

EVELYN NESBIT THAW

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CELEBRATED
STANFORD WHITE
MURDER

Here is a remarkable character sketch of the girlish little ingenue in the great roof garden tragedy—the spendthrift-manslayer's wife as she really is.

EVELYN NESBIT THAW is the woman in the case. Here is a little bunch of femininity tipping the scales at something less than 110 pounds—a fuss of feathers, a hank of hair, a frivolity of fringe, a pair of big eyes, such as artists like, and a smile that means everything or nothing. For this woman the life of one man was sacrificed. For this woman the life of another man is in jeopardy. Is the game worth the electric volts?

By **FREDERICK BOYD STEVENSON.**
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AT the first glance at the Thaw murder trial in New York one is impressed with the thought of sacrilege. Ten feet back of Harry K. Thaw, sitting in the second row of plain wooden chairs, is his mother. Her white hair is accentuated by the red flush on her face. The lines on her brow are painfully deep. On her right sits her daughter, Mrs. George Lauder Carnegie, or sometimes her other daughter, the Countess of Yarmouth. In the next seat is Evelyn Nesbit Thaw, and next to her is May MacKenzie, the show girl. These two exchange numerous courtesies. They smile lightly at each other. Their interests are common interests. They are in perfect sympathy with each other. But the mother looks neither to the left nor to the right. She hears only the low, sonorous tones of Jerome, the relentless prosecutor, seeking to send her son to the chair, and the pleading voices of her son's counsel, seeking to save him from the chair. Her life has been the life of the good wife and the good mother. Her enforced association with this potpourri of a criminal's room has cut her pride to the quick.

Evelyn Thaw, the Wife.

But how about Evelyn Nesbit Thaw, the wife?

If, by some psychological phenomenon, one's soul might follow the ritual of the believing Mahatma and become merged with the entity of another soul, one might see that other life from an unguessed viewpoint. It is easy enough to say: "A weak, vain, foolish woman." It is easy enough to say: "She sees it as a player sees it." It is easy enough to say all that and more, but until one gazes through the horrors of that night on the Madison Square Roof Garden, until one looks on the solemn faces of the jurors in the box, until one gazes on the crowded in the court room, and until one receives the smitten smile of the prisoner, who should be the greatest of all on earth to one, one cannot judge. Rather than to condemn too hastily, let us, then, follow out this idea of the Mahatma and look into the inner life of this woman. Do not judge her by the woman you see in the courtroom—one day cast down and gloomy, the next day, perhaps, smiling, one day the broken woman, the next day delighted the hearts of ambitious artists by her sangfroid and grace. The artist's model, the chorus girl, the actress, the millionnaire's spendthrift, was not evolved through one revolution of the short hand of the clock. The teaching of the mother, the environment of the child, the flattery, the fustle, the glow of the white lights, the false smiles on life—these were the attributes that formed the whole.

Her Career's Turning Point.

The turning point in her career began twelve years ago, when she stopped a photographer passing along a street in Allegheny City, Pa., and asked him to take her picture. The man looked down into the most beautiful little face that he had ever seen. It was round and full of life, full of glow, and full of shadows, and surrounding it, and falling down her back, was a mass of pretty curls. That was the beginning of her fame as a professional beauty. For soon after that Mrs. Darroch, of Philadelphia, made a painting of her, and later Mr. Phillips made some photographic studies of her, and her mother, finding she could get well paid for the daughter's posing, encouraged her in that line of endeavor. Her father, Scott Nesbit, a lawyer in Pittsburgh with a penchant for gambling, had died some years before, and her mother went to Allegheny City, and kept a lodging house. Later, when she learned that Evelyn was in demand as an artist's model, she moved to New York with her son and daughter. And during these days while posing as a model, Evelyn was trying to obtain a position on the stage. She finally secured an engagement in "Floradora."

"Floradora" engagement, I made enough money to support our little family. At that time Evelyn Nesbit and her mother were living in two rooms in an apartment house opposite the Casino Theater. Her earnings were small, and all her stage and street gowns were made by her mother, who exercised the greatest ingenuity in turning and altering the materials she had to do with. Both mother and daughter were fond of going out to dinner, but the mother was careful that no "detrimental" as she termed them, should be the escorts of her daughter. To the mother a "detrimental" meant a man without money. Along about this period Stanford White was the "guardian angel" of the Casino girls, and Evelyn Nesbit came under his guardianship. The Nesbits then moved into more pretentious apartments. Evelyn wore better clothes, soon had a "thinking party" in "The Wild Rose," and later was in the chorus of a play at the Madison square Theater.

She was only 17 years old when she entered the "Floradora" company, but even before this she began to get press notices that were the envy of girls who had been ten or more years in the theatrical business. And these press notices began soon after the guardianship of Stanford White. Ask any theatrical manager or the friend of a theatrical manager, and if he be so disposed, he will tell you how it is done. Thus we read back in 1901 in a New York evening paper, beneath a flattering photograph:

"Miss Evelyn Nesbit of this city, the prettiest girl of fifteen that has ever

delighted the eyes and inspired the artists of this city, for whom she has posed as a model. She is a dainty little classic, bright of conversation and with a talent for music. Such artists as Carroll Beckwith, Levy, Carl Riener, Irving Willard, Church, and Randall Phillips declare her a well-nigh perfect type of maidenly beauty. Her work has attracted the attention of several managers, and she will probably be cast next season for an ingenue in a comedy soon to be produced. When she left the studios for the stage, to take part in the Span-



SKETCH OF EVELYN NESBIT THAW AS SHE APPEARS IN COURT

Note the Girlish Face, Figure, and Mode of Dress; the Sad and Yet Not Over-Concerned Expression and the Easy Posture.

delighted the eyes and inspired the artists of this city, for whom she has posed as a model. She is a dainty little classic, bright of conversation and with a talent for music. Such artists as Carroll Beckwith, Levy, Carl Riener, Irving Willard, Church, and Randall Phillips declare her a well-nigh perfect type of maidenly beauty. Her work has attracted the attention of several managers, and she will probably be cast next season for an ingenue in a comedy soon to be produced. When she left the studios for the stage, to take part in the Span-

who immediately fell in love with her. Thaw began to shower presents upon her, but her mother from the start objected to him, preferring the guardianship of Stanford White. One day a piano mover rang the bell at the Nesbit flat. Mrs. Nesbit, now Mrs. Holman, opened the door. "Here is a grand piano, ma'am," said the man. "We have ordered no piano," said Mrs. Holman. "It is for you, ma'am; there is no mistake," insisted the man. "Here are the directions on the tag—they are plain enough, ma'am," Miss Evelyn Nesbit said. "What sent this piano?" asked the man, sharply. "Mr. Harry Thaw, ma'am," was the answer. "Well, you take it right back to Mr. Harry Thaw with my compliments,

and tell him that Miss Nesbit does not care for it," rejoined Mrs. Holman. Sent Away to School. After that Miss Nesbit took a minor part in "Tommy Rot," which was put on at Mrs. Osborne's playhouse, and Thaw paid attentions to her there nightly. The girl was sixteen years old then, and she and her mother decided that it would be well for her to obtain a better education than public schools of the grammar grade had afforded her in Pittsburgh and Allegheny. So, she was sent to a school for young ladies at Pompton, N. J. It was an exclusive institution, the membership being limited to twenty-five. In the meantime Harry Thaw, who began his

This, in brief, is the story of Evelyn Nesbit Thaw's life—not a life filled with good deeds and impulses, not a life with high motives and ideals. But after all, one asks if the girl was wholly to blame for that. There was one primordial factor that entered into her life and influenced it. That factor was Harry Thaw. We have all of us read a great deal of the shams of the Thaw family because of Harry Thaw's marriage to Evelyn Nesbit. When Harry Thaw met Evelyn Nesbit, Harry Thaw was no angel. That \$8,000 Dinner. Three years later, when he was thirty years old, he is reported to have given a dinner costing \$8,000 to twenty women whose photographs were

attended to Miss Nesbit while she was a school girl, much to the annoyance of the principal of the school, who bluntly asked him to discontinue his visits there. But Thaw was persistent and it began to be noted about that little Miss Nesbit's days at the exclusive institution at Pompton were nearing an end. Then she fell ill and Thaw went tearing out there in an automobile with a doctor from New York and a basket full of cut roses, kissing her and shocking the entire school.

Poses for Artists. Her school days thus suddenly brought to a close, Evelyn Nesbit went back to New York as an artist's model and became the subject of Charles Dana Gibson's "The Eternal Question," which is said to be one of his great triumphs. She made little progress in a theatrical way after her "Wild Rose" engagement, and, as there was scant promise of advancement in that line, she went with her mother to Europe. Thaw followed her and there mother and daughter quarreled, as Mrs. Holman said Evelyn was accepting the attentions of "that odious man," and she was done with her daughter forever. Evelyn Nesbit returned to New York alone, and to an intimate friend she is reported to have said: "Harry Thaw has all my jewels. He took them from me because he was afraid I was going to leave him." She secured an engagement with "The Girl From Dixie," but remained only a few weeks. Thaw followed her to America, and induced her to return to Europe with him, where they remained until November, 1904, when they came back to New York.

Family Jars. Along in 1905 a coldness seemed to spring up between Mrs. William and Mrs. Harry Thaw. Mrs. Harry Thaw was not at the wedding of Mrs. William Thaw's grandchild, the daughter of W. R. Thompson, and there was talk of a separation of the Harry Thaws. Then came all sorts of stories, and these stories were followed by the murder of Stanford White on the evening of June 26, 1906.

Now the Thaws may blame Evelyn Nesbit Thaw as much as they please, but at the same time it must be observed that other members of the Thaw family have not always been out of the sensational public prints. There, for instance, is Mrs. George Lauder Carnegie, whose husband's name was connected with the Estlier Bartlett Clark divorce case. There also is the Countess of Yarmouth. Just after her wedding the newspapers were filled with sensational stories to the effect that the Earl of Yarmouth had held up the wedding party on the way to the church, demanding at the last moment a double allowance of the marriage settlements agreed upon by him previously. Although a settlement was already drawn up where-in he agreed to take as his personal allowance \$200 a year, it was said he demanded \$10,000, and that the countess' fortune upon her death should go to the Herford estates instead of her family in the event of there being no heirs. Harry Thaw, it was reported, jumped into a cab and sought the family lawyer, and while he was gone his mother is said to have come to the terms of the earl to avoid a scandal.

Still a Beautiful Child. No attempt is made, however, to gloss over the shortcomings of Evelyn Nesbit Thaw. We have seen that her environments were not the best. We have seen that her education was not the education that makes toward the building up of character for a high-minded young woman. We have seen the attributes and the surroundings that have produced this woman who is stared at in the criminal courtroom today. If she were only twenty-two years old, who should be in the full flush of womanly beauty, but who is as faded as a woman of forty, even now with all the worry with all the strain upon her nervous energies, there are still to be seen traces of that great beauty which she possessed when a child. Perhaps there is no beauty-fading though it may be—as difficult to define as that of Harry Thaw's wife.

Smile Her Crowning Glory.

What does she look like? You may ask a dozen critics. They will give a dozen answers to you. You, perhaps, have seen many of her photographs. They are all different. There are those who say her face looks young and innocent. There are others who aver that it is old and haggard. Then there are others who say she has a strong face. As for her eyes—they are large and hazel. At times they seem to be long and soft eyes—Oriental eyes. At times her face seems to be of five persons in Paris. The manner active and full of life, and then dull and covered with shadows and deep lines. Her wealth of black hair adds to the picturesque effect of the face, and sometimes to its somberness. Then there is the low brow and the nose—a good nose, which she possessed when a child. It creates the impression of having started out to be a Greek nose, then changing to a Roman, and ending by being neither. Then come the full lips, which at times can be compressed so that they seem thin and sharp. Altogether, the mouth is weak. The ears are large and long. The teeth, however, the figure like, the head shapely and well poised, and the smile the crowning glory of the woman. These are the outward and visible signs. What is the inward and spiritual grace? Who is there to judge? Who can read the secrets of this woman's heart?