

to death—that many have come to the conclusion that this witness was in some way or other personally implicated in the crime.

On the other hand there are not wanting those who have refused to entertain a suspicion so revolting as that one sister could murder another, and, their sympathies being thus aroused, have expressed opinions to the effect that the witness in question was harshly dealt with by the counsel for the Crown. Others have said that the inquiry savoured too much of the French system, which is repugnant to their ideas of British fair play. But there remains the ghastly fact of a cold-blooded murder, and the suspicion will not down that this sister knows more than she has told, or that she has told untruths to shield the murderer, whoever that may be.

This suspicion has been largely strengthened by the undoubted fact that speaking generally the evidence of this girl has been shewn to be absolutely unreliable. She has stated as facts things which never occurred, and has calmly admitted that she has perjured herself. These untruths may either have been wilful, or may have been the result of a diseased imagination or of some mental derangement or hallucination. Her statement as to the man whom, she says, she saw in the house at the time of the murder may be as much a matter of imagination or hallucination as the rest of her stories. We are therefore without any explanation of any value from the only eye-witness who could speak with any definiteness of the facts connected with the murder.

Under such circumstances it can scarcely be said with fairness that the counsel for the Crown was not justified in endeavouring to probe the mystery, and get at the truth by a lengthened examination, and so sift the evidence that the jury might if possible find out what was fact and what was fiction. Indeed, in the light of what is known now, but which was then only known to him, Mr. Blackstock seems to have acted with judicial fairness, and so saved the family from further unpleasant revelations.

The nature and object of a coroner's inquest must not be forgotten in this discussion. As to evidence on such an inquiry it