

James L. Cryer (- 2 Dec 1911)

Cryer. Suddenly on Saturday, December 2, 1911, James L., eldest son of James H. and Mary V. Cryer, aged 24 years. Funeral (private) from chapel of Frank Geier's Sons, No. 1115 7th street northwest, Wednesday, December 6 at 10 a.m. Interment at Congressional cemetery.

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Ends Life at Dance

James L. Cryer Prefers Death to Facing Forgery Charge

Shoots Self in Temple

Detective Is Standing Near When Tragedy Occurs

Partner Awaits His Return

Girl With Whom He Was Dancing, as Well as Others There, Knew Nothing of Suicide

Called from a merry throng of dancers at a dancing class at the National Rifles' Armory on G street last night about 10 o'clock to be placed under arrest to answer charges of forgery, James L. Cryer, twenty-four years old, drew a revolver from his hip pocket and shot himself in the right temple. He was rushed to the Emergency Hospital and died at 11:10 o'clock.

Cryer was in an alcove on the third floor of the building, the floor above the dance hall, and almost within reach of Detectives Cornwell and Fortney when the shot was fired. The officers were unable to reach him in time to prevent him from firing the shot, however, and when they saw what he had done they had an ambulance summoned.

While Cryer's companion waited in the hall for him to return and finish the dance, the wounded man was carried to the ground floor and placed in the ambulance. None of those participating in the dance knew of what had happened until the dance was finished, so quietly was the wounded man taken from the building.

Detectives had been looking for Cryer for two weeks or more. While Detectives Cornwell and Fortney were at the armor looking for him Detective Berman and others were looking elsewhere. A young woman had accompanied one of the detectives to the armory to point out the man wanted.

Dancing When Accosted

Cryer was dancing with a young woman when Detective Cornwell reached the door and saw him.

"I want to see you outside," Cornwell said to him.

"All right," said Cryer, excusing himself to his partner and walking to the door.

"Will you let me go upstairs and get my hat and coat?" he asked the detective.

Detective Cornwell said he had no notion of making him leave the armory bareheaded, and went with him to the upper floor, where the hats and coats are kept. Reaching the third floor, Cryer stepped to the opening and asked Maxed Thomas, the colored man in charge of the cloakroom for his hat and coat.

"They are in fifty-four," he told Thomas.

"All right," said Thomas, turning and going in the direction of the compartment indicated.

About the time Thomas reached the hat and coat, the owner of the articles turned from the detective and darted into the alcove, the top of the opening being so low that it was necessary for him to stoop in order to enter.

Cryer drew the weapon from his pocket as he passed through the low opening and fired.

"I saw him reach for the pistol," said Detective Cornwell, "and thought he was going to shoot the colored man. I hurried to grab him before he could shoot, but just as I was about to place my hands on him he discharged the weapon and fell to the floor."

Shot Himself in Temple

Detective Cornwell picked up the pistol. He saw that the bullet had entered the right temple of Cryer and that the wounded man was unconscious. He thought he was dying. The teacher of the class was quietly summoned from the hall and told of the occurrence, and in a few minutes the ambulance was at the armory door.

A large crowd of persons on the street gathered in front of the armory when they saw the ambulance stop. They waited to see the wounded man brought out, but those who were attending the dance continued to do the light fantastic without having been advised of the tragedy.

Cryer was wanted on a charge of passing checks to which the name of T. Freeman Mattingly, local agent for the Monumental Brewing Company of Baltimore, had been forged, and his bondsman, in other cases pending against him, wanted to surrender him to the police. Cryer had also been arrested for alleged failure to support his wife and child, the police say, and had been ordered to pay his wife \$3 a week.

Cryer, it is said by the police, was separated from his wife and child, Mrs. Cryer residing at the home of her parents in Langdon.

The latter part of August Mr. Mattingly caused the arrest of Cryer for alleged embezzlement. Cryer was employed as driver and collector and it was charged that he embezzled \$99.75 of the money he collected for beer he had delivered at saloons and private residences.

James Fletcher became surety for him in the sum of \$500. A preliminary hearing was waived in the Police Court and the defendant was held for the grand jury. When Fletcher learned that Cryer was blamed for other offenses he procured a writ for his arrest in order that he might surrender him and have him committed to jail.

Charged He Forged Checks

Following the time he was arrested and given a preliminary hearing on a charge of embezzlement, it is charged, Cryer did little or no work. It is charged that he procured small sums of money or checks to which he is charged with having forged Mr. Mattingly's name saloonkeepers with whom he had previously had dealings having cashed the checks for him.

Detectives and policemen who knew he was wanted to answer the more recent charges found it a difficult matter to locate him. Cryer they believe, knew his bondsman wanted him surrendered and kept out of sight.

Last night Detectives Fortney and Cornwell learned that Cryer was at the dance, and each of them went to the armory without knowing the other was on his trail. A few minutes before 10 o'clock the detectives reached the armory and went in search of their man, Cornwell being first to reach the door leading to the armory and seeing Cryer.

Cryer did not regain consciousness before he died. His relatives were unable to reach the hospital until sometime after life was extinct. As he was still alive when he reached the hospital his name was recorded at police headquarters as having been arrested, a charge of forgery being preferred against him.