

Mary Frances Scheitlin (- 23 Oct 1905)

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Murder and Suicide

Double Tragedy Enacted in Southeast Washington

Result of Jealousy

Husband Finds Dead Wife and her Slayer Together

William Bottomy Kills Mrs. Mary F. Scheitlin And Then Shoots Himself

Another double tragedy was entered on the police annals of Washington last night as the result of the alleged unfaithfulness of a wife, following closely after a somewhat similar case in West Washington. According to the best evidence obtainable it appears that Mary Frances Scheitlin, aged 35 years, the wife of Rudolph B. Scheitlin, employed as an electrician in the navy yard, was murdered in her home, at 750 9th street southeast, by William Bottomy or Bottemby, 38 years of age, who is said to have been a frequent visitor at the Scheitlin home during the absence of the husband. After firing the fatal shots at Mrs. Scheitlin from a 38 caliber bulldog revolver the murderer turned the weapon on himself and committed suicide by shooting himself through the right temple.

It was evident that death was almost instantaneous in both cases. Two shots were fired into the woman's head--one entering immediately behind the right ear and the other in the mouth.

The sight which met the gaze of the husband when he entered his home late yesterday afternoon, after leaving his work in the navy yard, was a gruesome one. Lying on the floor of the parlor was his murdered wife, while stretched at her feet was the murderer and suicide, Bottomy. With the husband were several of his fellow employees of the navy yard who had come to his home with him.

Detective's Investigation

Detective Patrick O'Brien of headquarters, who was assigned to the case by Capt. Boardman, made an immediate investigation of the circumstances surrounding the double fatality. He learned that the murderer was what is known as a bar-room singer, and that he had been paying clandestine visits to Mrs. Scheitlin for a long time, against the protests of the husband. On the occasion of his visits he always brought liquor to the house and the two often indulged to the point of intoxication.

The husband, finding that his protests against the visits of Bottomy were without avail, as he informed Detective O'Brien, he had determined to pack up his effects and leave her November 1. He added that he had informed her that if she preferred the fellow Bottomy, with his ribald songs and his strong drink, to a true and industrious husband, he would leave the place for all time.

When Mr. Scheitlin first entered his home about 4 o'clock yesterday afternoon and saw Bottomy and his wife stretched out on the floor, he believed that they were both drunk. He saw blood about the place, but decided that it was the result of the man and woman falling or engaging in a fight. He therefore went out to look for a policeman to have them taken from his home. He found Policemen Thompson and Price, and they went with him to the house.

It was quickly discovered that a murder and suicide had been committed. Bottomy was found with his head lying across the woman's breast, and the police believe he had placed his ear against her body after shooting her to see if she had stopped breathing before he fired the shot into his own head. The revolver was found at the dead woman's feet where it had fallen from the hand of the murderer. The bodies were sent to the morgue.

Police Theory

It is the theory of the police that on the occasion of the visit of Bottomy to the Scheitlin home yesterday he had words with the woman; that as the time was drawing near for the husband to return from his place of employment, the woman urged the man to depart, as she had informed a friend that Rudolph had threatened to leave her on November 1, and she was going to be good and try to cause him to change his mind and live again happily with her. It is believed that Bottomy resented this and opposed her decision to try and live a wifely life with her lawful husband. She stuck to her determination, it is thought, and he in a drunken frenzy fired the fatal shots. When found by the policeman, he bore evidence of having been under the influence of liquor, and the remains of a pint of whisky were found in a flask in his pocket.

The wife had returned to her sober senses and realized that her husband was going to leave her, and that Bottomy could not support her, and she made the decision which is thought to have resulted in her death and that of the man who had caused her all the trouble.

Mr. Scheitlin informed Detective O'Brien that he believed the man had been calling on his wife for some time, and that he had heard things since her death which he had not heard before of their transactions. He also said his wife was a good woman except at those times when she indulged in intoxicants. She had more than once threatened to leave her husband when he chided her for her misconduct, and on several occasions had taken the pictures from the wall preparatory to carrying out her threat. She was engaged in hanging pictures on the wall and tidying up the house to make a good impression on her husband when Bottomy called and the tragedy took place.

Soldier in War With Spain

Rudolph B. Scheitlin, the husband was a Spanish war soldier, having been the first man to enlist in Company F, 1st District of Columbia Volunteers, in 1898. He served in the Cuban campaign with honor. At the close of the war he married Mary Frances Smith, daughter of Wylie Smith of Brick Church Station, near Upper Marlboro, Md. After securing employment in the navy yard he established a modest little home at 750 9th street southeast, and lived happily until Bottomy and strong drink came in, and then, it is said, happiness and content went out.

"At last," said Scheitlin, sadly, "I almost lost hope, and finally determined to leave my wife for good."

Since his wife's death the husband has learned, so he told Detective O'Brien, that Bottomy's clandestine visits have continued for about two years. On several occasions when he found the invader at his home he had requested the police to remove him.

Mrs. Scheitlin was evidently in the act of hanging a picture on the wall in the process of tidying up her home and restoring happiness, when Bottomy shot her from behind, and she tumbled, dying, to the floor.

Bottomy was not given a good reputation by the police when they were asked about him today. The husband Scheitlin, is said to be a grandson of John Hitz, the first Swiss consul in Washington.

Coroner J. Ramsey Nevitt today gave certificates of murder and suicide in the cases. Mr. Scheitlin had his wife's remains taken to Nally's undertaking establishment on 11th street southeast, and says he will give her a Christian burial. The body of Bottomy was still at the morgue at a late hour this afternoon.