HENRY BRODRIBB IRVING

A BOOK OF REMARKABLE CRIMINALS

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Irving H.

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Содержание

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Introduction

"The silent workings, and still more the explosions, of human passion which bring to light the darker elements of man's nature present to the philosophical observer considerations of intrinsic interest; while to the jurist, the study of human nature and human character with its infinite varieties, especially as affecting the connection between motive and action, between irregular desire or evil disposition and crime itself, is equally indispensable and difficult."—*Wills on Circumstantial Evidence*.

I REMEMBER my father telling me that sitting up late one night talking with Tennyson, the latter remarked that he had not kept such late hours since a recent visit of Jowett. On that occasion the poet and the philosopher had talked together well into the small hours of the morning. My father asked Tennyson what was the subject of conversation that had so engrossed them. "Murders," replied Tennyson. It would have been interesting to have heard Tennyson and Jowett discussing such a theme. The fact is a tribute to the interest that crime has for many men of intellect and imagination. Indeed, how could it be otherwise? Rob history and fiction of crime, how tame and colourless would be the residue! We who are living and enduring in the presence of one of the greatest crimes on record, must realise that trying as this period of the world's history is to those who are passing through it, in the hands of some great historian it may make very good reading for posterity. Perhaps we may find some little consolation in this fact, like the unhappy victims of famous freebooters such as Jack Sheppard or Charley Peace.

But do not let us flatter ourselves. Do not let us, in all the pomp and circumstance of stately history, blind ourselves to the fact that the crimes of Frederick, or Napoleon, or their successors, are in essence no different from those of Sheppard or Peace. We must not imagine that the bad man who happens to offend against those particular laws which constitute the criminal code belongs to a peculiar or atavistic type, that he is a man set apart from the rest of his fellow-men by mental or physical peculiarities. That comforting theory of the Lombroso school has been exploded, and the ordinary inmates of our prisons shown to be only in a very slight degree below the average in mental and physical fitness of the normal man, a difference easily explained by the environment and conditions in which the ordinary criminal is bred.

A certain English judge, asked as to the general characteristics of the prisoners tried before him, said: "They are just like other people; in fact, I often think that, but for different opportunities and other accidents, the prisoner and I might very well be in one another's places." "Greed, love of pleasure," writes a French judge, "lust, idleness, anger, hatred, revenge, these are the chief causes of crime. These passions and desires are shared by rich and poor alike, by the educated and uneducated. They are inherent in human nature; the germ is in every man."

Convicts represent those wrong-doers who have taken to a particular form of wrong-doing punishable by law. Of the larger army of bad men they represent a minority, who have been found out in a peculiarly unsatisfactory kind of misconduct. There are many men, some lying, unscrupulous, dishonest, others cruel, selfish, vicious, who go through life without ever doing anything that brings them within the scope of the criminal code, for whose offences the laws of society provide no punishment. And so it is with some of those heroes of history who have been made the theme of fine writing by gifted historians.

Mr. Basil Thomson, the present head of the Criminal Investigation Department, has said recently that a great deal of crime is due to a spirit of "perverse adventure" on the part of the

criminal. The same might be said with equal justice of the exploits of Alexander the Great and half the monarchs and conquerors of the world, whom we are taught in our childhood's days to look up to as shining examples of all that a great man should be. Because crimes are played on a great stage instead of a small, that is no reason why our moral judgment should be suspended or silenced. Class Machiavelli and Frederick the Great as a couple of rascals fit to rank with Jonathan Wild, and we are getting nearer a perception of what constitutes the real criminal. "If," said Frederick the Great to his minister, Radziwill, "there is anything to be gained by it, we will be honest; if deception is necessary, let us be cheats." These are the very sentiments of Jonathan Wild.

Crime, broadly speaking, is the attempt by fraud or violence to possess oneself of something belonging to another, and as such the cases of it in history are as clear as those dealt with in criminal courts. Germany to-day has been guilty of a perverse and criminal adventure, the outcome of that false morality applied to historical transactions, of which Carlyle's life of Frederick is a monumental example. In that book we have a man whose instincts in more ways than one were those of a criminal, held up for our admiration, in the same way that the same writer fell into dithyrambic praise over a villain called Francia, a former President of Paraguay. A most interesting work might be written on the great criminals of history, and might do something towards restoring that balance of moral judgment in historical transactions, for the perversion of which we are suffering to-day.

In the meantime we must be content to study in the microcosm of ordinary crime those instincts, selfish, greedy, brutal which, exploited often by bad men in the so-called cause of nations, have wrought such havoc to the happiness of mankind. It is not too much to say that in every man there dwell the seeds of crime; whether they grow or are stifled in their growth by the good that is in us is a chance mysteriously determined. As children of nature we must not be surprised if our instincts are not all that they should be. "In sober truth," writes John Stuart Mill, "nearly all the things for which men are hanged or imprisoned for doing to one another are nature's everyday performances," and in another passage: "The course of natural phenomena being replete with everything which when committed by human beings is most worthy of abhorrence, anyone who endeavoured in his actions to imitate the natural course of things would be universally seen and acknowledged to be the wickedest of men."

Here is explanation enough for the presence of evil in our natures, that instinct to destroy which finds comparatively harmless expression in certain forms of taking life, which is at its worst when we fall to taking each other's. It is to check an inconvenient form of the expression of this instinct that we punish murderers with death. We must carry the definition of murder a step farther before we can count on peace or happiness in this world. We must concentrate all our strength on fighting criminal nature, both in ourselves and in the world around us. With the destructive forces of nature we are waging a perpetual struggle for our very existence. Why dissipate our strength by fighting among ourselves? By enlarging our conception of crime we move towards that end. What is anti-social, whether it be written in the pages of the historian or those of the Newgate Calendar, must in the future be regarded with equal abhorrence and subjected to equally sure punishment. Every professor of history should now and then climb down from the giddy heights of Thucydides and Gibbon and restore his moral balance by comparing the acts of some of his puppets with those of their less fortunate brethren who have dangled at the end of a rope. If this war is to mean anything to posterity, the crime against humanity must be judged in the future by the same rigid standard as the crime against the person.

The individual criminals whose careers are given in this book have been chosen from among their fellows for their pre-eminence in character or achievement. Some of the cases, such as Butler, Castaing and Holmes, are new to most English readers.

Charles Peace is the outstanding popular figure in nineteenth-century crime. He is the type of the professional criminal who makes crime a business and sets about it methodically and persistently to the end. Here is a man, possessing many of those qualities which go to make the successful man

of action in all walks of life, driven by circumstances to squander them on a criminal career. Yet it is a curious circumstance that this determined and ruthless burglar should have suffered for what would be classed in France as a "crime passionel." There is more than a possibility that a French jury would have?? ing circumstances in the murder of Dyson.?? Peace is only another instance of the wrecking a man's career by his passion for a ???? bert Butler we have the criminal by conviction, a conviction which finds the ground ready prepared for its growth in the natural laziness and idleness of the man's disposition. The desire to acquire things by a short cut, without taking the trouble to work for them honestly, is perhaps the most fruitful of all sources of crime. Butler, a bit of a pedant, is pleased to justify his conduct by reason and philosophy—he finds in the acts of unscrupulous monarchs an analogy to his own attitude towards life. What is good enough for Caesar Borgia is good enough for Robert Butler. Like Borgia he comes to grief; criminals succeed and criminals fail. In the case of historical criminals their crimes are open; we can estimate the successes and failures. With ordinary criminals, we know only those who fail. The successful, the real geniuses in crime, those whose guilt remains undiscovered, are for the most part unknown to us. Occasionally in society a man or woman is pointed out as having once murdered somebody or other, and at times, no doubt, with truth. But the matter can only be referred to clandestinely; they are gazed at with awe or curiosity, mute witnesses to their own achievement. Some years ago James Payn, the novelist, hazarded the reckoning that one person in every five hundred was an undiscovered murderer. This gives us all a hope, almost a certainty, that we may reckon one such person at least among our acquaintances.[1]

Derues is remarkable for the extent of his social ambition, the daring and impudent character of his attempts to gratify it, the skill, the consummate hypocrisy with which he played on the credulity of honest folk, and his flagrant employment of that weapon known and recognised to-day in the most exalted spheres by the expressive name of "bluff." He is remarkable, too, for his mirth and high spirits, his genial buffoonery; the merry murderer is a rare bird.

Professor Webster belongs to that order of criminal of which Eugene Aram and the Rev. John Selby Watson are our English examples, men of culture and studious habits who suddenly burst on the astonished gaze of their fellowmen as murderers. The exact process of mind by which these hitherto harmless citizens are converted into assassins is to a great extent hidden from us.

Perhaps Webster's case is the clearest of the three. Here we have a selfish, self-indulgent and spendthrift gentleman who has landed himself in serious financial embarrassment, seeking by murder to escape from an importunate and relentless creditor. He has not, apparently, the moral courage to face the consequences of his own weakness. He forgets the happiness of his home, the love of those dear to him, in the desire to free himself from a disgrace insignificent{sic} in comparison with that entailed by committing the highest of all crimes. One would wish to believe that Webster's deed was unpremeditated, the result of a sudden gust of passion caused by his victim's acrimonious pursuit of his debtor. But there are circumstances in the case which tell powerfully against such a view. The character of the murderer seems curiously contradictory; both cunning and simplicity mark his proceedings; he makes a determined attempt to escape from the horrors of his situation and shows at the same time a curious insensibility to its real gravity. Webster was a man of refined tastes and seemingly gentle character, loved by those near to him, well liked by his friends.

The mystery that surrounds the real character of Eugene Aram is greater, and we possess little or no means of solving it. From what motive this silent, arrogant man, despising his ineffectual wife, this reserved and moody scholar stooped to fraud and murder the facts of the case help us little to determine. Was it the hope of leaving the narrow surroundings of Knaresborough, his tiresome belongings, his own poor way of life, and seeking a wider field for the exercise of those gifts of scholarship which he undoubtedly possessed that drove him to commit fraud in company with Clark

[1] The author was one of three men discussing this subject in a London club. They were able to name six persons of their various acquaintance who were, or had been, suspected of being successful murderers.

and Houseman, and then, with the help of the latter, murder the unsuspecting Clark? The fact of his humble origin makes his association with so low a ruffian as Houseman the less remarkable. Vanity in all probability played a considerable part in Aram's disposition. He would seem to have thought himself a superior person, above the laws that bind ordinary men. He showed at the end no consciousness of his guilt. Being something of a philosopher, he had no doubt constructed for himself a philosophy of life which served to justify his own actions. He was a deist, believing in "one almighty Being the God of Nature," to whom he recommended himself at the last in the event of his "having done amiss." He emphasised the fact that his life had been unpolluted and his morals irreproachable. But his views as to the murder of Clark he left unexpressed. He suggested as justification of it that Clark had carried on an intrigue with his neglected wife, but he never urged this circumstance in his defence, and beyond his own statement there is no evidence of such a connection.

The Revd. John Selby Watson, headmaster of the Stockwell Grammar School, at the age of sixty-five killed his wife in his library one Sunday afternoon. Things had been going badly with the unfortunate man. After more than twenty-five years' service as headmaster of the school at a meagre salary of L400 a year, he was about to be dismissed; the number of scholars had been declining steadily and a change in the headmastership thought necessary; there was no suggestion of his receiving any kind of pension. The future for a man of his years was dark enough. The author of several learned books, painstaking, scholarly, dull, he could hope to make but little money from literary work. Under a cold, reserved and silent exterior, Selby Watson concealed a violence of temper which he sought diligently to repress. His wife's temper was none of the best. Worried, depressed, hopeless of his future, he in all probability killed his wife in a sudden access of rage, provoked by some taunt or reproach on her part, and then, instead of calling in a policeman and telling him what he had done, made clumsy and ineffectual efforts to conceal his crime. Medical opinion was divided as to his mental condition. Those doctors called for the prosecution could find no trace of insanity about him, those called for the defence said that he was suffering from melancholia. The unhappy man would appear hardly to have realised the gravity of his situation. To a friend who visited him in prison he said: "Here's a man who can write Latin, which the Bishop of Winchester would commend, shut up in a place like this." Coming from a man who had spent all his life buried in books and knowing little of the world the remark is not so greatly to be wondered at. Profound scholars are apt to be impatient of mundane things. Professor Webster showed a similar want of appreciation of the circumstances of a person charged with wilful murder. Selby Watson was convicted of murder and sentenced to death. The sentence was afterwards commuted to one of penal servitude for life, the Home Secretary of the day showing by his decision that, though not satisfied of the prisoner's insanity, he recognised certain extenuating circumstances in his guilt.[2]

In Castaing much ingenuity is shown in the conception of the crime, but the man is weak and timid; he is not the stuff of which the great criminal is made; Holmes is cast in the true mould of the instinctive murderer. Castaing is a man of sensibility, capable of domestic affection; Holmes completely insensible to all feelings of humanity. Taking life is a mere incident in the accomplishment of his schemes; men, women and children are sacrificed with equal mercilessness to the necessary end. A consummate liar and hypocrite, he has that strange power of fascination over others, women in particular, which is often independent altogether of moral or even physical attractiveness. We are accustomed to look for a certain vastness, grandeur of scale in the achievements of America. A study of American crime will show that it does not disappoint us in this expectation. The extent and audacity of the crimes of Holmes are proof of it.

To find a counterpart in imaginative literature to the complete criminal of the Holmes type we must turn to the pages of Shakespeare. In the number of his victims, the cruelty and insensibility with which he attains his ends, his unblushing hypocrisy, the fascination he can exercise at will over

[2] Selby Watson was tried at the Central Criminal Court January, 1872.

others, the Richard III. of Shakespeare shows how clearly the poet understood the instinctive criminal of real life. The Richard of history was no doubt less instinctively and deliberately an assassin than the Richard of Shakespeare. In the former we can trace the gradual temptation to crime to which circumstances provoke him. The murder of the Princes, if, as one writer contends, it was not the work of Henry VII.—in which case that monarch deserves to be hailed as one of the most consummate criminals that ever breathed and the worthy father of a criminal son—was no doubt forced to a certain extent on Richard by the exigencies of his situation, one of those crimes to which bad men are driven in order to secure the fruits of other crimes. But the Richard of Shakespeare is no child of circumstance. He espouses deliberately a career of crime, as deliberately as Peace or Holmes or Butler; he sets out "determined to prove a villain," to be "subtle, false and treacherous," to employ to gain his ends "stern murder in the dir'st degree." The character is sometimes criticised as being overdrawn and unreal. It may not be true to the Richard of history, but it is very true to crime, and to the historical criminal of the Borgian or Prussian type, in which fraud and violence are made part of a deliberate system of so-called statecraft.

Shakespeare got nearer to what we may term the domestic as opposed to the political criminal when he created Iago. In their envy and dislike of their fellowmen, their contempt for humanity in general, their callousness to the ordinary sympathies of human nature, Robert Butler, Lacenaire, Ruloff are witnesses to the poet's fidelity to criminal character in his drawing of the Ancient. But there is a weakness in the character of Iago regarded as a purely instinctive and malignant criminal; indeed it is a weakness in the consistency of the play. On two occasions Iago states explicitly that Othello is more than suspected of having committed adultery with his wife, Emilia, and that therefore he has a strong and justifiable motive for being revenged on the Moor. The thought of it he describes as "gnawing his inwards." Emilia's conversation with Desdemona in the last act lends some colour to the correctness of Iago's belief. If this belief be well-founded it must greatly modify his character as a purely wanton and mischievous criminal, a supreme villain, and lower correspondingly the character of Othello as an honourable and high-minded man. If it be a morbid suspicion, having no ground in fact, a mental obsession, then Iago becomes abnormal and consequently more or less irresponsible. But this suggestion of Emilia's faithlessness made in the early part of the play is never followed up by the dramatist, and the spectator is left in complete uncertainty as to whether there be any truth or not in Iago's suspicion. If Othello has played his Ancient false, that is an extenuating circumstance in the otherwise extraordinary guilt of Iago, and would no doubt be accorded to him as such, were he on trial before a French jury.

The most successful, and therefore perhaps the greatest, criminal in Shakespeare is King Claudius of Denmark. His murder of his brother by pouring a deadly poison into his ear while sleeping, is so skilfully perpetrated as to leave no suspicion of foul play. But for a supernatural intervention, a contingency against which no murderer could be expected to have provided, the crime of Claudius would never have been discovered. Smiling, jovial, genial as M. Derues or Dr. Palmer, King Claudius might have gone down to his grave in peace as the bluff hearty man of action, while his introspective nephew would in all probability have ended his days in the cloister, regarded with amiable contempt by his bustling fellowmen. How Claudius got over the great difficulty of all poisoners, that of procuring the necessary poison without detection, we are not told; by what means he distilled the "juice of cursed hebenon"; how the strange appearance of the late King's body, which "an instant tetter" had barked about with "vile and loathsome crust," was explained to the multitude we are left to imagine. There is no real evidence to show that Queen Gertrude was her lover's accomplice in her husband's murder. If that had been so, she would no doubt have been of considerable assistance to Claudius in the preparation of the crime. But in the absence of more definite proof we must assume Claudius' murder of his brother to have been a solitary achievement, skilfully carried out by one whose genial good-fellowship and convivial habits gave the lie to any suggestion of criminality. Whatever may have been his inward feelings of remorse or self-reproach, Claudius masked them successfully

from the eyes of all. Hamlet's instinctive dislike of his uncle was not shared by the members of the Danish court. The "witchcraft of his wit," his "traitorous gifts," were powerful aids to Claudius, not only in the seduction of his sister-in-law, but the perpetration of secret murder.

The case of the murder of King Duncan of Scotland by Macbeth and his wife belongs to a different class of crime. It is a striking example of dual crime, four instances of which are given towards the end of this book. An Italian advocate, Scipio Sighele, has devoted a monograph to the subject of dual crime, in which he examines a number of cases in which two persons have jointly committed heinous crimes.[3] He finds that in couples of this kind there is usually an incubus and a succubus, the one who suggests the crime, the other on whom the suggestion works until he or she becomes the accomplice or instrument of the stronger will; "the one playing the Mephistophelian part of tempter, preaching evil, urging to crime, the other allowing himself to be overcome by his evil genius." In some cases these two roles are clearly differentiated; it is easy, as in the case of Iago and Othello, Cassius and Brutus, to say who prompted the crime. In others the guilt seems equally divided and the original suggestion of crime to spring from a mutual tendency towards the adoption of such an expedient. In Macbeth and his wife we have a perfect instance of the latter class. No sooner have the witches prophesied that Macbeth shall be a king than the "horrid image" of the suggestion to murder Duncan presents itself to his mind, and, on returning to his wife, he answers her question as to when Duncan is to leave their house by the significant remark, "To-morrow—as he proposes." To Lady Macbeth from the moment she has received her husband's letter telling of the prophecy of the weird sisters, murder occurs as a means of accomplishing their prediction. In the minds of Macbeth and his wife the suggestion of murder is originally an auto-suggestion, coming to them independently of each other as soon as they learn from the witches that Macbeth is one day to be a king. To Banquo a somewhat similar intimation is given, but no foul thought of crime suggests itself for an instant to his loyal nature. What Macbeth and his wife lack at first as thorough-going murderers is that complete insensibility to taking human life that marks the really ruthless assassin. Lady Macbeth has the stronger will of the two for the commission of the deed. It is doubtful whether without her help Macbeth would ever have undertaken it. But even she, when her husband hesitates to strike, cannot bring herself to murder the aged Duncan with her own hands because of his resemblance as he sleeps to her father. It is only after a deal of boggling and at serious risk of untimely interruption that the two contrive to do the murder, and plaster with blood the "surfeited grooms." In thus putting suspicion on the servants of Duncan the assassins cunningly avert suspicion from themselves, and Macbeth's killing of the unfortunate men in seeming indignation at the discovery of their crime is a master-stroke of ingenuity. "Who," he asks in a splendid burst of feigned horror, "can be wise, amazed, temperate and furious, loyal and natural in a moment?" At the same time Lady Macbeth affects to swoon away in the presence of so awful a crime. For the time all suspicion of guilt, except in the mind of Banquo, is averted from the real murderers. But, like so many criminals, Macbeth finds it impossible to rest on his first success in crime. His sensibility grows dulled; he "forgets the taste of fear"; the murder of Banquo and his son is diabolically planned, and that is soon followed by the outrageous slaughter of the wife and children of Macduff. Ferri, the Italian writer on crime, describes the psychical condition favourable to the commission of murder as an absence of both moral repugnance to the crime itself and the fear of the consequences following it. In the murder of Duncan, it is the first of these two states of mind to which Macbeth and his wife have only partially attained. The moral repugnance stronger in the man has not been wholly lost by the woman. But as soon as the crime is successfully accomplished, this repugnance begins to wear off until the King and Queen are able calmly and deliberately to contemplate those further crimes necessary to their peace of mind. But now Macbeth, at first the more compunctious of the two, has become the more ruthless; the germ of crime, developed by suggestion, has spread through his whole being; he has begun to

[3] "Le Crime a Deux," by Scipio Sighele (translated from the Italian), Lyons, 1893.

acquire that indifference to human suffering with which Richard III. and Iago were gifted from the first. In both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth the germ of crime was latent; they wanted only favourable circumstances to convert them into one of those criminal couples who are the more dangerous for the fact that the temptation to crime has come to each spontaneously and grown and been fostered by mutual understanding, an elective affinity for evil. Such couples are frequent in the history of crime. Eyraud and Bompard, Mr. and Mrs. Manning, Burke and Hare, the Peltzer brothers, Barre and Lebiez, are instances of those collaborations in crime which find their counterpart in history, literature, drama and business. Antoninus and Aurelius, Ferdinand and Isabella, the De Goncourt brothers, Besant and Rice, Gilbert and Sullivan, Swan and Edgar leap to the memory.

In the cases of Eyraud and Bompard, both man and woman are idle, vicious criminals by instinct. They come together, lead an abandoned life, sinking lower and lower in moral degradation. In the hour of need, crime presents itself as a simple expedient for which neither of them has any natural aversion. The repugnance to evil, if they ever felt it, has long since disappeared from their natures. The man is serious, the woman frivolous, but the criminal tendency in both cases is the same; each performs his or her part in the crime with characteristic aptitude. Mrs. Manning was a creature of much firmer character than her husband, a woman of strong passions, a redoubtable murderess. Without her dominating force Manning might never have committed murder. But he was a criminal before the crime, more than suspected as a railway official of complicity in a considerable train robbery; in his case the suggestion of murder involved only the taking of a step farther in a criminal career. Manning suffered from nerves almost as badly as Macbeth; after the deed he sought to drown the prickings of terror and remorse by heavy drinking Mrs. Manning was never troubled with any feelings of this kind; after the murder of O'Connor the gratification of her sexual passion seemed uppermost in her mind; and she met the consequences of her crime fearlessly. Burke and Hare were a couple of ruffians, tempted by what must have seemed almost fabulous wealth to men of their wretched poverty to commit a series of cruel murders. Hare, with his queer, Mephistophelian countenance, was the wickeder of the two. Burke became haunted as time went on and flew to drink to banish horror, but Hare would seem to have been free from such "compunctious visitings of Nature." He kept his head and turned King's evidence.

In the case of the Peltzer brothers we have a man who is of good social position, falling desperately in love with the wife of a successful barrister. The wife, though unhappy in her domestic life, refuses to become her lover's mistress; marriage is the only way to secure her. So Armand Peltzer plots to murder the husband. For this purpose he calls in the help of a brother, a ne'er-do-well, who has left his native country under a cloud. He sends for this dubious person to Europe, and there between them they plan the murder of the inconvenient husband. Though the idea of the crime comes from the one brother, the other receives the idea without repugnance and enters wholeheartedly into the commission of the murder. The ascendency of the one is evident, but he knows his man, is sure that he will have no difficulty in securing the other's co-operation in his felonious purpose. Armand Peltzer should have lived in the Italy of the Renaissance.

The crime was cunningly devised, and methodically and successfully accomplished. Only an over-anxiety to secure the fruits of it led to its detection. Barre and Lebiez are a perfect criminal couple, both young men of good education, trained to better things, but the one idle, greedy and vicious, the other cynical, indifferent, inclined at best to a lazy sentimentalism. Barre is a needy stockbroker at the end of his tether, desperate to find an expedient for raising the wind, Lebiez a medical student who writes morbid verses to a skull and lectures on Darwinism. To Barre belongs the original suggestion to murder an old woman who sells milk and is reputed to have savings. But his friend and former schoolfellow, Lebiez, accepts the suggestion placidly, and reconciles himself to the murder of an unnecessary old woman by the same argument as that used by Raskolnikoff in "Crime and Punishment" to justify the killing of his victim.

In all the cases here quoted the couples are essentially criminal couples. From whichever of the two comes the first suggestion of crime, it falls on soil already prepared to receive it; the response to the suggestion is immediate. In degree of guilt there is little or nothing to choose between them. But the more interesting instances of dual crime are those in which one innocent hitherto of crime, to whom it is morally repugnant, is persuaded by another to the commission of a criminal act, as Cassius persuades Brutus; Iago, Othello. Cassius is a criminal by instinct. Placed in a social position which removes him from the temptation to ordinary crime, circumstances combine in his case to bring out the criminal tendency and give it free play in the projected murder of Caesar. Sour, envious, unscrupulous, the suggestion to kill Caesar under the guise of the public weal is in reality a gratification to Cassius of his own ignoble instincts, and the deliberate unscrupulousness with which he seeks to corrupt the honourable metal, seduce the noble mind of his friend, is typical of the man's innate dishonesty. Cassius belongs to that particular type of the envious nature which Shakespeare is fond of exemplifying with more or less degree of villainy in such characters as Iago, Edmund, and Don John, of which Robert Butler, whose career is given in this book, is a living instance. Cassius on public grounds tempts Brutus to crime as subtly as on private grounds Iago tempts Othello, and with something of the same malicious satisfaction; the soliloquy of Cassius at the end of the second scene of the first act is that of a bad man and a false friend. Indeed, the quarrel between Brutus and Cassius after the murder of Caesar loses much of its sincerity and pathos unless we can forget for the moment the real character of Cassius. But the interest in the cases of Cassius and Brutus, Iago and Othello, lies not so much in the nature of the prompter of the crime. The instances in which an honest, honourable man is by force of another's suggestion converted into a criminal are psychologically remarkable. It is to be expected that we should look in the annals of real crime for confirmation of the truth to life of stories such as these, told in fiction or drama.

The strongest influence, under which the naturally non-criminal person may be tempted in violation of instinct and better nature to the commission of a crime, is that of love or passion. Examples of this kind are frequent in the annals of crime. There is none more striking than that of the Widow Gras and Natalis Gaudry. Here a man, brave, honest, of hitherto irreproachable character, is tempted by a woman to commit the most cruel and infamous of crimes. At first he repels the suggestion; at last, when his senses have been excited, his passion inflamed by the cunning of the woman, as the jealous passion of Othello is played on and excited by Iago, the patriotism of Brutus artfully exploited by Cassius, he yields to the repeated solicitation and does a deed in every way repugnant to his normal character. Nothing seems so blinding in its effect on the moral sense as passion. It obscures all sense of humour, proportion, congruity; the murder of the man or woman who stands in the way of its full enjoyment becomes an act of inverted justice to the perpetrators; they reconcile themselves to it by the most perverse reasoning until they come to regard it as an act, in which they may justifiably invoke the help of God; eroticism and religion are often jumbled up together in this strange medley of conflicting emotions.

A woman, urging her lover to the murder of her husband, writes of the roses that are to deck the path of the lovers as soon as the crime is accomplished; she sends him flowers and in the same letter asks if he has got the necessary cartridges. Her husband has been ill; she hopes that it is God helping them to the desired end; she burns a candle on the altar of a saint for the success of their murderous plan.[4] A jealous husband setting out to kill his wife carries in his pockets, beside a knife and a service revolver, a rosary, a medal of the Virgin and a holy image.[5] Marie Boyer in the blindness of her passion and jealousy believes God to be helping her to get rid of her mother.

A lover persuades the wife to get rid of her husband. For a whole year he instils the poison into her soul until she can struggle no longer against the obsession; he offers to do the deed, but she writes

[4] Case of Garnier and the woman Aveline, 1884.

[5] Case of the Comte de Cornulier: "Un An de Justice," Henri Varennes, 1901.

that she would rather suffer all the risks and consequences herself. "How many times," she writes, "have I wished to go away, leave home, but it meant leaving my children, losing them for ever.. that made my lover jealous, he believed that I could not bring myself to leave my husband. But if my husband were out of the way then I would keep my children, and my lover would see in my crime a striking proof of my devotion." A curious farrago of slavish passion, motherly love and murder.[6]

There are some women such as Marie Boyer and Gabrielle Fenayrou, who may be described as passively criminal, chameleon-like, taking colour from their surroundings. By the force of a man's influence they commit a dreadful crime, in the one instance it is matricide, in the other the murder of a former lover, but neither of the women is profoundly vicious or criminal in her instincts. In prison they become exemplary, their crime a thing of the past.

Gabrielle Fenayrou during her imprisonment, having won the confidence of the religious sisters in charge of the convicts, is appointed head of one of the workshops. Marie Boyer is so contrite, exemplary in her behaviour that she is released after fifteen years' imprisonment. In some ways, perhaps, these malleable types of women, "soft paste" as one authority has described them, "effacees" in the words of another, are the most dangerous material of all for the commission of crime, their obedience is so complete, so cold and relentless.

There are cases into which no element of passion enters, in which one will stronger than the other can so influence, so dominate the weaker as to persuade the individual against his or her better inclination to an act of crime, just as in the relations of ordinary life we see a man or woman led and controlled for good or ill by one stronger than themselves. There is no more extraordinary instance of this than the case of Catherine Hayes, immortalised by Thackeray, which occurred as long ago as the year 1726. This singular woman by her artful insinuations, by representing her husband as an atheist and a murderer, persuaded a young man of the name of Wood, of hitherto exemplary character, to assist her in murdering him. It was unquestionably the sinister influence of Captain Cranstoun that later in the same century persuaded the respectable Miss Mary Blandy to the murder of her father. The assassin of an old woman in Paris recounts thus the arguments used by his mistress to induce him to commit the crime: "She began by telling me about the money and jewellery in the old woman's possession which could no longer be of any use to her"—the argument of Raskolnikoff—"I resisted, but next day she began again, pointing out that one killed people in war, which was not considered a crime, and therefore one should not be afraid to kill a miserable old woman. I urged that the old woman had done us no harm, and that I did not see why one should kill her; she reproached me for my weakness and said that, had she been strong enough, she would soon have done this abominable deed herself. 'God,' she added, 'will forgive us because He knows how poor we are.'" When he came to do the murder, this determined woman plied her lover with brandy and put rouge on his cheeks lest his pallor should betray him.[7]

There are occasions when those feelings of compunction which troubled Macbeth and his wife are wellnigh proof against the utmost powers of suggestion, or, as in the case of Hubert and Prince Arthur, compel the criminal to desist from his enterprise.

A man desires to get rid of his father and mother-in-law. By means of threats, reproaches and inducements he persuades another man to commit the crime. Taking a gun, the latter sets out to do the deed; but he realises the heinousness of it and turns back. "The next day," he says, "at four o'clock in the morning I started again. I passed the village church. At the sight of the place where I had celebrated my first communion I was filled with remorse. I knelt down and prayed to God to make me good. But some unknown force urged me to the crime. I started again—ten times I turned back,

[6] Case of Madame Weiss and the engineer Roques. If I may be permitted the reference, there is an account of this case and that of Barre and Lebiez in my book "French Criminals of the Nineteenth Century."

[7] Case of Albert and the woman Lavoitte, Paris, 1877.

but the more I hesitated the stronger was the desire to go on." At length the faltering assassin arrived at the house, and in his painful anxiety of mind shot a servant instead of the intended victims.[8]

In a town in Austria there dwelt a happy and contented married couple, poor and hard-working. A charming young lady, a rich relation and an orphan, comes to live with them. She brings to their modest home wealth and comfort. But as time goes on, it is likely that the young lady will fall in love and marry. What then? Her hosts will have to return to their original poverty. The idea of how to secure to himself the advantages of his young kinswoman's fortune takes possession of the husband's mind. He revolves all manner of means, and gradually murder presents itself as the only way. The horrid suggestion fixes itself in his mind, and at last he communicates it to his wife. At first she resists, then yields to the temptation. The plan is ingenious. The wife is to disappear to America and be given out as dead. The husband will then marry his attractive kinswoman, persuade her to make a will in his favour, poison her and, the fortune secured, rejoin his wife. As if to help this cruel plan, the young lady has developed a sentimental affection for her relative. The wife goes to America, the husband marries the young lady. He commences to poison her, but, in the presence of her youth, beauty and affection for him, relents, hesitates to commit a possibly unnecessary crime. He decides to forget and ignore utterly his wife who is waiting patiently in America. A year passes. The expectant wife gets no sign of her husband's existence. She comes back to Europe, visits under a false name the town in which her faithless husband and his bride are living, discovers the truth and divulges the intended crime to the authorities. A sentence of penal servitude for life rewards this perfidious criminal.[9]

Derues said to a man who was looking at a picture in the Palais de Justice: "Why study copies of Nature when you can look at such a remarkable original as I?" A judge once told the present writer that he did not go often to the theatre because none of the dramas which he saw on the stage, seemed to him equal in intensity to those of real life which came before him in the course of his duties. The saying that truth is stranger than fiction applies more forcibly to crime than to anything else. But the ordinary man and woman prefer to take their crime romanticised, as it is administered to them in novel or play. The true stories told in this book represent the raw material from which works of art have been and may be yet created. The murder of Mr. Arden of Faversham inspired an Elizabethan tragedy attributed by some critics to Shakespeare. The Peltzer trial helped to inspire Paul Bourget's remarkable novel, "Andre Cornelis." To Italian crime we owe Shelley's "Cenci" and Browning's "The Ring and the Book." Mrs. Manning was the original of the maid Hortense in "Bleak House." Jonathan Wild, Eugene Aram, Deacon Brodie, Thomas Griffiths Wainewright have all been made the heroes of books or plays of varying merit. But it is not only in its stories that crime has served to inspire romance. In the investigation of crime, especially on the broader lines of Continental procedure, we can track to the source the springs of conduct and character, and come near to solving as far as is humanly possible the mystery of human motive. There is always and must be in every crime a terra incognita which, unless we could enter into the very soul of a man, we cannot hope to reach. Thus far may we go, no farther. It is rarely indeed that a man lays bare his whole soul, and even when he does we can never be quite sure that he is telling us all the truth, that he is not keeping back some vital secret. It is no doubt better so, and that it should be left to the writer of imagination to picture for us a man's inmost soul. The study of crime will help him to that end. It will help us also in the ethical appreciation of good and evil in individual conduct, about which our notions have been somewhat obscured by too narrow a definition of what constitutes crime. These themes, touched on but lightly and imperfectly in these pages, are rich in human interest.

And so it is hardly a matter for surprise that the poet and the philosopher sat up late one night talking about murders.

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[8] Case of Porcher and Hardouin cited in Despine. "Psychologie Naturelle."

[9] Case of the Scheffer couple at Linz, cited by Sighele.

The Life of Charles Peace

"Charles Peace, or the Adventures of a Notorious Burglar," a large volume published at the time of his death, gives a full and accurate account of the career of Peace side by side with a story of the Family Herald type, of which he is made the hero. "The Life and Trial of Charles Peace" (Sheffield, 1879), "The Romantic Career of a Great Criminal" (by N. Kynaston Gaskell, London 1906), and "The Master Criminal," published recently in London give useful information. I have also consulted some of the newspapers of the time. There is a delightful sketch of Peace in Mr. Charles Whibley's "Book of Scoundrels."

I HIS EARLY YEARS

Charles Peace told a clergyman who had an interview with him in prison shortly before his execution that he hoped that, after he was gone, he would be entirely forgotten by everybody and his name never mentioned again.

Posterity, in calling over its muster-roll of famous men, has refused to fulfil this pious hope, and Charley Peace stands out as the one great personality among English criminals of the nineteenth century. In Charley Peace alone is revived that good-humoured popularity which in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries fell to the lot of Claude Duval, Dick Turpin and Jack Sheppard. But Peace has one grievance against posterity; he has endured one humiliation which these heroes have been spared. His name has been omitted from the pages of the "Dictionary of National Biography." From Duval, in the seventeenth, down to the Mannings, Palmer, Arthur Orton, Morgan and Kelly, the bushrangers, in the nineteenth century, many a criminal, far less notable or individual than Charley Peace, finds his or her place in that great record of the past achievements of our countrymen. Room has been denied to perhaps the greatest and most naturally gifted criminal England has produced, one whose character is all the more remarkable for its modesty, its entire freedom from that vanity and vaingloriousness so common among his class.

The only possible reason that can be suggested for so singular an omission is the fact that in the strict order of alphabetical succession the biography of Charles Peace would have followed immediately on that of George Peabody. It may have been thought that the contrast was too glaring, that even the exigencies of national biography had no right to make the philanthropist Peabody rub shoulders with man's constant enemy, Peace. To the memory of Peace these few pages can make but poor amends for the supreme injustice, but, by giving a particular and authentic account of his career, they may serve as material for the correction of this grave omission should remorse overtake those responsible for so undeserved a slur on one of the most unruly of England's famous sons.

From the literary point of view Peace was unfortunate even in the hour of his notoriety. In the very year of his trial and execution, the Annual Register, seized with a fit of respectability from which it has never recovered, announced that "the appetite for the strange and marvellous" having considerably abated since the year 1757 when the Register was first published, its "Chronicle," hitherto a rich mine of extraordinary and sensational occurrences, would become henceforth a mere diary of important events. Simultaneously with the curtailment of its "Chronicle," it ceased to give those excellent summaries of celebrated trials which for many years had been a feature of its volumes. The question whether "the appetite for the strange and marvellous" has abated in an appreciable degree with the passing of time and is not perhaps keener than it ever was, is a debatable one. But it is undeniable that the present volumes of the Annual Register have fallen away dismally from the variety and human interest of their predecessors. Of the trial and execution of Peace the volume for 1879 gives but the barest record.

Charles Peace was not born of criminal parents. His father, John Peace, began work as a collier at Burton-on-Trent. Losing his leg in an accident, he joined Wombwell's wild beast show and soon acquired some reputation for his remarkable powers as a tamer of wild animals. About this time

Peace married at Rotherham the daughter of a surgeon in the Navy. On the death of a favourite son to whom he had imparted successfully the secrets of his wonderful control over wild beasts of every kind, Mr. Peace gave up lion-taming and settled in Sheffield as a shoemaker.

It was at Sheffield, in the county of Yorkshire, already famous in the annals of crime as the county of John Nevison and Eugene Aram, that Peace first saw the light. On May 14, 1832, there was born to John Peace in Sheffield a son, Charles, the youngest of his family of four. When he grew to boyhood Charles was sent to two schools near Sheffield, where he soon made himself remarkable, not as a scholar, but for his singular aptitude in a variety of other employments such as making paper models, taming cats, constructing a peep-show, and throwing up a heavy ball of shot which he would catch in a leather socket fixed on to his forehead.

The course of many famous men's lives has been changed by what appeared at the time to be an unhappy accident. Who knows what may have been the effect on Charles Peace's subsequent career of an accident he met with in 1846 at some rolling mills, in which he was employed? A piece of red hot steel entered his leg just below the knee, and after eighteen months spent in the Sheffield Infirmary he left it a cripple for life. About this time Peace's father died. Peace and his family were fond of commemorating events of this kind in suitable verse; the death of John Peace was celebrated in the following lines:

"In peace he lived;
In peace he died;
Life was our desire,
But God denied."

Of the circumstances that first led Peace to the commission of crime we know nothing. How far enforced idleness, bad companionship, according to some accounts the influence of a criminally disposed mother, how far his own daring and adventurous temper provoked him to robbery, cannot be determined accurately. His first exploit was the stealing of an old gentleman's gold watch, but he soon passed to greater things. On October 26, 1851, the house of a lady living in Sheffield was broken into and a quantity of her property stolen. Some of it was found in the possession of Peace, and he was arrested. Owing no doubt to a good character for honesty given him by his late employer Peace was let off lightly with a month's imprisonment.

After his release Peace would seem to have devoted himself for a time to music, for which he had always a genuine passion. He taught himself to play tunes on a violin with one string, and at entertainments which he attended was described as "the modern Paganini." In later life when he had attained to wealth and prosperity the violin and the harmonium were a constant source of solace during long winter evenings in Greenwich and Peckham. But playing a one-stringed violin at fairs and public-houses could not be more than a relaxation to a man of Peace's active temper, who had once tasted what many of those who have practised it, describe as the fascination of that particular form of nocturnal adventure known by the unsympathetic name of burglary. Among the exponents of the art Peace was at this time known as a "portico-thief," that is to say one who contrived to get himself on to the portico of a house and from that point of vantage make his entrance into the premises. During the year 1854 the houses of a number of well-to-do residents in and about Sheffield were entered after this fashion, and much valuable property stolen. Peace was arrested, and with him a girl with whom he was keeping company, and his sister, Mary Ann, at that time Mrs. Neil. On October 20, 1854, Peace was sentenced at Doncaster Sessions to four years' penal servitude, and the ladies who had been found in possession of the stolen property to six months apiece. Mrs. Neil did not long survive her misfortune. She would seem to have been married to a brutal and drunken husband, whom Peace thrashed on more than one occasion for ill-treating his sister. After one of these punishments Neil set a bulldog on to Peace; but Peace caught the dog by the lower jaw and punched it into a state of

coma. The death in 1859 of the unhappy Mrs. Neil was lamented in appropriate verse, probably the work of her brother:

"I was so long with pain opprest
That wore my strength away;
It made me long for endless rest
Which never can decay."

On coming out of prison in 1858, Peace resumed his fiddling, but it was now no more than a musical accompaniment to burglary. This had become the serious business of Peace's life, to be pursued, should necessity arise, even to the peril of men's lives. His operations extended beyond the bounds of his native town. The house of a lady living in Manchester was broken into on the night of August 11, 1859, and a substantial booty carried away. This was found the following day concealed in a hole in a field. The police left it undisturbed and awaited the return of the robber. When Peace and another man arrived to carry it away, the officers sprang out on them. Peace, after nearly killing the officer who was trying to arrest him, would have made his escape, had not other policemen come to the rescue. For this crime Peace was sentenced to six years' penal servitude, in spite of a loyal act of perjury on the part of his aged mother, who came all the way from Sheffield to swear that he had been with her there on the night of the crime.

He was released from prison again in 1864, and returned to Sheffield. Things did not prosper with him there, and he went back to Manchester. In 1866 he was caught in the act of burglary at a house in Lower Broughton. He admitted that at the time he was fuddled with whisky; otherwise his capture would have been more difficult and dangerous. Usually a temperate man, Peace realised on this occasion the value of sobriety even in burglary, and never after allowed intemperance to interfere with his success. A sentence of eight years' penal servitude at Manchester Assizes on December 3, 1866, emphasised this wholesome lesson.

Whilst serving this sentence Peace emulated Jack Sheppard in a daring attempt to escape from Wakefield prison. Being engaged on some repairs, he smuggled a small ladder into his cell. With the help of a saw made out of some tin, he cut a hole through the ceiling of the cell, and was about to get out on to the roof when a warder came in. As the latter attempted to seize the ladder Peace knocked him down, ran along the wall of the prison, fell off on the inside owing to the looseness of the bricks, slipped into the governor's house where he changed his clothes, and there, for an hour and a half, waited for an opportunity to escape. This was denied him, and he was recaptured in the governor's bedroom. The prisons at Millbank, Chatham and Gibraltar were all visited by Peace before his final release in 1872. At Chatham he is said to have taken part in a mutiny and been flogged for his pains.

On his liberation from prison Peace rejoined his family in Sheffield. He was now a husband and father. In 1859 he had taken to wife a widow of the name of Hannah Ward. Mrs. Ward was already the mother of a son, Willie. Shortly after her marriage with Peace she gave birth to a daughter, and during his fourth term of imprisonment presented him with a son. Peace never saw this child, who died before his release. But, true to the family custom, on his return from prison the untimely death of little "John Charles" was commemorated by the printing of a funeral card in his honour, bearing the following sanguine verses:

"Farewell, my dear son, by us all beloved,
Thou art gone to dwell in the mansions above.
In the bosom of Jesus Who sits on the throne
Thou art anxiously waiting to welcome us home."

Whether from a desire not to disappoint little John Charles, for some reason or other the next two or three years of Peace's career would seem to have been spent in an endeavour to earn an honest living by picture framing, a trade in which Peace, with that skill he displayed in whatever he turned his hand to, was remarkably proficient. In Sheffield his children attended the Sunday School. Though he never went to church himself, he was an avowed believer in both God and the devil. As he said, however, that he feared neither, no great reliance could be placed on the restraining force of such a belief to a man of Peace's daring spirit. There was only too good reason to fear that little John Charles' period of waiting would be a prolonged one.

In 1875 Peace moved from Sheffield itself to the suburb of Darnall. Here Peace made the acquaintance—a fatal acquaintance, as it turned out—of a Mr. and Mrs. Dyson. Dyson was a civil engineer. He had spent some years in America, where, in 1866, he married.

Toward the end of 1873 or the beginning of 1874, he came to England with his wife, and obtained a post on the North Eastern Railway. He was a tall man, over six feet in height, extremely thin, and gentlemanly in his bearing. His engagement with the North Eastern Railway terminated abruptly owing to Dyson's failing to appear at a station to which he had been sent on duty.

It was believed at the time by those associated with Dyson that this unlooked-for dereliction of duty had its cause in domestic trouble. Since the year 1875, the year in which Peace came to Darnall, the domestic peace of Mr. Dyson had been rudely disturbed by this same ugly little picture-framer who lived a few doors away from the Dysons' house. Peace had got to know the Dysons, first as a tradesman, then as a friend. To what degree of intimacy he attained with Mrs. Dyson it is difficult to determine. In that lies the mystery of the case Mrs. Dyson is described as an attractive woman, "buxom and blooming"; she was dark-haired, and about twenty-five years of age. In an interview with the Vicar of Darnall a few days before his execution, Peace asserted positively that Mrs. Dyson had been his mistress. Mrs. Dyson as strenuously denied the fact. There was no question that on one occasion Peace and Mrs. Dyson had been photographed together, that he had given her a ring, and that he had been in the habit of going to music halls and public-houses with Mrs. Dyson, who was a woman of intemperate habits.

Peace had introduced Mrs. Dyson to his wife and daughter, and on one occasion was said to have taken her to his mother's house, much to the old lady's indignation. If there were not many instances of ugly men who have been notably successful with women, one might doubt the likelihood of Mrs. Dyson falling a victim to the charms of Charles Peace. But Peace, for all his ugliness, could be wonderfully ingratiating when he chose. According to Mrs. Dyson, Peace was a demon, "beyond the power of even a Shakespeare to paint," who persecuted her with his attentions, and, when he found them rejected, devoted all his malignant energies to making the lives of her husband and herself unbearable. According to Peace's story he was a slighted lover who had been treated by Mrs. Dyson with contumely and ingratitude.

Whether to put a stop to his wife's intimacy with Peace, or to protect himself against the latter's wanton persecution, sometime about the end of June, 1876, Dyson threw over into the garden of Peace's house a card, on which was written: "Charles Peace is requested not to interfere with my family." On July 1 Peace met Mr. Dyson in the street, and tried to trip him up. The same night he came up to Mrs. Dyson, who was talking with some friends, and threatened in coarse and violent language to blow out her brains and those of her husband. In consequence of these incidents Mr. Dyson took out a summons against Peace, for whose apprehension a warrant was issued. To avoid the consequences of this last step Peace left Darnall for Hull, where he opened an eating-shop, presided over by Mrs. Peace.

But he himself was not idle. From Hull he went to Manchester on business, and in Manchester he committed his first murder. Entering the grounds of a gentleman's home at Whalley Range, about midnight on August 1, he was seen by two policemen. One of them, Constable Cock, intercepted him as he was trying to escape.

Peace took out his revolver and warned Cock to stand back. The policeman came on. Peace fired, but deliberately wide of him. Cock, undismayed, drew out his truncheon, and made for the burglar. Peace, desperate, determined not to be caught, fired again, this time fatally. Cock's comrade heard the shots, but before he could reach the side of the dying man, Peace had made off. He returned to Hull, and there learned shortly after, to his intense relief, that two brothers, John and William Habron, living near the scene of the murder, had been arrested and charged with the killing of Constable Cock.

If the Dysons thought that they had seen the last of Peace, they were soon to be convinced to the contrary. Peace had not forgotten his friends at Darnall. By some means or other he was kept informed of all their doings, and on one occasion was seen by Mrs. Dyson lurking near her home. To get away from him the Dysons determined to leave Darnall. They took a house at Banner Cross, another suburb of Sheffield, and on October 29 moved into their new home. One of the first persons Mrs. Dyson saw on arriving at Banner Cross was Peace himself. "You see," he said, "I am here to annoy you, and I'll annoy you wherever you go." Later, Peace and a friend passed Mr. Dyson in the street. Peace took out his revolver. "If he offers to come near me," said he, "I will make him stand back." But Mr. Dyson took no notice of Peace and passed on. He had another month to live.

Whatever the other motives of Peace may have been—unreasoning passion, spite, jealousy, or revenge it must not be forgotten that Dyson, by procuring a warrant against Peace, had driven him from his home in Sheffield. This Peace resented bitterly. According to the statements of many witnesses, he was at this time in a state of constant irritation and excitement on the Dyson's account. He struck his daughter because she alluded in a way he did not like to his relations with Mrs. Dyson. Peace always believed in corporal chastisement as a means of keeping order at home. Pleasant and entertaining as he could be, he was feared. It was very dangerous to incur his resentment. "Be sure," said his wife, "you do nothing to offend our Charley, or you will suffer for it." Dyson beyond a doubt had offended "our Charley." But for the moment Peace was interested more immediately in the fate of John and William Habron, who were about to stand their trial for the murder of Constable Cock at Whalley Range.

The trial commenced at the Manchester Assizes before Mr. Justice (now Lord) Lindley on Monday, November 27. John Habron was acquitted.

The case against William Habron depended to a great extent on the fact that he, as well as his brother, had been heard to threaten to "do for" the murdered man, to shoot the "little bobby." Cock was a zealous young officer of twenty-three years of age, rather too eager perhaps in the discharge of his duty. In July of 1876 he had taken out summonses against John and William Habron, young fellows who had been several years in the employment of a nurseryman in Whalley Range, for being drunk and disorderly. On July 27 William was fined five shillings, and on August 1, the day of Cock's murder, John had been fined half a sovereign. Between these two dates the Habrons had been heard to threaten to "do for" Cock if he were not more careful. Other facts relied upon by the prosecution were that William Habron had inquired from a gunsmith the price of some cartridges a day or two before the murder; that two cartridge percussion caps had been found in the pocket of a waistcoat given to William Habron by his employer, who swore that they could not have been there while it was in his possession; that the other constable on duty with Cock stated that a man he had seen lurking near the house about twelve o'clock on the night of the murder appeared to be William Habron's age, height and complexion, and resembled him in general appearance; and that the boot on Habron's left foot, which was "wet and sludgy" at the time of his arrest, corresponded in certain respects with the footprints of the murderer. The prisoner did not help himself by an ineffective attempt to prove an alibi. The Judge was clearly not impressed by the strength of the case for the prosecution. He pointed out to the jury that neither the evidence of identification nor that of the footprint went very far. As to the latter, what evidence was there to show that it had been made on the night of the murder? If it had been made the day before, then the defence had proved that it could not have been Habron's. He

called their attention to the facts that Habron bore a good character, that, when arrested on the night of the murder, he was in bed, and that no firearms had been traced to him. In spite, however, of the summing-up the jury convicted William Habron, but recommended him to mercy. The Judge without comment sentenced him to death. The Manchester Guardian expressed its entire concurrence with the verdict of the jury. "Few persons," it wrote, "will be found to dispute the justice of the conclusions reached." However, a few days later it opened its columns to a number of letters protesting against the unsatisfactory nature of the conviction. On December 6 a meeting of some forty gentlemen was held, at which it was resolved to petition Mr. Cross, the Home Secretary, to reconsider the sentence. Two days before the day of execution Habron was granted a respite, and later his sentence commuted to one of penal servitude for life. And so a tragic and irrevocable miscarriage of justice was happily averted.

Peace liked attending trials. The fact that in Habron's case he was the real murderer would seem to have made him the more eager not to miss so unique an experience. Accordingly he went from Hull to Manchester, and was present in court during the two days that the trial lasted. No sooner had he heard the innocent man condemned to death than he left Manchester for Sheffield—now for all he knew a double murderer.

It is a question whether, on the night of November 28, Peace met Mrs. Dyson at an inn in one of the suburbs of Sheffield. In any case, the next morning, Wednesday, the 29th, to his mother's surprise Peace walked into her house. He said that he had come to Sheffield for the fair. The afternoon of that day Peace spent in a public-house at Ecclesall, entertaining the customers by playing tunes on a poker suspended from a piece of strong string, from which he made music by beating it with a short stick. The musician was rewarded by drinks. It took very little drink to excite Peace. There was dancing, the fun grew fast and furious, as the strange musician beat out tune after tune on his fantastic instrument.

At six o'clock the same evening a thin, grey-haired, insignificant-looking man in an evident state of unusual excitement called to see the Rev. Mr. Newman, Vicar of Ecclesall, near Banner Cross. Some five weeks before, this insignificant-looking man had visited Mr. Newman, and made certain statements in regard to the character of a Mr. and Mrs. Dyson who had come to live in the parish. The vicar had asked for proof of these statements. These proofs his visitor now produced. They consisted of a number of calling cards and photographs, some of them alleged to be in the handwriting of Mrs. Dyson, and showing her intimacy with Peace. The man made what purported to be a confession to Mr. Newman. Dyson, he said, had become jealous of him, whereupon Peace had suggested to Mrs. Dyson that they should give her husband something to be jealous about. Out of this proposal their intimacy had sprung. Peace spoke of Mrs. Dyson in terms of forgiveness, but his wrath against Dyson was extreme. He complained bitterly that by taking proceedings against him, Dyson had driven him to break up his home and become a fugitive in the land. He should follow the Dysons, he said, wherever they might go; he believed that they were at that moment intending to take further proceedings against him. As he left, Peace said that he should not go and see the Dysons that night, but would call on a friend of his, Gregory, who lived next door to them in Banner Cross Terrace. It was now about a quarter to seven.

Peace went to Gregory's house, but his friend was not at home. The lure of the Dysons was irresistible. A little after eight o'clock Peace was watching the house from a passageway that led up to the backs of the houses on the terrace. He saw Mrs. Dyson come out of the back door, and go to an outhouse some few yards distant. He waited. As soon as she opened the door to come out, Mrs. Dyson found herself confronted by Peace, holding his revolver in his hand. "Speak," he said, "or I'll fire." Mrs. Dyson in terror went back. In the meantime Dyson, hearing the disturbance, came quickly into the yard. Peace made for the passage. Dyson followed him. Peace fired once, the shot striking the lintel of the passage doorway. Dyson undaunted, still pursued. Then Peace, according to his custom, fired a second time, and Dyson fell, shot through the temple. Mrs. Dyson, who had come

into the yard again on hearing the first shot, rushed to her husband's side, calling out: "Murder! You villain! You have shot my husband." Two hours later Dyson was dead.

After firing the second shot Peace had hurried down; the passage into the roadway. He stood there hesitating a moment, until the cries of Mrs. Dyson warned him of his danger. He crossed the road, climbed a wall, and made his way back to Sheffield. There he saw his mother and brother, told them that he had shot Mr. Dyson, and bade them a hasty good-bye. He then walked to Attercliffe Railway Station, and took a ticket for Beverley. Something suspicious in the manner of the booking-clerk made him change his place of destination. Instead of going to Beverley that night he got out of the train at Normanton and went on to York. He spent the remainder of the night in the station yard. He took the first train in the morning for Beverley, and from there travelled via Collingham to Hull. He went straight to the eating-house kept by his wife, and demanded some dinner. He had hardly commenced to eat it when he heard two detectives come into the front shop and ask his wife if a man called Charles Peace was lodging with her. Mrs. Peace said that that was her husband's name, but that she had not seen him for two months. The detectives proposed to search the house. Some customers in the shop told them that if they had any business with Mrs. Peace, they ought to go round to the side door. The polite susceptibility of these customers gave Peace time to slip up to a back room, get out on to an adjoining roof, and hide behind a chimney stack, where he remained until the detectives had finished an exhaustive search. So importunate were the officers in Hull that once again during the day Peace had to repeat this experience. For some three weeks, however, he contrived to remain in Hull. He shaved the grey beard he was wearing at the time of Dyson's murder, dyed his hair, put on a pair of spectacles, and for the first time made use of his singular power of contorting his features in such a way as to change altogether the character of his face. But the hue and cry after him was unremitting. There was a price of L100 on his head, and the following description of him was circulated by the police:

"Charles Peace wanted for murder on the night of the 29th inst. He is thin and slightly built, from fifty-five to sixty years of age. Five feet four inches or five feet high; grey (nearly white) hair, beard and whiskers. He lacks use of three fingers of left hand, walks with his legs rather wide apart, speaks somewhat peculiarly as though his tongue were too large for his mouth, and is a great boaster. He is a picture-frame maker. He occasionally cleans and repairs clocks and watches and sometimes deals in oleographs, engravings and pictures. He has been in penal servitude for burglary in Manchester. He has lived in Manchester, Salford, and Liverpool and Hull."

This description was altered later and Peace's age given as forty-six. As a matter of fact he was only forty-four at this time, but he looked very much older. Peace had lost one of his fingers. He said that it had been shot off by a man with whom he had quarrelled, but it was believed to be more likely that he had himself shot it off accidentally in handling one of his revolvers. It was to conceal this obvious means of identification that Peace made himself the false arm which he was in the habit of wearing. This was of gutta percha, with a hole down the middle of it into which he passed his arm; at the end was a steel plate to which was fixed a hook; by means of this hook Peace could wield a fork and do other dexterous feats.

Marked man as he was, Peace felt it dangerous to stay longer in Hull than he could help. During the closing days of the year 1876 and the beginning of 1877, Peace was perpetually on the move. He left Hull for Doncaster, and from there travelled to London. On arriving at King's Cross he took the underground railway to Paddington, and from there a train to Bristol. At the beginning of January he left Bristol for Bath, and from Bath, in the company of a sergeant of police, travelled by way of Didcot to Oxford. The officer had in his custody a young woman charged with stealing L40. Peace and the sergeant discussed the case during the journey. "He seemed a smart chap," said Peace in relating the circumstances, "but not smart enough to know me." From Oxford he went to Birmingham, where he stayed four or five days, then a week in Derby, and on January 9th he arrived in Nottingham.

Here Peace found a convenient lodging at the house of one, Mrs. Adamson, a lady who received stolen goods and on occasion indicated or organised suitable opportunities for acquiring them.

She lived in a low part of the town known as the Marsh. It was at her house that Peace met the woman who was to become his mistress and subsequently betray his identity to the police. Her maiden name was Susan Gray.

She was at this time about thirty-five years of age, described as "taking" in appearance, of a fair complexion, and rather well educated. She had led a somewhat chequered married life with a gentleman named Bailey, from whom she continued in receipt of a weekly allowance until she passed under the protection of Peace. Her first meeting with her future lover took place on the occasion of Peace inviting Mrs. Adamson to dispose of a box of cigars for him, which that good woman did at a charge of something like thirty per cent. At first Peace gave himself out to Mrs. Bailey as a hawker, but before long he openly acknowledged his real character as an accomplished burglar. With characteristic insistence Peace declared his passion for Mrs. Bailey by threatening to shoot her if she did not become his. Anxious friends sent for her to soothe the distracted man. Peace had been drowning care with the help of Irish whiskey. He asked "his pet" if she were not glad to see him, to which the lady replied with possible sarcasm: "Oh, particularly, very, I like you so much." Next day Peace apologised for his rude behaviour of the previous evening, and so melted the heart of Mrs. Bailey that she consented to become his mistress, and from that moment discarding the name of Bailey is known to history as Mrs. Thompson.

Life in Nottingham was varied pleasantly by burglaries carried out with the help of information supplied by Mrs. Adamson. In the June of 1877 Peace was nearly detected in stealing, at the request of that worthy, some blankets, but by flourishing his revolver he contrived to get away, and, soon after, returned for a season to Hull. Here this hunted murderer, with L100 reward on his head, took rooms for Mrs. Thompson and himself at the house of a sergeant of police. One day Mrs. Peace, who was still keeping her shop in Hull, received a pencilled note saying, "I am waiting to see you just up Anlaby Road." She and her stepson, Willie Ward, went to the appointed spot, and there to their astonishment stood her husband, a distinguished figure in black coat and trousers, top hat, velvet waistcoat, with stick, kid gloves, and a pretty little fox terrier by his side. Peace told them of his whereabouts in the town, but did not disclose to them the fact that his mistress was there also. To the police sergeant with whom he lodged, Peace described himself as an agent. But a number of sensational and successful burglaries at the houses of Town Councillors and other well-to-do citizens of Hull revealed the presence in their midst of no ordinary robber. Peace had some narrow escapes, but with the help of his revolver, and on one occasion the pusillanimity of a policeman, he succeeded in getting away in safety. The bills offering a reward for his capture were still to be seen in the shop windows of Hull, so after a brief but brilliant adventure Peace and Mrs. Thompson returned to Nottingham.

Here, as the result of further successful exploits, Peace found a reward of L50 offered for his capture. On one occasion the detectives came into the room where Peace and his mistress were in bed. After politely expressing his surprise at seeing "Mrs. Bailey" in such a situation, one of the officers asked Peace his name. He gave it as John Ward, and described himself as a hawker of spectacles. He refused to get up and dress in the presence of the detectives who were obliging enough to go downstairs and wait his convenience. Peace seized the opportunity to slip out of the house and get away to another part of the town. From there he sent a note to Mrs. Thompson insisting on her joining him. He soon after left Nottingham, paid another brief visit to Hull, but finding that his wife's shop was still frequented by the police, whom he designated freely as "a lot of fools," determined to quit the North for good and begin life afresh in the ampler and safer field of London.

II PEACE IN LONDON

Peace's career in London extended over nearly two years, but they were years of copious achievement. In that comparatively short space of time, by the exercise of that art, to his natural

gifts for which he had now added the wholesome tonic of experience, Peace passed from a poor and obscure lodging in a slum in Lambeth to the state and opulence of a comfortable suburban residence in Peckham. These were the halcyon days of Peace's enterprise in life. From No. 25 Stangate Street, Lambeth, the dealer in musical instruments, as Peace now described himself, sallied forth night after night, and in Camberwell and other parts of South London reaped the reward of skill and vigilance in entering other people's houses and carrying off their property. Though in the beginning there appeared to be but few musical instruments in Stangate Street to justify his reputed business, "Mr. Thompson," as he now called himself, explained that he was not wholly dependent on his business, as Mrs. Thompson "had money."

So successful did the business prove that at the Christmas of 1877 Peace invited his daughter and her betrothed to come from Hull and spend the festive season with him. This, in spite of the presence of Mrs. Thompson, they consented to do. Peace, in a top hat and grey ulster, showed them the sights of London, always inquiring politely of a policeman if he found himself in any difficulty. At the end of the visit Peace gave his consent to his daughter's marriage with Mr. Bolsover, and before parting gave the young couple some excellent advice. For more reasons than one Peace was anxious to unite under the same roof Mrs. Peace and Mrs. Thompson. Things still prospering, Peace found himself able to remove from Lambeth to Crane Court, Greenwich, and before long to take a couple of adjoining houses in Billingsgate Street in the same district. These he furnished in style. In one he lived with Mrs. Thompson, while Mrs. Peace and her son, Willie, were persuaded after some difficulty to leave Hull and come to London to dwell in the other.

But Greenwich was not to the taste of Mrs. Thompson. To gratify her wish, Peace, some time in May, 1877, removed the whole party to a house, No. 5, East Terrace, Evelina Road, Peckham. He paid thirty pounds a year for it, and obtained permission to build a stable for his pony and trap. When asked for his references, Peace replied by inviting the agent to dine with him at his house in Greenwich, a proceeding that seems to have removed all doubt from the agent's mind as to the desirability of the tenant.

This now famous house in Peckham was of the ordinary type of suburban villa, with basement, ground floor, and one above; there were steps up to the front door, and a bow window to the front sitting-room. A garden at the back of the house ran down to the Chatham and Dover railway line. It was by an entrance at the back that Peace drove his horse and trap into the stable which he had erected in the garden. Though all living in the same house, Mrs. Peace, who passed as Mrs. Ward, and her son, Willie, inhabited the basement, while Peace and Mrs. Thompson occupied the best rooms on the ground floor. The house was fitted with Venetian blinds. In the drawing-room stood a good walnut suite of furniture; a Turkey carpet, gilded mirrors, a piano, an inlaid Spanish guitar, and, by the side of an elegant table, the beaded slippers of the good master of the house completed the elegance of the apartment. Everything confirmed Mr. Thompson's description of himself as a gentleman of independent means with a taste for scientific inventions. In association with a person of the name of Brion, Peace did, as a fact, patent an invention for raising sunken vessels, and it is said that in pursuing their project, the two men had obtained an interview with Mr. Plimsoll at the House of Commons. In any case, the Patent Gazette records the following grant:

"2635 Henry Fersey Brion, 22 Philip Road, Peckham Rye, London, S.E., and John Thompson, 5 East Terrace, Evelina Road, Peckham Rye, London, S.E., for an invention for raising sunken vessels by the displacement of water within the vessels by air and gases."

At the time of his final capture Peace was engaged on other inventions, among them a smoke helmet for firemen, an improved brush for washing railway carriages, and a form of hydraulic tank. To the anxious policeman who, seeing a light in Mr. Thompson's house in the small hours of the morning, rang the bell to warn the old gentleman of the possible presence of burglars, this business of scientific inventions was sufficient explanation.

Socially Mr. Thompson became quite a figure in the neighbourhood. He attended regularly the Sunday evening services at the parish church, and it must have been a matter of anxious concern to dear Mr. Thompson that during his stay in Peckham the vicarage was broken into by a burglar and an unsuccessful attempt made to steal the communion plate which was kept there.

Mr. Thompson was generous in giving and punctual in paying. He had his eccentricities. His love of birds and animals was remarkable. Cats, dogs, rabbits, guinea-pigs, canaries, parrots and cockatoos all found hospitality under his roof. It was certainly eccentricity in Mr. Thompson that he should wear different coloured wigs; and that his dark complexion should suggest the use of walnut juice. His love of music was evinced by the number of violins, banjoes, guitars, and other musical instruments that adorned his drawing-room. Tea and music formed the staple of the evening entertainments which Mr. and Mrs. Thompson would give occasionally to friendly neighbours. Not that the pleasures of conversation were neglected wholly in favour of art. The host was a voluble and animated talker, his face and body illustrating by appropriate twists and turns the force of his comments. The Russo-Turkish war, then raging, was a favourite theme of Mr. Thompson's. He asked, as we are still asking, what Christianity and civilisation mean by countenancing the horrors of war. He considered the British Government in the highest degree guilty in supporting the cruel Turks, a people whose sobriety seemed to him to be their only virtue, against the Christian Russians. He was confident that our Ministers would be punished for opposing the only Power which had shown any sympathy with suffering races. About ten o'clock Mr. Thompson, whose health, he said, could not stand late hours, would bid his guests good night, and by half-past ten the front door of No. 5, East Terrace, Evelina Road, would be locked and bolted, and the house plunged in darkness.

Not that it must be supposed that family life at No. 5, East Terrace, was without its jars. These were due chiefly to the drunken habits of Mrs. Thompson. Peace was willing to overlook his mistress' failing as long as it was confined to the house. But Mrs. Thompson had an unfortunate habit of slipping out in an intoxicated condition, and chattering with the neighbours. As she was the repository of many a dangerous secret the inconvenience of her habit was serious. Peace was not the man to hesitate in the face of danger. On these occasions Mrs. Thompson was followed by Peace or his wife, brought back home and soundly beaten. To Hannah Peace there must have been some satisfaction in spying on her successful rival, for, in her own words, Peace never refused his mistress anything; he did not care what she cost him in dress; "she could swim in gold if she liked." Mrs. Thompson herself admitted that with the exception of such punishment as she brought on herself by her inebriety, Peace was always fond of her, and treated her with great kindness. It was she to whom he would show with pride the proceeds of his nightly labours, to whom he would look for a smile when he returned home from his expeditions, haggard and exhausted

Through all dangers and difficulties the master was busy in the practice of his art. Night after night, with few intervals of repose, he would sally forth on a plundering adventure. If the job was a distant one, he would take his pony and trap. Peace was devoted to his pony, Tommy, and great was his grief when at the end of six months' devotion to duty Tommy died after a few days' sickness, during which his master attended him with unremitting care. Tommy had been bought in Greenwich for fourteen guineas, part of a sum of two hundred and fifty pounds which Peace netted from a rich haul of silver and bank-notes taken from a house in Denmark Hill. Besides the pony and trap, Peace would take with him on these expeditions a violin case containing his tools; at other times they would be stuffed into odd pockets made for the purpose in his trousers. These tools consisted of ten in all—a skeleton key, two pick-locks, a centre-bit, gimlet, gouge, chisel, vice jemmy and knife; a portable ladder, a revolver and life preserver completed his equipment.

The range of Peace's activities extended as far as Southampton, Portsmouth and Southsea; but the bulk of his work was done in Blackheath, Streatham, Denmark Hill, and other suburbs of South London. Many dramatic stories are told of his exploits, but they rest for the most part on slender foundation. On one occasion, in getting on to a portico, he fell, and was impaled on some railings,

fortunately in no vital part. His career as a burglar in London lasted from the beginning of the year 1877 until October, 1878. During that time this wanted man, under the very noses of the police, exercised with complete success his art as a burglar, working alone, depending wholly on his own mental and physical gifts, disposing in absolute secrecy of the proceeds of his work, and living openly the life of a respectable and industrious old gentleman.

All the while the police were busily seeking Charles Peace, the murderer of Mr. Dyson. Once or twice they came near to capturing him. On one occasion a detective who had known Peace in Yorkshire met him in Farringdon Road, and pursued him up the steps of Holborn Viaduct, but just as the officer, at the top of the steps, reached out and was on the point of grabbing his man, Peace with lightning agility slipped through his fingers and disappeared. The police never had a shadow of suspicion that Mr. Thompson of Peckham was Charles Peace of Sheffield. They knew the former only as a polite and chatty old gentleman of a scientific turn of mind, who drove his own pony and trap, and had a fondness for music and keeping pet animals.

Peace made the mistake of outstaying his welcome in the neighbourhood of South-East London. Perhaps he hardly realised the extent to which his fame was spreading. During the last three months of Peace's career, Blackheath was agog at the number of successful burglaries committed in the very midst of its peaceful residents. The vigilance of the local police was aroused, the officers on night duty were only too anxious to effect the capture of the mysterious criminal.

About two o'clock in the morning of October 10, 1878, a police constable, Robinson by name, saw a light appear suddenly in a window at the back of a house in St. John's Park, Blackheath, the residence of a Mr. Burness. Had the looked-for opportunity arrived? Was the mysterious visitor, the disturber of the peace of Blackheath, at his burglarious employment? Without delay Robinson summoned to his aid two of his colleagues. One of them went round to the front of the house and rang the bell, the other waited in the road outside, while Robinson stayed in the garden at the back. No sooner had the bell rung than Robinson saw a man come from the dining-room window which opened on to the garden, and make quickly down the path. Robinson followed him. The man turned; "Keep back!" he said, "or by God I'll shoot you!" Robinson came on. The man fired three shots from a revolver, all of which passed close to the officer's head. Robinson made another rush for him, the man fired another shot. It missed its mark. The constable closed with his would-be assassin, and struck him in the face. "I'll settle you this time," cried the man, and fired a fifth shot, which went through Robinson's arm just above the elbow. But, in spite of his wound, the valiant officer held his prisoner, succeeded in flinging him to the ground, and catching hold of the revolver that hung round the burglar's wrist, hit him on the head with it. Immediately after the other two constables came to the help of their colleague, and the struggling desperado was secured.

Little did the police as they searched their battered and moaning prisoner realise the importance of their capture. When next morning Peace appeared before the magistrate at Greenwich Police Court he was not described by name—he had refused to give any—but as a half-caste about sixty years of age, of repellant aspect. He was remanded for a week. The first clue to the identity of their prisoner was afforded by a letter which Peace, unable apparently to endure the loneliness and suspense of prison any longer, wrote to his co-inventor Mr. Brion. It is dated November 2, and is signed "John Ward." Peace was disturbed at the absence of all news from his family. Immediately after his arrest, the home in Peckham had been broken up. Mrs. Thompson and Mrs. Peace, taking with them some large boxes, had gone first to the house of a sister of Mrs. Thompson's in Nottingham, and a day or two later Mrs. Peace had left Nottingham for Sheffield. There she went to a house in Hazel Road, occupied by her son-in-law Bolsover, a working collier.[10]

[10] Later, Mrs. Peace was arrested and charged with being in possession of stolen property. She was taken to London and tried at the Old Bailey before Mr. Commissioner Kerr, but acquitted on the ground of her having acted under the compulsion of her husband.

It was no doubt to get news of his family that Peace wrote to Brion. But the letters are sufficiently ingenious. Peace represents himself as a truly penitent sinner who has got himself into a most unfortunate and unexpected "mess" by giving way to drink. The spelling of the letters is exaggeratedly illiterate. He asks Mr. Brion to take pity on him and not despise him as "his own famery has don," to write him a letter to "hease his trobel hart," if possible to come and see him. Mr. Brion complied with the request of the mysterious "John Ward," and on arriving at Newgate where Peace was awaiting trial, found himself in the presence of his friend and colleague, Mr. Thompson.

In the meantime the police were getting hot on the scent of the identity of "John Ward" with the great criminal who in spite of all their efforts had eluded them for two years. The honour and profit of putting the police on the right scent were claimed by Mrs. Thompson. To her Peace had contrived to get a letter conveyed about the same time that he wrote to Mr. Brion. It is addressed to his "dearly beloved wife." He asks pardon for the "drunken madness" that has involved him in his present trouble, and gives her the names of certain witnesses whom he would wish to be called to prove his independent means and his dealings in musical instruments. It is, he writes, his first offence, and as he has "never been in prison before," begs her not to feel it a disgrace to come and see him there. But Peace was leaning on a broken reed. Loyalty does not appear to have been Susan Thompson's strong point. In her own words she "was not of the sentimental sort." The "traitress Sue," as she is called by chroniclers of the time, had fallen a victim to the wiles of the police. Since, after Peace's arrest, she had been in possession of a certain amount of stolen property, it was easier no doubt to persuade her to be frank.

In any case, we find that on February 5, 1879, the day after Peace had been sentenced to death for the murder of Dyson, Mrs. Thompson appealed to the Treasury for the reward of L100 offered for Peace's conviction. She based her application on information which she said she had supplied to the police officers in charge of the case on November 5 in the previous year, the very day on which Peace had first written to her from Newgate. In reply to her letter the Treasury referred "Mrs. S. Bailey, alias Thompson," to the Home Office, but whether she received from that office the price of blood history does not relate.

The police scouted the idea that any revelation of hers had assisted them to identify "John Ward" with Charles Peace. They said that it was information given them in Peckham, no doubt by Mr. Brion, who, on learning the deplorable character of his coadjutor, had placed himself unreservedly in their hands, which first set them on the track. From Peckham they went to Nottingham, where they no doubt came across Sue Thompson, and thence to Sheffield, where on November 6 they visited the house in Hazel Road, occupied by Mrs. Peace and her daughter, Mrs. Bolsover. There they found two of the boxes which Mrs. Peace had brought with her from Peckham. Besides stolen property, these boxes contained evidence of the identity of Ward with Peace. A constable who had known Peace well in Sheffield was sent to Newgate, and taken into the yard where the prisoners awaiting trial were exercising. As they passed round, the constable pointed to the fifth man: "That's Peace," he said, "I'd know him anywhere." The man left the ranks and, coming up to the constable, asked earnestly, "What do you want me for?" but the Governor ordered him to go on with his walk.

It was as John Ward, alias Charles Peace, that Peace, on November 19, 1878, was put on his trial for burglary and the attempted murder of Police Constable Robinson, at the Old Bailey before Mr. Justice Hawkins. His age was given in the calendar as sixty, though Peace was actually forty-six. The evidence against the prisoner was clear enough. All Mr. Montagu Williams could urge in his defence was that Peace had never intended to kill the officer, merely to frighten him. The jury found Peace guilty of attempted murder. Asked if he had anything to say why judgment should not be passed upon him, he addressed the Judge. He protested that he had not been fairly dealt with, that he never intended to kill the prosecutor, that the pistol was one that went off very easily, and that the last shot had been fired by accident. "I really did not know," he said, "that the pistol was loaded, and I hope, my lord, that you will have mercy on me. I feel that I have disgraced myself, I am not fit

either to live or die. I am not prepared to meet my God, but still I feel that my career has been made to appear much worse than it really is. Oh, my lord, do have mercy on me; do give me one chance of repenting and of preparing to meet my God. Do, my lord, have mercy on me; and I assure you that you shall never repent it. As you hope for mercy yourself at the hands of the great God, do have mercy on me, and give me a chance of redeeming my character and preparing myself to meet my God. I pray, and beseech you to have mercy upon me."

Peace's assumption of pitiable senility, sustained throughout the trial, though it imposed on Sir Henry Hawkins, failed to melt his heart. He told Peace that he did not believe his statement that he had fired the pistol merely to frighten the constable; had not Robinson guarded his head with his arm he would have been wounded fatally, and Peace condemned to death. He did not consider it necessary, he said, to make an inquiry into Peace's antecedents; he was a desperate burglar, and there was an end of the matter. Notwithstanding his age, Mr. Justice Hawkins felt it his duty to sentence him to penal servitude for life. The severity of the sentence was undoubtedly a painful surprise to Peace; to a man of sixty years of age it would be no doubt less terrible, but to a man of forty-six it was crushing.

Not that Peace was fated to serve any great part of his sentence.

With as little delay as possible he was to be called on to answer to the murder of Arthur Dyson. The buxom widow of the murdered man had been found in America, whither she had returned after her husband's death. She was quite ready to come to England to give evidence against her husband's murderer. On January 17, 1879, Peace was taken from Pentonville prison, where he was serving his sentence, and conveyed by an early morning train to Sheffield. There at the Town Hall he appeared before the stipendiary magistrate, and was charged with the murder of Arthur Dyson. When he saw Mrs. Dyson enter the witness box and tell her story of the crime, he must have realised that his case was desperate. Her cross-examination was adjourned to the next hearing, and Peace was taken back to London. On the 22nd, the day of the second hearing in Sheffield, an enormous crowd had assembled outside the Town Hall. Inside the court an anxious and expectant audiience{sic}, among them Mrs. Dyson, in the words of a contemporary reporter, "stylish and cheerful," awaited the appearance of the protagonist. Great was the disappointment and eager the excitement when the stipendiary came into the court about a quarter past ten and stated that Peace had attempted to escape that morning on the journey from London to Sheffield, and that in consequence of his injuries the case would be adjourned for eight days.

What had happened was this. Peace had left King's Cross by the 5.15 train that morning, due to arrive at Sheffield at 8.45. From the very commencement of the journey he had been wilful and troublesome. He kept making excuses for leaving the carriage whenever the train stopped. To obviate this nuisance the two warders, in whose charge he was, had provided themselves with little bags which Peace could use when he wished and then throw out of the window. Just after the train passed Worksop, Peace asked for one of the bags. When the window was lowered to allow the bag to be thrown away, Peace with lightning agility took a flying leap through it. One of the warders caught him by the left foot. Peace, hanging from the carriage, grasped the footboard with his hands and kept kicking the warder as hard as he could with his right foot. The other warder, unable to get to the window to help his colleague, was making vain efforts to stop the train by pulling the communication cord. For two miles the train ran on, Peace struggling desperately to escape. At last he succeeded in kicking off his left shoe, and dropped on to the line. The train ran on another mile until, with the assistance of some gentlemen in other carriages, the warders were able to get it pulled up. They immediately hurried back along the line, and there, near a place called Kineton Park, they found their prisoner lying in the footway, apparently unconscious and bleeding from a severe wound in the scalp. A slow train from Sheffield stopped to pick up the injured man. As he was lifted into the guard's van, he asked them to cover him up as he was cold. On arriving at Sheffield, Peace was taken to the Police Station and there made as comfortable as possible in one of the cells. Even then he had energy enough to be troublesome over taking the brandy ordered for him by the surgeon, until one of the officers

told "Charley" they would have none of his hanky-panky, and he had got to take it. "All right," said Peace, "give me a minute," after which he swallowed contentedly a couple of gills of the genial spirit.

Peace's daring feat was not, according to his own account, a mere attempt to escape from the clutches of the law; it was noble and Roman in its purpose. This is what he told his stepson, Willie Ward: "I saw from the way I was guarded all the way down from London and all the way back, when I came for my first trial, that I could not get away from the warders, and I knew I could not jump from an express train without being killed. I took a look at Darnall as I went down and as I went back, and after I was put in my cell, I thought it all over. I felt that I could not get away, and then I made up my mind to kill myself. I got two bits of paper and pricked on them the words, 'Bury me at Darnall. God bless you all!' With a bit of black dirt that I found on the floor of my cell I wrote the same words on another piece of paper, and then I hid them in my clothes. My hope was that, when I jumped from the train I should be cut to pieces under the wheels. Then I should have been taken to the Duke of York (a public-house at Darnall) and there would have been an inquest over me. As soon as the inquest was over you would have claimed my body, found the pieces of paper, and then you would have buried me at Darnall."

This statement of Peace is no doubt in the main correct. But it is difficult to believe that there was not present to his mind the sporting chance that he might not be killed in leaping from the train, in which event he would no doubt have done his best to get away, trusting to his considerable powers of ingenious disguise to elude pursuit. But such a chance was remote. Peace had faced boldly the possibility of a dreadful death.

With that strain of domestic sentiment, which would appear to have been a marked characteristic of his family, Peace was the more ready to cheat the gallows in the hope of being by that means buried decently at Darnall. It was at Darnall that he had spent some months of comparative calm in his tempestuous career, and it was at Darnall that he had first met Mrs. Dyson. Another and more practical motive that may have urged Peace to attempt to injure seriously, if not kill himself, was the hope of thereby delaying his trial. If the magisterial investigation in Sheffield were completed before the end of January, Peace could be committed for trial to the ensuing Leeds Assizes which commenced in the first week in February. If he were injured too seriously, this would not be possible. Here again he was doomed to disappointment.

Peace recovered so well from the results of his adventure on the railway that the doctor pronounced him fit to appear for his second examination before the magistrate on January 30. To avoid excitement, both on the part of the prisoner and the public, the court sat in one of the corridors of the Town Hall. The scene is described as dismal, dark and cheerless. The proceedings took place by candlelight, and Peace, who was seated in an armchair, complained frequently of the cold. At other times he moaned and groaned and protested against the injustice with which he was being treated. But the absence of any audience rather dashed the effect of his laments.

The most interesting part of the proceedings was the cross-examination of Mrs. Dyson by Mr. Clegg, the prisoner's solicitor.

Its purpose was to show that Mrs. Dyson had been on more intimate terms with Peace than she was ready to admit, and that Dyson had been shot by Peace in the course of a struggle, in which the former had been the aggressor.

In the first part of his task Mr. Clegg met with some success. Mrs. Dyson, whose memory was certainly eccentric—she could not, she said, remember the year in which she had been married—was obliged to admit that she had been in the habit of going to Peace's house, that she had been alone with him to public-houses and places of entertainment, and that she and Peace had been photographed together during the summer fair at Sheffield. She could not "to her knowledge" recollect having told the landlord of a public-house to charge her drink to Peace.

A great deal of Mrs. Dyson's cross-examination turned on a bundle of letters that had been found near the scene of Dyson's murder on the morning following the crime. These letters consisted

for the most part of notes, written in pencil on scraps of paper, purporting to have been sent from Mrs. Dyson to Peace. In many of them she asks for money to get drink, others refer to opportunities for their meetings in the absence of Dyson; there are kind messages to members of Peace's family, his wife and daughter, and urgent directions to Peace to hold his tongue and not give ground for suspicion as to their relations. This bundle of letters contained also the card which Dyson had thrown into Peace's garden requesting him not to interfere with his family. According to the theory of the defence, these letters had been written by Mrs. Dyson to Peace, and went to prove the intimacy of their relations. At the inquest after her husband's murder, Mrs. Dyson had been questioned by the coroner about these letters. She denied that she had ever written to Peace; in fact, she said, she "never did write." It was stated that Dyson himself had seen the letters, and declared them to be forgeries written by Peace or members of his family for the purpose of annoyance. Nevertheless, before the Sheffield magistrate Mr. Clegg thought it his duty to cross-examine Mrs. Dyson closely as to their authorship. He asked her to write out a passage from one of them: "You can give me something as a keepsake if you like, but I don't like to be covetous, and to take them from your wife and daughter. Love to all!" Mrs. Dyson refused to admit any likeness between what she had written and the handwriting of the letter in question. Another passage ran: "Will see you as soon as I possibly can. I think it would be easier after you move; he won't watch so. The r—g fits the little finger. Many thanks and love to —Jennie (Peace's daughter Jane). I will tell you what I thought of when I see you about arranging matters. Excuse this scribbling." In answer to Mr. Clegg, Mrs. Dyson admitted that Peace had given her a ring, which she had worn for a short time on her little finger.

Another letter ran: "If you have a note for me, send now whilst he is out; but you must not venture, for he is watching, and you cannot be too careful. Hope your foot is better. I went to Sheffield yesterday, but I could not see you anywhere. Were you out? Love to Jane." Mrs. Dyson denied that she had known of an accident which Peace had had to his foot at this time. In spite of the ruling of the magistrate that Mr. Clegg had put forward quite enough, if true, to damage Mrs. Dyson's credibility, he continued to press her as to her authorship of these notes and letters, but Mrs. Dyson was firm in her repudiation of them. She was equally firm in denying that anything in the nature of a struggle had taken place between Peace and her husband previous to his murder.

At the conclusion of Mrs. Dyson's evidence the prisoner was committed to take his trial at the Leeds Assizes, which commenced the week following. Peace, who had groaned and moaned and constantly interrupted the proceedings, protested his innocence, and complained that his witnesses had not been called. The apprehension with which this daring malefactor was regarded by the authorities is shown by this clandestine hearing of his case in a cold corridor of the Town Hall, and the rapidity with which his trial followed on his committal. There is an appearance almost of precipitation in the haste with which Peace was bustled to his doom. After his committal he was taken to Wakefield Prison, and a few days later to Armley Jail, there to await his trial.

This began on February 4, and lasted one day. Mr. Justice Lopes, who had tried vainly to persuade the Manchester Grand Jury to throw out the bill in the case of the brothers Habron, was the presiding judge. Mr. Campbell Foster, Q.C., led for the prosecution. Peace was defended by Mr. Frank Lockwood, then rising into that popular success at the bar which some fifteen years later made him Solicitor-General, and but for his premature death would have raised him to even higher honours in his profession.

In addressing the jury, both Mr. Campbell Foster and Mr. Lockwood took occasion to protest against the recklessness with which the press of the day, both high and low, had circulated stories and rumours about the interesting convict. As early as November in 1878 one leading London daily newspaper had said that "it was now established beyond doubt that the burglar captured by Police Constable Robinson was one and the same as the Banner Cross murderer." Since then, as the public excitement grew and the facts of Peace's extraordinary career came to light, the press had responded loyally to the demands of the greedy lovers of sensation, and piled fiction on fact with generous

profusion. "Never," said Mr. Lockwood, "in the whole course of his experience—and he defied any of his learned friends to quote an experience—had there been such an attempt made on the part of those who should be most careful of all others to preserve the liberties of their fellowmen and to preserve the dignity of the tribunals of justice to determine the guilt of a man." Peace exclaimed "Hear, hear!" as Mr. Lockwood went on to say that "for the sake of snatching paltry pence from the public, these persons had wickedly sought to prejudice the prisoner's life." Allowing for Mr. Lockwood's zeal as an advocate, there can be no question that, had Peace chosen or been in a position to take proceedings, more than one newspaper had at this time laid itself open to prosecution for contempt of Court. The Times was not far wrong in saying that, since Muller murdered Mr. Briggs on the North London Railway and the poisonings of William Palmer, no criminal case had created such excitement as that of Charles Peace. The fact that property seemed to be no more sacred to him than life aggravated in a singular degree the resentment of a commercial people.

The first witness called by the prosecution was Mrs. Dyson. She described how on the night of November 29, 1876, she had come out of the outhouse in the yard at the back of her house, and found herself confronted by Peace holding a revolver; how he said: "Speak, or I'll fire!" and the sequence of events already related up to the moment when Dyson fell, shot in the temple.

Mr. Lockwood commenced his cross-examination of Mrs. Dyson by endeavouring to get from her an admission; the most important to the defence, that Dyson had caught hold of Peace after the first shot had been fired, and that in the struggle which ensued, the revolver had gone off by accident. But he was not very successful. He put it to Mrs. Dyson that before the magistrate at Sheffield she had said: "I can't say my husband did not get hold of the prisoner." "Put in the little word 'try,' please," answered Mrs. Dyson. In spite of Mr. Lockwood's questions, she maintained that, though her husband may have attempted to get hold of Peace, he did not succeed in doing so. As she was the only witness to the shooting there was no one to contradict her statement.

Mr. Lockwood fared better when he came to deal with the relations of Mrs. Dyson with Peace previous to the crime. Mrs. Dyson admitted that in the spring of 1876 her husband had objected to her friendship with Peace, and that nevertheless, in the following summer, she and Peace had been photographed together at the Sheffield fair. She made a vain attempt to escape from such an admission by trying to shift the occasion of the summer fair to the previous year, 1875, but Mr. Lockwood put it to her that she had not come to Darnall, where she first met Peace, until the end of that year. Finally he drove her to say that she could not remember when she came to Darnall, whether in 1873, 1874, 1875, or 1876. She admitted that she had accepted a ring from Peace, but could not remember whether she had shown it to her husband. She had been perhaps twice with Peace to the Marquis of Waterford public-house, and once to the Star Music Hall. She could not swear one way or the other whether she had charged to Peace's account drink consumed by her at an inn in Darnall called the Half-way House. Confronted with a little girl and a man, whom Mr. Lockwood suggested she had employed to carry notes to Peace, Mrs. Dyson said that these were merely receipts for pictures which he had framed for her. On the day before her husband's murder, Mrs. Dyson was at the Stag Hotel at Sharrow with a little boy belonging to a neighbour. A man followed her in and sat beside her, and afterwards followed her out. In answer to Mr. Lockwood, Mrs. Dyson would "almost swear" the man was not Peace; he had spoken to her, but she could not remember whether she had spoken to him or not. She denied that this man had said to her that he would come and see her the next night. As the result of a parting shot Mr. Lockwood obtained from Mrs. Dyson a reluctant admission that she had been "slightly inebriated" at the Half-way House in Darnall, but had not to her knowledge been turned out of the house on that account. "You may not have known you were inebriated?" suggested Mr. Lockwood. "I always know what I am doing," was Mrs. Dyson's reply, to which an unfriendly critic might have replied that she did not apparently know with anything like certainty what she had been doing during the last three or four years. In commenting on the trial the following day, the Times stigmatised as "feeble" the prevarications by which Mrs. Dyson tried to explain away her intimacy

with Peace. In this part of his cross-examination Mr. Lockwood had made it appear at least highly probable that there had been a much closer relationship between Mrs. Dyson and Peace than the former was willing to acknowledge.

The evidence of Mrs. Dyson was followed by that of five persons who had either seen Peace in the neighbourhood of Banner Cross Terrace on the night of the murder, or heard the screams and shots that accompanied it. A woman, Mrs. Gregory, whose house was between that of the Dysons and the passage in which Dyson was shot, said that she had heard the noise of the clogs Mrs. Dyson was wearing as she went across the yard. A minute later she heard a scream. She opened her back door and saw Dyson standing by his own. She told him to go to his wife. She then went back into her house, and almost directly after heard two shots, followed by another scream, but no sound as of any scuffling.

Another witness was a labourer named Brassington. He was a stranger to Peace, but stated that about eight o'clock on the night of the murder a man came up to him outside the Banner Cross Hotel, a few yards from Dyson's house. He was standing under a gas lamp, and it was a bright moonlight night. The man asked him if he knew of any strange people who had come to live in the neighbourhood. Brassington answered that he did not. The man then produced a bundle of letters which he asked Brassington to read. But Brassington declined, as reading was not one of his accomplishments. The man then said that "he would make it a warm 'un for those strange folks before morning—he would shoot both of them," and went off in the direction of Dyson's house. Brassington swore positively that Peace was the stranger who had accosted him that night, and Mr. Lockwood failed to shake him in his evidence. Nor could Mr. Lockwood persuade the surgeon who was called to Dyson at the time of his death to admit that the marks on the nose and chin of the dead man could have been caused by a blow; they were merely abrasions of the skin caused by the wounded man falling to the ground.

Evidence was then given as to threats uttered by Peace against the Dysons in the July of 1876, and as to his arrest at Blackheath in the October of 1878. The revolver taken from Peace that night was produced, and it was shown that the rifling of the bullet extracted from Dyson's head was the same as that of the bullet fired from the revolver carried by Peace at the time of his capture.

Mr. Campbell Foster wanted to put in as evidence the card that Dyson had flung into Peace's garden at Darnall requesting him not to interfere with his family. This card had been found among the bundle of letters dropped by Peace near the scene of the murder. Mr. Lockwood objected to the admission of the card unless all the letters were admitted at the same time. The Judge ruled that both the card and the letters were inadmissible, as irrelevant to the issue; Mr. Lockwood had, he said, very properly cross-examined Mrs. Dyson on these letters to test her credibility, but he was bound by her answers and could not contradict her by introducing them as evidence in the case.

Mr. Lockwood in his address to the jury did his best to persuade them that the death of Dyson was the accidental result of a struggle between Peace and himself. He suggested that Mrs. Dyson had left her house that night for the purpose of meeting Peace, and that Dyson, who was jealous of his wife's intimacy with him, had gone out to find her; that Dyson, seeing Peace, had caught hold of him; and that the revolver had gone off accidentally as Dyson tried to wrest it from his adversary. He repudiated the suggestion of Mr. Foster that the persons he had confronted with Mrs. Dyson in the course of his cross-examination had been hired for a paltry sum to come into court and lie.

Twice, both at the beginning and the end of his speech, Mr. Lockwood urged as a reason for the jury being tender in taking Peace's life that he was in such a state of wickedness as to be quite unprepared to meet death. Both times that his counsel put forward this curious plea, Peace raised his eyes to heaven and exclaimed "I am not fit to die."

Mr. Justice Lopes in summing up described as an "absolute surmise" the theory of the accidental discharge of the pistol. He asked the jury to take Peace's revolver in their hands and try the trigger, so as to see for themselves whether it was likely to go off accidentally or not. He pointed out that the pistol produced might not have been the pistol used at Banner Cross; at the same time

the bullet fired in November, 1876, bore marks such as would have been produced had it been fired from the pistol taken from Peace at Blackheath in October, 1878. He said that Mr. Lockwood had been perfectly justified in his attempt to discredit the evidence of Mrs. Dyson, but the case did not rest on her evidence alone. In her evidence as to the threats uttered by Peace in July, 1876, Mrs. Dyson was corroborated by three other witnesses. In the Judge's opinion it was clearly proved that no struggle or scuffle had taken place before the murder. If the defence, he concluded, rested on no solid foundation, then the jury must do their duty to the community at large and by the oath they had sworn.

It was a quarter past seven when the jury retired. Ten minutes later they came back into court with a verdict of guilty. Asked if he had anything to say, Peace in a faint voice replied, "It is no use my saying anything." The Judge, declining very properly to aggravate the prisoner's feelings by "a recapitulation of any portion of the details of what I fear, I can only call your criminal career," passed on him sentence of death. Peace accepted his fate with composure.

Before we proceed to describe the last days of Peace on earth, let us finish with the two women who had succeeded Mrs. Peace in his ardent affections.

A few days after Peace's execution Mrs. Dyson left England for America, but before going she left behind her a narrative intended to contradict the imputations which she felt had been made against her moral character. An Irishwoman by birth, she said that she had gone to America when she was fifteen years old.

There she met and married Dyson, a civil engineer on the Atlantic and Great Western Railway. Theirs was a rough and arduous life. But Mrs. Dyson was thoroughly happy in driving her husband about in a buggy among bears and creeks. She did not know fear and loved danger: "My husband loved me and I loved him, and in his company and in driving him about in this wild kind of fashion I derived much pleasure." However, Mr. Dyson's health broke down, and he was obliged to return to England. It was at Darnall that the fatal acquaintance with Peace began. Living next door but one to the Dysons, Peace took the opportunity of introducing himself, and Mr. Dyson "being a gentleman," took polite notice of his advances. He became a constant visitor at the house. But after a time Peace began to show that he was not the gentleman Mr. Dyson was. He disgusted the latter by offering to show him improper pictures and "the sights of the town" of Sheffield.

The Dysons tried to shake off the unwelcome acquaintance, but that was easier said than done. By this time Peace had set his heart on making Mrs. Dyson leave her husband. He kept trying to persuade her to go to Manchester with him, where he would take a cigar or picture shop, to which Mrs. Dyson, in fine clothes and jewelry, should lend the charm of her comely presence. He offered her a sealskin jacket, yards of silk, a gold watch. She should, he said, live in Manchester like a lady, to which Mrs. Dyson replied coldly that she had always lived like one and should continue to do so quite independently of him. But Peace would listen to no refusal, however decided its tone. Dyson threw over the card into Peace's garden. This only served to aggravate his determination to possess himself of the wife. He would listen at keyholes, leer in at the window, and follow Mrs. Dyson wherever she went. When she was photographed at the fair, she found that Peace had stood behind her chair and by that means got himself included in the picture. At times he had threatened her with a revolver. On one occasion when he was more insulting than usual, Mrs. Dyson forgot her fear of him and gave him a thrashing. Peace threatened "to make her so that neither man nor woman should look at her, and then he would have her all to himself." It was with some purpose of this kind, Mrs. Dyson suggested, that Peace stole a photograph of herself out of a locket, intending to make some improper use of it. At last, in desperation, the Dysons moved to Banner Cross. From the day of their arrival there until the murder, Mrs. Dyson never saw Peace. She denied altogether having been in his company the night before the murder. The letters were "bare forgeries," written by Peace or members of his family to get her into their power.

Against the advice of all her friends Mrs. Dyson had come back from America to give evidence against Peace. To the detective who saw her at Cleveland she said, "I will go back if I have to walk

on my head all the way"; and though she little knew what she would have to go through in giving her evidence, she would do it again under the circumstances. "My opinion is," she said, "that Peace is a perfect demon—not a man. I am told that since he has been sentenced to death he has become a changed character. That I don't believe. The place to which the wicked go is not bad enough for him. I think its occupants, bad as they might be, are too good to be where he is. No matter where he goes, I am satisfied that there will be hell. Not even a Shakespeare could adequately paint such a man as he has been. My lifelong regret will be that I ever knew him."

With these few earnest words Mrs. Dyson quitted the shores of England, hardly clearing up the mystery of her actual relations with Peace.

A woman with whom Mrs. Dyson very much resented finding herself classed—inebriety would appear to have been their only common weakness—was Mrs. Thompson, the "traitress Sue." In spite of the fact that on February 5 Mrs. Thompson had applied to the Treasury for L100, blood money due her for assisting the police in the identification of Peace, she was at the same time carrying on a friendly correspondence with her lover and making attempts to see him. Peace had written to her before his trial hoping she would not forsake him; "you have been my bosom friend, and you have ofttimes said you loved me, that you would die for me." He asked her to sell some goods which he had left with her in order to raise money for his defence. The traitress replied on January 27 that she had already sold everything and shared the proceeds with Mrs. Peace. "You are doing me great injustice," she wrote, "by saying that I have been out to 'work' with you. Do not die with such a base falsehood on your conscience, for you know I am young and have my living and character to redeem. I pity you and myself to think we should have met." After his condemnation Mrs. Thompson made repeated efforts to see Peace, coming to Leeds for the purpose. Peace wrote a letter on February 9 to his "poor Sue," asking her to come to the prison. But, partly at the wish of Peace's relatives and for reasons of their own, a permission given Mrs. Thompson by the authorities to visit the convict was suddenly withdrawn, and she never saw him again.

III HIS TRIAL AND EXECUTION

In the lives of those famous men who have perished on the scaffold their behaviour during the interval between their condemnation and their execution has always been the subject of curiosity and interest.

It may be said at once that nothing could have been more deeply religious, more sincerely repentant, more Christian to all appearances than Peace's conduct and demeanour in the last weeks of his life. He threw himself into the work of atonement with the same uncompromising zeal and energy that he had displayed as a burglar. By his death a truly welcome and effective recruit was lost to the ranks of the contrite and converted sinners. However powerless as a controlling force—and he admitted it—his belief in God and the devil may have been in the past, that belief was assured and confident, and in the presence of death proclaimed itself with vigour, not in words merely, but in deeds.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.