

## ACCUSE THE PRIEST.

Miss Maud Steidel Disappears from Her Home in St. Joseph, Mo.

Her Mother and Friends Believe Priest Wagner, of That City, First Seduced the Girl and Then Either Abducted or Killed Her.

Another pretty girl is missing. She was the prime favorite of the father confessor.

Her well-developed form excited his amorous feelings, causing him to pay her marked attentions.

Those attentions were remarked before she disappeared.

They have been recalled vividly since she so mysteriously passed beyond the protection of her mother, and all kinds of stories are rife.

The St. Joe Daily News, in speaking of the case, says:

The disappearance of pretty 15-year-old Maud Steidel from her home at 514 Richardson street Sunday night was so complete that the police have not even a vestige of a clue to follow. Even the "fly cops" are in the dark as to her present whereabouts.

The heart-broken mother, however, is emphatic in her accusations.

Father Dominick Wagner, of St. Mary's Church, she declares, has either spirited the girl away by force or exercised an influence over her which is keeping her from home.

Excitement has been high in the north part of the city to-day. Lynching has been talked of. A reporter for the Daily News was informed by a well-known resident of the north end that an effort was being made to organize a lynching party. William Liebig, owner of a livery-stable, is the man. He said that several men came to him and asked that he lead the party. He refused, and the promulgators of the contemplated lynching then skinned the neighborhood in an endeavor to increase their number.

Up to the hour of going to press the "bee" hadn't come off, but the feeling is still rife. Unless the girl is returned to her mother it is possible that trouble will ensue.

A Daily News reporter paid a visit to the Steidel home and found the missing girl's mother in a precarious condition, brought on by excitement. Her eyes were badly swollen and she was about exhausted from weeping and loss of sleep. She hadn't closed her eyes since the disappearance of her daughter, Sunday night.

"No, they have not succeeded in finding my poor girl," she said, sobbing.

At mention of the priest's name the woman's countenance changed suddenly. A look of intense hatred and contempt replaced the sad and mournful expression on her face as she clenched her fists and exclaimed:

"He has got her and will never give her up. By placing a rope around his neck, though, he would show traits of a coward and tell where she is, but not otherwise. If there are men in the neighborhood who will place the noose around his neck, I will take the other end and swing him high until a confession is forced from his lips."

Saying which the poor woman bowed her head in tears. Having received an intimation that the girl was entirely in the meshes of the priest the reporter put the delicate question to the mother. She had no doubt but that the priest had won her daughter's confidence. Whether she was infatuated with him and consented under his magical power to go with him of her own accord, she said she was unable to tell. Amid occasional outbursts of tears the grief-stricken widow related the story of her life and concluded with the disappearance of her daughter, which has possibly proved a greater blow than the death of her husband did fifteen years ago. She said:

"Death is nothing compared with this. It is awful! My husband died a young man fifteen years ago. It was a terrible blow to me. But it was nothing compared to this. The feeling that your daughter has been stolen from you, after years of care and watchfulness, is the most agonizing grief one can experience.

My daughter went to school in Father Wagner's parish for two years. He became attached to her from the time he laid eyes on her sweet face, and I'm afraid that her face has proved her fate," sighed the mother mournfully. "Well, it can be readily inferred," she continued, "that he set his net for her. He favored her at the school, showered his attentions on her, and she succumbed to him because of

his reverence. Poor girl, he was a priest and she was brought up to reverence them. He finally began to send presents for her to the house. Imagine my feeling upon surmising that his love for her was not of that nature which a man in his position should cherish for a young girl. It drove me wild—the thought of it. I refused to allow him to give her any more presents. He had, apparently, magnetized the girl, though, and she continued, I afterwards learned, to meet him secretly.

"Sunday evening previous to going across the yard to her aunt's house, Maud put on an old red dress, which she had outgrown, laughingly remarking to me that she wanted to see how she looked. She left my home to go to her aunt's fifty feet away, and that was the last I saw of her." At this juncture the sad-faced mother spoke chokingly. Tears flowed from her swollen eyes, and it was a few moments before she sufficiently recovered to proceed with her heart-rending tale.

"I called her name from our back yard, and not receiving any response, I became weak and faint. I hardly know how I passed the night. It seemed that I would die of grief unless she returned by morning. Midnight came and passed, but still she didn't come. When the gray dawn of morning appeared, I knew that something had happened her. Oh, the suspense is horrible. It's more than I can bear."

The unfortunate woman was obliged to pause a moment to wipe away tears. Asked concerning the accusations she made to Father Wagner personally, Mrs. Steidel said:

"Yes, I am nearing that part of it. Give me time; I will tell it. Early in the morning, some time after daylight, I was aroused from my bed by the ringing of the church bells for early mass. 'Father Wagner does hold mass this morning,' I said to my uncle, who had told me there was no mass that morning, upon learning of my intention of going to the priest for information concerning my daughter. I slipped on my shawl and in company with my uncle visited the church. Father Wagner stood at the door greeting the early morning worshippers as we came up. I approached him boldly and demanded the return of my daughter. He declared that he knew nothing of her whereabouts. I accused him of lying, and again demanded her return. Seeing that it would do no good to talk to him commandingly, I begged of him to let me have my dear, sweet girl. My uncle drew me away from him, and we visited the prosecuting attorney's office to swear out a warrant for his arrest. They asked me for evidence. What proof did I have? None. Oh, my God, I can't stand it longer! Nothing but trouble has come to me. Would that she were dead instead of in such hands. I belonged to St. Mary's Church. I have been a Catholic all my life."

The Daily News reporter called at Father Wagner's parish during the forenoon and found a sign pinned to the front door. It read:

"Will be back about 2 o'clock." The police version of the disappearance is that it is an abduction, pure and simple. Yesterday several members of the force, including one or two inspectors, visited the parish and put the priest through a category of questions. Sergeant Fred Henry stated that Father Wagner proved a very ready talker and appeared at ease. He said, however, that the priest contradicted himself several times. He had claimed that he had not seen the girl for two months or more, but finally, when pinned down, admitted that he had seen her on the street a week or so ago.

William Liebig told the reporter that he saw the priest and Miss Steidel walking together on St. Joseph avenue Wednesday of fair week. The celibate appeared very assiduous in his attentions to the miss, he said, and his manner indicated an intimacy between them.

But the question remains: Where is the girl? It is a question that no one seems to be able to answer. The police are simply befuddled. They have struck no lead, as yet, and the prevailing opinion is that the priest has successfully baffled all.

There is a rumor current that Father Wagner intends to leave St. Joseph in the near future for Europe, where, it is said, he will come into possession of a fortune and retire from the priesthood. Members of the church say he has been contemplating the change for some time.

The Daily Herald, another paper published in the same city, in commenting on the case, says: "Miss Maud Steidel, the young girl who so mysteriously disappeared from her home at 514 Richardson street on Sunday night, has not yet returned to her mother's arms, and Mrs. Steidel is almost frantic with grief.

A clue was obtained yesterday, however, which, it is believed, will lead to the final discovery and return to her home of the young girl, who will not be 16 years old till next month.

It was rumored yesterday that the girl had been seen on Monday and yesterday by people who knew her, and that she was kept in concealment by the priest in charge of St. Mary's Catholic Church on the corner of Second and Cherry Streets, and has a residence next door north.

Residents of the neighborhood say that for a long time they have seen Miss Steidel stopping at the church, and that she was cordially received by the reverend father. The police went to the church yesterday and interrogated the priest. At first he denied having seen the girl since July, but finally admitted that he had seen her lately on St. Joseph avenue. He told several different stories as to his relations with her. A Herald reporter called on her mother, Mrs. Matilda Steidel, last night. Mrs. Steidel is a woman apparently 35 years of age, and seemed much grieved by the absence of her only child. She said the girl had gone away without a hat or any clothing except what she had on. She said that two years ago she started the child to the school at St. Mary's Church, but she did not like the actions of the father in charge, and last year sent the girl to the public school, where she passed the first grade and had a certificate for admission to the high school. Over a year ago she sent the child to visit her uncle's family in Horton, Kan., and when she returned she said that the father had come back on the train with her. The mother later found that the priest had gone to the home of the uncle, Alex. Podvant, and remained for several days, bringing the little girl home.

Last July, Mrs. Steidel says, Maud went to visit her grandpa on the Rochester road near Lover's Lane, and when she went there to see her little girl she found the priest there. She reproached her father-in-law for allowing the priest to stay in the house, and brought her daughter home. She says that the father had been in the habit of calling her daughter his niece, and that she told him in her own house that he must not do it again.

He replied that he had been in the habit of calling her his niece, and it was generally understood that this relation existed and ended by asking the mother what she was going to do about it. Mrs. Steidel further says that she is satisfied that the father abducted her daughter and knows where she is.

It was stated yesterday by a well-known business man that he had been told that the girl left the church by a back entrance yesterday while the police were in front, and went toward Third street. He would not tell who this party was, but said it would be proved that the girl had been seen on Monday and yesterday.

Mr. Podvant, the uncle of the girl, was very diligent in his search yesterday, and later went to Conception in the belief that the child had been spirited away to that place.

It is said that the pastor has not been in good odor with his church for some time. Certain it is that Maud Steidel is not at home and that there are parties who say she was last seen coming from St. Mary's Church, and Mrs. Steidel says that the priest came to her and proposed that he would send her to the convent at his own expense. Mrs. Steidel is an old resident of St. Joseph, her maiden name being La Croix. Her ancestors are among the first settlers of the Platte purchase. The priest is a man of about thirty-five years of age, and is originally from Chicago. He was for a long time in Conception, Mo., after which he came here and organized the St. Mary's Church, which was completed some four years ago.—Herald.

An uncle of Maud's lives in Omaha and works for a large installment house. He has been in daily telegraphic communication with the mother of the missing girl. He called at our office Monday of this week and asked our assistance in finding his niece. He also published a card offering \$50 for information that would lead to the discovery of the whereabouts of his niece.

As our readers will notice, this is not an A. P. A. charge against the priest. It comes from a Roman Catholic, the mother of the missing girl.

It should serve as a warning to Catholic mothers and fathers who have pre-

possessing daughters going to parochial schools or to the confessional.

It needs no words of ours to picture the desolation and shame that may come to their homes.

They should decree "The confessional must go."

Will they do it?

Since writing the above, Maud Steidel has been discovered. The Chicago Daily Dispatch of Tuesday gives this version of her stay in that city:

Pretty Maud Steidel, who was found in a West Side convent yesterday after the police had vainly searched for her for days, was before Justice Chott, at the Desplains Street Station, this morning. She told the story of her abduction from St. Joseph, Mo., by Albert Elandt, who acted at the instigation of his brother-in-law, Father Wagner, priest of one of the leading churches there. Albert Elandt was arraigned, held in \$4,000 bonds to the grand jury, and given some good advice by Inspector Shea. Maud, who is a pretty child of 15 years, told her story in a straightforward manner. She first told it to Matron Keegan, and repeated it in court.

"Father Wagner has been intimate with me for over a year," she said, "and my coming to Chicago with his brother-in-law, Elandt, was arranged so we could live together without any one to quarrel with us. We could not live together in St. Joseph, for the church people were suspicious, and Father Wagner did not want it to become known."

"How old were you when you first became intimate with Father Wagner?"

"I was 14, and he told me it was all right. He told me not to tell my mother nor any of my chums, and I obeyed him. When he decided for us to live together in Chicago, he said it would be much nicer that way; and he bought some furniture and sent it here. We were not going to board, for I know how to keep house, and that was what we were going to do."

"How did you come to Chicago?"

"Father Wagner sent for Mr. Elandt and told me to go with him, and do whatever he told me, and to wait until all was ready for him to leave his church in St. Joe and join me in Chicago. Mr. Elandt did not abduct me. I came to Chicago of my own free will. Mr. Elandt placed me in the convent, and I was waiting for Father Wagner when the police came. I sent the telegram to my mother, telling her not to do anything to Father Wagner, for I was afraid he would not come if she did not let him alone."

Elandt lives at 1014 Diversey street, and the police think he will tell all about the case when taken to St. Joseph to answer for abduction. He was arrested this morning at his home, and was in his working-clothes when brought before Justice Chott.

L. A. Podvant, of Holton, Kan., an uncle of Maud Steidel, told the court that Elandt had admitted to him that he abducted the girl and brought her to Chicago at the instigation of Father Wagner. "The first clue to Maud's whereabouts," said Podvant, "was the shipment of a lot of household goods to Chicago by the priest. We felt certain then that Maud was here and that Wagner was coming."

While Maud was on the stand she stated that Father Wagner gave her \$40 for expenses. She stopped at Elandt's several days, then went to the home of James Pughert (129 Fullerton avenue)—a friend of the Elandts; and there finally was taken to the Catholic Academy at Park and Oakley avenues.

The girl is unusually pretty. She is a brunette, with large, sympathetic eyes, and her hair is soft, dark and curly.

After the hearing, when questioned by Inspector Shea, Elandt admitted that he brought the girl to Chicago at the instigation of his priestly brother-in-law. Wagner had written him about the matter, and when he received a cipher telegram Sept. 20 he understood what was wanted, and, going to St. Joe, found the girl and brought her to Chicago. "You're a poor man with a family," said Inspector Shea to Elandt, "and no one had any right to get you into this scrape. The way for you to get out of it is to go back to St. Joseph with Podvant, without requiring requisition papers, and tell the truth on the priest."

"I will go back all right," said Elandt, "and tell all I know."

Maud Steidel disappeared from St. Joe a week ago last Saturday. Her mother is a widow in moderate circumstances, but well respected. The affair created a sensation owing to the prominence and previous good name of Father Dominick Wagner, priest in charge of a leading Catholic church.

WAGNER IS IN JAIL.  
ST. JOSEPH, Mo., Oct. 1.—Upon in-

formation received from Chicago at 2 o'clock this morning the Rev. Dominick Wagner, pastor of St. Mary's Church, was arrested on the charge of having abducted Maud Steidel, 16-year-old daughter of a widow parishioner. Father Wagner spent the early morning hours in jail. Owing to the conclusiveness of the evidence against him and the certainty that he would flee if given an opportunity, it is not thought that he will be admitted to bail. The priests of St. Joseph, who had previously declared belief in the innocence of Father Wagner, have telegraphed to Bishop Burke, now in New York, urging him to take immediate action in banishing Wagner from the church. Only last Saturday night Wagner issued a newspaper card, denying any responsibility for or knowledge of the disappearance of Maud Steidel, and he publicly and dramatically swore that this statement was true. Wagner is 33 years old and a native of Ottawa, Ill.

WANTS TO BE A MAN.

ST. JOSEPH, Mo., Oct. 2.—Maud Steidel arrived home from Chicago this morning, accompanied by her brother-in-law, Eli Podvant. She looked happy when she alighted from the train, but the meeting with her mother was very sorrowful. Elandt, Father Wagner's brother-in-law, was also one of the party. He was in the custody of a detective. This afternoon Father Wagner confessed everything and has asked permission to marry the girl. His confession is made to Sheriff Adriano and Alexander Podvant, Maud Steidel's uncle. No action has yet been taken by relatives.

HOW TO DOWN THE A. P. A.

Ajax has a Plan Which the Pope is Invited to Put into Execution.

The greatest of all "farce-comedies," "The Landing of the Mugs," with Father (?) Finerty as "gab-shooter-in-chief," have at last agreed that Ireland shall have home rule. From all accounts, the new movement is to be one of "force"; that is, that England is to be "forced" into relinquishing all claim to govern the bog-trotters, that they may set up their own king or pope. If the convention of carriers had agreed to use the "force" to banish the priests and Jesuits from Ireland (as it is claimed St. Patrick banished the snakes), they would have had some thing very much resembling genuine home-rule, by the time the last of the "fakers" had started for Rome. There will never be any home-rule in Ireland until the people of that priest-ridden island get sufficiently enlightened to huff off blind and ignorant superstition, which holds them under Rome's rule. If the British lion had been here to listen to the gab-shooting of Finerty & Co., he would have made a be-line for the African jungles or some other place where the weather was not so "beastly warm," "don'tcher know."

Roman Schack stopped the so-called anarchist before he had uttered one per cent. of the treason and anarchy which were contained in some of the speeches before the "new movement."

"I am as good a citizen as any man," said Mr. Finerty during his speech. "but I would welcome the sight of 100,000 armed Americans breaking the neutrality laws in behalf of Cuba, and doubly could I welcome the sight of 500,000 armed Americans breaking the neutrality laws with England in behalf of Ireland."

"Agitation," said Mr. Finerty, "seems to be a failure, and now I advocate some other course."

How fiery and furious some people can be when the people they are sailing are three thousand miles away! As the St. James Gazette says:

"There is none so valiant as the exiled Irishman in the secure atmosphere of an American liquor saloon. There is none so ready to attack the Saxon when the Saxon cannot get at him, or so patriotic in raising other people's money for war."

Among the Illinois gang were an ex-congressman, state senator, state legislator, member of city council, police force and justice shop, while the board of education, Democratic party and the Good Old party were not without representation. The delegates were very conspicuous on "the levee" on Tuesday evening, and there was many a sore head on Wednesday morning. They all wore a small button on the lapel of their coats (those who had coats to wear) on which was stamped an "American flag" and a "green rag," with the words "Liberty for Ireland." From the headquarters on "the levee" the crowd in large numbers "took in" the sights, and the saloons and dives did a rushing business. As one of the tough saloon-keepers remarked: "Business had not been so lively since the World's Fair." They appeared to be right at home, and one delegate compared "the levee" to the "Kerry Patch" of St. Louis, while another thought it resem-

bled in some particulars "the French Market" of New Orleans. Not having any night session on Tuesday, was the cause of many of them leaving town before the end of the convention.

Many others got disgusted when they saw the turn affairs were taking, and one of them remarked while laboring under too much fire-water, that it was not to free Ireland at all, but to knock out the d— A. P. Ayes. This remark fits very nicely with this clipping from a Chicago daily:

"P. H. Duggan, late of the Chicago board of education, who has just returned from Ireland, says in his judgment that the Irish people are well satisfied with the government under which they now live.

"In Ireland," he said, "I did not talk with the scum of the cities, but with the people who are owners of the soil and tillers. I found that they do not want separation. They desire union with England. They said to me they had the real democracy and that our government was but the counterfeit. For instance, I talked with a Mr. Phalen, a west of Ireland man, who said to me that he had been foolish enough to be a nationalist fifteen years ago, but he had got over it. In illustration, he said to me that years ago elks' horns were found in the bogs of Ireland, but during the last hundred years but one set had been found. It would be just as hard, he said, to find a nationalist in Ireland now as a set of elks' horns. I think the people there are satisfied with their government, and wish no change. The Irish movement in this country, in my judgment, is but a part of American politics, and amounts to nothing, so far as the real Ireland is concerned. I learned that much while I was with the Irish people themselves."

A similar organization has just been formed among the German followers of the "dago," and the "old banana peddler" has sent them his blessing: DUBUQUE, Iowa, Sept. 27.—Cardinal Rampolla has cabled the secretary of the German Roman Catholic congress held at Dyersville yesterday that "the sentiments of the German Catholic societies have been most pleasing to the holy father, who blesses them with the full blessings of his heart." This is an endorsement of the plan for a national organization of German Roman Catholics to resist, by united political action, laws aimed against church and language.

These movements may be in answer to the prayers for "more power for the pope," and this so-called God upon earth may be contemplating the beauties of his "temporal power" in America surrounded by these armed mobs; but he will discover ere long that the people of the United States are disgusted with what Rome-rule they have had up to the present time, and will not tolerate any more.

It is said that the pope's Irish would as soon think of changing their socks as of changing their religion. If Leo's mouth-pieces expect to defeat the A. P. A.'s they will have to change their tactics. There is only one way in which they can ever defeat the A. P. A.'s and the other patriotic organizations in America, and I will give his "royal jiggers" a "quiet tip."

Load all your nuncios, convents, monasteries, fairs, Hibernians, sodalities, Clan na-Gaels, Molly Maguires, Mafiae, crooks, confidence men, gamblers, thieves, safe-blowers, thugs, burglars, sandbagger, mashers, vags, priests, confessional-boxes, nuns, bishops and archbishops, Lincoln assassins, Dr. Cronin murderers, prize-fighters, sour beer, pro-anity, vice and rottenness generally on board some vessel and take them to Rome, where they will be under your wing and within sound of your "voice of God," and then the A. P. A.'s will be out of a job.

CHICAGO, ILL., Oct. 1. AJAX.

Phwat is Intillic?

"Phwat is intillic. Dims?" inquired Mr. Herity of her stolid-faced husband.

"Sure an how can Oi tell yez?" responded Mr. Herity. "The river was o' thim amongst the Heritties that Oi liver heard of, and Oi'm wan that kapes to his own paypie."

"The praste was after tellin' me that Fayther Dolan had a grate intillic," pursued Mrs. Herity.

"Sure, an it's some sort a fever, thim," said her spouse with decision. "It's that as killed the poor man, without a doubt."

"An it's goin' the round?" inquired Mrs. Herity, anxiously. "It's only a wake since Fayther Dolan did, an' there's our Johnny lookin'—"

"Niver you fret about Jonny," counseled Mr. Herity. "He's a chip aw the old block, an' if he gets an intillic, it'll be because somebody has give it to him on the shtrate. Kape him at home wid yerself, or in the prehookia school, Nora, an' he'll be all right.—Er.