

WHAT DURRANT FELT WHILE WAITING FOR THE FATAL VERDICT.



W. H. THEODORE DURRANT, THE CONVICTED MURDERER OF BLANCHE LAMONT, IN HIS CELL AT THE COUNTY JAIL WRITING HIS COMMUNICATION TO "THE CALL."
[Sketched from life by a "Call" artist.]

DURRANT'S LETTER TO "THE CALL."

I cannot describe the peculiar feeling that kept creeping over me as Judge Murphy's charge to the jury drew closer and closer to the end; and as the last word of the charge was spoken I involuntarily looked about as if to ask, "What next?" I felt in a sort of a chaos for the moment, then at once I instinctively raised my eyes to the jury and looked at them. I looked as if I desired to know what they were going to do. I longed, I yearned for their expression; to hear them at once. I looked steadfastly into the eyes of each man. I watched their movements. I tried hard to read in their faces which one of them was for or against me. Hope rose and fell as I cast my searching looks over them. I felt relieved at one, and again I felt disturbed by the looks of another, and all at once as they filed out of their box into the jury-room I felt a cloud press over my mind, and all became blank to me for the moment. I looked around; I saw my friends and my enemies. I saw the great thirsty crowd of curiosity-seekers. I looked askance. I wondered to myself that I should be so calm and possessed when all these people had centered their interest in me. They came to see me, to hear the evidence, to hear and see the end of the great trial; and I was the center of it all. For a moment I inwardly felt amused, then all at once a flash of my true position came to me and I became tranquil again, forcing all the exhausted energy in my power to control my feelings and appear, to all outward signs, at least, calm and indifferent. But it was tasking all my power to do so, and presently, when the same jurors filed back in the jury-box, took their seats, ah, with what remarkable rapidity I scanned their faces from one to the other, trying to read the verdict in their eyes before the foreman would unfold that tightly folded slip of paper and announce the verdict. I felt keenly my predicament. In less than a minute I should know my fate; all the theories, all presentiments, all opinions, all hope, all the consolations, all fear and doubt were to be at once decided. As I watched Foreman Dutton unfold the paper and commence reading the verdict I felt as if half a dozen men were reading it at the same time. I felt as if some one was reading for the benefit of my ears, another to catch my eyes, another to touch my heart, another to uncover that great and deep mystery of doubt which was veiled in my mind. As he uttered the first word I instinctively felt for the worst. A peculiar tremor seized my body, but I controlled myself and gasped to hear the verdict to the last. And as the fatal words were uttered a cold chill passed through me. Instantly all doubt passed away and I became conscious of a new feeling, a terrible foreboding of the ill omen. The change of my thoughts as

I came to realize my situation was too sudden for my organism; I felt paralyzed for a moment. My mind refused to think; I felt stunned. I made a desperate effort to shake the feeling off, the feeling of lethargy, and as I fastened my eyes on my dear mother I became conscious and I felt like myself again. I clasped her, I embraced her, I looked in her eyes, and felt a great relief come over me. My strength and my courage returned only to be startled by the cheering and vociferous applause of the multitude—notably that of clapping of the hands of the Lamonts and Nobles and the screeching of the crowd.

My thoughts swiftly went to my dear mother. I cared nothing for myself, but I did feel for my dear, poor mother, who was not even permitted to receive in respectful silence the fatal crushing blow to her wounded heart. Yes, I declare to you, reader, there is nothing that has touched my heart so deeply as the great love and affection of my dear mother, whose heart was pierced daily for months and weeks during this great ordeal; and finally, when the end came and the blow descended and her heart broke and the greatest act of the drama in real life became enacted, the people—what shall I say? I hesitate; but as I see her bleeding heart with no one to comfort her I say the fiends incarnate must needs to deport themselves like demons and applaud before this sorrowful scene.

Ah! for words, for language, for utterances to express my indignation at such a cruel scene. There is nothing so mean, base, vile, degraded, demoniacal, miammoniacal, devilish, satanic, impish and hellish as to revile the true and honest grief and sorrow of a mother's heart.

Innocent that I was, innocent that I claim to be and am, I reposed with a child's confidence at the outcome of the charge.

I gave my testimony—I gave the whole willingly—I gave the whole truth—whether it was for or against me. On the stand I substantiated many of the points the prosecution endeavored to prove, which were used against me in its argument and twisted and turned into all shapes, and it helped to convict me on circumstantial evidence.

But I had then, as I have now, the utmost belief in the triumph of the innocent, and although the law of the land has convicted me, if I must soon come to stand before God, my Maker, I do now, as I will ever hereafter, till the last breath leave my body, and as the spark of life disappears in the unfathomable beyond, as I stand upon the brink of eternity, in the presence of my God, cry out in the anguish of my soul that I am Innocent, Innocent.

WILLIAM HENRY THEODORE DURRANT.

Cell 29, County Jail, Nov. 5, 1895.

DURRANT TURNS AUTHOR.

The Convicted Murderer of Blanche Lamont Tells of His Feelings in Court.

William Henry Theodore Durrant has turned author. He burns the midnight oil in his cell at the County Jail and turns out great heaps of manuscript, some pages of which THE CALL presents this morning, rather as a literary curiosity than anything else.

Naturally, whatever Durrant writes in his lonely cell is of absorbing interest to the world, for he has been the central figure in one of the greatest criminal trials of the century. He writes a great deal these days, and to tell the truth, is able to command something more than a fair price for the product of his pen.

"You see," he said yesterday, "that is one of the advantages of being a notorious man. I have had many offers from editors who desire to print my writings and a dealer in London has written to me offering £25 for my autograph alone. All this will bring money to my parents at the time when they need it most."

He has orders from various newspapers and publications for manuscript. The great New York dailies have made him generous—even fabulous—offers for his writings. The public is keen to know as much as it can learn of this abnormal man, who still smiles and preserves a calm and seemingly unaffected exterior, though

convicted of a murder so heinous that its perpetration sent a thrill of horror round the world.

In his communication to THE CALL, Durrant gives an inkling of that seeming mystery of his calm and imperturbable demeanor throughout the trial, and even at its last moments when the dread verdict came.

He says he struggled to maintain his calmness and not to break down and show feeling before his enemies. And this is probably true. No matter how abnormal a creature Durrant may be, it is hardly probable that his seeming indifference is natural, his coolness unaffected. Indeed, a man may be studied from many points in his writings. To the practiced eyes these present many opportunities for the study of character that are not presented in any other way.

To the student of chirography the handwriting of Durrant will present excellent chances for the study of the man's characteristics.

Of course the writer of the pages still protests his innocence, though a jury of his peers has adjudged him guilty. He also pays his respects to the crowd that cheered when Foreman Warren Dutton announced the dread verdict of guilty.

Taken as a whole, Durrant's communication to THE CALL is a unique document in its way, and will repay careful study by those who care to pry into the mysteries and mainsprings of that phase of human nature as presented in the case of William Henry Theodore Durrant.

THEODORE DURRANT'S LIFE.

Compiled From His Own Evidence Given on the Witness Stand.

From Durrant's testimony and statements made by him during the trial the following particulars of his life are collected:

I am 24 years of age and have resided in San Francisco sixteen years. My father and mother were married at Toronto, Canada, on the 30th of June, 1870. They were both natives of Canada. In December of 1879 my parents removed from Toronto to San Francisco. I have one sister living, Eulalia Maud Durrant. She is 21 years of age and is now in Berlin studying the pianoforte at the conservatory. She left for Europe on the 14th of February last.

With the exception of a few trips I have made I have always lived with my parents. At one time, ten years ago, I lived at Santa Rosa with my sister, whose residence there was necessitated by the state of her health, which was very poor.

When we first came to San Francisco we lived in Hayes Valley, on Fell street, between Buchanan and Laguna. We lived there only a year or two and then removed to Hayes street, opposite the Jesuit College, between Van Ness avenue and Franklin street.

While my sister and I were away at Santa Rosa my mother and father lived in rooms on Fifth street, near Jessie. A few

we came home our family again went housekeeping at 305 Fell street. Seven years ago we removed to my mother and father's present residence, 1025 Fair Oaks street.

My education began at a private school when I was 5 years of age. I have been going to school continually since then, though at vacation time, for the past eight or nine years. I have been employed at the Golden Rule Bazaar, and have at different times done odd jobs in electricity for various persons. I worked for John Coop once; he is president of the Belvedere Land Association. I wired the house of Joseph Perkins and also did work for Mr. Bunker.

When I graduated from the grammar school I went to the Cogswell Polytechnic School and then to the Cooper Medical College.

About five years ago, when Emmanuel Church was first built, I became a member of its congregation, and from that time till my arrest I was a regular attendant at all its services and social gatherings. Prior to the building of Emmanuel Church I attended Grace Methodist Episcopal Church and Sabbath-school. Before that, when I was quite small, I went to the Trinity Presbyterian Sunday-school.

When my father and mother first came here from Toronto they brought church letters and presented them to the Metropolitan Temple congregation, which was at that time presided over by the Rev. Mr. Killoch. Until I was arrested for this crime my life was very pleasant, and there was nothing in it at all out of the ordinary

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William Henry Theodore Durrant

FAC-SIMILE OF THE FIRST AND LAST PAGES OF DURRANT'S COMMUNICATION TO "THE CALL."