

THE BEAVER LAKE,

ON,

MISPECK TRAGEDY.

INTRODUCTION

On the night of Saturday, October the 25th, was perpetrated a crime of a diabolical nature such as was never approached in this Province. We have had murders and arsons, but most, if not all, of the former have been caused by heated blood, often by drunkenness, and quarrels arising therefrom. But, we believe, it never has entered the minds of any men in New Brunswick, certainly it has not entered the minds of any New Brunswickers, to murder a man, his wife and his helpless children, in cold, calm, calculating villainy, for the sake of his money, and then to cover the crime, to burn down the murdered man's property, and to destroy in the fire all the corpses of the slain!

On Saturday night then such a crime was committed as never before was heard of in New Brunswick, and such as may parallel the worst murders committed in any part of the world, equalling indeed, in horror, if not in extent, the bloody atrocities of the Indian Sepoys.

Robert McKenzie, the murdered man, was a native of Scotland, who had been domiciled in New Brunswick many years, having carried on the business of a tailor in different parts, latterly in St. John, and from which business he had retired on an ample competency, to a farm at Mispeck which he owned, and which by the expenditure of skill and capital he had brought to a high state of fertility. Surrounded by every necessary comfort, joined to a faithful and attached partner, and blessed with a numerous progeny, Robert McKenzie was in such a position as most tradesmen aspire to, as a happy means of passing the evening of their career. But beside the quiet business of his farm, Mr. McKenzie was also a money lender, and it is said that he made an ostentatious display of his wealth before every one who came to borrow. Be that as it may, it would seem to have required very little to have excited the cupidity of the wretches by whom this poor man's life was taken.

About the last week of October, McKenzie was desirous of getting the assistance of a farm laborer. He had an unoccupied house, which he offered for the use of his laborer, and he likewise offered a certain sum per acre for all the work the laborer performed. Not far from McKenzie's house was the hut of the Slavins, now charged with the murder, and here stayed James Breen, who seemed to have adopted several *aliases*, for what purpose it is not now difficult to understand. Breen was anxious to engage with McKenzie to work on his farm, and it is ascertained that he did so engage with him. Breen was to occupy the empty house, nearly opposite McKenzie's, and he was to bring his wife and family there to live. Whether Breen had a wife and family to bring is doubtful, there is little doubt, however, that he never intended to bring them.

Let us now relate the facts as they came before the police of this city.

The first news arrived early on Monday morning, the 26th October. Vague rumors spread about the city that McKenzie, who was well known here, had cut his throat, and had set fire to his house and therein burned his wife and children. By and bye, however, it began to be reported differently. Circumstances pointed to the fact that murder, most foul murder, had been committed. People went out of town to the scene of the horrid deed, which is distant about eleven miles, and from those who dwelt near, particulars were gathered which fully aroused and alarmed the public mind. Soon no doubt was entertained that a series of diabolical murders had been committed. The manner in which they were discovered was this:

The nearest house to that of McKenzie is that of Peter O'Hara, who resides about half a mile further on the road from the city. About ten minutes before eleven o'clock on