

Geraldine Durstan Murdered

(Continued From Page One)

Topping had a revolver in his possession for some days, having purchased the weapon in Port Huron according to the belief of Mr. Cook, Miss Durstan, he states, found bullets in Topping's pocket on a visit he paid her not long ago. Thursday night she is said to have felt a revolver in one of his pockets and it was a remembrance of this that caused her to seek refuge in the bedroom of her boarding house master and mistress when Topping put in his appearance at such an early hour Friday.

"I told him to leave the house quietly and without causing trouble, when he came into the kitchen this morning," said Mr. Cook. "But he persisted and stayed on, stating that he wanted the girl to go with him. Then I called the police and Constable Harpur arrived. He was going to place Topping under arrest, but I gave Topping another chance to leave the house and then I came back into the kitchen to tell the constable that Topping would not go. Just then we heard the shots and we both rushed in."

Pleaded for Love

The rejected suitor went to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Cook early Thursday night. Together he and Miss Durstan sat talking and the hours passed as he pleaded for her love. Someone else had, however, excited her love since coming to London, and she had previously complained to her boarding house mistress on several occasions that she did not care to have Topping come to see her.

At 2 o'clock Friday morning several hours after the man and woman of the house had gone to bed and to sleep, Mr. Cook awoke to see the light still burning in the kitchen. Getting up, he called to Miss Durstan, thinking that probably she had retired, forgetting to switch off the light. She answered his call and he also heard the voice of Topping, knowing then that both were still engaged in the battle of affection.

Noticing the lateness of the hour, he advised Topping to leave the house and allow the girl to get a night's rest. Then Mr. Cook went back to bed. He believes that the suitor left soon after.

Bright and early Friday morning both girls and the boarding-house master were up and preparing for the day's work. Mr. Cook was in the kitchen of the house when Topping knocked and was admitted by the side door. The girls were in the front of the cottage giving the finishing touches to their toilet and preparing for breakfast.

Calm and Collected

"I want to see Jerry," (Geraldine Durstan was called Jerry for short), Topping is alleged to have requested of Mr. Cook.

"What do you want to see her for?" questioned Mr. Cook. Topping at this time was not excited, but determination shone from his eyes and his attitude bespoke unwillingness to leave without accomplishing his purpose, according to Mr. Cook.

"I want her to go away with me," was the answer Topping is said to have made to Mr. Cook's query.

"Take my advice, the girl doesn't want you. Go away and forget about her," Mr. Cook returned.

When Topping refused to budge, Mr. Cook says he ran to the nearest telephone and called the police department, Constable Harpur arriving soon after in answer to the summons.

The would-be slayer by this time had left the kitchen and had gone into the sitting-room in front, according to Mr. Cook.

"I told the officer I'd give Topping another chance to leave the house quietly," Mr. Cook stated. "Then I went into the sitting-room, leaving the officer in the kitchen, and I advised Topping again to go away in peace. But he stood there without moving and I returned to the kitchen to inform the constable. As I was about to tell the policeman what had transpired, the shots rang out. We rushed into the sitting-room and through the open door of the bedroom we could see Topping kneeling over Miss Durstan, who was lying prostrate on the floor. Topping had his revolver in his hand and it was pointing down at the chest of the girl.

Officer Fired Shot

"How did Miss McNaughton come to be shot?" Mr. Cook was asked.

"The officer did that, unfortunately," said the grieving boarding house master. "He pulled out his revolver, aiming it at Topping, who, with Miss Durstan, was on the floor in one corner of the bedroom beside the bed. The officer fired at Topping and just

at that minute Miss McNaughton came from an obscured portion of the room and received the bullet in the chest.

After the shooting the police department was again notified and reinforcements were sent to the scene. Topping, weak and feeble from the strain under which he was laboring, was placed under arrest without fuss and his weapon was taken from him. Simultaneously, doctors were called, Dr. Homer Black being the first at the house.

He administered first-aid while the girls were being hurried to Victoria Hospital in the police ambulance. Topping was brought to police headquarters and charged nominally with shooting with intent to do grievous bodily harm. He was brought before Magistrate A. H. M. Graydon in police court and remanded for a week, pending the outcome of the wounds.

Meanwhile in Victoria Hospital everything possible was done for the victims. Adrenalin was administered to the heart of Miss McNaughton, whose wound through the chest was the most serious. Blood poured profusely from her back, the bullet piercing her body and possibly part of the heart and lungs. Stimulants were also given to Miss Durstan, whose two wounds in the abdomen were not considered so serious.

Dr. Roy Kingswood, chief interne at the institution, stated that both girls are suffering severely from shock. They were too weak to be operated upon and endeavors were being made to revive them from their precarious condition.

Mrs. Cook, who had left her bedroom but a few minutes before Topping entered, was in the sitting-room at the time. Though excited over the occurrence, she gave a most complete account of the affair to reporters most collectedly. Her husband, a veteran of the 70th battalion and a returned soldier, was overcome when he was reciting the details and sank to a lounge. He is a victim of shell shock received in the battle of the Somme, where he was buried alive. When a glass of water was brought he revived somewhat.

View Scene of Tragedy

Inspector of Detectives Thomas Hickie and Police Constable Harpur, the latter a finger-print expert and in charge of the new finger-print bureau in course of establishment at police headquarters, jointly conducted an investigation. They visited the house and removed many of the articles as evidence. One of the bullets fired in the melee lodged in the wall, but was recovered by P. C. Harpur, on his second visit.

Statements were taken from each of the girls in Victoria Hospital by J. G. Gillanders, acting for the Crown Attorney J. C. Elliot, K.C. He was accompanied by the detective and P. C. Harpur.

At noon Saturday Miss Durstan was removed to the operating room, where physicians attempted to remove the leaden pellets inflicted by Topping her rejected suitor. Neither of the bullets was removed, one being embedded in the bone at the base of the spine. About five o'clock Miss Durstan passed away. The actual cause of death was peritonitis due to perforation of the intestines. An autopsy was held on the body and a preliminary inquest held after a jury had been impaneled by Dr. Wilson, Coroner, and adjourned until Friday. Two bullets were taken from the body of Miss Durstan by Dr. Homer Black and Dr. J. E. McGillicuddy, who conducted the post-mortem examination Sunday. These will be held as evidence against Topping.

The body of Miss Durstan was brought to Watford Monday night and the funeral held from the Methodist church Tuesday afternoon.

Viola McNaughton has shown considerable improvement since the first turn for the better was noted in her condition on Saturday morning. She is not past the danger stage, however, and has not improved sufficiently to permit of a thorough examination being made. Victoria Hospital physicians are guarding against infection and are watching closely for symptoms of pneumonia, which, it is feared, may set in due to the proximity of the wounds to the lungs. In a statement she is said to have made to hospital doctors she said she believed that the bullet which pierced her chest went completely through her body emerging at the rear. Doctors are as yet unable to state whether or not the missile touched a lung or the spinal column.

Acting Crown Attorney J. G. Gillanders is in possession of a signed confession made by Topping on Saturday to jail officials and subsequently handed to the authorities. In his statement Topping admitted that he had gone to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Cook for the purpose of committing the deed if Miss Durstan refused to change her attitude toward him.

Topping said Miss Durstan promised to accompany him to her home in Watford on Friday morning when he left her boarding house on Thursday night. Her refusal when he went to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Cook preparatory to the trip caused him, the statement is said to read, to fire the fatal shots. He claimed that he did not know how Miss McNaughton came to be wounded and that the bullet fired by Police Constable Walter Harpur went through his overcoat.

Many witnesses will likely be called at the inquest to be resumed next Friday night at the police station. Topping will appear in police court on the morning of the same day and will likely be formally arraigned on a charge of murder.

The revolver which Topping used to inflict the wounds from which Miss Durstan suffered is a .25-caliber weapon. Five of the chambers are empty, but there is a bullet in the sixth. The revolver used by Police Constable Harpur was a .38 automatic.

Chief of Police Robert Birrell refused to disclose the information contained in the deposition made by Police Constable Harpur regarding the part he played at the house. Chief Birrell would not say whose bullet P. C. Harpur believed entered the body of Miss McNaughton.

Mrs. Harry Durstan, mother of the wounded girl remained in the city Saturday, together with Mrs. Durstan's son, Herbert Lawrence, Watford, friend of Miss McNaughton. Mr. Durstan went home Friday night. Frank McNaughton, brother of Viola also stayed in the city. They have paid visits to the hospital and made frequent inquiries by telephone concerning the condition of the two girls.

Mrs. H. Durstan, the wounded girl's mother, was at the C.N.R. station waiting to catch the train back to Watford when Geraldine died. Informed that her daughter had but a few minutes to live she was rushed to the hospital, but the girl had been dead several minutes.

Mrs. Durstan saw the body. She said "Geraldine, sweetheart, come to your mother. Tell me you are not dead," and collapsed.

The grief-stricken mother was then taken to the home of George Cook where the tragedy occurred. Mr. Durstan took her back to Watford late Saturday night.

According to attending physicians Miss McNaughton is making a game fight for life. Possessed with an unconquerable optimism, she has often expressed the conviction that she will live.

In a signed confession known to have been given jail officials late on Friday afternoon, after being duly warned that it would be used against him, Clarence Topping states he went to his sweetheart's boarding-house on Friday morning with the express intention of killing the girl of his heart, Geraldine Durstan. Although frightened to the point of fainting, the girl had steadily refused to go out with him, and Topping confesses he then fired two shots into the floor and two into his sweetheart.

Topping stated he did not know how Viola McNaughton, the other victim of the tragedy, was shot, and that he had no intention of hitting her. The bullet fired by Constable Harpur went through his overcoat, he claimed.

Jail officials refused to admit or deny that a confession had been made. However The Advertiser definitely established that there had been a confession after Topping eagerly discussed the shooting with turnkeys. It is believed that the document will be used against Topping when he comes up for a hearing in police court next Friday.

On Tuesday Miss McNaughton's condition was improved somewhat over Monday and every care is being taken of her, and hopes are entertained that she will not develop pneumonia.

Topping has been informed of the consequences of his act. He broke down and cried when the information that Miss Durstan had died on Saturday afternoon was imparted to him by jail officials. He appears to feel his position keenly.

The belief that the bullet which entered the chest of Miss McNaughton passed through her body is gaining headway. Following up the investigation made by detectives Sunday in the bedroom where the shooting occurred, Police Inspector Lucas and Constable Harpur went to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Cook Monday to make a complete search for the bullet which supposedly entered the east wall of the bedroom in a downward direction.

Though they removed plaster sufficiently to reveal the aperture between the lath down to the floor they were unable to find anything of con-

sequence. The belief is expressed that the hole in the wall may not have been caused by a bullet, in view of the fact that the lath and plaster which formed the side of the space gave no indications that a bullet struck it.

The murder charge will not be preferred against Topping until Friday morning, when he is slated to appear for the second time in police court following his week's remand to jail, crown officials stated.

May Not Recover

The condition of Miss Viola McNaughton is growing more critical according to information from Victoria Hospital, Wednesday morning and the hope for the recovery of the second victim of the shooting affray at George Cook's residence, 318 York street, last week is not as bright as has been.

Symptoms of pneumonia are beginning to be visible and the relatives of the girl were notified last night to the effect that there is little hope for her recovery.

Unless there is a change for the better it is not likely that the girl will recover," was the information given out by Dr. Roy Kingswood early Wednesday morning.

Efforts to find the bullet fired by Police Constable Harpur have not been renewed following the thorough search made Tuesday in the bedroom where the shooting took place. Dr. J. Cameron Wilson, who has made an examination of the wounds, is certain that there are no bullets in her body and that the missile which pierced her chest went completely through.

Large Gathering at the Funeral of Miss Geraldine Durstan on Tuesday

The funeral of Miss Geraldine Durstan, who was shot by Clarence Topping at her boarding house in London on Friday morning, was held on Tuesday afternoon to Watford cemetery and was very largely attended. The entire community mourns with the stricken family in their sorrow and the deepest sympathy is felt for them.

A private service was held at the home of the girl's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Durstan, on John street, and was conducted by the Revs. W. K. Hager and T. D. Rayner, Mr. Hager speaking words of comfort and Mr. Rayner offering prayer. The public service was held in the Methodist church, the large church being filled to the doors long before the hour of service. As the funeral procession entered the church the congregation remained standing.

Rev. W. K. Hager, B.A., pastor of

the church, conducted the service, reading the scripture lessons and offering an earnest prayer for comfort. The choir sang softly the hymns "Jesus Lover of My Soul," and "Jesus Saviour Pilot Me," and Mrs. James Brush sang "Does Jesus Care?" Mrs. Hicks presided at the organ. The address was given by Rev. T. D. Rayner, pastor of the Congregational church.

Mrs. Durstan, the mother of the dead girl, who collapsed on Sunday from the shock of her daughter's death and has been in the care of a trained nurse since, was able to be present at the private service in the house, but was not able to attend the service at the church. By a wonderful display of courage, however, she insisted on going to the cemetery, where from an automobile she witnessed the interment of her daughter's body.

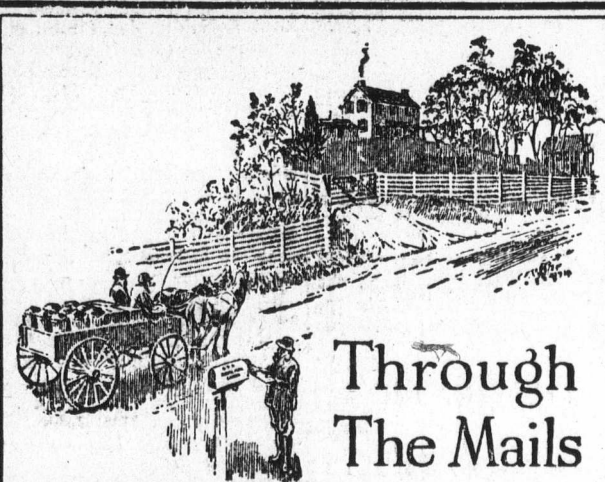
The pallbearers were six young friends of the family: Russell Duncan, George Morris, Orville Jones, Clare Manders, Orville Saunders and William Kerr.

Among the out-of-town friends and relatives present at the funeral were Miss Bessie Pressley, of London, Geraldine's closest friend, and W. Stacey, of London; Mr. and Mrs. Crim and family, Mrs. H. Thomas, Mr. St. Clair and Fred Hawn, all of Sarnia; Mrs. Griesch and daughter of Harriston; Arthur Keys of Windsor; R. J. Lawrence and Mrs. W. J. Johnston of Detroit; and Mrs. T.E. Newell of Strathroy. The Andrews Wire Works Company, in whose employ the girls were while in Watford closed both their Watford and Strathroy plants for the afternoon. Practically all of the Watford staff and a large delegation from the Strathroy plant were present at the funeral, while the Baptist Sunday school of Strathroy which the young ladies attended during their residence in that town, was represented by a large number of young ladies, headed by the teacher of the class the girls attended.

Expressions of sympathy have come in one way and another from the neighboring communities, Arkona, Strathroy and Warwick Village among others. Among the beautiful floral tributes were those from the Holeproof Hosiery, London; Mr. Remick and the girls of the Holeproof mending department, London; Andrews Wire Works' employees, Watford; Congregational and Methodist Sunday schools, Watford; Baptist Sunday school class, Strathroy; Miss Morton, Strathroy Hospital, and many from relatives and friends.

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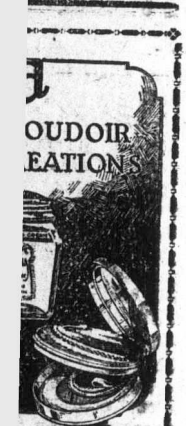
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