

Mother and Sister Accused

Of the Murder of Minnie Tucker and Held for Trial.

Portraits of the Prisoners and Scenes at the Court—
Interviews with the Prisoners and a Personal Description of Them and the Head of the Household.

The close of the preliminary examination in the Carleton County murder trial and the commitment of the prisoners, Mrs. Mary Tucker and her daughter, Mrs. Annie Canovan, for trial at the Circuit Court for the murder of Minnie Tucker ends the first chapter of a story with which PROGRESS readers all over the province are familiar.

It is not necessary to repeat details as it will be remembered that during the last week in January the startling news came from the district of South Johnville which is about forty miles from Woodstock, that a woman, Minnie Tucker had died suddenly and various suspicious circumstances pointed to her sister, Mrs. Canovan, as having compassed her death, through poisoning. So strongly, indeed, did everything tend in that direction, that the coroners jury brought in a verdict charging her with murdering her sister, by administering strychnine to her. She was known to have threatened her sister's life upon different occasions and a physician residing in the district recognized her as having purchased a quantity of the death dealing drug from him a few days before, though she positively denied having done so.

Later on the mother of the prisoner was placed under arrest, her language regarding her dead daughter, and other circumstances seeming to fully warrant such a course.

The preliminary enquiry was held in Woodstock before police magistrate Dibblee, Mr. Stephen B. Appleby representing the Crown and Mr. Wendell P. Jones the prisoners. Every part of Carleton County sent its delegation to the examination, which while it lasted engaged public attention to the almost utter exclusion of every other interest. Though there is a formidable array of circumstantial evidence against Annie Canovan there are many who still believe Minnie Tucker's death was brought about in an entirely different way. The idea of suicide can scarcely be entertained, the girls approaching marriage precluding that theory; and though she was known to be in a delicate condition at the time of her death, she was scarcely the kind of woman to regard that in the light of an overwhelming disgrace from which death would be an easy escape. The theory of accidental poisoning could be more easily accepted. Whatever the cause of her death, the finger of suspicion points strongly towards Annie Canovan, the motive for her alleged crime, being found in jealousy of her sister and husband.

It was a motley crowd the prisoners faced last Monday afternoon, the closing day of the enquiry. There were old men, young men and boys from every walk in life, crowding the town hall of Woodstock, but the predominating element seemed to be drawn from the masses, brought thither by the unusual spectacle of two women suspected of having taken the life of a third—and that third a sister and daughter. Curiosity, always a strong factor in matters of this kind, was written everywhere, and perhaps Mary Tucker and her daughter found truer pity in the hearts of those who sat in legal judgment upon them, than in any other portion of the assemblage.

Mrs. Canovan is not what the pictures in the daily papers would lead one to suppose—a female tramp of the lowest order. She is certainly not that, and though she may be guilty of the crime with which she is charged, she looks anything but a murderer. As she sat in the court room it was almost impossible to form any impression of her appearance beyond the fact that she was about the average height, and rather slender. She had on a black dress that would hardly be called shabby on one in her circumstances, and a dark shawl loosely drawn around her. A heavy blue veil was twisted tightly over a fur cap, and tied under the chin. Throughout the enquiry she sat a pathetic figure, her handkerchief pressed closely either to her lips or cheek. It was not to hide any emotion however, for it was difficult to tell what the prisoner felt. Her face was devoid of any expression save that of extreme sadness, and even when the most damaging evidence, that of Mrs. Edmund Carroll, was being given, there was no change in the quiet countenance nor the faintest quiver of a facial muscle.

Mrs. Mary Tucker on the other hand

was not indifferent to what was going on around her, and made whispered remarks occasionally to her daughter, which either were unnoticed, or acknowledged only by a slight nod. Of the two the mother is decidedly the harder looking, her general make up suggesting in a measure the woman of the city slums. Though thirty years younger than her husband who is seventy, she looks at least fifty-five years of age. Her swarthy weather-beaten face is no worse than hundreds of others seen daily, and save for a peculiarly sleepy expression around the eyes there is nothing unusual or vicious in it.



MRS. TUCKER,
Mother of the Murdered Woman.

Under provocation or in anger she might incite another to a deed of the nature of the one in which she is supposed to be implicated, but she hardly seems capable of planning and carrying out such a crime deliberately.

She didn't harbor any resentment towards Mrs. Carroll, for when the latter finished her damaging statements against Mrs. Canovan and taken her seat beside the prisoners, Mrs. Tucker kept up a whispered conversation with her. Mrs. Carroll later told PROGRESS that one of the questions was whether she—Mrs. Carroll—believed her guilty, and on being told no, asked why the witness hadn't said so, or, it she wouldn't say so.

PROGRESS had a talk with both prisoners upon two different occasions, and while Annie Canovan was peculiarly reticent, answering commonplace questions in monosyllables scarcely above her breath, the older woman needed little encouragement to discuss Minnie's death. Her tears were never far off at any time, and when asked if there was anything she wished to say to PROGRESS she wept bitterly and answered, "I am so lonesome I don't know what to say; only you might say in your paper, that I had nothing to do with it. I didn't murder Minnie. I have always worked hard for my children and it is too bad to be accused of murdering one of them. I have been away working all fall and winter and I wish I had not gone home, so that I could not have been blamed for this. I suppose I said things that I should not, and talked too much at the beginning, and its only for that they have me here. I didn't mean any harm though."

Mrs. Tucker didn't seem to be at all alarmed about Mrs. Canovan's serious predicament neither did she show any sign of feeling for her dead child. Her one reiterated statement was "I had nothing to do with it."

The accompanying pictures of the women were taken at E. M. Campbell's studio on Tuesday morning just before they were committed for trial. Mrs. Canovan was not particularly anxious to be photographed until Sheriff Balloch produced a newspaper containing an alleged picture of her. She looked at the awful caricature handed her and that settled it. With the glimmer of a smile on her pale face she looked up and said "I don't think I look like that. I'll have a picture taken if you wish it sheriff."

A touching incident of the closing days of the enquiry was the examination of Mr. Tucker. The poor old fellow who is tottering on the brink of the grave is as honest and simple minded as a child. He answered all questions in a sincere, straightforward manner that made as deep an impression upon the listeners as his

forlorn condition called forth the most intense sympathy. At the close of his evidence he took a seat between his wife and daughter, and it was noticed that he never once looked towards the latter, though he spoke several times to his wife in an undertone.

Mr. Tucker is seventy years of age, has lived in Johnville about twenty-four years, and was never in Woodstock until brought there last week. His story as he told it to PROGRESS was sad in the extreme. His tears flowed freely as he talked of the dead girl and his wife, of whose innocence he is convinced. Indeed the latter's incarceration is his deepest trouble.

"My poor old woman is innocent" said he, "she was a good wife to me, and always waited on me kindly and when I had a pain or ache, she wouldn't let me do a thing, but would go out and 'belt away' at the wood herself, and could use the axe as good as any man. I believe Annie is the cause of all this destruction with me. Minnie was better in every way. She was hot tempered like myself, but was over it in a minute, and was a good girl to me. Annie was deeper and quieter; she don't mind her sister's death a bit and is as case hardened as a dog."

"What do you think Minnie meant by 'Oh cursed be the day?' asked the old man with a wistful glance at his two auditors, Deputy Sheriff Foster and PROGRESS representative. "I can't make it out at all, though I suppose she had her own reasons for saying it. The poor girl, she had to be murdered, and then, worst of all cut up. I've been through some hard scenes in my life, but I'm too old to come to this. All I blame my old woman for is speaking too quick. Her tongue is too fast. I've often heard her say when Minnie was bothering her 'I wish to God you were dead, then we'd have some peace' but she never meant any harm by it. Any one might say it you know," said the old man with an air of sturdy devotion that was most pathetic. Mr. Tucker said he never was in a hotel before, and had never seen the inside of a lockup. He said he had no relatives within "millions of miles" most of them being in Pennsylvania and New Zealand, and gave a rather funny explanation of his change from the English to the Catholic church. "I could always read, and see things for myself" said he "and besides all the people out there are Catholics, and we thought we might as well join the church too. I always went to church when I could, but the children never went anywhere much."

When asked whether he would return to his old home or not he hastily replied "Oh no, I couldn't go back there and have the people twitting me with this. Oh yes they would. I know them, and I'm going to Mr. Gallagher's three or four miles from my home, and that is near enough."



MRS. ANNIE CANOVAN,
Sister of the Murdered Woman.

Everyone is good to me here, and Sheriff Balloch and Deputy Sheriff Foster gave me new clothes and did everything they could to make me happy and comfortable. Go to bed and get a good night's rest! No, I never expect to get any rest again. I don't want to be alone for I just think of the poor dead girl and my old woman in that jail there till my head aches and I can't sleep."

Mr. Tucker appears to have been very fond of his dead daughter and his aged face brightened as he talked of her and told proudly of her "smart tongue." He had nothing but good words for his son-in-law, Patrick Canovan, of whom in fact everyone seems to speak highly and who seems to be vastly superior to his wife's family. He is about thirty years of age quiet and in-

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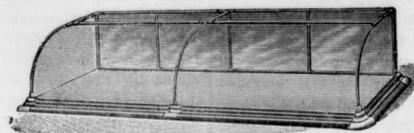
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offensive, and for miles around has a reputation as a good "fiddler." He wielded the bow at all the country dances, and was well liked.

It has been said that the first stories of the Tucker family's condition were greatly exaggerated. It was about as bad as could well be imagined, the little one-storied log house being the worst in its neighborhood, cold, dirty and cheerless and with no attempt at housekeeping. The only articles of furniture in the one room of the wretched place were a table and trunk and a home made chair. The bed was rather a unique affair, and was made of boards resting on blocks; it ran the entire length of the room but was only wide enough for one person. There were several quilts piled upon it, and as old man Tucker remarked "when he was alone and could have all the eight or nine quilts to himself he was warm enough, but when the others were home and he had to divide up, he found the house pretty cold." The door leading into the abode is so low and small that a large man would practically have to crawl through.

When Sheriff Balloch and Deputy Foster visited the place they found a poor old horse with nothing to eat. They cared for it, and it might here be said that both these officials have displayed the utmost kindness towards the family, supplying freely all necessary wants, and treating them with every consideration and courtesy. All necessary duties in connection with the prisoners are performed with a kindness and regard for their feelings that cannot but make a deep impression upon those who are in a position to note it unobserved. They have a special interest in the old man now left alone, and their numerous attentions and efforts to shield him in every way were good to see.

Deputy Albion Foster reluctantly tells the story of his first visit to the Tucker homestead. How the corpse with which the family had slept in the same room two nights, was found wrapped in an old night dress, and with wide open mouth and staring, sightless eyes. When the deputy arrested Mrs. Canovan Mrs. Tucker said "There is the damned devil that did it all." The shocked official enquired if she meant the prisoner and the mother replied "No, Minnie!" pointing to the dead girl. On the way to Johnville Mrs. Tucker amused herself by singing, and after she reached Woodstock tried to play on the organ in the hotel where they were first taken before going out to the jail, two miles from the town.

The young man to whom Minnie Tuck-

er was engaged does not seem to be much in evidence. He is at present in the lumber woods, though he came to Johnville at the time of her death, and one of the witnesses tells privately how he wanted to take his engagement ring but Mrs. Tucker told him he could not have it. He said if it was still on her finger he would leave it there but if around the house he wanted it.

On Tuesday morning of this week the prisoners were committed for trial at the circuit court which opens April 26th, when they will be tried for the murder of Minnie Tucker. The woman Canovan showed no sign of emotion when the statutory provisions were read, but Mrs. Tucker's tears fell freely.

Every consideration was shown both women by Police Magistrate Dibblee and Mr. S. B. Appleby. The latter's manner of examining the different witnesses was full of tact and served to put them entirely at ease. Mr. Wendell P. Jones a very clever young barrister is looking after the case of the prisoners with energy and interest.

Whatever opinion may be entertained regarding the innocence or guilt of the accused parties, there can be no doubt that they are in good hands all around, and nothing will be left undone to unearth the true facts of a death that at present is wrapped in mystery.

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