

Famous Poison Murders.

As I happen to have been present at some of the most celebrated murder trials in which various poisons were used during the last fifty years, heard the evidence saw the prisoners and stood up when wretched men and women have been condemned to death, it struck me that it might be interesting to run over a few sensational cases of poison murders in England during the Victorian era. The trials have mostly taken place in what we call the "Old Bailey." It is really the Central Criminal Court in the City of London, close by Ludgate Hill, attached to old Newgate Prison, outside whose gloomy walls I have, as a boy, seen several prisoners hanged in the early morning amid the most hideous din and disreputable rabble that ever cursed a great city. Happily that scandal has ceased. Public executions exist no longer in England. Men and very rarely, women, are hanged inside the prison walls, and in the presence of the Sheriff and a few officials.

When you go into the Central Criminal Court on the morning of a celebrated murder trial, the scene suggests anything but sadness and gloom. It is a bright, ugly, uncomfortable, ill planned court, with a dock for the wretched prisoner, large enough for a regiment of soldiers, and miserable accommodation for the barristers and solicitors and officials connected with the case, and a small confined 'pen' for the jury.

But the bench appointed for the Judge is, on such occasions, as gay as a garden, and the wretched man or woman waiting trial, huddled up in a corner of the great dock or standing between two burly warders in uniform, is face to face with a picturesque scene. Under a giant sword of justice hanging on the wall, which takes the place of the crucifix invariably placed in a French criminal Court, sits the Lord Mayor of London in his gorgeous robes of scarlet, fur and ermine. By his side are the sheriffs of London, in robes equally gorgeous, who are responsible for all the details of the trial and the custody of the prisoner.

Flitting about the court are the under sheriffs, in black velvet court suits, adorned with cut steel buttons, knee breeches, black silk stockings and buckled pumps, lace ruffs on their wrists and a sword at their side.

When the Judge appears, often in scarlet, with a heavy gray wig, provided it is a 'gaudy day' in term time, all rise (after a stentorian warning from the usher) of the court, who is, as a rule, the city townmaster, the official who stands behind the Lord Mayor's chair at city banquets to enounce the toasts and act as fagman for the cheers. A curious occupation, surely, to lead the cheers and enthusiasm at the Guildhall or the Mansion House, and to call dread silence when in the Old Bailey the Judge puts on a black cap and a man is sentenced to death.

You will notice that when the Judge enters to try a man or woman for his or her life he carries in his hand a beautiful bouquet of cut flowers, which he deposits by his side on his desk, which is not in the middle of the bench, as in other courts, but at the side, the centre being occupied by the Lord Mayor of London.

This bouquet is presented by the city of London, and is a survival of the old custom when at such trials rue and rosemary and sweet smelling herbs were scattered in the prisoners' dock, and in the precincts of the court, for the purpose of disinfection and to allay what was then called "goal fever."

The first celebrated poison case of the last half century was that of Palmer, a local doctor, of Rugely, in Staffordshire, who was charged with murdering by poison his friend Cook, a racing man, whose life he had insured, and to whom he owed a considerable amount of money. The actual murder occurred at the Raven Hotel, at Shrewsbury, but the trial took place in London, as often happens, to avoid local prejudice in the selection of a jury. I remember as a lad at school the Palmer case created furious excitement, and in all our classrooms and dormitories the Times newspaper was in enormous requisition. I was, I remember, appointed to read out

the details of the trial to my hungry and eager schoolmates. The case was tried by Lord Campbell, a very drastic Scotch Judge. "Jock" Campbell they used to call him. The attorney general prosecuted and the attorney general was Alexander Cockburn, afterwards Lord Chief Justice of England, a name well known in America in connection with the Alabama claims. For the defence was Sergeant Shee, an eloquent Irishman, with an enormous practice.

Palmer, the Rugely doctor, was charged with poisoning his friend Cook with strychnine, a deadly drug of which very little was known at the time, and consequently gave rise to a noteworthy discord in the medical evidence. There never was such black and white swearing on this occasion over the strychnine and its effects. At any rate, at the autopsy strychnine was discovered in the murdered man's body, and Palmer was proved to have bribed the postboy who conveyed the contents of the stomach for analysis to London to fall off his horse and smash the contents of the jar. Palmer, the doctor, throughout the trial preserved the utmost sang froid and fully expected he would be acquitted. The only thing that puzzled him was the obsequiousness of Lord Campbell, the Judge, who was not wont to be civil to anybody. Toward the close of the trial Palmer from the dock sent down a pencilled note to his counsel with these words written on the paper:—"The old devil on the bench is too beastly civil. He means to hang me!"

Palmer, the poisoner, was right. Hanged he was. Indeed, if he had not been condemned on this charge he would have been hanged a dozen times on others, for it was proved almost to demonstration that he had got rid of half his family, whose lives he had previously insured. Strychnine was found in each case, and death occurred after 'tetanus,' or twisting up of the limbs, a direct evidence of the effect of an overdose of strychnine.

Another remarkable case was that of Madeleine Smith, a lovely Scotch girl, who poisoned the cup of chocolate she offered to her lover, who turned out a blackmailer and a dastard. He was a young Italian. Weary of an intrigue which had become distasteful to her, and anxious to be honorably married, Madeleine Smith severed her connection with her lover. But he was brute enough to threaten that if she dared marry he would show all her passionate and compromising letters to her intended husband. The girl was accused of settling the difficulty with a little poison in the young gentleman's chocolate that did for him.

The case was tried in Scotland, and so much sympathy was expressed for the lovely girl that a verdict of "Not proven" was given, and Madeleine Smith was acquitted.

Many years after a curious circumstance occurred. It was related to me by George du Maurier, the artist-novelist, and well known to you all as the creator of 'Trilby.' One lonely Sunday, in London, a friend approached him and asked him if he had anything particular to do; if not, would he dine at the house of some hospital acquaintances of his. We will call them the Robinsons! They had given Du Maurier's friend carte blanche to bring anyone he liked to 'meal' on Sunday, in an informal way.

At the dinner table the conversation turned on celebrated poison cases and trials. Du Maurier launched out and quoted the Madeleine Smith case, maintaining with warmth that she ought to have been hanged, beautiful or not, no matter what provocation there had been.

When he had done his harangue there was a dead silence. Conversation fell flat and the party broke up.

When they got outside, Du Maurier's friend said:—

'Do you know what you have done?'

'Done! What do you mean; done?'

'Do you know your hostess is?'

'Mrs. Robinson, I presume; you told me so when you took me to the house. She can't have changed her name in an hour!'

'But, my dear fellow, do you know who she was?'

'No! How on earth should I?'

'Madeleine Smith!'

Quick curtain.

The Lamson case was another one of poisoning by a doctor. A little lad at school, a half brother, I believe, was in Dr. Lamson's way, and it was convenient to get rid of him. So the doctor visited him

at school and took with him as a present a delicious cake, well primed with strychnine. Lamson, watching him all the time, without turning a hair, saw the little fellow eat the cake. The lad died. The doctor was deservedly hanged.

All London was once very much excited by the "Bravo" mystery. Mrs. Bravo was a beautiful woman, in good society, who had married an athletic, handsome and very popular young barrister. She originally resided in Malvern, where her best friend was the local physician. Suddenly they all removed to Balham, a London suburb, where young Bravo mysteriously died. It was charged that antimony was introduced again and again into the wine he drank, continuously and in small quantities. The poor young fellow sickened and died. After a long and anxious inquiry Mrs. Bravo was acquitted.

The Mrs. Maybrick case is a poison mystery of such recent occurrence, and it has been so freely discussed both in England and America, that it will be unnecessary to go into details of the arsenic extracted from fly papers, the habits of the dead man, his illness and all the pros and cons of this most extraordinary cause celebre. I have heard as many eminent lawyers capable of sifting evidence strongly oppose the verdict as I have heard many, the family included, maintain its justice up to the hilt. For my own part I feel certain that had Mrs. Maybrick been tried in Scotland and not in England the verdict would have been as in the case of Madeleine Smith—"Not proven"—and this verdict seems a very righteous one in a trial for murder as opposed to the stereotyped 'Guilty or not guilty.' Let us hope, anyhow, that justice in this disputed case will be tempered with mercy, and that the unhappy woman, after all these weary years, will be restored to the arms of those loving ones who have never ceased to maintain her innocence before the world.

So much in England depends on the temperance and summing up of the judge. We have what are called 'hanging judges' and judges who strain every point to avoid the extreme penalty of the law.

I was in the Central Criminal Court during the whole of the Penge murder trial when two brothers Henry and Patrick Staunton, the wife of one of the Stauntons, and Alice Rhodes, the mistress of the other brother—four in all—were arraigned for the wilful murder of an old woman by neglecting to give her, their mother, the common necessities of life. They shut the poor lady up, they treated her vilely and brutally and she unquestionably died of neglect. The question was whether it was wilful murder or manslaughter. The prosecution argued one way, the defence argued the other.

Mr. Justice Hawkins summed up the dead against the prisoners, and maintained that if it was murder at all it was 'wilful' in the wickedest sense.

The trial was not over until nearly midnight. It was a ghastly scene when all were found guilty and condemned to death in that dim, half lighted court, the feeble gas supplemented by guttering candles. As the solemn sentence was pronounced the two women gave piercing shrieks and fell fainting into the arms of the female warders. The two brothers huddled together and received their death condemnation shuddering, hand in hand.

Then a curious thing happened. Public feeling was very strongly opposed to the verdict. Protest after protest was printed in the newspapers. The sentences were commuted to penal servitude in three cases and Alice Rhodes, though I saw her condemned to death, was actually acquitted and was afterward engaged as a barmaid in the city.

In fact they tell a story that one day Alice Rhodes found herself in the presence of Mr. Justice Hawkins on some race course, when the following conversation took place:—

'I say, Judge, do you know who I am?'

'I certainly do not,' replied the popular Judge.

'Why, I'm Alice Rhodes, the girl you condemned to death!'

'Such a thing as a free pardon to a condemned criminal has, I suppose, never occurred before. She, poor girl, passed indeed through 'the valley of the shadow of death.'

Only one of the Stauntons survived the sentence. He was recently released, a prematurely old and broken man.

CARE FOR THE WOUNDED.

How England Looks After Her Wounded and Dying Soldiers.

Modern artillery's effectiveness has put a very different complexion upon the uses and necessities of field hospitals. A field hospital used to be very near the fighting line—it was often actually under fire. But nowadays, when artillery fire is commonly effective at four thousand yards, no field hospital could be allowed sufficiently near the fighting line to permit of the wounded



MANY A WOMAN'S LIFE

has been saved, much needless suffering avoided or relieved by the wise counsels and advice given by Mrs. J. C. Richard. The rich and the poor, as well as the learned and unlearned have been alike educated in the construction and functions of their special delicate organs, have been warned against the countless causes of disease and shown the way to restored health, love and happiness. Mrs. Richard has just published a book entitled "Woman in Health and Disease" which will prove of much interest to daughter, wife and mother. A limited number of copies will be given FREE to all who send 10 cents (stamps or silver), to cover cost of mailing. Write to-day for a copy.

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being taken directly to it, and the organization of aid has been altogether altered.

In South Africa it has been arranged that all the effective aid in the field will be that of the army Medical Corps. Voluntary aid will confine itself to the lines of communication between the fields and the base hospital and between the base and general hospitals. The working organization is as follows:—

Accompanying the fighting line are the bearer companies of the Army Medical Corps—three or four men to each regular regimental company. When a man drops out wounded, the Army Medical Corps men pick him up and take him to the nearest dressing station, where he is attended to as quickly as possible. From the dressing station the wounded are taken to collecting stations, these being placed at points where more shelter is obtainable.

In the case of collecting stations, it is possible, of course, to select more effective shelter than at the dressing stations, where shelter is more a matter of improvisation. From the collecting stations the wounded are carried as quickly as possible to the field hospital. Here, generally speaking, they remain a day, and are then removed to the base hospital.

There will be twelve field hospitals in South Africa, four stationary or base hospitals and four general hospitals, each with its complete staff. The distribution of these hospitals will be determined by the officers commanding in South Africa, and must depend on the manner in which the military situation develops.

Dreaded Diphtheria.

ITS AFTER EFFECTS FREQUENTLY SHATTER STRONG NERVES.

Mr. S. McDougall suffered for Years and His Doctor Told Him Recovery was Impossible—Again Strong and Healthy.

Farmer and "jack of all trades," is what Mr. Salter McDougall styled himself when interviewed by the News recently. Mr. McDougall resides at Alton, about ten miles from Truro, N. S., and according to his own statement has been made a new man by the use of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. When interviewed by the News man, Mr. McDougall said:—"I am only too glad to give you any information you may want. Anything I can say will not be too good a recommendation for Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. Up to the year 1888," continued Mr. McDougall, "I had always enjoyed good health. At that time I had a severe attack of diphtheria, the after effects of which left me in a deplorable condition. I was troubled with a constant pain in my left side, just below the heart, and at times, dizziness would cause me to throw up my hands and fall on my back, or side. My face, hands and feet would swell and turn cold. In this condition I could not move hands or feet and had to be moved like a child. My appetite all but left me and I got very little sleep. I was under the care of a doctor, but got nothing more than occasional temporary relief. Finally I got so low that my friends wrote for my father to come and see me for the last time. This was in January, 1895. That night the doctor told my friends he could do nothing for me, and he doubted if I would live through the night. That night I took a severe fit of vomiting, and raised three pieces of matter, tough and leathery in appearance, and each about three inches long. The vomiting almost choked me, and it required two people to hold me in bed, but I felt easier after it. I was in this deplorable condition when I was urged by a neighbor to try Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. It was a hopeless case but I decided to try them. When I told the doctor I was taking the pills he said they would do me no good; that I would never be able to work again. But he was mistaken, for the effect was marvellous. By March I was able to go out of doors, and could walk quite a distance. I continued using Dr. Williams' Pink Pills until I had taken seventeen boxes, and they have made a new man of me. My health is better than it has been for twenty years, and notwithstanding the doctor's prediction, I am able to stand any amount of hard work. I attribute my new manhood and regained health to Dr. Williams' Pink Pills and gratefully recommend them to others in poor health."

Cautionary.

A Georgia colored preacher had more than one way of making sure that none of his parishioners let the contribution plate pass unnoticed.

"We have a collection for foreign and domestic missions dis morning, brethren and sisters," he announced one Sunday, "and for de glory ob heaven, whichever one ob you stole Widow Johnson's sheep, don't put a cent on de plate!"

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE NINE.)

some three hundred miles. Johannesburg, which might be called the gold-miners' capital, is practically on the summit of this elevated land, which falls away rapidly toward the north—so rapidly that Pretoria only thirty-five miles off, is twelve hundred feet lower.

Gold has been mined in there for comparatively few years, yet many different stories are told about the manner of the discovery. It is said that in 1854 a Dutchman named Marais found the precious metal and that the Boers, not wishing to be overrun by gold-hunters, gave him five hundred pounds to keep the secret and sent him home! It is further said that the former owner of much of the gold bearing region, a British veteran whose land was confiscated because he took up arms against the Boers in 1881, died in an almshouse. It is certain that, before 1868, digging of gold was forbidden by law. It is equally certain that a 'strike' in the Rand was announced early in 1884, and that within a little more than a year more than twenty thousand persons had gathered there.

At that time the railroad from Cape Town reached only to Kimberley and three hundred and seven thousand whites were employed in the neighboring diggings. Today it is a bustling modern city, with a population of a hundred thousand.

When the present war began, the Transvaal was yielding annually about sixty million dollars' worth of gold a year—or more than one-fifth of the world's production, of which, by the way, the United States is credited with nearly sixty millions.

Conservative authorities have estimated that, carried down to a depth of four thousand feet, the Rand mines will yield in all more than three and a half billion dollars' worth of gold, of which almost a third will represent clear profit.

The old phrase of 'a king's ransom' seems thin and meaningless when one realizes the enormous wealth destined to be controlled by the victor in the present struggle.

A Volunteer's Appetite.

It seldom occurs to the average man that 'home cooking' is really one of the blessings of civilization—but soldiers find it out. Apropos of the return of Western regiments from the Philippines, the Omaha World Herald prints this letter, written by a Nebraska volunteer to his wife:

I see they are preparing to give us a grand banquet when we return to Omaha. That's all right, but I want something to eat before the banquet comes off. And I want it on the table when I get home, too. What do I want? Well, here's the list:

Sirloin steak, rare.

Hot biscuit and plenty of them, made by you.

Flour and milk gravy, about three quarts.

Mashed potatoes.

Apple sauce.

Corn on the cob, eleven ears.

String beans.

Macaroni and cheese.

Peaches and cream.

Ice-cream.

I want you to get all these things ready. We have had plenty to eat since reaching San Francisco, but when things are camp-cooked they all taste alike. Cook 'em yourself, and don't think because I've been away over a year you can ring in any hired girl cooking on me. When I get through with this bill of fare I'll be ready to tackle the banquet.

A Disappointment.

"I came mighty near tryin' to enlist in de Transvaal army," said Meandering Mike.

You might have ter work," said Plodding Pete.

'Fur a minute I was willin' ter take de chance. I was deceived by a typographical error. De paper said de Transvaal was chock full o' Beers, an' I had ter read half a column before I got convinced dat it only meant Boers.'

'Ten years ago,' protested the farmer, I could buy a gold brick for \$10,000. And you ask me \$15,000!'

The Swindler inclined his head; he had no concessions to make.

'And yet the money interests' the farmer exclaimed, bitterly, 'profess not to understand agrarian discontent under an order which permits trusts!'

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