

The Independent

No. 6.

Honolulu, H. I., Tuesday, May 7, 1895.

5 Cts.

THE INDEPENDENT

ISSUED EVERY MORNING EXCEPT SUNDAY, BY

The Independent Association,

Corner Allen & Kekuanaoa Street (near Custom House) Honolulu, H. I.

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Residing on Alakea Street in Honolulu.

Subscription Rates

Per month.....\$ 75
Per 3 months in advance.....2 00
Per 1 year in advance.....8 00

The paper is delivered by carriers in the town and suburbs.

Advertisements published at reasonable rates. Special terms for yearly and half yearly contracts.

D. H. LEWIS,
Business Manager.

THE LATEST SENSATION

The Emmanuel Church Murders.

"There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins."

In the long list of mysterious murders which have shocked San Francisco, none have so wrought upon the public mind as the violent deaths of Marian Williams and Blanche Lamont. Scarcely anything else has been talked of since the discovery of the bodies, and the trial will probably pass into the law-books as one of the curiosities of medical and criminal jurisprudence. For, by the very nature of the circumstances attending such revolting crimes, the murderer and his victim must have been alone. Hence this will be another of the many murders where conviction of the murderer depends on circumstantial evidence.

The crime was so extraordinary that it may be well to summarize the circumstances here. On Friday, April 12th, at four p. m., Marian Williams, an eighteen-year old girl, left the house of Mr. and Mrs. C. H. Morgan in Alameda to cross the bay of San Francisco. Miss Williams was employed as "help" in the Morgan family; and owing to her youth, her poverty, her delicate health, and her loneliness in the world, was a protegee of the Morgan family, as well as their "help." The Morgans were about to leave for Tacoma, so Marian Williams had determined to board with a Mrs. Voy in San Francisco during their absence. She reached Mrs. Voy's house that afternoon, and informed her that she was going to attend a social entertainment of the Christian Endeavor Society, a club made up of the young people of Emmanuel Baptist Church, San Francisco. This entertainment was to take place at the house of Dr. Vogel, one of the church members. Marian Williams left the house of Mrs. Voy about 7:45 o'clock to go to Dr. Vogel's. She never reached there.

The following morning, Saturday, April 13th, some ladies entered Emmanuel Baptist Church to decorate it for Easter. They found in a small room leading off the library the dead body of a young girl. It was clothed, but the clothing was disarranged. The neck bore marks of a strangler's hands; there was a stab wound in the forehead; there were several stab wounds over the heart; while on the breast lay the fatal weapon, a broken table-knife from the kitchen in the basement of the church. The ladies gave the alarm; the pastor, Rev. J. G.

Gibson, was sent for; the coroner and the police were notified; and the body was identified as that of Marian Williams.

The police took possession of the church, and at once began searching the great building. On the following day, Easter Sunday, April 14th, they found in the lofty bell-tower of the church another dead body—the body of another young girl. The body was nude, and evidently had been dead for days. It was soon identified as the body of Blanche Lamont, a young girl who had been missing since the afternoon of Wednesday, April 3d. She was a friend of Marian Williams, and acquainted with members of Emmanuel Baptist Church.

At this point, suspicion fell upon one W. H. Theodore Durrant, also a member of Emmanuel Church, its librarian, and superintendent of its Sunday-school. The police claimed that Durrant was the last person seen with both the dead girls. Durrant had always borne a good character. He was a student at Cooper Medical College, and a member of the State militia. On Saturday, April 13th, he left the city at seven a. m., with a militia signal corps, to establish heliographic signal communication between Mt. Diablo, on the Contra Costa side of the bay, and Telegraph Hill, in San Francisco. The police followed him across the bay, and on Sunday afternoon he was arrested and brought to this city. He was not surprised at his arrest, nor were his comrades, for on Sunday morning the signal corps on Telegraph Hill had flashed across to Mt. Diablo, thirty miles away, the message: "The police are after Bugler Durrant for the murder of Marian Williams." Durrant had the sympathy of his comrades, who did not want to give him up to the police, but he submitted to arrest. He was taken to the San Francisco city prison under a heavy guard.

When the inquest began, a mass of testimony was introduced by the police, which seemed to point toward Durrant. The testimony showed that he had talked much of the disappearance of Blanche Lamont, and insinuated that she had fled. It was shown by the testimony of three school-girls who were with her that he had met her outside the Normal School at three o'clock on April 3d, and had got on a south-bound car with her; they were last seen on the corner of Powell and Market, on their way toward the Mission, where the fatal church is situated. It was shown that he had promised to get her a book from the church library in which she was interested, and it is supposed that she went with him for that purpose. Here the chain of evidence is weak. As yet, no one has been found who saw them enter the church. But Miss Lamont never got any further than the church, for her school-books were found concealed in the rafters, as well as all of her clothing, which had been hidden away in various dark corners of the big building. The links of the chain again begin with the evidence of George R. King, the church organist, who testifies that late in the afternoon of Wednesday, April 3d, he entered the church, when he was startled by seeing Durrant in his shirt-sleeves, coming from the belfry tower, pale and exhausted; on inquiry, Durrant told King that he had been fixing the gas-pipes in the ceiling, which were out of order; that the heat and the odor of gas had made him ill; he begged King to go to an adjacent apothecary's and get him a restorative, which the organist did, leaving him alone in the church for a time.

On Sunday, when the police discovered the body of Blanche Lamont, they found the door leading to the belfry locked, and the knob broken off. The janitor, F. A. Sademan, testifies that the last time he went up into the belfry was about a month ago, when the knob was on the door. Another circumstance which the police bring up against Durrant is that on Saturday, April 13th, a newspaper was received through the mail by Mrs. Noble, aunt of Blanche Lamont; in it were three rings belonging to the dead girl, while scrawled upon the margin of the paper were two names, "Geo. R. King" and "M. Schwaifarth," in a hand-writing which the police claim is similar to Durrant's; they also claim that these two names (the second being that of Miss Lamont's music teacher) were placed there to divert suspicion from Durrant. Altogether, the testimony points to the fact that the last human being seen with Blanche Lamont was Theodore Durrant.

Concerning the case of Marian Williams, the testimony shows that Durrant left his house at about 7:45 on Friday evening, April 12th. He was apparently on his way to the Vogel entertainment, where he had told Marian Williams he had something to say to her. He had been seen by F. A. Sademan, the church janitor, and P. S. Chappelle, a railroad detective, loitering around the ferries that afternoon—the police claim, waiting for Marian Williams. When carelessly asked by Sademan "what he was doing there," he replied that he was "watching to see if there was any clew to the disappearance of Blanche Lamont." Durrant, after leaving his home on Friday evening, met a friend, one Dr. Perkins, about eight o'clock. He left him on his way to the Vogel entertainment. The testimony differs as to the hour of Durrant's arrival. No one puts it earlier than half-past nine. The place where he left Dr. Perkins was eight blocks distant from Dr. Vogel's—about fifteen minutes' walk. Durrant fails to account for his hour and a half. He arrived at Dr. Vogel's about half-past nine, perspiring and with his hair disheveled. He asked for permission to wash his hands and arrange his hair, which was given him.

At about eight o'clock, on Friday evening, April 12th, a tall, slender man, wearing a long, black overcoat and a slouch hat (which was what Durrant wore on that night), accompanied by a short, slender girl, with a cape and a turban hat (which articles of attire Marian Williams wore on that night), went into the yard of Emmanuel Church, walked to the side door, which the man unlocked with a key, and then both entered. Durrant and other persons had keys to the church. Several witnesses testify to seeing the couple enter the church. It is supposed that Marian Williams had brought some flowers over from Alameda to be used for the Easter decorations; that she brought them to the church on the chance of finding it open, or of finding some one there to admit her. She found one there. She entered the church. She did not appear at the Vogel entertainment. She was never again seen alive.

At the Vogel house, the Christian Endeavor Society held its meeting, and owing to the absence of Theodore Durrant, its secretary, elected a secretary pro tem. When he arrived, the meeting was nearly over, and the merry-making began. About 11:15 the party broke up, and Durrant walked up street with Elmer Wolf and Miss Lord. He bade them

good-night near Emmanuel Church, saying he was going home. Elmer Wolf says that he then went to a stable and ordered his horse to be ready to ride to his ranch, some distance from the city. On his return, when he passed Emmanuel Church, he saw Durrant in front of the church. Durrant left the city the next morning, as we have said, to join his signal corps. During his absence, the police searched his room. They found in the pocket of the black overcoat he wore on Friday night a purse belonging to Marian Williams. It was identified by C. H. Morgan, her employer, who swore that it was hers. He identified it, among other things, by a twenty-year-old ear-ticket which he had given her as a curio. Durrant accounts for the presence of this purse in his pocket by saying that he picked it up on the street.

One of the features of this case which has most unpleasantly impressed the public has been the freedom with which Emmanuel Church has been used. From the testimony it appears that a number of persons have had keys to the church, and have had access to it both by day and night. Not only the pastor, but the janitor, the janitor's son, the organist, Durrant, and others have had keys to the building, and have been in the habit of using it freely. When a building which is intended for the worship of God is used by young men and young women at hours when no one else is there, it can not but shock the community. It is therefore not without warrant that a curious communication in the shape of a petition has been sent to the board of supervisors of San Francisco. There was a crusade by the churches not long ago against the side-door and rear entrances of the liquor-saloons of this city, which resulted in an ordinance forbidding such entrances, prohibiting private resorts in saloons, and limiting the issuance of liquor license to persons indorsed by twelve citizens. It is probable, therefore, that this petition was inspired by the liquor-dealers. It reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, residents, citizens, and tax-payers of the City and County of San Francisco engaged in a reputable and honorable vocation, do most respectfully represent as follows:

"In view of the heinous crimes committed in a church in this city within the past few days, we as good and order-loving citizens, would suggest to your honorable body that it is about time to call a halt in the debasement of church edifices.

"The remedy is, in our mind, that an ordinance be passed closing and forbidding all side and rear entrances to all church buildings in this city and county, and to have no partitions, separate rooms, bed-rooms or bed-lounges in any such church building, and no person but the authorized sexton or janitor of said church to have any key to any door or entrance to the said church, front, rear, or side entrance, and he, the said trustee or authorized person, to be under the supervision of the police authorities at all times, who are enjoined to keep notices of the fact of the opening and closing of said churches, and for what purpose.

"And that the preaching of the gospel in the City and County of San Francisco be made a licensed vocation, and no minister or preacher receive a license unless he has a good and sufficient character, or else the signatures of twelve good citizens, tax-payers and property-owners to that effect.

"This petition is not conceived in a spirit of malice, but with the

highest and loftiest and honorable object of saving the young girls of San Francisco from murderers and the debasement of churches and houses of ill-fame. And for a favorable consideration of this petition your petitioner will ever pray, etc. ROBERT BAILEY."

Whether it is not true that the "petition was not conceived in a spirit of malice," it is certainly true that the occurrences at Emmanuel Church furnish some justification for this document. If it is the revenge of the liquor-dealers, they have had ample revenge. A more stinging sarcasm was never penned.

As we write, the inquest is still in progress, and Theodore Durrant stands arraigned before the bar of public opinion. It can not be questioned that many people believe him to be guilty. But we do not believe in trial by newspaper. Therefore we leave this strange and awful case, merely giving the facts as far as they have been learned.

But whatever may be the fate of Theodore Durrant, there is only one fitting end for Theodore Durrant's church. It should die. For years the shadows of evil have brooded over this ill-starred congregation. One of its pastors became insane, and committed suicide; another pastor, Isaac M. Kalloch, was the murderer of Charles de Young. Under the present pastorate, two young girls have been foully done to death. There is no further field for Emmanuel Baptist Church as a temple of the Most High. No congregation could sit in the sanctuary without the pealing notes of the organ recalling the groans of Marian Williams, as she yielded up her frail life under her murderer's cruel hands. A step on the belfry stair would make them think with a shudder of the murderer panting up the tower with his bloody burden. And when the Christmas bells rang out, it would not be "Peace and good-will to men" that they would ring—it would be the requiem of poor Blanche Lamont, over whose fair young body, bloody and stark, far up in the belfry tower, the great bells moaned as they tolled her funeral hymn.

S. P. Argonaut.



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