

DEATH BY GUILLOTINE

Peasant Found Guilty of Murdering His Children.

KILLED FIVE OF HIS FAMILY

Surviving Child Pleaded for the Life of Her Father Though She Barely Escaped Losing Her Life—Realism Too Horrible for the Stage—An Extraordinary Judge.

Chartres, Dec. 30.—After a week's trial, which has attracted the attention of the whole of France, Briere, the farmer of this vicinity, who, April 21st, murdered four of his daughters, aged respectively 14, 11, 6, and 4, and his son, 7 years of age, stabbing and beating them to death, while they were in bed, was found guilty to-day, and was condemned to be decapitated by the guillotine. Briere persisted in declaring himself innocent, and defended himself with the habitual cunning of the French peasant. But the circumstantial evidence was overwhelming.

A pathetic incident of the trial occurred when Briere's surviving little daughter, who, the police declare, only escaped the fate of the other children by not responding to Briere's invitation to go to see him, went on the witness stand sobbingly, and protested that her father was innocent, and begged the court to restore him to her.

An Extraordinary Judge.

This is the first time a man has been tried in France for murdering his five little children, beginning with the eldest, by successively cutting their throats while sleeping, in order, as the himself proclaimed, to marry his mistress, a woman of reputed wealth, who did not want to wed a man with a family. Briere, the accused, is a hard-headed, red-headed peasant, the owner of a small farm near the picturesque village of Chartres. He emphatically declares his innocence, stating that he is the victim of the hatred of his town-folk, who, at the instigation of another peasant, one Lamon, the father of the woman he wanted to marry—the man whom he accuses of being the real murderer of his five children—succeeded in his state of mind, stained with the blood of a crime which he committed, and placed other blood-stained objects on the premises, thus providing a chain of circumstantial evidence.

The judge refused to allow the jurors to examine the premises where the crime was committed, and conducted the trial as if he were a prosecuting attorney, working tooth and nail to bring home to the accused one of the most inhuman crimes heard of since the days of the guillotines. The children she bore to Jason.

This extraordinary judge, whose method would under almost any other procedure than that of France furnish grounds for a new trial, broke forth in angry expletives, saying: "This is how this murderer entered the room; this is the way he cut his children's throats. If you don't believe it, why, I do; and that is enough for you to convict him." And again: "Oh, oh! You pretend, robbers only wounded you, and did not kill you. Well, had I been in their place, I would not have missed killing you. You may feel sure of that. Strange to say, the conduct of the judge caused great delight among the townsfolk of the accused, and when counsel for the defense objected to the ruling of the bench, and observed that his client had the right to express his indignation and that he wept each time that his dead children were spoken of, the audience in the court house began to yell and shout: "Kill him. Kill him. Kill him." And a venerable, mild-mannered gentleman with white mustache called out: "Enough, enough. Let him be guillotined right away." Judge Belat smiled, rang his bell, and finally restored order, and the trial was continued in the stuffy little court house within a few minutes' throw of Chartres Cathedral square.

A ghastly scene.

FARMERS' HOUSE BURNED.

Four Persons Lost Their Lives in the Flames.

AN OVERHEATED KITCHEN STOVE

Dubuois, Pa., Dec. 30.—Word reached here to-day of a terrible holocaust that occurred about three miles from Summerville, Jefferson county, yesterday morning. The home of John Ashbaugh, a farmer, was destroyed by fire and four persons were burned to death. One other is burned in such a manner that recovery is very doubtful, and four others are seriously burned and injured.

The dead are: William Ashbaugh, 22 years of age, a brother of the owner of the Ashbaugh home. Mabel Ashbaugh, a 12-year-old daughter. Harry Ashbaugh, a 10-year-old son. James Ashbaugh, a 9-year-old son. That recovery is doubtful.

Mrs. Ashbaugh, severely burned; leg broken, and injured internally by jumping from a second-story window. John Ashbaugh, the husband and father, severely burned and suffering from exposure.

Two young children painfully burned. The affair happened at an early hour in the morning, and the fire was undoubtedly caused by an overheated stove.

Mr. Ashbaugh got up in the morning, replenished the fuel in the kitchen stove, and went back to bed. He was awakened a short time afterwards by smoke entering the room he occupied, and he found the lower part of the house on fire. He ran through the house, and awakened everyone, and then made his way outside with his two smallest children. He hurried back and looked for his wife, brother and four children who were still in the house. He succeeded in reaching a room that had been occupied by the children, but only one, the 8-year-old boy, Herman, was there.

He could hear the screams of the four others in a room across the hall, where it is supposed they were lured in their bewilderment, supposing it to be a way out of the house. Mr. Ashbaugh could not enter the room. The flames were so fierce he was compelled to fight his way from the house. Meantime Mrs. Ashbaugh had jumped from the second-story window, and was lying on the ground, with a broken leg, and suffering from internal injuries and burns.

Mr. Ashbaugh dragged his wife and the three children further away from the burning house, the walls of which were now falling in. He carried bundles of hay, straw and corn, and covered them with his own feet, which were badly burned and cut in sacks, and with nothing on but his night clothes, and they having been partly turned off him, he ran over a mile through the snow and zero weather to the homes of neighbors and gave the alarm.

GIRL STUDENT BURNED.

Put Alcohol on Her Body and Set Fire to it.

WAS IT ACCIDENT OR SUICIDE?

Philadelphia, Dec. 30.—Miss Lillian Vickers, a student at Bryn Mawr College, met death in a horrible form yesterday. She covered her nude body with alcohol and was burned to death before the eyes of a number of her companions. Whether the girl was mentally unsound and set fire to herself or whether the alcohol was ignited accidentally, is not known.

The girl's roommate said that Miss Vickers arose about 6 o'clock and went into the bathroom, which was near her apartment. Half an hour later she came out into the corridor all aflame, screaming for help and crying from pain. Several students threw blankets over her, but the flames continued to burn, and help. Medical assistance was summoned, but her body was charred all over and it was impossible to save her. She died in five hours without regaining consciousness.

It is said at the college that Miss Vickers had recently had an idea that she was suffering from leprosy. Her friends tried to dispel the idea from her mind, but she persisted that she was a victim of the disease, and tried many remedies for it. A few days ago she said she had been told that to wash the entire body in alcohol would effect a cure. It is not known whether she had applied the spirits before to-day, but after the accident a bottle partly filled with alcohol was found in the bathroom.

CHARGED WITH WITCHCRAFT.

Chicago Woman Said God Would Send Defence, AND A LAWYER APPEARED.

Neighbors Say She is a Witch—She Breaks Down and Tells of Her Struggles for Her Family—Hypnotism in the Case.

Chicago, Dec. 30.—Because she had prayed for assistance in her trouble Mrs. Helen Roth, 1911 Cortez street, says Attorney Miles J. Devine was sent by the Lord to the Court of Justice James Dooley to defend her against the charges of witchcraft brought by her neighbors.

The scene, a dramatic one, occurred yesterday afternoon. On the benches sat almost a dozen witnesses who had sworn that the defendant had attempted to hypnotize them. Weir tales of witchcraft, hypnotism and other mysterious things were told His Honor by the witnesses.

"I am a defenseless woman," the victim pleaded when the case against her was called. "I have no witnesses to speak for me."

"Have you not even a lawyer to appear for you?" asked His Honor in a kindly tone of voice.

Put Faith in the Lord.

"I have nobody but the good Lord to help me," answered the defendant. "He is with me at all times. He will send somebody here to help me. I have prayed to Him to the near me and to assist me and I know He will not fail."

She had hardly finished her statement when Attorney Devine walked into the courtroom, being interested in another case.

"Ah, my prayer has been answered," declared Mrs. Roth. "The Lord has sent my protector already."

Then the woman approached Attorney Devine and declared that it was the Lord's wish that he appear as her counsel without any pay or compensation.

Attorney Devine gazed in surprise at the pale, careworn-looking woman before him. Suddenly he was seen to throw off his overcoat and a moment later the ex-city attorney announced that he was there to defend Mrs. Roth.

Then began a further effort to convince Justice Dooley that Mrs. Roth was a victim of hypnotism and hypnotic powers, and that her weird practices had thrown her neighbors into a state of intense fear and excitement.

Mrs. Roth took the stand in her own behalf. She told of her struggles to bring up her family of children.

I have stood on the cold street corners for hours," which, as the flowers so that I could bring up my children and provide for them a home. I am at the present time paying off monthly dues on my home, and as the result of my present trouble I have been ordered to leave my home.

At this point the woman broke down and wept several minutes despite the efforts of a representative of the Woman's Protective Association to comfort her.

"I am not a crazy woman. Neither am I an insane person," she said. "I am a woman who has been hypnotized for years, and a successful one. I am familiar with hypnotism and know how to use it. It is the mystery of this science which puzzle my neighbors and make them believe I am a witch. In their ignorance they misconstrued my efforts to benefit them and have brought disgrace upon myself and family."

Attorney Devine made an earnest plea that defendant, complainants and witnesses all shake hands. Mrs. K. Donovan, the complainant, however, refused, saying she feared the defendant, and the case was finally continued ten days with the understanding that Mrs. Roth confine her hypnotic efforts to her own family.

ELECTRIC TRAIN ON FIRE.

Strange Disaster to an Electric Train in a Tunnel.

SEVERAL INJURED—NONE KILLED

Liverpool, Dec. 31.—A terrible disaster occurred this evening on the overhead electric railway. A train of three cars was approaching the southern terminus at High Station. It is understood that the engine, a majority of its passengers at the Heracleum dock which is the preceding station. It is now stated that the motor of the rear car failed in its timing mechanism, firing the work of the car. The strong air current through the tunnel, which is a fifth of a mile long, caused the entire train to catch fire, the smoking thousands of people crowded the shelters, and filling the tunnel with dense smoke. Simultaneously the lights were extinguished, and High Station was quickly filled with smoke.

The officials do not know the cause of the fire. It is believed that the engine failed when the train entered the tunnel, and that the fire was caused by the engine. The train was driven out by the smoke. It is hoped that some of the passengers escaped by running.

The fire brigade is flooding the tunnel from both ends.

BRITAIN'S NAVAL STRENGTH

Opinion of Clover, Naval Attache at London.

WAS NEVER MORE EFFICIENT.

Washington, Dec. 30.—In an interview with the United States naval attache at the American embassy in London, who is here on leave of absence, declared that the naval forces of Great Britain are in a far more effective condition for extended service than the Continental Powers believe, and that never in her naval development has Britain been stronger on the seas.

Recent torpedo boat accidents have made little impression in British naval circles, he declares, and their programme calls for the continued advance of the highest class of boats of the swiftest possible speed. Commander Clover added:

"The naval force that Great Britain is capable of exerting is equal to that of any three Continental Powers and was never in a more efficient condition. The British service has been severely criticised, but much of this criticism is due to the policy of the Naval League and the press to depreciate in the mind of the public Britain's strength, in order that large appropriations may be secured for the navy."

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"The United States is reckoned as the most powerful navy in the world, but we are still regarded as entitled to no higher rank than seventh place, which would place us nearly at the bottom of the list."

"Two to-day is stronger than any two of the most powerful continental Powers, and stronger than these with another power included."

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ELDER SONS AT CORONATION.

Fathers Must be Dukes to Entitle Them to Carry King's Train.

London, Dec. 30.—There is a certain amount of curiosity to know who will be the elder sons to carry the King's train at the coronation. They should be elder sons of dukes, and will most probably be Lord Euston, elder son of the Duke of Devonshire; Lord Darnley, son of the Duke of Bedford; Lord Percy, son of the Duke of Northumberland; Lord Dalkeith, son of the Duke of Buccleuch; and Lord Hamilton, son of the Duke of Hamilton.

These are all of this rank at present in England, Lord Doro and Lord Tullibardine being in South Africa with their regiments.

Lord Graham, son of the Duke of Rutland, is not eligible, as he sits in the House of Lords as Lord Haddon.

The present ones are not home by June. It is possible that some of the elder sons of marquises will be chosen in their places.

CHRISTMAS IN THE HOLY LAND.

How the Day Was Spent in Bethlehem.

CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY.

Scene of a Wonderful Gathering to Honor the Day—Order of the Procession and Services—Many Altars Occupied.

New York, Dec. 31.—The World prints a cablegram from Bethlehem, showing the manner in which Christmas eve and Christmas day were this year celebrated in the Holy Land.

According to the despatch from Bethlehem the sky was clear and the air chilly on the day before Christmas. At an early hour crowds commenced to stream in from Jerusalem and all the neighboring towns. Many travelled from Europe, some even from America. The European costumes mingled with the oriental dresses made the scene varied and vivid with colors, while in the throng were seen many Bethlehem women.

At the Church of Nativity at Bethlehem the Latins, Greeks and Armenians each have a place of worship, but the ceremonies which attracted the thousands were those at the Catholic Church. Throughout the morning crowds flocked to the magnificent Church of the Nativity, closing the cave, believed by scholars to be the actual birthplace of Christ. It was brightly illuminated.

During the forenoon a multitude of people crowded the great square in front of the Church of the Nativity, covering the rooftops on every side.

The procession then appeared, the patriarch escorted by Turkish soldiers, preceded by the Kawassess or official guard of the Patriarch and convent, advancing to the church. Following the sacerdotal procession came that of the French Consul and his staff, in uniform, with an escort of mounted guards, he taking precedence as representing France, the guardian of Catholic interests in the Holy Land. Following his entry into the church came the beautiful service of vespers and the benediction.

At 11 o'clock matins were sung, and a few minutes before midnight all was hushed. Then on the stroke of the hour the "Gloria" arose—in a profound adoration to usher in Christmas morning. Immediately afterward the Patriarch ascended the high altar and began to celebrate high mass. Thenceforward throughout Christmas day every altar in the sacred edifice was occupied by priests saying mass. Many devotees who took their places at 10 o'clock on Christmas eve kept their vigils till 11 o'clock on Christmas day, anxious not to miss one moment of the ceremony on the site of the birthplace of Christ.

GERMAN SLAVERY IN AFRICA

Paving the Way for its Total Abolition.

SLAVES MAY BUY FREEDOM.

Berlin, Dec. 31.—The text of an imperial edict dealing with the question of domestic slavery in German East Africa has been published.

In order to pave the way for the abolition of domestic slavery in the colonies, it is decreed that the following regulations shall be included in the code:

"Neither by sale of a man's self, nor by payment for debt or fulfillment of other obligations, nor as punishment for adultery shall a relationship of slavery be henceforward established."

"Every slave who has paid the ransom appointed shall receive a certificate of emancipation from the authorities."

"Every domestic slave must be permitted to work for himself during two days in the week, or to use for his own purposes the corresponding proceeds of his labor. In so far as existing custom is in this respect more favorable to the slave, it shall continue in force. In this matter, as well as in all other differences between master and domestic slave, the decision shall lie with the competent authorities."

"The master of a domestic slave is under obligation to maintain him and provide for him in old age and in sickness. This obligation is not cancelled by emancipation granted during the period of old age or sickness."

"The transfer of the rights of ownership can be accomplished only with the consent of the slave, and before the competent authorities, upon whose assent it shall be dependent. Before accepting such consent, the authorities shall, besides deciding other points which may appear important, carefully test the reality of the owner's will, and shall take heed that members of the same family be not separated from one another without their consent."

"The rights of ownership shall be subject to the death of the owner, in the event of the owner's committing any grave breach of his duty toward his slave. The competent authorities shall officially enquire into cases of violation of duty, which come to their knowledge, and are in such cases entitled to

effect the liberation of the slave, and in such cases the former shall not have any claim to compensation.

MRS. DRUCE LOSES CASE.

The Duke of Portland Now Rest Easy.

REJECTED BY PROBATE COURT.

London, Dec. 30.—Another case of a British peerage and dukedom collapsed. The case of Mrs. Flora Anna Maria Druce, affecting relation to the title and estates of the Duke of Portland, has just been tied in the Probate Court.

After a trial lasting several weeks before Justice Barnes and a jury, the finding was officially that Thomas Charles Druce died in 1864. Inferentially, the verdict carries with it the declaration that Mrs. Druce was not and could not have been the fifth Duke of Portland.

Losses Both Sides.

Though the estate of Druce was also at stake, it is considered of little importance when taken in connection with the contest for the title by the jury's finding the will made by Druce in 1864, a copy of which was in 1864 an undoubted fact. Thus the plaintiff loses the right to claim for her son both the coveted title of nobility and the Druce property.

Not a few great families in England breathe easier over the result, for the connections of the Duke of Portland are so many and so influential that the trial had ramifications throughout the kingdom. Though a threat has been made that the case will yet go to the House of Lords for final decision, no one believes the result will be otherwise than in the Probate Court.

Throughout the trial Mrs. Druce acted in an extremely eccentric manner, and she has left the impression that her mind is unbalanced; but, then, her friends and supporters say that her domestic troubles and her legal contests and disappointments have been sufficient to render erratic the average human mind.

The claims set forth by Mrs. Druce are the most sensational that have ever been given publicity in England. She is the widow of a bankrupt, and Thomas Charles Druce, who kept a large bazaar in Baker street, London. This store was home-combed with underground passages, which through the roof of the building would not be seen for weeks at a time would suddenly emerge into his counting-room and resume business as if he had been absent for only an hour.

Frying Eyes Shut Out.

About the same period the fifth Duke of Portland lived in a baronial splendor at Welbeck Abbey, and at times occupied his town house in London. The latter place was surrounded by high walls that effectively shut out prying eyes into his movements. These things were different at Welbeck. There the eccentric nobleman had constructed subterranean passages, maze-like in character, and it was his custom to disappear and reappear in a mysterious way.

In fact it is the claim of Mrs. Druce that the Duke left Welbeck Abbey to become plain Mr. Druce in the Baker street establishment, and that when his Grace grew weary of trade he retraced his steps to his country home, washed off the stains and changed became again the high and mighty Duke of Portland.

The Duke died Dec. 6, 1879, and was succeeded in title and estates by a distant relative, but as Druce, the merchant, had expired some years earlier—or, according to the decision just rendered by Justice Barnes Dec. 28, 1864—Mrs. Druce's claim that she was the fifth Duke of Portland is a mere fancy.

His Grace was buried in Kensal Green cemetery, and it is alleged that there is nothing but lead pipe in his coffin. She once got a permit to have the sarcophagus opened, but another legal barrier was put in the way, and it is now impossible to know what that tomb contains.

While the Probate Court decision has failed to raise the veil that covers a mysterious double life, and while scores of people in England believe that the Baker street merchant and the eccentric nobleman of Welbeck were one and the same person, it is certain that Mrs. Druce's claim will now never be declared the rightful heir to the great Dukedom of Portland.

DIED ON BURNING STEAMER.

Several Lives Lost in Fire Started by Furnace Spark.

Memphis, Tenn., Dec. 31.—The steam wheel steamer Sun, plying between this port and Fulton, Tenn., burst to the water's edge at 5 o'clock to-day, at her moorings at the wharf on the city front.

The boat arrived from Fulton about midnight last night with fifteen passengers, all of whom were asleep on board when the fire broke out. Of these three are known to be D. H. Bailey and wife, of Old River, Tenn., and Mrs. G. M. Tins, of Richardson, La. The other passengers have been recovered from the wreck.

The three men who were on board when the fire broke out are believed that all the other persons on board escaped. The fire originated in a pile of seed cotton on the boiler deck, and probably was started by a spark from the furnace. The boat was valued at \$50,000 and was about half insured. The cargo was totally destroyed.

The action by the Town of Goodrich against the Elevator Company was settled at Woodstock Assizes.