

THE TRIPLE MURDER AT MIRFIELD.

Since the appalling murder of three persons, the circumstances of which were recorded at length in our last, Mirfield has been a scene of unusual excitement. No further public proceedings in reference to the barbarous tragedy have yet taken place, but Mc.Cabe and Reid, two persons suspected of the murder, are still in custody. An examination of these two persons was fixed to take place yesterday, before the Magistrates at Dewsbury, but it was postponed until to-day.

On Saturday last, in the presence of a very immense throng of spectators, not only of those resident in the vicinity, but also of persons from various districts in the West Riding, the interment of Mr. and Mrs. Wraith and their servant girl, Caroline Ellis, took place. The two former were interred in one grave in Mirfield Church-yard, and Caroline Ellis, in the burial ground attached to the Wesleyan Chapel.

It was very generally rumoured a few days ago, that Mr. McCabe had made a confession implicating four other parties; but this is entirely unfounded. An important train of circumstantial evidence has, it is said, been collected.

The rumour that Ellis's mother expired on hearing of the melancholy fate of her daughter is not correct.

To-morrow Caroline Ellis was to have been married.

(From our own Correspondent.)

As we announced in our last, a second prisoner named Patrick Reid, was apprehended about three o'clock in the morning of Friday (yesterday week), on the supposition of being concerned with the former prisoner, Michael Mc.Cabe, in the dreadful deeds of Wednesday. His apprehension was in consequence of information received by Mr. John Howarth, constable of Mirfield, and took place at the hour named. The place where the prisoner resided—Dawgreen, being a place where a person trying to escape from custody could soon baffle the officers of justice, they therefore, let day break before they attempted the capture. As the prisoner resided with his father, who keeps a lodging-house at Dawgreen; access to the house was gained under the pretence of looking for two females, who were supposed to lodge in the house, where Patrick Reid was found in bed with his wife—two men, supposed to be brothers, being in bed also in the same room. He was told that he was wanted on a charge of felony, when the only observation he made was a question, "had they taken any other person on a charge of felony?" Since that time the officers of Mirfield and Dewsbury have been unremitting in their exertions to collect such evidence as to either bring the horrid crime home to the prisoners in custody, or to others, the guilty parties. The result of those exertions, so far, has been to greatly strengthen the original suspicion against the prisoners now in custody.

Before we detail such of the discoveries and additional evidence as it will be prudent in this state of the inquiry to publish, it will be well to state how it came about that suspicion was first directed towards Michael Mc.Cabe, the man first apprehended. After having visited the house of the Wraiths, and being concerned, it is supposed, with the dreadful deeds there committed, he called with his pots at the King's Head Inn, and at one or two other places in the neighbourhood; receiving at one house a bundle of rags which he had left in charge that same morning. With these rags he went to the house of Mr. Chas. Flint, a pot dealer at Robert Town. Mc.Cabe wished to borrow a small sum of money on the rags he had with him, for the purpose, as he said, "of purchasing some pints and glasses for the landlord of the Shoulder of Mutton Inn, at Mirfield," but as Mr. Flint was not at home, Mrs. F. refused to advance any, so he said he must wait until Charley came in, for, as he promised to carry the pints and glasses, he should like to keep his word. Accordingly he waited nearly an hour in Flint's house before Flint returned, and during all that time he never breathed a word about what he had seen or heard at Mirfield. As soon as Mr. Flint returned he (Flint) immediately uttered in the house, "Good God, have you heard what there has been to do at Mirfield; three persons murdered!" on which Mc.Cabe instantly rose to his feet and made a statement to the effect that he had been there, and had "heard and seen" certain things, which induced the suspicious in Flint's mind that he had seen and done more than he ought to have done. He had the presence of mind, however, to disguise his suspicions from Mc.Cabe; but let him have the sum of money he asked for, that he might procure the pints and glasses for the Mirfield landlord. As soon as Mc.Cabe had departed on this errand, Mr. Flint dispatched a messenger off on horseback to Mr. John Howarth, the constable of Mirfield, to apprise him of the suspicions he entertained of Mc.Cabe, and the cause of them; and then Mr. Howarth, the constable, acting on the information he had thus received, immediately set off in pursuit, and apprehended Mc.Cabe at the Shoulder of Mutton Inn, whither he had repaired with the pints and glasses. He then made to Howarth the statement as to what he had seen and heard at the house of the Wraiths, which Howarth deposed to at the inquest. Mc.Cabe had been at his residence at Hightown, in the interim between leaving Mr. Flint's, at Robert Town, and being again in Mirfield. When he reached home, he had with him a quantity of flour, which he left. He also informed his wife of the "news" of the murders; accompanying his information with a question to the effect as to "what would she think if he had done it?" It can be conclusively proved that both the prisoners were in the neighbourhood where the Wraiths lived about the time that the murders were committed. They were seen approaching the dwelling within sight of each other. Indeed they both admit having been at the house; Mc.Cabe, in his statement before made public—and Reid, in accounting for himself and his doings on that day. Since the apprehension of the second prisoner, the constabulary have become possessed of a fact which seems to bear very notoriously on the case. On the afternoon of the day on which the murders were committed, and before the horrifying news of the murder had reached so far, a woman found in a privy situated in a small wood at Ravenswharf, an old shirt all covered with blood. The breast of the shirt was much bespattered, and the sleeves were the same, while the wrist bands were as though they had been steeped. The body of the shirt also bore marks as though bloody hands had been wiped on it. This garment the woman showed to her neighbour women; and unfortunately for the ends of justice, one of them, in ignorance of what had happened so near, and believing the marks to have been produced by a far different cause, burnt the garment, and thus rendered inquiry fruitless as to whether it could have belonged to either of the prisoners charged, or to any other person.

Ravenswharf is on the high-road from Mirfield to Dawgreen, where the prisoner Reid resided, and he was seen in the neighbourhood of Ravenswharf that same afternoon. The constables have also caused the water in the draw well adjoining the dwelling of the murdered parties to be pumped out, and the well searched. In it was found the kitchen door key, which it will be remembered, was missing, the miscreants who enacted the bloody tragedy having closed the house on their victims, by putting in the curtains and shutters, and bolting and locking the doors. In this well was also found an instrument which it is more than likely has been used in the perpetration of the dreadful deeds. It is a tool known to the trade of tinner and braziers by the name of a "copper bit;" used in the soldering of tin and copper. It is a formidable instrument if used in beating in a skull, and it is more than probable from the stains, as if of blood, on the instrument in question, it has been so used. It seems better calculated to have produced the punctured wounds found on the body of Mr. and Mrs. Wraith (and which it will be remembered, had been inflicted after death), than the poker left in the room in which the old gentleman was found dead. It is certain that the instrument cannot have been in the well for any lengthened period, for the iron portion of it is not corroded. It is not unlikely that this instrument will be of important consequence in fixing the crime on the proper parties. As may be supposed, the dwellings of the two prisoners have been minutely searched. In that belonging to Mc.Cabe has been found a trifling article, which may, however, turn out to be no trifle in the end. When the body of Caroline Ellis was being stripped prior to being laid out, it was observed that one of her garters was gone, and that she had but one remaining. The missing garter was not laid about, nor found anywhere in the house. In a box in Mc.Cabe's dwelling was found a pair of stockings similar to those he wore when apprehended, and with these stockings was found a piece of a garter similar to the one found on the leg of the unfortunate young woman.

The sensation which this most awful affair has produced throughout the entire district is truly deep. It pervades all classes: a feeling of alarm is extensively entertained, and no wonder; for here is an entire family knocked on the head in open day. Amongst the mass the feeling experienced is one of deep indignation, and which has manifested itself in a most unwise manner. Because the two parties apprehended are Irishmen, it is a reason with the unreflecting why all the Irish should be run at and condemned as a race almost unfit to live. So strong is the feeling in some parts of the neighbourhood, that breaches of the peace are apprehended in the shape of endeavours to "drive out the Irish."

This conduct is most foolish, to say nothing of its wickedness; for, granting that it should ultimately be proved that these particular brutal deeds have been committed by Irishmen, are not the Irishmen included in the general condemnation entitled to ask, whether Greenacre was an Irishman? were Thurtell and Probert Irishmen? was the murderer of Maria Marten an Irishman? was Daniel Good an Irishman? was Tawell an Irishman? Alas, we have had Englishmen who have been as great disgraces to the name and character of our people as the worst criminal that Ireland ever produced; and it would be as reasonable for the Irish to treat every Englishman in Ireland as a Greenacre, as it is for our people to engage in wicked schemes to "drive the Irish out," because two of their countrymen stood charged with this barbarous act.

From what has transpired, it would appear that the act was engaged in through avaricious motives. Plunder would appear to have been the object, and to attain this object life was sacrificed. It would appear too that the murderous portion of the act must have been premeditated; for the party seems to have "gone at it at once." No time was given for parleying—no opportunity for escape—no chance for alarm.

It was evident from the blood bespattered on the fender, that the servant was struck as she knelt on the floor cleaning it; and from the position of the other bodies and the marks of blood left behind, it is evident that their respective deaths must have followed immediately, and that they were struck down in the places where they were found. Had there been any time afforded, it is certain that either the old man or the old woman would have tried to escape out of the front door, or the front windows; or at least have hurried up stairs as fast as age would permit. The parties engaged in the dreadful act must have been aware of the habits of the family; and have known, too, that an attack at night would be far less likely to be successful than in the day time.

Against the night ample provision for security had been made. The doors were well provided with bolts and locks; the lower windows, both behind and before, were fitted with inside shutters, and against these at night bells were hung, to sound an alarm, should attempts be made to open them. In addition to all this, the old man had a brace of loaded pistols laid on the mantle shelf of his bedroom, within reach as he lay in bed; and there these weapons lay innocuous enough, though loaded at the very time the household were being knocked on the head. The plunderers knew also where to go for the money—not much search was to be made. The key of the drawers where the money was kept being found in the old man's pocket, they then went direct to it, and having secured it, went away. The up-stairs rooms did not seem to have been entered at all, as there were no marks of footsteps either in them or on the stairs, and nothing in the bed-room had been disturbed.

And was such a knowledge of the habits of the family, and of the situation of the premises, likely to be entertained by either or both of the persons now in custody? It is to be feared that it was, as both of them are stated to be persons of very engaging manners for their station in life. Of Mc.Cabe we know that he was well liked throughout entire districts, where he has "hawked" for years; he was always ready with the joke, and had a fund of good humour in store, out of which he seemed to draw at pleasure. For some two years he lived at "Castle-hill Side," in the neighbourhood of Huddersfield, and his industry there was so marked and his manner so pleasing, that many of the inhabitants there cannot believe it possible for him to have been concerned in the bloody tragedy, but one and all are ready to testify to his good conduct and general disposition.

Be the belief of these people what it may, one thing is certain, that this amiability of manner "in a hawker," gained him more than ordinary access into the family of the Wraiths. The old man was, as most "fant old men" are, a little newsy and gossiping. To "learn the news" from the regular wanderer was with him as much a habit as with the antiquary, and his contemporaries in the days of old *Edide Ochiltree*. The "bit and sup" was therefore oftentimes ready for Mc.Cabe, when he called; and hours have been passed together by him and the family in imparting and receiving the gossiping news of the day. These occasions would afford opportunity enough for "a man on the look out" to ascertain what would be required for the ground work of such a bloody and barbarous scheme as was evidently planned.

It is said that Patrick Reid has had similar favours shown him at the house; and if it should turn out that Mc.Cabe and he are the guilty parties, it will be apparent that they have applied the knowledge they thus obtained to a most awful purpose.

It now only remains that we should contradict the many stories that busy rumour has set about relative to captures, confessions, and discoveries. At the time we go to press, no one else but the two we have named have been taken into custody; consequently all the reports about "five being apprehended at Dewsbury," "two being in custody at Leeds," or "one being taken at Liverpool with the old man's watch on him"—are simple fabrications.

If any confession has been made, it has not yet been made public; and there is no reason for believing that such "confession" has been made. And as for the discovery of bloody clothing we have detailed above the most important discovery which was made, but which has unfortunately been placed beyond the reach of accurate investigation.

It will be remembered that the old shoes and stockings belonging to the prisoner Mc.Cabe were ordered to be placed in the hands of our townsman, Mr. West, the chemist, for the purpose of the stains upon them being tested as to whether they were those of blood or not. We have reason to believe that the next examination of the prisoner will show that the result of such test is far from being in his favour. Nay, more, that on portions of the garments worn by both the prisoners, stains of blood have been found.

It would not be right to close this report without bearing testimony to the active and unremitting exertions of the magistrates and constabulary of this district, to unravel the whole of this mysterious business. All the parties, both magistrates and the constabulary, from Inspector Green downwards, have been indefatigable, and their efforts have been guided by much acuteness and discrimination.