

## Trial of Professor Webster,

FOR  
THE MURDER OF  
**DR. GEORGE PARKMAN,**  
NOVEMBER 22, 1849.

## SECOND DAY.

Boston, Wednesday, March 20, 1850.

The visit of the jury to the medical college this morning was continued beyond the hour to which the court adjourned, and it was a quarter to 10 o'clock when the Court came in.

The prisoner who was conducted to his seat at about 8 o'clock, conversed occasionally with such of his friends as came along, and otherwise appeared to take his troubles with much philosophy. The court room was very much crowded.

The first proceedings was to exhibit to the court a plan of the premises at the College, where the murder of Dr Parkman is alleged to have been committed. The drawing was shown by Mr Bemis for the prosecution.

City Marshal Francis Tukey called and sworn. I have partial direction of the police department. We commenced the search for Dr Parkman on Saturday, 24th November, in the forenoon.

Advertisements were put in the papers on Saturday afternoon; I think it impossible to have made a greater or more thorough search than was made for Dr Parkman during that day and the following week. 28,000 handbills were issued, and men were despatched in every direction, for fifty miles around the city. I think the remains were discovered in one week from the day he was missing. In consequence of information, I went to Mr Shaw's house in Summer-street, (the younger Shaw) and from thence to the College. Dr. Bigelow (the younger) went with me; I went into Mr Littlefield's apartments and found officers Trenholm and Clapp; Littlefield, Trenholm, Dr Bigelow, Clapp, and myself entered beneath the college, into the cellar through a trap door.

We passed through an open space, I should think of sixty or seventy feet to the far corner when we saw a hole about eighteen inches square broken through a brick wall; the hole had the appearance of being recently made, and mortar laying alongside of it.

A very perfect model of the medical college building was here exhibited to the court and jury. The model was so constructed as to be taken in pieces, thus showing the internal arrangement of the various rooms, the laboratory, vault &c., to the best advantage.

Witness continued: We entered the trap door on the south side of the building; on reaching the hole I took a lamp and looked in; saw what I took to be pieces of flesh; the water was coming through the outside wall; Mr Trenholm went in and passed out the pieces to Mr Clapp; there were three pieces, a thigh, part of the body, and leg; Dr Bigelow said that was no place for dissecting subjects. I asked Littlefield if there was any way to go into the vault except the communication from Dr Webster's privy; he said there was not. We heard some one overhead which we thought was Dr Webster; we ascended to the laboratory by the door, and I passed in, while the officers looked for the person we heard walking about in the lecture room, but they did not find him. The officers accompanied me into the laboratory; it was the lower one; I saw pieces of cinders with bones mixed with them; Mr Clapp took a piece in his hand. I directed the officers to leave everything as they were, and left.

I next sent officers to Cambridge for Dr Webster, and called upon Mr Perket the county attorney.

[A box containing the fragments of bones, teeth, &c., taken from the grate, was here opened by Mr Tukey, and he testified to its having been in his possession since the coroner's inquest; the knife found in the tea chest was also shown. These things will be put in the case hereafter.]

Witness continued: I did not go into the college again that night; was on the outside of the building during the evening.

Cross examined: The remains were lying a little to one side from a direct line with the hole of the privy, can't tell the precise distance. Can't say what particular piece of the remains was particularly in a line with the hole. They lay little towards the north wall. I think the tide must ebb and flow through the outer wall of the building. The water might flow through the crevices of the wall, but no solid substances could. I only looked through the hole.

Several witnesses were then examined, who testified to having seen Dr Parkman on the 23d of November, just previous to his entering the college.

Paul Holland, called and sworn. On the 23d November last, I kept a grocery at the corner of Vine and Blossom streets. That day Dr Parkman came into my store about 1 or 2 o'clock—I think about half past one—he stopped about fifteen minutes, and made a small purchase, which I agreed to send home; his purchase was thirty two pounds of crushed sugar, and six pounds butter; he had a paper bag with him, which he asked permission to leave with me for a few minutes; he passed out into Blossom street, and spoke to me about leaving the paper bag just as he was going; the bag contained lettuce. The next afternoon I heard he was missing—Mr Kingsley and others told me; Calvin Moore came into my store while Dr Parkman was there; the

bag of lettuce remained at the store; I sent the articles purchased by the doctor to his house.

Jabez Pratt, Coroner, called and sworn:—I was called upon on the evening of Friday, the 30th November, between nine and ten o'clock, by officer Spurr, and went with him in a carriage to the house of S. D. Parker, Esq., in Mount Vernon street. We went from thence to the jail. Professor Webster was lying on his face on the bunk, apparently in great distress; Dr Gay endeavored to soothe his feelings and requested him to get up; Professor Webster said he was unable to. He was violently agitated, and trembled in every part of his frame, and exclaimed: 'What will become of my poor family!' He was assisted from the bunk, and carried up stairs; two officers carried him up, he was nearly helpless, or appeared so.

Mr Parker requested, before going to the jail, that no conversation should be held with Professor Webster relative to his arrest. He stated to Professor Webster that some discoveries had been made in his premises at the Medical College, and said we called to see if he would go down and make such explanations as he felt disposed. He consented to go, and we went. I did not take so much notice of the rooms as some others, supposing I was called there on official business; while we were in the laboratory a key was tried in the lock of the privy, which did not fit. The door was broken open by my direction, and the seats of the privy taken up. Same person enquired, where is the chimney? It was pointed out, and another observed, there is a furnace. Some person went to the furnace, took off the cover, and I believe took out some of the cinders. A piece of bone was found; crucibles, &c., were about the furnace some on the top of it. During this time some one had Dr Webster by the arm. He called for water and attempted to drink, but was so agitated that he could not. He appeared different from any man I ever saw before. On the water coming near his mouth he would snap at it, as though it was offensive and threw him into spasms. He appeared more calm up stairs than in the laboratory.

Mr Andrews, the jailer came in while we were in the laboratory; he went from thence to the cellar where a trap door was open. Mr Clapp, Mr Littlefield and myself went through the trap door, and got upon our hands and knees, and they passed out some parts of a human body; they went further in than I did. Professor Webster continued to manifest great agitation. The party then left for the jail, and the remains were conveyed into the laboratory. I left the college building in care of several officers, the remains having been placed in a box. I made no search that night.

Next morning I summoned a jury of inquest to assemble at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, at the college. On going there, found additional parts of a human body had been discovered. Several police officers were there, and have assisted me in examining the furnace. We found pieces of bone, particles of something resembling gold, lead, &c. On the top of the furnace there was a considerable quantity of ashes.

After taking out about half the contents of the furnace, I found some charred substances sticking to the jam back of the furnace, which I broke off.

Dr Winslow Lewis, jun., called and sworn. I was one of the physicians called to the medical college; was called on Saturday; Dr Martin Gay and Dr C. T. Jackson met with me; Coroner Pratt requested my presence; I went about three o'clock. Dr George H. Gay, Dr Stone, and Dr Wyman were also present. Drs Martin Gay, and C. T. Jackson, took charge of the bones and teeth. Doctors Gay, Stone, and myself prepared a report of what we had particularly inspected. We rendered the report to the Coroner's Jury. The report was reduced to writing.

[This report, drawn up and signed by Drs Winslow, Lewis, J. W. Stone, George H. Gay, was here read to the Court and Jury by Mr Bemis. It was very minute in detail, and comprehensive of medical and anatomical phrases, which were explained to the comprehension of the jury by Dr Lewis, who in this way followed the reading of the report with a running commentary. It is doubtless a very able report, as it is lengthy. It proved that the remains found in different parts of Professor Webster's premises, constituted an individual body, muscular and devoid of fat, advanced in life.—The left thigh had a string tied around it, just above the knee joint. The measurement of the limbs was made with great precision, making, with the comparative length of the missing parts, (the head and feet) the total length of the subject 5 feet 10 1/2 inches. This was the height of Dr Parkman.]

Dr Lewis was then examined at considerable length by Messrs Clifford and Bemis. I knew Dr Parkman, and saw nothing in the appearance of the limbs and body submitted for examination dissimilar from what I should expect to find in the body of Dr Parkman. It bore no indication of being a subject for dissection. The remains were doubtless one and the same body. A block of mineral teeth about two inches long was handed to me, which I subsequently gave to Dr Keep, a dentist. He afterwards returned them to me and I placed them in the care of the Coroner.

Dr J. W. Stone, called and sworn. Signed the report with Drs Lewis and Gay. The remains exhibited an unusual quantity of hair on the back; the lower limbs exhibited great muscular developments; on one side of the trunk, the hair had apparently been burned; we saw in the report that he was between

fifty and sixty years of age. I knew Dr Parkman, have known him, five or six years.

Dr George H. Gay, called and sworn. I am one of the physicians who signed the report. I agree now with the statements.

Dr Woodbridge Strong was next called and sworn as an anatomist, and examined in relation to the action of fire, upon the human flesh.

Dr F. S. Ainsworth, called and sworn. I am demonstrator of anatomy at the medical college. Every subject brought to the college must pass through my hands before being given to the students. I keep a record of all subjects brought to the college, and those disposed of. On learning the fact that parts of a human body had been found, I referred to my record, and found no additional entry had been made. I examined the remains found in the vault of the privy, and was satisfied that it had never been brought to me, or to the college for dissection. Subjects are always prepared for dissection by injecting into the arteries prepared fluid. I examined the body found, with reference to ascertaining if it had been so prepared, and found it not to be the case. Professor Webster has no necessity, or official intercourse with the Anatomical Society. My impression was that the person who cut up these remains had no knowledge of the science of anatomy. He may have seen a body cut up, but I do not think he could ever have taken the knife in his own hand.

The breast bone was cut out in the only way in which it could have been done with a knife. There is a joint connecting the collar bone with the breast bone.

At this time, 7 o'clock, the Court adjourned until nine o'clock to-morrow morning.

## THIRD DAY.

THURSDAY, March 21.

The Court came in at 9 o'clock. Dr. Chas. T. Jackson was called and sworn. Heard the testimony of Drs Stone and Gay in relation to their examination of the remains, and agrees with them in their conclusions as to the age and person of the remains.

Dr Nathan C. Keep called and sworn. I am a surgeon dentist; have been in practice as such nearly thirty years. Knew Dr. Parkman—as early as in 1825 was employed as a family dentist by him, and have continued to act in that capacity. I have been shown a block of mineral teeth. Recognised the teeth shows me as some made by me for Dr. Parkman in 1846. The teeth now shows me are the same; am able to recognise them from the peculiarity of Dr Parkman's mouth, in the relation of the upper and lower jaw. The impression left on my mind on first examining it is very distinct; I remember the peculiarities with great exactness. He first asked me how long it would take to make these teeth. On letting him know how long, I asked him why he wished to know. He said the Medical College was to be opened in a few days from the time, when he expected to be called upon to speak. He did not wish to order them unless he could have them at the time. He wished them to be made with as much skill as could be used. I began upon them immediately. Gave much time to the subject. Saw him frequently while it was in progress, and from these circumstances am enabled to remember the matter more distinctly than otherwise. The first step in the business was to take a fac simile of each jaw. This was done by the use of wax [The plaster cast of the lower jaw of Dr Parkman was here exhibited by Dr Keep.

Dr Keep here stated with great minuteness the method of taking the cast, of making the block of teeth, and exhibited the metallic plate, or die, which was put into the mouth of Dr Parkman to ascertain whether it was exact or not before making the teeth.

When I next saw the Doctor, he said he had not room for his tongue. To obviate that difficulty, I ground the side of the lower jaw next the tongue, to give more room. The grinding at the time was not accompanied with much ease. This grinding removed the pink color of the plate, a portion of the enamel, and injured the beauty of the teeth. Being ground on a very small wheel, the shape was peculiar. I saw Dr Parkman occasionally after that, in relation to his teeth. About two weeks before his disappearance he called on me, having broken a spring to his teeth. This was about 10 o'clock at night. I had retired early, from being unwell. To attend to him, I arose and examined his teeth thoroughly, and mended the spring. This was my last professional intercourse with him. The day before his disappearance he called on me between 1 and 2 o'clock, to make inquiries concerning a servant who had lived with me. I went to Longmeadow to pass Thanksgiving, and returned on the Monday following. Was told that Dr Lewis wished to see me. At that time Dr L. was presented to me the portions of mineral teeth now in my hands, saying he was requested to bring them to me for examination. On looking at them, I recognised them as portions of the same teeth I made for Dr Parkman. The most perfect portion remaining was the block belonging to the left side of the lower jaw. The shape and outlines of them were recognised as the same which I remembered as laboring on so long. Several of the other portions were very much injured by exposure to fire. I looked for the model from which those teeth were made. On comparing the left lower block with the model, the resemblance was very striking. (The witness appeared much affected at this point of the testimony. He then went on to point out the positions of the several teeth in his hands, in the different blocks, and described some of the injuries to them.)

Dr Lester Noble called and sworn. I was formerly an assistant of Dr Keep; was with him from the 11th or 12th September, 1846, to the middle of July, last year; am now in the Baltimore College. I recollect working upon teeth for Dr Parkman in the autumn of 1846. The writing of the name of Dr Parkman on the mould spoken of, is in my hand, dated October, 1846. The teeth were first exhibited to me in their present condition in the presence of the Attorney General and the City Marshal. I remember the teeth from their general shape and configuration. They struck me at first as being those made for Dr Parkman. In looking at them carefully saw several peculiarities in making and putting them together, particularly their appearance of having been ground. I saw Dr Keep grind the teeth of Dr Parkman. They were ground after they had been used. I see no good reason to believe these are the teeth made for Dr Parkman as I have of any fact. I have not the slightest doubt they are the same teeth. The promptness required of us in making the teeth, which was characteristic of Dr Parkman, fixes the fact of making them, in my mind. The occasion was that of the opening of the Medical College. Delay was occasioned by the spoiling of one of the blocks, which required me to work nearly all night. They were done just in time for the Doctor to use them at the College. I went to the College and sat where I could see how the teeth operated while the Doctor was speaking.

Several other medical men were then examined at considerable length, but their testimony had no direct bearing on the case, otherwise than corroborating the evidence given by the former witnesses. Dr Holmes, a Professor in the Medical College, said that he never knew Professor Webster to have subjects for dissection.

At 20 minutes before 7 o'clock, the Court adjourned.

## FOURTH DAY.

FRIDAY, March 22.

The Court came in at about quarter past 9 o'clock.

Ephraim Littlefield called and sworn. My connection with the Medical College is superintendant of the building—have the general charge of it; have been there seven years last October. Was three winters at the old College. I have known Dr Webster ever since I went to the College; that was my first acquaintance with him, on going there. I knew the late Dr Parkman twenty years ago. On Monday evening, November 19, knew of an interview between Dr Parkman and Dr Webster. I was in Dr Webster's private room helping him; Dr Webster had three candles burning, although it was not quite dark; he had a chemical book in his hand. I was standing by the stove, stirring some water. Without hearing any footsteps, I saw Dr Parkman coming into the room, by the door leading from the lecture room. Dr Webster, on seeing him, appeared to be surprised. Dr Parkman immediately said, Dr Webster are you ready for me to-night. The reply was, No, I am not ready for you to-night, Doctor. Dr Parkman then said something else, which I did not understand; but he either accused Dr Webster of selling him something he had sold some one else, or of doing him injustices about some papers. Dr Webster then said, I will see you to-morrow, Doctor. Dr P. stood near the door, and as he moved toward it, he said, Dr Webster, something must be done to-morrow. This was the last I saw of Dr Parkman. About half past 1 o'clock the next day, Dr Webster called to me in front of the building, and asked me if I was busy; he wished me to carry a note to Dr Parkman; he desired me to carry it myself, if I could not get some one upon whom I could depend. I got a boy by the name of John Maxwell to carry it. I gave it to him and he came back in ten minutes, having gone to the house.

I had also an interview with Dr W. about noon on Monday, preceding the evening before referred to. At that time he asked me if the vault had ever been fixed, where we put the remains of the subjects for dissection. This was the vault in the entry. He asked me what the matter was with it, and said something had been talked about it by the faculty. He asked me where the vault was built. I told him it was built under his coal pen; the coal pen between the laboratory and the dissecting room. The pen is large enough to hold two tons. I told him the weight of his coal sprung the wall of his vault, and caused it to seat the building. He asked if it was fixed, and I told him it was; he asked how; I told him the vault had been covered up with dirt; two men had been engaged for that purpose two days. He asked how they got down to fill it up. I told him the brick wall was taken up in the dissecting room entry, and then a hole was cut through the floor. He asked if that was the only way of getting down under the building. I told him it was, under his apartment; also told him how the walls run. He asked if a light could be got into the vault. I told him, no. He asked if I was sure of it; I replied I was, for I had tried it a few days before. He said he wished to get some gas out of the vault. I had tried it at the request of Dr Ainsworth, to find something he had lost in there. I think it was an African's skull he put in there to amercerate. I looked and found the rope attached to the skull had rotted off. Dr Webster told me he was going to get some gas out of the vault to try an experiment with. I told him I thought he might get the gas then, as the tide was high and pressed the gas up. I asked how he could get gas out of the vault into any vessel which would hold it. He said he had apparatus he could do it with. He told me when he wanted to get the gas he