

THE MIRFIELD MURDERS.

The fourth and concluding examination of Michael Mc Cabe and Patrick Reid, the two prisoners charged with the wilful murder of James Wraith, Ann Wraith, and Caroline Ellis, at Mirfield, on Wednesday, the 12th May, took place at the Court-house, Dewsbury, on Saturday morning last.

Shortly after nine o'clock, the two prisoners were brought to the prison adjoining the Court-house, in the charge of two keepers belonging to Wakefield House of Correction, a close carriage having been engaged for the purpose.

With a knowledge of the prisoners having been fully committed for trial on the coroner's warrant, a verdict of "wilful murder" having been recorded against them at the adjourned inquest held at Mirfield, on Thursday, the 10th inst., an increased interest was manifested in the proceedings, and long before the time announced for the examination to commence (10 o'clock), an immense concourse of people had assembled in front of the Court-house, with a view of being present inside. Considerable disappointment, however, took place, as the building was incapable of holding more than a tithe of the spectators. A certain degree of satisfaction was, nevertheless, felt by hundreds that they had had an opportunity of seeing the parties who have thus obtained for themselves such an unenviable notoriety, and which sight lasted only during the few minutes that elapsed in stepping to and from the carriage into the Court-house.

The interior of the building was completely crammed, and amongst those present could be seen persons who had come for a considerable distance in order to watch the proceedings, amongst whom were a great number of respectably attired females: seats on the Bench were provided for the ladies.

The Magistrates present were—Joshua Ingham, Esq., of Blake Hall, chairman; Jno. B. Greenwood, Esq., H. W. Wickham, Esq., John Hague, Esq., and E. B. Wheatley, Esq.

Mr. WATTS, solicitor, of Dewsbury, again appeared on behalf of the prisoner Mc Cabe; and Mr. HALSALL, solicitor, of Middleton, near Manchester, on behalf of the prisoner Reid.

The utmost curiosity prevailed when the prisoners were ushered into the dock. They each wore the same clothing that they did on the former occasions of their being examined before the Bench.

There was nothing new in the evidence brought forward against them, although several additional witnesses were examined, but nothing appeared in their depositions to make the connecting links in the chain of circumstantial evidence stronger against the prisoners. From some portions of the proceedings detailed below, it will be seen that Mc Cabe evinced a disposition through his solicitor, Mr. WATTS, to tell "what he knew about it;" but as this could only be done in the usual way of being set down in evidence against him, he refrained from throwing any further light, as far as he was concerned, upon this mysterious affair.

The first witness examined was Ann Lockwood, who formerly lived as servant in Wraith's family. She deposed to the time the old people usually dined, the situation in which they both sat at the dinner table, the circumstance of the old lady keeping cats, her usual mode of feeding them after dinner, and to the time dinner was brought into the kitchen for the servant. She also deposed, as she did before the coroner's jury, that she lived in Wraith's service from two to three years, and that she left two years since last October; that a person named Ann Brook lived there after she left; then Elizabeth Green, who was a relative of Mr. Wraith's; and then Caroline Ellis, the unfortunate murdered girl.

John Wraith, saddler, of Mirfield—I am great nephew of the late Mr. Wraith. I remember the 12th of last May, the day of the murders. I got to my great uncle's house at six o'clock in the evening of that day. I was again present on the 17th, and saw Thomas Hirst take the lock off the kitchen door. I took possession of the lock, and kept it locked up in a cupboard in Mr. Wraith's house until the 19th. I assisted in searching the well. I saw the key found in the well applied to the lock that was taken off the kitchen door, which it opened and shut (the lock was here produced). This is the lock.

Mr. WATTS had nothing to ask of this witness; neither had Mr. HALSALL.

John Pawson, stone mason, of Robert Town—I knew the late Mr. Wraith, and saw him last on the 10th of May. I went with him to Wakefield-wood on that day, and I paid him one sovereign and sixteen half crowns. I did not see that he possessed any other money. On that occasion Mr. Wraith wore his second-best clothes, and he had on a very decent hat. When I called upon him in the morning he had an old hat on. Mr. Wraith had a watch with him on that day. I saw it several times. We went by railway from the Mirfield station, and returned the same way. We separated at six o'clock in the evening, close by John Mc Kinnell's house.

Ann Lockwood, the witness first examined, was recalled. She examined the lock and key. She applied the key to the lock, and said she believed that they were the same that belonged to Mr. Wraith's kitchen door when she lived in service with them.

Joshua Green—I am 12 years old. The late Mr. Wraith was my great uncle. I was accustomed to work for him in the land. I saw him last on Wednesday, the 12th May, between 11 and 12 o'clock, at my father's house. He said that I was to go at noon to his farm, and help him to gather stones. I went at half-past one. I usually went at one o'clock, but a shower of rain came on, and prevented me from going; the shower had been over about 10 minutes when I went. When I got to the house I tried the kitchen door, and found it fast; I kicked it, but no one came; I heard no noise but the ticking of the clock. I then went to the kitchen window; the shutters were closed, except about four inches. I saw something white on the floor, but I could not tell what it was. I then went round to the front of the house, and as I passed the first window at the left hand, I observed that the curtains were pinned together. I went to the far room window, and saw that the shutters were closed; the shutters belonging to this window were often closed. I afterwards saw blood running from underneath the front door on to the step. I then ran home and told my mother. I did not return to the house again, but my oldest brother did. I should be a minute or two in running home.

Mr. Bradbury, surgeon, gave similar evidence to what he has done on the former occasions of the coroner's inquest, with respect to the finding of the bodies and the wounds upon them. He also corroborated the surgical evidence given by Mr. Watkinson, surgeon, this day evening.

Cross-examined by Mr. WATTS.—I examined the floor about where the body of the late Mrs. Wraith lay. It appeared to me that the blood had run outwards towards the doorstep, and very little had run inwards towards the passage. The blood in the passage appeared to have been trodden a little, but not much. In the kitchen the blood was standing in a pool about the girl's head, and inclining a little towards the hinge of the door, and there was some splashing on the floor towards the sneck of the door. Of that I am certain. I think there was some splashing on the casing of the door, but of this I am not certain. If the door had been open three inches, a person on the outside might have seen some little blood on the floor, but if it had been open six inches he would have seen more blood.

By Mr. INGHAM.—By the door being opened, I mean from the sneck, and not from the casing of the door jamb.

John Howarth, constable, of Mirfield, gave evidence as to the position the bodies were in when he found them: his evidence was merely a recapitulation of what he had before said on the coroner's inquest, about finding the trowsers pockets turned inside out—the bloody razor—the penknife—the searching of the well, and finding of the key and soldering iron.

By Mr. WATTS.—Would undertake to say that the blood was very little trampled when I went into the house; but would not undertake to say that it was not trampled at all. Did not notice any trampling of blood in the passage: had there been much trampling of blood, I should have seen it. I have been engaged in getting evidence to support this charge. I do not know whether all the witnesses are present that are to be brought forward to-day.

By Mr. INGHAM.—There is no evidence to be kept back, that I know of.

By Mr. GREENWOOD.—All information that I have received about this case, I have communicated either to Mr. Green or a Magistrate.

Mr. GREENWOOD.—Then you have done your duty.

Mr. WATTS said, his object in gaining this information was, that the prisoners might not be taken by surprise on their trial at the assizes, but that all should be brought out now that is known against them up to the present.

Mr. Leadbeater, constable, of Liversedge, deposed to the circumstances under which he had taken the prisoner Michael Mc Cabe into custody, on the 12th of May, at Mirfield; and the subsequent proceedings, all of which had before been detailed at full length in the evidence given before the coroner.

Cross-examined by Mr. WATTS.—I got the information on which I apprehended Mc Cabe from Wm. Sheard. The prisoner said that he would go with me any where, and tell me all about it, as he had come for the purpose of doing so. He did not express a wish to go before the Magistrates. After I had got Mc Cabe in custody, at the Shoulder of Mutton, Wm. Sheard came. Mc Cabe, myself, and Sheard were in a room together, at the Shoulder of Mutton. I remember Mc Cabe striking the table with his hand, and when he did so, he said, "I see where I have missed it: if I had made an alarm at first, the man would have been taken, but now he's gone, and I am here." All the witnesses against the prisoners that I know of, are either here or have been.

At the close of Mr. Leadbeater's evidence, the two prisoners were refreshed with bread, cheese and beer, which they seemed to relish with an epicurean appetite.

Richard Green, superintendent of constabulary, at Dewsbury, produced the clothes belonging to the prisoners, and which were worn by them on the day of the murders. It will be remembered that spots of blood were found upon these garments, and that they had undergone chemical tests by Mr. Wm. West, analytical chemist, of Leeds. The soldering iron and key found in the well in Mr. Wraith's garden, and the poker found in the room in which Wraith's body lay, were also produced. The articles belonging to Patrick Reid were a green coat, a pair of fustian trowsers, a plaid cap, a piece of brown paper, and a basket, not produced.

As to Mc Cabe, there was a brown coat, a pair of blue and a pair of grey stockings, a pair of old shoes, and a very old hat. There was also produced a very good hat, which was taken from Patrick Reid.

Mr. Wm West, recapitulated the same evidence that he gave before the coroner and jury at the second adjourned inquest, held on the 27th of May, at Mirfield, and as there was no material difference in it, it is unnecessary to repeat it again.

Cross-examined by Mr. HALSALL.—In some parts of my evidence I speak from facts, in others from opinion. I have no opinion at present whether the fibrine found on the soldering iron be that of human or other animal. I first saw the iron on the 20th May, and I retained it in my possession until the 27th.

Richard Green reproduced the soldering iron, coats, &c., as before enumerated, and stated the time and place where he had received each of them; the time of delivery to Mr. West; and the ultimate return of them again into his possession. I also produce a hat which I received this morning from Mr. Dewhurst. I believe it to be the hat which Mc Cabe has been in the habit of wearing. I produce also another hat, which was given me by a turnkey at the Wakefield House of Correction, a week or ten days ago. The turnkey's name is Reid. Sides, and the hat was in the possession of the prisoner Reid.

Cross-examined by Mr. WATTS.—I did not get a basket from Mc Cabe, but John Howarth did. It would be after five o'clock, and before six o'clock, when I first got so Wraith's house on the day of the murders. The blood appeared to be but very little trampled when I got there. The blood in the passage did not appear as if it had been trampled much. The blood in the parlour did not appear as if it had been trampled about; there was a carpet in the room which would prevent it.

By the CHAIRMAN.—This is all the evidence that is to be produced at present. We have laid all that has yet transpired before the Bench.

Mr. HALSALL said he had evidence to produce in favour of his client, but with the knowledge that he (Reid) stood committed on the Coroner's warrant, he would refrain from bringing it forward on this occasion. That there had been some outrage and brutal murders committed, he did not deny; but he was in a position to state that his client was guiltless of the offence with which he stood charged.

Mr. WATTS wished to know if the bench was in a position to receive any evidence that Mc. Cabe might be wishful to give.

Mr. INGHAM said it was quite discretionary on the part of Mc Cabe whether he did so or not; but if he did, it would be put down in the usual way.

Mr. WATTS said, on these conditions, of course his client would be silent; but, in his opinion, the case was not sufficiently clear against him to warrant the bench to send it before a jury.

At this stage of the proceedings, the Magistrates retired for about twenty minutes, and on their return,

Mr. INGHAM said—"Patrick Reid, the time is now come when you can make any statement you may wish. You have heard the evidence that has been adduced against you, and you see how your case stands."

Patrick Reid.—"I have no statement to make, only to say that I am not guilty."

Mr. INGHAM.—"As to you, Mc. Cabe, as the case stands against you we should not have sent you for trial, and it is unnecessary to express an opinion whether you are guilty or innocent; but, of course, you stand committed on the coroner's warrant."

Patrick Reid signed his declaration of innocence in a bold, well-written, signature.

The Court was then cleared, and the witnesses were bound over in recognizances of £100 each, to appear against the prisoners at the ensuing York assizes.

The circumstance of this examination having taken place has again aroused much curiosity in the public mind, and the house in which the murders were committed still continues to be visited by a great many people. We understand that little or no alteration is to take place in the house until after the York assizes, and that then the incoming family intend to obliterate everything that may act as a remembrance of the dreadful deeds that were therein committed.