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The Tragedy of Annie Pritchard.

By John LAURENCE. (In Pearson's Weekly.)

Annie Pritchard was an exceedingly good-looking Birmingham girl of twenty-five, and though not exactly engaged, her family were given to understand that she had only to say the word, and she could be married any day she liked to a man named Guy Anderson.

Her lover, however, lived in Liverpool, and had never been seen by any of the Pritchard family, except by Annie herself.

One day Annie suddenly announced to her family that she was going to Liverpool to get married, and she began to pack several things. A few days later the railway carriers called and took away a box and sewing-machine, but instead of being addressed to somewhere in Liverpool, the labels had on them "Mrs. Anderson, 33, St. John Street, Northampton."

Loved a Married Man.

"I thought you were going to Liverpool," said her brother, on noticing the address.

"So I am," replied his sister. "Then why send your things to Northampton? I hope you are not going to fool about with Andrew MacRae any more. He's a married man, and you ought to have nothing to do with him."

Annie Pritchard shook her head defiantly. "I'm not going to Northampton," she replied. "I am going to Liverpool. What's more, I'm going where I like in any case; and it's none of your business."

But Annie Pritchard was not telling the truth. Actually she followed her luggage to Northampton, where she posed as Mrs. Anderson.

The veiled accusation thrown at her by her brother was only too true. Next door to the Pritchard family in Birmingham there had lived a man named MacRae. A married man with two children, he had made love to

Annie Pritchard, and in spite of the warnings of her family, she had returned his love with unexpected strength. In fact, if the truth must be confessed, Andrew MacRae found Annie's love more than he could cope with, and he moved to Warwick.

But Warwick is not a far cry from Birmingham, and though her family hoped that now MacRae was in another town Annie would soon get over her infatuation for him, she more than once took the train to Warwick.

Lived a Double Life.

But sooner or later clandestine love-making is bound to be paid for in one way or another. Annie Pritchard, in her blind infatuation, had given herself body and soul to Andrew MacRae, and she was to pay as most women have to in the long run. But a short while after her lover had left Birmingham for Warwick, she found herself about to become a mother.

It was for that reason that she left home so hurriedly, and told everyone she was going up to Liverpool to get married. Actually she went to Northampton to join her lover. He had obtained a post there as manager for his brother, a Northampton provision dealer. At the shop he passed as Mr. Andrew MacRae, a respectable married man with two children, whom he had left temporarily in Birmingham, but in another part of the town he was known as Mr. Anderson, whose wife was shortly expecting her first child.

A few days after Annie Pritchard had arrived in Northampton a traveller at the station who was booking a ticket to Liverpool was spoken to by her.

"Excuse me, sir," she said, "but didn't I hear you ask for a ticket to Liverpool?"

"That is so," replied the traveller. "I am going by the next train."

"Would you be so kind as to do me

a favour?" said Annie. "Would you post this letter for me in Liverpool? I ought to have written from there yesterday, and I forgot."

The traveller took the letter and agreed to post it as he was requested. But he had a feeling that the woman who had spoken to him had run away from home and did not want to let her parents know, so he made a note of the address on the letter—"Mrs. Pritchard, Highgate Road, Birmingham." The wisdom of the course he took was fully borne out by after events.

The Pritchard family were surprised at the contents of the letter. It announced that the writer had been married in Liverpool to a Mr. Guy Anderson, and that she and her husband were sailing immediately for America.

Annie Pritchard, however, was living all the time in Northampton. During this time her baby was born, and shortly afterwards she gave the landlady notice she was leaving her rooms. She told her exactly the same tale as she had written to her parents.

"We are going to emigrate to America," she said to the landlady. "There are much better chances for my husband out there than here."

One fine day in July she left with her baby and MacRae, and that was the last ever seen of her alive. Her luggage was directed, as she had arranged with her landlady, to the provision shop where Andrew MacRae was manager, though of course the landlady only knew him under the name of Anderson.

What happened to Annie Pritchard and her baby will never exactly be known. For the next few nights, however, her lover slept at the shop, and then he took new lodgings in a fresh part of Northampton. During those nights he was exceedingly busy in the warehouse belonging to the shop.

A Workman's Gruesome Find.

In that warehouse was a large store of bacon which MacRae told several people he had to wash and get ready for sale, and it was that which kept him working so late at night. Certainly he was working late at night, and he made an extensive use of the copper in the warehouse, burning, burning, always burning—and boiling. Once only for those nights did he leave off burning and boiling in secret, and that once he hired a horse and trap

and went for a long and lonely drive along the road to Rugby. That he had driven at a furious pace was evident by the state of the horse on its return to the stables.

A little over a fortnight after Annie Pritchard was supposed for the second time to have sailed for America a labourer, walking along the high road from Rugby to Northampton, was attracted by a large parcel lying in a deep ditch. He began to open it, but found to his horror that it contained human flesh, and he promptly called the police. The parcel contained the headless, armless body of a woman wrapped in sacking, but in such a state that it was impossible to identify it. By one of those amazing oversights of the most careful murderers, however, the sacking itself contained a clue which eventually brought Andrew MacRae to his well-deserved fate.

On the sacking was a label which read, "E. MacRae, Northampton," and it did not take the police long to discover that Edward MacRae was a well-known provision dealer of Northampton, but naturally he was unable to throw any light on how the sacking could have been found where it was.

Body Boiled in a Copper.

The police, however, in the course of their inquiries, found that Andrew MacRae, the provision dealer's brother and manager, had been lodging in Northampton as a Mr. Anderson. Added to that, he had been living with a woman who had not been seen for the past fortnight or so, and suspicion began quickly to form in their minds and he was promptly arrested.

On him were found keys which were known to belong to the dead woman, but on being questioned he asserted that she had gone to America. The difficulty of testing the truth of his statement lay in the fact that the dismembered remains were quite unrecognisable as any definite person, and it could only be by the strongest circumstantial evidence that the body could even be assumed to be that of Annie Pritchard.

That evidence was forthcoming. The accused man's second landlady handed over to the police a number of presents which had been given to her by MacRae. These were all shown to be articles belonging to the dead woman, while a second-hand clothes-dealer in the town, came forward with various articles he had bought from the accused man a few days after Annie Pritchard had disappeared, and which were shown to belong to her.

Then neighbours recalled those busy nights of horror which Andrew MacRae had spent burning and boiling in the copper at the warehouse. The copper, when examined, still contained pieces of bone and hair, which the medical experts declared were human.

But all the time Andrew MacRae strenuously denied that he had murdered the woman he had once loved. He asserted that she had gone to America exactly as she had told her relations she was going to do.

The Sensational Trial.

The very stars in their courses, however, seemed to be fighting for Andrew MacRae at times, for at his first trial, by some extraordinary oversight, one of the jurymen became separated from his companions and went to his own house one luncheon interval. The law is very strict, but just, when trying a man for his life, and it is a rule that once the jury have been sworn in to try a man they must remain together, and have no communication with anyone outside till they have returned their verdict.

His second trial began almost as sensationally as his first, for one of the jurymen was suddenly taken seriously ill, and a fresh jurymen had to be sworn in to take his place. It was on Christmas Eve, finally, when it was Day, that Andrew MacRae was found "Guilty."

"You are murderers!" he cried, when the verdict was announced. "And you will have my fate on your consciences for the rest of your lives. Annie Pritchard is alive!"

During the terrible days of waiting for the scaffold to claim him the condemned man never lost an opportunity of asserting his innocence.

But the Home Secretary refused to interfere, and he was right. A cold, callous murderer, Andrew MacRae paid the penalty of his crime, and Annie Pritchard and her baby were avenged.

Good-Bye to the Big Campaign Funds?

OTTAWA—A clause set in the franchise bill which it is claimed, will hit the farmers' organizations in the west very hard, and which was the subject of discussion at the council of agriculture, forbids any political party, company or association, other than one incorporated for political purposes alone, contributing to aid any candidate or political party.

"No unincorporated company or association, and no incorporated company or association other than one incorporated for political purposes alone, shall directly or indirectly, contribute, loan, advance, pay, promise or offer to pay any money or its equivalent to, or for, or in aid of, any company incorporated for political purposes, or to or for, or in furtherance of any political purpose whatever, or for

the indemnification or reimbursement of any person for any moneys so used.

"Every director, shareholder, officer, attorney or agent of any company or association violating the provisions of this section, or who aids, abets, advises, or takes part in any such violation, and every person who asks or knowingly receives any money or its equivalent in violation of the provisions of this section is guilty of an indictable offence against this act, punishable as in this act provided."

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Clause 84 of the bill sets forth that any person guilty of an indictable offence against this bill is liable, on summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding \$2,000 and costs, or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years, with or without hard labor, or to both fine and imprisonment.

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