

Tisbury Woman Shot by her Sweetheart 1886

On Sunday evening a servant girl named Margaret Furnell, aged 19, in the employ of Mr. Woolley, auctioneer, Salisbury, was shot in a most deliberate manner in the public street by a painter of Warminster, named House who had come from Tisbury, it is believed, for the purpose. The young man, whose age is 20, has resided and worked as a painter at Tisbury and Warminster, and the girl had been living at Tisbury until about five weeks ago, when she came to Salisbury.



It must have been at Tisbury that a friendly intimacy sprung up between the two, and this had ripened into a closer acquaintance, an engagement eventually being affected. This connection continued until a week or two after the girl came to Salisbury, when some difference sprang up between the pair, the young man alleging that the girl had been keeping company with another person. This was denied, and the girl further stated her intention of breaking off the engagement. This she eventually did, with the result that her would-be lover threatened to do her bodily injury.

According to the girl's fellow servant at Mr. Woolley's, Furnell had no other reason for breaking off the engagement than that House had said something which she did not like, and that he had a bad temper. As it appears he had paid a visit or two to her since she had been at Salisbury, the estrangement must have taken place quite recently.

He had, it is said, sent her threatening letters, and in a conversation with a fellow servant a week or two ago, Furnell stated that House had spoken very roughly to her, and she added that she was not going to keep company with him anymore. She also said she had told House of this, and that he in reply had threatened to injure her. She, however, had not spoken to her fellow servant about her lover on many occasions.

House, on Sunday, appears to have come into Salisbury by the 5.7 p.m. train, he having during the day been at Tisbury, the home of the injured girl. It also appears that he came with the deliberate intention of carrying out his threat, and he must have been waiting about for the girl from the time the train came in until she started from Mr. Woolley's house shortly after six o'clock to go to church.

For it was not far from the house that he met her and walked by her side to the corner of Church Fields, where the roads branch off, to the station on the left, and to the Mill on the right. It was at this spot that the girl became aware of the man's presence, and here, too, House endeavoured to persuade her to go around by the Mill, but she objected and was turning towards the Station when he drew a six-chamber revolver and fired at her.

The report attracted the attention of other persons near the spot, amongst whom was Mr. Lywood, butcher, of Fisherton Street, who immediately on hearing the shot looked towards the spot, and saw the girl turn round and put her hand to her side, at the same time calling out "Oh!" Mr. Lywood then ran towards House, apparently unobserved by the latter, who again fired at the girl on her attempting to run away. House was seized by Mr. Lywood, and after a short scuffle, in which the latter ran some little risk, House was forced against the palisades of the garden of a house, and the revolver wrenched from him.

By this time a crowd had collected and the prisoner was handed over to P.S. Goodridge, of the City Police. The girl upon whom both shots had taken effect, was then assisted back to Mr. Woolley's, and that gentleman immediately took her in a cab to the Infirmary, where she was at once examined by Mr. L. S. Luckham, the house surgeon, who found her to be suffering from two wounds such as would be made by a small bullet, one of the bullets having passed through the inner part of the right arm, and the other having entered the side of the chest on the same side.

Meanwhile the prisoner was taken into custody by the police, but previous to being removed he was asked by some of bystanders why he had thus wounded the girl. He however only said "I won't answer questions." One person said "Why did you not operate on yourself instead of the poor girl, and see how you liked it first?" To this House replied, I should have done it, only you (meaning Mr. Lywood) were too quick for me. Give me my revolver and I'll show you what I'll do." At this there was some little hooting, and the man was taken to the police station, where he was examined by Mr. Supt. Mathews, but he refused to answer any questions.

He did not appear excited, and during the night he slept soundly, apparently not comprehending the gravity of his position. This calm appearance he maintained until after the examination at the Court on Monday morning, when he was formally charged that "he did, on the 12th instant, in the city, feloniously shoot with a certain revolver, loaded with powder and leaden bullets, one Margaret Furnell, with intent to kill and murder her." Some purely formal evidence having been taken, the prisoner was remanded until Monday next.

There was a very large number of persons in the Court during the hearing, and a crowd assembled outside to witness the removal of the prisoner. He is tall, with a light complexion, and by no means bad looking. The father of the prisoner is an omnibus driver at Warminster. The parents of the wounded girl live at Tisbury, her father being a carrier from the place to Salisbury. The wounded girl is gradually recovering. The ball that entered the chest has not yet been extracted, but is not in a very dangerous position; it is thought that the girl will recover.

Salisbury Magistrates Court

On Friday, George House, painter, was brought up on remand before the magistrates, charged with having shot Margaret Furnell, on September 12th with intent to kill her. Mr. Compton, of Bradford-on-Avon, appeared on his behalf.

The girl, who some days after the outrage contracted scarlet fever, said that she had known the prisoner little more than two months. She first knew him at Tisbury. She came to Salisbury from Tisbury, and was cook to Mr. Woolley, in whose service she had been six weeks. She and the prisoner were engaged when she entered that service. She afterwards wrote him a letter to tell him their engagement must come to an end, and she received a reply to say that he would be in Salisbury on September 12th and would then see her.

On Sunday, the 12th, she left Mr. Woolley's about a quarter to six, and saw the prisoner at the corner talking to another man. She spoke first, and told him she was going to church. He said, "Shall I see you after church?" and she replied "No, I am going in". She handed him a letter sealed up, which he took but did not open, and he then fired. She was shot in the side. She put up her hand to her side and said, "Oh, save me." Directly afterwards another shot was fired but that did not strike her. She walked back to Mr. Woolley's and was subsequently taken to the Infirmary.

Mr. Lywood, butcher, was next called. He proved seizing the prisoner after the shooting. He asked him what he wanted to shoot the girl for, and he replied, "I meant doing it. Give me the revolver again and I will show you what I will do." Witness thought that meant that he would shoot himself. Police Constable White stated that the prisoner, when in the police station, said "It won't be no worse than I expected it would be. The aim was good, but not low enough. I meant it for some time. I only had the revolver the day before yesterday."

Mr. Luckham, house surgeon at the Infirmary, proved that the girl had a wound right through the fleshy part of the right arm, and there was also a wound on the right side of the chest, which penetrated about three inches. He believed that both wounds were inflicted by one shot. The bullet had not been found. He believed that it was imbedded in the fat of the side of the chest. The girl was at no time in great danger. The prisoner was committed for trial at the assize, to be held at Winchester.

After the girl had left the court by a side door she was mobbed by a large crowd and hooted. When in Silver Street she appeared in a semi-fainting state, but notwithstanding this there was a renewal of hooting. Eventually she and her father, mother, and sister took refuge in the Shoulder of Mutton Inn, and some police arrived and dispersed the crowd. It is believed that the friends of both parties would have been glad if the case could have been settled.

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Winchester Assize

George House (20), painter, was charged with attempting to murder Margaret Furnell at Fisherton Anger, on September 12, by shooting her with a revolver. Mr Loveland prosecuted and Mr Phillips defended the prisoner.

The prosecutor formerly lived at Tisbury and kept company with the prisoner, whose home is at Warminster.

She obtained a situation as cook to a Mr. Woolley at Salisbury and after being there a few weeks wrote to the prisoner that their engagement must be broken off, as her friends were against her marrying, but she told him this was the only reason, and that her determination was not the work of a moment.

Prisoner replied that he would come to Salisbury, and two days later, on the evening of Sunday, September 12th - she had just left her master's house to go to church, when she encountered the prisoner in the street. He told her he could not understand her letter, and she then gave him another letter which he pushed into his pocket unopened. Immediately after, she found she was shot, and exclaimed "Oh save me". She made off, and as she did so prisoner again fired a revolver at her, but the bullet apparently missed her. Mr. Lywood, a butcher, saw the act, and seizing prisoner, wrenched the pistol from him. He asked the prisoner why he shot the girl and he said he meant to do it and if given the pistol again he would show what he would do.

The woman was taken to the Infirmary, and examination shewed the bullet had passed through the flesh of the right arm and fleshy part of the right chest, where it was still embedded. The girl never was in danger from the wound, but the doctor told the learned judge the bullet was on the same level as the heart though on the other side. When in the infirmary she was attacked with scarlet fever.

At the police station prisoner said, "It was no worse than he expected; the aim was good but not low enough; he meant it for some time, but only had the revolver two days previously." The prisoner received a good character from Mr. Morgan, Chairman of the Local Board at Warminster. The defence was that the prisoner only intended to frighten the girl with the pistol, and certainly not to take her life, and that his remark at the police station shewed he meant to fire on the ground by the side of her. The Judge said the defence was ingenious but was not what the prisoner himself said. He told the jury to exercise their common sense in the matter. After ten minutes deliberation the jury found the prisoner guilty. The Judge said he was convinced prisoner meant to kill the prosecutrix, probably from motives of revenge. He sentenced him to penal servitude for fifteen years.

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