

MEDUCTIC SENSATION

Evidence at the Preliminary Examination

OF MRS. MARSTEN,

Who is Accused of Poisoning Her Husband.

THE DEFENDANT PLEADS NOT GUILTY TO THE CHARGE.

Does Not Seem Much Worried Over Her Position.

Meductic, Aug. 18.—The opening today of the preliminary trial of Mrs. Annie Marsten, charged with the poisoning of her husband, George Marsten in June last, did not develop any sensational features. In fact the proceedings were picturesque and interesting rather than dramatic. Still the crown has several important witnesses who have yet to be heard. Practically the same evidence as that before the coroner's inquest was given this morning and related chiefly to the domestic affairs of the Marstens and the story of those who were present at George Marsten's death bed.

The early part of the day was dark, dreary, threatening rain and the male population was out in force at the trial. The case is attracting a good deal of attention in the county, particularly in this section.

There are two hotels in Meductic—the quaint tree-shaded Meductic Hotel and almost opposite the house which is now the principal point of interest to the villagers. This is the Aberdeen Hotel, kept by the Marstens, and is a two-story, square building of a deep cream color trimmed with dark red. It has a very neat appearance and in it now is Annie Marsten, the widow of George, and her two sisters, Celeste and Birdie Stairs. A third Ella, left suddenly two weeks ago.

A Telegraph representative sought out Mrs. Marsten, who is out on bail of \$4,000. The door was opened by a sister who said Mrs. Marsten was upstairs asleep and could not be seen. A little perseverance, however, succeeded in gaining a brief interview with the accused. Nothing of very great interest, however, was elicited, for Mrs. Marsten has at last realized that probably too much talking has brought about her unpleasant predicament.

Her lawyer, J. Chipman Hartley, of Woodstock, had warned her against talking and so, regarding the circumstances of her husband's death Mrs. Marsten was silent.

"It is not safe to make remarks of any kind," said she, "for they can be twisted about to mean most anything. I made a good many that I didn't mean no harm by, and people fixed them over to suit themselves. Me and George was awful home people and we didn't never go nowhere much; to circuses, carnivals nor nuthin'. I didn't see George's body till next day, for I wasn't well, but nuthin's trouble if you don't take it that way; I never did."

Mrs. Marsten steered carefully clear of the subject of her domestic life and in fact was shrewdly non-committal on anything connected with the case.

The accused is a woman of about 33, though looking fully 10 years older. She is of the average height and weighs probably 150 pounds. She looks rather pale just now from recent illness, but there is no trace of anxiety or nervousness about her. Her general appearance is not unfavorable, the one weak feature of her face being the pale blue eyes which hardly ever glance at the person with whom she is talking. Otherwise Mrs. Marsten might be regarded as a woman whom work, or, as has been said, a not to strict observance of the moralities, has prematurely aged. There are three little children in the home, two girls and a baby boy of two weeks, the eldest child being eight years old.

There was another child, but when a baby it had died under circumstances that pointed to accidental poisoning. It was given some milk and a short time later exhibited all the symptoms of poisoning, the theory being at the time that the dose was prepared for some one else. Mrs. Marsten told the neighbors that someone had poisoned the milk.

Sunday night Everett Marsten talked of his brother's death. He knew of the clouds on the domestic home life and the reputations because of which there was little intercourse between the families. George Marsten had little to say in his own home, Peter, the other man in the

case, practically running matters to suit himself. Although only living half a mile away, he was not informed of his brother's death, but learned it by accident. When he saw George last fall he was in perfect health and said he was in splendid condition. A few months later the change in his appearance was startling.

He was bloated, white, trembling and very feeble, with a wild look in his eyes. He heard from him that he had consulted Mr. Moore, a healer with a local reputation, and the latter said he could do nothing for him while he was taking so much poison. This George denied, and the man told him that he was getting poison in some way. His wife constantly talked of George's death, and on various occasions tried to get a deed of the property from him.

Everett Marsten, like his brother in Woodstock, is a prosperous farmer and highly respected.

Monday morning, when the preliminary examination opened, the quaint town hall was filled with a throng of farmers, old and young, who had forsaken their farms for the day. It was a curious assemblage, and on every stolid face was depicted the intense interest usual in a community where sensations of this sort are, fortunately, rare.

Crown Prosecutor J. R. Murphy, Chipman Hartley for the accused and T. L. Ketchum, stenographer, drove in from Woodstock yesterday morning, and at 10.30 the court assembled, J. S. Law, J. P., presiding.

A few moments later, Annie Marsten and her counsel entered the room and the woman took her place facing the court. Near her sat her father, Botsford Stairs, a man of probably 55 years or a little more. Mrs. Marsten was plainly dressed in a dark blue gossamer and wore a sailor hat. She looked bright and animated, with a slight flush, which disappeared as the trial progressed—though not from fear or anxiety.

If Annie Marsten is guilty of the crime of which she is accused, she is one of the coolest criminals that ever appeared before a court, was the comment of a spectator, and that even more, she is a brazen one, and if she is not guilty was showing a levity certainly not in keeping with her position either as a widow of two months or a person accused of a horrible crime.

She stood while the information against her was read, but showed no nervousness except perhaps a harder pressure of her hands on the table on which she leaned. At the close she said "Not guilty," in a loud voice, and with a smile around the room. This left her face only at rare intervals.

Even when her husband's death agony was being graphically described by an eye witness, Mrs. Marsten leaned forward with her ever ready smile. Occasionally her lips twitched and her fingers laced in and out, but as a general thing the smile remained, and once or twice when Crown Prosecutor Murphy, in eliciting some facts regarding the woman's relations with Peter Marsten or of the home life of the family, made a dry remark with a touch of grim humor about it, the accused joined in the laugh which followed.

J. Chipman Hartley is looking after Mrs. Marsten's interests, and it is pretty generally understood that suicide on the part of George Marsten will be the defence.

He entered objections to several questions of Mr. Murphy, but the rulings in most cases were in favor of the latter.

Crown Prosecutor Murphy has a method all his own in conducting the case, and there is enough originality to make the proceedings interesting. He is dignity personified, but will not brook dictation, and already there have been one or two little tilts between him and Mr. Hartley. The crown prosecutor is an elderly man of distinguished appearance, kindly mannered and a touch of quaint humor.

The witnesses of the morning were David Oils, Abram Marsten and Mr. Higgins. In the afternoon several witnesses gave testimony, one of whom, Arthur Higgins, said he had heard Annie Marsten tell his mother not long ago that she had found strychnine over the door. This Mrs. Marsten denied when on the stand last week. A cousin of the deceased also swore Mrs. Marsten had remarked once within a year that she hoped if George died suddenly it would be in Woodstock, for if at home it might be said she poisoned him.

Another time George told her his wife had thrown fire wood at him and that her sister had taken a butcher knife to him.

An incident of the afternoon was when Botsford Stairs, father of the accused, took the stand and was questioned regarding his daughter's life before the married George Marsten. There is some suspicion that previous to that she had other ties. The old gentleman denied all positive knowledge of such a state of affairs.

At 3 o'clock adjournment was made to have communication with Attorney-General Pageley regarding Mrs. Marsten's bail. That given last week held good only until she made her appearance in court

this morning. The attorney-general replied that the accused could be admitted to the same bail until Thursday morning, to which time the inquiry is adjourned.

Harold Marsten and Mr. Hartley gave bail for \$1,000 each, and Mrs. Marsten herself furnished the other \$2,000.

When Mrs. Marsten left the court at noon she was to all intents and purposes a prisoner, as her bail had expired, and she was attended by a constable, who followed Mrs. Marsten and her counsel at a short distance. If the woman is sent up for trial the case will be heard in January, and in the meantime an effort will be made to find if any of the family have bought strychnine within the year, and if so where it was purchased.

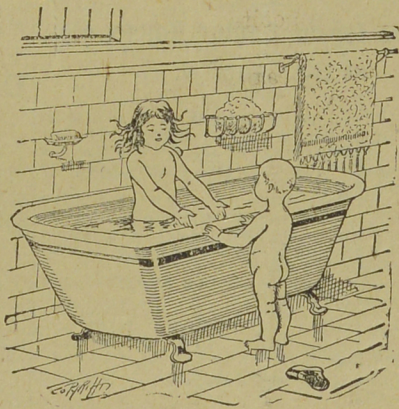
The Meductic case resembles that of the Doherty murder, inasmuch as a strong motive for the crime has not been established. It hardly seems credible that hatred of her husband would incite a woman to murder, and besides, she was one on whom, according to many, the marriage tie rested lightly. The deceased is not wealthy, and his brother says at the time of his death would probably be worth not more than \$2,000, after all encumbrances were removed.

It is claimed that the sisters of the woman accused—two of whom are married but living apart from their husbands—acted very suspiciously at the time of Marsten's death. After she had administered a dose of cream of tartar, wormwood and one or two other things Mrs. Marsten left home and went down to the river. Half or three-quarters of a hour later, Celeste Stairs in passing her brother-in-law's door, her dress accidentally brushed it he heard it and called her in. She looked in hurriedly, closed the door and sent another sister across the street for assistance. The man was in fearful agony his body writhing with his forearms held upwards. His first word to the persons who came to the calls were: "Oh God, take me out of this bed," and his last intelligible ones were: "My God I'm dying." Even under these tragic circumstances the members of the household it is told, laughed and chatted as usual, that night and the following evening Mrs. Marsten ushered visitors in to see the body of her husband, removing the coffin lid herself, talking all the while on different subjects.

Peter Marsten, whose name was mentioned in the matter is a tall loosely built man of nearly 50 years, of a morose disposition. He has a trick of keeping his head down and rarely looks up when in conversation.

The court adjourned yesterday at 2.30 but will meet again Thursday and continue until the witnesses have been examined.

J. R. Haycock, travelling auditor of the Dominion Express Company, is a guest at the Queen.



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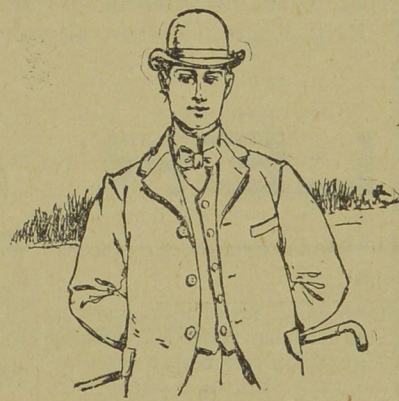
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