



Double Murder in Wiltshire

Escape and Capture of the Murderer

A Police-Sergeant Shot Dead in the Struggle

The little Wiltshire town of Melksham was the scene of a deliberate murder on Saturday night, the victim being Henry Richards, aged thirty-two, a tent-maker, in the employ of Mr. C. Maggs. From the particulars to be gathered, it would appear that for some time past a man going by the name of Louis Hamilton (a native of Higher Combe, Shaftesbury) has been employed at the Devizes Asylum as an attendant. He is a man of about twenty-nine years of age. During his engagement there he made the acquaintance of a young person named Adams, and the two apparently got on well together, for on Sunday, April 3rd, they were 'published' for the first time in St. James' Church, Devizes, with the view to being married about Easter. Hamilton gave notice to leave his employment on April 2nd, and on the 5th he asked to leave at once, as urgent family matters required his presence at home. He was allowed to leave. After he had gone the young woman was informed that her intended husband owed a lot of money to the inmates and other people in the town, and she at once wrote a strongly-worded letter breaking off the engagement. Hamilton appears to have been very much enraged at this, and telegraphed to the girl to meet him at Melksham on Saturday evening. The young woman evidently made up her mind not to go to Melksham, and in a letter she wrote home to her parents she told them that she had broke off the engagement, and stated her reasons for doing so. She also stated that Hamilton intended coming to Melksham on Saturday evening. On Saturday evening Hamilton arrived at Melksham about eight o'clock, wearing a light Scotch plaid suit of clothes and a bowler hat. He met the deceased man Richards (who is an uncle to the girl Adams), and the two men went to the Crown Inn, where they had some drink together. Leaving the inn about a quarter to ten, the two men proceeded up Spa Road in conversation with one another. When they were about three parts of the way up the road, two shots were fired at Richards, who ran forwards a few yards saying 'I'm shot', and then fell on the bridge close to his house. After the shots (the reports of which were heard by several people) had been fired, Hamilton was seen by someone coming down the Spa Road, who said to him 'What was that report I heard?' and he replied 'Only some boys on the bridge letting off some crackers'. He then passed on, and was lost sight of, no tidings being heard of him throughout Sunday and Monday, although many people conjectured that he was seen in one place and another, but nothing definite could be said of his whereabouts. The unfortunate victim had in the meantime been picked up and Dr. Keir sent for, but he was dead before his arrival. He was taken indoors, and the face, head, and neck examined, but no trace of the shot wounds was discernible. There was some blood on the face caused by the deceased falling. On Sunday, Dr. Keir made a post-mortem examination, and found two bullet wounds in the back.

The Search For The Murderer

Throughout the whole of Sunday and Monday the country around was scoured by the police, but nothing was heard of Hamilton. On Monday afternoon the police authorities issued a handbill containing a photograph of the person suspected, and accompanied with a statement as follows: 'Wanted, charged with a wilful murder at Melksham, Wilts, on the 9th inst., Louis Hamilton, late

attendant at the Devizes County Asylum, aged 29, height 5ft. 7in., fair complexion, sandy moustache, no whiskers, thin face, dark-brown hair, rather curly or frizzy. Dressed in a suit of large light plaid, supposed black bowler hat, or may be wearing dark coat and vest. A native of Higher Coombe, Shaftesbury. May be carrying a revolver. Probably will endeavour to leave the country'.

Desperate and Fatal Struggle with the Murderer

It was certain that unless he made away with himself the murderer would soon be hounded down. Where the prisoner had been since the fatal deed of Saturday night is even now not absolutely clear, but it is stated that he made his way to Frome and afterwards to Bath, where he occupied private lodgings. From something which has since transpired it would seem that he ran short of money, and on Monday night he was found tramping along the main road from Frome to Warminster, in the hope, he is reported to have stated since his arrest, of reaching his home at Shaftesbury, where he might obtain money to enable him to get further away. On Monday night about 10.30 a strange man called at the White Hart Inn, in the village of Corsley (kept by Mrs. Rendall, a widow), and asked for some drink. As he could not give a satisfactory answer to the servant girl as to where he had come from, drink was refused him, it being after closing hours. He was very much annoyed at this, and swore. Standing tethered at the end of the house was a horse belonging to Mrs. Rendall's brother-in-law, who had called to talk over matters with her. Shortly after the drink was refused to the man, a shot was heard outside, and the inmates of the house became very much alarmed, the rumours of the past day or two not tending to very much allay their fears. Mr. Rendall went outside and found his horse prancing and jumping about as if mad. When he had quieted the animal somewhat, he examined it, but could not find anything the matter with it. He rode it home, and when taking off its collar he noticed that it was saturated with blood. Having procured a light he examined the horse, and found on the neck (near side) a bullet wound, and on the other side a lump as if the bullet had penetrated through to the other side. Mr. Rendall immediately re-saddled the horse and rode to the Warminster Police-station and gave information to Mr. Supt. Perrett, who had only just got home from Trowbridge, having been out all day in search of the murderer. Mr. Rendall told Mr. Perrett that he believed the man who had called at the house to be the murderer. The horse was examined by a veterinary surgeon, and Mr. Perrett called up Police-Sergeant Moulden, and together with P.C. Davis and P.C. Langley, started in pursuit.

When Superintendent Perrett was informed of the incident outside the White Hart at Corsley, he determined upon an immediate investigation. He resides at the Warminster police station, and under the same roof is the sergeant's house. Enos Moulden has been the resident sergeant only about two months. He would have been fifty years of age at the end of this year, when, after a service in the Wiltshire force of twenty-nine years, he intended retiring on a well-earned pension. For the past ten years he has been stationed at Shrewton, in the Salisbury division, and the manner in which he has conducted himself is best shown by the fact that on his removal to Warminster the inhabitants of Shrewton subscribed a considerable sum of money for the purpose of presenting him with a testimonial. This was to have taken the form of a handsome timepiece and purse of money, and it is a melancholy feature in the proceedings that the time fixed for the presentation was the very day on which the poor fellow met his death. He had asked for, and obtained, permission from his Superintendent to visit Shrewton on Tuesday night, and as he did not go off duty until midnight on Monday, it was with some reluctance that Superintendent Perrett disturbed him in the early hours of Tuesday morning. As he had some important business to transact before leaving Warminster, the Superintendent despatched Sergeant Moulden to Bugley, a small village just outside Warminster, where he would meet Constables Langley and Davies. Shortly afterwards the Superintendent followed, and on reaching Bugley found the sergeant and the two constables awaiting his arrival. Without further delay the four started to walk along the main road to Corsley.

It is convenient at this juncture to have regard to the movements of Sergeant Reed and Constable Chandler. They had been apprised of the extraordinary incident at the White Hart, and they proceeded in the direction of Warminster, in the hope of overtaking the man who was supposed to have shot the horse. They had got some distance out on the road when, as they were passing a farm, Chandler heard a kind of rustling among the straw in the barn-yard. He called the Sergeant's attention to this, and Reed mounted a wall and had a hurried look round. Thinking it might have been pigs which had attracted their attention, the officers contented themselves with a brief examination, and, seeing nothing suspicious, proceeded on their way. From what subsequently transpired it is pretty certain that the fugitive was concealed under the wall near the spot where the sergeant had

been standing. The officers on continuing their journey had turned a little off the main road, in the hope, by thus gaining some ground, to come up with the man they were in search of before he reached Warminster. The accused fancying, it is stated, that the officers had entered the premises from another direction, with the intention of instituting a thorough search – in which case his whereabouts would be discovered – crawled out from his hiding place underneath the wall and got on to the main road. He struck out at once in the direction of Warminster, and had not gone very far when he met Supt. Perrett, Sergt. Molden, and Constables Langley and Davies.

The spot where the Superintendent and his party came upon Gurd is not far beyond the entrance to Longleat Park. It was somewhere about three o'clock, and the early morning, although fine, was rather dark. Still, in the distance, the officers noticed the figure of a man coming along the road towards them. The constables were wearing helmets, and all were in uniform, so that presumably the accused was able to distinguish them. When they met, the man was walking on the side of the road nearest to the Superintendent, who scanned him closely as he gave him 'a meeting'. 'Do you want me, sir?' the stranger asked, addressing the Superintendent. 'I think I do, for the murder of a man at Melksham', Mr. Perrett replied. In an instant the suspect drew back a few steps, whisked a revolver out of his jacket pocket, and presented it at the superintendent. The officers immediately closed upon the accused; then followed two shots in rapid succession, and in another moment Mr. Perrett had the assailant by the throat, forced him on to the bank and securely handcuffed him. While thus engaged in capturing the man he heard Sergeant Molden cry out, 'I'm shot. Oh, dear, I'm dying', and on looking round he saw that he was lying on his side in the road. The occurrence happened outside a keeper's cottage, and when the prisoner had been secured Mr. Perrett aroused the occupiers, and had the body taken inside and laid upon the floor. Messengers were despatched for assistance, but in ten minutes, or at the most a quarter of an hour, the wound proved fatal. Sergeant Reed and Constable Chandler, hearing the shots, made all possible haste into the road, and, arriving at the scene of the tragedy, rendered assistance to their comrades. The prisoner had by this time been disarmed, and he was taken into Warminster, charged with the two murders, and safely placed under lock and key, policemen being stationed in the cell along with him. The body of the sergeant was carried home shortly afterwards, and it now lies at his residence awaiting an inquest. Mrs. Molden was informed of the sad occurrence, and her grief may well be imagined. The deceased had four children, the eldest being about sixteen and the youngest seven years of age.

As the news spread in Warminster and the neighbourhood the excitement became intense. In front of the police-station a large crowd assembled, and in the main street knots of people were to be found discussing the sad event. On every hand there was sympathy for the widow and the fatherless, and at many of the houses near the police-station blinds were drawn as a mark of respect. As the day wore on the crowd increased, it being anticipated that the accused would be taken to the police-court for a remand. Everyone seemed anxious to set eyes upon the prisoner, and a person leaving the police-station was instantly besieged with inquiries as to whether he was likely to be brought out. Shortly before six o'clock in the evening the Rev. W. Hickman, one of the magistrates for the division, attended at the station with Mr. Wakeman, the justices' clerk, and formally remanded the accused. It is believed that the first shot which the prisoner fired passed between Supt. Perrett and the deceased, and from a hole which has been discovered in the sergeant's tunic it is pretty clear that the second bullet traversed the region of the heart. The revolver, when taken from the prisoner, was found to be loaded in three chambers.

Throughout Tuesday prisoner was watched by a number of constables, some being in the cell with him and others in the corridor. They were under the direction of Inspector Smith, of Westbury. Prisoner is said to have expressed to them his regret at the sergeant's death, and to have further stated that his object was to escape to Shaftesbury, where he could obtain money. He does not appear greatly concerned with the serious position in which he is placed.

The inquest has been fixed for Thursday.

From a short acquaintance with the deceased officer our reporter says that he has found him to be a most genial and courteous officer, always ready, whilst strictly obeying the rules of his calling, to impart to the representatives of the Press whatever information he could to oblige and help them. As late as Monday, mid-day, our reporter was in conversation with him respecting the murder, when he expressed his opinion (which was shared by hundreds) that he had committed suicide in the canal.

'Should, however', added the unfortunate sergeant, 'he be still at large, he will be desperate to capture'. Subsequent events have proved the above to be only too true.

Our Salisbury correspondent writes: A telegram from Sergt. White, at Warminster, to Supt. Stephens, early on Tuesday morning, conveyed the news to the inhabitants of the city. It can easily be imagined that the murder of Sergt. Moulden was the sole topic of conversation at Tuesday's market, not only on the ground of the cold-blooded nature of the crime, but from the fact that to many in Salisbury he was well known. The deceased was stationed at Shrewton for many years, and no-one received the news with deeper regret than did Supt. Stephens, who speaks in terms of the highest praise of the murdered man. His superior officers, his comrades, and the inhabitants of the district of which practically he had the charge are unanimous in their feelings and opinion, and what may be termed a singular feature of this sad tragedy is the fact that on Tuesday evening Sergt. Moulden was to have been presented with a timepiece and purse of gold by the residents of Shrewton, Maddington, and the neighbourhood, as a token of their respect and esteem. He only left Shrewton for Warminster in January last, after about ten years residence, and it is scarcely necessary, in face of the facts narrated, to say that his removal was a source of deep regret to those amongst whom he had for so long resided with credit to himself and the force with which he was connected.

The Inquest on Richards

A Threatening Letter From The Murderer

The Coroner's enquiry into the circumstances relating to the death of Henry Richards, described as a tent maker, in the employ of Mr. C. Maggs, took place at the Melksham Town Hall on Tuesday morning before Mr. F. T. Sylvester (coroner for Mid Wilts) and the following jury:- Messrs. F. Smith (foreman), F. Buckland, W. Davis, J. Jarvis, F. C. Brignall, G. Glover Westcott, R. H. Dixon, G. Cheap, E. Scott, E. J. Lee, T. E. Grist, J. Smith, F. Gowan, and W. H. Barnes.

There were present: Deputy Chief Constable Baldwin, Mr. Supt. White (Trowbridge), Mr. Supt. Perrett (Warminster), and Inspector Millard (Melksham). A large number of persons assembled at the station at 9.30 expecting that the prisoner would be brought over, but in this they were mistaken. Groups of people were also about the streets curious to catch sight of anyone who had business at the Court. The enquiry was held in one of the ante-rooms. It being Market-day the enquiry was not held in the large hall because of the noise of the cattle and traffic outside. The general public, were, therefore, not admitted to the enquiry.

The jury having been sworn, the Coroner addressed them at some length. In the course of his remarks he said that they had been called together to see how Henry Richards, of whose body they would have a view, came with his death. Deceased was a tent maker by trade, and worked for Mr. C. Maggs. He was about twenty-eight years of age. From the facts he had been enabled to gather it would appear that on Saturday night, when in the company of another man, he met with such injuries as caused his instantaneous death. The person who was with the deceased was a man named Hamilton, recently an attendant at the Devizes Asylum. As far as the case had been reported to him it appeared that Hamilton came to Melksham on Saturday evening from a distance – some people said from Shaftesbury – and got in company with the deceased. A part of the evening was spent in a public-house in the town, after which they proceeded towards the residence of the deceased along the Spa Road. It was whilst they were walking along this road that Richards received those injuries which caused his death. Dr. Keir was sent for, but life had ebbed away before his arrival. A post-mortem examination was made the following day, the result of which they would hear. In conclusion he trusted they would not allow anything they had heard outside to prejudice their minds either way, but to return their verdict wholly and solely upon what they heard in that Court that day.

The jury then proceeded to the house of the deceased and viewed the body, after which the evidence was taken. The widow was first called.

Fanny Eliza Richards, the widow, deposed that she had seen the body of the deceased, and identified it as that of her husband. He went to work as usual on Saturday. She did not see a man named or called Hamilton on Saturday. He had been keeping company with her husband's niece. Hamilton had been to their house to tea and supper once. She last saw Hamilton nine weeks ago. Her

husband went out about eight o'clock on Saturday evening, and she did again see him alive. She was not aware that her husband went out to meet anyone. He usually went out to get his papers and tobacco, and occasionally went to the Crown Inn or to Mr. Gerrish's to have a drink. She was not aware on Saturday that the engagement had been broken off between Florence Adams and Hamilton. Her husband very seldom mentioned anything to her about the courtship of Hamilton and Adams. The last time anything was mentioned about the matter was on Saturday, when her husband's mother showed him a letter which she had received from Florence Adams, and he said that if Hamilton came to his house he would show him the cold shoulder. She was not aware that her husband objected to the marriage. Florence Adams had told her that the character of Hamilton was not good, and that was the reason the engagement was broken off. Her husband had never said to her that he objected to Florence marrying him. Her husband had a pistol at home with which he kept off the birds. The pistol was at his mother's now. Her husband never took it out with him. It had been taken to his mother's because it was loaded, and there was no-one at her house to discharge it. She was sure that her husband did not take out the pistol with him on Saturday evening, for after he had gone out she saw it laying on the baby's perambulator. She was not aware that Hamilton had any grudge against her husband.

By the foreman: Her husband did not know he was going to meet Hamilton when he went out on Saturday evening. He had received no letter saying Hamilton was coming to the town.

Florence Louisa Adams deposed that she was an attendant at the Devizes Asylum. She had known Louis Hamilton for some time, he being in the same employ as herself. She had been keeping company with Hamilton for some times, and was 'asked' in church for the first time last Sunday week. She wrote to Hamilton breaking off the engagement on Thursday. She did not know where Hamilton went after he left the Asylum. She thought he had gone to her home at Melksham. She did not know if he went home to Shaftesbury. She received a telegram from him on Thursday. On Saturday morning she received the letter produced from Hamilton. The photograph produced was that of Hamilton. She had no objection to the letter she received from Hamilton being read. After Hamilton had left the Asylum she heard something about him from Mrs. Spencer (the housekeeper), and she thought it to be her duty to write and break off the engagement. She did not hear from her uncle about Hamilton in any way, either by letter or in the way of conversation. Deceased had always poken in a friendly manner of Hamilton. She had never heard Hamilton threaten her or any of her friends. Last 'fall' she noticed that Hamilton had a revolver. He showed it to her once, when they were at Melksham together, and he told her that he had purchased it for use when travelling alone. When Hamilton left the Asylum on Tuesday they parted good friends, and promised to meet each other the next night. They were to meet somewhere in Devizes, but no specified place of meeting was mentioned. She did not meet him. She came home to Melksham on Wednesday morning, thinking to meet him there. The letter she received from Hamilton on Saturday, in reply to hers breaking off the engagement, was as follows:-

Shaftesbury, Dorset

My dear Flo,- Please forgive me for taking the liberty of writing to you again, but do please read this before you throw it into the fire, but, my dear, I am broken-hearted, and I have sent to ask your forgiveness, my dear. I know that I am guilty, but it is through you, Flo, my dear, that I was in such difficulties. You know, Flo, my dear, or at least, you must think, that it has cost me a lot of money to do as I have when I have been out with you, and now, dear Flo, when I am ruined you look on me with scorn; but never mind, when I can I will return to Devizes, and pay every penny, and follow you till the end of the world. I will have a bitter revenge some day; if not on you I will on your old people or someone. Take notice of this, for I mean it; that is, if you give me up. But oh, Flo, darling, do please forgive me for the wrong I have done you, and don't get married just yet. Give me time, Flo, dear, to get over this, and pay what I owe. I'll pay every penny when I can, indeed I will, and have you too, my dear, if you will have mercy on me. Do ask Harry and Dad to think of me as well as they can, for if any poor wretch was in need of their pity, I am now. Oh, Flo, dear, look at it. I have done no crime. I only owe some money, which I will pay as soon as I can. I am going to America now, dear; don't tell where I am, my dear – I mean not to the police – for the sake of better times. I know you will not, my dear. I will take care of the ring till we meet again, and I know we shall meet again; and I know we shall some day, and then if you are a wife you shall die.

L. Hamilton.

P.S. – Oh, my dear Flo, have mercy on me; don't get married. X X X

The letter was not dated, but the deep black edged envelope bore the post-mark `Shaftesbury, Ap. 8-92', and was addressed to `Miss F. Adams, Wilts County Asylum, Devizes, Wilts'.

She had never known Hamilton to threaten her or any other relatives before. What made her break off the engagement was that she heard that Hamilton owed a lot of money to the patients and to people in the town. She did not make any enquiries about the money alleged to be owing, but went solely upon what Mrs. Spencer told her. When Hamilton left the Asylum he was under the impression that they would be married. Hamilton was not a quick-tempered man, and she did not suppose that he was weak in intellect. The `Harry' he mentioned in the letter was her uncle. She was surprised to hear of the murder.

The Coroner here read a letter which had been received from the Asylum authorities saying that Hamilton gave a month's notice to leave on April 2nd, but on April 5th he asked to be allowed to go at once as urgent family affairs required his presence at home. He was therefore allowed to go.

By a juryman: Was the letter you wrote to Hamilton breaking off the engagement of a passionate character?

Witness: Yes.

The juryman: Have you a copy of that letter?

Witness: No.

The juryman: Can you tell us its substance?

Witness: It was a strict letter. I began by addressing him as `Mr Hamilton', and told him I did not wish to have anything more to do with him.

By another juryman: Who first told you about Hamilton owing this money?

Witness: Mrs. Spencer, the housekeeper at the Asylum.

The juryman: Did you make enquiries of anyone else about his owing the money before writing to him?

Witness: No.

The Coroner said that the witness had received no letter on the subject from her uncle.

Henry Harvey, a porter on the Great Western Railway, said that he knew the deceased quite well. He last saw him between 9 and 9.30 on Saturday night, at the Crown. The deceased was his wife's first cousin. When he saw the deceased a stranger was with him. The two men were in the little stand-up bar when he saw them. They had two pints of beer together and appeared to be quite friendly, and drank together. Witness left them about 9.30. As far as he could judge by the photo produced it was that of the stranger who was with the deceased. He did not see them again after he left the inn. Henry Redman, farm labourer, of Semington Lane, deposed that he knew the deceased well. He saw him at the Crown Inn on Saturday evening between eight and ten. A young man who had been keeping company with `Flo Adams' was with the deceased. They were drinking together. He could not tell what they were talking about, as the bar was full. The deceased and his companion left about a quarter to ten o'clock. Neither of them was under the influence of drink. When they left the inn the stranger looked back to see if anyone was following. He noticed that the deceased's companion hung his head during the time he was at the inn. Did not notice any pistol about him. He appeared to be very friendly with the deceased.

Sarah Ann Gale said that she resided at the Canal bridge close to the house of the deceased. Richards was in her house on Saturday evening about seven o'clock. Witness did some home baking, and deceased came in to pay her a bill and have some more bread. He was in his usual condition. She did not see the deceased again till just before ten o'clock when she heard his voice in the Spa Road. Some young man was with the deceased. They were walking along very quietly

together. About two minutes after she had passed them she heard an explosion, and on looking back she heard another explosion and saw the flash. At that time the deceased and his companion were about fifty yards from her. She could not say in whose hands the revolver was. She walked on towards her home thinking that they were trying the revolver to see how it would act. She never once thought of murder. Just then the deceased came running past her holding his side and staggering from one side of the road to the other. She thought he was acting drunk and was doing it to frighten her as it was getting late. She then heard him say 'I'm a dead man; I'm a dead man', and fall down in the road at the top of the canal bridge. She did not hear him speak again, but he hollered out and moaned a great deal. She saw the other man turn round and walk down the street. She was sure it was deceased's companion who turned back, as there was no-one else in the street at the time. Deceased had never spoken to her about the engagement of his niece.

William Harris, employed at the rubber works, and residing at Melksham Forest, deposed that he knew the deceased. He saw him on Saturday in the Market Place just before eight, and again after he was shot. No-one was with him. Witness was with a Mr. Sweet, who spoke to the deceased. Shortly before ten o'clock he heard two reports of a revolver. He ran and saw a man dressed in a light plaid suit walking towards him. He had previously seen the man at the station the same evening about 8.20. Witness spoke to the man, and asked him what was the matter, and he said that some boys had been letting off some crackers. Witness continued up the road and found the deceased lying in the road. He went for Dr. Keir, and met two policemen on the way. The photograph produced was that of the stranger he saw. He saw the man at the station and particularly noticed him there, as he tried to get out of the wrong gate. After the man had passed him, he did not run. Inspector Millard said that he received information of the affair and went up to the Canal Bridge. He found that the deceased had been picked up and propped against the wall in a sitting posture. As his face was covered with blood and dirt, it was some little time before he could identify him. Witness searched the deceased, and found the tobacco, two pipes, two papers, a watch, and an old railway ticket produced. When he identified the deceased he had him removed to his home close by. From the kitchen of the house Mrs. Reeves brought witness a large horse pistol. He knew that it could have had no connection with the case. On Sunday morning he went with Dr. Keir to deceased's residence and took possession of the clothes produced, which were stripped from off the deceased. On the left hand back side of the jacket there were two holes four inches apart, and corresponding holes on the waistcoat, only nearer together. There were also two holes in the shirt. The shirt and waistcoat were both saturated with blood. He knew Hamilton, having seen him on several occasions when he had been staying in Melksham. He did not see him on Saturday. Deceased was a very sober man. Dr. Keir deposed that on Saturday evening he was sent for to see the deceased. When he saw him he was insensible and breathed once or twice. His face was covered with blood, and blood was flowing from his mouth and nostrils. Did not examine him further that evening. Next morning he stripped the deceased. The clothes were saturated with blood. There were eight abrasions on the face, and one on the index finger of the left hand. There were two bullet wounds in the back, the upper three-eighths of an inch in diameter, circular and direct, two inches below the inferior angle of the left scapula. The lower wound was a quarter of an inch in diameter, circular and valvular, situated two-and-half inches above the posterior and two inches to the left of the lumbar spines. Dissection showed that the upper wound perforated the muscles of the back, causing much extravasation of blood, fractured the lower edge of the ninth rib, penetrated the pleura and lower lobe of the left lung in a direction upwards and forwards, perforating root of lung and left pulmonary artery. The lower wound perforated the lumbar muscles in a downward direction, grazed the left ilium, but did not penetrate any of the cavities of the body. He extracted the bullets, which he now produced. All the organs of the body were perfectly healthy. Death was caused by internal haemorrhage. He had known the deceased for fourteen years. There was no predisposition to suicide. From the position of the wounds it would have been impossible for the deceased to have shot himself. Even if he had shot himself accidentally he would not have received the wounds he did.

This concluded the evidence, and the Coroner summed up at great length, reviewing the evidence and speaking strongly against Hamilton, expressing his opinion that there was a *prima facie* case against him. He also thought that the letter written by Florence Adams breaking off the engagement was an unfeeling one, and made a great impression on Hamilton.

The jury consulted together a few moments, and then returned a

Verdict of Wilful Murder

against Hamilton. In announcing the verdict, the foreman of the jury said that he had known the deceased for many years, and the report going forth that he was at the public-house on the night of the murder might prejudice some people against him. He had always known the deceased to be a straight-forward, abstemious, and honest man. He had left a widow and child, to whom he was sure the jury would willingly give their fees. (This was unanimously done.)

The Coroner remarked that the Superintendent of the Asylum had given Florence Adams a good character, but he (the Coroner) did not consider her behaviour towards Hamilton quite what it ought to be.

The witnesses having been bound over to appear at the Assizes, which will be held at Salisbury in July, the enquiry terminated.

The History of the Murderer [By Our Shaftesbury Reporter.]

Shaftesbury, Wednesday

John Gurd, *alias* Louis Hamilton, the murderer of Mr. Richards, of Melksham, and Police-Sergeant Moulden, of Warminster, is a native of the county of Wilts, having been born at Higher Coombe, in the parish of Donhead St. Mary, where his mother, a widow, at present resides. He comes of humble parentage, his father, dead about twenty years, following the occupation of a cobbler. His early years were spent in the village, and on becoming eligible a long-desired wish to be a soldier was gratified by his joining the Dorset Militia, from which he passed into the regular army, serving with the Dorset Regiment. The reason of the severance of his connection with the regiment is at present shrouded in mystery. Whether he deserted, as some believe, or whether he was invalided or expelled is not clear; but that a few years since, under the assumed name of Louis Hamilton, he enlisted in the Royal Marines is beyond doubt. With the Marines he continued until about twelve months ago, when, his health failing, he was invalided. On recovery, he was appointed, in the name of Louis Hamilton, an attendant at the Wilts County Asylum at Devizes. That he had adopted the name of Hamilton was known to but very few in Shaftesbury and neighbourhood; but among those in the secret was a young woman, a Miss Trimm, who lives with her widowed mother in Malthouse Lane, Shaftesbury. Gurd and this young woman were sweethearts. They had been anterior to his being invalided from the service. There undoubtedly existed a warm attachment between the young people, and this continued for some time after Gurd's appointment at Devizes, where he fell in with Miss Adams, the niece of one of the men murdered. After a few months' absence from Shaftesbury, his ardour towards Miss Trimm considerably cooled, and when in July last, she visited Devizes and ascertained Gurd's relations with the young woman Davis, a complete estrangement was the consequence. Miss Trimm's visit to Devizes had, without doubt, been arranged by Gurd with an object. He was well aware that she held numberless letters from him promising marriage, and that unless something was done to alienate her affections, he might find himself involved in an action for breach of promise. Feeling, therefore, that it was safer to be completely off with the old love before being on with a new, he wired Miss Trimm to meet him at Devizes. She complied, and he took care that before she left she was acquainted with the true position of things; the natural result being that the young woman was piqued, and a dissolution of the engagement into which they had mutually entered was the consequence. Since then, little or nothing has been heard of Gurd by Miss Trimm, and it was therefore with feelings of surprise that on Tuesday, the 5th inst., she witnessed his arrival at her mother's cottage. He had travelled from Devizes, and had in his possession a box, which he opened in Miss Trimm's presence. Whilst Gurd was turning over the contents the young woman observed a revolver, and asked him why he possessed such a thing. He made reply that it was 'to shoot such small things as cats and dogs'. From Tuesday to the Saturday following Gurd remained in Shaftesbury and the neighbourhood. Previous to leaving Devizes, Gurd must have been aware of the objections of Miss Davis' friends to their marriage, for whilst here he made every endeavour to re-establish himself in the good graces of Miss Trimm, and actually offered her marriage at any early date, an offer which she declined. Exasperated, Gurd wrote to Miss Davis the threatening letter of which mention has been made. This letter was indicted at the Grosvenor Hotel Tap, and Gurd, pretending to be unable to write plainly, asked the daughter of the landlord (Mr. Foot) to address the envelope to Miss Davis, which she did. The envelope was a deep-edged mourning one, taken from a packet purchased in the town. Whilst at Shaftesbury, Gurd talked of going abroad, but he appeared to have no plans, and when on Saturday he bade farewell to his friends it was thought that he would be soon returning, as his box had been left at his mother's. He travelled to Semley Station on the

bus, but whether he left the station by train, or walked to Warminster, is uncertain, but it is believed, seeing that he was not observed to enter the up train, that he must have journeyed to Warminster on foot, and travelled thence to Melksham by train. Here the first of his villainous deeds was committed. Of this information was received by Superintendent Devenish, of the Dorset Constabulary, at Shaftesbury, on Sunday morning, but as the murderer's name was given as Louis Hamilton, the Superintendent experienced no slight difficulty in securing particulars of the man's antecedents. Enquiry elicited the fact that one family only of the name of Hamilton resided in the town, and it was at once ascertained that none of its members were associated with the shocking occurrence in the adjoining county. Patient investigation, however, satisfied Supt. Devenish that the man, who had been on a visit to the neighbourhood, and who was there known by a less pretentious name than Louis Hamilton, viz., John Gurd, was none other than the person 'wanted' at Melksham. He acquainted the Chief Constable of Wilts (Capt. Sterne) and Supt. White, of Melksham, of his discovery, and early on Monday morning crossed into Wilts, and in the company of P.S. Lane, of Ludwell, visited the cottage of the murderer's mother. The box brought by him from Devizes was here found, and taken possession of, and on being opened later in the day was found to contain a quantity of revolver ammunition. The murder was not generally known in Shaftesbury until Monday had well advanced. 'Louis Hamilton' had appeared in the London morning papers as the name of the murderer, but no such person being known to belong to Shaftesbury, it was supposed that a mistake had been made. The culprit's real name eventually leaked out, and much excitement was then manifested throughout the district. This was increased ten-fold on Tuesday when the news arrived of his desperate resistance to the police, and his having shot through the heart the unfortunate Sergeant whose duty it was to effect his arrest. Much sympathy is expressed towards Mrs. Gurd, the mother of the murderer, the poor woman, who is sixty years of age, being nearly distracted with grief; but for the wretch who, without the slightest justification, has wilfully sacrificed two valuable lives, there is a feeling of abhorrence.

Callous Indifference of the Murderer

The murderer has stated that he visited Melksham with the intention of murdering the young woman with whom he was keeping company and her uncle as well. He converses freely with the policemen, and jocularly asked one of them when he thought near about the hanging would come off. Whether he is acting in this way to make it appear he is insane is not improbable, but if so there is abundant proof that no insanity has ever before been exhibited by him.

Funeral of Richards

The interment of the mortal remains of the unfortunate man Henry Richards took place on Wednesday afternoon, amidst many signs and tokens of respect and regret, the blinds of private houses being drawn. The members of the Loyal 'Good Intent' Lodge of Oddfellows assembled at the George Hotel at 2.30, where the customary funeral ceremony was opened. They afterwards went to the deceased's late residence, near Canal Bridge. Here the funeral procession was formed. The coffin was borne on a hand-bier and covered with exquisite wreaths, and several of the friends of the deceased acted as bearers. The widow, parents, and relatives of the deceased followed, then the Oddfellows, a number of fellow-workmen, Mr. C. W. Maggs (his employer), and others. The body was taken into the Wesleyan Chapel (where the deceased and his wife attended), where the first part of the service was impressively read by the Rev. T. Gane. The hymn 'When our heads are bowed with woe' was sung as the mourners were leaving the chapel. On arriving at the Cemetery the Rev. T. Gane read the concluding portion of the service. A large number of persons congregated in the streets to see the funeral procession.

Prisoner Before the Magistrates

On Wednesday afternoon, at 5.30, the man Hamilton (or Gurd) was driven over from Trowbridge in charge of Mr. Supt. White and a number of constables. He was brought up at the Police-station before Mr. J. F. Stancombe. There was hardly anyone about at the time of his arrival, the fact that the prisoner was to be brought to Melksham being kept a profound secret. Several people, however, were suspicious and kept on the alert all day. When, however, the conveyance drove up the news quickly spread, and before the short proceedings were at an end a large crowd had congregated in the vicinity of the Police-station. When the prisoner was eventually taken away after the formal

remand he was hooted and groaned at by the assembled crowd. – After formal evidence had been given, prisoner was remanded until Wednesday next.

Prisoner, in answer to the charge, said, in a low voice, 'Nothing to say, sir'. Hundreds witnessed the departure of the prisoner for Trowbridge prison.

Western Gazette, Friday, 15 April 1892