

THE MIRFIELD MURDERS.

SECOND EXAMINATION OF THE PRISONERS AT DEWSBURY.

SATURDAY, May 29th, 1847.

The prisoners Patrick Reid and Michael Mc Cabe, in custody on suspicion of being concerned in the murders at Mirfield, were this morning placed before the Dewsbury Bench of Magistrates for further examination, having been conveyed in the prison van from the Wakefield House of Correction for that purpose.

The Magistrates present on the bench were Joshua Ingham, Esq., chairman; John B. Greenwood, Esq., John Hague, Esq., W. W. Wickham, Esq., and E. B. Wheatley, Esq.

Since the inquest on Thursday, the constables have been prosecuting their inquiries in all directions likely to afford the least clue to the perpetrators of the dreadful deeds. It having transpired on Thursday that a party of scissor grinders had been in the neighbourhood on the day of the murder, at one of the houses in the immediate vicinity of Wraith's house, only some ten minutes before Patrick Reid appeared on the scene, it was deemed necessary to institute a rigid inquiry as to their doings and proceedings on the day in question. The result of such inquiry is to leave no doubt that they were not engaged in the work of destruction; for they can be traced through the entire neighbourhood following their occupation, down into an advanced part of the afternoon. They were engaged in grinding some knives at a place a tolerable distance from the scene of the murders at the time it is presumed they were being enacted. This is established beyond doubt, for a party for whom the grinding was being done was present with them, until driven into the house by a shower of rain; which shower it is known came on about the time that the Wraith's had usually finished their dinner; evidently the time when the murderous attack was made.

At the examination this day, Mr. Halsall, of Middleton, near Manchester, appeared for the prisoner Patrick Reid.

The prisoners looked better in appearance than on this day week. They were not dressed in the clothing they wore on the day of the murder; but in some very ragged and poor apparel. They were quite cool and collected, particularly Mc Cabe. Some of their friends were in court; Mc Cabe's wife and Reid's brother among them. The latter was observed to speak to Reid, but the bench interposed, unless the constable heard what passed.

The first witness examined was James Allatt.—I live in the Town-gate, Mirfield; am a glazier. I saw Mr. Wraith at his house on Tuesday, the 11th May, from half-past nine till eleven o'clock, was doing some work there. I put in for Mr. Wraith one square of glass, for which he paid me. I saw in his hand from 30 to 40 shillings, which he took from his left hand trousers pocket. I saw also among the silver four or five sovereigns. That was the last time I saw Mr. Wraith.

Bennet Parker.—I am step-son of the late Mr. Wraith. I was at the house on Tuesday morning about nine o'clock, the 11th May. I saw him before Mr. Allatt came counting some money by the window in the parlour; one piece of money fell down, which I saw was a sovereign.

Marv Schorah.—I live at Robert Town, and am the wife of Edward Schorah. I live as a house-keeper to Charles Flint, who sells pots. I know the prisoner, Michael Mc Cabe. I have known him about a month before this misfortune happened; he dealt with Charles Flint in the way of trade; he and Charles Flint traded together. Flint let him have pots in exchange for rags and bones. I remember Wednesday the 12th May, a fortnight since last Wednesday. I saw the prisoner, Michael Mc Cabe, that morning at Charles Flint's, about ten o'clock. Flint was at home, and left in about a quarter of an hour after Flint had let him have some pots. Did not say where he was going. Saw him again at Flint's near two o'clock in the afternoon. He brought some pots back and some rags. We have the pots yet. I weighed the rags and put them in a corner of the room. There were a few other rags there before I put his there. It was nearly an hour after Mc Cabe came that Flint came in; he was waiting for some money. Prisoner and I had no particular conversation that day as to anything that had occurred; he never mentioned anything as having happened at Mirfield. I was in the house when Flint came in. As soon as Flint came in Flint asked me, when Mc Cabe was present, if I had heard of the murder at Mirfield? I said I had not heard of it. Flint said he had heard that James Wraith, Mrs. Wraith, and the daughter, had got their heads cut off. Mc Cabe then said "I've been to the house to-day myself." He went to the door, he said, and rapped; nobody answered him; he rapped again. He said he then heard somebody come across the chamber floor, and down the steps; he heard them walk towards the fire-place in the kitchen, and then a man came and opened the door. He began rattling his pots, and asked the man if he wanted anything in the pot line. He said, "No, sir." He asked him again, when he returned the same answer. I asked Mc Cabe what sort of a man he was. He said "he was a good-like man—a red-faced man—and seemed to be four or five and twenty years of age." He said he saw lots of blood upon the floor, and Charles asked him if he saw anything else. He said "No, but he heard groans, very heavy groans indeed, and then the man looked the door after him." Then Mc Cabe said he put his pots on his head, and walked forward a bit; that he looked back, and thought what a foolish man he must be to be frightened. He thought Mr. Wraith had been killing some fowls, as it was so near the feast. He said he then went to John Mc Kinneil's window, and asked if they wanted any pots, and they said "No." I asked him (Mc Cabe) if he did not tell John Mc Kinneil about hearing these groans, and seeing this blood. He said Mr. Wraith was in the habit of buying a deal of pots of him, and he thought if he set a scandal on his house he would not buy any more. Mc Cabe then went away, saying he was going to Schofield's, at Hightown, to buy some classes. He returned in the course of about half an hour, and took one dozen pint pots, which he said he was going to deliver at Chadwick's, the Shoulder of Mutton public-house, at Mirfield.

Mr. WATTS, solicitor, here entered the Court, and, addressing the magistrates, said he appeared for the prisoner, Mc Cabe, and wished Mc Cabe to know the fact, in case he might have anything to communicate to him.

In answer to a question from Mr. Greenwood, the magistrate, witness said that when Mc Cabe came to Flint's at two o'clock, he wore the same dress he had on when he went away at ten in the morning. In answer to a question from Mr. Watts, she did not observe anything different in Mc Cabe's dress.

Mr. GREEN said the distance between Mr. Wraith's house and Charles Flint's was about a mile and a half. The prisoner, when he came the second time, did not appear flushed or to have any wet or washing or sponging of his clothes.

Charles Flint.—I live at Robert Town, and deal in pots. I know the neighbourhood of Mirfield; knew where the late Mr. Wraith lived: it is somewhere about a mile and a half from my house to Mr. Wraith's. I know Michael Mc Cabe. I heard from a waggoner of the murder. Have known Mc Cabe three weeks or a month, since I began selling him pots; he lives at High Town, about a mile from Robert Town. A fortnight since, on Wednesday, the 12th May, I was on Mirfield Moor; heard something had happened at Wraith's house. I went home at about three o'clock. When I got home I found the prisoner, Mc Cabe, and my housekeeper. Witness then gave in detail the evidence he had given before the coroner and jury on Thursday. This witness, after having explained the conversation between the prisoner and himself, said Mc Cabe, in answer to his observation, had he and the housekeeper heard of the murder? replied, "Nothing, as sure as there has been a murder, for I've been at the place and rapped at the door." This part of witness's evidence was considered very important, as it did not exactly agree with that given before the coroner's jury.

Cross-examined by Mr. WATTS.—The prisoner, Mc Cabe, said he thought they might have been killing fowls.

Mr. GREENWOOD here said it was necessary that Mr. Watts should know, if he had not seen the house—(Mr. Watts said he had not)—and had not attended the previous examination, that it had been proved that there was no pool of blood just behind the kitchen door, the blood from the body of the servant girl having flowed the other way.

Mr. Richard Green, superintendent of the Dewsbury police, was next called. As we have already given his evidence at two separate inquiries, taken before the deputy coroner, it is unnecessary to repeat it in detail in this place. He stated the manner in which he received information of the murders, and the steps he had taken from first to last in endeavouring to find out the guilty parties. With respect to the stockings worn by the prisoner, Mc Cabe, when taken into custody on the evening of the murder, he stated that they were wet, and his impression at the time was that they had been recently washed. The prisoner's shoes were bad, but witness thought the stockings were wet higher up than they could have been from wet shoes, though it was a wet day. Mr. Green produced a pocket, a cutting knife, a silver pint, a spoon, and a napkin, which were found in the room where the dead body of Mr. Wraith was discovered. All these articles had blood upon them. He also produced a brass pin with which the curtains of the room were pinned together at the time of the discovery, but there was nothing particular about the pin. The witness then detailed the conversation he had with the two prisoners on their apprehension, and which were proved in evidence before the deputy coroner.

Cross-examined by Mr. WATTS.—On one of the stockings worn by Mc Cabe, I saw a mark about the size of a fourpenny piece, which mark I supposed to be blood. On the other stocking I did not perceive any marks. I gave both stockings to Mr. West. I observed on one of the shoes a mark which my impression was might be blood. I did not see anything of the kind on the other shoe. I gave both shoes to Mr. West. He has both the shoes and stockings now. He is not here to-day to produce them. I asked Mc Cabe on the evening of the day on which he was apprehended—“Do you choose to say where you spent the former part of the morning before you went to Mr. Wraith's house?” I do not think I said anything else to him. I did not tell him I would use anything he said against him.

By Mr. GREENWOOD.—I know the locality about Mr. Wraith's house. There are no houses whatever between Mr. Wraith's house and the Town Gate that Reid would have to pass in going along the path.

Wraith's Green, nephew of the deceased Mr. James Wraith, repeated the testimony he gave before the Deputy Coroner.

Russiana Dallas, of Low Green, was next examined. She gave the same evidence as she gave before the Coroner on Thursday.

The Magistrates then retired for a few minutes, and on their return the Chairman asked Mr. Superintendent Green if he was prepared with any other evidence.

Mr. GREEN.—No, Sir.

The CHAIRMAN.—Have you any expectation of being able to produce any other evidence?

Mr. GREEN.—Oh yes, we have.

The CHAIRMAN.—In what time? At what future period?

Mr. GREEN.—Perhaps in the course of another week or a fortnight. We have a great many inquiries to make yet, Sir. It will take a long time to do it.

Mr. GREENWOOD.—Do you mean inquiries relating to this matter?

Mr. GREEN.—Yes, Sir.

Mr. HALSALL.—Of course my client's liberty is in the hands of this Bench.

The CHAIRMAN.—Our object is not more against the prisoners than for them. Our object is that if they are innocent they may be discharged, and if they are guilty that they may be convicted.

Mr. HALSALL then addressed the Bench at some length on behalf of Reid. He gave credit to the Bench for having conducted the examination in a straightforward, fair, and impartial manner, but he submitted that whatever degree of suspicion attached to the prisoner Mc Cabe, did not attach to Reid. That a most cruel and diabolical murder had been committed was certain, but the question was were the prisoners the guilty parties? That one man could not do it was clear, but he (Mr. Halsall) submitted that after all the inquiries which Mr. Green, the very active police officer, had made in the discharge of his duty, he had not found anything to inculpate Reid, and that, in truth, there was not a scintilla of evidence against him. He (Mr. Halsall) would call the attention of the Bench especially to this one circumstance, that it had never been shown that the prisoners were previously acquainted; and inasmuch as there was no proof that they were previously acquainted, he contended that that was a strong circumstance in favour of his client, Reid. Mr. Halsall then went on to remark that there was a strong feeling against the prisoners because they happened to be Irishmen, and said that although he appeared only for one of the prisoners, his own impression was that both were guiltless. His impression was, that the guilty parties had yet to be found. He submitted to the Bench that they ought to allow the prisoner Reid to go out on bail, taking sufficient security for his appearance at the conclusion of the coroner's inquest. He (Mr. Halsall) could not complain of the Bench. He rather thanked them for their courtesy and kindness, and the way in which the case had been conducted; and whatever the decision of the Bench might be he submitted to it.

Mr. WATTS declined to address any observations to the Bench on behalf of Mc Cabe, and in reply to a question from the Chairman, said that the prisoner did not wish to say anything.

The CHAIRMAN.—Mr. Green, you will perhaps be ready by Saturday morning next with evidence to enable us to come to a satisfactory conclusion, or to go no further.

Mr. GREEN.—Well, Sir, I don't know. Perhaps I may.

Mr. GREENWOOD.—We, as Magistrates, say this—there are circumstances of suspicion, and I feel myself bound to say this, sitting before you—I don't care whether they are English or Irish, and I must say we think it our duty to detain those parties a little longer.

Mr. GREEN.—I must say we think it our duty to detain those parties a little longer.

The CHAIRMAN (to the prisoners).—Then you will be remanded to the prison next Saturday morning, at the same hour.

Mr. HALSALL.—You will allow me, Mr. Ingham, to speak to my client.

The CHAIRMAN.—Yes, you may speak to your wife, but that must be in the presence of another party; but for the purpose of your defence you may speak to your attorney privately.

Mc Cabe.—Thank you, Sir.

The prisoners then stood down, and partook of some refreshment in the dock. They paid much attention to the evidence, and conducted themselves with the greatest decorum. Their personal appearance is perhaps rather prepossessing than otherwise.

The Court rose about ten minutes past four o'clock.