

Cambridge Independent Press 2 September 1876

## THE CAMBRIDGE MURDER.

The public mind has been very much exercised about the dreadful event which we described last week as having occurred on previous Thursday night on Butt Green. During the whole of Friday week there was a crowd of persons surrounding the spot where the poor girl was murdered, and it was not till the day had been far spent that some soil was thrown over the evidences of the dreadful crime. The scene in the neighbourhood of the Fort St. George on Friday afternoon and during the inquest was one of great excitement, crowds of persons being present, animated by a morbid curiosity to see the poor creature and to pick up all the possible details of the revolting crime. After the inquest the body of the deceased was removed to her parents' home, where on subsequent days many people are said to have been allowed to see it, and in some instances money was given to the friends towards the expenses of the funeral. This gave rise, suppose, to the rumour that the parents were making an exhibition of the body for profit.

The report of the proceedings at the inquest, appearing last week only in a portion of our issue, is reproduced this week.

## THE INQUEST

Was held on the deceased girl Emma Rolfe on Friday at the Fort St. George, before Mr H Gotobed and respectable jury, of whom Mr. Young Crawley was foreman.

After the Jury had viewed the body, which presented a ghastly appearance, the following evidence was taken:

Anne Pepper, who said she resided at Mrs. Phillips', Crispin-street, said: I have known the deceased, Emma Rolfe, and have done for three years past. She lived at the same house as me. Mrs. Phillips sells green-grocery, but other women live there. The deceased has lived there about three weeks. I have lived there nearly twelve months. I was with her last night from about a quarter past eight. We came out together. We were alone. I left her soon after we got out, after we had been out about half an hour. When I met her again she was with man. I had left her alone on the pavement by the side the Common. When I met her with this man, she said she was going with him. This would be about nine o'clock. It was against the gate opening on to the common where I saw her again. She was with a man whom I have never seen before, that I know of. I do not know that I should know him again. She stood talking with him against the rails. She asked me whether I was going to stay with her. I said, "No, I was going on." She asked him whether he was

going to stand pint of beer. He said "No." She gave me a knock with her foot, as much as to tell me to ask him. I did so. He said, "No," he was'nt going treat two women, one was sufficient. He said he would treat us when he came back. The last words she said to me when she was getting underneath the fence on to the common was, "Anne, I won't be gone long." I saw the man go to the common with her. I should say I was talking to them five minutes. They went across the common towards this house. They were walking together when I last saw them. I did not watch them. She did not say anything else to me. The deceased was girl on the town. I don't know how long she has been.

By the Jury : He was rather a tall man, I think. He was rather dark, I think. I heard nothing like quarrelling.

By the father of deceased : I don't know that he had been to Mrs. Phillips' that afternoon.

By the Jury : I don't think he was drunk. There were three of us lodging at Mrs. Phillips'.

By the Coroner : About half an hour after I had left the deceased, I was walking by the common, and heard a policeman calling to me, and said he wanted someone to come and help him. He told me to go to the Garrick ; he wanted help. He did not say what wanted them for. I heard no shriek, or anything at all, whilst I was on the common. There was no noise. There was scarcely anybody about. I saw no one in the direction they went.

By the Jury : She showed no reluctance to come out that night, she wanted to go out. I went to the Garrick ; then went back to the policeman, and saw the deceased lying bleeding on the common, not far from the railings, about the middle of the common nearer Brunswick-place. I think about 30 yards from the railings. The policeman was with her. He said, "Now run as quick as ever you can and fetch Dr. Knowles," and he came at once. I did not see the man. A policeman ordered us to walk on, but were not then talking to this man. That man went away. If there had been any screams I should have heard them, I think.

Thomas Southall, residing at the Garrick, a traveller, deposed : I saw the deceased last night about quarter to ten. I was at the Garrick when the last witness came and said a policeman wanted assistance on the common. I put on my hat and went. I found the policeman and another party alongside of him. The officer said "There has been murder committed. Will you take charge of the man?" pointing to the man who was with him. The body of deceased was lying on the ground. I said. "Yes, I'll take care of him." The policeman said "He has committed murder. He has killed a woman.'" This

was in the prisoner's presence. I said to the man, "What have you been doing." He said, "I've cut her throat, sir. I've done it; don't let me look at it." I said, "What made you a thing like that?" He said, "I don't know what tempted me. I've done it, and I'm very sorry for it. I hope the poor girl is in Heaven. I did not give her much time to reflect." I said, "What made you do it, then?" He said, "I don't know what hardly tempted me. The girl had robbed me of a shilling." I said, "It's a funny thing to cut a poor girl's throat for the sake of shilling. What made you do it?" He said, "I could not help it. I'm very sorry for what have done, and I hope I'll be forgiven. I done it and could not help it. I don't know whatever poor mother will say. A quarter of an hour ago I was sitting eating my supper, and I started to come out. My mother did not want me to go but I would. I had a shilling in my pocket, and I thought I would come the common. Tho policeman then handcuffed him, and sent me for assistance, and I went and fetched Leeland. I went back with the constable, and we left him with the body whilst I and Wheel went to the station with the prisoner. There were about 20 people there then. On the way to the station I said to prisoner, "How did you come possessed of the razor. Have you got the razor in your possession?" He said "No; I have not. I have given it to the policeman." I put my hand in his pocket and found he had not. I said "It is a curious thing you should carry a razor about." He replied, "I carry it about for fun or sport:" I am not sure which. I said "Its a \_\_\_ thing to carry about for sport." He had told that he cut her throat with a razor whilst I was walking him about so that might not see the body. He said he had been on the common with her, and she had taken a shilling out of bis pocket. He did not say when this was. He seemed perfectly sober. He said "After I had done it, went into the Garrick and had a glass of ale, and the Missus did look at me so."

By the Jury: The poor girl was quite dead. Her face was quite cold.

P.C. Wheel of Bradmore-street, and of the Borough force, deposed: I knew deceased by sight. I knew she was on the town. Last night about half-past nine, I saw Robert Browning standing against the four lamps, on the Newmarket Road. I went up as far James-street. When I got there I heard someone give a shriek, and it came from the direction of the Causeway. I returned to the Causeway and met Robert Browning running up the Causeway in the direction of James-street. I said, "Hallo what's the matter?" He said " Are you a police-constable?" I said, "Yes, you see I am." He said, "I have just murdered a woman on the common." I said, " What?" He said "I have murdered a woman." I said "Where?" He said, "If you'll come with me I'll show you." I went with him, and on the way asked him what he had done it with. He said, " With this," taking the razor from his right-hand pocket. I produce the razor, which was covered with blood. I went a little further and saw the body of a female lying on the common on her left side with her throat cut. I at once called for assistance, and sent for a medical man and

the parish constable. During the time they were away, I asked him what he had done it for. He said he had stood a glass of ale with her, and she had robbed him of a shilling, and he then cut her throat. As soon parish-constable Leeland came up, I left him in charge of the body, and took Robert Browning to the police station. On the way to the station, I asked him how he came by the razor, and he said, "I always carry it with me." Whilst on the common I had asked Southall to help me and he went with me to the station. I have seen Browning several times before. I believe he is a Cambridge man. He lived in the same street as me; but I never saw much of him. He said he had been in the army, and discharged with a bad character. I believe he is a baker. He was all alone when I saw him by the four lamps. It was about ten minutes from the time of my seeing him to my hearing the shriek. I was three hundred yards off where I found the lady when I heard the shriek. I produce prisoner's clothes which have spots of blood on the trousers and and pocket-handkerchief which was in his right hand coat pocket. The body was about fifty yards from the fence, about the middle of Maids-Causeway; the head was lying towards the road.

Robert Roper, M.R.C.S., of Brunswick-place, deposed: Last night, about a quarter to ten o'clock, Mr. Jane came for me to go and see body on the common. I at once went and round the corpse, with several people round, without any light. Presently a policeman came and turned his light on. I looked at the woman and found the pulse, and found that she was dead. Her face was quite cold. Her hand was cold, but her arm warm. There were about 20 people. I found the 1 whole of the vital parts were divided, and cut down the the spine. I have seen the body to-day. The wound, divides the neck, down to the spinal cord. I have never seen a throat so extensively cut before. It would cause almost instantaneous death. I have not seen other wounds. She could have shrieked whilst he was pinioning her. I think it was done the ground. I don't think such a severe wound could have been inflicted if she could have moved her head back. I believe the body I have seen here to be the same as I saw on the common. I have today examined the wound, and it is my belief that it was from the left the right, because it is much deeper on the right side. If committed by any person not herself, it would be probably from a person stabbing behind. Probably she was lying on her left side as all the blood ran on that side.

Robert Leeland, of King-street, parish constable deposed:

About ten o'clock last night I was sent for to the common, and found a dead body of a young woman. P.C. Jo was there with the body and man in custody. I have seen the man. about He told me he knew had done it, that he not help it. I took charge of the body, and with assistance brought it here.

Mrs Emily Calcott, the landlady of the Garrick, deposed: The deceased Emma Rolfe was at my house nine I should think, I cannot say exactly the time. She was with the girl Pepper. They were only there about two three minutes. They had a pint of ale between them. I know Robert Browning was my house last night about half-past nine or a little more; not when the girls were there. He came for a glass of ale which he drank. He looked very strange in the face. I noticed him particular. He appeared quite sober. He did not stop two minutes. I noticed his coat collar buttoned close up to his chin. About five minutes after they came to my house for help. He paid for the ale. I only know the man by sight. I looked at him because of peculiar his lips were of a mulberry colour. I look at him from the time came in ??????? went out ?????? if he had had a punch on the He looked very strange. ?????? once returned verdict of "Wilful Murder against Robert Browning, and the ?????? to their verdict: — "The jury cannot, separate without expressing their warm approval of Mr. Southall's brave conduct on promptly going to the attendance of the police when called to do so."

On Saturday and Sunday the scene of the murder attracted thousands of spectators, many of whom, the absence of anything to see, eagerly discussed the various theories of how the dreadful crime was inflicted. On Sunday night the Clergyman at All Saints' Church (the Rev. R.H. Smith) in the course of his sermon made allusions the frightful occurrence, urging his hearers, especially younger member of it, to let it be caution to them avoid the first wrong step.

#### THE EXAMINATION.

The examination of the accused took place on Tuesday morning, hundreds of persons surrounding the Guildhall and vainly attempting obtain admission. Every part of the court was crowded.

The magistrates on the bench were the Mayor. J. Death, ?? Dennis Adams Esq, and Professor Liveing.

Mr. W. Cockerell (instructed by the Town Clerk) appeared for the prosecution; Mr. T. H. Naylor (instructed by Mr. Ginn) defended the prisoner.

The prisoner was placed at the bar at eleven o'clock, and manifested very little concern for his dreadful position. in fact, two three times he smiled at the evidence.

Mr. Cockerell briefly opened the case to the Magistrates, saying that it was unnecessary that he should go through the whole of the circumstances, as they had been brought out at the inquest and published in the newspapers. The evidence he should have to offer on that occasion would be the same,



supplemented by a little additional evidence to make it complete. As to the prisoner's statement that he had committed this crime during a quarrel about a shilling, it might be remarked that no shilling was found on the deceased. It might be that if that was so it might have been dropped on the ground, but no shilling had been found. Still, it may have been trod into the ground or picked up by someone. He would at once proceed to call the witnesses.

Robert Leeland, constable of King-street, repeated his evidence on Friday, and added: I knew the father of the girl, who saw the body in my presence the same night, and also the next day.

James Rolfe, the father of the murdered girl, was called, and said: "I live in Leader's-row, Staffordshire-street, and am a hawker. The deceased girl, Emma Rolfe, was my daughter. She was fifteen years of age last September. I last saw her alive last Sunday week on the East-road. I did not speak to her. She left my house a fortnight before. She went to live at the house of Mrs. Phillips, in Crispin-passage. Last Thursday night I saw the dead body of a girl, which I identified as my daughter.

Cross-examined : Mrs. Phillips keeps a prostitutes' house.

Annie Pepper, of Crispin-street, repeated her testimony and added in cross-examination : I am 20 years of age, and have been at Phillips's very near a twelvemonth.

John Keegan deposed : I reside at 29, East-road, and am general dealer. I travel and live at London. On Thursday night last I was going down Maids-causeway, towards King-street, about a quarter or twenty minutes past nine, as near as I can tell. I saw two females and a man standing near the common rails talking together. I saw the same man about quarter to ten. I see him to day. It is the prisoner. I went as far as the Yorkshire Grey. I might have been there ten minutes, and then returned. Directly I got against Mr. Death's wall I heard a scream, which I thought was woman's ; it seemed to come off the common. I walked sharp towards the common, and met Pepper, who said there was something on the common. I went along the path to Brunswick-walk, and then turned back as I could see nothing, and got over the rails, when I saw a policeman, Southall, Mrs. Calcott and the prisoner. I saw a woman lying on the common, dead. She was lying on her left side with her throat cut, and appeared to me to be dead. It was the body of one of the girls I had seen talking to the prisoner. The witness Pepper was the other girl.

By Mr. Naylor: I had never seen the prisoner before that night. It was a dark night, but there was light from the lamps which fell upon them.

Emily Calcott, the wife of the landlord of the Garrick Head, added to her former evidence that she went on to the common after the alarm, and found the dead body, a policeman, and the prisoner.

P.c. Wheel deposed at the inquest, adding there is one spot of blood on the trousers' lining, two spots of blood on the lining of the right hand coat sleeve, also spots of blood the handkerchief, which was in the right hand coat pocket. There was also blood in the pocket lining.

Thomas Southall repeated his evidence adding that prisoner said she had robbed him of taking it out his waistcoat pocket.

Cross-examined by Mr. Naylor: I not remember his saying that he started up from supper.

Mr Roper, of Brunswick place, also gave the same evidence as Friday, and that the wound was high in the throat.

The Magistrates fully committed the prisoner for trial on the charge of wilful murder.

Mr. Naylor reserving his remarks till the trial.

There is almost a certainty of there being winter assize this year.

In the afternoon the body of the unfortunate girl Emma was interred in the Cemetery Mill-road, the presence of an immense crowd of persons, computed to be two or three thousand in number. The burial service was conducted by the Rev. E T Leeke, vicar of Christ Church, and after the conclusion Mr. Leeke gave short address on the sad event and the necessity for people living pure and good lives.