

Sensational Arrest at Cambridge

A Fatal Ending.

“Dr. Roland’s” Strange Career.

Trapped at Last.

A transcription of the article in the Cambridge Independent Press, 17 January 1902. Column breaks have been removed and paragraphs retained.

Cambridge just recently has had its full share of sensations, but one of the most startling for some years has occurred this week. For about eight months past the large and fashionable residence on Trumpington-road, known as “Edenfield,” has been tenanted by a person who was styled in the local directory as G. Rowland Sinclair Rowland, M.A., M.D., but whose name was spelt on his visiting cards as “Roland.” The house is an imposing one, situate about the hundred yards beyond the Stone Bridge. It stands back some fifty yards from the road, and is bounded by well-kept gardens and lawns, and towering trees. The residence contains sixteen rooms, and has a coach-house and stables at the back. During his stay there “Dr.” Roland has been living in luxurious style with his wife, niece, and a little boy. The house was splendidly furnished, and fitted with all the most modern appliances, both useful and ornamental. Two female servants were kept indoors and two male servants were employed outside the house. A carriage, dog cart, and a pair of horses were kept, and the mysterious occupants were seldom seen out except in one of these conveyances. They kept aloof from the society in the neighbourhood, and were known by very few persons in the district. They attended neither church nor chapel, and the only

occasion on which they are said to have visited the village of Trumpington was at the recent chrysanthemum show. Although the head of the house was known as “Dr.” Roland, he was looked upon as an independent gentleman of some wealth and standing. He was a pleasant-looking person of between fifty and sixty years of age. He stood about 5' 6" or 8 inches in height, and was rather stout. His hair was grey, and he had a dark moustache. There was nothing unusual about his style of dress except that he had a variety of costumes, and was generally attired in a “Trilby” hat. He drove about a good deal, and sometimes was to be seen in the town walking in company with a little boy, a pretty little chap of about 6½ years, who is still staying at the house. He was generally liked by the few neighbours that were acquainted with him, and he had a reputation for being very kind-hearted. The elder of the two women, Ella Sinclair Roland, is short, very dark, and 42 years of age. She presents a striking contrast to the younger one, aged about 23, known as Anna Sinclair, who is tall and extremely fair. The elder female seldom went beyond the precincts of the house, except when she journeyed to London with the “Doctor,” but as recently as last week she took part in a social event in the town. Being present with the little boy, Roland Sinclair (who was attired as a page) at the Mayor’s Fancy Dress Ball. The younger female had a charming taste for dress, and her costumes always gave her a prepossessing appearance. The whole of the family spoke with a slight foreign accent with the exception of the little boy, who speaks English fluently.

Generally the persons who went to make up this household were regarded as honourable members of society, and it came as a shock to many to hear on Tuesday morning that the “doctor” and his wife had since been arrested. It would appear that in consequence of a communication from the Metropolitan Police,

Superintendent Webb, of the Cambs. County Constabulary, has had the case in hand since August last, and observations had been made by himself and his staff upon the house daily. In that month a local cabman was chartered by a stranger—presumably a detective—to follow a vehicle, which stopped at “Edenfield,” where Roland alighted. These observations resulted in a warrant being granted by Mr. Fenwick at Bow-street on Monday for the arrest of the male and two females, and on the following day Inspector Arrow and Detective-Sergeant Badcock journeyed down to effect the arrest. They apparently anticipated some difficulty, because, in addition to the members of the County Constabulary, who had been watching the case, viz., Superintendent Webb and Police-Constable Day, they obtained the assistance of Chief Constable Holland, of the Borough Police. How the arrest was accomplished is graphically described in the evidence of Inspector Arrow, reported below. It is sufficient to say here that for nearly three hours the “doctor” evaded his pursuers by lodging under the roof of the house.

At the Police Station he fell a victim to a fit of apoplexy, about half-an-hour after he had been taken into custody.

Subsequent inquiries revealed the fact that the “doctor” was a man who had been wanted by the police for years. Nine years ago he absconded from a heavy bill when charged with offences under the Bankruptcy Act. He was arrested on a charge of conspiring to print and publish objectionable literature, prints, and pictures. One of his many aliases was Roland de Villiers, and it is believed that articles in *Truth*, denouncing strongly, at intervals during the past two years, a man trading and issuing circulars in the name of Villiers, referred to him. His business appears to have been carried on at various centres, both in and out of this country. After the

arrest of the “doctor” and the females, the police officers were engaged for a lengthy period in searching the house, and the examination revealed four and a half hampers of documents, blocks, and printing relating to the charge upon which the two females were brought up at Bow-street on Wednesday. A quantity of the literature was in German.

The Inquest.

The Cambridge Borough Coroner (Mr. H. Saunders French) conducted an inquest at the Coroner’s Court, Downing-place, on Wednesday evening, concerning the death of George Roland Sinclair Roland, age unknown. Mr. James Day was chosen foreman of the jury, and in addition to the witnesses there were also present at the inquiry:—Chief Constable C. E. Holland, Detective-Sergeant Marsh, and Detective White (Borough Police Force), and Superintendent G. W. Webb and P.c. Day (Cambs. Constabulary).

Previous to the jury viewing the body, the Coroner reminded them that that was an inquiry into the death of the deceased without approaching anything like magisterial proceedings, and anything that might have appeared in the local papers bearing upon this death they would please disabuse their minds of altogether. Their duty was simply to inquire into the cause of death.

Bennett Charles Rawlinson was the first witness called. He said: I live at Edenfield, Trumpington-road. I was in the employ of the deceased, whom I have recognised as Roland Sinclair Roland. I do not know his age. I have been in his employ about eight months, during which time he has lived at Edenfield. He has been in the enjoyment of good health, and had nothing the matter with him at

all. I last saw him about one o'clock on Tuesday, when he was arrested. He left the house in

His Usual State.

By the Foreman: I was in his employ as coachman. I drove him the last time on five o'clock last Monday, when he rode from the station.

The Coroner: You did not notice him ill at all?—No, sir.

Never heard him complain?—No, sir.

Did he live there as an independent gentleman?—Yes, sir.

The Police Story.

Charles Arrow deposed: I am an Inspector of Police at New Scotland Yard. On the 13th inst. I received a warrant at Bow-street, which I produce, for the arrest of Roland de Villiers, alias Dr. Sinclair Roland; Mrs. Singer, alias Mrs. Sinclair Roland; and Anna Von Jarchow, alias Miss Sinclair Roland. I had already traced these three persons as residing at Edenfield, Trumpington-road, Cambridge, in the names of Dr. Sinclair Roland, Mrs. Sinclair Roland, and Miss Sinclair Roland, and about twenty minutes past ten yesterday morning I went to Edenfield, in company with Chief Constable Holland, of the Borough Police; Superintendent Webb, of the County Police; and Sergeant Badcock, of New Scotland Yard, and one or two other officers. Mr. Holland went to the front door of the house with me, and we rang the bell. The door was answered by the younger of the two women, Miss Sinclair Roland. Mr. Holland handed her his card, and said, "Will you please tell Dr. Sinclair Roland we would like

to have a few minutes' conversation with him?" She said, "Dr. Sinclair Roland is not in; he has

GONE TO TOWN."

He then said, "Is Mrs. Sinclair Roland in?" The younger woman said, "She is in, but you cannot see her." We then stepped into the hall, and I said, "We are police officers, and we hold a warrant for the arrest of Dr. Sinclair Roland, Mrs. Sinclair Roland, and your arrest. You are Miss Sinclair?" She said, "I am Miss Sinclair. What is it for?" I said, "Where's Mrs. Sinclair Roland?" She said, "You cannot see her." I said, "We must see her." At that minute he shouted "Mama," and we heard a noise higher in the house. I said, "Will you conduct me to Mrs. Sinclair Roland? You can conduct me if you like, but I must see her." She then went to some rooms, pretending to look for her, but apparently she was delaying us. I went to the top of the house, where I

FOUND A WOMAN

that I recognised as Mrs. Sinclair Roland. She was at a chest of drawers, which was open, and was in the act of putting on a black skirt, which she had apparently taken from the drawers. She said "I am Mrs. Tipton." I said "Are you a servant?" She said "I am the house keeper." I replied "No, you are Mrs. Sinclair Roland, Where is Dr. Sinclair Roland?" She said "He is out; he has gone to town." I took her downstairs, and met Chief Constable Holland with the younger woman. We took them to the dining room and left them in charge of the other officers, and

SEARCHED FOR DR. ROLAND.

From inquiry of the servants, we found he was undoubtedly in the house ten minutes before we got there, in his cap and slippers. We

could not find his slippers, while the boots he usually wore when going out were in their usual place, and we came to the conclusion that he was either in the house or in the grounds. We detained the women for some time, and finally sent them to the Police-station with other officers. We made an exhaustive search of the house with two discovering him, but on taking a more careful search, that is, taking up carpets and removing articles of furniture, in a room at the top of the house, which was furnished as a billiard room, we came across a large walnut covered in washing-stand, such as you would find in a billiard room. It moved very easily, and behind it we saw a small

DOOR IN THE WALL.

It was a secret place. We thought at once that was possibly the hiding place of the man, and I could see in a voice that he must have heard, “Dr Sinclair Roland, you are here. The game’s up; you might as well come out.” There was no reply. I shouted out again a similar message, and there was again no reply, and then we commenced breaking open the door. It was securely locked, and hard to force, but we finally broke it open, and inside it found a boarded partition, as though it was a false cupboard. Breaking through, we found it was an hinges, and would open. Behind it there were two large wicker baskets, that might be laundry baskets, full of something. They were very heavy, and could not be moved. We heard

A MOVEMENT INSIDE

of somebody apparently breaking through another partition. We thought it was somebody breaking through the roof, and we blew a police whistle and got a constable who was on duty near by, to watch the roof while we went on with our search. At that minute,

Sergeant Badcock, who had been to the Police-station, came back. The movements continued, and went in the direction of another room. We went into the other room, and found another door behind a chest of drawers. We broke it open, and saw a

MAN IN THE DARKNESS

of this false ceiling, some distance away. There was only room for one man to go in, and Sergt. Badcock, without hesitation, went in and brought deceased out. Directly the man got into the room he struggled violently, apparently without object and like a madman. He was restrained by Sergeant Badcock and Chief Constable Holland while I spoke to him, and we pacified him without resorting to any violence, except holding him. We led him down to the dining-room. He asked for a glass of water, which the servant brought him, and he drank it. I read the warrant to him. He apparently understood it, and made answer, "I say nothing." He was then put into a brougham, which we had in waiting, in the custody of Sergeant Badcock and a county constable, who is present, and taken to the Borough Police Station here. I went on with the search that I was making of the house, and in about an hour and a half's time word was brought to me that he was dead. Later on in the evening I was at the *post-mortem* examination. There was no violence used by the police officers except holding him. He was not struck in any way, and nothing, so far as I could see, could account for his death. The man has been known to the police for many years past, but has been lost sight of.

IN 1892 HE ABSCONDED

from very heavy bail when charged with offences under the Bankruptcy Act.

The Coroner: I don't think that matters very much. If you will kindly give us the aliases he went under?

Inspector Arrow: His name was George Ferdinand Springmul Von Wessenfeld when last charged. He was released on bail in the sum of £1,000 for himself and two sureties of £1,000, but absconded, and has not been heard of since until the present time. He has also been under:—Dr. William Wild, George Aster Singer, M.A., Dr. Roland de Villiers, Gustave Perrier, Paul Grant Wilson, and other names. I might say that it was a small chamber—almost a cupboard—where he was concealed. He must have been there some three hours, and must have been undergoing

INTENSE EXCITEMENT

From the fear of being discovered, because we were walking about the house all the time, and he must have heard all that was going on.

Edward Badcock said: I am a Detective-Sergeant of New Scotland Yard. At half-past ten on the morning in question I accompanied the last witness to Edenfield, Trumpington-road. I conveyed two females to this police office, and then returned. I searched the house, and entered a kind of dummy cupboard on the second floor, where I saw deceased

CROUCHING ON THE RAFTERS

in the corner. I brought him out. He was very excited. The last witness pacified him, and took him downstairs. He asked for a glass of water, which was given him. I then accompanied him to this office. On alighting from the brougham in the appeared to have a fit. I assisted him into the office and then asked him how he felt, and if he desired to see a doctor. He said, "No; I feel all

right.” The fit came on again, and I sent for a doctor, who arrived about five minutes later. He was then taken charge of by officers here, and every attention was shown him. I afterwards heard that he was dead. He was very

VIOLENT ON BEING ARRESTED

but we used no violence to him except holding his hands. There were three of us, and we were able to do that without hurting him.

The Coroner: Did he attempt to strike you?—No. He was a very strong man, and no doubt he felt competent to free himself, but of course he could not.

George Henry Hurst stated: I am a police constable in the Borough Police Force. I was here when deceased was brought in about 1.40 yesterday. He was brought to the Police-station by a detective officer. He stood against the charge room window, and the detective asked him if he felt allright. He said “Yes,” but with that

HE FAINTED,

and sank down. I applied first aid, and a doctor was sent for. Dr. Russell came, and said, “Remove him into a warmer place.” We took him into a cell, and laid him on a mattress. The doctor then went away, but he seemed to be taken worse, and we sent for the doctor again. When Dr. Lucas arrived he pronounced life extinct. Deceased never spoke at all to me; he did not ask for a doctor to be sent for.

The Coroner here asked Inspector Arrow if he could give them the deceased’s age.

The Inspector: I cannot with any exactitude, but we believe him to be about 60.

Do you know what his occupation was?—To the best of my belief he has been

A SWINDLER

for years past.

His wife and niece would not give you any information concerning him?—The woman who is supposed to be his wife does not know his proper name herself.

Thomas Lucas said: I am a surgeon practising in St. Andrew's-street, Cambridge. I was called to the deceased yesterday, and I saw him about five minutes past two. He was lying on a mattress in a cell. He was quite dead, but there were very gorged and congested, and a large clot occupied the left ventricle. Death no doubt was due to apoplexy.

The Coroner: There were

NO SIGNS OF OPIUM POISONING

or any other poisoning?—None whatever.

Not the slightest marks of violence of any kind?—None whatever.

A Juryman: Would the brain, being in the state you speak of, bring on apoplexy?—Just the condition in which you expect it. Any excitement is likely to bring on apoplexy in that condition.

The Coroner informed the jury that there was no doubt that excitement caused the fit of apoplexy, which resulted in the deceased's death. It seemed to him he was arrested in the most humane manner he could be.

The jury returned a verdict of “Death from natural causes,” in accordance with the medical testimony.

Why “Roland” Was Arrested.

Alleged Nefarious Business.

Before Mr. Marsham, at Bow-street, on Wednesday, Ella Sinclair Roland, alias Singer, 42, married; Anna Sinclair, alias Anna Von Jarchow, 20, no occupation, both living at Edenfield, Trumpington-road, Cambridge; Allan Laidlaw, aged 47, journalist, Spring-street, Paddington; Charles Maurice Coleman, 31, Great College-street, Camden Town; Edward Henry Coleman, 45, printer, High-street, Bognor; and Walter Douglas Munday, 25, printer, Crescent-road, Bognor, were charged on a warrant with conspiring to print, sell, and publish obscene books, pictures, and pamphlets to the common nuisance of his Majesty’s subjects. Mr. R. D. Muir and Mr. Argus Lewis, the Assistant-Director of Public Prosecutions, appeared in support of the charge. Mr. Biron defended.

Mr. Muir said he only proposed to offer formal evidence of arrest that day, and then to ask for a remand.

Detective-Inspector Arrow, Scotland Yard, said he went to Cambridge on Tuesday, and, in company with Sergeant Badcock and the Chief Constable of the Cambridge Borough Police, went to the residence of the prisoner Sinclair, a large house standing in its own grounds. The Chief Constable asked one of the female prisoners if he could see Dr. Sinclair Roland. She replied, “He has gone to London.” Witness said that he held a warrant for the arrest of Dr. Roland, Mrs. Sinclair Roland, and herself. She immediately called out “Mama, mama!” In reply to the witness, she said Mrs.

Roland was in, but he could not see her. The officer afterwards went to a servant's bedroom, and there saw Mrs. Roland. She was

PUTTING ON A SERVANT'S SKIRT

He asked her if she was Mrs. Roland, and she answered, "No; I am Mrs. Tipton, the housekeeper." Witness said he was satisfied she was the person described in the warrant, and then asked her where Dr. Roland was. She replied, "He saw you coming and he has gone to London on his way to Germany." The two women were then handed over to other officers, the house was surrounded, and search made for the doctor. After searching inside and outside the house for about 2½ hours, continued the officer, "I removed a very large washing-stand from against the wall of the billiard room at the top of the house. Behind it was a small door in the wall. It was locked. I forced it, and inside I found a partition of match boarding, giving it the appearance of an empty cupboard. I broke through that, and found it was on a hinge. It was barricaded inside with two large trunks, kept in position by three iron rods and a number of heavy planks propped against the rods. While moving these I heard a noise from inside as though some one was breaking through the roof. When I got through the partition I came to another room, in which there was a similar door in the wall. That door was forced, and I then saw a man crouched up against the rafters of the roof. There was only room for one man to get in, and Sergeant Badcock entered. At that time we did not know who the man was. Sergeant Badcock brought the man out, and he began struggling violently. After a time he admitted that his name was Dr. Sinclair Roland, and I read the warrant to him. He said, 'I say nothing.' We put him in a brougham and conveyed him to Cambridge Police-station. In the room next to the loft, where he

was concealed, there was a room revolver. About an hour after the arrest of Dr. Roland I heard that he was dead.”

On hearing this the two female prisoners began to cry.

The officer continued that he afterwards found at the prisoner’s house a number of books and documents.

Detective-Sergeant Buckle gave evidence of the arrest of Charles Maurice Coleman and the prisoner Laidlaw at the offices of the University Press, Limited, the imprint of the publications of defendants were alleged to have issued.

Detective-Sergeant Cleveland said he arrested Munday and Edward H. Coleman at the latter’s printing works at Bognor. Munday was employed there as a journeyman.

The prisoners were remanded.

Bail in two sureties of £100 each was allowed for R. H. Coleman, and two in £50 for Munday. Mr. H. Davers, J.P., the chairman of the Bognor Urban District Council, and Mr. Toft (of Bognor) were accepted as sureties for both prisoners. An application for bail on behalf of Mrs. Roland having been made, Mr. Muir remarked that all the property which had been acquired by this sort of thing and by various swindles was in her name. The deceased man promptly carried out a swindle by means of which he obtained thousands of pounds, all of which went into the woman’s hands, he being an undischarged bankrupt.

Mr. Marsham declined to allow bail, but said that arrangements would be made for Mrs. Roland to attend her husband’s funeral in company with a police officer.

It is stated that the deceased had purchased the house where he was residing at the time of his arrest. The sum of £3,000 has been mentioned as the price.

The funeral of the deceased took place at Trumpington this afternoon.