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HIS STORY DISPUTED.

Police Officer Alexander Smith Receives a Bullet In His Breast.

He Says It Was an Enemy's Deed. But the Detectives Contradict it.

By strange coincidence, or as the superstitious might agree by fateful influence, the last day of each year sees in Victoria some suicidal tragedy. So it has been for the past five years, and yesterday proved no exception to the remarkable rule, the early morning hours witnessing not one, but two ghastly shooting affairs. As a result of the first discovered of these, Alexander Smith, a city police constable, is now waiting for death in one of the Jubilee hospital wards, the surgeons agreeing that his recovery is possible but not at all probable. All the facts in connection with the case are peculiar, and opinions differ as to whether poor Smith's wound was inflicted by a cowardly enemy who had deliberately planned his assassination, or caused by a shot from his own revolver, fired with suicidal intent.

Those who believe Smith was the victim of a revengeful, murderous enemy, base their opinion upon the account of the shooting given by the wounded officer himself, in an ante-mortem deposition taken by Magistrate Macrae; those who incline to the self-murder theory—among them Chief Sheppard and the majority of his men—prefer the silent testimony of circumstances to the statement of the injured man.

The shooting occurred just after yesterday's COLONIST went to press, at about 2:30 or 3 o'clock in the morning, and the first intimation that a tragedy had been enacted at the constable's cosy home on Michigan street was given by a printer passing the place on his way home after the labors of the night. He heard Mrs. Smith's hysterical weeping, investigated, and telephoned to town. Two COLONIST reporters were next on the scene, and with one of them Smith discussed the shooting at some length before the police arrived with Dr. Fraser, the city medical health officer.

He was coming home for lunch, he said, and was just on the point of entering at his own back door—his hand being in fact on the knob—then without a word being spoken some one fired at him from only a few feet away. He turned at once and recognized his assailant, who had evidently lain in wait for him at his own door, knowing that he would return home for a light lunch before completing his watch. Then, as he saw that the man intended to fire again, he got inside the house as quickly as possible; told his wife not to venture outside lest she too might be shot; and removing his coat and vest lay down upon the bed.

This is the version of the shooting given by Smith to the COLONIST. He did not feel much pain at this time according to his own statement, and seemed surprisingly unconcerned as to the character of his wound and the apprehension of his assailant.

"Oh, I know who it was," he said. "It's not the first time he's laid for me, and I'll get even with him all right if I get over this. I'm not going to give his name till I can get after him myself, though. If I am done for, Walker knows him—it's a friend of his."

He was sure that the shooting took place right at his own back door, as his hand was on the knob—yet strange to say his wound is not in the back, but in the breast, a little above the heart. When asked by the reporter if he had had a chance to return the shot, he hesitated a moment and then said: "No; I've lost my gun."

Yet his own revolver was found, on a search being instituted by Officer Allen, behind a pile of wood in the detached fuel shed, one chamber fired. It is of the calibre corresponding apparently with the wound. The coat which he had worn while on duty Wednesday night is also a witness in support of the sucidal theory, being powder-burned and marked as though the revolver had been pressed tight against the breast, the intention being to send the bullet into or through the heart. This would undoubtedly have been its course had it not been deflected by one of the ribs, to pass into the lung.

The doctor on his arrival found the injury to consist of a dangerous penetrating chest wound on the left side in the region of the heart. From the location of the point of entrance it would seem most likely that the bullet would pass through the body. It had found no exit, however, and is still lodged in such manner that probing for it would only seal the fate of the patient. The doctors, under the circumstances, can only await developments—death from pneumonia, hemorrhage, or blood-poisoning being the most likely termination of the case.

When Magistrate Macrae arrived, Dr. Fraser having said that it would be well to have a formal statement from the wounded man, he had changed his story in several essential details. He saw his assailant, he said, but could not describe him; the shot was fired while he was going from the house to the closet, which is off from the woodshed; he returned the fire and lost possession of his own revolver, he didn't know how; the man who shot him stood eight or ten feet away, and though he could see the bright barrel of his weapon he could not see his face.

Chief Sheppard is sufficiently convinced of the falsity of Smith's version to deem it unnecessary to act upon it. The burned coat; a pool of blood in the shed but nowhere else; the fact that Smith had no enemy but himself and his appetite, and the knowledge that he has been drinking heavily of late and was depressed in consequence are woven together and accepted as establishing a complete and common-sense presentment of the case.

Whether Smith or the Chief is right remains to be disclosed. The medical men share the opinion that the wound was self inflicted, and rather expect a confession to this effect from the patient before 24 hours more have passed.

A LARGE and merry company danced the old year out and the new year in at the Mount Baker hotel last evening.

NEW YEAR SERVICES.

Many People Keep Watch Night at the City Churches.

The death of the old year and the birth of the new has a solemn significance which many churches recognize by holding "watch night" services, that the new year may be entered into with prayer and hopefulness. At the Metropolitan, Centennial and other Methodist churches watch night services were held ushering in 1897; and at Emanuel Baptist church, where the home congregation and that of Calvary church combined.

Rev. J. B. Haslam conducted midnight services at St. Barnabas, and in St. James' and other Anglican churches the New Year was ushered in with appropriate services. The Salvation Army, too, had their Watch Night service, conducted after the novel and hearty manner characteristic of the Army.

Thursday being the usual prayer meeting night of many of the churches, the occasion was made use of for special services, instead of waiting till midnight. At the Reformed Episcopal church Rev. Dr. Reid, of Westminster, gave a New Year's Eve address, and at other churches the occasion was improved by the pastors by addresses apt to the time. The congregations were large and to suit the convenience of the public the street car service was continued until 2 o'clock this morning.

There will be a New Years service this morning at 11 o'clock in St. Andrew's Presbyterian church conducted by the pastor.

THE Strawberry Vale school house looked its prettiest on the evening of Tuesday last, when the ladies of the district, foremost among whom were Mrs. Daley, Mrs. Coverdale and Mrs. Porter, entertained the children of the school to a tea and a Christmas tree. The latter was tastefully decorated, and afforded much pleasure to the young people assembled. Many parents and friends were also present, and among the features of a very pleasant evening were the carols and glees by the scholars, and Master James Daley's performance on the violin. Towards the close of the evening, the members of the Strawberry Vale singing class (most of whom were present) took the opportunity of presenting Mr. J. H. Monk, the schoolmaster, with a very handsome writing desk, in recognition of his services during the past nine months, a kindness which he recognized in a short, but appropriate speech. More songs by local celebrities followed, and at 10 p.m., the singing of "God Save the Queen" ended a very enjoyable and sociable evening, for which the ladies of the district deserve great credit.

A FEW INCHES OF PLAIN ENGLISH.

Nowadays men are doing all sorts of wonders by means of electricity, both in mechanics and in chemistry. I see by the papers that they expect to be able to produce real diamonds by it. Perhaps they may marvels never cease. But we will wait till they do before we crow over that job. Up to this time, anyway, everything that is both valuable and useful is the fruit of hard work. Even diamonds are mostly got out of rocky mines. And, within reasonable limits, it is good for us to have to work. Ten shillings honestly earned is better for a man than twenty in the shape of a legacy.

The best condition of things for any country would be when fair wages could be earned straight along, without loss or deduction for any reason. But in the present aspect of human affairs this is impossible. Whose fault it is we cannot now discuss.

One source of loss, however, is plain enough, and some remedy for it ought to be found. In England and Wales every working man averages ten days of illness per year, making the total loss of wages from this cause £1,6030,030 a year. We are talking of the average, you see. But inasmuch as all working-men are not ill every year, this average does not fairly show the suffering and loss of those who are ill. In any given year many will lose no time at all, while others may lose individually from ten days to six months each. No charity, no savings, no income from clubs, etc., can make up for this—even in money alone—to say nothing of the pain and the misery.

Alluding to an experience of his in 1888 Mr. George Lagdon says, "I had to give up my work." How this came to pass he tells us in a letter dated from his home in White House Road, Stebbing, near Dunmow, August 24th, 1892. He had no inherited disease or weakness, so far as he knew, and was always strong and well up to April of that year—1888. Then his strength and energy began to leave him. He felt tired, not as from work, but as from power gone out of him through some bodily failure. He sat down to his meals, but not with his old eagerness and relish. There was a nasty copper-like taste in his mouth, his teeth and tongue were covered with slime, and his throat clogged with a kind of thick phlegm, difficult to "hawk up" and eject.

He also speaks of a nagging pain in the stomach, flatulency, and much palpitation of the heart as having been among his symptoms. As the ailment—whatever it was—progressed he began to have a hacking cough which he says, seemed as if it must shake him to pieces. He could scarcely sleep on account of it. One of the most alarming features of his illness, however, were the night sweats, for the reason that they showed the existence of a source of weakness which must soon, unless arrested end in total prostration. In fact he was obliged to give up his work altogether. To him—as to any once active man—this was like being buried alive.

One doctor whom Mr. Lagdon consulted, said he was consumptive, and it did indeed look that way. "For twelve weeks," he says, "I went on like this, getting weaker and weaker, and having reason to believe that it would end in my taking the one journey from which no traveller returns.

"It was now July—summer time, when life to the healthy is so pleasant and full of hope. At this time my sister-in-law got from Mr. Linsells, Stebbing a medicine that I had not tried yet. After having used one bottle I felt better, and when I had used the second I was cured, and *have not lost an hour's work since.*"

The reader will notice that between the date of his taking this medicine and the date of his letter there is an interval of four years. We may therefore, infer that his cure was real and permanent. The medicine by the way, was Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup. It is not likely he will forget its name nor what it did for him. His disease was indigestion and dyspepsia, the deadly enemy of every labouring man or woman under the sun, no matter what they work at or work with—hands, brains, or both.

Is it necessary to draw a "moral"—schoolbook style—from these facts? No, it is not. We have talked plain English, and that is enough.

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NEWS OF THE PROVINCE

More British Capital For Investment in This Province—Chain Gang at Work.

Golden Cache Mines—Held-Up at Cloverdale—The Paris Belle Claim.

(Special to the COLONIST.)

VANCOUVER.

VANCOUVER, Dec. 31.—Mr. N. Schou talked with the Colonist correspondent to-day in reference to the possibility of English capital being largely invested in British Columbia mines next summer. Mr. Schou, since his arrival here, has kept himself in constant touch with the English reading public by frequent communications to the press of Great Britain, and besides giving voluminous information, answering all queries about the province that appeared in the press. He is in receipt of numerous letters from wealthy Britishers, asking for bona fide information regarding the mineral wealth of the province, and going into detail in many instances.

He predicts a rush from England and Scotland next summer, basing his opinion on the fact that for the first time the press of Great Britain is noticing the mining possibilities of the province in extended notices. Mr. Schou said that two years ago it was very difficult for him to get his letters into the Old Country papers, and he would invariably receive a polite reply that British Columbia matters were at present of little interest; but he in turn politely persisted sending information. Among the numerous letters received by Mr. Schou recently, is one from a well known millionaire, which, for meaning a lot in a small space, is a record breaker. It reads: "Write me at once of something big in British Columbia, and I will investigate." Mr. Schou will probably sail for England before many months as a promoter, possibly lecturing through England on British Columbia's mineral resources.

The chain gang are being worked daily in the city limits clearing away brush. It has been said that the city have no right to put vagrants in the chain gang, that the law draws the line at convicts. In this case it is a matter of a few unfortunate vagrants unduly suffering for the good of the city, as there is no doubt that among those vagrants are the burglars and highwaymen against whom the police have been unable to get a conviction.

The result of the examination for entrance to the High school have been published. The West End school sends ten pupils, nine girls and one boy. The Central sends eight, Fairview three, Mt. Pleasant one, private schools two, Glen Valley school (rural) one.

Mr. J. M. MacKinnon, president of the Golden Cache Mines Company, in speaking of his recent trip to England said that he took every opportunity, apart from the business which actually took him to England, to effectively advertise British Columbia and its mining resources and to place them prominently before the English public. Mr. MacKinnon took with him 250 pounds of the rich gold bearing, free milling quartz from the Golden Eagle, as a sample of what British Columbia could produce. The Canadian Pacific railway authorities in London gave Mr. MacKinnon every assistance in the way of placing the samples before those most likely to be interested, and sent out invitation cards to fifty or sixty of the most influential newspapers of England and Scotland and to numerous prominent bankers and leading brokers. The MacArthur Cyanide Process Co., of Glasgow, were especially anxious to have some of the samples, and they were obliged by Mr. MacKinnon. The sequel to Mr. MacKinnon's trip is in the widespread notices he and the Golden Cache mines in particular and British Columbia in general have received from the press of Great Britain. Mr. MacKinnon's trip and the marvellously rich specimens exhibited by him are noticed in all the influential and conservative papers in England and Scotland, many of the more conservative of them for the first time printing a notice voluntarily on British Columbia mines.

WESTMINSTER.

WESTMINSTER, Dec. 31.—While J. I. Breen, treasurer of the local lodge I.O.O.F., Cloverdale, was close to the lodge room door in the rear of the premises, a gunny sack was slipped over his head from behind and his pockets quickly rifled of $100 lodge money. He was then thrown violently to the ground. When the sack was removed there was no one in sight.

NELSON.

(From the Nelson Tribune.)

The suit of the Nelson & Fort Sheppard railway company against the Paris Belle mining claim, in which the title of the defendant mining company to its mining claim is attacked, will come up for argument at Victoria during the first week in January before a full bench. The railway company claims that every location made subseqvent to April, 1893, the time of the filing of the selection under the railway grant, not accompanied by an entry bond, is invalid. This is the point raised against the location of the Paris Belle.

Otto Abeling, the well known mill man, has just returned from the Lanark mine near Illecillewaet, where he is putting up a 200-ton concentrator for the Lillooet, Fraser River & Cariboo Gold Fields Company, limited. The mill is about one mile from the mines, and will be connected by an aerial tramway. The property consists of seven claims, and is developed by four tunnels. The larger tunnel has a depth of 700 feet in the face. The ore is silver-lead, which will run 65 ounces silver and 75 per cent. lead.

J. T. Sullivan, superintendent of the Elsie mine on Wild Horse creek, reports the shaft down 26 feet, showing 4 feet of solid ore between two good walls. The ore is quartz, carrying sulphurets, and recent assays average about $300 to the ton. Exactly what the value of the ore is will not be known until a shipment or two have been made to the smelter. One sample lot of four tons shipped from the surface two months ago to the Trail smelter ran a little over $90.

NANAIMO.

Improving Prospects—The Gold Mining Industry—Review of the Coal Trade.

Property Assessments—Customs Returns—Vital Statistics—Mineral Claims Recorded—Building.

NANAIMO, Dec. 31.—(Special)—While in many respects a review of the business activities in this city and district during the year now closing might be much more encouraging, there are also many indications, quite as noticeable, of the likelihood of a change in the tide and a gradual return of its early commercial activity. This, it is believed, will be chiefly the result of the constant extension of the gold mining industry in this and surrounding districts, the importance of which is confirmed by the fact that a large number of citizens are energetically pushing negotiations for the location of a smelter here, the inauguration of which, it is thought, would be a powerful factor in raising the tide of commercial activity. Nanaimo, with its entire dependence upon almost a single industry, has felt the wide-spread depression greatly, and for the same reason has been slow in recovering. The foreign coal shipments for 1895 were considerably below those for the previous year, and though fortunately this cannot altogether be said of 1896, there has still been a slight decrease from the shipments of 1895.

Though the existing state of affairs be not a permanent one, it is gratifying to note that the year is closing with the prospects of at least several months of good demand for British Columbia coal from the American markets, owing to changes in the trade conditions and the lessening of the supply of Australian coal brought over by returning grain carriers as ballast.

The following tables of the foreign shipments from the three collieries of this district explain themselves:

WELLINGTON COLLIERIES.

	Tons.
January	23,042
February	25,922
March	21,106
April	10,127
May	17,163
June	13,523
July	12,782
August	8,710
September	24,800
October	17,552
November	28,068
December	25,093
Total, 1896	227,878
" 1895	235,951
" 1894	249,049

UNION COLLIERIES.

	Tons.
January	18,909
February	10,850
March	21,080
April	17,664
May	19,360
June	8,323
July	11,299
August	6,198
September	9,565
October	11,534
November	300
December (approx.)	14,805
Total, 1896	150,657
" 1895	207,543
" 1894	205,598

NEW VANCOUVER COLLIERIES.

	Tons.
January	14,232
February	18,749
March	14,309
April	22,792
May	24,353
June	18,864
July	24,986
August	18,384
September	14,206
October	17,310
November	19,032
December	31,938
Total, 1896	320,900
" 1895	241,495
" 1894	289,018

TOTAL OUTPUT OF COAL.

	1896.	1895.
Wellington	337,146	321,530
Union	258,542	202,839
N. V. Coal Co	339,704	320,900

The state of the coal trade has naturally had its full effect upon the Nanaimo district with the result that mercants have in a very large number of cases suffered considerably and many express the conviction that 1896 has been as quiet a year as any within the limit of the depression of the past few years, but, as at this time last year, a decided impression is noticeable that the ebb has reached its limit and that the new year will bring the prophesied change.

The yearly assessments of property within the electorial district carry out to some extent the statements made as to the general depression will be seen are by no means altogether discouraging. They are as follows:

NORTH AND SOUTH NANAIMO.

	Real.	Personal.
1896	$1,792,069	$1,612,400
1897	1,865,574	791,400

NANAIMO CITY.

	Real.	Personal.
1896	$1,699,320	$772,900
1898	1,369,208	758,500

The customs returns, which are not obtainable in detail at the time of writing, show a uniform and considerable decrease in the amount of duty collected during every quarter of the year and a consequently smaller importation of dutiable goods though goods coming in free of duty are largely in excess of what they were last year. The inland revenue returns will show but very little change from last year.

During 1896 the vital statistics show there were 258 births, 93 deaths and 57 marriages, as compared with 260 births, 118 deaths and 79 marriages in 1895. The deaths in Nanaimo City during the year were 46, a satisfactorily low death rate and one which indicates markedly the state of the public health during the past twelve months.

One very gratifying set of figures is that relating to police matters. During 1895 174 charges were investigated in the city police court, and 269 in the district court, while this year there were only some 95 cases in the former and 78 in the latter, and of these 173 at least 118 were breaches of the Liquor and Indian acts.

The number of mineral claims recorded in the Nanaimo mining division is exactly 300, which, with 22 recorded before the first of the year and 100 transferred from the New Westminster office to Nanaimo with the changing of the boundary of the district in reference to Texada island, makes the total number of claims now in the district 422. A large number of these are on Texada island and in Dunsmuir district.

The accidents in coal mines have this year been particularly few, only nine out of some 3,000 men employed by the three collierier having been fatally injured during the year, and only seven of these underground. The number of serious accidents reported from the three mines was this year 35 and last year 46.

Building during the year has been quiet, the only two structures of importance being the new Central school, which was finished in July, and the new court house, finished a few months earlier, both of which were started in 1895.

Perhaps the most important public project of the year is the organization of a syndicate to obtain a charter for the construction of a narrow gauge railway from Nanaimo up the Nitinatt valley and across the island to Alberni. In the event of Alberni becoming the great mining country which is anticipated, this railway would undoubtedly prove a great boon both to the merchants of Nanaimo and the mine owners of Alberni, especially if sufficient inducements can be given to bring a smelter here—and the citizens of Nanaimo have abundance of business enterprise yet.

INLAND REVENUE.

The appended table of Inland Revenue collections in Division No. 37, for the past few years shows a healthy and improved condition of the branches of trade covered by the returns:

Months.	1895.	1896.
January	$ 10,586 68	$ 13,491 01
February	10,224 99	13,116 49
March	13,545 93	11,787 67
April	10,488 75	14,919 83
May	12,710 35	12,365 92
June	13,637 19	16,185 70
July	15,856 14	15,671 78
August	16,404 46	15,467 75
September	12,339 38	13,799 10
October	15,161 44	13,327 36
November	12,787 53	13,728 86
December [app'x]	11,068 50	13,000 00
Total	$154,871 34	$168,861 38

The receipts for 1896 above given are derived from the following sources:

Months	Spirits and Malt.	Tobacco and Cigars.	Inep'n Licenses Etc,
January	$ 10,760 38	$2,514 33	$116 90
February	8,309 67	4,774 77	31 95
March	9,470 86	4 294 91	22 40
April	10,011 81	4,903 01	3 00
May	8,721 27	3,639 65	5 00
June	13,233 66	2,892 73	59 25
July	8,380 33	4,941 20	1,350 20
August	11,697 31	3 662 94	107 50
September	8,960 85	4,801 60	36 65
October	10,367 21	2,922 70	37 35
November	10 908 31	2,785 65	39 70
December	9,204 25	3,379 24	416 51
Totals	$120,126 66	$45,514 73	$2,227 51

Grip Packed and . . .
Ready for Good-bye to 1896.

We wish to thank our many friends who have been *pleased to patronize* us in '96. We will exert our every effort to *please* our *patrons* in 1897. We want you to understand that we are in a position to take advantage of fluctuations in market values; that we work on a small margin of profit and give you the benefit of our experience and purchases. We shall follow the ups and downs closely and keep you posted every week. Our low prices are the fruits of well bought goods and the power of money.

"Wealth's wasteful tricks I
will not learn.
Nor ape the glittering upstart fool;
Shall not carved tables serve
my turn.
But all must be of bulk?
Give grasping pomp its
double share,
I ask but *one* recumbent chair."

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The best appointed in the Kootenay Country, with all modern improvements. The Choicest Wines, Liquors and Cigars.
MRS. M. A. MEAKIN, Prop.
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MARKED IMPROVEMENT

A Splendid Showing of the Trade of the Port in Customs Returns.

This Year's Exports Amount in Valuation to Over $500,000 More Than Last Year.

Trade has, according to the customs statistics, been decidedly better in 1896 than in previous years, showing an improvement of over $500,000 in exports alone. This, too, is in spite of the fact that the seal catch this year has been less than the preceding years. The salmon output, however, counterbalanced this, while the mineral shipments connected with the port have also been very satisfactory. A comparison of the exports as made by months is as follows:

EXPORTS.

	1896.	1895.	1894.
January	$176,866	$43,666	$ 93,516
February	50,371	61,652	28,187
March	37,197	29,361	9,459
April	76,508	29,075	48,240
May	77,646	154,696	85,260
June	142,499	122,514	36,258
July	106,148	240,766	201,488
August	75,343	147,765	475,452
September	476,908	246,340	764,588
October	841,290	1,027,185	744,456
November	498,419	144,350	265,109
December	314,299	155,728	290,221
Totals	$2,863,434	$2,355,065	$3,013,213

IMPORTS.

	Free.	Dutiable.	D'ty Paid.
January	$ 47,649	$ 145,590	$ 48,304 34
February	26,750	96,094	44 383 15
March	299,909	222,311	62,735 41
April	59,476	180,720	64 576 87
May	98,849	158,859	52,162 97
June	105,079	120,918	47,689 63
July	38,851	126,884	47,331 67
August	22,596	223,113	52,419 20
September	50,651	192,249	61,965 79
October	86,169	183,592	60,270 71
November	46,414	147,532	49,546 46
December	24,405	134,901	45,983 97
Totals 1896	$906,778	$1,836,772	$634,570 17
" 1895	620,615	1,767,896	620,984 00

There has been a slight decrease in the collections from those of 1895, which shows, no doubt, that the tide of immigration from the orient has not been quite so great during the past year as in 1895. The collections by months are as follows:

	1896.	1895.	1894.
January	1,925 97	45,743	56,818
February	2,366 62	38,769	54,881
March	3,3 9 82	53,832	91,384
April	7,144 36	69,507	1,469
May	8,364 16	61,142	55,451
June	2,366 08	61,715	49,2[illegible]
July	7,162 40	54 228	47,089
August	4,887 31	60,039	54,171
September	4,836 15	62,174	62,919
October	4,172 41	61,015	61,422
November	4,524 36	64,193	54,468
December	2,694 28	53,373	43,985
Totals	53,8[illegible] 95	67,[illegible]00	691,41[illegible]