

NOTES on *Recent Cases*

R. v. Blais

Murder Charge Reduced to Manslaughter — Prompt Police Action

An afternoon of wine drinking, a devilish plot to rob an old man, the callous carrying out of it, and the plotter now languishing in prison on an eight-year term—that in a nutshell is the case of Joseph Arthur Blais, Richardsville, N.B.

Fortified with the false optimism that frequently is born of alcohol, Blais on the evening of Apr. 8, 1947, conceived an idea of how to get some easy money. At this stage, his thoughts dwelt on an 82-year-old store-keeper named Richard Newton Thompson who lived alone in quarters adjoining his country store at Dalhousie Junction, N.B. Though the old gentleman's once active dealings in feed and grain had dwindled to an almost negligible tobacco business, it was known that he usually kept some ready cash on hand.

After convincing himself of the feasibility of his plan, Blais convinced a drinking companion that the undertaking would be easy to accomplish without anyone being the wiser and the two of them drove to within walking distance of the scene of action. While Blais' companion went to the back door and engaged Thompson in conversation pretending to be a feed buyer, Blais was to enter the store from the front and steal the money he hoped to find there.

But the plan miscarried. As pre-arranged, Blais' partner in crime retired to the back door and conversed with the store-keeper a few minutes, but then, apparently growing apprehensive, he decamped. Blais meanwhile had found the front door locked, so he went around to the rear. His associate was nowhere in sight, but he tried the back door and finding it unlocked entered the place.

Blais sat and chatted with Thompson a while until finally the old fellow said

it was bedtime and asked him to leave. As they walked to the door, Blais suddenly gave his host a shove, knocking him down. The aged man fell on his face, and his nose was bleeding profusely when Blais helped him up and assisted him to a cot. The assailant bathed the other's face with a wet cloth, helped himself to the money in a wallet he took from his victim's pocket, and departed.

Blais flagged a truck and was driven part way to Campbellton, N.B. Shortly afterwards he was arrested by the R.C. M.P. Fate was the unforeseen factor that occasioned the culprit's unmasking. Unknown to them, Blais and his companion had been seen by a farmer as they approached Thompson's store. The farmer was suspicious of their intentions and telephoned his suspicions to the R.C. M.P. detachment at Campbellton. A patrol was immediately made to Dalhousie Junction where the aged victim was found in a dazed condition and incoherent in his attempts to describe what had happened. The investigator got in touch with the old man's relatives, arranged for medical services, and continued his patrol. In a short time he overtook Blais who was found in possession of \$61 which was concealed in the right leg of his underwear. Patient questioning elicited a confession of assault and robbery.

Thompson died the next afternoon, April 9. The only external injuries were abrasions on the right side of the face and a contusion on the right hip, but an autopsy revealed that death was due to multiple fractures of the skull; Dr. C. Rosenhek who performed the post-mortem reported that the skull of the deceased was of "egg-shell thinness" and could have been fractured easily either from a fall or direct blow.