

But the surgeons also said that Phyllis had had a meal about three hours before her death. It seems reasonable to think that the meal was taken between 11 p.m. and midnight, and that the murder was committed between 3 a.m. and 4 a.m. Wood and Phyllis had "refreshments" at the Eagle, but no meal; at her lodgings there was no sign of a meal. Since Wood was innocent, there is no

reason to doubt that he left Phyllis, as he said, at about 11 p.m. Whom, then, did Phyllis meet, and with whom did she share that meal?

The stolen articles were never found; if robbery was the motive, it was profitless. The weapon was never found; Shaw's razors could not, the experts said, have made the wound, and Wood's, under the microscope, showed no trace of blood. No other motive and no likely suspect was put forward. A Crown witness, called to prove that Phyllis and Wood had been long acquainted, talked of two men who had threatened her life, one, a sailor named Biddle, brandishing a razor, the other promising to cut her throat. The defence argued forcibly that this witness, a gaol-bird, was not to be believed. Two witnesses for the defence spoke of a man, well built and taller than Wood, whom they had seen with Phyllis in the Euston Road about midnight on the night of her murder, but little was made of this.

Was the murderer, then, someone outside the trial? Someone who had known Phyllis months before and had sent her postcards for her collection? From foreign lands? A sailor? (For she had known sailors as well as cooks.)

Did a letter come from him that Wednesday morning? Was it preserved, and were only Wood's scribbles burnt? Did the man come back to find her living as another man's wife? Why take the wedding-ring and leave three others? Who gave her those trinkets? Does Roberts's story of the three-page letter ring true? Could the sea-cook, perhaps, have made a guess at the identity of the dangerous, quiet-moving man who put away his knife and washed his hands and dried them on a petticoat and found what he wanted, letters and cards and ring and trinkets, and then slipped away?

Wood made no assignation to meet Phyllis that night; she met him by chance, her hair in curling pins—she was getting ready for her assignation, not with Wood, but with the man who mattered to her. She and the unknown

shared their meal; she took him home with her; she showed him, it may be, his postcards, treasured in her collection. If she realised that he had to be conciliated, she went peacefully to sleep, rashly confident of her success.

EX-CHIEF INSPECTOR WILLIAM GOUGH

The Case of Willie Starchfield

IT is the considered opinion of past and present chiefs of the Criminal Investigation Department that the train murder forms the most difficult of the various categories of homicide. The major percentage remain unsolved.

One has only to recall the cases of Nurse Shore at Lewes, Miss Money at Merstham, Miss Camp at Waterloo and, most recent of all, Mrs. Winifred East at Kidbrooke, all unsolved, to illustrate the truth of this contention.

In practically every case it is impossible to determine exactly at what stage of the journey the crime took place or at what point the murderer made his escape. The investigation usually resolves itself into a frantic search for evidence which does not exist.

The story I am going to tell is of a train crime which shocked the country—the murder of five-year-old Willie Starchfield. The body of this girlish-looking boy with long golden curls was found beneath the carriage seat in a North London Railway train on January 8, 1914. He had been strangled.

The officials at Broad Street railway station telephoned Scotland Yard directly the discovery was made and I was sent by Sir Basil Thomson, then the Assistant Commissioner, to take charge of the investigation.

I found that a fifteen-year-old errand boy had entered a third class compartment of the train at Mildmay Park soon after four o'clock. As the train approached the next station he noticed a small hand protruding from

beneath the seat. He was too terrified to examine it. When the train stopped at Dalston he tried to attract the attention of a porter, but failed.

At the next station, Haggerston, the boy, very shaken and unable to stand the strain any longer, fled. Once in the street, he recovered himself and went back and told the station-master what he had seen. The train had already started, but by telephoning to the next station, the station-master had a search made and the body was found.

As I examined the body I found all the appearances of death from strangulation. The face was intensely dark and suffused with blood, both lips were bruised, and on the neck were marks indicating the recent application of a narrow constricting band with sufficient force and for a sufficiently long period to cause a marked groove.

Sir Bernard Spilsbury, then Dr. Bernard Spilsbury, confirmed my impression when he arrived. After the post-mortem he gave me the additional interesting information that the child was in a condition of "status lymphaticus" and would, therefore, be more likely than an ordinarily healthy boy to die if subjected to sudden shock.

We were not long in establishing identification. We found that the boy was the only son of John and Agnes Starchfield, and that he lived with his mother in the house of a Mrs. Longstaff in Hampstead Road. His father, who was separated from his wife, sold newspapers in Tottenham Court Road. The boy had been sent on an errand at 12.50 to a stationer's shop and had failed to return.

What we had to determine was whom he had met upon that errand and how his murdered body came to be in the North London train. The timing of the actual death was, of course, of paramount importance.

The medical men told me that death had probably taken place between two and three o'clock. This particu-

lar train ran at intervals of twenty-five minutes between Chalk Farm Station and Broad Street. This was the time schedule :

- 4.14.—Train left Chalk Farm Station.
- 4.17.—Train left Camden Town Station.
- 4.19.—Train left Maiden Lane Station.
- 4.21.—Train left Caledonian Road Station.
- 4.23.—Train left Highbury Station.
- 4.25.—Train left Canonbury Station.
- 4.27.—Train left Mildmay Park Station.

With one exception there was an interval of only two minutes between each station. I had to assume that the body had been on the train during its earlier journeys, but exactly how many ?

The only clue I could obtain was from a signalman who, from his cabin window at 2.14, caught a momentary glimpse as the train went past his cabin-box near Camden Town of a man leaning over somebody in a third class compartment very near to the engine.

I then worked on the theory that the murder was committed during the journey of the train timed to leave Chalk Farm at 1.59, arriving at Broad Street at 2.21. Assuming this to be correct, the dead body had been carried backwards and forwards between the stations twice before it was found. As the train was practically empty in the middle of the day, it was quite feasible that the body would remain undiscovered.

The suggestion was made that the murder might have been committed elsewhere and the body carried on to the train in a sack or case ; but inquiries at every station failed to supply the slightest support for this theory.

The next day, while searching the railway line, an officer found a piece of cord a short distance from Shoreditch Station. It was the kind of twine generally used for securing bundles of newspapers and it was in a position that suggested that it had been dropped from a window of a passing train. . . .

The medical men examined it, compared it with the groove around the victim's throat, and gave us the opinion that it was probably the cord which had caused the strangulation.

I spent considerable time in endeavouring to trace some concrete motive for this murder, without result. True, there were domestic differences between the parents, but both were devoted to the child.

I had accounted for all the movements of the mother, but all I could guarantee about Starchfield himself was that at intervals during the day he was selling his newspapers in Tottenham Court Road. It was at this stage that we began to collect evidence which incriminated Starchfield to a considerable extent.

A commercial traveller named White was the first witness to come forward. He testified that a few minutes before two o'clock he saw the victim with a man at Camden Town Station.

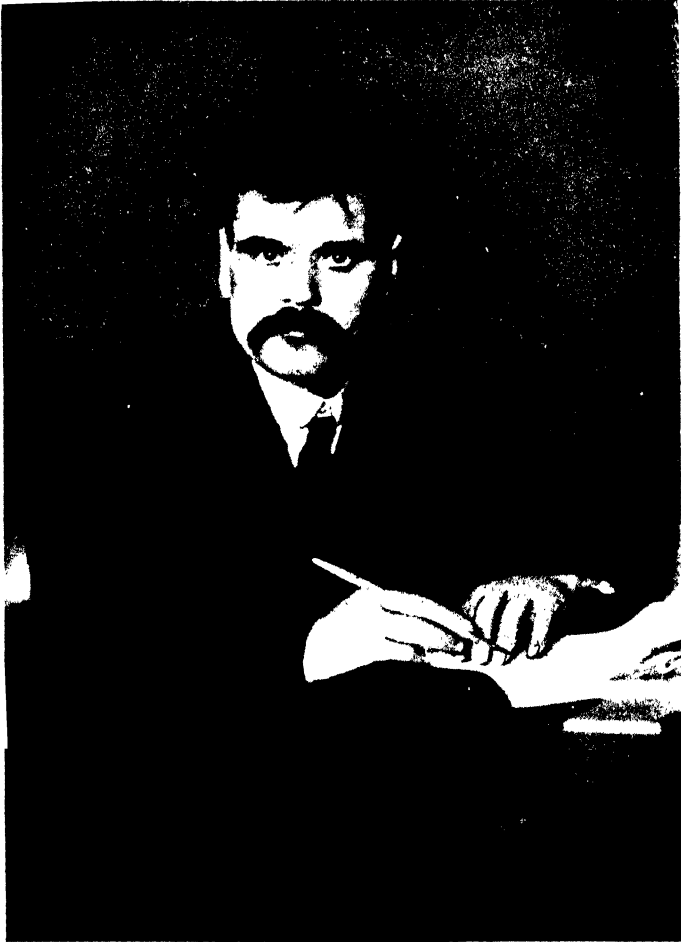
The next witness to arrive was a Mrs. Wood, who said that she was in Kentish Town Road soon after one o'clock when she saw a man leading a little boy by the hand. The boy was eating a piece of currant cake and she particularly remembered his golden curls.

The post-mortem examination verified this evidence to a very great extent, for it had revealed that the stomach contained an ounce and a half of partially digested food containing currants.

The description they gave me of the little boy's companion made me determine to call Starchfield as a witness at the inquest and let the two witnesses pick him out from the crowd if they could. I reasoned that this would be a far better process than making him attend the usual identification parade.

As I had anticipated, both witnesses picked him out in the crowd without the slightest hesitation. It appeared quite a clear case, and after White and Mrs. Wood had given evidence it did not come as a great surprise when the coroner's jury returned a verdict of Wilful Murder

THE CASE OF WILLIE STARCHFIELD



John Starchfield

Daily Mirror

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Willie Starchfield

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against Starchfield, and I was instructed to arrest him.

After he had been charged he told me that he was in the lodging-house in Hanover Court in which he lived continuously from Monday, January 5, until 3.30 p.m. on the day of the murder, but he could suggest no witness whom he could call on his behalf to bear this out.

I again turned my attention to the question of motive. It seemed inconceivable that he had deliberately planned to murder his child just to spite his wife, knowing how greatly she was devoted to the boy.

Consequently I came to the conclusion that Starchfield had intended to defy his wife by carrying off the child and his sole intention had been to cause her mental anxiety.

I began to fashion my case upon this theory : Starchfield and the boy meet by accident. He buys a cake for the boy at a confectioner's shop and then induces him to go for a ride upon the train.

They enter the train at Chalk Farm at 1.59 and then Starchfield makes the suggestion that the child should leave his mother and come to live with him. The child refuses and holds out despite all his father's pleadings.

Losing his temper, Starchfield strikes the child and then, becoming alarmed at his cries, puts the piece of cord he used to tie up his newspapers around the boy's throat to try to quieten him.

The child struggles, the cord tightens, and in the child's state of health death takes place. It was reasonable to assume that the man then threw the cord out of the window, hid the body under the seat, and left the train at the earliest possible moment and raced back to Tottenham Court Road in order to be seen on his pitch.

While I was trying to collect evidence to support this theory, another witness came forward who swore that he knew Starchfield well. He said that shortly before 2 p.m. on the day of the murder he saw him in Kentish

Town Road leading the child by the hand and that he spoke to him.

I asked him whether he had come forward because a reward was being offered, but he assured me that he had hesitated in the first place only because he thought his life would be in danger.

Such was our case when we took it to the Central Criminal Court on March 9. We were to be badly shaken. On the following day this last witness attempted suicide.

Then Mrs. Wood wavered under the fire of the cross-examination. She gave the Judge the impression that she had seen Starchfield's photograph in a newspaper before she identified him. She was confused about the kind of hat the prisoner was wearing when she saw him, and she confessed that she failed to identify the photograph of the dead boy as the child she had seen.

Actions by the Coroner were then severely criticised by the Judge. He had read to the jury statements made by witnesses to the police without taking formal depositions himself or questioning the witnesses.

The Judge added: "In addition I find that the depositions were not taken down at the time by the Coroner, or at any rate, they were not read over to the witnesses. Then, apparently, the Coroner's officer who took them round to be signed, was permitted to allow the witnesses to correct them. That procedure seems to me to be an entire mockery and an abuse of the duties entrusted to any Coroner."

After making these observations the Judge suggested that the prosecution should be withdrawn and the jury was directed to return a formal verdict of "Not Guilty."

Every inquiry I made following this unsatisfactory ending to the case made me more and more convinced that the theory I have propounded was indeed the correct one.

Starchfield, still protesting his innocence, died in April, 1916, in the St. Pancras Infirmary. It was his

persistent argument that the crime was committed by someone as an act of revenge because in 1912 he had assisted to arrest an armed madman.

Starchfield had been selling his papers outside the Horseshoe Hotel when Stephen Titus, a big, black-bearded Armenian, entered the bar. Without provocation Titus pulled out a revolver and shot down a man and a woman.

As he rushed from the bar, still firing at other people, he was tackled by Starchfield and eventually overpowered.

Starchfield was wounded during the struggle and was later allowed £1 a week by the Carnegie Heroes' Fund. It was, he always afterwards declared, some friend of Titus who had taken his revenge by murdering his son.

Personally I do not believe there was ever any foundation for this, for I could never find anyone who was at any time interested in the mad gunman to the slightest degree.

I will say this. Although I am convinced that Starchfield was the man who travelled on that train with the victim I am equally convinced that when he met his son there was no thought of murder in his mind.

DR. HAROLD DEARDEN

Who was Jack-the-Ripper?

SHORTLY after three o'clock on the morning of August 7, 1888, a man named Albert Crow, who followed the calling of a cab-driver, was ascending the staircase of Georgia Buildings, Whitechapel, on his way to bed, when he noticed the figure of a woman curled up in a corner of the first landing.

Mr. Crow had lived in Georgia Buildings for some time—a privilege which appears to have given him a quite unusual tolerance for the whimsicalities of his fellow-creatures. "Let recumbent ladies lie" was clearly one of his mottoes. He continued placidly on his way to bed.

Some two hours later, however, another tenant, Mr. John Reeves, was descending the stairs, with the intention of going out to look for a job, and he also noticed the woman. But he observed, in addition, one feature about the huddled-up figure which had entirely escaped the attention of the easy-going Mr. Crow.

The woman, to use his own words, "was lying in a lake of blood." He stepped gingerly over to see what had happened. What had actually happened was to be made distressingly clear during the next three months.

The anonymous but singularly capable slaughterer, Jack-the-Ripper, had made his début.

Martha Turner, like all those other drab women who subsequently helped to make the nickname of her murderer almost a synonym for horror, had been leading what is commonly referred to, for some inscrutable

reason, as a gay life. Her injuries were identical with those of her fellow-sufferers, and it is impossible to avoid some reference to them.

In every case the throat was first cut from behind with a very keen blade, and the appearance of some of these injuries pointed strongly to the supposition that the murderer was ambidextrous.

This first wound alone would have instantly prevented any outcry and inevitably resulted in death; but the murderer was not one to be satisfied with death only. His victim was next subjected first to a phase of demoniac ferocity, accompanied by multiple and indiscriminate stabbing, and thereafter to a phase of restrained and deliberate bestiality associated with quite indescribable mutilation. Certain indications in this latter phase pointed clearly to a knowledge of anatomy on the part of the operator.

The death of Martha Turner aroused no more than passing interest. In those days the inhabitants of White-chapel were accustomed to behave with such uniform spontaneity and forcefulness that a death by violence in the neighbourhood was regarded by police and public alike as very little more than a boyish prank.

But a month later Mrs. Nicholls, forty-three years old, was found lying, butchered like her predecessor, in the open gutter of a byway off Spitalfields known as Buck's Row. This second murder created a considerable sensation, which was fanned into a display of absolute hysteria about a week later by the discovery of yet a third victim in a yard behind a lodging-house within a stone's throw of Buck's Row.

Another victim, Mrs. Chapman, aged forty-nine, had suffered precisely as had her predecessors, but in her case the contents of her pockets, pitifully valueless as they were, had been laid out at her feet with orderly precision in a rough but definitely geometrical design.

With the occurrence of this third crime it was impossible for police or public to avoid the conclusion that a

“killer” of inhuman ferocity and cunning was at work in their midst.

The yard in which Mrs. Chapman was discovered at five in the morning was immediately overlooked by the windows of a lodging-house. Sixteen tenants lived there, and since the movements of any one of them was entirely unpredictable at any hour of the day or night, the daring and efficiency of the perpetrator of such a crime were manifestly appalling.

The East End of London was panic-stricken. Vigilance committees were formed and the police arrested people with the most praiseworthy eagerness and impartiality, but all these efforts were utterly fruitless.

There was, however, one man in Whitechapel whose efforts at this juncture were supremely successful: the keeper of the lodging-house which overlooked the scene of the crime. This astute gentleman announced his readiness, in return for a small fee, to welcome to his house any who wished to enrich their memories with the spectacle to be obtained through the grimy windows at the back. Beauty lies in the eye of the beholder; hundreds flocked to take advantage of this offer.

About a month later a certain East End social club engaged a hall in a building just off the Commerical Road for a dance. It was a Saturday night, and about one o'clock in the morning the steward of the club, whose duties as a hawker had unavoidably prevented his earlier arrival, drove his smart little donkey and cart into the yard at the back of the premises with the intention, no doubt, of making up for lost time.

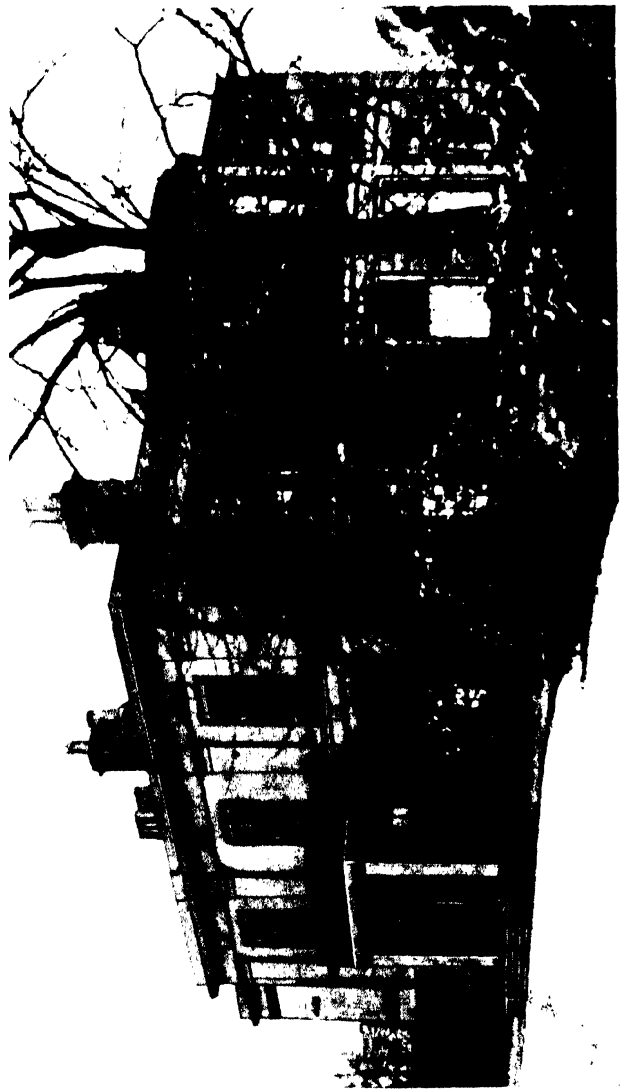
His donkey shied at something; and a moment later the steward's hopes of a stimulating evening were fulfilled beyond his wildest dreams.

Mrs. Stride, aged forty-eight, had sought the seclusion of that little yard for the last time. The foul ritual which usually characterised the activities of her recent companion had evidently been interrupted. It is not unlikely that he was actually at work when the patter of the

WHO WAS JACK-THE-RIPPER?



THE GORSE HALL MYSTERY



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donkey's hooves at the entrance to the yard forced him to stop.

He was at work again, however, within a very few minutes in Mitre Square, Aldgate, about half a mile away, and it is clear that no amount of haste and eagerness could interfere at any time with his genius for organisation.

A policeman on his normal beat passed through Mitre Square every twenty minutes, during one of which intervals Catherine Eddowes, aged forty-five, was punctiliously dealt with according to routine.

It was after this double crime that the title Jack-the-Ripper was first evolved. A postcard was received by the Central News Agency, signed in that name. The writer apologised for the incompleteness of his work on Mrs. Stride and undertook to do better next time.

This promise was so richly fulfilled less than five weeks later on the person of a certain Miss Kelly that it is difficult to regard it as a vulgar hoax.

Miss Kelly occupied a room in Miller's Court, off the Commercial Road. She was only twenty-four years old and distinctly pretty, with an incorrigibly happy-go-lucky disposition.

In the early part of November, 1888, she was hopelessly behind with her rent. At ten-thirty on the morning of the ninth of that month an emissary from her landlord called round to deliver an ultimatum.

Miss Kelly's room was on the street level; there was no glass in the window, so the emissary, presumably wishing to introduce as little formality and unfriendliness as possible into what was inevitably a somewhat unpleasant errand, just pushed aside the sacking which safeguarded her privacy, and looked in.

It is unlikely that he ever forgot what he saw. Miss Kelly's companion of the night had enjoyed what was for him a unique period of immunity from interruption, and it is sufficient to say that he had taken the fullest advantage of it.

One feature of the aspect of that room must be referred to. That passion for geometrical design which had induced him to arrange the contents of Mrs. Chapman's pockets in an orderly manner at her feet was expressed here with such wild and freakish elaboration as to challenge the grotesque exuberance of a nightmare.

This was the last crime of the series. It has been suggested that either George Chapman or Neill Cream, both of whom were actively engaged in homicidal enterprises during approximately the same period, may have been Jack-the-Ripper, but neither of these notions seems to me to be plausible.

Chapman invariably married his victims, and methodically poisoned them at home over a period of months. It is hard to believe that a professional killer of such essentially sedentary habits would fill in his sparse leisure by rushing about Whitechapel in circumstances of unimaginable discomfort.

As for Neill Cream, he was in gaol in America when these crimes were committed, which must surely be regarded as a fairly sound alibi.

My own view is that Jack-the-Ripper was some doctor or medical student who was periodically overwhelmed by a sexual impulse of an abnormal character. The element of cruelty is a well-recognised characteristic of many such conditions, and those afflicted in this way will undoubtedly run the most fantastic risks in the gratification of their appetite.

The frenzy which accompanied the killing of Miss Kelly, exceeding as it did in intensity and duration any previous indulgence, may well have been too much for the already unstable mentality of the killer. And if that banquet of horrors did, indeed, lead to definite insanity, his confinement in an asylum would automatically put an end to his murderous career.

I have a somewhat bizarre reason for adhering to this theory. In November, 1918, a fellow-unfortunate and

myself were celebrating the former's fortieth birthday in a dug-out on the Somme, and our joint comments on the unsuitable nature of the circumstances prompted him to say that this was the second birthday that had been spoiled for him.

"Jack-the-Ripper did in my tenth birthday," he said, and proceeded to tell me the following anecdote.

His father had at one time been the proprietor of a private lunatic asylum on the outskirts of London. He was a widower, and on the evening of November 9, 1888, he had promised to take the boy to the pantomime to celebrate the occasion.

Suddenly, while they were at dinner, the whole house was thrown into commotion by the unexpected arrival of a violent and noisy patient. Left alone at the table, the boy peeped round the door into the hall, and caught a momentary glimpse of the gaunt and dishevelled figure of a man amidst a huddle of attendants.

It was an unprecedented thrill, but his birthday was none the less ruined, for the visit to the pantomime was cancelled.

Later on he had seen a good deal of this newcomer, who was, he gathered, the son of one of his father's oldest friends. He remembered him then as a smiling and gently demented individual who played with him in his father's garden and was his constant and tireless companion.

He had, it appeared, a marvellous gift for drawing and would cover literally reams of paper with fantastically conceived, but perfectly executed, pictures of tiny animals, birds and butterflies, which miraculously ran or marched or flew to form a definite orderly design. And in the execution of this delicate task he showed equal facility with either hand.

"Of course," said my friend, "I was too young then to think anything about it, and by the time I was old enough to ask questions, my father was dead and I was living with an uncle abroad. But the last murder was

on the night of November 8, remember. Looks queer, doesn't it?"

I was forced to admit that it did.

"Anyway," he said finally, "Jack-the-Ripper or not, he was a grand companion for a rather lonely kid."

FREEMAN WILLS CROFTS

The Gorse Hall Mystery

AT the beginning of November, 1909, Mr. George Henry Storrs was murdered at his home, near Stalybridge, under circumstances which have never been cleared up.

Mr. Storrs was a wealthy builder and mill-owner, and lived with his wife and his wife's niece, Miss Lindley, in a large house named Gorse Hall. There were three servants—a cook and housemaid resident in the building, and a coachman living with his wife over the stables.

Mr. Storrs was a kindly and popular man, a good employer, and had no known enemies. He and his wife were a devoted couple, and both were on affectionate terms with Miss Lindley. The household may, indeed, be called a happy one.

Its peace, however, was destined to be rudely broken. About 9.30 on the night of September 10, 1909, when the family were sitting in the dining-room, a shot was suddenly fired through the window.

Seeing that no one had been hit Mr. Storrs rushed to the window and pulled aside the blind. He could just see a dark figure disappearing into the shrubbery. When the ladies asked if he knew the man he replied, after a slight hesitation, that he did not.

Mrs. Storrs was more alarmed than her husband, and next day she insisted on the police being informed and asked to keep a special watch on the house. She also had a large alarm bell put on the roof, and it was agreed that if this were sounded the police should instantly

hurry over. It was suggested that the man was a homicidal maniac, and she was afraid that he might return.

Nothing unusual happened, however, for some seven weeks, and then, on the last Saturday of October, Mr. Storrs called on the police and asked them to be particularly vigilant in their watch. He said he had no special reason for making the request, but that he "wanted to be sure."

That night about midnight the alarm bell sounded and the police hurried to the house. But nothing was wrong. Mr. Storrs said apologetically that he had wished to be sure that the alarm was really efficient, and had rung it as a test.

Sunday and Monday passed uneventfully, but on Monday evening tragedy really did visit the house. Some time after dinner the housemaid had to pass the scullery door, when she saw that the gas was alight. She looked in and found that the window had been broken open, but before she could investigate further a man jumped out from behind the door and seized her wrist. He had a revolver in his hand and he swore that if she made a sound he would shoot her.

Instinctively she twisted away from him, running screaming through the house. He did not fire, but followed her till they reached the hall. There Mr. Storrs, attracted by the noise, rushed out of the dining-room. As soon as the man saw him he cried: "I've got you at last!" Again he did not fire, but as Mr. Storrs ran forward he closed with him and a terrible fight began.

In the meantime Mrs. Storrs and Miss Lindley had also rushed out. For a moment they tried to join in the struggle. Mrs. Storrs actually succeeding in tearing away the man's revolver. Then they saw him draw a knife. But Mr. Storrs gasped out: "The bell! Give the alarm!" and Mrs. Storrs rushed off to ring it, while Miss Lindley fled down the drive to summon help from the Stalybridge Central Club, which was close by.

When assistance came the murderer had disappeared

and Mr. Storrs was at the point of death. He had received fifteen terrible knife wounds, and died without making a statement.

While neither the ladies nor the servants were able to give a detailed description of the murderer, declaring that there was nothing distinctive about him, they agreed that he was youngish and poorly dressed, with a slight moustache and long fair hair. The revolver was of a cheap type, and yielded no clue.

A young man called Howard was arrested and charged with the murder. He was a cousin of Mr. Storrs, though he was personally unknown to the ladies. The evidence against him seemed purely circumstantial, but the police had a stronger case than was anticipated. When at the trial Mrs. Storrs and Miss Lindley were asked if they could identify the murderer, they pointed dramatically to the prisoner, and swore he was the man.

No possible question of their bona fides arises; at the same time it became evident during the course of the trial that they were mistaken. Howard's innocence being proved beyond question. The verdict of Not Guilty was received with applause, and Howard left the court a popular hero.

Months afterwards a second man named Wilde was charged with the crime, stood his trial at Chester Assizes, and was also acquitted.

Since then the Gorse Hall Tragedy has remained a complete mystery, and no trace of the real murderer has ever been found.

In attempting to reconstruct what may have taken place in this strange tragedy, certain facts at once stand out as significant.

First, the murderer, whom for want of a better name I shall call John, had a definite grievance, real or imaginary, against Mr. Storrs. This is proved by the facts that he said: "I've got you at last," and that he did not gain materially through his crime.

Second, Mr. Storrs knew of this grievance and of his own danger. From his manner on the occasion of the attempt on September 9, it is almost certain that he recognised the man, and when he went to the police on the last Saturday in October, he evidently expected a further attack. Moreover, when he saw his assailant in the hall on the night of his death, he gave no exclamation of surprise, but grappled at once as with a known foe.

Third, Mr. Storrs obviously wished to keep the affair secret. If he knew his own danger, as I have suggested he did, the fact that he made no statement on the subject proves this. But it is supported by his other actions. He did not inform the police of the first attack until the assailant had had time to get away. I will suggest presently that a second attack was made on the Saturday night on which the alarm was sounded, and that on this occasion Mr. Storrs suppressed any mention of John's presence for the same reason: to give him time to escape.

Fourth, owing to Mr. Storrs's upright character and kindly disposition, the secret was nothing with which he could reproach himself.

Fifthly, certain of John's actions seem to indicate an unbalanced mind. He entered the house on the night of the murder by smashing a window, and then committed the folly of turning on the gas. When he was discovered by the housemaid he followed her through the house, though he must have known her screams would attract attention. Again, to strike as many as fifteen times with his knife shows a fury quite abnormal.

With these salient points in mind, can we suggest any circumstances which might meet the facts?

I think we can.

At first sight it might seem as if the crime were committed by some epileptic or homicidal maniac, subject to recurrent fits of illness. But this theory would not account for the facts that Mr. Storrs undoubtedly recognised his assailant and yet kept his identity secret.

If he had not had some definite and personal reason for silence, he would surely have told the police who the man was.

Let us then try to fit a theory on to the facts we know. Let us begin by assuming that John is like Howard in personal appearance, and of an extremely unbalanced and excitable temperament. Let us further assume that he nurses a bitter hatred against Mr. Storrs.

The cause of this hatred—that is, the motive for the crime—we do not know. There is not the slightest indication as to its nature in the evidence. All that we really know is that John had some overwhelming but mistaken sense of grievance against Mr. Storrs.

We are probably on firmer ground when we picture John brooding over his fancied wrongs until his desire for revenge grows first into an obsession and then into actual mania.

On going to see Mr. Storrs John blurts out his grievance and threatens vengeance. Mr. Storrs, however, has no ill-feeling towards his visitor; in fact, he is sorry for him.

His kindly disposition makes him regret the young man's sense of injury, and he is willing to discuss the affair. But John, half insane, will not listen to reason, and Mr. Storrs in self-defence is obliged to summon help.

John, seeing his chance gone, hurries away, determined to succeed at the next opportunity. The person who was called does not realise what he has prevented, and Mr. Storrs, finding the whole matter painful, does not discuss it.

This reconstruction is still speculative and unsupported by direct evidence. But it is clear that John and Mr. Storrs must have had some interview of the kind, in order to account for what follows. This interview, further, was probably not at Gorse Hall, as John was not seen by the inmates.

On September 10, John, who has bought a revolver,

goes to Gorse Hall to make his attempt. He reaches the house, creeps up to the only lighted window, finds the blind does not exactly fit and that he can see Mr. Storrs, and fires at him through the window. He sees that he has missed, and noticing that there are other people in the room, realises that if he remains for a further attempt he may be identified. So he hurries off.

Mr. Storrs realises he is in danger, and asks the police to be specially vigilant. That night John makes his third attempt, but Mr. Storrs sees him and rings the alarm. John again finds that if he remains, he will be caught. Mr. Storrs, full of pity for the misguided youth, and hoping eventually to bring him to reason, tells the police he was only making a test, in order to give the young fellow time to escape.

It is obvious that there must have been some special circumstances about this attempt which enabled Mr. Storrs to ring the alarm before being attacked. Perhaps, for example, he may have discovered John in the act of swarming up a balcony pillar or a waterpipe, or in such other position that the young man could not use his weapon.

On Monday, John again goes to Gorse Hall. Determined this time to make an end of the matter, he breaks in and commits the murder. He escapes from the country and is therefore not found by the police.

The above reconstruction, indicates the lines along which I believe the explanation of this mysterious crime must lie.

HELEN SIMPSON

The Yarmouth Beach Murder

IT was a gold chain, frail, ancient and mended with cotton, that hanged Herbert John Bennett, accused of murdering his wife on Yarmouth Beach. He was tried fairly, found guilty, and despatched at Norwich Gaol, without making any confession, on March 21, 1901.

Why, then, since a man paid the penalty, reckon this among the unsolved mysteries? Let Sir Edward Marshall Hall answer: "I am not the sort of man to worry unnecessarily about anything, least of all about a worthless life like that, but honestly and solemnly I do not and cannot believe that he murdered his wife." "Bennett," the letter goes on, "was much too clever a man to have done such a deed in such an appallingly bungling way."

Certainly as a planned murder this came tardily off in a manner to make the judicious grieve; as the work of a man who from the time he left school had lived by his wits, it is altogether unconvincing.

Consider the artless but sufficient tale which kept him and his wife in comfort for months after their marriage. She would go, looking very pitiful and ladylike, from door to door, carrying a violin. This, the last reminder of better days, property of her late husband, a clergyman, was offered for sale at a wretched price, fifteen shillings or so; and bought by many an innocent householder with a kindly nature, who was unaware that the Bennetts obtained fiddles by the dozen at a rock-bottom price of 4s. 9d. each.

Bennett shared in these profits, and did a little on the side with sewing machines. Between them they got

together no less than £365 in the course of a couple of years, and set up a grocer's shop at Westgate.

But one or possibly both of them found respectability dull ; and a fortuitous fire, occurring at a moment when they, with their baby, were out of the house, delivered them from the tyranny of regular hours. The insurance, or most of it, was paid.

Bennett took some empty premises adjoining his ruined shop, stocked on credit, sold these goods, with such of his own as had been salvaged, to the tune of £300 odd, and retired in good order, and a false name, to South Africa, where he remained exactly five days.

Marshall Hall had some notion that he was at this time (1900) in the pay of the Boers as a spy. If this was so, it lends a stronger colour to the picture of a resourceful, unscrupulous youth, accustomed to weigh his words and watch his step, so that the chief actor seems miscast in the subsequent silly and slipshod crime.

Another matter, relevant if we are to suppose Bennett innocent, is his general carelessness of respectability. He was no Mahon, preferring murder to domestic upheaval. He had no friends ; his employment was not dependent upon keeping up appearances ; and he was the kind of man to quit his wife, when he tired of her, as he might have thrown down a newspaper once read.

Instead, he installed her as " Mrs. Bartlett " in a house at Bexley Heath, and began to pay attentions to an attractive parlourmaid, Alice Meadows, introducing himself as a single man. She accompanied him on a jaunt to Yarmouth.

A trip to Ireland followed, all in the strictest propriety, she swore, with separate room and a conspicuous engagement ring. Since the wedding ring and double room would have come cheaper, and a honeymoon would have appeared more convincing all round, Meadows was undoubtedly speaking the truth.

The 30s. a week, which was Bennett's official wage as a labourer at Woolwich Arsenal, would certainly not

have sufficed to keep a wife and entertain a friend on such a scale. Money from other sources he must have had ; where it came from is another of the secrets that died with that enigmatic man.

No person who had been blackmailed or swindled by Bennett volunteered any accusation to the police during this period or after ; yet all his bills were paid. Is it possible that he was selling such information as might come his way through his employment at the Arsenal ?

This would fit in with his counsel's conjecture as to the kind of mission that took him to Africa, but is not probable. A labourer could have no secrets of any value to sell. If Bennett's defenders could have found out where he got his money, and where the gold came from that was observed to fill Mrs. Bennett's purse at Yarmouth, it is not out of the question that a good many other things might have been cleared up.

His lies are understandable if, conscious of innocence on the murder charge, he was apprehensive of arrest on a charge not capital, and so fell into one pit in avoiding another.

He returned from Ireland on September 11 and at once went to call upon his wife. A suggestion that she and the baby should take a short holiday at Yarmouth was made and agreed to, and on September 15 Mrs. Bennett arrived at the lodging he recommended : an address obtained through Alice Meadows.

Bennett did not accompany her to the house, or at any rate, was not seen to do so, though he was in Yarmouth that night. Mrs. Bennett, having put her baby to bed, went out immediately, wearing by way of ornament a chain which the landlady remembered—"not a rope pattern chain ; I took it to be of longer links, with little

Coming home, considerably the more confidential for drink, the lodger vouchsafed that she had had a fish supper with her brother-in-law, who was in love with her and jealous ; and that her husband was dead.

For the next few nights she behaved more soberly, but on the following Saturday she was seen in a bar-room at 9.30 p.m. in company with a man oddly and conspicuously dressed in a steel-grey suit, clerical waistcoat, blue shirt, and the inevitable Trilby hat, a black one. This individual had a heavy moustache, which he twirled.

The manager of the place, who made a sketch of the moustache and the way the braid went on the woman's sleeve, in the witness-box identified Bennett; but one of his employees swore that the prisoner was much younger than the moustached man, who looked "about thirty." Bennett was at this time twenty-one years old.

For an hour after this couple left the bar they were not seen. At eleven, or a little after, a young man called Mason, sitting with his girl on the beach, heard steps, and saw—it was a moonless night, but the woman had on a dress of "shiny" stuff, and two dark figures would show clear against a September sky—a man and woman sit down in a hollow of the sand about thirty yards away.

Later came the sound of a voice: "Mercy, mercy"; then moaning. Asked in court why he took no notice of this remarkable circumstance, Mason answered, as any of us might, so entirely do we take for granted that "people don't do these things": "I did not for a moment think that a woman was being murdered."

He and his girl passed within five yards of the couple; the man turned his head and looked as they passed.

Next morning a boy of fifteen came running to the police, having found a woman's body on the sands. The face was black and blue; round the neck a mohair boot-lace was tied with two knots, a reef and a granny. Medical examination showed that she had been sexually assaulted.

What were Bennett's movements? He was in Yarmouth on the night of September 15, the night of his wife's arrival, and went to an hotel where he was known, at which he had visited Alice Meadows. Why this visit?

His wife was quite capable of finding her way alone

THE YARMOUTH BEACH MURDER



Mrs. Bennett, photographed on the beach at Yarmouth

THE YARMOUTH BEACH MURDER



Herbert John Bennett

to a given address, and did in fact do so. He was in Yarmouth again on the night that she died. The prosecution assumed that the first visit was made for the purpose of spying out the land ; but Bennett already knew Yarmouth well.

He and Alice had spent most of their time there " walking about." He did not go to the lodging his wife subsequently occupied, he could hardly have been engaged in reconnoitring the beach.

Did he wish to make sure that his wife had arrived ? A letter would have told him as much, and been less costly than a double journey of a hundred and twenty miles, plus an hotel bill.

He returned to London the day following the murder, and met Alice Meadows in Hyde Park a little before one o'clock. She was surprised to see him ; he had broken an appointment with her for that day on the score of a grandfather *in extremis* at Gravesend ; but he smoothed matters over, and they met again on Wednesday, when Bennett presented her with his wife's gold pick-and-shovel brooch.

Later he gave her some of his wife's clothes, left behind in the house at Bexley Heath to which he had access. He gave the landlord of this house three months' notice, paid the rent, and had the furniture packed for storing or transport.

He chose, with Alice Meadows, another house, and paid a deposit on that. All the time he appeared to be flush of money and was scrupulous about his bills.

It was a laundry mark on his wife's clothes that revealed her identity, and, as a natural consequence, his. (This is the first appearance of that invaluable clue in real detective work.) A false name had been given to the lodging-house keeper at Yarmouth, but a petticoat with the true name in marking ink was useful as a guide to the investigators.

By November the police had tracked Bennett down. He was arrested, his lodgings were searched, and in a

portmanteau were found a chain, alleged to be that which Mrs. Bennett was wearing on the night of her death, a wig, and a false moustache.

The chain produced in court involved the evidence of no fewer than eight witnesses, photographers, jewellers and landladies. Mrs. Bennett had been photographed on Yarmouth beach in a chain which showed as a series of blobs, while the chain found among Bennett's belongings was linked.

Was it the linked chain that she was wearing when she went to her death? The beach photograph was, as might be expected, a little out of focus.

A previous landlady deposed that she had two chains, one sham and one true gold, one with links and one with blobs. The Yarmouth landlady stuck to her opinion, that there was one chain only, the one produced in court.

A photographer stated that the breathing of the subject during a few seconds' exposure of a plate was responsible for the blobbed appearance of the links.

The Judge, summing up, advised the jury not to discredit the Yarmouth landlady's word, and made the comment that while it might appear to them odd that the prisoner should preserve such a piece of evidence against himself, the slips that criminals made were among the curious things that did happen.

The jury took the hint and, after withdrawing for thirty-five minutes, returned with a verdict of Guilty. Neither judge nor prosecution offered any answer to one vital question. Why a man determined to murder his wife should begin by raping her?

Alice Meadows fainted when she heard the verdict. Later she said: "If Bennett dies without confessing, I shall go through life with a grave doubt."

When Bennett's solicitor and junior counsel interviewed him in prison, he impressed them both as an innocent man. He lied wildly at every turn. To the police who arrested him he declared that he had never

been to Yarmouth; that he had not lived with his wife for almost a year, as she had been going with other men.

To the landlord of the Bexley Heath house he offered some story of his wife going away for her health. Alice Meadows was told that the furniture there belonged to a cousin who was off to South Africa. To a grocer's assistant he volunteered that his wife and child were both dead of fever in South Africa.

His counsel said in court that he was a man who could not be believed on oath, and confessed that he dared not put him in the witness-box.

His lies kept no measure; they were random and futile. Yet he was not unbalanced mentally. Is there no explanation which will bring together these two irreconcilables—his untrustworthiness, and the fact that men of good judgment, accustomed to the ways of criminals, were prepared to believe that of this one crime he was innocent?

We come back to the question of how he got his money. I have suggested one explanation based on Sir Edward Marshall Hall's guess that Bennett was a spy, but it is not satisfactory. Something is needed which shall account for the money, plus the visit together of husband and wife to Yarmouth for some purpose which involved for her a false name and story, for him a separate lodging.

There is a man to be reckoned in, seen standing with her at the corner of the row where she lodged, and overheard saying: "You understand, don't you. I am placed in an awkward position just now."

Is it quite out of the question that these two, who before had followed a good line of fraud together, should have joined forces to work one of the oldest tricks in the world on some man, married, respectable, living in or visiting Yarmouth? The victim is lured towards a compromising situation, caught *in flagrante delicto* by the woman's—jealous brother-in-law, shall we say? And

there, with a little judicious pressure, is an income secured for life.

This is just the kind of plan Bennett was capable of conceiving. But some dreadful mishap occurred on the very evening when he, who had come down from London for the purpose, was to make the lucrative discovery of his wife in another man's arms.

Marshall Hall maintained, in a letter to Sir Arthur Pinero, that the murder was done by some erotic maniac. What an irony, the kind of coincidence of which real life is prodigal and novelists chary, if the personage whom the two had chosen to bleed should have been one of these !

It may be argued that had there been such a conspiracy, Bennett would surely have confessed it to save his skin. But he would confess nothing, not even that he had been at Yarmouth on the crucial dates, though one of the hotel's receipts was found in his bag. Innocent or guilty, his behaviour was baffling. He made no protest. He lied fantastically or blankly denied everything, to the despair of his advisers. There was no appeal.

A stationer of Lowestoft came to the defence in the middle of Marshall Hall's closing speech, with a queer story of a man with one boot laced up and the other's tag hanging out, who entered his shop demanding a paper, the paper with the best account of the beach murder, the day after it occurred.

His hands and face were scratched ; the paper trembled in his hand ; all the time he read he was groaning. " He spoke nicely," said the witness, " and appeared gentlemanly."

No search was made for the nice-spoken and gentlemanly customer, who, if he is still alive, may know the answer to the riddle.

VAL GIELGUD

The Otterburn Mystery

TO a writer of sensational fiction there can be few cases more fascinating than the story of what came to be called "The Otterburn Mystery."

Both as regards its environment and its circumstances, the story might so easily be judged to have sprung from the slightly morbid imagination of the novelist, rather than from cruelly hard fact. But once again fact proved stranger than fiction.

About half-past nine during a night in January of 1931, a bus belonging to a garage proprietor of Otterburn, Northumberland, was returning along the road from Otterburn to Newcastle, driven by a Mr. Johnson.

At a desolate spot on the moors, known as Wolf's Neck—the name of the place immediately brings to mind some chapter heading—he saw a motor-car about seventy yards away from the road. The car had been on fire and was still smouldering.

On investigation, Mr. Johnson and his conductor were amazed to find that the car belonged to the firm by which they were employed—that is to say, by Mr. Foster, the garage proprietor, of Otterburn. Not far from the car they made a hideous discovery.

Miss Evelyn Foster, Mr. Foster's twenty-seven-year-old daughter, was lying moaning on the grass, crying out for water. Below the waist all her clothes had been burned off, her hands were black from the effects of a hard frost; her face was severely discoloured.

Mr. Johnson wrapped the girl in his overcoat and took her home as quickly as possible. Most of the way she

kept on muttering about "that awful man—that awful man." During intermittent periods of consciousness she told a long and detailed story of the incidents that had preceded and accompanied the tragedy, and shortly afterwards she died.

Her story in brief was this :

Miss Foster was in the habit of driving cars about the country for her father, and on the previous day she had driven three passengers to Rochester, a village in the neighbourhood. At Ellishaw, a village two miles away from Otterburn, she was accosted by a stranger, who told her that he wished to go to Ponteland in order to catch a bus to Newcastle.

About 7.30 in the evening she picked him up on the bridge just below the hotel at Ellishaw and drove him as far as Belsay. It must be remembered that when she made her statement Miss Foster was in great pain, and was, in fact, dying.

But of what happened at Belsay no satisfactory account emerged. In reply to the urgent questionings of her mother, Miss Foster's words seemed to imply that her passenger made advances to her; when she resisted him he struck her in the eye; that she lost consciousness, and that the man finally drove the car away with Miss Foster inside along the road to Otterburn as far as the Wolf's Neck.

At that point her car was turned off the road and run down a 3-ft. bank on to the moor for 70 yards or so.

She described her assailant as rather a small man, wearing a bowler hat and a dark coat and speaking like a gentleman, although he had a Tyneside accent.

As to what happened at Wolf's Neck Miss Foster was unhappily, though not unnaturally, vaguer still. According to her story she recovered consciousness owing to the jerking and jolting of the car as it passed on to the moorland. The passenger then got out, took something from his pocket and applied a light to it.

There followed a small explosion and a blaze. Miss

Foster, in horrible agony and feeling that she must be suffocated, struggled to get the door of the car open. This she finally succeeded in doing, and she crawled out and fell on to the grass where she was found. She seemed to remember seeing the man go back to the road, hearing another car coming along the road, hearing a whispered colloquy, and the other car drive away.

The only other significant item that the victim could add was the fact that the man had told her that he had been picked up at Jedburgh by a party of motorists on their way to Hexham, and had had tea with them—the party consisting of three men speaking with a Scottish accent in a saloon car, probably an Essex.

The B.B.C. broadcast a police message containing a description of this party. The men were found and interviewed by the police, but said they gave no lift to anyone answering to the description of the wanted man.

The inquest on Miss Foster was opened by the Coroner, Mr. P. M. Dodds, on Thursday, January 8, at the Otterburn Memorial Hall.

Formal evidence of identification was given by the dead girl's father, and the inquest was adjourned until February 2. In the interval Professor Stuart Macdonald, a well-known pathologist of the College of Medicine at Newcastle, had been called in to consult with the doctor who made the post-mortem examination. It was not until February 5 that Professor Macdonald's evidence was given.

According to him, no external marks suggesting injury other than burning were found on any part of the body. He gave the cause of death as the result of shock caused by severe external burning.

He said that the distribution of the burned areas suggested that Miss Foster was sitting during some period of the burning, and he added that there was absolutely no trace or evidence of bruising of the face. There was also no evidence of outrage.

The next witness, Mr. W. Jennings, a motor engineer

of Morpeth, said that it would have been very difficult for anybody to have driven the car from the position in which Miss Foster said that her assailant had driven it after taking the wheel from her, always supposing that she had offered any resistance.

And the Coroner put the whole problem flatly when he pointed out to the jury that the two main points before them were :

(a) Was the girl murdered ?

(b) Did she set fire to the car, and in doing so obtain the burns accidentally ?

If the latter, was her object to obtain money from the insurance on the car ?

The jury, after a retirement of two hours, returned the verdict that Miss Foster had been murdered by some person or persons unknown.

Of course, the unfounded suggestion that Miss Foster had met her death by means self-inflicted in the course of carrying out a criminal fraud was hotly resented by her family, and Miss Foster's father wrote a letter on the subject to the Home Secretary.

"There was no tittle of evidence," he said, "to support such shameful theories," and he resented most strongly the fact that though the jury's verdict had vindicated his daughter's honour, the Chief Constable of Northumberland had stated in an interview with a newspaper reporter that the verdict was against the weight of evidence.

"The police," Mr. Foster continued, "were defending themselves in a case in which they had failed by attacking his dead daughter." And it transpired that, though there were two insurance policies—one for £450 and the other for £700—in existence, Miss Foster left estate valued at £1400.

It must be remembered on behalf of the police that the description of Miss Foster's assailant was comparatively comprehensive ; that he must almost certainly have

THE OTTERBURN MYSTERY



Graphic Photo Union

The burnt-out car on the moor

THE OTTERBURN MYSTERY



Miss Evelyn Foster

had a good knowledge of the locality to have been able so effectively to disappear without leaving trace behind him; and yet that no one answering to his description was ever traced.

It is true that during the night of February 13, a seaman walked into the Newcastle police station and said that he wished to give himself up for the Otterburn murder. But after being interviewed, he was removed to hospital for observation and was presumably suffering from delusions, or an insane desire for notoriety.

The problem was infinitely complicated by Miss Foster's condition both of mind and body when she made her statement, combined with the very understandable confusion which seems to have emerged from some of the facts given by her mother.

The Coroner asked Dr. McEachran, of Bellingham, who was called in to Miss Foster when she was brought home injured, if he recollected the mother asking Miss Foster if she had been interfered with—using that or a similar expression. To which the doctor replied that there had been a question of that nature, and apparently the girl's reply was to the effect that she had been interfered with.

This fact seems to have been put in parallel with the medical report, which stated that there was no evidence of outrage.

And this, combined with the fact that no corroborative evidence could be found of the existence of the assailant, and no trace of anything inflammable except petrol had been found on the girl's clothes, led the Coroner to the summing-up which read distinctly adverse to the verdict as ultimately given by the jury.

What of the possibilities of accident? The car had left the road at not more than ten miles an hour. It had not overturned in crossing the embankment. It seems to have been definitely under control before it stopped. It had suffered no damage which could have caused it to ignite.

The valves, the ignition and carburettor were all in perfect order, and there was no trace of abnormal heat below the line of the float chamber. In the back of the car was a burned-out tin of petrol—but it was customary always to keep a full two-gallon tin in the car for emergencies. The cap of the petrol tin had been removed before the fire started.

It seems, therefore, quite definite that this tragedy cannot be put down to any misadventure, however singular. Nor, unless Miss Foster's is to be categorised as a most extraordinary case of mental instability, can the theory hold water—and it was only very tentatively put forward—that she might have been one of those persons obsessed with the idea of achieving notoriety.

We are left, therefore, with the alternatives of murder or suicide by mistake.

The Coroner himself, though evidently inclined to believe the greater part of Miss Foster's statement to be unreliable owing to her condition at the time it was made, pointed out that the suggested motive of obtaining insurance money was inadequate. There remains that "Wilful Murder by a Person or Persons Unknown" which the jury gave finally as their considered opinion.

The murder has been described as motiveless. Miss Foster's money was in her bag and her personal ornaments were untouched. But, disagreeable though it may be to accept such a conclusion, the facts as they stand point, in my view, quite clearly in one direction.

There are three significant sentences in Miss Foster's statement which form strong links in this chain. First of all was her repetition of the phrase "that awful man," while she was being driven home by Mr. Johnson.

Next we find her first reply in answer to her mother's questioning as to what had happened to her: "It was a man. He hit me and burned me."

And thirdly her story that when the car stopped on the top of the hill by Wolf's Neck, the man offered her a

cigarette, and when she refused it, made the remark: "Well, you are an independent young woman!"

Perhaps it should be added at this point that in reply to the Coroner's questions, Mrs. Foster insisted that her daughter's condition was perfectly lucid and sane while she was telling her story, and Dr. McEachran said he saw no reason to think that she had any idea that she was going to die.

It does not seem to me that this statement combined with the facts admits of more than one explanation. It remains, of course, questionable whether the assailant was a sexual maniac, who deliberately hailed Miss Foster because she was a girl driving alone, or whether his revolting purpose arose only with the incidence of opportunity.

It was, as a matter of fact, quite exceptional that Miss Foster should have been unaccompanied on such trips, and it had been suggested by her sister that she should take a man with her, but she had not done so.

But whatever his original motive, the lateness of the hour and the darkness of the moors provoked in the unknown an attitude to which Miss Foster objected, and in this connection his remark about the cigarette is by no means without significance.

Finding that his overtures were not welcomed—probably they were actively repulsed—the man must have lost both his head and his temper, with results catastrophic in an individual almost certainly pathologically abnormal. He then struck Miss Foster in the eye.

It seems likely that this first attack was comparatively slight, and that the girl was completely terrified, which in the circumstances is not an unlikely supposition. This would account for the absence of bruising on the face, which provoked the comment in the medical evidence.

He then bundled her into the back of the car, drove to the desolate neighbourhood of Wolf's Neck, and

deliberately turned the car off the road. At that point, roused to frenzy by Miss Foster's continued resistance, he wrenched the cap off the spare tin of petrol, drenched her with it and, with a brutality almost unbelievable, set her on fire.

That done, he disappeared over the moors into the darkness.

It is perhaps worth making a point in this connection that in pouring petrol from a petrol tin it flows in a stream and not with a splash, which would account for the comparatively localised nature of the burns. That the victim in this awful condition of physical and mental torment—that is to say, after the burning—should have believed that a casual car stopped on the road, and going on again, should have picked up her assailant, although, in fact, it had done nothing of the kind, is surely not stretching the issue to any great extent.

And it emerged that a motor salesman of Hawick, named Beatty, passed Wolf's Neck between half-past nine and ten that night, saw a blaze on the right-hand side of the road and put on his brakes. He saw that it was a car, but it appeared to him to be completely burned out and he saw no movement, so he imagined that it had been abandoned and drove on.

The only other clues that were discovered near the burned-out car were a single footprint, a glove and a cap. They were all systematically examined. They all led to nothing.

Mr. Foster was not alone in taking exception to the fact that the Northumberland police had shown the very minimum of inclination to call in the experience of Scotland Yard to help them towards the solution of one of the most remarkable unsolved crimes of modern days.

G. B. STERN

The Le Touquet Mystery

FROM the day when as a child she was given her first riding-lesson, Florence Aline Wilson was a popular and breezy figure among the county and hunting sets of Hampshire and the Lake District.

She kept her own pack of otter-hounds, and generally passed her days in a normal rural English routine of sport and athletics ; of pleasant social and family life. On her visits abroad, she played golf and danced.

It is horribly incongruous, therefore, that by the manner of her death she should have become the unconscious focusing-point of a group of melodramatic exhibitionists warranted to give any competent alienist a busy and happy time ; and a Grand Guignol " reconstruction of the crime," in which tragedy formed the excuse for a macabre and merry pastoral picnic.

On May 20, 1928, Mrs. Wilson, aged fifty-five, wife of Mr. Herbert Wilson, a wealthy retired ironmaster, left the Le Touquet Golf Course to walk to the Casino. She departed at six o'clock, and followed the small tramway track which ran between the two places.

It was about twenty-five minutes' walk, and, as she was due to meet her husband and a friend in the town at 7.30, she had allowed herself plenty of time to stroll quietly along and perhaps enjoy the smell and sight of the woods which grew thickly down on either side of the track.

She did not arrive at her appointment. Alarmed, they searched for her until 2.30 a.m., when wearily they went

home for some rest. At 4.30 on the morning of the 21st an Alsatian dog led the police to a clearing in the bushes near the track.

Here they found Mrs. Wilson with fourteen dagger wounds in her chest, abdomen and legs, inflicted by means of a small knife, the point of which was found broken off in her body. She was lying on her back with her head to one side, her face was discoloured as a result of strangulation, her knees drawn up and her clothing disarranged ; but no outrage had taken place.

If her assailant suffered from a peculiar form of sexual mania, the stabbing might have given him sufficient gratification, as most of the wounds were superficial and she would have died from strangulation without their aid.

She was wearing a pearl necklace, a pendant and (surprising in a golfer) several valuable rings. None of these jewels were touched. Fifteen francs had been in her handbag when she left the club. The bag was found a short distance away. Robbery can be ruled out as a motive for the crime.

Mrs. Wilson had evidently made a fierce attempt to defend herself, as a space in the wood, 30 feet by 15, had been practically cleared of undergrowth by the trampling of her feet and those of her assailant. Detectives, in fiction, at any rate, are supposed to be passionately addicted to foot-print clues ; but in this case, though there had been rain and the ground was soft, the question of footprints seemed almost at once to slip into oblivion.

The post-mortem examination reported : " The hands which strangled Mrs. Wilson had no nails," and as the horn handle of the dagger which was found lying near the body would appear to have yielded no fingerprints, it was thought probable that the murderer had worn gloves.

Almost immediately after the discovery of the body, an arrest was made. André Vambre, a deaf-mute degenerate who had already been confined in an asylum for offences against women, was examined in the deaf and

dumb alphabet. After long interrogation he produced a completely satisfactory alibi; corroborated by the mason's tale.

The mason, first of a fantastic frieze of witnesses, was a man named Biguet. He declared that within a few minutes of the approximate time of the crime on the evening of the 20th, he saw a man, not Vambre, behaving in a strange manner close to the edge of the woods; his head hunched down between his shoulders as though he were trying to hide his face.

He thought he saw the handle of a knife sticking out of the man's pocket; but many imaginative people figuring in this drama were to declare that they had seen many strange and contradictory things.

Several days later, the mason recalled that on the same night he was accosted by a man resting at the side of the road with a damaged bicycle, who said: "Bon soir, Monsieur," in a very musical voice. The unknown, as we shall see presently, was given to saying "Bon soir" in mellifluous tones.

Other witnesses testified to a mysterious cyclist who had been noticed on and off in the neighbourhood for several days before the crime.

And now "The Man in the Trench Coat" begins to loom up through the dense fog of exciting and conflicting evidence. "The Man in the Trench Coat" (sometimes white, sometimes grey, for hardly a single statement in this case emerges in solid and consistent form) proved to be Monsieur Matras, the conductor of an orchestra at Le Touquet. He was interrogated by the police for twelve hours, but, like the deaf mute, was able to establish his innocence.

And here follows the Musician's Tale: Matras, too, had seen a youth sitting by the roadside with his bicycle beside him, a bundle tied to the handlebars. The time of this encounter is variously given as "about a quarter of an hour before Mrs. Wilson was due to pass," and "a short time after the crime is supposed to have been

committed"; but, at any rate, it appears to have been between six and seven o'clock on the evening of May 20.

He cried out "Bon soir" to Matras as he passed. Matras swore he could recognise the voice again.

This important clue could not be ignored, and several suspects were paraded before Monsieur Matras and made to say "Bon soir," including the deaf-mute, who apparently could just speak conventional words of greeting.

Matras said the cyclist was "covering his face with his hands, as though he feared to be recognised." Biguet had seen a strange man who "stooped over a bush as though he were a naturalist examining an object which had just caught his attention."

Might not both these statements be explained by the fact that the man was simply shielding a match while lighting a cigarette? If he wished to hide his face, surely there was no need for him to have called out "Bon soir" to the two men?

Miss Madge Lloyd, employed at the golf club, stated that she had been accosted twice in the woods by a man like the mysterious cyclist; and three other women testified to the same experience.

It is a pity, when these things happen in any neighbourhood, that the victims should not immediately broadcast the fact, as it might act as a timely warning to other women not to walk unaccompanied in lonely districts.

In Miss Lloyd's story the cyclist tried to open conversation with her by saying: "Come and look here; there is a body in the woods." But this encounter took place a few days *before* the murder was committed.

The pathological explanation might be that he was still at an early stage when he could satisfy his mania by imaginary mutilations; but later, the phase developing, had to materialise image into horrible fact.

Various other floating bits of evidence were then assembled by the police into a composite picture:

"A tall, well-built man, aged from eighteen to twenty, fair, clean-shaven and slightly corpulent. He has a

THE LE TOUQUET MYSTERY



The scene of the murder

THE LE TOUQUET MYSTERY



Mrs. Wilson as a nurse during the war

pale face, but is not thin-featured. When last seen he was wearing a rough cap of light grey colour, a black workman's jacket, and dark velveteen trousers, with bicycle clips attached. He rides an all-black bicycle, and is believed to live near Etaples."

The difficulties of the police are nearly always enormously increased in a murder investigation where any special savagery is connected with the crime by the number of exhibitionists who desire at all costs to associate themselves, even vicariously, with such savagery; thus to gain the neurotic pleasure and privilege of being regarded with flattering horror by the mob.

To a fanatic of this nature nothing is more bitter than to sit quietly at home not having committed the murder, nor even having seen as much as a shred of the homicide's pocket handkerchief.

So now a bizarre procession of accusers and accused, of labourers, burglars, foreign legionaries, prisoners in Londonderry, gigolos, Algerians and Annamite stranglers appeared to testify. And it looked as though any opportunity for acquiring relevant information was gradually disappearing under a highly coloured patchwork quilt.

The Prisoner's Tale: A man in Londonderry Gaol insisted that he was in a position to contribute thrilling information about the murder, but that he would have to be taken to Le Touquet before he could speak. But they left him to languish in Londonderry.

The Gigolo's Tale led to a wild extravaganza connected with mysterious Annamite sects, impressionable widows and strangling silken cords.

The stories became less and less substantial, and finally dwindled down to a mere list of freakish names: "Monte Carlo," Ladislas Epstein, Marceau Petit of the Foreign Legion.

Nothing more happened until two years later.

In July 1930 a boy of sixteen and a half, André Leloutre, was arrested for having attacked a woman in the forest. She afterwards recognised him in the street

at his trade of delivering ice, and went straight to the police. The result was a startling confession that he had murdered Mrs. Wilson.

Monsieur Matras, called back to the limelight, said that he could not identify Leloutre except on an exact reconstruction of their original meeting. So then was staged a sinister *Fête Champêtre* on the actual scene of the murder.

Holiday-makers flocked in gay crowds to watch the show provided. Nothing could have been more charming than the white dresses of the tennis players, the brilliant hues of bathing costumes and bath robes against the sunshiny September woods. There were gorgeous motor cars and a lorry with a talking-film apparatus.

There may have been swings and coco-nut shies as well; history does not relate. The whole *mis-en-scène* suggested a super-film production.

The boy was told to sit down beside the tramline where M. Matras might have seen him, two years before. Then M. Matras walked along until he reached the spot. The onlookers were breathless.

"Oh dear, no, nothing like that!" exclaimed M. Matras. And completely rearranged Leloutre, his hands, his cap, his whole pose.

Then he said to the Judge: "Now I formally recognise him."

The proceedings thereupon took a Gilbert and Sullivan turn; for Leloutre's lawyer violently condemned this procedure, and began arguing with the Judge, who repeated over and over again: "Pas du tout. Pas du tout. Pas du tout!"

Leloutre was then identified by two or three women as having attacked them recently; and by three or four others as the "blond cyclist of the woods," whom they had seen hanging about in incriminating attitudes two years before.

The newly aroused interest in the Wilson Case again stimulated the usual clamour of exhibitionism.

The Russian's Tale, for instance : that on the day of the murder he saw a motor car driving up and down in terrific rain on the road between Mrs. Wilson's home and the golf course. Inside the magnificent car was a woman, held down by two foreigners. He had been struck by her immobility and by the strange look in her eyes (sumptuous Phillips Oppenheim, but hardly helpful).

And the Tale of the Miner of Valenciennes : He had himself murdered Mrs. Wilson, but at the wicked instigation of an American, since dead, whom he had met at Evian les Bains, and who gave him £58 for committing the murder, nonchalantly standing by while his catspaw did the deed.

Most of these interesting confessions were afterwards retracted, then re-confessed, then retracted again.

Presently Leloutre was acquitted.

A few months later he was tried again on charges of assaulting several women.

The identity of Mrs. Wilson's assassin has never been established.

Yet we must wonder if any mere accident could account for a crime burying itself in such an obliging wilderness and over-abundance of entangling evidence.

One begins to suspect a declaration of organised system in this very multiplicity ; a system subtly expounded by G. K. Chesterton's little detective-priest :

“Where would a wise man hide a leaf? In the forest? . . .

“If there were no forest, he would make a forest. And if he wished to hide a dead leaf, he would make a dead forest.”

We can be fairly sure that the murderer of Mrs. Wilson had suffered from an impulse of sexual mania. Yet it is reasonable to suppose that a degenerate of as crude a mentality as the circumstances of the murder reveal, would never have had the resource and brilliance to

have so successfully covered his tracks ; in spite of the immediate activity of the police and the early discovery of the body.

Supposing, however, he had been one of a band whose original motive had been no more than robbery. It was probably well-known in the district (in fact, the gardener had admitted it) that Mrs. Wilson generally wore valuable jewellery and was fond of taking long walks, frequently unaccompanied. To rob her would, therefore, be a comparatively easy task.

But supposing, again, they were not aware of these periodic frenzies on the part of the man whom they had chosen from among them for this particular job until after the discovery of the body. They would then quickly have realised that the arrest of the murderer would almost inevitably lead to the arrest of the whole gang ; so, under astute leadership, they used the "dead leaf" method both in 1928 and again during the stir aroused by Leloutre's contribution in 1930 to create a bewilderment of evidence, highly coloured statements and contradictions, some of which may have been real and many false.

Far-fetched ? Perhaps. Yet nothing happened connected with this tragedy which was not far-fetched. It is logical to presume that the solution, if we ever were to know it, might equally materialise from beyond the very outer boundaries of probability.

EX-SUPERINTENDENT JOHN PROTHERO

The Blazing Car Murder

“**F**EW will have the courage to assert that the evidence was such as of itself to leave no reasonable doubt as to the guilt of the accused.”—*The Law Journal.*

“Rouse dies because :

1. He told lies.

2. He ran away from the fire.”—The late EDGAR WALLACE.

I have quoted these two opinions in order to recall to the reader's mind the confusion and outcry which arose when, on January 31, 1931, Alfred Arthur Rouse was sentenced to death for the crime which has since become known as the “Blazing Car Murder.”

I have no doubt that a considerable percentage of the public still contend that Rouse should have walked out of the Assize Court at Northampton a free man.

In this fact lies the justification for including this remarkable murder case in this unsolved crime series.

And it is because there still exists that great cleavage of public opinion on the case that I am going to try to establish that without a shred of doubt Rouse was justly convicted on the evidence.

The murder committed by Rouse was unique in two respects. First, in plan and execution, for it was the original murder of its type and has since been copied in two other countries.

Secondly, because the motive was concealed in the evidence of his immorality and treatment of his women—

evidence of which, although tendered at the police court, was suppressed at the trial. The evidence was ruled inadmissible. The Crown deemed it advisable not to introduce it into its case. Mr. Norman Birkett, K.C., who prosecuted, disposed of it thus: "It was thought at one time—and I express no view—that it might be relevant upon the question of motive."

As the Rouse case is fairly recent I am presuming that the general details are well known and that only a brief outline of the story is necessary.

Rouse set out from London in his car on the night of November 5, 1930, ostensibly to travel through the dark hours to Leicester in order to collect some commission from the firm by whom he was employed.

Either by accident or arrangement, he picks up a male passenger on the outskirts of London. At two o'clock the next morning Rouse is seen by two young men upon a lonely road near Hardingstone village, quite a distance from the main road to Leicester.

Some few hundred yards further on, the young men discover the car ablaze. As the flames die down, they are horrified to see in the wreckage the body of a man—the mystery passenger whose identity to this day remains a complete mystery.

It was a time error of two minutes which really convicted Rouse. Had he set fire to the car just that fraction earlier he would have missed the two young men who were returning from the Guy Fawkes dance at Northampton. And the body in the car would have been assumed to be that of Alfred Rouse, commercial traveller, who had perished in an accidental fire. As it turned out, the fact that a hatless man had been seen coming away from the blazing wreckage was to arouse considerable suspicion.

Momentarily, however, Rouse was master of himself. He certainly was not the panic-stricken man that at his trial he described himself to be.

From the spot where he met them the two young

men could not yet see the cause of the blaze. So with the casual remark: "It looks as if someone has had a bonfire over there," Rouse passed on.

The young men walked homewards and onwards towards the blazing car and its charred occupant.

Even the suspicion aroused by the young men's story of the hatless man does not appear to have suggested to the police at the time that they were dealing with a case of deliberate murder.

No police photographs were taken and no medically trained man saw the body before its removal.

I do not mention this as a reflection upon the police officers concerned, who at that time quite honestly believed that they were dealing with a case of accidental death, but I refer to it as an indication of how near Rouse came to committing the perfect crime.

Let us follow the movements of Rouse. The two young men last saw him hesitating at the cross-roads. It was obvious that the realisation had at that moment forced itself upon him that the plan had miscarried.

He secures a lift in a lorry and returns to London to the wife from whose life he had schemed to disappear. Within a few hours he is off again to Gellygaer, the lonely inaccessible spot in Wales where another woman waits for him—a woman he has promised to marry and with whom he had apparently decided to start life all over again.

But the news of the blazing car tragedy penetrated even to this lonely spot. Instead of finding, as he had anticipated, the accident dealt with in a minor paragraph, if at all, Rouse is astonished to find that the burnt-out car tragedy has become a front-page story.

To avoid the pertinent inquiries of the Welsh family into whose home he had been introduced as a son-in-law, he returns by motor-coach to London and arrest.

Now if Rouse, who had had many hours in which to think out an explanation of the fire and his subsequent conduct, had remained firm on the original story he

told the police, I doubt whether he would have been convicted.

He gave precise details of picking up an unknown man who wanted a lift, of what happened on the journey, how he asked the man to pour some petrol in the tank, how after leaving the vehicle for a short time on a dark country road, he suddenly saw the blaze and rushed back to find the vehicle a mass of flames, and how, panic-stricken, he had rushed from the scene.

Most motorists have met that type of passenger who professes to know all about cars, and yet who, entrusted with a simple task, might make a total mess of it. It was quite conceivable, too, that in the circumstances, a man might lose his head and do the things Rouse said he did. It sounded a feasible story, if a little too plausible.

He later made an astonishing statement in which he said: ". . . I am very friendly with several women, but it is an expensive game. . . . My harem takes me to several places. . . . I was arranging to sell my house and furniture. . . ."

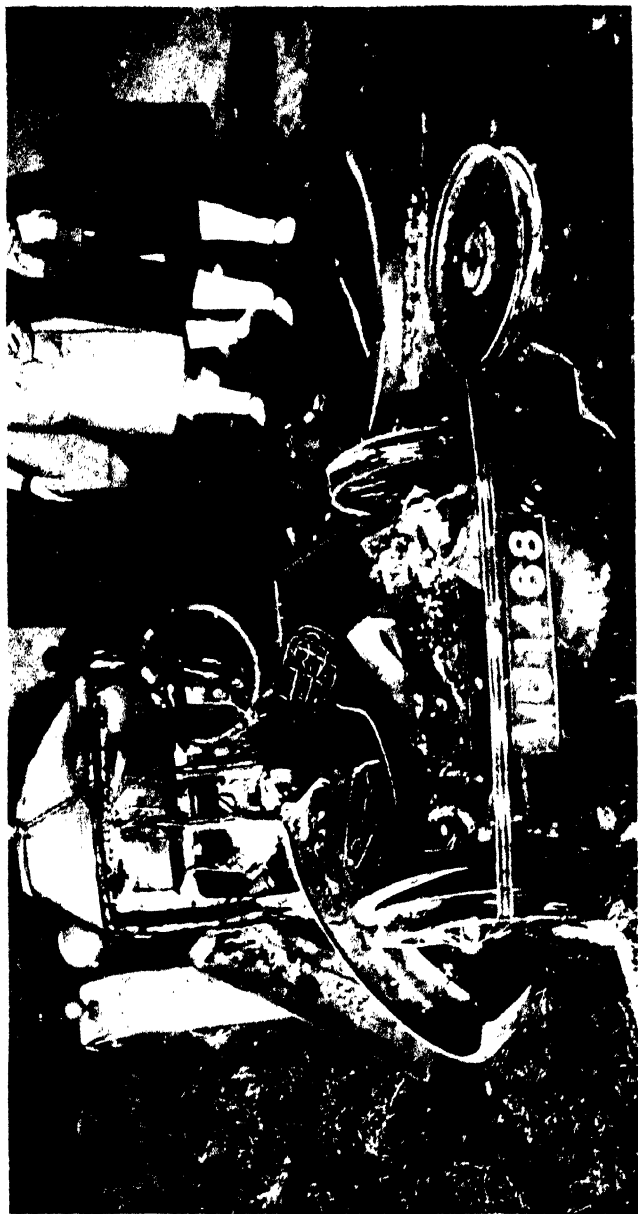
This statement, and the subsequent exposure of his affairs with three women, all of which was revealed at the police court hearing, may, I agree, have had some prejudicial effect in the minds of the public.

Let us examine the actual evidence. Let us look at it from the attitude Mr. Norman Birkett asked the jury to look at it from when he said: "The motive, if motive there be, is locked in the accused's own heart and there is no power under heaven which enables me to unlock it."

There was everything to support the suggestion that the car was deliberately burnt. There was the evidence of Colonel Buckle, the Crown expert, which showed that a continuous supply of petrol to feed the flames had come from a petrol tap which had been deliberately loosened.

This would keep a steady flow of petrol to feed the fire, but he also found that there had been a second source of petrol, most probably from the petrol can found

THE BLAZING CAR MURDER



Here: Rowe's burnt-out car was found

Sport Coupe General

THE CASE OF DR. KNOWLES



Dr. Knowles

Daily Express



Mrs. Knowles

Daily Express

among the debris. The fragment of clothing which remained after the blaze was saturated with petrol, a fact which must imply that the contents of the petrol can had been poured over the victim before the blaze.

Then the position of the body of the victim suggested that he was lying unconscious at the time of the outbreak. It was lying face downwards with the face upon the driver's seat. The trunk was extended along the other seat and the right arm was burned off at the elbow. The left leg was drawn up and the right one extended.

Certainly a position which suggests that the man had been thrown helplessly upon his face. The right foot extended beyond where the door of the car had been, and a charred heel was found six inches outside the door.

All these are circumstances which point to the theory that Rouse stunned the man with a mallet found 14 yards away from the car—and upon which was found what was contended to be one human hair—and then threw the helpless body into the vehicle. They are circumstances which fit no other theory.

Rouse did not help his case by his callous attitude. His behaviour reminds me of Sidney Fox, the Margate murderer, who admitted that he closed the door of the room in which his mother was being burned to death.

“Can you explain to me why you closed the door instead of flinging it wide open?” the Attorney-General asked Fox.

“My explanation is that I did it so that the smoke should not spread into the hotel,” was the astounding reply.

That answer convicted Fox as surely as his callous actions convicted Rouse.

If Rouse had called to those two young men :
a man is being burnt to death in my car,” he would probably have been a free man to-day. But he passed them by with his cool remark about “the bonfire along there.”

Throughout his long examination and cross-examination in the box, one cannot find the slightest expression of regret from Rouse at the fate of the unknown victim.

The evidence of one decent action after the fire, or some indication of concern at the fate of the man, might have weighed heavily with the jury. But not one such word was spoken by Rouse. Instead he adopted a cynical attitude throughout the evidence of the Crown's scientific experts, which seemed to imply "That is not the way I

It was a very improbable story which he told in the box. As Mr. Justice Talbot said in his summing-up: "The whole notion of asking this total stranger to pour the petrol in the tank for him when he had everything ready and had done everything except actually empty the can in; and at the same time giving him a cigar of all things in the world, and making sure that he has a match to light it with, certainly sounds a very singular story."

The statement made by Rouse to the police compared very unfavourably with the statements he made in the witness-box. To the police he declares: "I saw the man inside the car, and I tried to open the door."

In the witness-box he says: "I could not get near it. I never saw the man and the doors were both shut."

When asked by Inspector Lawrence how the mallet got upon the grass verge, Rouse said: "It is possible the man I left in the car may have used the mallet to undo the stopper of the petrol can."

In cross-examination at the trial Rouse admitted that he not only took the stopper out of the petrol can himself, but that he had undone it with the handle of the mallet.

To the police he also said: "I said to my companion: 'Will you look to see if I have any petrol and put some in from the spare can?'"

At the trial he testified: "I had looked into the tank of the car."

Were these lies those of an innocent man in a state of panic ?

Then take this passage from the cross-examination :

Mr. Birkett : " He (the victim) had been thrown in that unconscious position face forward, into the car that you were to light ? "

Rouse : " Most decidedly not. I should not throw a man. If I did a thing like that I should not throw him down face forwards. *I should think where I put him, I imagine.* "

" You would imagine what ? "

" Hardly that I would throw him down like nothing. That is absurd. "

" If you rendered him unconscious, would you have a delicacy about his posture ? "

" No ; but I think if I had been going to do as you suggest I should do a little more than that ? "

" Would you ? "

" *I think I have a little more brains than that.* "

Are these the answers of an innocent man ?

Rouse was not at a loss to find an ingenious theory for the presence of the human hair upon the mallet. He said :

" My wife trained as a hairdresser—she never went into the business seriously at all—but two or three times she has occasionally—not every week—cut neighbours' hair or her friends' hair, including my own occasionally, and that is the only way I can account for the hair, because the rags I used for cleaning the car, which are given to me by her, are usually my old shirts and things of that description and they were always used as being the most convenient rag handy for covering up the head and shoulders to prevent the hair from falling to one's clothes.

" As a matter of fact it is practically the only thing

that is used, and, as I was handed the shirts as I wanted them, it is possible that on one occasion the shirt I had in the garage or in the car for cleaning contained, we will say, a few cut hairs. I might mention that I had knocked some dents out of the mudguard just a week or two previous, and I had used a cloth on the outside of the mudguard to prevent damaging the enamel. I particularly remember doing that, but what rag it was I do not remember."

Very ingenious, but unfortunately for Rouse, Sir Bernard Spilsbury had testified that the human hair was not one which had been cut, but one which had been obviously crushed *and still possessed a root*.

Ignoring the stories of his affairs with women; ignoring the fact that he had bigamously married one woman, and that he was indicted for this offence on the Calendar, and that he would have been proceeded against on this charge in the event of his acquittal on the capital charge; ignoring his illicit associations with two other women, and ignoring the motive these circumstances supply, I still remain convinced that on the actual evidence Rouse was justly convicted on a charge of wilful murder.

A. J. ALAN

The Case of Dr. Knowles

AS public memory is notoriously short and this case happened six years ago, I'd better begin by running over the facts again.

To my mind the only thing really criminal about it was the somewhat quaint habit of leaving a loaded and cocked revolver kicking about in a bedroom. And when one adds that :

1. The revolver was extremely light on the trigger, and
2. That the people chiefly concerned in the shooting weren't always any too sober, one expects trouble sooner or later.

But when one bears in mind that it all happened in Ashanti, West Africa, allowances have to be made. People who live within five hundred miles of the Equator are apt to do crazy things. . . .

Dr. Benjamin Knowles held the appointment of medical officer at Bekwai, twenty miles from Kumasi. He lived in a bungalow with his wife, who before her marriage was Madge Clifton, well known on the English music-hall stage, and still an attractive woman.

Everyone seems agreed that they were a devoted couple although there were undoubtedly quarrels from time to time. But who wouldn't sometimes feel irritable in such a community and such a climate ?

Anyhow, to get on with the story. On Saturday, October 20, 1928, the Knowles gave a luncheon party.

The guests were three men—Mr. Mangin, the District Commissioner ; Mr. Bradfield, Inspector of Government Works, and Mr. Grove, the agent of a trading concern.

From all accounts the party was a great success, notwithstanding the fact that only a normal quantity of alcohol was consumed.

Before reading about this case I always thought that in the tropics wise people didn't touch alcohol till sundown—but let that pass !

The guests left somewhere between 2.15 and 2.30, and for what happened during the next hour or so we have to rely entirely on the statements of Dr. Knowles and his wife.

He says that after their guests had gone he had two more drinks. There is no evidence as to what these drinks were, but he admits that they made him sleepy. He thereupon, in accordance with the universal custom out there, went into the bedroom, undressed, wrapped a towel round him and lay down on his bed.

It should be mentioned here that Dr. Knowles and his wife slept in separate beds placed close together—touching, in fact—and one large mosquito net covered the two. Very well, then. Some time after Dr. Knowles had laid down, Mrs. Knowles came into the room.

It is rather strange that no one seems to have taken the trouble to determine with any accuracy when this was. All we know is that it was between 2.30 and 4 o'clock.

At all events, Mrs. Knowles began to undress in her turn, and in the course of doing so, woke her husband and had some conversation with him. What they talked about no one knows. He maintained that they had a quarrel, but that the cause was so trivial that he could not remember it afterwards.

She, on the other hand, in a sworn statement made two days later, makes no reference to any quarrel. What she did say, however, was that she picked up a revolver from the bookcase and put it on the table near the bed.

At that moment the "boy" came in with afternoon

tea, so she removed the revolver from the table to the chair, took a cup of tea, and sat down—on the revolver in the chair. She then, not unnaturally, raised herself a little and tried to move the revolver from under her.

The trigger caught in the lace of her dress, the revolver went off, and the bullet passed upwards through the left side of “the part of the body on which we sit” (to use a dictionary phrase), coming out eventually on the right side of the abdomen.

Strange as it may seem, that is the story of the shooting which those two people agreed to tell to the outside world and they stuck to it to the end. Let us see how much of it sounds reasonable.

First of all the weapon. For some time previously there had been a burglar scare in the district, and it was Dr. Knowles’s custom to sleep with a loaded revolver by his bedside. During the day it was kept in its holster under his pillow, but when he went to bed he took it out, cocked it, and left it within easy reach on some piece of furniture. If we assume, as I think we may, that Dr. Knowles was a bit “muzzy” when he lay down for his afternoon nap, he may easily have thought that he was going to bed for the night and more or less mechanically have cocked and put out the revolver in the usual way.

That would account for Mrs. Knowles being *able* to pick it up, but not for *picking* it up. She begins her statement by saying that she was examining it, and we are not told why.

Dr. Knowles threw no light on the question either as to whether he was half asleep at the time, or supposed to be, but he was wide awake a few moments later when the revolver went off.

She said: “My God, I’m shot,” and he said: “Show me, show me.”

Now this *does* make sense, and furthermore the explosion and the words “show me” were heard by the two native servants out on the veranda. One of them, called Sampson, immediately sent the other, who rejoiced in

the slightly less Biblical name of Bondo Fra Fra, to fetch Mr. Mangin, the District Commissioner.

To go back to what was happening inside the bedroom. Dr. Knowles appears to have acted promptly and, moreover, rigidly in accord with medical practice. He had forceps, cotton wool and iodine handy, and with these he dressed and plugged the wounds. Having done this, he gave his wife a sedative and also took some himself. So far so good ; but from now onwards he seems almost deliberately to have made every conceivable error of judgment in what he said and did. We all know that a bullet through the abdomen is a pretty bad show and that practically the only hope for the patient is an immediate operation to trace and repair all the internal damage that has been done. Plugging the external wounds pending removal to hospital is, of course, absolutely fatal, but it would be stupid to regard it as anything more than an emergency measure—and that is precisely what Dr. Knowles appears to have done.

When the District Commissioner turned up soon afterwards to know what the trouble was, Dr. Knowles seemed quite annoyed, and said there had been merely "a domestic fracas, and that everything was all right now," so he went away again ; but he can't have been quite satisfied because next day he motored into Kumasi and mentioned the matter to two friends of his.

One of these was a surgeon called Howard Walter Gush, and he proceeded to behave in a somewhat (for those parts) surprising manner. Instead of continuing to sit languidly in the club, or wherever they were, he leapt into his car, drove full tilt out to Dr. Knowles's bungalow at Bekwai, and walked straight in. He called the doctor out of the bedroom and demanded an account of what had happened.

All he got was a somewhat incoherent statement about domestic arguments, Indian clubs and a display of bruises on the shin. Quickly realising that the unfortunate man had gone all to pieces, he insisted, with a most praise-

worthy disregard for medical etiquette, on seeing the patient.

He found her in her nightdress pottering about the bedroom. He made an examination, saw where the bullet had gone in and come out, and said: "Have a warm bath and get dressed at once. I am taking you straight to Kumasi hospital."

While she was dressing, Dr. Gush asked Dr. Knowles why he hadn't called in other help, and received the somewhat surprising reply that he was an Aberdonian, and therefore preferred to rely on his own judgment and skill.

Dr. Gush then asked for the revolver. Dr. Knowles said he didn't know where it was; but his wife did, and she directed him to a uniform case which was locked and of which she produced the key from her bag. I think we may assume from this that she had locked it up herself.

Anyhow, Dr. Gush examined it, and found it to be a -45 Webley, containing six cartridges, of which one had been discharged. He wrapped it up in a towel and put it in his pocket, and then took Mrs. Knowles to the hospital.

Dr. Knowles did not go with them. He went back to bed. There was just one little incident which occurred when they were leaving which may or may not throw light on this most puzzling case. Dr. Knowles made as though to shake hands with his wife. She, however, wasn't having any. She took his face between her hands and kissed him properly. Now exactly what do you make of that?

Her husband, when questioned about it afterwards, once again pleaded that he was an Aberdonian and therefore disliked affectionate demonstrations before strangers! Just think of it!

When they got to Kumasi hospital and a closer examination of Mrs. Knowles was made, it was presumably considered too late to operate. She got steadily worse

and on the Monday morning all the necessary authorities, including the police, were notified.

Of these the police got busy at once and a small party, headed by the Acting Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner, motored out to Bekwai. There they carried out a close investigation. The first thing they found was Dr. Knowles in bed reading a letter. That sounds bad, certainly, but I don't honestly think we ought to attach too much importance, from the point of innocence or guilt, to the actual behaviour of the Doctor on the Sunday or Monday.

All are agreed that immediately after the shooting he indulged in a violent bout of drink and drugs and it is safe to say that half the time he didn't know what he was doing. At any rate, he made the police officials free of the bungalow, although they hadn't a warrant at the time, and he gave them such information as he could.

With the exception of a smoked hole through the mosquito net of the bed and a few bloodstains on the sheets and elsewhere they don't seem to have found anything particularly incriminating, but they none the less detained Dr. Knowles on suspicion of "having caused grievous bodily harm" to his wife, and took him back to Kumasi.

No one could find fault with them for doing this as he clearly wasn't fit to be left alone, especially with the run of his own medicine chest.

By the evening of this day, Monday the 22nd, it was realised that Mrs. Knowles was a dying woman, and a statement was taken from her in the presence of certain officials, her husband also being present.

This accurately repeated the story they had both told all along, how she had sat on the revolver and shot herself by accident and so on, and when they told her that her husband had been arrested in connection with the affair she expressed considerable surprise.

She said he couldn't have done it as he was in bed at the time. There I am inclined to believe her. A woman

as ill as that might have made a supreme effort of will to say something to clear her husband, but I very much doubt whether she would have been equal to simulating surprise to make her words more convincing.

If she was, it proves that she was an exceptionally brave woman, for she only lived another two hours.

The next day, Tuesday (actually it was the same day, Mrs. Knowles having died at 2 a.m.) the police made further investigations at the Bekwai bungalow, in the course of which they evolved a highly ingenious if somewhat circumstantial theory.

In addition to the hole in the mosquito net they discovered two more, one through the top of the table by the bed and another through the door of a wardrobe in the dressing-room adjoining. On opening this wardrobe they found a bullet mark on the inside of the back and the bullet itself lying on a shelf just below.

They then fetched a long piece of string and, holding one end against the mark inside the wardrobe, and threading it in turn through the holes in the door, the table and the mosquito net, they found all these points to be in line.

This looked like an absolute gift. All they had to do to complete their case was to assume that Mrs. Knowles had been somewhere on the line of flight of this bullet, and that Dr. Knowles had fired it, and this is what they did assume.

Now why wouldn't this do at all? I'll suggest a few reasons.

First of all the floor had been scrubbed between the time of the shooting and the experiment with the string, and therefore it's a million to one that the furniture got moved in the process so that if the holes all came in line afterwards it was only a fluke.

Secondly, Mrs. Knowles was thick-set and on the plump side. A soft-nosed bullet fired from a service revolver would have had all its work cut out to go

through *her*, much less through a deal table-top and a wardrobe door as well.

Thirdly, no one knew where she was standing.

Fourthly, a bullet was picked up by Bondo Fra Fra in front of the wicker chair (where one would expect to find it) when he was cleaning up the blood. This didn't fit the string theory.

Fifthly, the hole in the wardrobe was shown to have nothing to do with the case at all. Mr. Bradfield, the Inspector of Government Works, gave evidence that he had seen it months before. I believe he had also been told its history at the same time, namely, that Mrs. Knowles had once fired at it with the revolver to "make her husband jump." It doubtless did.

So much for the string theory, but the police adhered to it all the same.

And now you have heard all the material facts perhaps you would like to know why I do *not* think Dr. Knowles murdered his wife :

A doctor would probably not choose a revolver to do it with.

If he did he would be unlikely to select a moment when his victim was stooping down with her back to him.

Having found that he'd failed to kill her outright he wouldn't have tried to keep her alive so that she could give him away.

She in her turn, knowing that her husband had shot her, would hardly have meekly accepted a sleeping-draught from him, and finally there was never any suggestion of a motive for murder.

In fact, I think we ought to wash out that idea altogether.

At the trial, the prisoner was not allowed counsel or even a solicitor to defend him, but he apparently had the right to put in a statement and also to cross-examine witnesses.

The Judge sat without a jury.

The trial can be described in quite a few words. Practically everything I've told you already was brought out in some form or other. The Commissioner of Police conducted the prosecution himself.

The prisoner defended himself as well as he could be expected to do, and quite shone as a cross-examiner.

The Judge, giving judgment, said that he didn't believe the prisoner, he didn't accept his wife's dying statement, and he also rejected the theory which the police had so meticulously worked out with a piece of string. But he gave it as his opinion that the evidence was all very confusing, but none the less overwhelmingly against the prisoner and he therefore sentenced him to death.

The sentence had to be confirmed by the Governor of the Gold Coast, Sir A. R. Slater, and he didn't confirm it. He commuted it to imprisonment for life.

Well, the prisoner did appeal—to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, and his case was heard in November, 1929, in London. The judges were: Lord Sankey (the Lord Chancellor), Lord Dunedin, Lord Darling, Lord Atkin and Lord Thankerton. Sir William Jowitt (the Attorney-General) appeared for the Crown and Mr. D. N. Pritt for the prisoner.

The whole case was most carefully gone through, and at the end they allowed the appeal and quashed the conviction.

Dr. Knowles only lived another four years, but strangely enough, he spent those years in London and *not* in Ashanti.

GERALD BULLETT

The Siege of Sidney Street

LIFE is sometimes so flagrant a copy of fiction, isn't it? And not always of very high-class fiction.

In a sense, honest Mr. Isenstein, of Houndsditch, may be said to have started the whole trouble. If Mr. Isenstein had happened to be a little deaf, or a heavy sleeper, or the kind of easygoing fellow who can hear nocturnal rappings andappings without bothering his head overmuch about their origin and significance, five police officers who were shot down on December 16 twenty-four years ago might be living unscathed to this day, and it would have been left to some wild novelist, some specialist in crude improbability to invent the story of the Siege of Sidney Street.

But Mr. Isenstein was not of that temper. He had all the normal man's dislike of the unusual and the unexplained. He was a retailer of fancy goods, and he lived behind his shop. We may picture him, at ten o'clock on that winter's evening, dozing by his fireside, beginning already to think about bed, but too comfortable to get out of his chair.

It was years before the invention of wireless telephony, so there was no loud-speaker either to keep him awake or to send him definitely to sleep. With a book, perhaps, lying neglected in his lap, he sat with closed eyes, thinking of nothing in particular. And then he heard it again, that sound of tap-tap-tapping, muffled by distance, but as clear to his perception as the sharp scrabble of a mouse in a still night.

A tapping or a knocking, call it what you will ; it was

a suggestive and even sinister sound, and Mr. Isenstein didn't like it at all. It was by no means the first time he had heard it either. As long as a fortnight ago he had mentioned it to the police, but nothing, so far as he knew, had been done about it.

"No," said Mr. Isenstein, "I don't like it and I won't have it." The noise stopped. Mr. Isenstein, very much awake now, sat up stiffly in his chair and strained his ears with listening; and in the silence that followed he asked himself again and again what was going on. Soon the noise started again.

"Somebody's up to no good," said Mr. Isenstein. At half-past ten he went to the telephone. It was no doubt an antiquated instrument by modern standards, and I dare say he had to work vigorously at the handle before the exchange became aware of him. But he got through at last to the police and recited his name and address into the transmitter.

"You know that noise I reported a fortnight ago. Well, it's started again and it's louder than ever. Yes, it seems to come from next door. It's my belief somebody's up to no good."

The anxious figure of Mr. Isenstein now fades from the scene. Within a few minutes of that telephone conversation six policemen—two officers and four constables—arrived at the house next door to him. Two posted themselves at the back of the premises, while a sergeant and three men went and knocked at the front door. After an interval of waiting it was opened, very cautiously and meagrely, by a man.

"Good evening," said the police sergeant. "Have you any work going on in the house by any chance? Plumbing, perhaps?"

The man stared dumbly.

"Do you understand English?"

Still no answer.

"Is there anyone in the house who speaks English?"

Suddenly the door was shut in the sergeant's face.

But not quite shut : possibly the sergeant had seen to that. Anyhow, he pushed the door open and stepped into the house. He found himself alone in a gas-lit room ; the man who had opened the door had disappeared up the stairs. The situation looked perhaps a little fishy, but the sergeant had no reason to anticipate trouble.

He was only, after all, making a simple routine inquiry, and he was well supported by the three constables hovering discreetly about the door. He stood for a moment or two awaiting developments, his mind alert, no doubt, but comparatively serene. He heard a door open, the door of an inner room ; and then there was an instant of bright searing pain and the whole scene wavered and disappeared in the darkness of death.

Yes, it must have been as sudden as that. He could hardly have seen the assassin's head or heard the report of the pistol shot. The other police, rushing in to the rescue, were met by a second shot from that inner room ; they were swept back towards the street door, but before they could either advance or retire someone began firing at them with an automatic from the stairhead, firing rapidly and with deadly precision.

All four fell, and a wild figure, leaping down the stairs and into the street, continued to fire this way and that. Only one of the four, Constable Choate, was still capable of fight, and this gallant fellow, unarmed though he was (like his comrades) and already shot in two places, closed with the assassin and held him.

But the help that came was not for Constable Choate : he was shot from behind by others of the gang, and was left to die with twelve wounds in his body. All the murderers got away.

So Mr. Isenstein's very natural curiosity was satisfied. Subsequent police investigations showed that the criminals had planned to enter, not *his* premises, but those of their neighbour on the other side—a jeweller, who had some thirty thousand pounds' worth of stuff in stock.

THE SIEGE OF SIDNEY STREET



THE SIEGE OF SIDNEY STREET



The besieged house

Central Press

The jeweller was no doubt duly grateful to Mr. Isenstein.

In the small hours of the next day a doctor was called by two women to the assistance of a young man who, they said, had been shot by a friend, in mistake, three hours before. His name was given as Gardstein. In spite of the doctor's ministrations he died of his wound, and the doctor reported his death to the coroner.

It was eventually established that Gardstein, whose real name was Morountzel, was certainly a member of the gang and probably the murderer of the police sergeant. And so the police got busy.

The next act of the drama takes us to January 3 of the following year, and this time the curtain rises on a very different scene. We are confronted with the inspiring spectacle of Mr. Winston Churchill in his bath.

"At about ten o'clock," he has told us, "I was in my bath, when I was surprised by an urgent knocking at the door." It was a telephone message from the Home Office (Mr. Churchill was then Home Secretary) to the effect that the anarchists who murdered the police at Houndsditch had been surrounded in a house, 100 Sidney Street, and were firing on the police with automatic pistols.

They had already shot one man and the police asked for authority to send for troops. Mr. Churchill lost no time in giving the required permission. And, having finished with his bath and consumed breakfast, he himself went to watch the show after visiting the Home Office.

It appears that, after their desperate work in Houndsditch, and after the death of Gardstein, or Morountzef, whom they had shot by accident, two members of the gang had taken refuge in a single room rented by a Mrs. Gershom at 100 Sidney Street.

They had with them a large stock of arms, ammunition.

and home-made bombs. They had been a fortnight with Mrs. Gershom, when she confided her anxiety to someone, who, in his turn, confided in the police.

The police had good reason to believe that a reckless and murderous resistance would be offered by the wounded men, and accordingly they contrived to get everyone else out of the house before addressing themselves to the main business. The room occupied by the criminals was on the second floor.

At two o'clock on that January morning all the other inmates of the house were routed out of their beds by the police and ordered to leave the house. To burst open the door of the room in which the criminals were barricaded would have involved unnecessary loss of life. The police therefore threw stones at the window from the road in the hope that the two men would surrender voluntarily. The response to this invitation was a couple of pistol shots, and Detective-sergeant Leeson was hit in the chest.

More shots came from the house; the police began to return the fire; but by now the enemy had vacated the front room, and only returned to it from time to time to do a little more shooting. Meanwhile, a party of Scots Guards had marched up from the Tower, and the battle began in earnest.

The siege started some time before three in the morning and did not come to an end until the middle of the afternoon. To a generation of Londoners who knew nothing of war it must have been a fantastic affair, an unexampled sensation. For hours the roll of musketry seldom ceased. Soldiers and police completely surrounded the house, and a contingent of men was posted in a brewery opposite, to fire across the street into the enemy's quarters.

But despite the excitement, the life of London, even in the immediate neighbourhood, went on much as usual. Early in the battle a postman was observed delivering letters at the house next door, as though nothing unusua

were happening: presumably, having received no official intimation from the Postmaster-general, he saw no reason to be deterred from his duty by a little quiet rifle practice.

Presently the upper storey of the house was seen to be on fire, and in due course the fire brigade arrived, and there followed a heated dispute between fire brigade and police. The officer in charge of the police operations refused to allow the brigade to approach the burning house. The fire brigade officer retorted, in effect, that anarchists and flying bullets were none of his business; there was nothing about them in the regulations. But a fire had been reported, and he and his men were going to put it out.

The matter was settled by the intervention of Mr. Churchill, who, in his official capacity, said that the house was to be allowed to go on burning, and that the Fire Brigade must stand by in readiness to prevent the fire spreading. In time the shots from the house ceased, and then, when it became evident that the fugitives were dead, the Fire Brigade got to work.

So much for the action. Now for the personalities involved in this story. Here we are on far less solid ground. The relevant facts are mixed up, often indistinguishably, with a great mass of hearsay and conjecture.

It appears to have been established that the gang itself was recruited from a small colony of about twenty Letts from Baltic Russia; and it has been taken for granted, never proved, that they worked under the leadership of a mysterious person—artist and conspirator—called Peter the Painter. What precisely they were after is not definitely known.

It seems likely that they combined political plotting with more ordinary criminal activities, though even this is not certain. In those days any criminal who carried a gun and spoke with a foreign accent was supposed to be an anarchist; but we, with the methods of the

THE CASE OF CHRISTINA GILMOUR



Christina Gilmour

Mendoza

his face was swollen, and he was sick several times during the twenty-four hours that he and his wife were with them. As soon as the pair returned to Inchinnan, Gilmour had another attack.

He struggled out of bed the next day, Wednesday, January 4, and got as far as the stables, where he told one of the farm hands, by name John Muir, that he had been very sick. Muir testified afterwards that his face was swollen and his eyes watering.

The next day he could not leave his room, and remained there till he died. Christina tended him with the utmost care. She prepared his meals herself; she held his forehead when he was sick; and as soon as medicines were prescribed, she herself poured them out and gave them to him.

On Friday, the 6th, in the early morning, Christina told Mary Paterson that she was going into Renfrew to get something which might do Mr. Gilmour good. Here again she seemed to wish for secrecy, asking Mary to say nothing about her errand. Renfrew is only two miles from Inchinnan, so she was not long gone.

Between eight and nine o'clock, John Muir, going out after his breakfast, saw at the corner of the boiling-house an object which had not been there when he went in. This was a black silk bag. Picking it up curiously he opened it and found inside a paper package labelled "Poison," and a small phial full of liquid.

He smelled the phial and decided that it was some so of scent. Perplexed, Muir took the bag to Mary Paterson, and together they examined and speculated upon its contents. Mary thought that the bag must belong to her mistress, and accordingly carried it in to her.

Christina took it, with the remark that it contained turpentine with which to rub Mr. Gilmour. John Muir, however, was positive that the liquid in the phial did not smell like turpentine.

That same evening Christina set out again with another of the farm hands, Sandy Muir, saying that, as Mr.

Gilmour would not see a doctor, she was going to ask the advice of her uncle, who lived at Paisley. The uncle was surprised to see her. She had not paid him a visit for four years.

She told him of her marriage, making no secret of her repugnance, and finally asked his advice about John's illness. He said he would at once send his own physician, Dr. M'Kechnie. Christina demurred. She did not care to let him do this without consulting John. Would he come himself the next day and try to persuade him ?

Before she got back, John Muir, who had been scratching his head about the so-called turpentine, summoned up his courage and went to his master's bedroom. Without mentioning his discovery he asked whether Mr. Gilmour would like to see a doctor.

Mr. Gilmour replied that he would, and Muir set off at once to fetch Dr. M'Laws, of Renfrew. The doctor unfortunately was drunk. He diagnosed the illness as "an inflammation," bled Gilmour, and ordered that he should be rubbed with turpentine.

(He was able subsequently to remember this and to give an account of the patient's general condition, but denied that he had been told anything about his being sick.)

The next morning, at about eight o'clock, Mr. Wylie, a chemist in Renfrew, received a visit from a young woman who wanted arsenic for killing rats. The chemist, naturally, asked questions, to which she replied that her name was Robertson, and that she had been sent to get the poison by a farmer in the district.

What farmer ? asked the chemist. John Ferguson. Where did he live ? The young woman explained that she had only just come to the neighbourhood ; she did not know the name of the farm. Was it this one or that one ? She did not know. To satisfy himself, the chemist called in a neighbour, and asked him which farm was owned by John Ferguson.

The neighbour knew all the farms by heart, but had

not heard of John Ferguson. The young woman then said that the farm was close to Paisley and the chemist, apparently satisfied, labelled the package and handed it over. He took the precaution, however, of getting the neighbour to sign the poison book as a witness.

Later in the morning Gilmour's father came over to see the patient. He found him very low and anxious not to be left alone. Presently Mr. Robertson, Christina's uncle, came as arranged and spent an hour with Gilmour, who was no better. He arranged with Christina to send for Dr. M'Kechnie if Gilmour grew worse.

Receiving a message next morning he sent the doctor and followed himself. Dr. M'Kechnie diagnosed a severe bilious attack, prescribed certain remedies, and particularly enjoined that any vomited matter, etc. should be kept for him to see when he came next day. Mr. Robertson stayed all day and all night, taking Christina's place by the bedside.

When Dr. M'Kechnie called on the Monday morning he found his patient distinctly better. He ordered Christina to persevere with the treatment and asked to see what he had told her to keep. She replied that there had been so little she did not think it worth keeping.

On Tuesday old Mr. Gilmour came again, to find his son much worse. He and Christina nursed him turn and turn about, and assiduously gave him his medicine. On the Wednesday Dr. M'Kechnie could not come, but sent his son. Shortly after the young man had been and bled him, Gilmour died.

He was buried five days later, and Christina returned to her parents, whence she wrote to Anderson, presumably to inform him that she was a widow.

Meanwhile, the Muirs and Mary Patterson had been talking. Soon it was being openly said that Gilmour's death was not a natural one. The rumours reached Christina's father, who, thinking that the body was likely to be exhumed, advised her to be somewhere else when that event took place.

Christina resisted the advice, pointing out that to fly would be virtually to acknowledge her guilt ; but she was overborne, smuggled off by devious methods to Liverpool, and handed over to a man who undertook to escort her safely to America. In order to avoid exciting attention, she was to pass as his wife, and their passages were booked in the names of Mr. and Mrs. Spiers. Before they sailed, Christina once more wrote to Anderson.

The suspicions of Christina's father proved to be well founded. The local police got wind of the gossip, and Superintendent M'Kay was sent to interview Gilmour's servants. The result was the issue of an exhumation order and a warrant for Christina's arrest.

The exhumation took place, and the two doctors who made the autopsy found intestinal inflammation, suggesting poisoning by arsenic. Their verdict was later confirmed by a celebrated authority, Dr. Christison. Immediately the findings were made known to him, Superintendent M'Kay set off to arrest Christina.

She had gone. He traced her to Liverpool, and there followed the ocean chase and the proceedings in New York which we have already described.

The case for the prosecution was unfolded with deadly effect. Wylie the chemist, his wife, and the neighbour who signed the poison book, all testified that "Miss Robertson" and Christina were the same. Mary Paterson and the Muirs gave their testimony simply, and could not be shaken.

John Muir caused a stir by relating that, when he went to consult his master about fetching a doctor, Gilmour expressed to him his suspicion that all was not well. "Jock," said the sick man, "this is an unco' thing !"

The best the defence could do with the servants was to elicit from them that Gilmour had occasionally possessed and used arsenic for killing rats, though never since his marriage. Christina's uncle testified that she had several times complained to him about her marriage, saying that she preferred "one Anderson."

(Anderson's own testimony did not help the defence. He said that in the letter Christina wrote that she was prepared to admit the purchase of arsenic, but that it was for herself, not for her husband. Her father and brother, on the other hand, who had recovered the letter from Anderson, and afterwards destroyed it, both swore that it contained no mention of arsenic.)

Christina's defence was, in brief, that Gilmour had been complaining of headaches and pain in his breast, which "he thought was his heart"; that the first supply of arsenic, which she had told Mary Paterson to buy, was intended for rats, but that, hearing from Mary how dangerous it was, she had burnt it; that she had herself bought the arsenic which the servants found in her bag, but with the intention of putting an end to her own life; that Gilmour had steadfastly refused to see a doctor, and that she had at no time given him arsenic.

The most valuable evidence in her favour was the unanimous report as to the gentleness and mildness of her character, her attentive care of him, the composure of her manner, as reported by Dr. M'Kechnie and her uncle, and—most valuable of all—the opinion of Dr. Christison, the poison expert, that it was just possible that Gilmour's symptoms might result from a single dose of arsenic, rather than from a series of doses.

The address for the prosecution was all the more damning for its moderation. The Lord Advocate (Mr. Duncan M'Neill) reviewed the evidence simply, giving Christina the benefit of any point that might tell in her favour. The medical evidence was undisputed: Gilmour died from arsenic poisoning. Either he took the poison deliberately or by accident, or it was administered to him.

He had no reason to take his own life, and in any case would hardly have chosen so agonising a means, especially by repeated doses. There was no probability nor suggestion of accident.

There remained the third explanation. The prisoner had, and admitted to having, possession of the poison. As his sole attendant, preparing his food with her own hands, she had "every opportunity that could exist" for administering it to him.

As to motive, there was her dissatisfaction with her marriage, which she had confessed to everyone, including her servants: a dissatisfaction so intense that, on her own admission, she had contemplated taking her own life. But—why should she wish to take her own life, when her husband seemed likely to die?

She could have ended the marriage in two ways, by poisoning herself, or by poisoning her husband.

"Gentlemen," exclaimed the Lord Advocate impressively, "her husband is poisoned—she is not. By a most extraordinary chance, the cup which she mixed for herself has not been quaffed by her, but by some unknown and mysterious hand was conveyed to the lips of her husband. Can you, then, doubt the purpose for which that poison was obtained or the purpose to which it was applied."

Christina's advocate, Mr. Maitland, with great skill, made the best of his bad job. He admitted candidly that things looked black against his client. The jury might well suspect her; but this was not the point. The point was whether, on the evidence, they would be legally justified in bringing in a verdict of guilty.

Mr. Christison was unable to say for certain that death had been caused by repeated doses of arsenic. If this was so—if a single dose could have been responsible—then a great part of the Crown's case fell to the ground, and the possibility of suicide or accident was enormously strengthened.

The marriage was as unhappy for Gilmour as for her. Gilmour had had arsenic in his possession. Nothing but the possession of arsenic could be proved against his wife. Everything in her character and her demeanour was inconsistent with such a crime.

Admittedly she had disliked her marriage, but no one had ever heard her do more than lament it. She had never expressed resentment against her husband. Were they to believe, upon circumstantial evidence alone, that a young and gentle girl could suddenly turn into a monster, and minister to the man she was killing by inches with an affection and devotion to which all who saw her agreed in testifying? Suspicion apart, even personal belief apart, the jury, on the evidence, could find no verdict but "Not Proven."

The summing-up of Lord Justice-Clerk Hope inclined in Christina's favour. "You," he charged the jury, "who are the only judges of the facts in this case, may say that without any proved act of administration on her part, your minds revolt from the notion that she committed the crime charged against her."

The jury's minds did revolt. They brought in a verdict of "Not Proven," and Christina left the court a free woman. Anderson did not marry her, but she passed the remainder of her life in good works, and lived to a ripe old age.

At a distance of ninety years, and uninfluenced, as judge and jury perhaps may not have been, by Christina's good looks, we can only conclude that she was lucky, and leave it at that.

C. E. BECHOFER ROBERTS

The Case of Jessie McPherson

MR. JOHN FLEMING, a staid and respected Glasgow accountant, dashed down the steps of his house one fine July afternoon and hammered wildly on the front doors of his neighbours.

But they had not yet come home from their offices. Seeing one of them turn the corner of the street, Mr. Fleming begged him to come at once and inspect a woman's corpse lying in the basement.

The neighbour shook his head. "Na, na," he replied grimly, "ye've already said enough to frichten me fra' ma dinner."

So Mr. Fleming ran breathlessly on till he reached the home of Dr. Watson, whose professional interest was, fortunately, stronger than his appetite. If only Dr. Watson could have brought a Sherlock Holmes with him to No. 17, Sandyford Place!

The death of Jessie McPherson might then have been cleared up without dividing the whole nation into two controversial camps, without thrusting a woman twice into the shadow of the gallows, without compelling a Home Secretary to reopen a case in which judge and jury had unhesitatingly agreed on their verdict, without provoking a debate in Parliament, and without remaining an unsolved mystery even to-day, nearly three-quarters of a century later.

Alas, *this* Dr. Watson was alone, and, after pointing out that Jessie had been slashed some forty times across the head and body, could offer no more helpful opinion than: "This is evidently not a suicide."

The police arrived. They learned that Mr. Fleming and most of his family had spent the week-end at the seaside, leaving their thirty-five-year-old servant, Jessie McPherson, to look after Mr. Fleming's aged father, James Fleming, who held a minor post as rent collector in his son's firm.

The others had left Glasgow on the previous Friday afternoon and returned to Sandyford Place only on Monday afternoon to be greeted by Old Fleming (as he came to be called) with the words, "Jessie's awa'. She's cut. I've no' seen her syne Friday."

The son went down to the basement, found Jessie's bedroom locked, forced his way in, and discovered her body, half-naked and horribly mutilated, beside the bed. When the poor old gentleman saw the corpse, he flung up his arms and cried, "She's been lyin' there a' this time, and me in the hoose!"

Then the younger man ran out for help. The police noted that, although an attempt had been made to wash the floors—indeed, some patches were still damp—there was much blood in the lower part of the house. It looked as if the wretched woman had been dragged by her murderer from one room to another; and, strangest of all, there were three clear prints of a naked foot, a left foot, in a smear of blood in the bedroom. These prints were not those of Jessie. It was also observed that a quantity of the table silver used by the family was missing.

Surgeons amplified the statement of the cautious Dr. Watson, declaring that the servant had been killed by repeated blows with a cleaver which was found near by; that she had been murdered "with extreme ferocity"; that "the comparatively slight degree of strength shown in the blows would point to a female, or a weak man, as having inflicted them"; and that a severe struggle had taken place before her death.

Old Fleming was at once asked to describe his week-end. He said that on Friday evening, having got his feet wet while walking, "I went down to the kitchen

fire to get ma feet warmed, and Jessie McPherson made my tea." He went upstairs to bed at half-past nine, leaving her at work on the family washing.

"In the mornin' I was wauken't wi' a lood squeal; and after that followed ither twa, not so lood as the first ane." He looked at his watch and noted that it was exactly four o'clock. After a few minutes' consideration he decided that the noise came from outside, and went to sleep again.

He was much surprised, however, that Jessie did not bring his porridge at eight o'clock next morning—"I wearied very much for her"—and at nine he rose breakfastless, dressed himself, and went downstairs to knock "three chaps" on her door.

Receiving no reply, he made up the kitchen fire, and, summoned by a neighbour's servant, who asked for the loan of a spade, was amazed to find the front door unlocked: "The door was on the latch: just snecked, ye ken, not locked. Sae whaever had been in, they had got oot by the door; there is nae doubt o' that."

When it was suggested that he ought to have waited to see if Jessie would appear and answer the door the old man replied: "Jessie, ye ken; it was a' ower wi' Jessie afore that."

Now, how could he have known?

At noon he went to the office, inspected some properties of which he was in charge, and returned home in the afternoon, "thinkin', maybe, that Jess would be waitin'," but "all was quiet an' no appearance."

He prepared dinner for himself, told a young man who called for Jessie that she was not at home, put away some shirts that were airing in the kitchen, and went to bed. The next day being Sunday, he went to church twice, and, still without news of the missing woman, again told the young man that she was out.

On Monday he rose early, collected some rents and went home about two; a couple of hours later his son arrived from the seaside.



James Fleming from a drawing made in Court

William Hodg

THE CASE OF JESSIE McPHERSON



Mrs. McLachlan

William Hole

Old Fleming was very old : even so he had shown a surprising lack of observation. He had not noticed the state of the kitchen floor ; he had not observed the loss of the table silver ; he had not even seen the bloodstains on two of the shirts he had put away, and he had not mentioned to anybody over the week-end that Jessie McPherson had vanished. The police decided to take him into custody on suspicion of having murdered her. Meanwhile they circulated a description of the missing silver, and soon learned that it had been pawned by a Mrs. McLachlan, a young woman of twenty-six, who had been in service with the dead woman in the Flemings' house until her marriage five years before, and who had remained her closest friend.

Mrs. McLachlan's story was even stranger than Old Fleming's. She said she had not been near Sandyford Place that week-end, and knew nothing of Jessie's death, but old Fleming had come to her house on the Friday night with the silver, asking her to pawn it for him that he might have money for his fare to the Highlands.

He came back next day, generously gave her £4 out of the £6 15s, that the silver fetched, and bound her to secrecy lest his son should detect his pilfering.

When the police confronted her with some of Jessie's clothes which she had sent since the murder to fictitious addresses she told contradictory stories. Worse still for her, it was shown that she had been away from home all the Friday night ; that the dress she wore when she went out was splashed with blood ; that she had returned in one of Jessie's frocks ; and that, though penniless overnight, she had been able to pay off debts on the Saturday morning even before she pawned the silver.

Moreover, Old Fleming denied having seen her for a twelve month, and pointed out that, had he needed money for his fare to the Highlands, which he had not the slightest desire to visit, he could have drawn it from one or other of his bank accounts.

Her preposterous story of his visit, her possession of

the silver and of money on the Saturday, her lies about her movements and the clothes were all highly suspicious ; and, when it was found that her left foot exactly fitted the prints on the bloodstained floor, the police were confident that they had now found the true culprit. They released the venerable Fleming and charged Mrs McLachlan with the crime.

Two rival solutions of the mystery were set out in court when she was put on trial ten weeks later, on September 17, 1862. The prosecution maintained that she had murdered her friend for motives of gain ; whereas she pleaded Not Guilty and " without reference to that plea, specially pleads that the murder was committed by James Fleming."

As usual in the Scottish courts, the trial began with the evidence called by both sides, without any preliminary speeches.

Old Fleming was a witness for the prosecution. There was some doubt about his real age : he insisted that he was eighty-seven, which was confirmed by his son and other witnesses, but the defence suggested that he was at least ten years younger.

Perhaps it was from horror at having spent the week-end in the same house as a corpse, perhaps (as unkind people hinted) it was to his advantage to seem as feeble as possible, but certainly Old Fleming had grown much weaker in the past few weeks.

For one thing, he now wore spectacles, which he had never been known to use before ; again, his deafness manifestly increased as soon as he was subjected to cross-examination by the prisoner's counsel.

However, his evidence and that of the Crown's other witnesses, particularly in regard to her disposal of the stolen articles and her bloodstained dress, built up a strong circumstantial case against Mrs. McLachlan. Her original fibs to the police were read out, greatly to her discredit.

When the defence called its witnesses, among whom

the prisoner could not be included in those days, it was obvious that her lawyers aimed at a verdict of Not Proven rather than Not Guilty. Their best witness was a milkman who had called at Sandyford Place before eight on the Saturday morning, and who swore that old Fleming had opened the door to him, fully dressed, and that the door by which the murderess was supposed to have escaped was not "just sneaked, ye ken," but was securely fastened on the inside.

As for a possible motive for the crime, a woman testified that Jessie McPherson had spoken to her of Old Fleming as an "auld wretch and auld deevil" who was making her miserable in a way which she preferred not to tell the witness before the latter's husband. Counsel suggested that the explanation of the murder was that the old man tried, not for the first time, to demonstrate his affection for Jessie on the Friday night, and that, when she resisted, he killed her.

Lord Deas, the Judge, summed up in a manner highly unfavourable to the prisoner. He attached small importance to the milkman's evidence, and pooh-poohed the insinuations of the woman witness. The jury of fifteen followed his lead, and after an absence of only a quarter of an hour found Mrs. McLachlan guilty.

Her counsel then claimed the privilege of reading a statement which she had made. It offered a third and much more plausible solution of the mystery. In it she at last admitted that she went to Sandyford Place on the Friday evening. Jessie and Old Fleming had been drinking heavily before she arrived, and the woman threatened to reveal a secret about him.

"Haud yer ill tongue!" he said, and sent Mrs. McLachlan out for more liquor: when she got back, Jessie lay in a pool of blood where the old man had struck her down with the cleaver. She raised the moaning woman, washed her wounds and propped her up before the kitchen fire.

Old Fleming, starting to wash the floor, upset a basin

of bloody water over Mrs. McLachlan's legs, so that she was obliged to change her dress for one of her friend's and to walk barefoot while her shoes and stockings dried : it was thus that she left her prints on the floorboards.

Jessie, she continued, waiting till the old man had left the room, told her that he had taken liberties with her when he was drunk a few weeks before and that she meant to make him pay handsomely for that affront and for his present assault on her.

Old Fleming, however, produced the family Bible, and made both women swear on it not to reveal what had passed, promising "never to forget it to either her or me."

Jessie grew worse towards morning, and, though old Fleming forbade Mrs. McLachlan to fetch a doctor, she ran upstairs to the door. Finding it locked and the key gone, she reached the kitchen again to discover that he had once more attacked his victim and killed her. Then he dragged the corpse into the bedroom, locked the door and sent Mrs. McLachlan away with the silver, to suggest that a thief had done the murder.

Lord Deas, who had listened incredulously to all this, proceeded to pass sentence. He entirely concurred, he said, with the jury's verdict, and assured them that "there is not upon my mind a shadow of suspicion that the old gentleman had anything whatever to do with the murder." He sentenced the prisoner to be held in gaol for three weeks on a diet of bread and water and then to be hanged. As he uttered the solemn phrase "And may God Almighty have mercy on your soul" Mrs. McLachlan cried, "Mercy? Ay, He'll ha'e mercy, for I'm innocent!"

Unlike the Judge, both Press and public decided that the prisoner's new account fitted the evidence much better than either the prosecution's case or the feeble defence presented to the court in hopes of a Not Proven verdict. There was no Court of Appeal then, but meetings were held and a monster petition—signed by no

fewer than 50,000 people in Glasgow alone—was prepared for despatch to London.

A week before she was to die the Home Secretary ordered the execution to be postponed for three weeks, in order that her statement might be investigated: if it were shown to be untrue, he said, she must hang.

The Sheriff of Haddington was charged with the inquiry: many old and many new witnesses appeared before him, and their evidence overwhelmingly corroborated the main outline of her story.

Thus, for example, a neighbour testified that he heard a scream at midnight on the Friday; a girl told of helping Old Fleming to wash the stairs on the Saturday; a brewer described the old man's drunkenness a few weeks before; and an elder of his church presented the minutes of a meeting ten years before which admonished him for having a child by one of his servants!

The future Lord Lister, then a Glasgow professor, stated that the prisoner's story was consistent with the medical evidence at the trial. Old Fleming prudently stayed away.

Four days before the new date set for her execution, Mrs. McLachlan's sentence was reduced to penal servitude for life. Old Fleming's friends reasonably complained that by the terms of the Home Secretary's original letter, this reprieve was tantamount to an acceptance of her story, and thus to an acknowledgment of the "old innocent's" guilt; they asked the Home Secretary to state publicly that this interpretation should not be placed on his decision, but he refused to commit himself.

Nor did he do so in a subsequent debate on the case in the House of Commons, when Mrs. McLachlan's imprisonment was justified as the fitting punishment for an accessory to murder after the fact; it was explained at the same time that, by Scottish law, Old Fleming, no matter what suspicion might now attach to him, could never be tried for Jessie's murder because he had been a witness at the trial.

The House and the country drew their own conclusions, as we, too, may. Old Fleming and his friends naturally pretested his innocence during his few remaining years. They were gratified when Mrs. McLachlan, a few months after her reprieve, suddenly offered a fourth solution of the crime, in which she absolved the old man from any share in it and declared that she murdered her friend under the influence of laudanum.

But she quickly withdrew this confession, explaining that she had made it only to see how people would look when they heard it. It was a queer form of amusement. She was released after fifteen years, went to America, married again, and died at the close of last century.

Who really murdered Jessie McPherson? Was it Old Fleming? Was it Mrs. McLachlan? Or both of them? And why?

It seems incredible that she could commit the crime alone, either drugged or in her senses; but I am not altogether satisfied that her statement at the trial told the full story. For one thing, if the old gentleman could so easily swear both women to silence on a Bible, why should he then change his mind and want to seal the bargain with a cleaver?

Was he really so frightened that Jessie might reveal that he had attempted familiarity with her? It seems an inadequate motive for murder, even in so persistent a churchgoer.

As a fifth possible solution, I tentatively suggest that a more sinister secret may lie behind the crime. The medical evidence showed that Jessie had borne a child; she had never married. Was it Old Fleming's, or did she persuade him that it was? Was it still alive? Did she now threaten to produce it?

Or did she know some other, equally disreputable, secret in his life? Possibly this concerned Mrs. McLachlan, who, though five years married, remained on strangely familiar terms with her former employer. On such a hypothesis, her share in the affair may not

have been as subordinate as she claimed: perhaps Jessie's death was not wholly unwelcome.

On the other hand, her account may have been mainly correct. She knew that, for her, silence was indeed golden: for she profited at once by the proceeds of the pawned silver and by the dead woman's savings, which she took from her chest. Did she already realise that she might surely rely in future on a venerable old gentleman's generosity?

Nobody knows. Nobody will ever know. The Sandyforth Place murder will always remain an Unsolved Mystery.

ANTONY MARSDEN

The Case of Louis and Harriet Staunton

ON Friday, April 13, 1877, a gentleman with the unlikely name of Mr. Casabianca stood in a Penge shop. . . .

It is a commonplace that truth takes liberties with probability to which fiction dares not aspire. To-day no self-respecting story-writer deals in "Friday the 13th"; nor in fantastic names; nor in the long arm of coincidence; nor even in overheard conversations. . . . And now, consider these facts.

Forbes Road, Penge, was the boundary between Kent and Surrey. And on that Friday night Mr. Casabianca, while shopping there, happened to overhear an inquiry made by a stranger at his side. "A lady visiting in Forbes Road has died suddenly. Where must she be registered? She came from Cudham in Kent."

Mr. Casabianca pricked up his ears. Poor Harriet, he recalled, had been last heard of at a farm near Cudham in Kent.

An unhappy history. His wife's sister Harriet though robust enough, was not too strong in the head. She wrote with difficulty; she had never learnt how to spell. But she was heiress, in possession and reversion, to about £4000. Three years ago, at the age of thirty-three, she had left her mother's house to live with cousins in Walworth, and had there met a Mr. Louis Staunton, to whom she had become engaged.

Her mother objected strongly. Staunton was only twenty-three, an auctioneer's clerk, not well off; a fortune-hunter, Harriet's mother suspected. She tried

to prevent the match, even going so far as to apply for Harriet to be protected by the Court of Chancery as a lunatic.

Her attempts failed, and Harriet bitterly resented them. In June, 1875, the marriage took place in Clapham. The mother declined to attend. There was no settlement; so, as the law then stood, all Harriet's present and future property passed into Louis Staunton's hands.

Harriet's photograph is extant, taken about this time; and is worth studying in view of later events. It shows her small-built, but with a large head; the face and hands plump and well-nourished; the lips full and sensuous; something peculiar about the eyes—a slight cast, possibly, or the left lid and brow somewhat drooping; the expression amiable but vacuous. The engagement, or wedding ring, is proudly displayed.

Three weeks after the marriage, Harriet's mother called on her at Loughborough Park, Brixton. She was curious, and not quite satisfied; but no quarrel took place. Next day she received two letters—one from Louis Staunton, forbidding her the house; and one more temperate from Harriet, who said that in view of Louis' attitude she would rather her mother kept away.

Next March a son was born. Harriet's mother heard of this incidentally; and found soon afterwards that the Stauntons had quitted Brixton, leaving no address. Later, unpleasant rumours reached her of a love-affair between Louis Staunton and Alice Rhodes, one of the cousins in whose home Harriet and Louis had met.

She made inquiries and at once received (January, 1877) an abusive letter from Louis, headed Brighton. A few weeks later she met Alice by accident (the case is full of such accidents) at London Bridge Station. The girl was wearing one of Harriet's brooches, she saw; but would say nothing save that Harriet had been ill and was with Louis at Brighton. The latter statement was untrue.

The mother's doubts were increasing. From inquiries

in Walworth she now learned that Louis's brother Patrick, who had married Alice Rhodes's sister, lived at Cudham, in Kent. On March 5 she went there; and by another queer coincidence, while she was booking her ticket, she encountered Patrick himself.

She disclosed her errand and questioned him; but he denied all knowledge of Harriet's whereabouts. "Damn your daughter!" he said. "If you come to *my* house I'll blow your brains out——"

She took train, none the less—she seems to have been a woman of character. At Halstead, the nearest station, she heard that Louis Staunton lived at Little Grays Farm, five miles off. She drove there, and found Louis and Mrs. Patrick.

This time an open quarrel flared up; Louis threatened violence, and the pair hustled her out of the house. She returned home, informed the police, and had Little Grays watched; but no one answering to Harriet's description was seen there. Where then *was* Harriet? Was the unhappy woman still alive, or——?

Such was the tale, well known to Mr. Casabianca, which on the night of April 13 led him to follow up his chance clue. He traced the doctor who had signed the certificate for the woman in Forbes Road; she proved to be Harriet; the doctor notified the Coroner; and so the police were called in.

At the Old Bailey trial, September, 1877, some of the inner history of Harriet's unhappy married life was revealed. Already at Loughborough Park, where Harriet bore her child in March, 1876, the love-affair between her husband and Alice Rhodes had begun.

Alice looked after her at the confinement; and for servant they had an orphan cousin of Alice's, named Clara Brown. In June the Louis Stauntons removed to Norwood: sending their maid and baby to The Woodlands, near Cudham, where the Patrick Stauntons now lived.



THE CASE OF LOUIS AND HARRIET STAUNTON



WILLIAM HULL

Sir John Holt, the first Protestant, and the first English, lawyer.

In August Harriet joined them there, her husband paying Mrs. Patrick Staunton £1 a week for her keep. From letters of this period it seems that Harriet looked on their separation as temporary, but that Louis had taken an intense dislike to his wife.

In October he brought her to a London solicitor, to assent formally to a transaction which he had made: namely, the sale for £1100 of her reversionary interest in the will of her great-aunt, Lady Rivers. (It is noteworthy that the solicitor, who had known her before marriage, remarked no change in her looks; and that the doctor who attended her confinement had judged her general health to be good.)

She returned to The Woodlands, where, from October till the following April, she lived behind a veil of mystery which has never yet been withdrawn. She was seen once or twice by casual visitors: never by the tradesmen: often by her husband—or so he maintained.

He was now living half a mile away at Little Grays Farm, which he had taken and stocked in October. There is no evidence that Harriet knew he was so near, nor does she seem to have guessed that Alice Rhodes, who also visited at The Woodlands, was passing as his wife.

On April 8, the child was taken by the Patrick Stauntons to Guy's Hospital, where it died the same night; the Stauntons gave no name, but said the child's name was Stormton; soon afterwards Louis Staunton, giving his name as Harris, arranged with an undertaker for the burial of the child.

On April 12, after dark, the three Stauntons and Alice Rhodes arrived at Forbes Road, Penge, with an "invalid lady" for whom they had booked lodgings. She had collapsed, and was carried upstairs by the cabman. Louis went twice that night for a Dr. Longrigg, whom the landlady recommended, and who had already promised to attend the patient next day; but he was out both times, and next day found Harriet beyond aid.

She died that afternoon ; and Longrigg, whose own impression was confirmed by Louis's history of the case, wrote in good faith a certificate, "Primary, cerebral disease : secondary, apoplexy." But he had hardly issued it when a stranger was announced :

"Mr. Casabianca——"

The two accounts now converge. Longrigg withdrew his certificate. A post-mortem was held. And the verdict turned out—starvation !

Sir Henry Hawkins ("Hanging Hawkins" he was called after this) tried his first murder case at the Old Bailey on September 19. All four suspects had been arraigned—the three Stauntons and Rhodes. In Maidstone Gaol, meanwhile, the latter had borne a child : Louis Staunton's.

Public indignation ran high ; but the case was by no means simple. It had to be proved that negligence had directly caused Harriet's death ; and that her death was foreseen or intended. If not, a charge of manslaughter alone would hold good.

Further, if manslaughter alone were proved, who was culpable ? Not Rhodes, at any rate : perhaps not even Louis Staunton himself, since he had paid his wife's keep.

At the inquest Clara Brown testified that Harriet was never restricted : that at The Woodlands she shared family meals and came and went at her pleasure : and that she showed no trace of any ill-health until the week of her death. But at the trial Brown recanted this evidence ; she had been Harriet's gaoler, she confessed, for the Stauntons.

Lastly—assuming it were proved that there was no ill-treatment at Woodlands, but that Harriet fell ill there—was her removal thence to Penge so hazardous that it might reasonably have caused death ? For if so, even without previous negligence, a charge of murder or of manslaughter could yet stand.

Then there were factors, legally outside the case,

which might well influence any jury. The guilty intimacy between Louis and Rhodes : the white-heat of public anger : and the feeling that Harriet's child's death was no less actionable than her own.

The trial lasted seven days. The doctors' evidence alone fills forty close-printed pages. I will outline the respective arguments of the prosecution and the defence.

The Crown, urged, primarily, the condition of the deceased. No expert evidence was needed to show that the body was unkempt, filthy and verminous ; the dirt on it, one witness said, was " like the bark of a tree." More shocking, even, was the post-mortem report, which proved extreme emaciation, a complete absence of fat, and an abnormal smallness of the liver, kidneys and heart, suggesting long starvation.

The deceased's isolation in the last five months of her residence at The Woodlands, was proved by neighbouring witnesses ; the local tradesmen had not known she was there ; and there was testimony of restraint and coercion, from the few visitors who had seen her.

The post-mortem proved no violence ; but there was independent evidence of assault upon both mother and child. For motive, there was the liaison between Louis and Rhodes, and the necessity to avoid local scandal.

Against Louis stood the monetary gain that his marriage had brought him : and his lease and re-stocking of the Little Grays farm in October, when Harriet's interest in her aunt's will had been sold : against Patrick, inferentially, the fact that his acquisition of The Woodlands coincided with Louis's sudden wealth.

Lastly, there was the grave responsibility incurred by moving Harriet to Penge : and the double allegation—first, that if Harriet should die the Stauntons shrank from registering her death locally ; second, that it must have been obvious to them that removal would make death sure.

And the defence ? Against such testimony, what

could the defence find to say? They did their utmost to contend that cerebral or tubercular trouble had been the true cause of death; the doctor's evidence admitted traces of both—but in such small degree as was negligible.

The prisoners' depositions—namely, that Harriet had neither refused food nor been kept from it—were shattered likewise by the medical evidence: even if Clara Brown had not gone back on her previous testimony.

A further plea—that they had kept her prisoner to combat her addiction to drink—was again stultified by the doctors, who found no traces of intemperance in the body whatever.

Sir Henry Hawkins took eleven hours to sum up: the jury an hour and a half to deliberate. Their verdict lay against the prisoners, who were all four sentenced to death.

The news was hailed with savage joy: one journal asking on what grounds the women had been recommended to mercy. Then came a reaction. The public doubted whether Alice Rhodes, whatever her character, were responsible for Harriet's death.

Seven hundred doctors sent in a petition, stating their firm belief that the post-mortem evidence showed death from cerebral disease: and that the symptoms during life were those of brain-disease, not of starvation. The Judge's treatment of some eminent doctors was criticised.

The Court of Criminal Appeal did not then exist, but the case was reopened by the Home Secretary; the Stauntons' sentence was changed to penal servitude; Alice Rhodes was pardoned. In a few years Mrs. Patrick Staunton was released. One of the two brothers died in gaol.

A miscarriage of justice? Assume that Harriet did die of tubercular meningitis: does that annul the Stauntons' responsibility for her treatment, and her ghastly condition at death? Was she starved by her gaolers to make her submissive, or to cure her alleged intemperance, or with more fatal intent?

Were they her gaolers? Their depositions all maintain that she was free; and that she drank, although the doctors' evidence contradicts them. Was the intention to enjoy her inheritance, or merely to protect the liaison between Louis and Alice? And if the former, did Patrick share the spoil?

What *was* the spoil? £4000 between four of them—enough to risk murder for, when Louis already possessed it?

We know far more than Casabianca did, when he came hurrying from that Penge shop to invoke the aid of the law. But we may see small reason to suppose that his suspicions were ill-founded.

A. J. CRONIN

The Great Wyrley Mysteries

TO be condemned for a crime of which one is innocent—that is a nightmare which rarely affects the British citizen. But to George Edalji, spending three years of his life in prison for an outrage which he had never committed, the nightmare became grim reality.

It all goes back to the seventies of last century when a Parsee, Shapurji Edalji, who had taken orders in the Church of England and married an Englishwoman, was called to the living of Great Wyrley, about six miles from Walsall.

Great Wyrley was at this time only a scattered village, surrounded by dismal fields, stunted trees and smoke-darkened hedgerows. In places pit workings scarred this grim landscape and dreary canals intersected it—a country that might well have filled newcomers from pleasanter surroundings with dismay and foreboding.

And, indeed, in 1880, after they had been settled some years in this inhospitable district, the first hint of definite trouble came to the Edaljis. A number of anonymous threatening letters were then received at the vicarage, and eventually Elizabeth Foster, a servant-maid employed there, was accused by the police.

After pleading at her trial that she had sent the letters as a practical joke, she was bound over to keep the peace. As George Edalji, son of the vicar, was at this time only twelve years old and the letters were written in a formed handwriting, they could not under any circumstances have been sent by him.

Tranquillity was now restored for four years, but at

the end of this time another singular outbreak of anonymous letter-writing disturbed the Edaljis. The letters were posted from different towns in the neighbourhood, but all bore internal evidence of a common origin and carried some reference to the previous episode.

For the best part of three years this secret pen distilled its poison, and it is easy to imagine the constant tension and distress produced in the Edalji family, against whom these scurrilous communications were for the most part directed. But the culprit was never traced.

From the standpoint of the subsequent events, one of the definite threats contained in this second series of letters is singularly interesting. On March 17, 1893, the vicar was warned: "Before the end of this year your kid will be either in the graveyard or disgraced for life. . . . Do you think that when we want we cannot copy your kid's writing?" The kid was, of course, George Edalji, and the prophecy, though premature, was to prove only too accurate.

Meanwhile, as if these letters were not enough to embitter the life of the Edaljis, a series of peculiar hoaxes were also perpetrated at their expense during the same period. Among other things, a large key was found on the vicarage doorstep. It proved to have been taken from Walsall Grammar School.

Naturally the police had been informed, but the Chief Constable of the county apparently decided that young George Edalji had himself carried out this stupid joke. George was not a scholar of Walsall Grammar School and would have had to make a journey of six miles in order to obtain the key.

But the Chief Constable wrote to the Rev. S. Edalji in January, 1893, saying: "I shall not pretend to believe any protestations of ignorance which your son may make about this key. My information on the subject does not come from the police."

Thus it is obvious that as early as 1893, the police of Staffordshire had focused some sort of suspicion on young

Edalji and felt able to back their own judgment against all his denials. Indeed, in this idiotic episode may perhaps lie the reason of their arbitrary treatment of him ten years later.

For those anonymous letters and hoaxes were merely a foretaste of the final and overwhelming disaster which overtook the Edaljis in 1903. In February of that year the first of several revolting crimes was perpetrated in Great Wyrley, when a horse was disembowelled and killed. Other victims--horses, sheep and cows--were ripped and butchered at close intervals.

The method of maiming was always the same, but no clue could be found to the criminal. Though it seemed impossible to approach a horse at night in a pitch dark field, with policemen hidden in various vantage posts listening for any movement, to disembowel that horse ferociously and then, necessarily covered with blood, to make an escape--this is what the unknown slayer did again and again.

The county police, goaded by the remarks of the men whose stock they had so far failed to protect, redoubled their vigilance. Thus on the night of August 17, 1903, they were out in considerable force keeping hidden watch in the surrounding fields.

In spite of this, on the morning of August 18, a young miner going to his work was horrified to see a pony with a large gash underneath its belly from which blood was flowing freely. He rushed at once to fetch the police, who arrived on the scene shortly after seven, and after examining the pony and the field, proceeded without further ado to interview George Edalji.

Young Edalji was by now a lawyer. In appearance he was dark-skinned, short-sighted and rather staring. But when the police reached the vicarage, George had already left for his office in Birmingham.

Undeterred, they examined his parents and obtained the clothes he had worn on the previous night. The foot of the trousers was muddy as were also the boots, but



John King

John King



John Watson Taylor

William Hodder

the jacket was the incriminating article. On the cuffs were dark reddish stains. On the right cuff the stain was "four inches long and about half an inch wide," and had the appearance of partly dried blood. On the left cuff was a similar but smaller stain.

Besides these bloodstains, the police averred that this coat bore traces of brown horse hairs and was damp. No likely weapon was found on this first visit. When asked for his dagger, Edalji's mother could only produce a botany stud, but later the police returned and confiscated four razor-blades which they maintained bore stains.

The police now hastened to Birmingham to confront young Edalji with these clothes. George denied all complicity in the affair. But he was, not unnaturally, considerably upset by the sudden descent of the police, and his confusion confirmed their suspicions.

Yet his own account of his movements on the evening of the 17th was definite and straightforward. He had returned from his work in Birmingham, reaching the vicarage at about 6.30 p.m. He dealt with some business, changed his coat and then walked down to the village cobbler with a pair of boots to be mended. He arrived there about 8.35.

Knowing that his supper would not be ready before 9.30, he took a walk, meeting various people on his way. He was seen to enter the vicarage again at 9.25 p.m. This walk would certainly account for the mud on his trousers and boots, for, although the weather was fine during the evening, rain had fallen earlier and the roads were very muddy.

Edalji's father subsequently testified that he slept in the same bedroom as his son, who went to bed that night at about 10.45 p.m. At 4 a.m. the father woke and young Edalji was then asleep. The door was locked on the inside with the key in the keyhole. The vicar was a light sleeper and would have heard if anyone had unlocked the door, the key of which was hard to turn.

All this seemed to testify to Edalji's innocence. Nevertheless, the result of the Birmingham visit was that the inspector took Edalji into custody.

This rapid and uncompromising arrest had been made by noon, which may appear a miracle of detection for country policemen, but it must be remembered that for six months they had been mystified by the perpetrator of these dreadful outrages, which afforded them ample opportunity to formulate various suspicions.

The fact that they had harboured such suspicions is proved not only by their rapid descent on the vicarage on the morning of August 18th, but by another detail which subsequently transpired—namely that two constables had spent the night of August 17-18 keeping close watch upon the vicarage.

How important this latter point becomes is revealed by the evidence of these constables who were obliged to state that following his return at 9.25 p.m. on that night of August 17-18, the night when the crime was committed, George Edalji had not left the vicarage at all.

This was a decided blow for the police, but they managed to triumph over it. They had a prisoner and the damning evidence of the "blood-stained jacket covered with horse hairs." In addition, some foot-prints found in the field in which the pony was attacked were agreed to correspond with the size of Edalji's boots.

The theory, moreover, was now advanced that Edalji had himself written the anonymous letters which gave his name, with some others, as a member of a gang formed for the sole purpose of disembowelling inoffensive animals. In this they were stoutly upheld by a handwriting "expert."

Accordingly, as the two constables had seen no one leave the vicarage, it was decided that Edalji must have attacked the pony before going in to supper.

A rather complicated itinerary was attributed to him. After leaving the cobbler's, he was supposed to have

hurried off for three-quarters of a mile across railway sidings and a main line to commit the crime. He would then have hurried back to the vicarage, arriving so composed and tidy that he attracted no special attention. The expedition must have taken less than an hour.

On this evidence Edalji was committed for trial at the next Stafford Quarter Sessions. The production of this prisoner might have been a greater triumph for the county police had not the mutilation of horses continued unabated while Edalji lay in prison awaiting trial.

He had refused bail, adding almost hysterically, in the conviction of his innocence: "When the next horse is killed it will not be by me." Yet, when another horse *was* mutilated, this very natural remark was remembered and used *against* Edalji, the supposition of the prosecution being either that an incredibly chivalrous friend had thus tried to prove Edalji's innocence, or that Edalji was merely one member of a gang.

Certainly this further mutilation put the police distinctly in a quandary, but, adopting the "gang" theory, they again moved quickly and managed to secure from a boy of nineteen a confession.

In this, Harry Green, the actual owner of a slaughtered horse, said: "The horse was killed to keep the game rolling." Green subsequently secured a ticket for South Africa and before he went, presumably feeling safe at last from the wild accusations which were flying round Great Wyrley, he said that he had been forced to sign this confession and denied that he had any hand in killing the horse.

The villagers, who had been very willing to suspect the alien vicar's son, now began to sympathise with him and to feel he was innocent.

But their belated sympathy availed Edalji little. He was tried, found guilty, and sentenced to seven years' penal servitude.

While the picture of George Edalji languishing in prison remains with you, let us examine the evidence

carefully, without attempting to fit it to any preconceived theory.

First, the evidence of the wound itself. The veterinary surgeon who examined the pony soon after the police pointed out that, as the animal was still able to stand, the wound could not have been made more than six hours before, or the rapid drain of blood would have completely exhausted the beast.

This fixed the time of the outrage not earlier than one o'clock in the morning. Edalji, as we know, had a perfect alibi for this time—the evidence of one clergyman and *two* constables.

But, supposing the earlier time chosen by the police was, after all, correct, it invalidated another portion of their evidence—that of the footprints. If Edalji committed this crime before 9.30, how was it that the footprints were still traceable in the morning, after the heavy rain which fell at intervals from midnight until dawn?

The evidence of the damp and blood-stained coat is more serious. But it was not raining when Edalji was at first supposed to have committed the crime, so the dampness (which the vicar denied) is beside the point.

On the other hand, if he had, as the prosecuting counsel later asserted in spite of the alibi, mutilated the pony at about one in the morning, the coat would have been sopping wet, for it rained heavily at that time. But, if the coat *was* damp, why were the bloodstains, made presumably at the same time, dry?

And they must have been, for otherwise the policeman, by merely rubbing his finger across them, would have had it stained red with irrefutable evidence.

Twelve hours later this coat reached the police surgeon. By this time the large bloodstains had suffered an odd chemical change to “two stains in the centre of the right cuff, each about the size of a threepenny bit.” These proved to be mammalian blood, but no more stains were found.

Splashes of the gravy of under-done meat or a cut finger might account for such stains ; certainly they are a little small to have been acquired in ripping a horse with a razor on a dark night.

There is still the evidence of the presence of horsehair on this same coat. When the police took charge of it at the vicarage, the vicar, after repeated inspection, denied their assertion that there were hairs on the jacket.

Such a conflict of evidence between two interested groups could easily have been settled satisfactorily on the spot by calling in a referee, but this was not done. When the police surgeon received the coat twelve hours later he picked twenty-nine horse hairs from its surface.

In the meantime, however, the pony had been destroyed and a portion of its hide had been cut off and secured by the police. It would be interesting to know whether these two exhibits were carelessly carried in the same parcel, or whether the police, in their investigations of the hide, did not get some hairs on their clothes and transfer them by the sheerest accident to the coat.

And lastly, the proof that Edalji wrote the anonymous letters must be regarded as unsatisfactory.

After this examination of the evidence one cannot help being dismayed at the travesty of English justice meted out to George Edalji. Conviction of his innocence deepened in the public mind. But not until three years of his sentence had passed was Edalji released.

Then, quite suddenly he was freed, but not pardoned. This compromise on the part of the authorities was not accepted as final by his friends, who fought for, and finally obtained, a pardon in May, 1907.

Since, in the light of these facts, Edalji's innocence must be logically admitted, are there no clues to the actual criminal ? Discounting the Farringdon case as isolated and sporadic, it becomes increasingly probable that the solution of this complicated crime lies behind the mysterious personality of "G. H. Darby."

In 1904, while Edalji lay in prison, these maiming

outrages recommenced, and were continued, executed and often predicted in letters bearing the signature "G. H. Darby." This fantastic person even went so far as to style himself in a burst of proud exhibitionism "captain of the Wyrley gang."

But there never was a Wyrley gang. The whole psychosis of the crime is individual. That there should have been several people in Great Wyrley afflicted with this peculiar mania for mutilating animals, and that they should have sought out each other to form an organised gang, is a theory positively refuted by alienists.

"G. H. Darby" was the single-handed perpetrator. Indeed, when the war came, he wrote with crazy patriotism to promise that there would be no mutilation of cattle during hostilities—a sacrifice on his part for which he may have compensated himself by going to the Front, where there would be more scope for his mania than in the peaceful fields of the Midlands. At any rate, he kept his word. *The outrages ceased.*

Then who *was* "G. H. Darby"? He obviously knew the Wyrley neighbourhood inside out; was aware, even although he was not the author, of the anonymous letters which had troubled the Edaljis in 1888 and 1892-5—since in his own letters he traded upon this knowledge so cunningly. But he was, beyond everything, a man of abnormal mentality, almost certainly an obsessional neuropath. Possible he was the victim of the paranoid form of *dementia præcox*.

As such he must have set seriously to work to extend his aberrant imagining and, beginning with cautious, but extremely realistic pictures of maimings and a killing, he dramatised himself as captain of a band where men kept watch while he, the great, the infallible killer, did his work.

Thus he did kill, and through his letters in which, remembering the resounding success of those anonymous epistles of 1892-5, he incorporated Edalji's name, he betrayed the insane vanity which accompanied his recurrent mania.

Reality was probably more drab, and the powerful gang guarding their omnipotent chief at his great, his bloody sport, dwindles to a solitary, slinking figure in deserted lanes and fields.

And yet a man dreadful in his power to evade justice, more dreadful still, perhaps, in that an innocent fellow-creature suffered for his crimes.

CLENNELL WILKINSON

Murder on the Mountain

ON the morning of April 27, 1910, there was a curious little scene on the platform of the railway station at Aberdeen. A train from Glasgow and Peterhead had just come in and many of the passengers were waiting on the platform to catch the connection to Perth.

From the door of a reserved compartment emerged a party of six convicts, "all heavily manacled" (says a local reporter), with an escort of armed warders. They also were waiting for the Caledonian train, and it presently became known that the men were being transferred from Peterhead Prison to the Criminal Lunatic Department of the prison at Perth.

People on the platform glanced at them with that mixture of pity and mere idle curiosity always noticeable on such occasions. One of the convicts, a sturdy, square-shouldered individual, attracted particular attention.

He was below the middle height, but powerfully built. His hair, once fair, now bristled grey on a close-cropped head. His large, full-lipped mouth hung a little open. His wide, pale eyes, stared vacantly about him.

Suddenly there was a faint stir of excitement. A whisper ran round: "*The murderer of Arran!*" Yes, the broad-shouldered convict was John Watson Laurie himself! Yet one doubts if the crowd thickened much. The older people present might crane their necks for a closer view. The younger would not—they had never heard of the Arran murderer.

It had made a tremendous sensation in its time. Few Scottish murder trials have produced fiercer controversy.

It was nearly twenty-one years before this scene on the railway station at Aberdeen that two young men, a Scot and an Englishman, holiday-makers on the picturesque isle of Arran out in the estuary of the Clyde, set off together on a July afternoon to climb Goatfell.

The Englishman was a slight, dark, eager young man, a visitor from London, enjoying his holiday, well-dressed, affable to strangers. His name was Edwin Robert Rose. The Scot was a chance acquaintance picked up quite casually during the last few days. He was fair, broad-shouldered, reticent, and gave his name as Annandale.

They passed other parties of climbers that afternoon, and with each of these the dark young man spoke a few friendly words, but the fair one trudged on in silence. They were last seen near the summit, standing together and apparently discussing their next step.

Late that night—very late—Mr. Annandale came down from the mountain, alone. He arrived at the lodgings in the little village of Invercloy, where Rose and himself had been staying.

He packed his bag, and Rose's, and quietly left the house (without paying his bill), so that when the landlady, at eleven o'clock the next morning, went to see whether her lodgers were stirring, she found no trace of their presence except a tennis racket and one or two other things belonging to Rose.

Annandale (or Laurie) left Arran betimes and went to Port Bannatyne, where he stayed for some days, spending money freely and having in his possession several articles of clothing later identified as having belonged to Rose. Again "bilking" his landlady, he moved on to Glasgow, which was his home, and there quietly resumed his ordinary avocation, which was that of a pattern-maker in some locomotive works.

For some days nothing happened. There was no

hue and cry. If the pattern-maker's thoughts often flew to that mountain-side on Arran below the summit of Goatfell, to a certain big grey boulder tilted a little on one side, and to what lay hidden beneath it, he gave no sign. He went about his business composedly.

Here was one of those strange delays one so often comes across in criminal cases. If Laurie had possessed even an average degree of imagination he must have known that it could be only a temporary lull.

For Rose's relations in London were expecting him back from his holiday on a certain date (July 18). They were alarmed when he failed to arrive.

A whole week was somehow allowed to slip by before they got in touch with the Buteshire police and the first search party was organised.

There was plenty of evidence to go upon. There were the other climbers who had encountered our pair on that fatal afternoon; there were friends of Rose's who had departed by steamer on the very day of his disappearance, leaving him with "Annandale" on the pier; there was the landlady's story—all this must have aroused the suspicion of the authorities and indicated the line of inquiry to pursue! Yet another week went by before the search parties discovered anything.

Then on Sunday, August 4, as the searchers were at work—hundreds of them, volunteers and policemen, scattered all over Goatfell—there came a sudden cry from a group who had been exploring the steep descent by Coire-na-Fuhren, where a gully runs down the mountain-side. Near the foot of the slope there was a big grey boulder, tilted to one side.

Someone, quite recently, had carefully filled the opening with stones and grass. But one of the searchers had pulled these stones away and peeped underneath. There he saw what remained of Edwin Robert Rose—his head beaten in, his face unrecognisable.

The newspapers had it all by now. Laurie, still in Glasgow, read with growing anxiety of the progress of

the search. Sooner or later, someone must look beneath that boulder. He prepared to bolt.

And just then he chanced to meet in the street an acquaintance who had seen him during his recent holiday, and had known of his intention to stay at Arran with a visitor called Rose.

"What do you know of the Arran mystery?" asked this inconvenient acquaintance. Laurie "hummed and hawed."

"But have you not been reading the papers?" exclaimed the friend. "Didn't you see there is a tourist missing called Rose?" Laurie again "hummed and hawed," and finally said that this must be a different Mr. Rose, since the Rose he stayed with on the island had returned with him to the mainland and gone away to Leeds.

The friend urged Laurie to tell all this to the police, and made an appointment to meet him next day. Laurie did not keep the appointment. He, who had been going about in poor Rose's blazer and yachting cap, and thrusting himself forward in public as though there were nothing to fear, now suddenly realised his danger.

He sold his pattern-maker's tools to raise money and left by an early train for the south (he still had Rose's return half-ticket to London in his pocket). Four days after the encounter with his friend he arrived in Liverpool, still with Rose's property about him, even wearing the dead man's shirts.

He was forty-eight hours in Liverpool, and then left abruptly, telling his landlady that he had secured a position in Manchester. By this time the police were close on his heels, and he must have guessed it.

Yet he now took the astounding step of writing a long letter to a Glasgow paper, the *Mail*, describing at some length a love affair, three years old, in which he claimed to have been hardly used by a young lady whose name he gave—though the editor did not print it—and concluding with the assertion that he had left Rose on

the top of Goatfell "in the company of two men who came from Loch Ranza," and had never seen him since.

For the moment the police lost him. But on August 27 (that is, seventeen days later) another long letter, this time bearing the Aberdeen post-mark, arrived at the offices of the *Glasgow Herald*. It was written in the same egotistical strain, gleefully pointing out some of the false scents started by the newspaper "sleuths."

Why should he want to rob "poor Rose," asked Laurie? The Englishman had very little money; "he wore an old Geneva watch, with no gold albert attached, and I am sure no one ever saw him wear a ring on his finger."

But Laurie was that kind of "wanted" man who can never keep away from his old haunts. On the sixth day after writing his letter from Aberdeen he was hanging about the railway station at Larkhall, quite close to Glasgow, apparently with no definite purpose.

The station-master noticed him and thought he recognised the broad shoulders, the fair hair and staring eyes. He tipped the wink to a policeman, and when Laurie left the station he found himself being followed along the dusty country road by a uniformed representative of the law.

The policeman's stride was rapid and purposeful. Laurie did not like the look of it. Losing his nerve, he bolted through a gate and ran across the field, over the railway and along the Lanark road, pursued all the way by the constable, who was shouting: "Catch that man—that's Laurie!"

A party of miners from Larkhall joined in the chase. The hunted man turned aside from the road and plunged into Quarry Woods. There they found him in the undergrowth, panting and exhausted, feebly trying to cut his throat with a razor.

"I am Laurie," he admitted as they dragged him out. "I robbed the man, but I did not murder him."

There are men still living to-day who can remember the trial. Notably Mr. William Roughead, that wise, ironic commentator on criminal history, whose books are well known to-day, and who tells us that this trial was always "one of his favourites." He remembers every moment of it, from the interminable arguments of the medical witnesses to the last tense moment of the death sentence :

"Without, in the black November night, a great crowd silently awaited the issue of life or death. The lofty, dimly lighted court room, the candles glimmering in the shadow of the Bench, the imposing presence of the Justice-Clerk in his robes of scarlet and white, the tiers of tense, expectant faces, and in the dock the cause and object of it all : that calm, commonplace, respectable figure—the callow and brutal murderer whom Justice had tardily unmasked."

Laurie was ordered to be hanged at Greenock on the morning of November 30.

Where, then, is the mystery? Laurie had behaved throughout like a conscience-stricken man. Yet the jury brought him in Guilty by a bare majority !

It is a point worth recording that the Judge, at the end of the first day's hearing, had taken the unusual step of declaring that "this case must be finished to-morrow night." The following day was a Saturday, and it was, said the Judge, "exceedingly desirable that this case should not be carried over Sunday."

Why? Except as a matter of personal inconvenience to judge and jury.

The jury, after two tiring days, retired to consider their verdict as late as ten o'clock on the Saturday night. We know nothing of their physical condition, but we do know that they had complained of the bad meals they were given during the hearing of the case. All these circumstances were distinctly unusual.

Then there was the fact that the evidence was purely

circumstantial. No one saw the crime committed. Laurie said that he left Rose, alive and well on the mountain-top, talking to some strangers. That was his original assertion, and he stuck to it obstinately, though it obviously tied his counsel's hands.

For if Laurie had left his companion when they reached the summit, what had he been doing during the several hours that elapsed before he returned to their lodgings? He never attempted to explain this, and it was perhaps fortunate for him that in 1889, before the introduction of the Criminal Evidence Act, he could not be put in the witness box and cross-examined.

The defence took the obvious line that Rose met his death from a fall among the rocks, landing on his head and injuring his face beyond recognition. But they could not go on to say that Laurie had seen this, and had taken to flight after robbing and concealing the corpse.

They had to maintain, on his instructions, that he was miles away at the time. It was never explained how Rose's pockets came to have been emptied and his battered body thrust beneath the boulder.

The Dean of Faculty, Mr. J. B. Balfour, who led for the defence, made the best of a bad job. He brought medical witnesses who testified that these horrible injuries might have been caused by a fall; in cross-examination he tied up the Crown witnesses to such an extent that most of them admitted in the end that the thing was just possible.

One, who had been medical officer to the police of Edinburgh, and "had considerable experience of falls from great heights, such as Dean Bridge and the Castle Rock," began by discounting the theory contemptuously, but ended by stating that he had "rarely, if ever," seen such effects of a fall—a very different statement.

However, he was found guilty and condemned to be hanged at Greenock. Then the fun began. All the sentimentalists of Scotland rose like an army to demand

reprieve. Greenock, which hated the unsolicited distinction of providing Laurie with his last public appearance, took the lead in the agitation.

An influential committee was appointed—copies of the petition for reprieve were exhibited in public buildings and on tables set out in the streets, where crowds queued up to sign them all day long, and even at night by lamplight! School-children, marshalled by their teachers, signed in hundreds.

The petitioners prayed the Secretary for Scotland (Lord Lothian) to consider that most of the evidence against Laurie was circumstantial; that the medical witnesses were not agreed; that the jury's verdict was only a majority verdict; that there was insanity in the prisoner's family and that he himself had shown symptoms of mental disease.

This last is the interesting point. It was never put forward by the defence at the trial. Therefore we have no sworn evidence to go upon. But it was known that Lord Lothian had appointed a medical commission to inquire into the prisoner's state of mind and report upon it before the date of execution. Why had he done this? It is the principal mystery of the Arran case.

The doctors interviewed Laurie in prison. He was behaving precisely like a guilty man. His references to Rose were callous. He admitted now that he had seen his companion slip and fall to his death among the rocks and that he had gone and emptied his pockets. But, he added, regretfully, "he had not very much." It was, at any rate, a better story than he had given to his counsel.

The doctors made their report. The agitation for reprieve had now died down, and there was a general impression that the experts had found Laurie to be sane.

But the Secretary for Scotland respited him on November 27 on the ground that the doctors had found him "of unsound mind."

And a few days later his sentence was changed to one of penal servitude for life. Immediately protests began to pour into the newspapers. If the public conscience was shocked by the decision to hang Laurie, it was apparently still more shocked at his reprieve.

Writer after writer demanded to know what grounds there could be for finding this man insane, except his mad behaviour when the police were after him. If it was only necessary to act like a panic-stricken idiot when the hue and cry had started, almost any murderer might get away with it.

A question was put in the House of Commons. Mr. Pickersgill, M.P., asked the Lord Advocate whether he would now publish the report of the medical experts; whether it was a fact that these experts had reported that Laurie was "not irresponsible"; and, if so, why the sentence had been commuted.

The Lord Advocate answered briefly that "the words quoted in the question were not used by the medical experts." He refused to publish the report, remarking that it would be "quite contrary to practice."

There the matter rested. Laurie went to prison. The reasons for supposing him to be mad have never yet been given to the world. But he did his best to support Lord Lothian's view by going most indubitably mad in the year 1910 and spending the remainder of his sentence in criminal lunatic asylums.

He died in the autumn of 1930—only four years ago! The gates of Perth Prison had closed behind him forty-one years before—just a quarter of a century before the outbreak of the Great War.

No one has ever seen that medical report. In my humble opinion Laurie was no more mad than every criminal is mad—that is in thinking that his own immediate necessities were more important than all the world beside.

The real mystery of the case is whether Rose slipped and fell and killed himself, and Laurie then went and

robbed the corpse and battered the face to make it unrecognisable, or whether Laurie hit him from behind and murdered him for his money.

I am inclined to the latter view. I think the jury was perfectly right. And I think that John Watson Laurie was one of the luckiest criminals that ever lived when he got that reprieve. . . . If you can call it lucky.

MARGARET COLE

The Trial of Oscar Slater

THE case of Oscar Slater is probably the most widely known of any in the history of crime, except the few which stand out for reasons of sheer sensation. It is also one of the most disquieting for those who want to believe in the fairness and wisdom of the law.

Slater, after eighteen and a half years in gaol, has been pardoned and compensated (not very adequately). In the eyes of the law, therefore, Slater, having been guilty for eighteen and a half years, is now innocent ; but this innocence would never have been established, in face of the difficulties that were put in the way, if people like Sir Arthur Conan Doyle had not worked unremittingly and in spite of all rebuffs to get the case reopened.

What is particularly alarming is what I may call "the dominance of the preconceived idea." Not everybody, even to this day, realises that there was nothing whatever to connect Slater with the murder, except a single clue, which turned out to be a misleading one. If it had not been for this clue, Slater would never have been brought into court at all.

But, having once brought him in, the Scottish police seem to have got on to a tramline from which it was impossible to move them.

A few words should suffice to "reconstruct" the murder in the memories of readers. Miss Marion Gilchrist was an old lady of eighty, who lived in a fair-sized flat in Queen's Terrace, Glasgow, with one maid, Helen Lambie.

Little came out about her at the trial, or anywhere

else ; but it is known that she did not get on too well with some of her relatives, and that she was a jewel collector. She had about £3000 worth of jewels in her flat, and in order better to protect them (and presumably herself) she had double locks put on her front door, and had also arranged with the Adamses, who lived in the flat below, to knock on her floor if at any time she wanted assistance.

On the evening of December 21, 1908, Helen Lambie went out to do some shopping, leaving Miss Gilchrist reading in the dining-room. She went out at seven o'clock, and came back, according to herself, about ten minutes later, to find Mr. Adams outside the door saying he had been alarmed by noises coming from Miss Gilchrist's flat.

She said : " Oh, that will be the pulleys in the kitchen " ; and, unlocking the door, went in with Mr. Adams. While she was in the hall a man passed her, went out, and ran down the stairs ; but she took no particular notice of him, and did not make any inquiries about her mistress, but went into the kitchen to look at the pulleys, and then into the bedroom.

Only when Mr. Adams asked : " Where is your mistress ? " did she go into the dining-room, and there she found Miss Gilchrist's body lying battered and covered with a rug. The bones of her chest as well as of her head had been smashed, and a good deal of blood must have spurted out.

Then Helen summoned Mr. Adams, and he ran downstairs in pursuit of the man whom they had both seen ; but as he could find no trace of the stranger he got the police and a doctor, also named Adams. Subsequently the police-surgeon took the case over, and Dr. Adams was not called at all at the trial.

It seemed pretty clear that the man whom Mr. Adams and Helen Lambie saw had at any rate something to do with the crime. It also seemed clear that the motive was robbery of a kind, for a wooden box which contained

Miss Gilchrist's private papers lay broken open in her dressing-room, and jewellery was scattered about. Nothing, however, had disappeared except one diamond brooch.

The news spread very rapidly that there had been a murder in Queen's Terrace; and, later that same evening, a girl of fourteen, called Mary Barrowman, came home much later than her mother was prepared to stomach, and related, with great excitement, that she had been nearly knocked down by a man in a great hurry coming out of the house in which Miss Gilchrist's flat was.

Mrs. Barrowman, who seems to have been a sensible parent, in effect told Mary to go to bed and not make up fairy stories, but two days later she met a detective on the stairs and said to him that "our Mary" had seen a man whom she was ready to describe.

The police thereupon interviewed "Our Mary," and as a result sent out a circular asking for news of *two* men, one as described by Mary Barrowman and one as described by Helen Lambie, who, however, "did not think she would know him again." They also would like to know more about the diamond brooch.

Here they got some information almost immediately. A cycle dealer named Allan M'Lean, member of a club called the Sloper Club, turned up and told them that a fellow-member, a German Jew, called "Oscar," had been trying to sell a diamond brooch on the Monday of the murder; and as "Oscar" was sallow, he thought he might be the wanted man. He did not know "Oscar's" address, but he could show them the house where he lived, which was only a few minutes' walk from Miss Gilchrist's flat.

Off went the police to the house, only to find that "Oscar," in company with the woman with whom he lived, had left Glasgow on Christmas Day, and that the foreign maid who remained in the flat did not appear to know where they had gone.

The clue of the diamond brooch thus seemed to have





Marion Callahan

William H. ...

led straight to Oscar Slater. But within a very short time the police, at all events, knew that this was not the case. The diamond brooch which Slater had been offering for sale was not Miss Gilchrist's brooch, was not even a pair to it. Moreover, it had actually been pawned by Slater himself some weeks before the murder.

At this point an astute reader of detective novels would have realised that the only possible connection of Slater with the crime had proved a complete wash-out. He did not know Miss Gilchrist; and the prosecution never alleged that he did.

He did not know that she had any jewellery; and nothing was found in his flat to connect him either with her or with her property. There was only a diamond brooch—and that was the wrong one. Most people would have said it was now time to go and look for the real criminal.

But not so the police. They were impressed by the fact that his origins were obscure. He had passed under several names. He did not live with his wife. There was no evidence that he practised his nominal profession of dentistry. In the course of his many occupations he had dealt in jewellery.

Finally, he had left Glasgow for America four days after the crime, and registered on a boat under an assumed name. It was vain to suggest (though it was the fact) that his departure had been decided upon weeks before, and that he was only waiting to go until his flat was let, or that another change of name in a man who had changed so many times was not in itself any particular evidence of a guilty flight. Slater, if he was a murderer, would have fled; therefore, flight it must have been.

Then the police worked hard indeed. They amalgamated the two men whom they had first been seeking into one, and made exhaustive inquiries about anyone else who could have seen him. They found plenty.

They found a whole household of women who had seen a man standing and staring suspiciously at Miss

Gilchrist's house; they found a booking-clerk at the nearest railway station who, soon after the time of the murder, had sold a ticket to a man so agitated that he never picked it up.

They found a constable who had seen a man standing in the road and thought he was drunk but found he wasn't, and they found a tram-conductor who had had a passenger whom the mere mention of the murder startled so much that he leapt off the tram without having completed the journey for which he had paid.

All these people, and several others (Slater's portrait having been broadcast all over the Press), recognised him at the trial with varying degrees of certitude, though they seem to have been pretty hazy about the clothes he wore. They picked him out from a group which contained, beside Slater, nine policemen in plain clothes and two railway officials.

Meanwhile, Helen Lambie and Mary Barrowman had been taken for a trip to New York to see if they could recognise him. When they saw Slater, walking between a United States deputy marshal, six feet four in height, and another official wearing a badge, they at once said: "That's the man." Slater could have resisted extradition; but he preferred to return and stand his trial. On his return the police searched his baggage; they found an old waterproof with some stains on it, which the experts said might or might not be human blood, and a half-pound hammer, which had no stains on it at all.

On this evidence, Slater was tried and condemned by a majority of three in a jury of fifteen. Lord Guthrie, the Judge, remarked in his charge to the jury that a man like Oscar Slater "has not the presumption of innocence in his favour which is a form in the case of every man, but a reality in the case of the ordinary man."

This unguarded sentence of Lord Guthrie's helped to secure the prisoner his pardon. The Court, which in 1928 quashed the sentence on Oscar Slater, had no fault

to find with the evidence, but did agree that the Judge (who was by then dead and could not resent anybody's remarks) had been guilty of misdirection.

Read in cold blood, the whole history of the case is nothing short of astounding. There was literally no evidence against the man at all except the highly dubious evidence of identity, and nobody, I think, who remembers the case of Adolf Beck can think that the evidence of identity proved, at the most, anything more than that the man who met Adams and Helen Lambie in Miss Gilchrist's flat was quite like Oscar Slater to look at.

The whole conduct of the trial, and the great unwillingness that was shown to reopen it—which I have no space to describe here—is extraordinary enough. It was simply a case of the police dashing so blindly after their one red herring that they never even looked for the real murderer.

For Miss Gilchrist *was* murdered, and her murderer has never been caught. Nor is it possible, lacking the information which could have been got at the time, to find out now who the murderer was. We can only note two or three points.

First, that if Helen Lambie's recollection of her own movements and the time she took over them was accurate, the whole thing happened in an incredibly short space of time. The murderer must have been waiting for the moment when she slipped out and have gone in instantly.

Secondly, that the murderer was admitted by Miss Gilchrist herself, and that quickly. There was no time to parley. And Miss Gilchrist was very nervous about her jewellery. The probability is therefore (*a*) that she knew the man, and (*b*) that he did not come after her jewellery. He did not take it, at all events, except possibly one brooch.

What, then, did he come for? He broke open a box of private papers. What he found there—if he found anything—we do not know. Helen Lambie either knew nothing about her mistress's papers, or was never asked.

But it is at least possible that one or more of the persons known to Miss Gilchrist, with whom she did not get on, knew of the existence of some document of which he or they were desperately anxious to obtain possession.

There crept into the proceedings at the trial one or two hints about Miss Gilchrist's life which might with advantage have been followed up.

I have said "*one or more*" of Miss Gilchrist's acquaintances, and said it advisedly. For the time was very short for one man to have murdered the old lady, covered her up, and then gone into the bedroom, lit the gas, broken the box open, ransacked it, and been ready to depart coolly when Helen Lambie returned; and from the testimony of one witness (who was not called by the Crown at the trial) it seems quite possible that the police were right in their original idea, and that there were two men in flight from Queen's Crescent that night.

As I write, I can almost see it—the two of them, waiting in the dusk of December to make sure that Helen Lambie has gone out, and then knocking at the door and being admitted by the old lady. They talk a minute or two; they ask her to give them whatever it is they want; but she refuses.

She defies and threatens them, and they hear her stamp on the floor as a signal, and guess that that means the end of them.

One man leaps to silence her, and silences her for ever, perhaps with the blood-stained chair that Dr. Adams—the doctor whom the police did not call—thought the most probable weapon, perhaps with something that he carried away in his pocket; the other goes to the bedroom, and searches until he finds the deadly paper, possibly slipping a diamond brooch into his pocket as a blind—and a perfect blind it proved.

The actual murderer makes off at once; the other finishes his job, maybe stopping to cover the body with the rug, and strolls out—surely the coolest criminal on record—actually under Helen Lambie's nose. Helen

Lambie—this is clear if nothing else is—saw either the murderer or his companion, face to face, under the gas-light in the hall.

But in an evil day she equated the face she saw with the the features of Oscar Slater, who knew no more about the murder of Miss Gilchrist than the man in the moon.

MARTIN ARMSTRONG

The Case of Adolf Beck

ON December 16, 1895, Mr. Adolf Beck, a Norwegian living in London in somewhat straitened circumstances, was standing at the door of a house in Victoria Street, where he had a flat, when he was accosted by a woman who looked him in the face and said: "Sir, I know you."

Mr. Beck was surprised. "What do you want from me?" he asked, and thereupon he pushed past her into the street. "Sir," said the woman, "I shall follow you wherever you go."

Mr. Beck ran across Victoria Street and the woman followed him. He hurried towards Victoria Station, and catching sight of a policeman standing near the clock on the island where Victoria Street is joined by Vauxhall Bridge Road, he went up to him and complained of the woman's behaviour.

His command of English was sufficient to enable him to refer to her in very lurid terms. In a moment the woman, whose name was Otilie Meissonier, joined them and declared her intention of charging Mr. Beck. The policeman thereupon conducted them both to Rochester Row Police Station.

The officer in charge, having heard her story, at once sent for Miss Meissonier's servant and for a woman called Daisy Grant, who had complained to the police of an experience precisely similar to that described by Miss Meissonier. These two women, on seeing Mr. Beck, declared that he was the man. The officer, in consequence,

refused to take Mr. Beck's charge and accepted Miss Meissonier's.

Miss Meissonier's charge was this: Three weeks previously she had passed Mr. Beck in Victoria Street. After passing he had turned and said: "Pardon me, are you not Lady Everton?" or "Egerton?" and then added: "Oh, pardon, I've made a mistake." He then asked her where she was going.

She was going, she said, to the Chrysanthemum Show. He replied that he had an estate in Lincolnshire where he kept ten gardeners. Miss Meissonier told him she had just received a box of chrysanthemums. Mr. Beck was interested. Might he call on her and see them? It was arranged that he should call next day.

He did so, and was extremely affable. It turned out, according to his story, that he was an aristocrat, a cousin of Lord Salisbury's. His income, he said, was £180,000 a year, and he suggested that they should go to the Riviera together. But she would require dresses: he would give her dresses. And jewels.

Had she a watch? She had three. One, a gold one, had a broken glass. The affable gentleman offered to get it mended and have a diamond star set in the back. She gave it to him. And rings? If she would give him a ring, for the purpose of measurement, he would buy her some rings. She gave him two. As to the dresses, she must choose them herself. He wrote her a cheque on the Union Bank in St. James' Street and took his leave.

Three minutes after he had gone, Miss Meissonier found that a small antique enamelled watch had vanished from a table. Somewhat alarmed, she set off in a cab for the St. James' Street branch of the Union Bank, to cash the cheque. The branch did not exist. She went to two police stations and gave a description of her caller to the police.

On December 17 (the day after Miss Meissonier had given him in charge) Mr. Beck was brought up at the Westminster Police Court and was remanded in custody.

On the following day a person who had happened to see an account of the proceedings in a newspaper was struck by the close resemblance between the crime described and those for which a certain John Smith had been convicted in 1877.

He wrote to the police, pointing this out. His action had important results: it enabled the authorities to discover that the incriminating documents in the Smith and the Beck cases were in every instance in the same handwriting. Apparently, then, Beck was the Smith of nineteen years ago.

Furthermore, two retired police officials, Spurrell and Redstone, who had been concerned in the Smith case, identified Beck as Smith. Many other women now came forward, who had been swindled in an exactly similar way, and eleven of them unhesitatingly picked out Beck from several other men as the culprit.

Some failed to do so; one stated positively that he was not: but even in these cases the handwriting on the dud cheques given to them appeared to be identical with the rest. The culprit had invariably given his name either as Lord Wilton or Lord Winton de Willoughby.

The next step in the evidence is impressive. Mr. Gurrin, a handwriting expert, declared that not only were the cheques and other documents in both cases in an identical hand, but also that it was a disguised hand obviously written by Beck, whose admitted writing he had examined. On February 6, 1896, Beck was committed for trial at the Central Criminal Court on ten charges.

Before the trial, Mr. Dutton, Beck's solicitor, applied to the Commissioner of Police for leave to inspect the record of John Smith, convicted in 1877: he thought it possible that the physical description of Smith might prove to be inapplicable to Beck, which would be a highly important discovery. His request was refused.

He then applied for the production of Smith's record at Beck's trial: this, too, was refused.

The trial opened on March 3. Mr. Horace Avory (as



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he then was) was counsel for the Crown, Mr. C. F. Gill counsel for the prisoner. Now it was open to Mr. Avory either to indict Beck for misdemeanour on the ten counts, making no reference to the conviction under the name of Smith in 1877, or to proceed on one of several indictments for felony and larceny in which the conviction of 1877 was charged.

Actually, under a certain Act, it was possible to charge the previous conviction for misdemeanour also. The reason given by Mr. Avory, years later, for choosing the first and not the second course open to him appears to us at this stage, as it doubtless appeared then to Mr. Avory, entirely in the prisoner's favour.

These are Mr. Avory's actual words: "If a man were tried upon one indictment only for felony, in such a case as this, it might be difficult or impossible for him to establish a defence either by way of alibi or otherwise to that particular charge, but if he were tried upon ten different charges, giving at least ten different dates, it not only enabled the jury to have the whole case before them, but it enabled him (the prisoner) to prove an alibi or other defence to any one of those charges." And so Mr. Avory, in opening the case, made no reference to the 1877 crimes.

Now the result of this was that, although both the 1877 and the 1896 documents were in Court, only those of 1896 were presented for inspection. The point is vital: let us consider its implications.

It was an undeniable fact that both sets of documents were in the same handwriting. But the expert had declared that this writing was obviously the work of Beck. This, of course, is not an undeniable fact, but an expert opinion. Suppose, for instance, that it could be proved that at the time when all the 1877 documents were written Beck was out of England. What then?

Obviously, in that case, Beck could not have written any of the disguised writing; in other words, the expert would be wrong. But if no reference was allowed

during the trial to the 1877 conviction, and if, as was the case, Beck was in England when all the 1896 documents were written, the defence could not prove, against the expert's assertion, that Beck had not written them.

When the evidence for both sides had been heard Beck was allowed to speak. "From beginning to end of these horrible charges," he said, "I have had nothing to do with them. I am absolutely innocent."

The result of the trial was that Beck was convicted and sentenced to seven years' penal servitude. As a convict he was, presumably by an oversight, given a number, D W 523. This is now revealed as a palpable injustice, for Smith's number had been D 523, and so Beck's number connected him with the 1877 conviction, although his trial had refrained from doing so.

Now, though the persons concerned in convicting and sentencing Beck had acted in perfect good faith, they had, as a matter of fact, completely failed to solve the problem. Indeed, if Mr. Gill had been permitted to refer to the conviction of 1877, he was in a position to prove that Beck was in Peru during the whole period of those crimes.

Accordingly, immediately after Beck's conviction, Mr. Dutton and Beck himself began a series of petitions on the strength of this, and Mr. Dutton applied once again for leave to inspect the Smith record. Nearly a year later, as a result of these petitions, an official at the Home Office caused inquiries to be made into the records both of Smith and Beck.

These records had never before been compared. The inquiry elicited an amazing piece of information: that Smith (whose real name was Meyer) was a Jew and had been circumcised, and that Beck had not. Now, this particular mark of identity was not in those days included in recording the distinguishing marks of prisoners, and it was merely by chance that it now became known.

But now that it *was* known it was surely enough to prove Beck's innocence. The fact remains that it did not

do so. Why? Because Beck had not, as we have seen, been identified at his trial with the crimes of 1877.

It is true that the authorities wrote to the Judge who had tried and sentenced Beck and informed him of the discovery. The Judge, in reply, agreed (how could he not?) that Smith and Beck could not be the same person, but with reference to the Peru alibi mentioned in the petitions, he wrote: "I should be inclined to regard it with the gravest suspicion."

It is difficult to see what weight this statement was intended to carry, since the question of Beck being the culprit in 1887 had not, as we know, been raised. Yet the Home Office was apparently satisfied, and continued to assume, in face of what seems to us now overwhelming evidence to the contrary, that Beck was guilty of the 1896 charges.

The only advantage that the unhappy man reaped from the new revelation was that he now received a new number which did not connect him with the crimes of 1877.

In 1901 Beck was discharged on licence. Thereupon he set about collecting evidence to prove his innocence, but, though he spent several hundred pounds, he had no success. Then, in 1903, precisely the same frauds on women as those connected with Smith in 1877 and those connected with Beck in 1896 began to occur once more.

The police, it seems, at once fixed their suspicions on Beck, and on their advice one of the women victims went to a restaurant in Oxford Street which Beck was known to frequent. She remained there for an hour and a half while Beck was there without recognising him as her man.

Another woman was instructed by the police to stand at a street corner near the house where Beck was lodging. He came out, she went up to him and accused him of carrying off her jewels and money, and a police inspector at once took him into custody.

And then the whole wretched business began over

again. Four other women came forward and identified Beck. He was tried once more and convicted, but the Judge, Mr. Justice Grantham, was not satisfied and refrained, for the time being, from passing sentence.

If one runs through the evidence of each of the victims from 1877 to 1904 (the date of Beck's latest arrest), their similarity, even to various small details, is astounding.

Now if Beck be assumed to be the culprit once more, what would be the inevitable result of his arrest? It would obviously be that these occurrences would cease. And that is exactly what happened. From the date of Beck's arrest on April 15, 1904, there were no more of these now familiar frauds; no more, that is, until about ten days after his conviction. Then, surprisingly, they began again.

Now, at last, the solution must be approaching, for there could be no question, this time, of Beck's being involved: he was safe in prison. Who, then, was the culprit? A day or two later William Thomas, alias John Smith (actually a German named Meyer), was arrested while pawning some rings which he had obtained from two women by precisely the same methods as those of which Beck had been convicted.

Four of the women who had identified Beck a few weeks before admitted, when confronted with this Thomas, that they had been mistaken, that Thomas was the man.

And there was no other fact, even more clinching. Thomas had written a letter to one of his victims, and the writing was identical with the writing in the documents of 1877, 1896, and the final Beck case of that same year, 1904. Well, there it was at last: the handwriting expert had been wrong.

Thomas was sentenced to five years' penal servitude.

Within a fortnight Beck was released. He was granted a free pardon in respect of both his convictions, and received £5000 as compensation for what he had suffered:

So much for the lamentable case of Adolf Beck.

An amazing number of coincidences pointed to the innocent Beck's identity with the real criminal :

1. Both were foreigners and spoke broken English.
2. A certain resemblance between them made it possible for women, no doubt in a state of excitement, to identify one with the other.
3. A person totally unconnected with the affair notices and points out to the police the exact similarity of the frauds of 1877 and 1896, thus putting the police on a false scent.
4. Beck was known to have pawned women's jewellery.
5. Beck was discovered to have in his possession various smart articles of clothing similar to those which the women described the culprit as wearing.
6. The two men had actually stayed at the same hotel, the Grand Hotel, Charing Cross.
7. Many of the first meetings between the culprit and his victims occurred in close vicinity to Beck's various abodes.

If this was a coincidence it was an astounding one. It is hardly credible, and it is a question which will never now be solved.

HON. H. FLETCHER MOULTON

The Brixton Taxi Murder

TOWARDS a quarter to ten on the evening of Wednesday, May 9, 1923, passers-by in Acre Lane, Brixton, saw two men struggling near a taxi-cab some forty yards down a side street, Baytree Road.

One cried for help: "Save me—he is killing me"—then his opponent threw him to the ground, shot twice, flung down his weapon and fled along the road.

The wounded man struggled to his feet and stumbled towards the main thoroughfare, calling to the spectators to keep back, probably as a warning that his assailant was armed, collapsed as he reached the corner and was dead within the minute.

A tragedy in the twilight with the figures showing but as dim silhouettes, so that distances and movements were matters of uncertainty, and recognition of the assassin impossible. Such was the death of Jacob Dickey, the taxi-driver, for which Alexander Campbell Mason stood his trial, was convicted and sentenced to death.

The murderer—whoever he was—had escaped for the moment, and though the identity of his victim was easily established through his badge number, that identity gave no clue to his assailant.

The only starting-point for investigation lay in what the murderer had left behind, viz. the revolver with seven cartridges, six of which had been discharged, a jemmy wrapped in paper, a grey suède glove heavily bloodstained, and a black walking-cane with a gold top.

A photograph of this stick was published in the papers

on Friday, and it was identified by some person—probably from the underworld—as belonging to one Eddie Vivian, already well known to the police, and, accordingly, on Saturday morning Vivian and the woman he was living with were taken from their rooms in Charlwood Street, Pimlico, to Brixton Police Station and there interrogated.

Vivian apparently immediately admitted that the stick was his property, but made a statement which completely exculpated him, and identified one, Mason, as the man who had been in possession of the stick on the Wednesday evening and who had committed the murder. The gist of the story given in Vivian's evidence at the trial was as follows.

On the Sunday before the murder Mason had come to Vivian's rooms, having been discharged from prison in Scotland on the previous day. He and Vivian were old acquaintances—in fact, workmates—for they had been convicted together for housebreaking in January 1922 (and, though Vivian had received the severer sentence for that offence on account of his being in possession of a revolver, Mason had been the longer in prison, since at the expiration of his imprisonment in England he had been removed to Scotland to serve a further term for a previous offence committed there).

According to Vivian's account, Mason had shortly before his release sent him a smuggled note asking him to procure for Mason a revolver from a man named Nunn, a note which Vivian said had been lost or destroyed, and the contents of which he was, therefore, allowed to give from memory.

On the Monday morning Mason went to see Nunn, and when later Vivian met them by appointment in the Waterloo Road, Mason said that he had the revolver.

After Nunn had left them they went into an eating house, where Mason pulled out the revolver and a match-box full of cartridges and said he had a good mind to "stick-up a taxi-driver, plant him one, and take his

money," whereupon Vivian had told him "not to be a damned fool."

Their subsequent movements on Monday were doubtful, but on the Tuesday evening, having purchased a jemmy, they went in the direction of the Crystal Palace to seek for a house suitable for burglary. On Wednesday Vivian felt symptoms of stomach trouble, which he attributed to some sardines he had eaten on the previous Sunday, and by the evening these symptoms became so severe that he was unable to go out. Mason, therefore, went alone, taking with him Vivian's gloves and gold-headed stick, the jemmy and an electric torch.

At about ten-thirty Mason returned with torn and bloodstained clothes and a wounded hand, and told how he had "made a terrible mess of things," had shot a taxi-driver, firing seven shots at him without killing him, and had then escaped over walls and railings till he found a woman who let him through her house into Acre Lane.

Vivian assisted Mason to remove the worst traces of his misadventures, and permitted him to pass the night at his house, since he was penniless, but on the next day Vivian suggested that in view of what had happened his presence in Charlwood Street might be dangerous for them all. Mason then left, and Vivian saw him no more.

Mason's story, as told in the box, was in general agreement with Vivian's as to their movements on the Monday and Tuesday, but he denied that he had either asked for a revolver or obtained one. On the contrary, he said that Vivian had shown him a revolver on the Monday morning, and that he, Mason, mindful of their previous experience, had said he would not work with Vivian if he carried a revolver.

After their exploratory expedition on Tuesday they had decided on serious work for the Wednesday. It was therefore arranged that Vivian should get up and join Mason at a bar near Victoria Station.





1911-1912

This was duly effected, and then Vivian, who attributed their previous mischance to failure to provide for their safe retreat with their booty, declared he would get a "straight-up" taxi, i.e. one whose driver was not averse to being party to a criminal expedition in return for a share of the spoil.

He claimed to know of some who normally stood near Piccadilly, but said that Mason must not accompany him there, as a strange face might frighten the driver, and gave him a rendezvous in Bay Tree Road, Brixton.

Mason then described his journey, performed on foot owing to lack of money, which included a visit to Nunn's house in Webber Row, Lambeth, in the hope of effecting a loan—a visit which was unsuccessful owing to Nunn's absence.

Unfortunately for Mason, it was shown that such a journey would have taken at least twenty minutes more than the time allotted. He arrived at the rendezvous, and almost immediately a taxi drove past hooting as if to signal, and then slowed down.

A man jumped out and the driver grabbed at him, and then came revolver shots by whose light Mason recognised the passenger as Vivian. I may say that such a recognition from the light of the flashes, though difficult, would not be impossible.

Mason, according to his own story, fled in terror, heard Vivian behind him, helped him over the first fence, and then made his way along the top of a wall while Vivian took some other route.

They met again at Charlwood Street, where Vivian told how he had found a "straight-up" taxi in Shaftesbury Avenue, but that when the driver arrived at Bay Tree Road, and Vivian said he had no money, he had threatened to drive to the police station—an unpleasant prospect for a fare if he were carrying a revolver and jemmy—and that when he tried to escape the driver had grabbed at him so that he was compelled to shoot in order to get away.

Mason's defence had only been disclosed at the last moment, and obviously he was lying about one important factor, viz. his route to Acre Lane, while Vivian's evidence, almost entirely directed to what had passed between him and Mason when no third party was present, was unshaken. The result was inevitable, and the jury after a very short absence returned a verdict of "Guilty!"

Mason made a poor show in the witness-box, and his tale was certainly concocted in part, and very badly concocted too. He had but to conjure into his pocket the necessary coppers for a tram fare, and the time difficulty would have disappeared—as it would have if he had laid his course along the direct route from Victoria by Vauxhall Bridge Road, instead of introducing that divagation to Nunn's house in Webber Row.

Had Mason's story been consistent in this respect I think it is a very open question whether he would have been convicted. There would have been the position of the principal witness for the prosecution and the accused—both men with criminal records—each swearing that the other had not only committed the murder, but had confessed to committing it—with little direct outside evidence of value in discriminating between the two stories.

The woman with whom Vivian was living had seen Mason on the Wednesday evening standing by Vivian's bed with the stick in his hand, but was not prepared to swear that he actually took it with him, and, moreover, the defence would have tried, and possibly with success, to depreciate the value of her evidence on account of her relationship with Vivian.

On the other hand, Nunn denied Vivian's story that he, Nunn, had given Mason the revolver, or that he had seen either Vivian or Mason on the Monday, while Mrs. Nunn thought she had recognised Mason's voice at the door, which was opened by her daughter, a girl of ten, who was considered incapable of giving evidence.

Turning from the verbal to the circumstantial evidence, there was one point which could have been strongly pressed by the advocate for the defence.

Vivian's story was based on a deliberate plot by Mason to rob—and if need be murder—a taxi-driver, and it might well have been argued that if such were indeed the plot the setting of the tragedy was all wrong.

The only obvious reason for a criminal's selection of a taxi-driver as a victim is that he can direct him to some place where a robbery can be carried out without fear of interruption. Why then should he choose a spot like Bay Tree Road, in sight of a main thoroughfare and surrounded by houses whose occupants might rush out at the first shot?

And this argument might have been fortified by pointing out that Bay Tree Road, entered as it was from Brixton High Road, led to nowhere but Acre Lane, which the driver would already have passed on his journey from Shaftesbury Avenue. The jury could have been asked whether the route taken was not more consistent with his having been directed to drive down Bay Tree Road, and with Mason's story of a rendezvous, than with the case put forward by the prosecution.

If then, as I have said, Mason's story had been consistent in itself, it is possible that these considerations would have induced the jury to give the prisoner the benefit of the doubt.

One point which was pressed strongly against the prisoner, both by the Counsel for the prosecution and in the summing up, was that his defence had never been indicated, either by statement or question, until the actual trial, and here I think that more allowance might have been made for Mason's difficulties.

A prisoner under remand and without a legal adviser is one of the most isolated and helpless creatures conceivable. If he sees a friend to discuss his defence or suggest the names of possible witnesses, everything must be said in the presence of a warder, his statements may

be given in evidence against him at the trial, and the witness may be visited by the police—as in fact was done in Mason's case.

He had from the first asked for legal aid, but in those days such aid could only be given if the prisoner had already "made a statement," and when Mason offered to do this to qualify for such aid, the magistrate advised him in his own interest to keep silence.

So he remained in prison, alone and unaided, for nearly two months till friends raised the money to provide solicitor and counsel, and by then he was probably too frightened to instruct them properly. Happily, the law is now changed, and in the case of a serious charge a prisoner is given legal aid immediately.

Much, too, was said about an innocent man never fearing to tell the truth—a comfortable maxim for those whose conscience is clear and whose statements would involve no confession of crime. But in Mason's case (if we accept his story) the truth would have involved the admission that he had started out on a felonious expedition.

In any case, the non-disclosure of the lines of the defence did not in this case impose any additional difficulties on the prosecution.

Much might be said as to the incompleteness of the police evidence, and in fact this was the subject of some severe criticism in the summing up. Not only were the plans of the environs of Bay Tree Road inaccurate—so that repeated correction was necessary—but no attempt was made to take casts of the supposed fugitives' tracks across the gardens.

As Mr. Justice Rigby Swift pointed out in his summing up, one such cast, had it existed, would have afforded invaluable evidence as to who the fugitive really was, and have afforded support or refutation of Mason's story that he himself had gone not through the gardens, but along the top of the wall.

The absence of any evidence as to finger-prints on the

revolver, cartridges, jemmy and taxi is also remarkable, and it is regrettable that our police do not—or at least did not in this case—attempt to apply the discriminating tests for blood types, as this might have assisted in checking Mason's story as to the stains on his clothes being from the wound on his own hand, and not from the victim's blood.

Mason's appeal was dismissed, as the conduct of the trial had been unimpeachable, and it was impossible to contend that there was not evidence on which the jury could convict.

Yet the Home Secretary (Lord Bridgeman) exercised his prerogative of mercy, and in view of the atrocity of the crime this could only have been because in his opinion there was such a possibility of further evidence being discovered as rendered it advisable that Mason should not pay the irreparable penalty.

Certainly rumours existed, and have persisted, which suggest that other persons whose names were not even mentioned at the trial might have been present at the scene of the tragedy, and even in the taxi itself, who might be able to throw new light on the matter.

It is because of these rumours, and of the doubts which seem to have existed in the minds of a section of the public and the Press, that this case has been included—like others, such as the Steinie Morrison case—in this series, and not because it is suggested that the conviction of Mason was erroneous or that the evidence on which it was based was perjured.

PERCY HOSKINS

The Brighton Trunk Crime No. 1

THE Brighton Trunk No. 1 mystery has been acclaimed—perhaps rather hastily—as the perfect crime. I am one of those persons who believe that many perfect murders are committed in this country every year. Many detectives of long experience share my conviction that in many instances, contrary to the general belief, murder does *not* out. When he retired from Scotland Yard some years ago, Sir Basil Thomson expressed this opinion :

“The proverb ‘Murder will out’ is employed whenever one out of many thousands of undiscovered murderers is caught by a chance coincidence that captures the popular imagination. It is because murder will not out that the pleasant shock of surprise when it does calls for a proverb to enshrine the phenomenon. The poisoner who is brought to justice is almost invariably proved to have killed other victims without exciting suspicion until he has grown careless.”

Such views, however, are not in unison with those who are at the moment claiming for the Brighton case the distinction of the perfect murder. Consider awhile and you must realise that the knowledge of the perfect murder must obviously be only in the possession of the murderer.

He must be the only person to know that the death of the victim was not entirely due to the inscription “natural causes” which the death certificate probably bears. Unlike the trunk murderer, he must be able to continue his ordinary life with very little fear of the possibility of his crime being detected.

No, there is nothing perfect in either the conception or the committing of the Brighton crime—in fact, if a system which I shall suggest was adopted, there would probably be no future case of the body of a murder victim being disposed of in this manner.

The author of the Brighton crime cannot even console himself with the thought that at least from his point of view the crime has been perfect—for it may yet be solved.

It may be solved through one seemingly insignificant but actually very important detail which, in the interests of justice, has never been publicly revealed. That is a story I am not permitted to tell . . . yet. One day we may be quoting it as another example of the murderer's one mistake.

The principal details in the history of this investigation are fairly well known. I am going to reveal many hitherto unknown facts which may help when private theories of this greatest of all modern mysteries are being discussed.

Choosing a day when the staff would be too busy to pay him any particular attention, the murderer took the trunk containing the torso of his victim to the cloakroom at Brighton railway station, on June 6—Derby Day. It was the seventieth trunk to be deposited there within a few hours.

The trunk, new and apparently bought for the purpose, was a cheap production of light plywood covered with brown canvas and reinforced with four cane bands. It had a single handle. The ticket G.1945 was issued by the attendant to the murderer, acknowledging the custody of the trunk.

On the following day, June 7, the murderer took the severed legs of his victim in a suitcase to the main line cloakroom at King's Cross station in London.

So well did the murderer judge his opportunities—he chose the busiest hours—that neither cloakroom attendant has the slightest recollection of the man who left those parcels with their grim contents.

How he disposed of the head and the arms of the victim must remain a mystery for the moment. It has been suggested that these limbs were placed in the tray which was missing from the trunk, that the murderer converted it into a parcel and deposited it elsewhere, but it does not seem feasible that if the head and arms were disposed of in this way they should still remain undiscovered.

It is more reasonable to assume that they were either destroyed by fire, thrown into the sea, or buried.

The plan of distributing the remains in various places is not original, for it was adopted by Greenacre, who, with Sarah Gale, was found guilty of the murder of Hannah Brown some years ago. He distributed portions of the body in London over a radius of twenty-one miles.

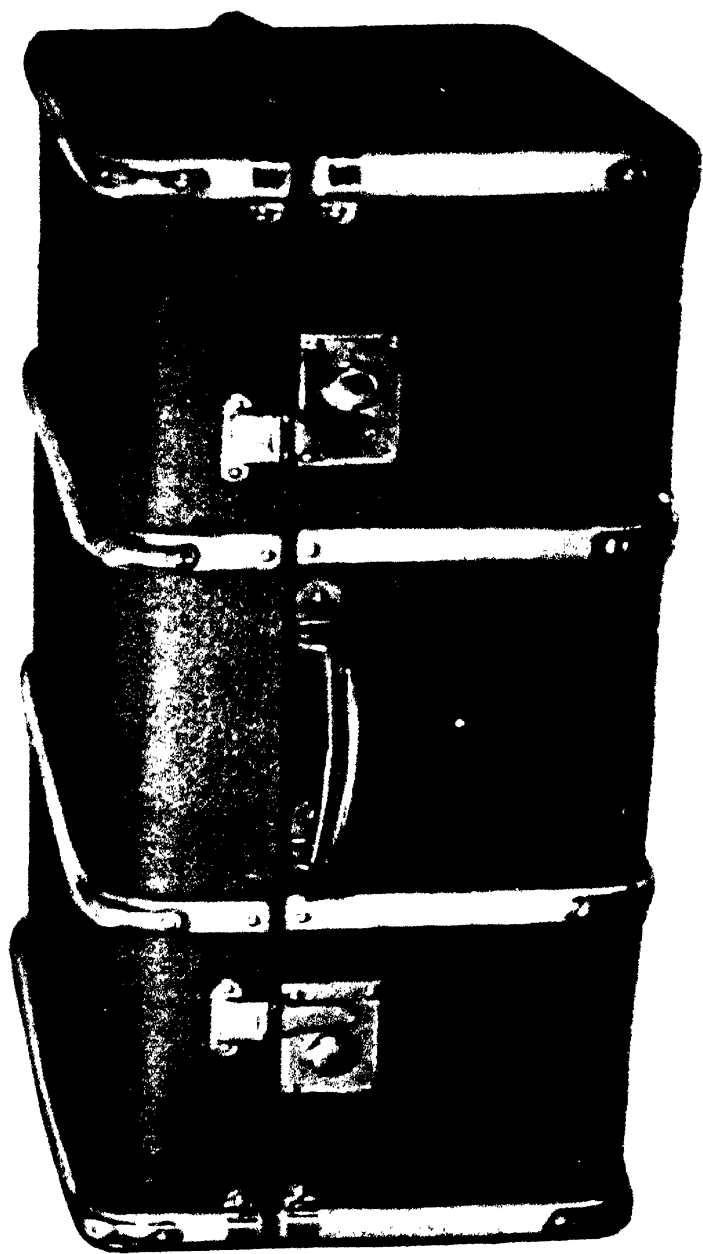
It was not until June 17—a lapse of ten days—that a clerk at Brighton, remembering the unclaimed trunk, subjected it to a more careful examination and discovered its horrible secret.

The torso had been covered with brown paper and tied around with 19 feet of venetian blind cord. A face flannel with a red border and a quantity of cotton wool were the only other articles the trunk held.

Upon one of the pieces of brown paper, the examining detectives found the latter half of a word written in blue pencil. The letters F-O-R-D were easily discernible; obviously the end of a surname or a place name, such as Stafford, Salford, Ilford, Guildford, or Dartford. Congealed blood obliterated the preceding letter, but it began with a line which might have been the line of a "d" or a hastily made "l."

While the assistance of police forces in every district containing these letters in its name was being sought, the paper was on its way in the custody of an officer to the Government laboratories in Chancery Lane. Ultra-violet rays and all the various other chemical tests which were applied by the experts failed to give the slightest suggestion of those preceding letters.

Realising that this was a crime requiring national





co-operation, the Chief Constable of Brighton had by this time called in Scotland Yard. He was fortunate in being given the services of Robert Donaldson, whose astuteness and persistency in tackling clueless crimes had frequently upheld the reputation of the Criminal Investigation Department.

With him there came to Brighton Sir Bernard Spilsbury, who was able to say that the murder had taken place about May 30 or 31, and that the victim had been a well-nourished young woman not younger than twenty-one and not older than twenty-eight. She was about 5 feet 2 inches in height, weighed approximately 8 stone 7 pounds, and was in a state of pregnancy. He could find no scar, operation mark, or birthmark which might help in the matter of identification.

Sir Bernard then filled the trunk with articles to the equivalent of the woman's weight. By various tests he was able to deduce that a normal man could only carry it for a very short distance without seeking some assistance.

On Donaldson's instructions, searches had been begun in every other railway centre where the missing limbs might conceivably have been deposited.

The following day brought news from King's Cross of the discovery of the legs. From an examination of these, Sir Bernard could deduce very little further beyond the fact that the victim would have been wearing four and a half size shoes. Newspapers which were found in the trunk were, by an examination of the "make-up," proved to be copies of an edition which circulates within a radius of 50 miles of London.

Practically all the paper found in the suitcase at King's Cross had been saturated with olive oil.

These, then, were the only clues which Donaldson possessed when he began to organise his unparalleled man-hunt. First came the great round-up of missing girls. Seven hundred and thirty-two who had left home for one reason or another were traced—some not

altogether pleased at having been sought by the murder squad.

Simultaneously Donaldson launched his campaign of inquiries at every hospital, every nursing home, and every doctor's surgery. Here is one illustration of the amazing extent of this search.

At one London hospital it was found that five thousand women had received pre-natal advice or treatment during the material dates considered applicable to the victim. Each of the five thousand had to be accounted for.

They were all traced with the exception of fifteen. What has become of those fifteen is one of the minor mysteries in this search for an identity.

A similar process was adopted in connection with the manufacturers and retailers of trunks, and although it involved discreet inquiries into some thousands of such purchases, it failed to yield the essential clue.

House agents were invited to co-operate, with the result that every house, bungalow or flat vacated about the time of the murder was visited by the police of every city, town and village. Even the Continent supplied many clues which had to be followed. One thousand and twenty letters concerning possible victims came from Germany alone.

What has been the result of this great activity? Although the scene of the murder is not yet located, and although the identification of the victim has not been established, a considerable measure of progress has been made.

If it will temporarily allay the fears of the murderer, let me say at once that at the present time there are on Scotland Yard's list no fewer than twenty-two actual suspects. The process of elimination is slow, but that one of those twenty-two committed the crime Scotland Yard is confident. By a similar process of elimination, Chief Inspector Donaldson and his men have now narrowed down the number of missing girls, among whom the name of the victim may be found, to seven.

Readers may here remark : " But this is entirely contrary to a statement made by a retiring police chief the other day. He declared that the authorities were certain they knew who committed the crime."

I am fully aware to whom this statement referred, and I can say now with definite authority that this particular man has since been completely cleared of the suspicions which associated him with the crime. The supposed " victim " was traced some time ago—a fact which completely kills the circumstantial case which several misleading actions and incidents had created.

A similar false clue led to detectives beginning digging operations a few months ago on the shore at Jaywick, near Clacton. Here again, after weeks of investigation, the supposed " victim " was found in the Midlands, quite unaware that she had been the cause of so much perturbation at Scotland Yard.

These are only two examples of the several thousands of false trails which the police have had to follow.

A certain fallacy has been created in connection with this murder which I should at this stage dispel. There is apparently a general belief that from the manner in which the body was dismembered, the murderer must have been a doctor, a medical student, a butcher or some other person with a knowledge of anatomy.

Nothing is further from the truth.

The medical experts found nothing to suggest that the murderer displayed any skill in the commission of his grim task. Actually the many attempts made upon two of the limbs, and the terrible manner in which the flesh had been mutilated, would suggest that the criminal had not the slightest elementary knowledge of anatomy.

The meagre evidence of the cause of death which exists gives no support to the idea of a carefully planned or skilfully executed crime. All the medical experts can tell us is that it was probably due to a blow on the head involving no great strength.

If the victim had been strangled the post-mortem

would have revealed, even allowing for the lapse of time, petechial hæmorrhages or Tardieu spots on the surface of the lungs and heart.

[Tardieu spots are named after Auguste Francois Tardieu (1818-1879), a French physician, who first discovered them. They are minute capillary hæmorrhages due to the raised blood-pressure caused by strangulation.]

If the victim had been shot the examination would have shown the heart empty of blood. It might be, in view of the victim's condition, that she died from pressure—it might have been slight and accidentally caused—upon the vagus nerves at the junction of the neck; but in the absence of any further evidence it seems reasonable to accept the blow on the head theory.

This problem has created a remarkable situation, for without actual evidence of the cause of death the Coroner has been unable to return the usual verdict of "Murder by some person or persons unknown." It stands recorded in the vague terms of "Found dead."

A glimpse or two behind the scenes of the investigation may convince students of criminology that everything possible has been done from a scientific point of view to secure a chain of evidence.

Geologists, botanists and Harley-street medical experts have been employed to determine points which have arisen. The Government scientists in particular carried out two extraordinary experiments.

They took a piece of the saturated brown paper in which the legs had been wrapped, and from it extracted a wineglassful of pure olive oil. This experiment was of greater importance than may be supposed.

If the oil had been found to have been of the ordinary cooking type it would have supported the theories which had been voiced: (*a*) that the murder had taken place in a cookshop or restaurant, (*b*) that the murderer had originally intended to burn the remains. But oil of this particular type was formerly used by surgeons after

performing operations to prevent profuse bleeding. Did the murderer bear this fact in mind?

Did he use oil to prevent the blood from penetrating the trunk? Scotland Yard now believe that he did.

Here is another scientific test secret which has no precedent in murder investigation. A handful of sand was secured from a mat found in the car of a suspect. It was sent to the Government laboratories with a sample of Brighton sand and similar samples from every coast town between Yarmouth and Bournemouth. The scientists decided that the sand in the mat came from Clacton. This fact clinched the suspect's alibi.

Hopes of a solution have many times suddenly appeared and then vanished with equal rapidity.

There was the anonymous letter from the person signing himself "The Londoner." The police appealed to him to come forward. He did, and the information he gave made the prospects of a solution appear very bright.

It involved searching premises upon which were found hack-saws and even brown paper of the same texture as that found in the trunk. A cross-examination of the occupier, however, brought the detectives' optimism down again with a rush.

One could continue indefinitely with illustrations of clues which led nowhere.

To-day only one statement stands firm. That is the story given by Porter Todd, and concerns the history of a man who travelled from Dartford to Brighton by way of London Bridge on the day the trunk was deposited in the cloakroom.

This passenger, who so far has ignored the police appeals inviting him to come forward, had with him a large heavy fibre trunk which Porter Todd assisted him to get on to the three o'clock train for Brighton. He travelled third class and was also noticed by a girl who journeyed in the same train. Five cheap day tickets to Brighton were issued by the booking-office clerk at

Dartford railway station on that day. The purchasers of four of these tickets were traced by the police; the fifth cannot be found. Although every possible step has been taken to trace this passenger, he remains to-day the one mysterious figure in the background of the investigation.

What type of man is this much-sought murderer, who, contrary to the practice of the majority of his predecessors in crime, chose to efface the victim rather than efface himself?

The principal dates in the history of the crime shed a little light on this question. The murder, says Sir Bernard Spilsbury, took place on May 30 or 31—a Wednesday or a Thursday. Then, on Wednesday, June 6, we find the murderer at Brighton, and on Thursday, June 7, it is equally evident that he was at King's Cross.

Obviously, argues Scotland Yard, he is either a man of leisure, a man unemployed, a man not following fixed hours of employment, or a man on holiday. He undoubtedly committed his crime in a place where he had no fear of being interrupted, because the experts say that the remains were not packed in the trunk until some time after dismemberment.

The fact that the trunk, the suitcase, the brown paper and the cord were all new suggests that these articles were all purchased after the crime. The murderer had reason to dread the exposure the condition of the victim might eventually bring. There can be no other motive.

Of the victim we know nothing beyond the fact that, according to the medical men, she was obviously a woman who had taken great care of herself from a health point of view. She was not a woman of low moral character, as might be imagined.

From these facts one can continue to build many theories until the persistency of Chief Inspector Donaldson brings new facts to light.

No suggestion has yet emanated from any source as to what might be done to prevent a repetition of this

crime. It has brought to light other crimes of concealment. Bodies of three children have been discovered during searches into various articles of luggage, while the amount of stolen property which has been recovered by the police during their systematic operations is estimated at a very large figure.

I throw out the suggestion that, as a preventive measure to this growing method of concealing crime the railway officials should assume the same powers as the Customs authorities. I do not imply that it is necessary for them to inspect the contents of every trunk or suitcase which is deposited, but I believe that a system of requesting the owner of one in every ten to declare and, if necessary, show the contents, would meet the case.

The mere fact that he might be called upon to open the trunk would, I claim, be sufficient to deter any murderer from attempting to copy the example set in this case.

It may be argued that the circumstances do not justify the cost or time such a system might involve. Delve into the history of crime and you will realise that past murderers have acquired a habit of basing their procedure on any method which someone else has found successful.

There may not be an epidemic of trunk crimes, but in any case, the cost of such a system would be nothing in comparison to the many thousands of pounds the Brighton trunk crime has already cost the State.

THE END

