

THE MURDER

LIFE

WILLIAM DOWELL,

THE ACCUSED MURDERER.

*Taken into custody September 20th, 1883; tried
and examined three times in Honiton, Devon;
and discharged without one titlle of evidence
against him.*

PRICE THREE PENCE.

THE writer of this preliminary
the duty of assisting to wa
been placed upon the ch
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as WILLIAM DEAN DOWELL
throughout the Devon Pre
His good character has be
his actions have been at
which he was as innocent
upshot, nevertheless, is th
have received a shock th
his sole desire appears to b
as an "innocent." No o
have a shadow of doubt b
in this case misapplied, and that once within its clutches
the "accused" was draw almost into a web. WILLIAM
DEAN DOWELL's innocence was, however, proven, and his
life, written by his own hand, is language that the simplest
of us all can distinguish as being the truth. It is neces-
sary, perhaps, for the reader to become acquainted with
the case, and we therefore give on page 28 extracts from
the Devon Press leading up to the discharge of DOWELL.

If any resident in Devon or elsewhere is inclined to
assist DOWELL in any way to bring the case before the
public, his address is 6, Hindley's Place, Forest Hill,
London.

THE LIFE OF WILLIAM DEAN DOWELL,

WHO WAS
CHARGED with WILFUL MURDER

At Brixton, Devon, on Sept. 8, 1883.

taken into custody September 20th; tried and examined
three times at Honiton, Devon, before Viscount Sidmouth,
Colonel Graves, and Major Speid (magistrates), and dis-
charged without one tittle of evidence against him, Vis-
count Sidmouth remarking that the case never ought to
have been brought before them.

THE case would never have been brought before the
magistrates in the way it was if Superintendent de Schmid
and P.-c. Martin of the Devon constabulary had under-
stood their duty. I charge several witnesses with perjury
and malice during the case, which I hope to prove during the
coming year. The tone of the prosecution all through
was malice and lies. My only reason for publishing these
facts is to show to the county of Devon and the country at
large, in which I am well-known and respected, the cruel
manner in which I was served in that case. As my true
version of the case has never been heard, and as I intend
going to Australia shortly, through having been served so
badly in England, I thought it should be published.

I was born in the county of Devon, east, parish of Branscombe, in the year 1852; population about 1,000. It lies between Sidmouth and Seaton, on the east coast. I was born of poor, but respectable parents, my father at that time being a farm labourer whose wages were from 7s. to 8s. per week. I was his eldest son, but third child, and seven more children were born after me. Until I was nine years of age I had but very little schooling. At nine I went out to work driving the plough, oxen, and lived in two farm houses; my wages were from 6d. to 1s. per week. That brings me on to the age of 14. During that time my father had, through his own industry, raised himself from a farm labourer to be the owner of a horse and cart, going about dealing in pigs, poultry, cheese, etc., and is doing the same now in Branscombe. After he had improved his position he thought he would like to put me to a trade, and bring me out of the bonds of slavery, which it was in those days, and very little better now. The poor labourers are the means of putting hundreds of pounds in the Bank for a few, while they and their children are obliged to go with hungry bellies, and so they may until some one stands up and champions their rights. But next spring they will stand face to face with their oppressors, the great Liberal Government having passed the Franchise Bill, so that the labourers can vote for members of Parliament the same as the landlords or farmers. So be careful you use your vote for your own good, not individually, but for the good of your common cause, as you have worked for other people long enough. If there's a bad season, who has to suffer through it? You labourers, or the rich landlords? Why they drop lower the labourers wages and take their drop of cider away. It also means hungry

bellies to thousands of little children, which I suffered when very young, and would have been the same now only my father improved his position and was enabled to put me to a trade. I said I would like to be a carpenter; he got me a place at Sidmouth, six miles from Branscombe, with Richard Tucker, builder, with whom I was bound apprentice for five years, from 1867 until 1872, serving my time faithfully and honourably. When my time was out my master gave me 10s. and my mistress a new bible, which I have now. I worked on for my master a little while, then left, as I was offered more money. I left Sidmouth altogether in 1873, without a stain upon my character in any shape or form. From Sidmouth I went to Exeter, and worked for Mr. White, builder; from Exeter I went to Cardiff, and got work with Mr. Thomas Williams, builder, Canton, Cardiff, and was sent by him to work on Llanfrachva Church, a village back in Monmouthshire, and when that was nearly completed was sent by the same master to work for him on another new church in a large town called Llanelly, in Carmarthenshire, 60 or 70 miles below Cardiff. I worked in that town several years for different masters after the church was finished, attending the church Sunday School while there, receiving rewards for regular attendance and good conduct from the vicar, the Rev. David Williams, and it was there I opened my account with the Post Office Savings' Bank in 1874. I state this because a big bug in Branscombe dared to ask a companion of mine where I got my money from. I will tell him to his face one day—by the sweat of my brow, 57 hours per week. Not the same way that he got his: by telling a cock-and-bull story two hours per week. From Llanelly I went through South Wales to

Pembroke Dock, and then I started for the Midland counties (not a stain on my character up to that time), and got work in Birmingham. I went to Manchester, but a great strike broke out there amongst the carpenters and joiners, and as I belonged to the Trade Society I did not dare to work there. I still belong to it, though it was my wish to resign when that cruel crime was put on me, but the heads of my Branch would not hear of it after I had stated the case to them. During my stay in Birmingham in which town I worked several years, lodging at 36, Aston Road, I had the honour of listening to three of England's greatest and best men. My views up to that time had been Conservative, but after listening to Gladstone, Bright and Chamberlain on the oppression of the poor I knew what they said was true, for I had witnessed it in my own native village. Their's is the Party that will do good for the oppressed labourers, and I dared to say a few words to that effect in my native village, where they are all Tories, so I was rather looked down on, but that is no reason why they should try to hang me for it. About the year 1878, in the winter, I received a letter from my mother telling me of the poverty that was in Branscombe. I had about £90 at that time. I wrote back to my mother telling her to send to me the names of any family that was in want, and I would send 10s. or a £1 to them. That's the man they tried to hang. I have no doubt my mother has the letter now, but I have never spoken to her about it since. I don't blame the poor of Branscombe for what I suffered. From Birmingham I went to London, working in various parts. This brings me up to Christmas, 1881, at which time I left London to go home. I went home to enjoy myself, trade being rather dull

I thought I would stop at home for two or three months as I had plenty of money at that time. I had £114 to my credit in the Post Office Savings' Bank, and £15 in my pocket, and every farthing of it I had saved by working as a journeyman carpenter. I opened my account with the Bank in 1874, and the last deposit I made was in October, 1881. I state this because a certain person in the village dared to ask my companion where I had got my money from; I wish he could say, that he had got his as honestly.

The first account I read in the papers was three lies for a start. It said I left London because I was ill; that I did not live with my parents on account of a dispute, and French, who was charged as an accessory, was a relation of mine. The reason I lived with my sister was that I was at home when her husband was taken to the Asylum. She came to my father's house, and asked me to come to her and stop, as she was timid. I did so, and when I have gone home since, I have always made that my home. Christmas, 1881, I went down home. March, 1882, I was thinking of returning to London again, when I was taken very ill, and was ill for six months, dangerously part of the time, during which I received 12s. per week from my club at Forest Hill. I then declared off; but was far from well, so I made up my mind to stop at home, and so I did until August, 1883, at which time I told my people I was going back to London, but stopped on a little longer as I heard trade was bad in London. On September 6th, 1883, I went to my sister's house to go to bed. When I got home she said to me, "Bill, my late brother, David Pyle, has been calling me dreadful names; I will go to Honiton on Saturday to see if I cannot

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make him prove his words or withdraw them, and will you go with me." I said, "no," as I had not heard a word of it, but after a little pressing I said I would go with her, I being her brother, and her husband being in the asylum: but I was very sorry for Pyle, as he and I were the best of friends up to September 8th, the day I was charged with attempting to way-lay him. I never had an angry word with him in my life, or ever heard him and my sister having an angry word together, although the prosecution, during the hearing of the case, kept on alluding to the row between Pyle and me. On the Sunday I was in the cells, I was told there was a detective in his house, almost trying to make him swear that there had been a quarrel between him and me, but he told them he was sure that there never had; and about a week before that he gave me some cabbage out of his garden, and I gave him 4d. for it. On Saturday, September 8th, I went with my sister to Honiton, and she stated her case to the magistrates' clerk, and he gave her his advice, which she thanked him for, as she thought it would answer her purpose very well, and that was to go to the police station at Honiton, and tell the sergeant from him to communicate with the constable at Branscombe, and tell him to go and see Pyle, which was done. We left Honiton highly pleased with our mission, as she considered it the best and cheapest way. We got back to our home about 7 or 7.30 in the evening, in the best of tempers. I went in two neighbours' houses laughing and joking, as I generally did, and reading, and then I went into my sister's house. She was busy about her children, and our fire was not lighted, so I lit the fire myself; made some tea and fried a piece of meat, and just as I was tak-

ing my meat from the pan on to my plate, I heard David Pyle, (who I was supposed to have been lying in wait to shoot,) say outside of my window, to a neighbour further up, that some one had shot poor old John Perriman. I said, "Good God, it's never true!" I ate a small portion of my meat, and went up to deceased's house at once, although the prosecution saw fit to say, in his opening statement to the magistrates, that when the deceased was brought home dead, although he was taken close to the defendant's house, yet they showed no surprise at the circumstances, or notice of the facts. I don't blame Mr. Tovey, the prosecuting counsel, for these bareface lies; but P.-c. Martin, of Branscombe, I do, for Mr. Tovey, of Exeter, must have got the tale directly from him. Mr. Tovey also said at the same time, near the place the deceased was shot, a gun was found under the hatch of a cottage (another bareface tale of Martin's), for the gun was Mr. Parret's, kept where he stored his potatoes in the side of the cliff, and Mr. Parret said he had kept it there for years until P.-c. Martin broke in and took it out; quite a different part of the parish altogether from where the deceased was shot. The prosecution all through was one tissue of lies, which I will prove as I go on; and then they failed to commit us. What their reason was for trying to get me hung God alone knows, but God was more powerful than the devil or his servant Martin. I cannot say that he was offered money to do it, but it looked to me very much like it. I know that I had three or four powerful enemies in the village, and I will name them if ever this case is found out, and why they went against me. From the time I heard of the shooting of the deceased until the time I was in his house, was not

more than six minutes. When I got to the house there was a crowd outside and in. I spoke to James Minife just inside of the door, and there were a great many in tears, and feeling mine coming I stepped outside for a minute or two until I regained my composure. Minife was called against me and he said I went outside because I was the guilty party. Then I went in again and into the room where the deceased lay. I stayed there ten minutes and then went outside and said to the crowd, "Has any one gone for the doctor?" they said, "Yes." I said, "Has any one gone for the policeman?" they said, "Yes, but we cannot find him." I said, "Which way have you been to look for him?" they said, "Down to his house." I said, "I will go up to the public house and look for him," as I knew he was very often there, but he was not there then. I said to a companion of mine, William Parrett, "It is a dreadful thing for poor old John to be shot dead in our midst and no one to see to it;" he said, "Where is Martin?" I said, "I am come up to look for him but can't find him. As we can't find Martin, will you go with me over to the farmer that rents the farm on which deceased was shot and ask him if he has given any one permission to shoot over Culverwell Hill, or knew of any one that had been shooting there that night?" he said, "he did not care much about it, as it was a long way to go and an awkward place to find." But we started on the road together; we had not gone far before we met P.-c. Martin. We went with him and a lot more, up to the place where the old man was shot. All the others went back excepting Martin and I. We consulted together there and agreed to go over to the farmer that rented the farm. It was very dark, and neither of us knew the way,

so Martin turned on his bullseye, and then we had a fine old bother as it was a dreadful rough path and dangerous for us. And here I charge Martin with several deliberate lies. He says in his evidence against me that while we were walking over the hill I said to him "it must be somebody that has done it that keeps guns. I don't know anybody excepting myself, Mr. Gill, and the young Powers that do." A cursed liar! when my name was on the church door at the same time as the holder of a gun license for 1882 in the midst of 20 or 30 more. He said again in another place the last time he saw me with a gun was in April, when I was with Mr. Richards, an adjoining farmer, and his nephew from London was there six months the holder of a gun license, and about almost every day with it, and I very often with them, but still I did not know them. If what Martin said was true, how was it possible for me to say what he said after that about myself and the other two? As regards myself, I never had a gun in my life of my own. The old one I used to fire with sometimes, belonged to my brother-in-law, as did the powder flask and shot belt they talked so much about during the trial. When my sister gave the shot belt and powder flask to Martin without being asked for them they were an eighth of an inch thick in dust, as they had been on the top of the shelves several months without having been touched. The last time I fired a gun was in May, 1883, and I have never fired a gun from then up to now (1885). The prosecution knew I had no gun, because a man in the village whom I told them of, had asked me twice for the loan of the old gun that I used to carry, when I told him my brother-in-law had left the parish and taken the old gun with him in June before the

old man was shot in September, and they went to this man and found that what I said was quite right; and if I had been carrying a gun, I should have had a license the same as the year before. Another lie of Martin's, again he says: "I asked him if he (the prisoner) could account for himself during the night; that I said yes, I had been at home all the night since I came from Honiton, where I had been for a summons against Pyle about the row we had, and you will get a letter about it on Monday." How was it possible for me to say such a thing when I had never heard an angry word between my sister and Pyle in my whole life, nor had one myself. We called at various places during the night. At one house we were told they had seen Fred. Skinner, the keeper, with his gun that way, so we made for his house. On the road Martin says to me, "I feel rather thirsty. I could drink a drop of cider." I said, "So could I, and when I get over to Skinner's I will ask him if he has any in the house," as we three had been drinking together at different times. After we had asked him various questions, we found out he had been up near the place where deceased was shot; and as we were leaving I said to Skinner, "Have you a drop of cider in the house you could give us?" He said, "No, I wish I had, Bill!" and then I said, in a jocular manner, "Have you a drop of brandy," and he said, "No!" and then that fellow Martin at my trial, a fortnight afterwards said that "as I was leaving Skinner's, I asked him to give me a drop of brandy, as I felt awfully queer." The scoundrel, I would not have asked for anything had it not been for him. Little did I think then, that I was assisting, and sheltering, a venomous serpent in my breast, that was soon going to bite me. We called at a place or

two after leaving Skinner's, getting back to the house of the deceased about three o'clock on Sunday morning very tired, both of us. They showed us the watch of the deceased, how it was indented by the shots; also a ruff bag which he carried over his shoulder. At my suggestion they searched the bag for any stray shot that might be there, and found several. They were brought against me also.—I must here say, that neither Superintendent de Schmid, or P.-c. Martin, of the Devon Constabulary, had any more idea how to work the case than two pigs.—I left Martin at my door, after we left the house of the deceased. I said to him, "If you will give me a call in the morning, I will go with you again." He said he would if he came that way. He did not come that way, so I got up in the morning, and went up again with several more chaps, and hunted the copse all over, thinking we might find the gun hidden away, but did not. I then went home to dinner, and after dinner I wrote a report of the case, as far as I knew, and sent it to the editor of *Pulman's Weekly Newspaper*, at Yeovil, praised the deceased in the highest terms that I was able, as I knew he had done more good in that village than any other man, for there are a great many young men there now that would never have been able to read, had it not been for the Sunday school, of which the deceased was superintendent for many years. He was also the first man that taught me to read. After I had written the report, I took it down to P.-c. Martin, for him to look at before I sent it away. He said it was very good, and it appeared in the local papers. P.-c. Martin and I then went down to the bottom of the village, and had several glasses of ale together. I then left, as I had to go and see my girl, and I

had very little to do with him after that, unless when I was compelled to go with him. In the course of a few days, after what I have spoken of, the rumour got about the village, that it was I that shot the deceased; but who started it God only knows, and those that did it. But I took no notice of it, as there was nearly always some old tale about in the village with not a bit of truth in it. At the first inquest, at which I was a spectator, the Coroner said it was a disgraceful thing to think that this old man should be shot in the village, and not to know who it was that caused his death. The inquest was adjourned. The old man was shot on September 8th, and on September 20th I *was taken into custody charged with murder*. I was very much surprised when they took me, because I considered they were bound to have some evidence against any one before they dared to take them into custody. I knew I was as innocent of the crime as the Queen of England, as was proved by the evidence, and although the prosecution brought lies to bear on the case, yet Lord Sidmouth on the bench said that it never ought to have been brought before them. On the Thursday that I was taken into custody, my sister, her children, and myself, had just sat down to dinner, when into her house came the Superintendent of police. He said to my sister, "Do you know me?" She said, "I have seen you before." He said, "I charge you with being an accessory before and after the murder of John Perriman." She said to him, "What do you mean?" I said to her, "Eliza, I know what they mean, you will have to go with them." Being a poor ignorant country woman, my sister did not know what he meant, and was as innocent of the charge as a new-born babe. She was than driven ten miles in a trap to Honiton police station;

she was in tears, you may depend, and her three children were crying around me; their ages were eight, six, and four years. I remember my words to them, and ever shall, "My God! your father in the asylum and your mother taken into custody on a charge she knows nothing about." I had no idea up to that time that they were going to charge me as well. The Superintendent then came into the house again; he said "Do you know me?" I said "Yes," he then said to me "I charge you with causing the death of John Perriman." He said at my trial that I made no reply; God only knows, I could not remember; all I was thinking about was the poor little children crying around me, and no one to look after them. P.-c. Martin then came in and handcuffed me, the first time and the last up to now, but I shall never forget it to my dying day. If I had broken the least of the laws of my country I could have borne it, but I had done nothing wrong up to that time, that I swear, and defy the world to prove anything against me. *As regards the charge of wilful murder, I knew no more about it than a child unborn, I swear it, and here call God to witness while I write it, here in my lodgings, 6, Hindsley-place, Forest Hill, London, and if it's not true, may I come short of the Glory of God in the world to come, which I have thought more about than ever since I was charged with that dreadful crime. Whatever I shall have to answer for before my Heavenly Judge, I shall be free of that crime. I am apt to think that Martin exceeded his duty in handcuffing me, as I made no demur, and was quite willing to go with him. If I had wished to have gone away I could easily have done so during the fortnight before I was taken into custody, but I had no cause for it. I was taken from*

Branscombe to Seaton to catch the train for Honiton (police cells), at which town I was tried. Before I left Branscombe, P.-c. Martin, my bosom friend as I thought, took me in a public-house while he sent for a conveyance to take me to Seaton station. While I was there John Croom asked me to drink out of his pint, but P.-c. Martin would not allow me, although he took me there. Mrs. Clarke, the landlady, saw I was very much upset, and she gave me a drop of brandy but Martin would not allow me to drink it. Now a strange policeman took French, who was charged with me as an accessory, he never handcuffed him, and he took him to the same public-house and payed for some drink for him. Now there's the difference in two policemen, this poor fellow has died since then, and I was very sorry to hear it as he treated us with every respect while in the cells, and he had most to do with us whilst there. After I was taken from my sister's house there came two or three fellows, who turned our house upside-down. They turned my best clothes out on the floor, and served our beds the same, and there they left them. It was shameful how they served the property. They had it all to themselves, and what they were looking for I cannot tell. When we got to Honiton we were searched and placed in cells. There are three cells there in a line one with the other, French was in the first, my sister second, and myself in the third. I was in the condemned cell I suppose. I shall never forget my feelings when the door of the cell closed against me with its double locks, I thought my heart would have ceased beating, a dreadful sensation passed over me. I went to the wooden bed and kneeling down, shed a few tears, the first time for many years, but since then I have shed thousands over this cruel

case, I am the wreck of a man through it to-day; the reason I feel it so much is that I had never thought to injure a soul in my whole life, by word or deed, neither had I done so. If there was anyone in trouble in the village and I knew it, I was always the first to go to their assistance with advice and money, and there are people lying in Branscombe churchyard to-day, if they could speak they would thank Bill Dowell for what he had done. After I had been in the cells a little while, I felt more composed, thinking to myself that the guilty person would come forward now that innocent persons were charged with the murder. I always did believe it was an accident, and always shall until it is proved otherwise. The brother of the man that was shot gave evidence at the trial. He said he heard a gun fired in the same place where his brother was shot on the Wednesday previous, and about the same time at night. It was also heard the same night that the deceased was shot by an adjoining farmer about a quarter of an hour before the fatal shot, for it was nothing rare to hear guns on this hill. That's a proof they were not up there shooting men at all times. There is not a person in the village wicked enough to lie in wait and shoot a man in cold blood. Every right-thinking person must see it was an accident some way or the other. But he was a scoundrel not to come forward when three innocent persons were charged with wilfully doing it. I consider the villain was worse than the notorious Charles Peace, as there were three innocent persons in danger, and two of them heads of families. But if he will only come forward now I will forgive him freely for all I have suffered and will be his friend through life. After I had been in the cell some time I went to the hole in the door

and spoke to my sister and French of the cruel way in which we had been served; and that was all we talked about during the week we were there, and every word we said was listened to by the police day and night, although we did not know it till afterwards, and even after all that they had not a tittle of evidence against us after all the lies they brought to bear on the case. Had I been hung I should not have been the first that has been hanged innocently by a great many, through perjured evidence. We have heard of some being paid to give false evidence in murder cases, but I would not like to say that was so in my case; but perjury I can prove. I know I had given offence to a few in the village. I also kept a poodle dog and dared to take out a gun license in 1882. That's a dreadful crime in these villages, where landlordism, tyranny, and oppression is rampant. But I will say much more on my case if it is ever found out, which I will have a good try for, before I leave this country where I have been served so cruelly. I hope the land laws of this country will be altered before long to give the poor labourers a chance. My sister had a bible in her cell, so she asked us if she should read a chapter to us. We said yes, as we could hear from the little cell windows. She told me that she took the bible and let it open where it would, and read the first chapter that came to her view, and it was the 35th Psalm. If she had looked the bible through she could not have found a chapter more suitable to our own case. She read that chapter to us dozens of times during the week we were there. It is where David prayeth for his own safety and his enemies confusion, and of their wrongful dealings with him; and God knows we had cause for it as much as David. I did not sleep the

first night in the cells, being on bare boards, and I had been used to good beds all my life. The next morning we appeared before the magistrates. It said next day in the newspapers that "Dowell's eyes appeared red and he had a very anxious appearance." I wonder how that reporter would have felt had he been in my place, and knew just the same about it as I did? Especially if he had lived such a life as I had up to that time: that is, no thought to injure a soul in my life by word or deed, but if I knew of any one in trouble always the first to his assistance. I thought I should never have borne up against it, but God gave me strength. We were remanded from Friday till Monday; Monday till Wednesday; not a tittle of evidence against us. Tuesday taken to the inquest in custody, a distance of twenty miles there and back. On Wednesday we were discharged without one of our witnesses having been called, Lord Sidmouth remarking that the case ought not to have been brought before them. I was summoned the same day that I was discharged to give evidence at the adjourned inquest, which I did, although they could not compel me as I had been charged with the crime. What I said was the truth, the same that I had told althrough. So HELP ME GOD! It appeared in the newspapers every time I was before the magistrates "that Dowell would not be quiet." Reader, put it to yourself how you would have felt when your friend, as you thought, was trying to swear your life away falsely. I could not speak, being a prisoner, and had employed counsel, which I was very sorry for afterwards, as it closed my mouth. It was not my intention at first, as I told Martin at the station, and I sent back my Bank book by him and said I would not spend a farthing over the case, so I sent back

my bank book by him to my friends which he delivered quite safe. But the next morning we three consulted together and agreed to have someone to defend us, as we knew there had been a great many hung innocently. We stated our views to the sergeant in charge, he persuaded us not to, which was rather strange. We employed Mr. Every, Solicitor, of Homerton, and paid £25 besides other expenses, and the case itself must have cost the county of Devon hundreds of pounds, the fruits of employing men that do not understand their duty. After we were discharged there, they let the case stop, never so much as offering a reward and the case was not so much as brought up at the county sessions following, as all these things are supposed to be. I suppose the Superintendent was ashamed to, after making such a bungling job of it as he did. I stayed in the village 18 months afterwards endeavouring to unravel the mystery but failed, as the way the case was managed enabled the guilty part to get free. P.-c. Martin, in reply to a question from Mr. Every during the hearing of the case, said he frequently saw Dowell because he thought he was the guilty person. I do not believe that he had ever thought of such a thing in his life if he spoke the truth. No doubt if he had got me hung he would have gained a stripe through it, and perhaps £100 in the bargain. During the 18 months I was in Branscombe before the murder, we were always about together. I was about with P.-c. Martin more than I was with any man in the village. I have been scores of miles with him, played hundreds of games of shove-halfpenny with him, all one night at cards, when no doubt he ought to have been on duty, and about a fortnight before the murder he sent his child to my house asking me to go out

to Southleigh with him as he had a job on there. Was that because I was a murderer, and when he asked me to go with him to the "Three Horse Shoes" public-house in Colyton parish where I paid for four quarts of 6d. ale for him and myself and Keeper Skinner, who was with us. Also before that when he asked me to go for a walk with him, he said he was not going far; I went with him as far as Trow Hill, when he told me he was going to Sidford, a village at the bottom of Trow Hill. I refused to go with him as I knew that if I had gone down I should have spent a lot of money on both of us, so I went back to Branscombe again, he going to Sidford. Was all this because he thought I was a murderer? No, but because he knew I was a good-tempered fool, and spent my money on him and others in the village foolishly, and well I have been repaid for it. But I forgive P.-c. Martin now for all the lies he told about me, and I hope that God will, but I shall never forget him, a bad man. And this P.-c. Martin that had served me so cruelly, about a week after I was discharged had the daring impudence to speak to me. I refused to speak to him—he said it was for my good—I said I should not answer him, as he had done his worst for me and I believed there was not any good in him. I was in the village 18 months after I was discharged, but I spoke neither good nor bad of Martin. I was waiting for the case to be found out, and I made sure that it would have been before now. But a week or so before I came away I ask Martin a question. He said to me I must thank my friends that ever I was charged with murder. I thought to myself, yes, that's you; as the rich of Branscombe were not my friends, quite the reverse. I was too clever to be one of their slaves, for I kept a little fox

terrier dog and the year before I had a gun license—dreadful crime that, although it was in the village I called home, and the home of my forefathers for generations. I also dared to speak a word in defence of the poor oppressed labourers of my native village. Their wages now are only 10s. per week, whilst there are some coining their thousands a year and do nothing for those who get for them all their money. The population of Branscombe is nearly 1000, one church, one chapel, two publichouses. All the poor slaves can do after they leave work in the evening, is to go the public if they have a copper to spend, or go to bed. What would it be for the man that owns the whole village to build a reading room and supply it with papers and books. No, that is against their creed, they wish to keep them in ignorance, especially now the Franchise Bill is passed for the poor labourer, which gives him the right to vote the same as the rich for Members of Parliament. Men of Branscombe, vote for the party that will alter the landlaws, and give to you part of the fruits of your labour, you have gained money enough for other people, your children have gone with hungry bellies long enough, while you have put hundreds of pounds in the bank for others. Beware of the party that preaches what they do not practice. I was very much disliked in Branscombe by one family for this reason, which they ought to have thanked me for, only he was a distant relation of theirs. Most of the people in Branscombe are very ignorant and superstitious, and believe very much in witchcraft. If they are taken ill and don't get well quick they say they are bewitched, and then they will give pounds to an old man that pretends to cure these things. When I got home, in 1881, my sister told me she

had paid a man a sovereign to go and see her husband in Exminster Asylum, as the people had made her believe that her husband was bewitched; and this old wizard, or wise man, Cross, of Newton Abbott, went to the asylum and saw him, and told her she was to do the most ridiculous nonsense I ever heard of. When she told me of it I was very angry, and wrote off at once to this Cross, of Newton Abbott, threatening him with proceedings in the police court if he did not refund the money which my sister had paid him. He did so, but I ought to have summoned him for getting money under false pretences. He gets many pounds from the ignorant of that village, so I got disliked by his worshippers instead of thanking me for it. When I was taken ill it was because I got the money back from Cross; all my troubles they trace to that, even the murder case. Poor silly mortals. Regarding the murder case, I have stated the case all through to a gentleman in London well-versed in law. He says if the party was to come forward now and prove that it was an accident, which every right-thinking man can see it was, he would get punished, but only very little: that would be for not coming forward when innocent persons were charged with it. If the party that fired the fatal shot will only come forward and confess to it before I leave this country I will forgive him freely for all I have suffered and am suffering now. I will be his friend through life, and my two brothers and myself in London will give him £50 and whatever he has to pay or suffer through confessing to it. If it is possible for me to suffer for him I will do so gladly, and will try by all means in my power to suffer for him. I would gladly do the worst five years' penal servitude that ever a man

has done if I thought at the end of that time it would be found out. So I pray and beseech you, man of Branscombe, to come forward and confess it. If you were up there on the Culverwell Hills to shoot a rabbit for your wife and childrens' Sunday dinner, I commend you for it, for I know the few shillings per week you get for your labour, will not allow you to buy much meat, especially if you have a large family like some have in the parish. But when you found you had shot a man, you ought to have gone to his assistance, and stated the truth, instead of running away and leaving him to die. Then every man in the parish, with a spark of human feeling in his breast would have pitied you. I am sure I should have been the first to have given you a sovereign towards your expenses as I was always the first in these matters. I remember the case of Jack Farrant and Lewis Perryman two lads of Branscombe that got in a little trouble, whom I tried to keep from a felon's cell. When I got to the lock-up in which these lads were, Jack Farrant told me that he dreamt in the cell last night that Bill Dowell would come to their assistance, although no relation to them. I did so, with money and advice. The reason I was about with P.-c. Martin so much was, when I left Forest Hill in 1881, nearly all my companions in Forest Hill were in the Metropolitan police force, and I have been with them many times when they were on special duty, and I always found them upright and just in doing their duty both to rich and poor alike, and I was proud of the cloth they wore. When I got home I treated this Devon county policeman with the same respect, taking him to be an honourable man the same as my companions at Forest Hill. I have proved him to be a rough. After I

assisted him to the best of my ability. His word never ought to be taken in a police court. I know it is not right for a man to speak well of himself, but mine is an exceptional case, as I wish to show to the County of Devon and the country at large, especially in towns where I have worked and always been respected, and the cruel way in which I was treated. After acting the noble part, I ought to have been thanked instead of trying to hang me. It has ruined me in every shape and form, because I was very feeling and sensitive chap.

After we were discharged and every thing paid, a lot of the poor villagers persuaded us to have a subscription list, and they promised us various sums of money, half-a-crown to one penny. I said no, I would not accept any from the poor people, but the others could please themselves. My sister went down to the vicar of the parish and asked him if he would make her out a paper, he being the "Shepherd of the flock." He hesitated, and then said "No, not now, he would go over and see Mr. Ford about it," (that's the bloke who has got nearly all the land in the village,) so of course these two are rulers supreme there amongst the poor ignorant mortals, but, thank God, the rising generation will have more sense, as they go to school there now. I did not blame the Vicar altogether for consulting Ford. No doubt he remembered the fate of his predecessor, the Rev. Mr. Tomkins, who dared to act according to the dictates of his heart, and he was the best Vicar the parish ever had, as he studied the welfare of the poor, both the chapel-goers and church alike, and gave them many a good meal when they would have had none. The Ford's fell out with him and kept away from church, and of course all the farmers did the same, being tenants of the

Ford's. When I used to go home from Sidmouth to Branscombe I used to go to church just the same. Being a member of Sidmouth church and schools, I have been down to church after the fall out, perhaps there were no more than seven or eight people there, the choir had all left. The vicar, Mr. Thomkins would give out the hymns and start the tune, and I, in the gallery, would join in, and there might be a woman in the body of the church squeak in, and so they got on for some time, but they drove him from the village after all, in this way:—One 5th of November they dressed up a guy to represent the vicar, with surplice on and bible in hand and paraded him through the village and then burnt his effigy in front of his house, surplice, Bible, and all. I believe that these proceedings nearly broke him down, I don't know if the gentleman is still living if he is I hope he is quite well, but if dead may his soul be resting in peace. I can sympathise with him as I have been served the same as he was, through acting the noble part, but much worse and by the same class of people. The farmers would do anything if they thought it would please their landlord, not because their farms are cheap as they pay high rents, but because they don't know any better. If they burnt me and my little dog, that would sure to give satisfaction! Dreadful crime in these villages to keep a little dog, but I think it's hard to hang a man for it. But, thank God, I can keep a dog here in London, or six if I can afford it.

Although I have been served so cruel in the village I once called home, my voice shall be heard in its midst again before I leave this country, and that very shortly I hope; and I defy the land grubbers, parsons, and their myrmidons to do their worst. If I have the support of

the upright honest labourers, of which I could name many of them in Branscombe if I had space, for I am certain not one of that class would dare, or could, ever speak a bad word of Bill Dowell, or accuse him of a mean or dirty action; as they used to say to me when I went home they were always glad to see me as I was not like some that went away from the village and came home and would not speak to them. No; I was always proud to shake the hand of such class of men as I have mentioned, and felt for them in their oppression, as they work very hard for the enormous sum of 10s. per week, and when I left last September they were thinking of dropping the wages because there was no price for their corn. *Shameful!* Why didn't the farmers compel the landlord to drop their rent instead of making all the little children in the village suffer, as he could well afford to lower it half? No! they are afraid. The class of labourers I have alluded to are not the landlords and farmers cronies that would do or say anything for a horn of cider, but the honest, upright men.

W. D. DOWELL.

He who steals my purse steals trash.

'Twas mine: 'tis his;

Has been the slave of thousands.

But he who robs me of my good name

Robs me of that which not enriches him

But makes me poor indeed.

The day before I was taken into custody I was singing the song entitled "Justice in England." Little did I think then I was going to suffer next day and ever after through the injustice of England. I often think of it, but have never sung since.

Extract from the Press.

**"THE ALLEGED MURDER OF A SUNDAY
"SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT AT BRANSCOMBE.**

"ARREST OF THE ALLEGED MURDERER AND HIS ACCOMPLICES.

"East Devon was shocked by the death of an elderly man named Perriman, who was shot in the dark at Branscombe when returning from the harvest field, and died almost immediately without being able to give any assistance in the identification of the person who had caused his death. The fact that Perriman should be the subject of such an outrage was a matter of much surprise, he having led a very quiet and inoffensive life during the 70 years he had been in the village. The only prominence he had gained was as the superintendent of the Wesleyan Sunday School. It was at once suggested that in the darkness he had been mistaken for another person, and that he was not the one for whom the contents of the gun were intended. At the inquest no light was thrown on the event, and the inquiry was adjourned in order that the police might investigate the case. They appear to have acted on the suggestion which we have referred to, and have now arrested three persons who had a grievance against another, for whom, it is suggested, Perriman was mistaken. The persons in custody are *William Dean Dowell, Amos French, and Eliza Williams*, all of whom are

grouped in the charge of murder, Dowell as the principal and the others as accessories. When questioned as to their whereabouts on the 8th, French said Dowell was at his house during the greater part of the evening reading, and Dowell stated that on leaving French he went into his sister's, and at the time when Perriman was shot—ten minutes to nine—he was cooking his supper. After various inquiries, however, the police arrested these men and Mrs. Williams on Thursday afternoon. As Dowell last year held a gun license search was made for a gun, but none has been discovered either in the house in which he resided or in any of the adjoining cottages. Powder and shot, however, were found in Dowell's house. The villagers are greatly excited by the event, and a hope was yesterday expressed that 'the one who has done it will pay so, and so save other people.'

At the inquest evidence was given by the police and others, after which

"Mr. Every addressed the jury on behalf of William Dean Dowell, Amos French, and Eliza Williams; and having dwelt on the details of the circumstances which led to their apprehension, referred to the cause which prompted Williams and Dowell to visit the Magistrates' Clerk at Honiton on the day that Perriman was shot for the purpose of getting a warrant to bind over David Pile to keep the peace, and the manner in which these two persons and Amos French spent their time on the evening of the 8th ultimo. There was nothing before them, he said, to link the story of the journey to Honiton and the return with the return of the labourers from Edge Farm on the night of the 8th except suspicion—and suspicion was rank, and had got hold of men in the village. However, it was for

the jury to say how far the stories of the accused were pertinent to the inquiry. They had heard their statements, and he (Mr. Every) was satisfied that it was consistent, and that there had not been one particle, one fragment, or one tittle of evidence against Dowell, Williams, or French. No doubt there had been a quarrel with Amos French; but what he desired was to fight it out there and then; and, perhaps, if he had done that a painful inquiry would have been spared. (Applause, which was immediately suppressed).

"The Coroner summed up the evidence in detail. Having dilated upon the circumstances immediately preceding and attending the death of Perriman, he said it was quite possible, as Mr. Every had suggested, that the affair was an accident, but it was not at all probable. If the death of Perriman was the result of an accident, it was difficult to suppose that the person who had caused the death would not come forward in the face of three persons actually having been accused of the murder, and brought before the magistrates on that charge. Dowell, Williams, and Amos French were accused of causing the death of Perriman—whether rightly or wrongly it was now for him to say—and therefore he thought it his duty to investigate the matter as fully as possible. The Coroner then spoke as to the circumstances which threw suspicion upon them, and remarked that with regard to Amos French, it was clear that a quarrel had taken place with David Pile, the man whom the police averred was intended to be shot. Eliza Williams had been insulted by Pile; therefore she might have felt some revenge against him; but he must say, with reference to William Dean Dowell, that, so far as the evidence brought before him went, he

was unable to see any sufficient motive on his part to induce him to murder Pile. With regard to what had passed concerning the actions of the persons accused, he thought it right that they should be allowed, if they chose to do so, to come forward and give evidence. They had done so, and the jury alone would be the judges of the evidence given by them. The conduct of Dowell on the night of the 8th ult. was not that of a man who was about to commit a serious crime.

Dowell: I never was so hurt in my life. I never thought of such a thing. It is more than a man can bear.

The Coroner, continuing, said as far as the evidence sworn to there was not the slightest proof of either of the accused having committed the crime. In conclusion, he said that, taking the whole of the evidence into consideration, he (the coroner) could not see the slightest possible evidence to connect any particular person with the cause of the death of Perriman.

"The jury retired for a few minutes, and then returned a verdict of 'Wilful murder against some person or persons unknown.'

"The Coroner: I think that is a proper verdict, and I entirely agree with you. I thank you for the great attention you have given to this inquiry, and I am sorry that you were bound to listen to so much evidence; but I think you will agree with me that it was necessary to investigate fully the circumstances in connection with the death of Perriman and with the three persons charged with the murder.

"At the hearing of the charge of wilful murder preferred against William Dean Dowell, Amos French, and Eliza Williams on Monday, at the Honiton Police-court, before

Captain Graves, an eager crowd was waiting outside for admittance. When the gates were thrown open at half-past eleven o'clock the Court was soon filled with people from Branscombe and Honiton, and many who could not gain admittance remained outside the front entrance.

"The evidence was then read over.

"The three prisoners were then charged in the ordinary manner.

"Amos French said: The only thing I have to say is that I am innocent.

"Eliza Williams said in a firm voice: I am innocent, sir, I know nothing of the case whatever.

"William Dean Dowell said: I know nothing of the charge whatever.

"The Bench then retired before calling on Mr. Every to answer, and upon returning into court,

"The Chairman said: The Bench are of opinion that the evidence does not connect the prisoners, and decline to commit them. Therefore they are discharged.

"There was loud applause in Court on the Bench giving their decision. Dowell and Williams seemed to be overjoyed, but Amos French maintained the same calmness which has marked him throughout the proceedings. Dowell cried, and said that he was never so much injured in his life, and he had travelled the world over. He wished to address the Bench, but was not allowed to do so. Addressing the reporters he said: My character has been vilified, and it has gone throughout the world. I wish the Press to take notice of the decision to-day.

"The prisoners were then liberated, and as Dowell walked up the street many persons followed him, he, at the same time protesting his innocence."

