

Frederick Reichenbach

(- 5 Apr 1890)

The Evening Star, April 5, 1890

**Shot Himself in the Head
Sensational Suicide of Frederick Reichenbach This Morning
He Goes to a Secluded Spot in the Monument Grounds,
Lies Down on a Knoll Under the Magnolia Blossoms
And Blows His Brains Out
Affecting Letter to His Wife**

"My Dear Wife: My whole life to you has been a life of deceit. You have been guilty of nothing wrong. God help you and the little ones and forgive me for what I am about to do.

Your loving husband,
Fred"

Such was the note that Fred Reichenbach addressed to his wife and put in his pocket before taking his own life this morning, which he did by shooting himself in the right temple with a "bull dog" revolver.

Frederick Reichenbach was well known in this city. He was one of the piano tuners here and was in the employ of the Knabe Company. He came here from Baltimore a number of years ago and married a daughter of Judge Plant.

His Composed Manner Before The Act

This morning he appeared at the Washington branch of the Knabe Piano Company on Market space and reported for duty as usual. He was unusually pleasant to the young man in charge of the store, but the latter noticed something strange about Reichenbach's appearance and asked him:

"What's the matter?"

"Oh, nothing," was Reichenbach's reply. He took off his hat and coat and was ready to work. There were some tuning orders on the book for Alexandria and they were assigned to him. Taking the addresses on a piece of paper he put the slips in his pocket and left the store, going across to the south side of Pennsylvania avenue, but instead of going to the steamboat wharf or depot to go to Alexandria he walked as far as the Smithsonian grounds and from there he passed through the parks until he reached the monument grounds near the front entrance to the Bureau of Engraving and Printing.

The Last Scene of All

Taking the path leading to the propagating gardens he wended his way along and around the fence. Then he walked some distance until he reached a large magnolia tree, where there is a little knoll above the marshy ground where the tide makes up. Under the magnolia blossoms he rested his weary form and placed his head on the green sod beside him. Then he crossed his legs and in a few seconds he had passed into the other world. He only fired one shot, but that proved sufficient and death must have ensued almost instantly.

The men at work in the gardens heard the shot, but they paid no attention to it, as there are gunners on the flats shooting birds almost every day.

The Body Discovered

Nearly half an hour afterward a colored woman who was making a short cut across the marshy path saw the body of the dead man and a pool of blood near his head. She hastened to a house near by and informed Miss Annie Sullivan of the ghastly find.

Word was at once sent to the propagating gardens and then the police were notified. When Lieut. Amis and Officer Cross went with the patrol wagon for the body a number of persons had collected there, among them several persons from the White House. The revolver which had done the deadly work was lying on the ground near the body and there was enough to satisfy the officers that the man had committed suicide, but someone suggested that he had been beaten and then the officers searched his pockets for some evidence in the shape of a letter, with the result above stated. The body was placed in the patrol wagon and taken home to his wife and children at No. 1003 8th street northwest and Coroner Patterson was notified.

The Evening Star, April 7, 1890

Fred Reichenbach's Death

The Motive for His Rash Act Still a Mystery

An investigation of the facts concerning the death of Frederick Reichenbach from a pistol shot wound of the head, as published in Saturday's Star, showed plainly that it was a case of suicide. He purchased the revolver at Walford's store on Pennsylvania avenue Saturday morning, but when he wrote the farewell letter to his wife no one has yet learned.

Mrs. Reichenbach, wife of the unfortunate man, was terribly affected by the sad news and could not understand what drove her husband to commit such a terrible deed. His financial prospects were brighter than they had ever been before. He received a salary of \$1,400 from the Knabe Piano Company and was also compensated for ringing the chimes in the Metropolitan Church. Recently there were several cases of typhoid fever in the family and Mr. Reichenbach's fear of taking the fever, his wife thinks, had something to do with the taking of his life.

Dr. Walter had been attending the deceased for some time before his death, and he was unwell when he left home Saturday morning.

Coroner Patterson investigated the case and gave a certificate of death. The funeral took place this afternoon from his house and was private.