FOR A HUNDRED POUNDS.

CONCLUSION OF THE STORY OF THE MISPECK TRAGEDY.

The Discovery of the Murder and Pursuit of the Murderers—Trial of Young Slavin—His Escape—Suicide of Breen and Death of old Slavin on the Gallows.

When daylight came on Sunday morning, the 26th of October, only the ashes remained of the two houses in which six human beings had been so foully put to death. The murderers believed that the fire would obliterate the traces of their crime, and it was with this idea that they had taken McKenzie's body from the cellar and dragged it into a room where it was more likely to be consumed. It must be remembered that they were ignorant as well as brutal, and they probably thougnt there was little chance of the murder being traced to them, otherwise they would have made an attempt to get out of the country. It would not have been a difficult undertaking in 1857. Only the principal towns had telegraph offices, and only a small beginning had been made in railways. By avoiding the settlements the men could have got out of the province, as nearly a week elapsed before an attempt was made to arrest them.

Nobody had seen the light of the burning houses, nor was there a suspicion that anything had occurred until about eleven o'clock on Sunday morning. At that hour, Peter O'Hare, the nearest neighbor, who lived half a mile beyond the farm, went to talk with McKenzie about some work which was to be done. On reaching the place, he was astonished to find both houses burned to the ground. He supposed the fire had been accidental and that the family had escaped and gone to some other house. He made no examination of the premises, but returned home and told his wife. She seems to have had a suspicion that something was wrong, for she told her husband to get somebody to go with him and find out where the McKenzies were. He accordingly sought James Robinson, who lived a mile this side of the farm, and together they returned to investigate the affair.

The site of the dwelling house was on the south side of the road, while that of the small house was on the north side, about 300 feet distant. In front of the dwelling, and on a line between the two houses was a barn, and in the rear of the dwelling was another barn, neither of which had been burned. There had been little or no wind during the night. It was plain that neither house had caught fire from the other. This was the first circumstance to excite suspicion.

O'Hare and Robinson then made a superficial examination of the ruins of the dwelling house, and found the empty iron money chest with the door open and the key in the lock. This convinced them that there had been at least a robbery. They at once made their way to the house of the nearest magistrate, Wm. Hawkes, six miles distant. It was then between 3 and 4 in the afternoon.

Mr. Hawkes and the others went at once to the McKenzies', and fearing that the family had been burned in their beds, began to search about the ruins. James Peacock and his son, a lad of 15, had joined them, and the farmer thought there was a body under the remains of the kitchen chimney, which had fallen. On removing the bricks, they were horrified to discover what they supposed to be the remains of Mrs. McKenzie, though so much of the body had been burned that this was merely a conjecture.

Soon after this, young Peacock, who had been searching in the ruins of the small house, found what at first appeared to be a charred log, but which proved to be the trunk of a man, the head, arms and legs being missing. Some metal coat buttons and suspender buckles left no doubt that the remains were those of McKenzie.

Portions of the bones of the eldest child were also found in the ruins of the dwelling house, but both they and the remains of Mrs. McKenzie were so reduced that the iron money chest sufficed to contain them. The bodies of the other children were wholly consumed.

By the time these discoveries had been made, evening had come, and the parties returned to their homes. No word was sent to the city until Monday morning, when Mr. Hawkes, with George Leet and James Robinson, drove in and notified the authorities of what had happened.

Among those of the country folk who gathered at the ruins on Monday morning was John Leet, father of the young man already mentioned. He noticed that McKenzie's small red and white dog had a smear on its side. A closer examination showed him and the others that the mark was the stain of blood. There was no wound on the dog. The blood was that of some of the murdered family.

George Scoullar was at that time chief of the St John police, and George Stockford, jr., was high constable. To these was delegated the duty of getting at the evidence of the tragedy and of finding the murderers. Capt. Scoullar's suspicions were at first directed toward the Slavins from the fact that the old man and his son had disappeared. He therefore secured Mrs. Slavin and John Slavin, a lad of 12, as witnesses for the inquest.

The inquest began at Mispeck on Tuesday, and was held by Dr. Wm. Bayard, coroner. Mrs. Slavin gave her evidence with great reluctance. She said that Breen had called at their house Sunday morning and had left again saying he was going to Woodstock or Boston. He had not been there the week before. She saw nothing suspicious in his conduct. She had left her husband and Pat at home when she left on Monday morning to come to the city. She knew nothing of their whereabouts after that. When closely pressed on this point she began to cry, and while thus agitated her second son was brought into the room. On seeing him, she broke down, and as she was being taken out she exclaimed:

"Oh! Johnny, Johnny, you won't hang your poor father!"

Johnny gave very clear evidence as to Breen having been at the house during the previous week, and as to conversations about the money McKenzie had. He also told how he had been awakened when the three returned late Saturday night and had seen them with a bag which seemed to contain clothing. Breen had a gold watch and a purse. The next day he saw Breen with a lot of gold. On Monday the three were in a camp in the woods near the house. On a closer examination Johnny told how he had heard the three talk of the killing of the McKenzies.

An important witness at the inquest was Bernard Hagarty, or Hagerton, whose evidence showed that the three fugitives had been at his father's house, 16 miles from the city, on the proceeding day, Thursday, to get food, and were sheltered in a camp in the woods.

On hearing this evidence, Capt Scoullar with policemen Dobson and Marshall, High Constable Stockford and others at once started for Hagarty's house. Residents in the neighborhood joined in the pursuit, and young Hagarty, who was a nephew of Slavin, reluctantly acted as guide. "Dobson led the van," as a ballad on the tragedy used to tell, and they got within a few feet of the camp before the hunted men heard them. Breen and old Slavin rushed out and were at once seized by Dobson and Scoullar. They were broken down by exposure and want of food, and made no attempt to resist. Young Slavin escaped at the back of the camp, but stopped when told he would be shot if he did not come back. He thereupon surrendered.

George Stockford and policeman Marshall arrived in town with old Slavin about 8 o'clock that evening, just six days to the hour after the commission of the murder. In the meantime the coroner's jury had found a verdict of wilful murder against Hugh Breen, Patrick Slavin, senior, and Patrick Slavin, junior. The excitement in the city was intense.

At a later hour, Scoullar and James Stockford brought in young Slavin, while Dobson and George Smith, of Beaver Lake, were in charge of Breen. The two latter prisoners had pointed out where some of the stolen goods were concealed. At a later date more of the stolen goods were found, as well as gold to the amount of 89 sovereigns.

The prisoners were arraigned at the November circuit, 1857, Judge Parker presiding, when Breen at once pleaded guilty. Old Slavin refused to plead otherwise than to say, "I could not say I am clear of it," and a plea of not guilty was entered for him. He said he did not want any counsel. Young Slavin pleaded not guilty, and the court assigned Messrs. D. S. Kerr and A. R. Wetmore to defend him.

This was on Thursday. On the following Monday when old Slavin was brought into court he looked dogged and obstinate. To the surprise of everyone he pleaded guilty. The judge asked him if he understood what had been said; he replied that he did and that he was guilty. Then the judge asked him if he understood the nature and consequences of this plea; he again replied that he did and was guilty.

"Shall I direct the plea of guilty to be entered?" asked the judge. The prisoner apparently did not understand this and made no reply. The question was repeated.

"I'm guilty," answered Slavin. "That is all I have to say about it, and I'm satisfied to die for it. I'm reconciled."

This left only young Slavin to be tried, and his trial began the following day. An immense crowd had gathered around the court house, and the outside steps were broken down in the rush that followed the opening of the doors. Both court room and corriders were speedily packed with people, and it was some time before the sheriff and constables could enforce even a semblance of order. Hundreds who could not get into the building got on the rocks between it and the jail, climbed the fences and secured other positions where they could see the prisoner as he passed.

The trial occupied three days. The prosecution was conducted by Hon. Charles Fisher, attorney-general, and Hon. Charles Watters, solicitor-general, while Messrs Kerr and Wetmore appeared on behalf of the prisoner. Among the witnesses for the crown were the prisoner's young brother, John Slavin, and Hugh Breen, who had already pleaded guilty. Old Slavin was the only witness for the defence. Admitting all the facts of the murder, which these witnesses told freely enough, the defence was that young Slavin was of deficient understanding, that he acted under the command of his father, and that he was merely witness to the killing, in which he took no actual part. John Slavin's evidence as to how Pat had lived needs no comment: "He can't read; I can't read; I never went to church; my father never went to church, nor Pat, nor my mother. We just stayed in the house on Sundays and played away our time."

Young Slavin was convicted, but not hanged, his sentence being to the penitentiary for life. His prison was the provincial institution on the present Reformatory grounds. After he had been there about fourteen years, showing himself very well behaved, a successful effort was made to have his sentence shortened to, I think, fifteen years. The time had very nearly expired when he anticipated it by making his escape one night. He had been trusted a great deal, and among other things used to look after Warden Quinton's horse when that official returned from the city in the evening. Having got beyond the walls he quickly made his way to the state of Maine, where Mr. Keefe, one of the keepers, subsequently had an interview with him.

"Why did you run away when your time was so nearly up?" asked Keefe.

"What was I to do when I had a suit of clothes given me, and money to pay my way?" was Slavin's reply.

No attempt was made to bring him back. Apart from the fact that his sentence had nearly expired, there was a question at that time whether an escaped convict came within the scope of the extradition treaty. There was, besides, a general feeling that the prisoner had been sufficiently punished for his share in the murder.

Patrick Slavin, senior, and Hugh Breen were sentenced by Judge Parker to be hanged on the 11th day of December. Before that date, Breen cheated the gallows by hanging himself in the cell with his neckerchief. Slavin suffered the penalty of the law.

At that time the jail had not the basement story which is now part of the jailer's residence, and the only street entrance was in what is now the second story, just above the present door. This had a large stone porch, and was reached by a flight of stone steps leading down to the street. The centre cell in the upper story was the drop room, or execution chamber, and a hinged grating led from it to the gallows, built out on the street from the top of the porch, the supports resting on the ground. The trap door of the platform was held by a line passing into the jail, the cutting of which would cause the trap and its human burden to drop. Everything, except the act of cutting the line, was in full view of the public. The execution was under direction of Sheriff Charles Johnston, but I believe the rope was cut by the man who had charge of the ironing of the prisioners, one George Thomas, well remembered as an armorer, bell-hanger and ballad writer.

The morning of the 11th of December, 1857, was clear and cold, with just a little snow on the ground. The hour for the execution was fixed for 10 o'clock, but long before the hour a vast crowd had gathered on King street east, or Great George street, as it was then called. There was a crowd, too, in the old burial ground, in the King Square, on the Block House Hill (the rock running eastward from King and Carmarthen streets, and since cut away) and from every point where a view could be had was occupied. A detachment of troops from the regiment in garrison surrounded the scaffold, and formed a line impervious to the surging mob.

Slavin came out upon the gallows dressed in dark trousers and waistcoat, but no coat, and a clean white shirt. Very little time elapsed from his appearance until the drop fell. The hanging was what is technically known as a good job, and the only observable motion of the limbs was the momentary jerking up of one leg.

Thus ended the eighth life brought violently to a close in connection with the Mispeck tragedy, and all for the sake of a hundred pounds in gold.

The hanging of Slavin was the last public execution in St. John, and he was the last man hanged here on the old style of gallows with a drop. ROSLYNDE.

JOHN L. WAS SCARED.

Dared Not Fight the Millionaire, Who Is Stronger than Sandow.

I know of four men who do not pose as sons of Hercules, and who never made a penny by spectacular exhibitions, who, I think, could hold their own with the quartette of foreign invaders, Sandow, Samson, Attila, and Romulus, in trials of strength. These men are Herman Oelrichs, principal owner of the North German Lloyd Steamship Company; Tea Merchant Harry Buermeyer, Editor William B. Curtis, and Piano Manufacturer William Steinway. Of these Herman Oelrichs, millionaire and clubman, is the strongest, and stronger, I firmly believe, than Sandow or any of the other professional strong men.

Two of these men, too, could come very near to giving Corbett or Jackson a trouncing in the squared circle—Oelrichs and Buermeyer. Both of these gentlemen were adjudged by competent experts fully capable of holding their own, even with the mighty John L. Sullivan when that renowned gladiator was in his prime. If they could do this with the Bostonian, they might go a shade better with the Californian or Australian. Of this "big four" as I will call them, three—Oelrichs, Buermeyer, and Curtis—were and are as good all round heavy-weight athletes as this or any other country has ever seen. The fourth, Steinway, despite his 48 years, can perform downright feats of strength—not juggling tricks—that any of the professional strong men would find it hard to duplicate.

Once, on a wagon with friends at a private trial, Oelrichs entered a lion's cage, and properly accoutered for the fray, of course, actually overcame and reduced to a state of exhaustion by his physical resources a full-grown monarch of the jungle. The lion was muzzled with a plain leather strap, but was not hampered in any other way. Oelrichs thus did better then Sandow, who only dared recently to try with a tame and crippled old lion at San Francisco.

When John L. Sullivan was in his prime ten years ago, knocking out men nightly in four rounds on his exhibition tours, Oelrichs offered to meet the great Bostonian in private and give him $10,000 if he (Oelrichs) did not beat him. Sullivan was not one whit afraid, but as he was making $100,000 a year just then he listened to the voice of his manager, the famous sportsman, Al Smith, and determined to take no chances, much to Oelrichs, chagrin.

Father Bill Curtis and Buermeyer rank next to Oelrichs as strong men.

Another "strong men" in private life is Giovanni P. Morosini. In early life he was a sailor before the mast. He is over 50 years of age, yet he is a perfect Hercules in strength.

The Poetic Nature of Children.

Children have the poet's gift of personification. There vivid imagination endows everything with life, and they make companions of bird and tree, bush and flower, writes Harriet A. Farrand. A little girl was walking with her mother one day when they saw in the grass the first dandelion of spring. "Run, pick it," said the mother. The child ran, but presently came back without it. "Where is the dandelion?" asked the mother. "Oh," answered the child, "It looked right at me and said, 'Please, little Helen, don't pick me. I want to stay right here.' So I didn't pick it." To her little sensitive heart the impression was just as if the flower had actually spoken the words.

A little fresh-air child, who was seeing the country for the first time, would throw herself upon the grass, face downward, and fondle and talk to each separate blade as she lay there, and the sight of a growing flower would throw her into an ecstasy of delight. One morning she came stealing down as soon as it was light. "Why didn't you sleep, Bertha?" called the housel mother as she heard the child coming down. "The leaves talked to me and I couldn't," answered Bertha, looking with eager eyes toward the open door.

A little boy stood with hushed breath and parted lips, listening to the twitter of a robin in the apple tree.

"Don't make a noise," he softly said. "Birdie is telling a story to the apple-flowers."

A little girl was watching a gorgeous sunset, when with awe-stricken face she exclaimed:

"O mamma, God has opened his door and I can see right into heaven!"

She did not know that some poet before had likened the flaming clouds to the "vestibule of heaven."