

Cruel murder committed by Robert Johnstone, on the body of Miss Jane Henderson : near Rosevale village on the banks of the Humber, a few miles from Hull, on Saturday, 27th June, 1863.

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CRUEL MURDER

COMMITTED BY

ROBERT JOHNSTONE,

ON THE BODY OF

MISS JANE HENDERSON,

Near Rosevale Village on the
banks of the Humber, a few
miles from Hull,

On Saturday, 27th June, 1863

PRINTED FOR THE BOOKSELLERS.

1863.

CHURCH

MURDER

COMMITTED

ROBERT J. HARRISON

ON THE BODY OF

MISS JANE HARRISON

West Rosedale Village on the

banks of the Elmhurst, a few

miles from Hall.

On Saturday, 27th June, 1880



PAM:

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CRUEL MURDER.

Another most atrocious deed of blood has been brought to light in the usually quiet locality of Rosevale village, which has caused a sensation in that district which would be difficult to describe, as both the murdered lady and the accused are most respectably connected.

Miss Jane Henderson, the deceased, was daughter of the late Mr James Henderson, an inn-keeper, who died about two years ago ; his widow, after his death, removed with her only daughter to a villa in the neighbourhood of Rosevale, on the banks of the Humber, where she is now residing. Robert Johnstone, who is now in custody for the murder, is the son of a respectable farmer, and considerable proprietor in the same parish. From what we have been able to learn of this most appalling case, it appears that Robert Johnstone had formed an intimacy with Miss Henderson soon after her coming to this place, that their attachment had been mutual, and it was understood by both of their parents that it would grow into a union, alike congenial to all parties. It appears that an illicit connection had been carrying on between them for some time, and that she had become pregnant without disclosing her situation to any one except Robert, the father of her

and, in a very short time ceased altogether ; when, laying aside all restraint, he courted another lady who, to her honour, be it told, knew nothing of his former intimacy with Miss Henderson. This young lady possessed a considerable fortune, and he was upon the eve of making her his bride, only one object stood in the way, and that was Miss Henderson. He trembled at the thought of that coming to light, which could not long remain a secret. He was determined to put Miss Henderson out of the way by diabolically taking her life. He accordingly sent her a note, which was found on her person, the night previous to the murder, to meet him at nine o'clock in a grove on the banks of the Humber. and not far from the house. The confiding young woman obeyed the summons, when it appears that he murdered her on the spot, and threw her body into the river. On Monday following, as Mr Berkwith and some others were walking by the river side, something attracted their attention in a small creek, when drawing near to the spot they perceived it to be a human being. On procuring assistance, it was dragged to the side, and found to be the body of a female with a deep gash on the throat, and two desperate cuts on the abdomen. The police were promptly on the spot, and the body was conveyed to the Crown Inn, where an inquest was held and the body was identified; when the body was undressed, a piece of paper was found in the left side of the dress, which after being carefully dried and read.

My Dear Miss Henderson,—

I hope you will forgive all the injuries I have done. I know that you have heard the report that I am to get married. It is all false, do not believe it. Will you meet me once more in the Willow Grove at nine o'clock, to-night, and I shall give you proof of my truthfulness for ever. Do not forget nine o'clock. Be sure and destroy this hurried note, as it might fall into your mother's hands, and she would think both time and place improper. Be sure and burn it—nine o'clock.—Yours, R. J.

The initials affixed to the letter, as well as their keeping company, at once fixed suspicion on Robert Johnstone; and the Coroner's jury returned a verdict of wilful murder against him. He was accordingly committed to the county prison to take his trial at the next assizes.

CONFESSION.

The letter written by her betrayer and murderer was found on her person. An order for his apprehension being issued, he was taken into custody. When brought into the presence of his murdered victim he appeared greatly agitated. The authorities told him that he was charged with the murder of Miss Henderson, which he strongly denied. When asked if the letter which was handed to him for inspection, was his property, he fainted away, and on being brought to a state of consciousness, that the letter was written by

INTERVIEW.

His aged father and mother visited him. On entering his cell, the scene that presented itself was of the most heart-rending description, tears of sorrow were shed by the unhappy prisoner, also by his parents. They lifted him from his knees, embraced him with kindness, and requested him to obtain the forgiveness of God, whose law he had so greatly violated. "Dear parents," exclaimed the unhappy prisoner, "had I but followed your advice, I should not now have been branded with the name of murderer. I hope God will bless you, my dear parents, for the love and attendance you have shown me." At last his mother asked him in reference to the letter found on Miss Henderson's person, when he choked with grief could utter no more than the emphatic words, "I wrote it." When the time allowed for the visit expired, they were removed amidst tears and sobs, and a few incoherent words were all they could utter to their disconsolate son.

VERSES.

You young men and maidens, I pray you take warning
 By this cruel tragedy I'm going to relate ;
 For the death of my sweetheart, who ne'er did offend me,
 I'm bound in strong irons my trial to wait.

My name's Robert Johnstone, and near unto Rosevale,
 My father, a farmer, respected does dwell,
 Being his only son he did rear me tender,
 Till to swearing and drinking I unfortunately fell.

I fell deep in love with an Innkeeper's daughter,
 A charming young creature, Jane Henderson by name,
 Her sweet comely features and manners so courteous,
 In my wretched bosom raised a fierce flame.

And oft by the Humber we've wandered together,
 While fondly I swore I would make her my bride,
 Ah ! little she thought that I tried to deceive her,
 While I smiled in her face as I walked by her side.

Unknown to her parents a long time we courted,
 Till at length my dear Jane proved with child ;
 And often she urged me to keep by my promise,
 As fondly and sweetly upon me she smiled.

Dear Robert, she cried, you've oftentimes told me,
 You would make me your own, for you loved me so dear ;
 O think of my fate, if my mother should know it,
 Pray make me your wife, for my time it is near.

I sent her a letter one evening to meet me,
 By the banks of the Humber where the willow trees grow ;
 And there we'll appoint the day for our wedding
 But be sure come alone, and let no person

On the swift wings of love she flew there to meet me,
 O'erjoyed to think that she'd soon be my wife;
 Ah! little she thought that her days they were numbered,
 The man she loved dearly would deprive her of life.

By the hair of the head I did seize this poor creature,
 And out of my pocket I drew a large knife;
 I said, you young harlot, no more you'll torment me,
 For this very night I'll deprive you of life.

I plunged it into her bosom and mangled her body
 In various parts while the blood it did flow;
 She fell on her knees, and implored for mercy,
 While murdered she sank under many a blow.

Her cries I ne'er minded, no mercy I showed her,
 While she cried dearest Robert, O spare my sweet life;
 For the sake of your body, I beg you'll have mercy,
 And I never will ask you to make me your wife.

Her throat then I cut, while the blood flowed profusely,
 Then she fell like a corpse, most dreadful to view;
 My crime to conceal, I drew her near the water,
 And into the Humber her body I threw.

A few days after some people were walking
 On the banks of the Humber so lovely and green;
 When they spied her fair body by the side of the water,
 As mangled and wounded that night she had been.

They ran for assistance, and soon did discover
 A letter containing her murderer's name;
 By the stern hand of justice he's now overtaken,
 And doubtless the murderer will die for the same.