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THE POLICE NEWS EDITION

OF THE

**TODMORDON MURDER**

LIFE, TRIAL, AND EXAMINATION

OF

**MILES WETHERHILL.**

WITH SEVEN ILLUSTRATIONS.



WITH MANY INTERESTING PARTICULARS NEVER BEFORE  
PUBLISHED

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(2)

# THE MURDER AT TODMORDEN PARSONAGE.

## MEMOIR OF MILES WEATHERILL.

Nothing in literature or art, in romance or reality, embodies a fiercer or more fearful illustration of the fury of hate and revenge than the murder and outrage perpetrated by Miles Weatherill, the weaver of Todmorden.

The history of this wretched man's crime forms one of the darkest pages in the criminal records of our country.

Miles Weatherill, residing at No. 4, Brook-street, Todmorden, aged twenty-three years, the son of a widow, on Monday evening, March 2nd, committed and attempted murder at the dwelling house of the Rev. Anthony John Plow, Vicar of Todmorden.

There were adult persons in the house at the time—Mr. and Mrs. Plow, Jane Smith, Mary Hodgson, and Elizabeth Spink, (domestic servants), and a monthly nurse, attending upon Mrs. Plow after recent confinement. The night was dark but not stormy. The particulars of the crime will fully appear in the evidence, before its close; but it may not be devoid of interest to our readers to know some of the antecedents of the accused person, and the circumstances which have contributed to excite him to the commission of the awful deeds of which he confesses himself to have been guilty. He was born in Todmorden, and in boyhood, we believe his religious discipline—so far as he was capable of being subjected to discipline—was amongst the Methodists. A while ago—it may be from six to seven years—he left the Methodist school and formed associations with some of the persons of his own age — attending the Sunday school at Christ Church, Todmorden; or else by some accident or caprice he appeared at that school, and formed those associations. Ever since, he has gone to that school with more or less irregularity—but at times very irregularly, and has been what we may term a very inconvenient boy, fond of levity, jocular, and prominence in the eyes of other boys, thwarting the efforts of his teachers both upon himself and the boys of his class. We believe, however, that, as he was growing up, he became a little tempered in his character and manifestations, and on occasions he taught some of the classes in the school. A certain sharpness, and humour of expression, made him, in a measure, attractive to his companions, which, no doubt ministered to his vanity. We do not, while writing, know precisely the time at which the girl — Sarah E. Bell — who is referred to elsewhere in connection with the perpetrator of the lamentable and fearful acts—became a servant with Mr. Plow. She seems to have, some time before she left Mr. Plow's (in Nov. last), to have commanded much of Weatherill's thoughts and attentions. For some time before she went away it is probable that she was the chief reason for his attendance either at school or church; and, we may say, with truth, that it has been more desultory since. Young, and impressionable, she reciprocated his feelings towards her. Out of this intimacy the sad tragedy has been evolved which, in concentration of purpose, adaptation and secrecy of means, and vigour of execution is, happily, almost parallel in the records of crime in our country. The young woman his sweetheart, we hope as we believe, will not be found in the least criminally implicated in these doings. Apart from the inconvenience (and as Mr. Plow thought, impropriety of this intimacy being carried on in the manner in which it was between Weatherill and Sarah Bell) she was everything that was required in a servant;—master, mistress, and servant were mutually satisfied with, if not attached to each other. Now we come to the irritating cause of the tragic sequel. The girl's mother residing at a distance, Mr. Plow considered himself not only the employer, but the guardian of her. We think we may say she was not more

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than sixteen when the connection between her and Weatherill commenced. Weatherill had, before the girl went away, not only frequent interviews with her out-of-doors—but intruded himself for that purpose into Mr. Plow's house contrary to that gentleman's wishes. Mr. Plow had frequently expostulated with Weatherill, and prohibited him this privilege, but Weatherill continued to act as if Mr. Plow's authority was to be second to his (Weatherill's) in his own house. The particulars respecting this may transpire in the evidence yet to be given. Ultimately the girl was sent home, and Weatherill's satisfactions being thus interfered with he began to brood over plans of revenge. Intimations have been given in various ways of his ill-feeling towards Mr. Plow since the departure of the girl, Sarah E. Bell, which it is not necessary to specify, but some of which have been of a nature to excite alarm.

On the Friday before the murder Weatherill asked off his work, as weaver, at Messrs. Lord Brothers, Todmorden, that he might go to York on Saturday, where his sweetheart is at present residing with her mother. He went thither, saw her and stayed over Sunday, left on Monday, and, as we are told, arrived at Todmorden by the 7-50 train the same evening. Between ten o'clock several—at least more than one—of his companions saw him, and discerned no difference in his manner. He talked of his two days' visit to York, and the ride; and left a young friend, but a little before ten o'clock, not far from his own (Weatherill's) house, saying he was going thither, and apparently taking the usual road to go there. His home is situate between York-street and Bridge-street chapels. He went on Bridge-street (the lower side of the town-hall), but instead of turning down, he continued on to execute his desperate purpose, stopping, it is said, at the Black Swan Inn for a few moments, and drinking one glass of whiskey. He was afterwards met going in the direction of the vicarage. His overcoat concealed the pistols and hatchet, the implements of his deadly object. Pistols he had four, which he had adjusted in a leathern belt, made by himself, and cut so as to hold them handy for use. In all probability he approached the house by the lane leading to the vicarage and church, and, from the evidence, he must have immediately set about carrying his plans into effect. First he began to tie the two back doors together with a stout new string, though not a rope. He was heard by the servants, and all the after violence followed instantly in train. The Rev. A. J. Plow, after his escape, made his way by the back or side gate of his garden to the house of Mr. William Greenwood (organist of the church and auctioneer, who resides within fifty yards of the vicarage), under the impression that the murderer was pursuing him. Without shoes and hat, the blood streaming over his face, Mr. Greenwood and his family were almost panic stricken, as they did not at first recognize that it was Mr. Plow. Dr. Cockcroft attended him as soon as possible, and next day, though he had had so severe an encounter with his adversary, he was able to walk back into the vicarage.

### EXAMINATION OF PRISONER.

The prisoner was brought to the Magistrates' Office on Tuesday afternoon, in a cab, at a little past five o'clock, in charge of Mr. Superintendent Pickering, of Rochdale, attended by Sergeant Riding, of the local police force, and a number of other officers. At 5-30 the magistrates—Abraham Ormerod, John Fielden, and Joshua Fielden, Esqrs., opened the examination.

Elizabeth Spink was the first witness called. She stated that she was one of the domestic servants of the Rev. Anthony John Plow, vicar of Todmorden. At a little before ten o'clock on the evening of March 2nd she and the other servants heard a noise at the back door of the vicarage. Half an hour before that the master had come home. It might be nine o'clock, as near as she could tell, when he came home; he had his supper. Mrs. Plow was in bed. She had a baby which would be three weeks old on Saturday. She had a monthly nurse with her. Monday was their washing-day—there were three domestic servants besides the monthly nurse. Herself (witness), Jane Smith (deceased), and Mary Hodgson. There was to the house a passage door, a scullery door, and front door; the passage door was opposite the front door. The scullery





VIEW OF THE PARSONAGE!





### THE REV. MR. PLOW STRUGGLES WITH ASSASSIN.

door was near the passage door or front door. At a little before or about ten p.m., when they heard the noise, the back door and the scullery door were both fastened; they were both locked and bolted. The noise they heard was very slight, but sufficient for all three of them (the servants) to hear it. Jane Smith got up and went to the dining-room to Mr. Plow and told him. He came back with her and unlocked and unbolted the back door, but he found he could not open it, only a little way. Mr. Plow then went out at the front door; she heard him open it, and shut it after him. They heard the master scream, and he said, "open the door—quick!" They heard talking distinctly at the back door, but could not tell what was said. Heard no other noise. Witness ran with a candle to the door and opened it as far as she could. Jane Smith cut the string. Witness did not see the string. Deceased took the knife to cut it with off the kitchen table. Witness opened the door, and set the candle down on the kitchen table, and when she (witness) looked back, she saw, about a yard inside the door, Mr. Plow and the prisoner in the passage—prisoner in the furthest. They had tight hold of each other. Prisoner was striking Mr. Plow with a hatchet, which he had in his hand, on the head and face. Two blows she saw prisoner strike with the hatchet before she (witness) got hold of him; she could not tell how many after. Witness seized prisoner by the hair of the back of his head with the right hand, and the hair of his forehead with her left, and pulled him away as well as she could. She could not entirely pull prisoner away. He tried to hit Mr. Plow as well as he could, repeatedly, but did not hit him every time. Mr. Plow did not say anything to him at this time. They were scuffling towards the front door. Opposite the dining-room, Jane Smith (the deceased) came to try to help witness. Jane Smith tried to get hold



of prisoner, and he struck back at her with the hatchet, so that she staggered and went back against the wall for a moment, and then went into the dining-room and closed the door. The hatchet she (witness) thought fell, and was taken away by Mary Hodgson. Witness did not remember anything else.—Mr. Plow then got loose of prisoner, and went out at the front door. Witness remained alone with the prisoner, and had hold of him. She left loose of him and he was quite calm. She said to the prisoner, "be quiet, be quiet,—you'll get the best through." Prisoner smiled, but did not speak; he stood facing her (witness). He then stooped, and picked up a pistol, which witness had not seen before. He burst from witness, pushed open the dining-room door which was not fastened, and shot at Jane Smith, who was about a yard from her (witness). She could see Jane Smith's figure in the darkened room. Jane Smith said something to prisoner; witness did not know what it was; prisoner fired at her. As soon as he had fired he said to her "Where's my Sarah?" She screamed two or three times; witness went away as soon as the pistol was fired. She went out at the scullery door, and to Dr. Cockcroft's—200 or 300 yards' distance. She was but a short time away, and met with the Rev. W. Fearnside first. When witness got to the vicarage there were two or three more men trying to get in. Some went to the back of the house, others to the front. Both back doors and the front door were fast. They waited four or five minutes, and then the monthly nurse unlocked the back door. Witness went through the passage to the front door, and found it was locked, and the key was not in the lock. Next thing, a pistol was fired in Mrs. Plow's bedroom. Witness heard it go off. George Stansfield then came in, and witness asked him to go up-stairs; he went up, and witness followed him half-way up the first flight of stairs. Then prisoner was coming down with George Stansfield, and she (witness) thought with another man. Witness looked first into the dining-room, Dr. Cockcroft next, and the housemaid also. The door was nearly closed. They saw Jane Smith on the floor dead, her head towards the window her feet towards the wall and door hinges. A pool of blood was running from her head, a foot or more in extent at one place. Witness did not touch the deceased. Prisoner was then in the kitchen. Prisoner asked, while witness was in the kitchen, to have his hat brought. He did not ask anyone in particular but he looked at her (witness); she said she would not bring it. Prisoner then looked at the other servant, and said "Mary, bring me my hat." She called prisoner a villian, and said she would not bring the hat. Did not remember more particulary what was said. Witness did not know that she said anything to prisoner about Jane Smith being killed, but asked him if he knew that he had killed her master? She thought he laughed. [Prisoner here said he thought he did not laugh.] Prisoner asked them to let him light his pipe, which he tried to do with a piece of paper. Witness took the piece of paper from the prisoner, and some one else took his pipe. Witness then went up-stairs to Mrs Plow. She found Mrs. Plow in bed bleeding. Dr. Cockcroft accompanied her (witness). The blood was running over Mrs. Plow's face down on her night-dress and the pillow—the last the worst. Jane Smith had been able to do her work, and was in her usual state of health. They had not a servant named Sarah Bell; she (witness) had succeeded her. Did not know what prisoner meant when he said "Where's my Sarah?"

George Stansfield said he resided at Gandybridge, was parish clerk at Todmorden. Mr. Plow's housemaid (Mary Hodgson) came to his (witness's) house at ten p.m. or a little after, last night. He (witness) had his shoes off ready to go to bed; he put them on again and went to the vicarage, to the back or side-door, and found it open. He had seen the monthly nurse at the gate which closed in the yard, and asked her where the man was? Witness proceeded into the house, and up stairs, to the door of Mrs. Plow's room, saw a glimmer of light from the fire, and Miles Weatherill on the further side of the bed. When witness got to the bedroom door he heard something like a slap from the inside of the room, but did not see what it was with. Mrs. Plow he (witness) did not see, there was so little light, nor did he hear her speak. He made his way to the prisoner and got hold of him. Witness did not see anything in prisoner's hand. Said to him "What are you doing here?" Witness did not exactly know what prisoner's reply was—or if he did make a reply. He got hold of prisoner's arm, took him down the stairs into the hall.



and gave him to Mr. Binks, who took prisoner into the kitchen. Witness went into the dining-room, and there saw deceased laying in a pool of blood. Dr. Cockcroft, and Police-sergeant Hopkins came. The doctor got hold of deceased and looked at her, and said she was dead. Witness saw cuts on her head and on her wrist—blood was issuing from them upon the floor. Sergeant Hopkins took a hatchet from under deceased's legs. It seemed to have a new haft, the blade also seemed very bright, and there was a price mark of 1s. 2d. upon the hatchet. Witness went into the kitchen, saw the prisoner, and said to him, "Thou's killed Jane." Prisoner said "I knew." The doctor was examining Mrs. Plow, when witness was in the room; she was all covered with blood.

Mr. Gould here asked for a remand. The magistrates adjourned the examination to Friday, the 5th inst.

### EXAMINATION.—FRIDAY.

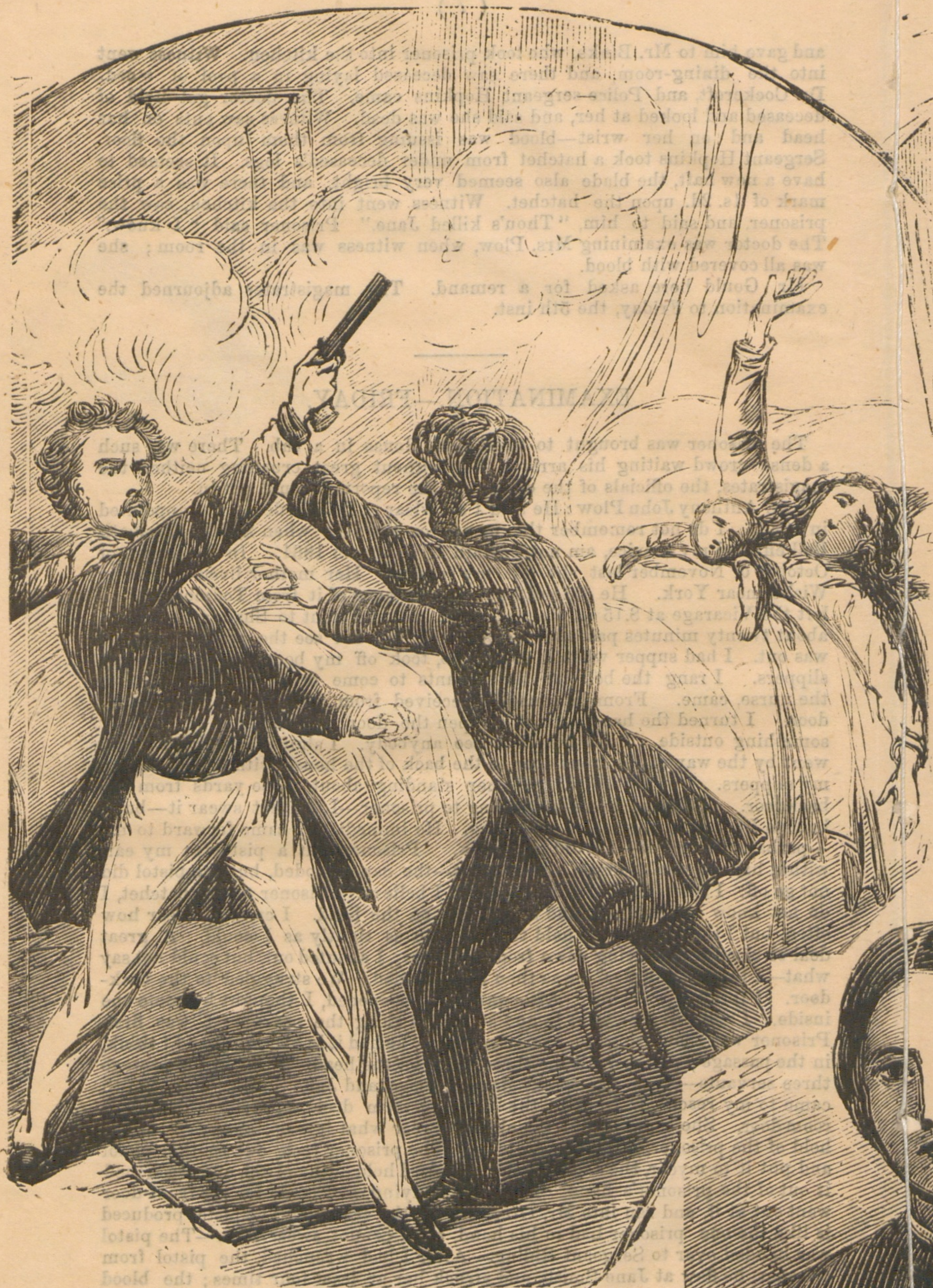
The prisoner was brought to the Court House in a cab. There was such a dense crowd waiting his arrival, that without great crushing neither the magistrates, the officials of the court, nor the reporters could get in.

Rev. Anthony John Plow: He said I am vicar of Todmorden, I was appointed in 1863. I do not remember the month or the year when Sarah Elizabeth Bell entered my service, am not certain if it was in 1864. In the month of October or November last she left my service. Her mother lived at Newby Wiske, near York. He did not know the distance of it from Todmorden. I left the Vicarage at 8.15 on Monday night last, and went to Shade; I returned about twenty minutes past nine o'clock. I did not see the prisoner while I was out. I had supper when I got home, took off my boots and put on my slippers. I rang the bell for the servants to come prayers. Jane Smith, the nurse, came. From information received from her, I went to the back-door. I turned the handle, tried to open the door, and found it was held by something outside. I did not then see anybody. I shut the back-door, and went by the way of the front door to the back of the house, without hat, and in my slippers. I perceived the prisoner standing about three yards from the backdoor. Believed I said something to prisoner—I will not swear it—but I believe I asked him what he was doing. He immediately came forward to me—perhaps two yards—he did not speak. Prisoner put a pistol to my ear, within half an arm's length. He fired it—the cap exploded, but the pistol did not go off. I then seized him by the neck, I believe. Prisoner took a hatchet, I do not know where from, and struck me on the head. I cannot swear how often, but I think twice. I held the prisoner as tightly as I could. A great deal of blood was pouring down from my face. I shouted out, but could not say what—I think "murder" I was then half-stunned. We struggled to the back-door. I think it was shut. Afterwards it was opened, I thought by some one inside. I and prisoner went in and struggled along the passage; I was first. Prisoner was then using the axe on my head, he had it in his right hand I think, in the passage; prisoner hit me three times on the head. I saw in the passage three servants—Elizabeth Spink, Mary Hodgson and Jane Smith. Jane Smith came to my rescue, in front by the drawing-room door—opposite the dining-room door. She shouted, but I could not swear what it was; she tried to lay hold of the prisoner, I think she did so. The prisoner took out another pistol and put it to my ear, the cap exploded. I seized hold of the pistol, and wrenched it out of the prisoner's hand. I felt I was dying, and made for the front door went out at it, and ran into Mr. Greenwood's, the organist. The pistol produced is like the one prisoner had in his hand, but I cannot swear to it.—The pistol was handed over to Sergeant Riding.—After I had wrenched the pistol from prisoner, he flew at Jane Smith, and struck her at least four times; the blood proceeded from her head. She was on her knees, put her hands up in the attitude of prayer, and said "Mercy." I did not see anything further. The prisoner saw me making my way to the door; he followed—he was close to the door. He put his hand into his breast; that was all I saw. I will not swer that prisoner pulled out more than one pistol in

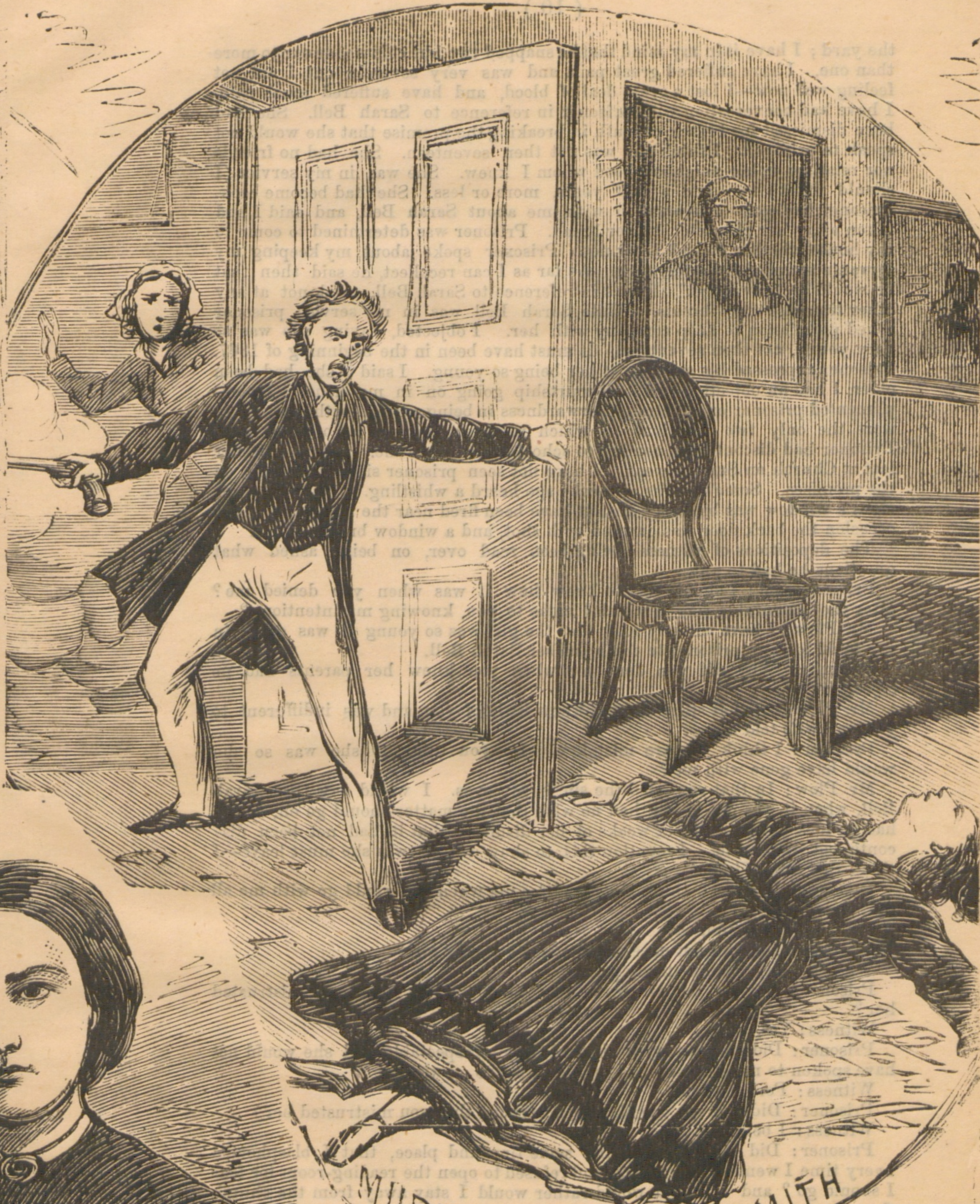








ATTACK ON MRS. PLOW.



MURDER OF JANE SMITH



PORTRAIT OF SARAH BELL



the yard ; I have it in my mind that he snapped two but could not swear to more than one. I have suffered great pain, and was very severely cut, I am not feeling well now—I lost a great deal of blood, and have suffered much pain. I have had conversation with prisoner in reference to Sarah Bell. She had been dismissed for breach of truth in breaking the promise that she would not speak to prisoner. I think she was not then seventeen. She had no friends nor relatives in her neighbourhood whom I knew. She was in my service (I should think) two and a half years, more or less. She had become cook. Prisoner had some conversation with me about Sarah Bell, and said I had taken away her character, or her bread. Prisoner was determined to come to my house whether I liked it or not. Prisoner spoke about my keeping my servants secluded from the town. As far as I can recollect, he said then that he would be “revenged.” It was in reference to Sarah Bell. Did not at any other time use any threats. While Sarah Bell was in my service, prisoner asked permission to keep company with her. I objected, saying she was so very young, not then seventeen. It must have been in the beginning of 1867. Prisoner expressed his surprise at her being so young. I said if she had been older, I had an objection to a long courtship going on in my house. I complimented prisoner on his straightforwardness in being so plain with me. These were the only two occasions on which prisoner spoke to me of Sarah Bell. Prisoner had discontinued coming to school since last June. I saw prisoner last at Church on Sunday week. I have not seen prisoner since February on the premises. Some months or weeks ago heard a whistling. On two occasions a window was broken. Pistols have been fired near the house. On one occasion the back door was covered with shot, and a window broken above.

The depositions of witness having been read over, on being asked what questions he had to put,

Prisoner said : I should like to know how it was when you denied me ? after the honourable way in which I came to you, knowing my intentions ?

Mr. Plow : I have already said that the girl was so young it was quite in my mind to deny prisoner to come and see Sarah Bell.

Prisoner : Why did you deny me when you knew her parents had no objections ?

Mr. Plow : At that stage the girl knew little of you, and was indifferent to you, my wife told me so.

Prisoner : I think you are mistaken. Do you think if she was so she would have gone with me ?

Mr. Plow : In that consisted the sin, in my eyes. I would say that Sarah Bell, when it was put to her, had no wish that the matter should go on, and I had no idea until within six weeks of her dismissal that it had not been discontinued six months. I mention this, to show why it was she must leave—I think this rather important.

Prisoner : Don't you think she cared for me when she would go with me all that time ?

Mr. Plow : I cannot say.

Prisoner : Did you not once say she was a steady girl ?

Witness : Yes, a very steady girl.

Prisoner : Did you not afterwards say, when she left, that you mistrusted her ?

Witness : Yes.

Prisoner : Did you not say if she had been a respectable girl she would not have spoken to me after she had promised not to go with me ?

Witness : Perhaps I did.

Prisoner : Did you say one Monday afternoon that you mistrusted her ?

Witness : I believe I did.

Prisoner : Did you not say at the same time and place, that I blasphemed every time I went to the church, and refused to open the reading-room for fear I should go ? and said you would rather would I stay away from the church than go.

Witness : To the former part of the question I cannot say if I said the exact words ; but I did not, that I remember, refuse to open the reading-room for fear you should go ; I believe I said I would rather you stayed away from the church than go.



Margaret Ball said she was monthly nurse to Mrs. Plow, who was confined a month since to-morrow. She had retired to rest before ten o'clock; Mrs. Plow had retired to rest also; the room was made dark because Mrs. Plow had had little sleep for two or three nights. There was no night light in the room. Just as they were going to sleep—Mrs. Plow and herself—Mrs. Plow said, "Oh! what is that?—run down." I immediately ran downstairs and saw Elizabeth Spink, Mary Hodgson, and Mr. Plow. Prisoner had his hand up; Elizabeth Spink had him by the hair of his head. Did not see what he had in his hand—the handle was like reddish. Saw Mr. Plow run out of the door; she ran up to Mrs. Plow, and while away in her room heard a pistol fire. It was inside the house, there was no mistake about that. She came out and stood on the first landing, and saw the prisoner walking to and fro in the lobby. The front door was shut. Saw him go into the dining-room twice or three times. He had a pistol; saw him with some paper putting in it; saw the ramrod fall to the floor—the ramrod produced is like it. He took the ramrod into the kitchen. Heard a knocking—opened the window which was over the porch; she thought he was going to shoot Mr. Plow. When he dropped the ramrod he picked it up and went into the kitchen. Saw him come up again into the room, pistol in one hand, and kitchen poker in the right hand. Went into Mrs. Plow's room, and put my back to the door. He pushed the door and said "let me in, I shall not hurt you." I then said "the person that you want is down stairs, if you will come with me." He said, "I have seen her." She said "have mercy upon us." He looked at her, and she looked at him. She then said, "do not hurt the new-born babe;" he never spoke. Then I heard a knocking, and went and tried the front door, but it was locked, and the key out. I ran to the back door as quickly as possible, and to the back gate. The door was locked and bolted with two bolts, but I unlocked and unbolted it. The knocking was at the front door. Many people were there—Stansfield was first; saw the flash of a pistol in Mrs. Plow's room; they all saw it; it was a very loud report. I then ran into Mrs. Plow's room, and found her saturated in blood from her forehead and her nose. She was not so when I went down stairs. The upper sheet shown (with shot-hole through), and night-cap all covered with blood. I found some 8 or 9 matches on the floor and the paper wadding produced, between the two sheets of Mrs. Plow's bed. The blanket is little smeared with powder. Handed them over to the sergeant. On Wednesday evening I found 2 bullets in removing the bottom sheet; I gave them to the sergeant; they have been produced; I found also in the bed a percussion cap.

Sarah Elizabeth Bell said: I am now living as a housemaid at the Friends Retreat, in York. Three years last November I entered Mr. Plow's service and left 1st last November. I know the prisoner—he courted me; my master and mistress objected to it. The courtship commenced in the second year of my service at Mr. Plow's. He has courted me ever since. Prisoner knew that I was forbidden to keep company with him. I told him I had promised not to do so. Could not tell when I was forbidden; it was in the second year, after I became cook. Told him that I had told Mrs. Plow that I should not keep his company. He came to the house, and into the house, notwithstanding. Came sometimes in the afternoon, sometimes in the evening. Came when Mr. and Mrs. Plow were at home. It came to Mr. Plow's knowledge some time in last October. The result was that I gave notice, and left when the year was up; it was not quite a month that I left after giving notice—it was on the 1st of November. Prisoner went with me home when I left, at Newby Wiske, six miles from Thirsk—we went third-class. I not know what distance it is from Todmorden. He remained two or three days. Had not seen him from that time till last Monday. In the meantime I had sent and received letters from him. I told him before the 1st of November that Jane had told of us. He said he would "have his revenge."—Said it only once. "I will have my revenge unless you come back to Todmorden." Did not say whom he would have his revenge upon in particular. At about eleven in the morning of last Sunday I saw him at the Friends' Retreat. He asked me to go out. I told him I could not go out at two o'clock. He asked me to take back the letters with me. He did not say what he wanted with them. I met him a little after two o'clock, and he



took the letters. We had had some slight difference. When he had got the letters said something about "revenge" low down, when I gave him the letters back. He took the letters and looked at them, and he said "revenge" in a low tone of voice. I asked him twice what he meant by such a saying, and he would not give me any answer. He gave me a new locket; we parted friends; he asked me to wear it for ever, for his sake. I said I would. I parted with him a few minutes before nine. I was with him from a little after two at that time. Asked him how the people at Mr. Plow's were; he answered "they were all quite well." He said Mary did not speak to him. I asked him if Jane did? He said he would not speak to her if she did. Did not say anything to me about what he was going to do, nor did I see any pistols or hatchet. He did not say what kind of revenge he would take; he asked me to come to Todmorden to a situation, but I refused because I was comfortable where I was. He had talked to me about some person whom he called "a traitor"—he meant Jane Smith. He did not explain to me, but I knew what he meant—that "she told tales" about him and me. We had no quarrel during the whole of that Sunday. They (prisoner and herself) met and parted friends. Nothing was said as to his coming or going. All the letters were sent by post.

The following are the most important:—

My dear Sarah Elizabeth,—You must excuse me for writing so much but this will be the last time for a bit. I have had such a row with master and mistress. I had heard that she had given you a character, so I asked her about it, and she put in what you told me she would. It was yesterday noon when I saw her, and she said she thought there was not much wrong in it, but I told her there was a great deal of wrong in it. In the afternoon I saw the master. He called on me and we had a regular row. He called us anything but Christians, and spoke of you as not being a respectable girl. He made my blood boil, and I will have my revenge for the girl I love, unless you will come to Todmorden, or within a mile or two of it, so that we may plague them by wakling out.

My dear Sarah.—I am now at Todmorden once more. You know how we love each other, and you may guess how I have been since. Oh, Sarah, my true love, how I do long to see you. I should so like to view that sweet face of yours once more. I hearkened many hours in the yard at the kitchen door, but then time is gone—gone, I am sorry to say, for ever. I wish I had staid a bit longer, as you wanted me for I only worked four hours. I wish you were at Todmorden again, I should then be happy once more; but now I am miserable. We are parted, and what is it for? Not for any disgraceful action either of us has done. No; it's for being too honourable and upright in our dealings. Sarah, it makes my blood boil to think of the wrong they have done to you. I will never forgive them. They have ruined our happiness.

Ah! Sarah, how happy we should be if you could get a place here, and then we could have our walk and so plague them. They are, I understand, going to have a cook on Tuesday. She is coming from where Jane, the traitor comes from. But now we are not together, and if you love me you will come. Oh! Sarah, come, and don't let us be parted, for it's hard to be parted from the one I love. If you were poorly, it would be different, but you are well and healthy, and so let us enjoy our youth in spite of the Plows. Why can't you get a place without being so far away. Letter courting is not like courting personally, and we should not have had any cause to be parted at all if it had not been for the Plows. Plow and his wife have spoilt our happiness, and unless that happiness can be renewed they should rue it. I cannot forgive them for doing as they have done towards us.

George Holdsworth said: I am an ironmonger in Todmorden. Prisoner purchased powder, shot, and caps at my shop on Monday night. Cannot say when I sold the axe, but it has come from my shop; it has my own figures on it. It is a month or six weeks since I sold the last; my boy has one, a size larger; the axe is marked in an unusual way; it was betwixt 8 and half-past 8 when he came. I did not see him myself. I knew he had been, though I





THE FUNERAL OF JANE SMITH.



did not see him ; my daughter served him with the powder and caps, and my son with the shot.

David Midgley Cockcroft said : I went, after I had seen the body of Jane Smith, into the bedroom to see Mrs. Plow. It was obscured with smoke, and there was a strong smell of gunpowder. Found Mrs. Plow in bed, and bleeding from a severe wound on the forehead and nose ; it was all one wound. There was ecchymosis on the top of the head, as if there had been a blow. She complained of the right arm, but it was not broken. There was a great deal of bleeding. She was only just recovering from her confinement. On the arm was a discoloration and mark near to the elbow. It appeared as if it might have been done by a poker. The weapon produced (the poker) was such as would have inflicted such an injury. I did not see the poker, I saw a pistol close by the bedside. It was handed to Sergeant Hopkins. There was a cap upon it. Mrs. Plow's wounds, he then was afraid, were of a dangerous character, but he thought they were not so now ; but it would be dangerous for her to give evidence now, or at the Assizes. I saw Mr. Plow on the same night. Mrs. Plow suffered great pain, in fact she breathed through the top of her nose through her wound. The blood, when I had placed something in her nose, ran into her throat. She will be permanently disfigured. Afterwards I saw Mr. Plow at Mr. Greenwood's, the auctioneer. I found him faint and sickly from the loss of blood. He had three wounds on the head—one of them on the side of the head, a large one at the back of the head, and one down the right temple ; on the left ear there was a cut from the top to the bottom, a slight abrasion on the nose, and a small cut on the upper lip. He was in a dangerous state when I saw him. I advised him to stay there all night. The vicarage is within 50 or 100 yards of Mr. Greenwood's. Mr. Plow had great pain ; he could have no rest because his bone was sore on all sides. On the morning following I and Dr. Foster, in consultation, examined prisoner at the lock-up, he seemed rational. By the Chairman : did you see him that night ? Witness : I saw him in the house. By the clerk : I was of opinion that he was of sound mind, and that he is so still, as far as I have seen. I was present at the inquest, and at the sitting of the magistrates at the first examination of prisoner, and heard his questions and observations. An instrument like the hatchet produced was likely to inflict such wounds as I found upon Mr. Plow. It is sharp enough to cut the ear as Mr. Plow's was cut. I did not see any signs of prisoner being other than sober on the night of October 2nd.

Other witnesses were examined whose testimony tended to make out the case for the prosecution, so as to leave no doubt in the minds of all present that the prisoner had been guilty of a premeditated and cold blooded-murder and outrage.

The Chairman said : Miles Weatherill, you are committed to take your trial, on the five charges brought against you at the Manchester Assizes.

Prisoner : Sooner and better.

The prisoner laughed and seemed in a great degree indifferent to what had taken place, when the examination terminated, and before being removed from the court.

The witnesses were then bound over to appear at the assizes in the usual form. The proceedings were not concluded until near ten o'clock.

## TRIAL AND SENTENCE ON THE PRISONER.

The interest which this remarkable case has excited was manifested on Friday morning in the crowded state of the court and its approaches. The death of the Rev. Mr. Plow, against whom the prisoner in the first instance directed his violence, and his infant child, had intensified the interest previously attaching to the case. The police allowed the court to fill, and then the approaches were guarded, and no other persons were permitted to enter, and all confusion was thereby avoided.

The prisoner, Miles Weatherill, was placed at the bar at half-past nine o'clock, charged with the wilful murder of Jane Smith, at Todmorden Parsonage, on Monday night, the 2nd instant. His countenance had lost the careless and



defiant expression which it wore when he was examined at Todmorden; and he followed the evidence with apparent interest, but not anxiety. The announcement, by Mr. Foster, in the course of his opening speech, that Mr. Plow was dead, seemed to come upon the prisoner as a painful surprise, and he manifested traces of strong emotion.

Mr. Campbell Foster and Mr. Addison were for the prosecution; the prisoner was defended by Mr. J. B. Torr.

Mr. Foster opened the case by a clear and temperate statement of facts, and then called the witnesses, whose evidence as to the attack of the prisoner upon the Rev. A. J. Plow, the deceased, and Mrs. Plow, the details of which are printed at length in our preceding pages. The death of Mr. Plow, having been proved, his deposition before the coroner was put in and admitted as evidence.

Mr. Holdsworth, ironmonger, Todmorden, identified the hatchet as having been sold from his shop; and his son stated that at half-past eight on the night of the murder the prisoner bought some powder, small shot, and percussion caps at the shop.

Sarah Elizabeth Bell called: I was cook at Mr. Plow's till last November. I have very well known the prisoner for three years. He courted me. My master and mistress objected to his coming to the house. I told him so, but he still came; and it got to the knowledge of my master and mistress, and in consequence I left them on the 1st of November. I requested the prisoner to meet me at the railway station, and he went home with me to Newby Wiske, where my parents live, and he remained three days. From then till the 1st of March I did not again see prisoner, when he came to York to the Friends' Retreat, where I am housemaid. I did not say anything to him about Jane Smith, but he told me he would not speak to her if she spoke to him. He asked me to come back to Todmorden again, and I said I would not. He did not say anything as to what he would do if I did not come back to Todmorden. Once before I told the prisoner that Jane had told about our courting. He at York asked me to bring out with me the letters I had received from him. I did so, and gave him them. Some he took, others he gave me back. He gave me the letters I had written to him. The three letters he took had been written by him while we had a quarrel. When I gave him the letters he said in a low tone, "Revenge." I asked him what he meant by it, but he did not answer. Before we parted he gave me a locket, and asked me to wear it for his sake. I said I would. I asked him about the Plows, how they were, and he said they were all well; that Hodgson would not speak to him, and that he would not speak to the girl Smith. I have heard him call Jane Smith a traitor, because she told tales. On the 30th of September I received this letter from the prisoner. This on the 7th of November, after the prisoner had been home with me. Here several other letters were put in, and witness said they were all in prisoner's handwriting.

The prosecution then put in the prisoner's statement before the committing magistrates, which was as follows:—

"I wish to say a few words, but it will amount to nothing. When I began to keep company with Sarah, I thought I would act as an honourable man. I waited upon Mr. Plow one night as he was coming out of church, and told him I wanted to ask a favour, which I hoped he would grant. I told him I wanted to keep company with Sarah, and when he asked me how long I had known her, I said I had had my eye on her ever since she came to Todmorden. He said that was quite natural. I asked him if he would grant me that favour, and he said, 'Oh, no, he could not think of such a thing.' I said I thought I would come and ask him in the right way, and I little thought he would deny me. I said also that I did not want to go whistling about the back yard, and that my intentions were very good. He replied that he had always looked upon me as a respectable young man; that Sarah was a good girl, and he would speak to his wife about it. I went to him a day or two afterwards, and he told me that he had talked the matter over with his wife, and they could not give their consent. He said they were both very well pleased with the honourable way in which I had acted, but they could not allow me to come into the house. I asked that Sarah might be allowed to come out to see me, but he refused, and I saw it was no use asking for the privilege, but I was determined



to go to the house, and I did not go until Jane told about us keeping company. A stop was then put to it. Since then I have been going to ruin, and ever will be. I will die like a dog; but, after all, I am glad Mr. and Mrs. Plow are living, and I hope they will forgive me."

This concluded the evidence for the prosecution, which Mr. Foster then summed up.

Mr. Torr, for the defence, urged that he was, under the circumstances, justified in asking them to consider whether the prisoner was, when he committed the crime charged against him, in a state of mind which would render him answerable for what he had done. Although he apparently was sane enough, still he (Mr. Torr) would be shrinking his duty if he did not ask them well to consider whether he was so when he committed the horrible murder with which he was charged, and of which he was undoubtedly guilty. Lighter cause than had beset the prisoner—that of a sort of destroyed love—had been known to upset the mind of an individual. Surely a sane murderer would never go armed with four pistols and a hatchet to murder one unprotected woman—the girl Smith—for there was no evidence to show that he knew Mr. Plow was at home, or that he intended to murder him. A man who would go armed like a brigand, as did the prisoner, with belt and pistols stuck in it, could hardly, he thought, be thought sane.

The learned Judge then summed up, and said the only question for the jury was, whether, when the prisoner committed the murder, he was legally answerable for what he did? The law authorities on the subject of insanity in such cases were clear. The authorities on this point to which he (the learned judge) should call their attention were undoubted, and were not for him to question for a moment. Those authorities said that the jury should be told in all cases that every man charged with murder is presumed to be sane till the contrary is proved to their satisfaction before they could acquit the prisoner on the ground of insanity; and at the time of his committing the murder it must be shown he did not know the quality of the act which he was committing—in other words, that he did not know right from wrong.

The jury, after a brief consultation, returned a verdict *guilty*.

His Lordship, in sentencing the prisoner, said it would have been a deplorable thing if the jury had come to any other verdict, for there was nothing in the evidence of the prisoner's manner or life to lead them to give any other verdict than that which they had come to. The prisoner had rightly been found guilty of a murder and outrage, which were such as might rather be expected from a wild savage than one who had been brought up in a civilised country. It was a murder such as rarely happened for savagery and brutality, and for it he (the prisoner) must die. But the law would not deal so hardly with him as he did with his victim, Jane Smith. He would have time for repentance—she had none. He (the judge), therefore, hoped he would apply the short time he had to live in seeking after that repentance, and his past sins would be forgiven. His Lordship then passed sentence of death in the usual form.

The prisoner throughout the trial was unmoved by the evidence. On being asked why sentence of death should not be passed upon him, he looked at some notes of the evidence he had made and held in his hand, but made no reply. His pale boyish face from the beginning to the end wore a rather pleasing expression than otherwise, or anything but that which we should look for in a murderer.

The case lasted five hours and a half.



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**TODMORDEN MURDER.**

**LIFE, TRIAL, AND EXECUTION**  
**OF**  
**MILES WETHERHILL.**



One Penny.



# THE EXECUTION

OF

## MILES WEATHERHILL.

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The wretched man, whose callousness and singular determination in carrying out his wicked purpose caused an almost unprecedented amount of horror, expiated his crime on the public scaffold at Manchester, on Saturday, April 4th, 1868. He suffered in company with another man who was convicted of murder and sentenced to death. We subjoin an account of the double execution.

Miles Weatherhill, aged 24, weaver, and Timothy Faherty, aged 30, weaver, were hanged on Saturday morning, in front of the New Bailey Prison. The crimes for which these men have forfeited their lives are of too recent a date, and too universally known—so terrible and melancholy are their results—to need a long *resumé* now. The deliberate, remorseless, and cowardly acts of the culprit Weatherhill, detailed in this pamphlet, must ever form one of the blackest pages in the book of criminal record. His vindictive and, to use the judge's expression who sentenced him to death, "barbarous" spirit, caused the death of three innocent people. After his conviction and sentence he declared he would not make the least preparation for death until he had seen his sweetheart, Sarah Bell. In each interview which he had with his unhappy mother he strenuously demanded a last interview with "his Sarah." Seeing the unsettled state of the culprit Sarah Bell was written to, and on Thursday she arrived in Manchester from York, and in company with the convict's mother and sister proceeded to the prison, and were admitted to an interview, and took their last farewell of the wretched man. Passing through the ancient iron gates of the gaol, the creaking of which must have struck the three unhappy women with horror, they were conducted by the humane governor across the prison yard to the condemned cell, which is situated in the northern angle of the prison, and within fifty feet of the wall on which is erected the gallows. It would appear that the convict was aware of the arrival of Sarah Bell, for directly the formidable lock of his cell was turned he sprang from his seat, forgetting evidently for a moment that he was a prisoner, and, rushing towards the door as it opened, he received the unhappy girl in his arms as she entered the cell, ejaculating, "My dearest Sarah." The poor young woman was deeply affected, and would have fainted but for the prompt administration of restoratives. The anguish, too, of the mother and sister is said to have been heart-rending. Indeed, the scene throughout the entire interview was of the most painful description. After the first emotions had, in a measure, subsided, Weatherill in the course of the desultory sobbing conversation that followed complained to his mother, who asked why he had not used the writing paper and stamps with which she had supplied him, that he had not been allowed the use of pen and ink, and that some of his letters had been suppressed. We believe the truth is, that every possible indulgence was allowed the convict in this respect; and if his friends and relatives have not received all the letters that he wrote to them, it has probably been because the contents of these missives were so extraordinary, and even shocking, that it could have served no good purpose whatever to forward them to their destination. The interview was prolonged for a considerable time, and when the parting farewells and embraces were exchanged, the wretched young man, who, while surrounded by a loving aged mother, a devoted sister, and an affectionate sweetheart, fought hard to suppress the emotion their presence created in him, gave full vent to his grief as the three nearest and dearest creatures to him in the world turned to leave, and the heavy iron door of his cell shut them for ever from his view. It was thought, after the convict



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44

had taken a final farewell of his friends, that his mind would be more composed, and that he would turn his attention to the exhortations of the chaplain, who has been in constant attendance upon him, but up to Thursday night he did not manifest symptoms of remorse or contrition for his crime—indeed, so obdurate was he that at one time (so it is said) when the Rev. Mr. Caine, the acting chaplain of the gaol, was endeavouring to bring him to a state of contrition, that he ordered him to leave the cell and take his books with him. It is satisfactory, however, to be able to state that as his time drew near he listened with more attention to the exhortations of the rev. gentleman, and is said to have expressed sorrow for his crime, and to have admitted the justice of his doom. The chaplain was with him till a late hour last night and early this morning, and accompanied the unhappy man to the drop.

The man Faherty, who murdered his sweetheart by beating her on the head with a poker, was from the time he was sentenced very contrite and resigned to his fate. He was visited every morning by the Rev. Father Gadd, whose exertions to bring the convict to a proper sense of his horrible position were unremitting. The convict was deeply affected by the meeting with his widowed mother, which took place, after more than 13 years of separation, on Thursday. Since that interview his demeanour was moderately quiet, but the appearance of calmness seemed to arise not so much from resignation or the hope of pardon hereafter, but rather from sullen hardihood and a determination to meet his fate without flinching. He repeatedly denied that the crime was premeditated; and professed to know nothing of the actual circumstances of the murder until he saw his victim lying bleeding upon the floor of the chamber into which he had pursued her.

The arrangements for the execution were very similar to those adopted when the Fenians—Allan, Gould, and Larkin—were executed in November last. Strong barriers were erected across New Bailey-street (which runs on the northern side of the prison) at intervals of 50 feet, for the purpose of avoiding accidents from overcrowding. The different streets abutting on the main streets were barricaded, while space in front of the scaffold was also enclosed with strong barriers. The gallows, upon a platform overhanging the pavement 20 feet from the ground, was, as usual, draped in black, and the fall was so contrived that only the heads and shoulders of the culprits could be seen by the multitude after the bolt was withdrawn. The platform was erected in an aperture or doorway made temporarily in the prison wall, and was reached from the inside by a flight of wooden steps, also temporarily erected. A large concourse of people began to assemble, and, as the hour, eight o'clock, named as the time of the execution, approached, the crowd must have numbered between 6,000 and 8,000.

A thick haze cleared off a little before eight, affording to the dense crowd, which was three times as great as that at the Fenian execution, a distinct view of the drop. A few minutes before eight Calcraft made his usual preliminary inspection of the drop, and shortly afterwards the two men made their appearance, accompanied by two reverend gentlemen. Faherty was the first at the platform. He was deadly pale, and tried to be firm, but eyed the crowd with an air rather of curiosity. He moved his lips as if in prayer, but the moment the cap was put on his head he prayed louder and most fervently. Weatherhill next made his appearance; he was accompanied by a couple of gaol officers, who extended their hands to his elbows, as if slightly supporting him; but this was not so, for he was evidently firm and determined to meet his fate; he clutched a Prayer-book and prayed aloud. The cap was adjusted within a minute or two, and Calcraft, having shaken both men by the hand, withdrew the bolt, and they fell heavily together, but struggled violently for a moment or two. When all was over an attempt was made on the part of the crowd to get up an applause by the clapping of hands, but this failed, and the vast multitude quietly dispersed.

The bodies, after hanging an hour, were cut down and buried in quicklime, the barriers were removed, and by ten o'clock this locality of Manchester resumed its wonted business-like aspect; and a stranger passing at that hour would not have known that anything unusual had happened.

Faherty passed a good night in sleep, but Wetherill was very restless, and did not sleep more than two hours.



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