

## Ella Miller

( - 18 Jul 1895)

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*The Evening Star, July 20, 1895*

### **Case of Suicide**

### **No Inquest Necessary Over Ellen Miller's Body She Came to Her Birthplace in Order to Die-- Had Friends in Baltimore**

Coroner Hammett today viewed the remains of Ellen Miller, the young girl whose body was found in the Eastern branch Thursday night, and, after talking with the witnesses assembled at Lee's undertaking establishment, he decided that an inquest would be unnecessary, and he issued a certificate of death by drowning, and declared that it was a clear case of suicide.

In consequence of this decision the witnesses were discharged and preparations were made for the burial of the body. Miss Miller's relatives, who live in Baltimore, reached the city this morning and were at the undertaker's at 11 o'clock, the hour set for the inquest. They positively identified the body, and when the coroner tendered his decision they made arrangements at once to have it placed this afternoon in the vault at Mount Olivet cemetery, where the girl's mother is buried.

"It is a clear case of self-destruction," said the coroner to a Star reporter. "I have talked with all of these people, and there is not a scrap of evidence that gives the shadow of a suspicion of foul play. I have only to do with the manner of the girl's death, and there is so little question that it was a case of suicide by drowning that I shall not go to the expense and trouble of an inquest. I have nothing to do with the poor girl's past life or with the causes leading up to her unhappy and fatal act. That is none of my business, and I shall not attempt to unravel the mystery, if there be one, that surrounds her motives."

### *Certain Identification*

The identification of the body was complete and unquestionable. After the coroner had announced his decision all the witnesses filed past the coffin in the chapel back of the office, and those who knew the girl in life agreed that the poor, wasted form of the suicide was that of Ellen Miller. Mr. W.H. Russell of Baltimore is uncle to the dead girl. He and his wife were present this morning to take charge of the remains. Mr. Russell said to The Star reporter that the statements made this morning that the girl had no home or place of shelter were untrue.

### *She Was Welcome*

"She had a home, and a good and welcome one, under my roof," he said, "and she knew it. She visited my family about three weeks ago, shortly after her employers left the city, and spent about a week with us. She went with my daughters, and seemed to be very cheerful and happy. When she prepared to return to Washington I urged her to stay with us during the summer or until she could get other employment. I told her she was welcome to stay until Col. Graham's family came back in the fall. She said she was sure to be reappointed to her old place, and was quite pleased with the prospect of living with Mrs. Graham again. She was paid \$10 a month and was given her board, and she thought that was a good wage.

"But for some reason she refused to remain, and came back here, and a few days later one of my daughters received a letter from her which was bright and cheerful. There was not a hint of suicide in it nor a word of any trouble, mental or otherwise. Yesterday evening my daughter received another letter

from Ellen, saying that she had decided to commit suicide and that by the time of its receipt she would be dead.

"There was no word in this second letter to indicate why she had reached this conclusion, or any inkling of her motive. I am at a loss to understand why she should take her life. She had several places to go to, in addition to mine, for there are friends and relatives all over Baltimore who would have been glad to give her shelter. I have not had a suspicion that she was in want or in need of help, or I should have sent her money or come here after her.

"Ellen's mother died about a year ago, and since then the poor girl has been very much downcast at times, and I fear she has brooded until she sought relief in death. She was born on a farm out here near what I believe they call Uniontown (Anacostia), and was always quiet and retiring. She read a great many books, and was eager for information. I have a notion that of late she has been reading more than was good for her, and has got her head filled with melancholy and romantic notions, that have crowded on her until she thought of suicide. I do not know anything about her love affairs, and did not know until I read this morning, that she had a lover. She did not mention a thing to my daughters, with whom she was very intimate. I think she died a good, pure girl."

#### *Knew the River*

So it turns out that the girl sought death near the scene of her birth, and the theory of the river men, who declared that the suicide knew the nature of the river, appears to have been well founded. Facts have come to light to show that the girl was in considerable distress for money during the last few days, and that during the early part of the week she was forced to seek aid from the police station, whence she was turned over to the matron of an employment agency. But it seems that she was then bent on destroying her life, for she did not return, as she promised, and Thursday night she made her way to the river and plunged in. She was owner of some property, inherited from her mother, but it was unimproved, except one lot on the Bladensburg road, which rendered a return only large enough to pay the interest on a small deed of trust. Recently the girl went to Mr. John Larner, who, as counsel of the Washington Loan and Trust Company, was trustee of the estate, and tried to effect some disposition of the property that would yield her a fund that she might use to give her a better education. But Mr. Larner showed her that there was little prospect of realizing at once on the property. The gross value of the land is probably about \$5,000 with one or two trust deeds. When Mr. Larner told her these facts and showed her that she could not easily enter Wellesley College, which she desired to do, she was grievously disappointed. This was two weeks ago, and probably immediately after her return from her uncle's house in Baltimore, and it is likely that it was this disappointment that first started the chain of melancholy thoughts that finally led to her self-destruction. It is stated that Miss Miller was engaged to be married to a young man named Johnson, who keeps a cigar store in this city. She wrote a number of letters just before she went to the river, telling those in whom she was most interested that she was about to die.