

A STRIKING PARALLEL TO THE RECENT TRAGEDY.

On 11th May, 1811, the Rt. Hon. Spencer Percival, Chancellor of the Exchequer, was entering the lobby of the House of Commons, in company with Lord F. Osborne, when he was shot with a pistol, and expired, uttering only the words, "oh! I'm murdered!" A person was standing between the assassin and the deceased at the time the pistol was fired, and the assassin was obliged to raise his hand over the shoulder of the intervening individual, and the ball consequently took a slanting direction.

The murderer threw down the pistol, but on his person was found another with a steel barrel seven inches in length, and a bundle of papers. He made no effort to escape. Horror and dismay at first prevented any attention being paid to the assassin, but when the question was asked, "where is the rascal that fired?" John Bellingham, who had been unobserved, coolly stepped up and replied, "I am the unfortunate man." When asked the motive of the horrid deed, he replied, "it is a private injury; I know what I have done: it was a denial of justice on the part of the government."

On the preliminary examination before the magistrates, it appeared he had on the previous day been watching the entrance of every member from Liverpool, testified he had received many memorials from the prisoner, respecting his claims on the government, based upon his alleged services in Russia, for which he had received no remuneration.

These representations had also been made to Percival, and Tarleton Speaker of the House.

Bellingham, during the examination, was perfectly composed. He said he had for more than a fortnight watched for a favorable opportunity to effect his purpose; that he had implored for justice, in vain; he had made application to every person likely to procure him redress, and that he had at length been driven to despair by being told at the public offices that he might do his worst. "I have done my worst, and I rejoice in my deed."

Mrs. Percival was on a visit to the Honorable Mrs. Ryder, in Great George street, when the sad catastrophe happened and was apprised of it on her return to Downing street. She and her children were plunged into inexpressible grief.

The culprit only evinced anxiety to vindicate the justice of the act. He said if he had shot Mr. Percival from personal malice he should have been worse than a brute. It was the minister, not the man, that had led him to commit the deed, and if he had a million of lives to lose he would do the same way. He had bought the pistols, proved them, (those were the days of flint locks), and loaded them for the purpose.

He was brought to trial on May 15th before Lord Ch. Justice Mansfield. Baron Graham and Sir Nash Grose. He plead not guilty, and after the evidence was in he was called upon for his defence. He asked whether his counsel had nothing to urge. On being informed that they were not entitled to speak he said that his documents had been taken from him and not returned. They were handed to him and he deliberately examined and arranged them. He then rose, and bowing respectfully to the court and jury, went into his defence with a firm voice and without any appearance of embarrassment or feeling for the awful situation in which he was placed.

We can only quote the opening sentences which will show that insanity was the ground on which his counsel relied for his defence.

"I feel great obligation" he said, "to the Attorney-General for the objection he has made to the plea of insanity. I think it is far more fortunate that such a plea as that should have been unfounded than it should have existed in fact. I am obliged to my counsel, however, for having thus endeavored to consult my interest, as I am convinced the attempt has arisen from the kindest motive. That I am, or have been insane, is a circumstance of which I am not apprised, except from the single instance of my having been confined in Russia. How far that may be considered as affecting my present situation is not for me to determine.

I beg to assure you that the crime which I have committed has arisen from compulsion rather than from any hostility to the man whom it has been my fate to destroy. Considering the amiable character of the universally admitted virtues of Mr. Per-

cival, I feel if I could murder him in a cool and unjustifiable manner, I should not deserve to live another moment in this world."

We have not the space to quote the entire speech, but the idea was that it was justifiable to remove the obstacle to justice whatever it was. The dread insanity is now called Nihilism. In the course of his speech the prisoner said: "Had I been so fortunate as to have met Lord Levison Gower instead of that truly amiable and highly lamented individual Mr. Percival, he is the man who should have received the ball."

When the prisoner got through Lord Mansfield summed up the evidence, pointed out those species of insanity which would excuse murder—a person capable of distinguishing right from wrong, could not be excused.

Bellingham was convicted and executed on the 18th of May. Thus the majesty of the law was vindicated and Nihilism for the time was annihilated. The above synopsis is taken from VI vol. of celebrated trials, page 102.

From the fragment of telegrams of the recent horrible tragedy at Washington the reader will see a striking similarity in some of the phases of the two cases there. The head of the English government was struck down and the nation plunged into grief. So with our chief head and our nation. Percival was a man of estimable virtues. Garfield the same. Bellingham a disappointed claimant; Guiteau the same. The one watched for two weeks around the Parliament House; the other around the Capitol; both were men of education. The one shot over Lord Osborne's shoulder; the other shot while Blaine was, as we hear, arm and arm with the President. The one was doubly armed with his two pistols; the other with his revolver. The single expression that fell from Bellingham's lips is paralleled by Guiteau's remark; "I'm a stalwart. Arthur is President now." Whether future developments will bring out a similar insanity remains to be seen.

North and South, East and West, political friends and whilom foes, are uniting in praying to God that the shot may not prove fatal.

A REMARKABLE LOVE STORY OF MAINE AND NORTH CAROLINA.

A remarkable romance is related by a Morehead City (N.C.) correspondent. About fifty years ago a prepossessing young woman appeared suddenly in a small mountain village near Asheville and obtained work in a farmer's family. She called herself Mary Burt, but gave no further clue to her origin. Her tasks were so skillfully performed, and she could sing a song, dance a reel and tell a story so well that she became a village favorite. Fifteen years later the mystery surrounding her was forgotten. Having declined more than one good offer of marriage, she settled down as a good-natured old maid, became the beneficent "aunt" of the neighborhood, and finally was persuaded to take charge of a country school near by.

After several years of teaching her whole character seemed to change. She became moody, melancholy and fond of solitude. Purchasing a lonely spot among the mountains, she had a rude log hut erected, and there she lived without any companionship but that of her dog, cat, cow and chickens. Her only book was the bible, and this she nearly learned by heart. The publication of this woman hermit story in the Asheville Citizen not long ago, brought a solution for the mystery. The article was copied into a Vermont paper and attracted the notice of Robert Fletcher, a prominent citizen of that State, and Fletcher soon visited Asheville, sought the editor of the Citizen, and together they went to Miss Burt's house. The hermit did not recognize the Vermont, but she soon learned that he was her old lover.

A mistake had kept them apart for half a century, but when Fletcher left Asheville a few days later, Mary Burt Howe, for that was the hermit's full name, accompanied him as his wife. When Miss Howe and Fletcher were young they were engaged to be married. The young woman fancied her lover was attached to another girl, and suddenly left her home in Maine. Going to Boston, she shipped as stewardess on a ship bound for Liverpool. The vessel was wrecked on the North Carolina coast, and after many adventures at sea in an open boat and among friendly Indians on land, Miss Howe found her way to civilization. Robert Fletcher traced his runaway sweetheart to the ship on which she sailed, and, hearing of the loss of the vessel, always mourned for her as dead till the North Carolina paper gave him a happy surprise.



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