

# "WHAT DID I DO WITH MY CHILDREN?"



Brockton, Mass.—"I opened my cloak and took the children under it, one on each side. From that time till I woke up everything is a blank."

Twenty-five trembling words, spoken by a disheveled, shaking woman, yet behind them lies the tragedy of a wrecked home, the remarkable disappearance of two human beings as if by the ground had opened to swallow them, and a mystery which has baffled the keenest detective minds of New England.

A mother calling at the schoolhouse door for her boy and girl, three figures disappearing into the woods, a great storm cloak flung open to shelter two small forms—a blank of 24 hours, and then a disheveled, quivering mother-form being hurried to an insane asylum.

What happened during that period of mental death?

And where are the children? On Monday, December 2, soon after nine o'clock, Mrs. Mary R. C. Ball, wife of John Ball, left her home at 26 Holbrook avenue, and walked hurriedly to the Winthrop school, where her children were engaged in their studies. Mary Grace Ball, aged nine, and Thomas Ball, aged seven, were excused by their teachers at the request of their mother, who was apparently quite composed and natural in her bearing. They put on their warm coats and toques and mittens and trotted down the schoolyard path, one on either side of the tall, cloaked figure.

## Children Went Joyfully.

Joyous anticipations were aroused in their childish minds. Christmas was at hand. Perhaps they were going shopping! Perhaps they were going to the woods to gather evergreens! As to where they really went, directly from the schoolhouse, opinions differ. This may have been because Brockton had something else to think about during the next few hours. The Ball home on Holbrook avenue was in flames. There was a fire to be put out and to be discussed, and it was so unfortunate that it happened while Mrs. Ball was away shopping!

However, since the tragedy has become the sole topic of conversation in the little manufacturing city of Brockton, one man recalls that he saw the mother and her children together about 2:30 o'clock that afternoon. Two children, who knew the Ball family well, claim to have seen the mother without the children on Brockton street at 4:30 of that eventful Monday afternoon.

But the one tangible piece of evidence is that Mrs. Ball, unaccompanied by her children, stopped at a lunch cart for a mouthful of food at Avon, a little town just north of Brockton, on Tuesday evening, December 3. Later that night she was found by a nearby farmer, A. L. Pinto, in his barn and was ordered away. The children were not with her. Pinto did not know who she was and took her for some poor, drunken wretch.

## Instinct Led Woman Home.

Two nights later, on Thursday, December 5, Mrs. Ball staggered into the home of Mrs. Baxter, who lived directly opposite the Ball home in Brockton. The Baxters were terrified by the figure which stumbled across

their threshold. Her clothes were in disorder. Her fingers were grimy and torn as though she had been digging in the frozen earth. Across her throat were great bloody scratches. All reason had fled. Her eyes were wild, her speech incoherent.

The next morning a raving maniac, Mary Ball was taken to the asylum for the insane at Taunton, Mass.

But where were the children? The distracted father asked it. The excited neighbors echoed his question. The county officials considered it their duty to find out. Detectives came from all over New England to join in the search. The Brockton Enterprise offered a reward of \$100 for the recovery of the children, dead or alive. Brockton citizens raised \$400 more, and more detectives, professional and amateur, flocked to the scene.

## Woods Thoroughly Searched.

Every inch of the frozen woods into which the woman and her children had disappeared was raked over. The Avon reservoir, beyond the woods, was dragged. Farmers all around Brockton neglected their affairs in their frantic efforts to unearth the bodies of the two little ones. The police matron of Brockton was sent to the asylum at Taunton in the hope that talking, woman to woman, she might obtain some clew from the demented mother. But she came home with word that her attempt had failed. Mrs. Ball's mind was a blank.

Then came a day when some children playing in the woods near the suburb of Holbrook, five miles from the Ball home, came upon some juvenile raiment—a boy's blouse, two union suits and a little girl's undershirt. These were partially but not completely identified by the distracted father, for man-like, he was not up on the details of the family wardrobe. And then, while searching parties raked and scraped the woodland in which these garments had been found, the father received word that his wife seemed to be quite rational again.

## Mother's Memory Gone.

So to the Taunton asylum he hurried alone. Unaccompanied by hysterical women or keen-eyed detectives, he hoped that in a quiet, heart-to-heart talk with his wife he might obtain some clew to the whereabouts of his children.

"I took my children under my cloak. They were cold and crying. The rest is a blank."

Behind that moment of motherly instinct when she stretched out the protection of arms and woolen folds to envelop her shivering children, Mrs. Ball's memory cannot go. Sometimes she gropes wildly for facts, and says a woman in a red automobile took the children away. But always she realizes that the children are gone, that none can find them, and that behind the veil of her clouded mind lie the facts which she cannot reach.

Grave physicians and alienists have visited this woman, striving to decide whether it is a lapse of memory pure and simple, or a return of the mental malady from which she suffered four years ago. At that time she was confined to the asylum because, on the death of her youngest child, she had

developed a curious homicidal mania, brought on by excessive grief. But as time cured the wound her mental equilibrium was restored, and she returned to her home, where apparently she was devoted to the two remaining children.

## Shock May Restore Reason.

Her present condition in nowise resembles her former unfortunate state. Then she was violent and noisy. Now her mind is simply a blank. And Dr. Goss, superintendent of the asylum, who has been studying her case, believes that unless her brain receives some terrible shock her memory will never be restored. Her recollections of what happened between the time she took her children under the shelter of her cloak and reason resumed its sway in a ward of the asylum will be aroused only by a shock as great as the one which robbed her of reason.

And what shock was that?

This is the question which is baffling physicians, detectives and relatives of the unhappy family.

Did Mrs. Ball accidentally set her house on fire, and then, in a spasm of terror, race away with her children from the results of her carelessness?

And if so, at what psychological moment was her reason destroyed—at sight of the flames, or when she found herself alone in the woods with her children?

Or did she feel the approaching return of the dreaded malady, and, fearing for the future of her children without her care and oversight, spirit them away? And, if so, where did she leave them?

## May Have Sent Children Away.

Some few Brocktonites believe that because the air had been full of rumors regarding unhappiness in the Ball home she really did arrange to have some one come with a red automobile and take her children where they might be cared for.

But such reasoning does not satisfy the majority of those who have worked on the case. The majority believe that the woman, in horror at the malady which was slowly creeping upon her, took her children to some lonely spot and killed them, then with the cunning of the madwoman, hid them beyond all finding. Perhaps the torn hands came from digging in the half-frozen ground that she might hide the silent little forms. Perhaps the scratches on her throat came not from her own fingers, but from the tiny hands fighting for their

oxysm had overtaken him? And poor Archibald, when he was 28, remembered on the night when he was 21 he had hidden his bride of an hour in a dungeon, where none of the merry wedding guests might find her, while he went to bring her wine and cake from the wedding feast. And as he went down the winding stairs the hand of time had touched him, setting him back seven years and blotting out all memory of what had happened between his fourteenth birthday and his twenty-first. And so it happened that when, with his twenty-eighth birthday, came memories of the twenty-first, he remembered his bride and went to take her the cake and the wine, and behold! there, beneath the wedding veil, lay the bones and the dust of her whom his retainers had sought for weary months.

Then there is Sir Gilbert Parker's "The Right of Way," the tale of the young lawyer who, struck on the head, roamed among the loggers, his brain a blank, until another and an equally great shock restored reason. And today Booth Tarkington is contributing to Everybody's in "The Guest of Queensy" a story on precisely the same line, of a brilliant mind stricken and then restored in both instances by shock.

And if the alienists now studying Mrs. Ball's case decide that shock alone will restore her reason and provide the key to the mystery of the two lost children, will the law permit them to apply the test, to administer the shock?

## BUILT ON CONCERTINA PLAN.

Lightkeeper Measures Six Feet Six Inches in His Stockings.

Like the towering pines that fringe the North Carolina coast, upon which he was born, in sight of dreaded Hatteras, Fabius Evans Simpson, the assistant keeper of Lazzaretto light-house, at the entrance to Baltimore harbor, can lay claim to be the tallest lightkeeper in the Fifth lighthouse district, if not level with the tallest in the service from Maine to Rio Grande.

He is only 23 years old and is built on the concertina plan. When he rises from a sitting posture one wonders how much more remains to be unfolded before he is straightened out. He is six feet six inches in his stocking feet.

His parents were reared alongside the sea, and he comes of a family that has figured in the annals of the light-house service. Alpheus W. Simpson,



lives. And who shall say at what instant reason was dethroned, or what act of her own or another swept like a sharp knife through the tottering brain and left it a blank?

Perhaps Mrs. Ball knows to-day where the children are, and, with demonic cunning, refuses to let the father claim his own flesh and blood. Perhaps, if she would, she could lead the searching parties to the very spot where the silent forms are buried. Perhaps her mind was never a blank. But history, medical and otherwise, gives her the benefit of the doubt.

## Resembles Famous Stories.

Who does not recall Julian Hawthorne's great story, "Archibald Malmaison," whose hero, from brain shock, reverted every seven years to the mental state of seven years before, recalling in minutest detail everything that had happened when this peculiar psychological and mental par-

father of the young man, was keeper of North river light station, and his uncle, Fabius Evans Simpson, is now in charge of the exhibit of the light-house board at the Jamestown exposition. Another uncle, A. J. Simpson, is keeper of Southwest Point light, all in North Carolina. Young Simpson says he will stick to the business, believing he has inherited an ambition for the service in which his family has figured for many years.

He could not furnish a full length picture of himself. He said he tried to get a photographer in North Carolina to take all of him, but the artist said he could only do it in sections, and then paste them together, which, he thought, would give an idea of his client's towering figure. To do so the photographer wanted to charge extra for the second section, and the picture was not taken.

A light heart lives long.—Shakespeare.

handkerchief out of my side pocket and that infernal spoon fell to the floor with a big rattle. I could hear people near me saying, 'Funny a decent duck like that would try to get away with a spoon.' Of course I squared it with the cashier all right by simply showing her the spoon, but I've always been ashamed to go back and take a chance on meeting some of the same crowd there again."

A Lively Squirrel.  
An old negro who lives in the coun-

try came into town and saw an electric fan for the first time in his life. The whirling object at once attracted his attention, and, after intently gazing at it for several minutes, showing all the while the greatest astonishment and curiosity, he turned to the proprietor of the shop and said: "Say, boss, dat sutenly is a lively squirrel you got in dis yeah cage. But he's shorely goin' to bus his heart of he keep on makin' dem resolutions so fas'."—Harper's.

## IN THE PUBLIC EYE

### HANDLED GOTHAM PANIC



William A. Nash, president of the Corn Exchange bank, probably did as much as any man in New York to put a stop to the recent panic. J. Pierpont Morgan alone excepted. When the flurry came on he was made chairman of the clearing house committee, and it fell mainly to him to pass upon the securities offered by banks in need of assistance, to decide which should be aided and which suspended. He was regarded by the other bankers as the balance wheel of the Wall street situation. Nor is this his first experience of a panic, for in 1903 he was one of five men who, as executive committee of the clearing house, had that panic in charge. His sound common sense, his keen business methods and his far-sighted mental vision in each case saved him from making any very grave

blunders, and he came through both ordeals with flying colors. Mr. Nash commenced life as messenger boy in the bank of which he is now president. He won his advancement step by step, through his own efforts, and 25 years from the day he entered the bank he was its president. It then had a capital of \$1,000,000; now it has \$8,000,000. He was the father of the branch system and the Corn Exchange was the first bank to open branches when the law was passed authorizing it to do so. To-day it has 22 branches and minor depositories throughout the city of New York.

Mr. Nash holds the idea that hard work, no matter how intelligent, will never raise a man very much above his fellows, unless it is combined with the power of thinking for one's self and aiding his superiors with suggestions. A man who can do this can practically dictate his own terms in the banking world.

### CHANCELLOR MAY RESIGN



Chancellor von Buelow, finding that it requires a man of more than the average attainments to fill the shoes of the late Prince Bismarck and to conduct the affairs of the German empire, is said to be on the point of retiring to private life. His uncompromising attitude towards the socialists, who are rapidly gaining in strength, has been the means of blocking many of the emperor's schemes and has caused the utmost difficulty in his getting the money he wants for an immense army. He has won for himself the hostility of some of the court favorites, because he has denounced their scandalous behavior, and he has even made enemies in the kaiser's own household by his opposition to the marriage of the crown prince to the beautiful Cecile, because she was the daughter of a Russian grand duchess whose escapades were the talk of all Europe. All this has reminded Germany that Von Buelow was not so very impeccable himself when he was a young man, and that his marriage to the lovely Princess Camporeale was achieved only after she had run away from Count Charles von Doenhoff, her rich but aged husband.

The princess found the rambling old Roman palace lonely with only her husband, a man old enough to be her grandfather, for company, and she was attracted by the young attache of the German embassy. Without any pretense the princess left her husband and fled from Rome with her young lover. That of course terminated Von Buelow's connection with the embassy, and few people would have given much for his chances of advancement in diplomatic life. The appealing charm of his wife, even then little more than a child, her rare beauty and their fidelity, coupled with Von Buelow's own undoubted talents, kept him in the imperial favor, and he was sent from one embassy to another until he returned to Rome as German ambassador.

Roman society conveniently forgot the elopement, and Von Buelow having married the lady when her husband had divorced her 11 years after the elopement, they were received into the most exclusive circles. The incident is now being recalled in Berlin society, however, and strong pressure is being brought to bear upon the emperor to induce him to dismiss his chancellor.

### EX-SENATOR'S FLIGHT



Warner Miller, formerly United States senator from New York and once prominent in Republican politics as leader of the "Halfbreeds," has fallen as a result of the Martinique disaster several years ago, "bankrupted by the acts of God and William Nelson Cromwell," as one of his friends expressed it.

He did not own a foot of land in Martinique, nor did he have a dollar invested there, yet the terrible explosion of natural forces that blew off the top of the mountain, wiped a city from the face of the earth, laid waste the fields and caused much destruction among the shipping caused his ruin years later. Deeply interested in the Nicaragua canal project, Miller had invested much of his money in it. The United States had virtually decided to undertake the work. Miller stood to make a fortune. Then came the disaster, which brought with it the fear of similar outbreaks in Nicaragua. The Panama canal people had meantime come to their senses and were preparing to make an equitable bargain. The Nicaragua canal project was dropped and Miller was deeply involved. To meet his obligations he disposed of his pulp mill and lumber holdings and pinned his faith to the Sierra Consolidated Gold Mining Co., a West Virginia corporation. He held about one-third of its total stock of \$3,000,000, hoping to recover his standing through that, but the mines never became producing properties, although he held on for 12 years, and in the end it came to crash, bringing Miller down with it.

Miller first came into prominent notice when Senator Roscoe Conkling and Thomas C. Platt resigned their seats in the senate, to appeal to the people for their indorsement. They failed to receive the indorsement they sought, and Miller became senator to succeed Conkling. He never did anything remarkable in the senate, and retired almost as obscure a personage as when he entered.

### TROUBLE IN INDIA



Lord Elgin, secretary of state of the colonies, is accused by the British press of being responsible for the latest ferment in the Transvaal by allowing the colonial legislature to treat British Indians as criminals and send them to jail if they refuse to register their finger prints and other marks of identification. Many of the proud-spirited high caste Indians have gone to jail rather than submit to such an indignity, and in a few days their "martyrdom" will be known all over India.

Just as the stories sent home by Indian residents of the Transvaal before the Boer war of the powerlessness of the British there brought on several uprisings and two rather serious wars on the northwest frontier, so the story of the treatment of these Indians now may be the cause of still more serious troubles.

Lord Elgin is said to have explained that he was forced to consent to the registration law of the Transvaal on threat of a rebellion, but if he yielded to such a threat he shows himself to be a much weaker man than he was ten years ago when he was viceroy of India. The frontier was then in a disturbed state and the Afghans, stirred up by Russia, were committing outrages. Lord Elgin took upon himself the responsibility of sending an army to bring the disturbers to terms, which he did in short order.

Lord Elgin, although a Scotch nobleman and a descendant of an uncle of King Robert the Bruce, was born at Monklands near Montreal, while his father was governor general of Canada. The latter died in Canada when the present Lord Elgin was a lad of 14. The family had been in the British diplomatic service for generations, and the name was known all over the east.

## Looked Like Clear Case.

LOOKED LIKE CLEAR CASE.

Appearances Very Much Against Innocent Man.

"It's an imposition for a woman to ask her husband to do errands for her in the stores," said the subdued looking man. "I never fail to get in wrong, somehow, whenever I get something for my wife. The other

day I had a bad five minutes on her account. She had given a teaspoon to me, one of our wedding presents it was, to get engraved. I shoved it into my side pocket and thought I would wait till I went out to lunch and turn it over to a jeweler friend of mine down near where I eat. I had my luncheon first, and forgot about the spoon. While the lady cashier was getting my change I pulled a