

JAMES GORDON BENNETT The Recent Tragedy

MONDAY, April 11

MOST ATROCIOUS MURDER—Our city was disgraced on Sunday by one of the most foul and premeditated murders, that ever fell to our lot to record. The following are the circumstances as ascertained on the spot.

Richard P. Robinson, the alleged perpetrator of this most horrid deed, had for some time been in the habit of keeping (as it is termed) a girl named Ellen Jewett, who has for a long period, resided at No. 41 Thomas street, in the house kept by Rosina Townsend.

Having, as he suspected, some cause for jealousy, he went to the house on Saturday night as appears with the intention of murdering her, for he carried a hatchet with him. On going up into her room, quite late at night, he mentioned his suspicions and expressed a determination to quit her, and demanded his watch and miniature together with some letters which were in her possession. She refused to give them up, and he then drew from beneath his cloak the hatchet, and inflicted upon her head three blows either of which must have proved fatal, as the bone was cleft to the extent of three inches in each place.

She died without a struggle; and the cold blooded villain deliberately threw off his cloak, cast the lifeless body upon the bed, *and set fire to that*. He then ran down stairs unperceived by any person, went out of the back door and escaped in that manner.

In a short time Mrs. Townsend was aroused by the smell of smoke—she rushed up stairs and saw the bed on fire and the mangled body of the unfortunate girl upon it. She ran down, raised the alarm, and the watchmen rushing to the spot, rescued the body and preserved the house from being consumed.

Robinson's cloak was in the room, and at once they suspected the murderer. Mr. Noble, the assistant Captain of the Watch, instantly went and aroused Mr. Brink. They received such information as the

horror stricken inmates could afford them, and proceeded on their search. On Sunday morning, at seven o'clock, Robinson was arrested in bed at his boarding house, No. 42 Day street, and brought at once to the house where had been committed the foul deed.

On seeing the body he exhibited no signs of emotion, but gazed around and on his victim coolly and calmly.

The Coroner was summoned, a Jury formed, and on a patient examination of the testimony, they returned a verdict that "she came to her death by blows upon the head inflicted with a hatchet by Richard P. Robinson."

Robinson is a native of one of the Eastern States, aged 19, and remarkably handsome and intelligent, and has been for some time past in the employ of Joseph Hoxie, 101 Maiden Lane. But his conduct upon this occasion must stamp him as a villain of too black a die for mortal. Of his intentions there can be no doubt, for he took the hatchet with him, with which the murder was committed, and the deed done, he attempted to destroy all evidence of his guilt, by firing the house, and thus induce the public to believe that she had perished in the flames. He is very well and highly connected, and the sad news that must soon reach his parents ears may be fatal to them.

Ellen Jewett, was a finely formed, and most beautiful girl—a girl about twenty years of age, and endowed by nature and education, with talents and accomplishments which should have saved her from her ignoble situation.

On his examination before the Coroners Jury, Robinson denied himself and his name and asserted that he had not been in the house that night; but a woman was brought from his boarding house, who swore positively to his cloak. The fact of his having carried the hatchet with him, is substantiated, by there being a piece of twine attached to his button hole, which tallied precisely with a piece attached to the handle of the hatchet. On leaving the house yesterday, he leaped lightly into the carriage which was to carry him to Bridewell, his countenance clear, calm, and unruffled, and on being put into his cell his last request

was for some segars to smoke. The remains of the poor unfortunate victim will be interred this day.

VISIT TO THE SCENE—Yesterday afternoon, about 4 o'clock, the sun broke out for a moment in splendor. I started on a visit to the scene at 41 Thomas street. In passing through Canal street, I came to the corner of Thomas street, which runs west from behind the Hospital yard to Hudson street. A large crowd of young men stood around the door, No. 41, and several groups along the street in various directions. The excitement among the young men throughout the city was beginning to spread in all directions.

The house is a large four story elegant double one, painted yellow, and on the left hand side as you go to Hudson street. It is said to be one of the most splendid establishments devoted to infamous intercourse that the city can show. I knocked at the door. A Police Officer opened it stealthily. I told him who I was. "Mr. B. you can enter," said he with great politeness. The crowds rushed from behind seeking also an entrance.

"No more comes in," said the Police Officer.

"Why do you let that man in?" asked one of the crowd.

"He is an editor—he is on public duty."

I entered—I passed forward to the sitting room or parlour. There I found another Police officer in charge of that apartment. The old lady of the house, Mrs. Townsend, was sitting on a sofa, talking to several young men, in a great state of excitement. She was describing what Ellen had said—how she discovered the fire—how she made an alarm—how she called for the watch. The room was elegantly furnished with mirrors, splendid paintings, sofas, ottomans, and every variety of costly furniture. The Police officer when he saw me said—"Mr. B. would you like to see the *place*?"

"I would," replied I.

He immediately rose—I followed him. We mounted an elegant stair case—dark and gloomy; being in the centre of a large double house.

On reaching the second story, the Police officer took a key from his pocket and opened the door. What a sight burst upon me! There stood an elegant double mahogany bed, all covered with burnt pieces of linen, blankets, pillows black as cinders. I looked around for the object of my curiosity. On the carpet I saw a piece of linen sheet covering something as if carelessly flung over it.

“Here,” said the Police officer, “here is the poor creature.”

He half uncovered the ghastly corpse. I could scarcely look at it for a second or two. Slowly I began to discover the lineaments of the corpse as one would the beauties of a statue of marble. It was the most remarkable sight I ever beheld—I never have, and never expect, to see such another. “My God,” exclaimed I, “how like a statue. I can scarcely conceive that form to be a corpse.” No vein was to be seen. The body looked as white—as full—as polished as the purest Parisian marble. The perfect figure—the exquisite limbs—the fine face—the full arms—the beautiful bust—all—all—surpassed in every respect the Venus de Medicis according to the casts generally given of her.

“See,” said the Police officer, “she has assumed that appearance within an hour.”

It was the first process of dust returning to dust. Not the slightest appearance of emotion was here. One arm lay over her bosom—the other was inverted and hanging over her head. The left side down to the waist, where the fire had touched, was bronzed like an antique statue. For a few moments, I was lost to admiration at the extraordinary sight—a beautiful female corpse—that surpassed the finest statue of antiquity. I was recalled to her horrid destiny by seeing the dreadful bloody gashes on the right temple, which must have caused instantaneous dissolution.

I then looked round the room. It was elegant, but wild and extravagant in ornaments. On the drawer was a small library, composed of light novels, poetry, and monthly periodicals. There hung on the wall a beautiful print of Lord Byron as the presiding genius of the place. The books were Byron, Scott, Bulwer’s works, and the Knickerbocker.

A work table in a state of disorder, stood nearby. It was covered with fragments, pen, ink, paper, crayons, pamphlets &c. &c. Above the mantel piece hung several theatrical fancy sketches.

I returned to take a last look at the corpse. What a melancholy sight for beauty, wit, and talent, for it is said she possessed all, to come to such a fatal end!

I came down stairs—the house looked dark and gloomy, all the windows being half shut—but it was throughout splendidly furnished.

Such is the scene as it was seen yesterday afternoon.

This extraordinary murder has caused a sensation in this city never before felt or known. I understand that a large number of fashionable young men, clerks and others were caught in the various apartments by the Police when the cry of fire was given. *It was Saturday night.* The murdered girl was one of the most beautiful of her degraded *caste*. She was a perfect Millwood. She has seduced, by her beauty and blandishments, more young men than any known in the Police Records. She was a remarkable character, and has come to a remarkable end. The house is in danger from the mob. Let the authorities look to it. A morbid excitement pervades the city. It is said that she threatened to expose Robinson, when she lived, having discovered that he was paying attention to a respectable young lady. This threat drove him to madness. On Saturday she walked up and down Broadway half the day, nodding to her acquaintances among the dissipated young men.

In what a horrible condition is a portion of the young men of this devoted city?

New York *Herald*, April 11, 1836