

The Perkins Horror

From the Cincinnati Enquirer

By Lafcadio Hearn

Another History of the Family Trouble.

Mrs. Perkins the Victim of a Designing Woman's Wiles.

Mr. Perkins Makes a Statement

From the beginning it has been our endeavor to do all possible justice to all parties in any way connected with the recent terrible tragedy and scandal; and it seems there are some very ugly statements yet to be made, which will turn the tide of popular feeling more strongly than ever against Perkins, and create more sympathy for the unhappy victim. Indeed she does not lack sympathy now from thousands who have read the terrible story; and who do not hesitate to believe in Mrs. Perkins' entire innocence of the scandalous charges against her honor. Many loudly declare that the murder of the beautiful little girl was in itself a strong proof of the frenzied mother's innocence; that only a very loving mother would ever so kill her child with the idea of saving it from a life of misery and shame; and that no wife guilty of secret and habitual criminal intimacy, could ever, when convicted, suffer such an agony of despair and shame as would impel her to the frightful acts of which Mrs. Perkins has been guilty. Yesterday this widespread feeling of sympathetic pity, was greatly aroused by a terrible rumor concerning Charles Perkins—being nothing less than that he had offered some short time previously to the tragedy, to pay \$500 to any man who would give him ground for the obtaining of a divorce; and that this offer had been made in a public resort of ill-repute. This rumor reaching the ears of an ENQUIRER reporter, he at once set about tracing it to the source whence it emanated, and found it, as is common in such cases, unquestionably false. The researches of the reporter, nevertheless, developed some fresh and shocking facts, hardly less damaging, if true, as we have reason to believe they are, to the character of the husband. A friend of the reporter, at his request, sought for and obtained an interview with a lady well known in certain stylish circles and who has been for years a confidante of both Mr. Perkins and Pauline Payne. This lady acknowledged that Mr. Perkins had visited her establishment at the time indicated, and expressed herself willing to state such facts relative to the tragedy as she was possessed of, that justice might be done to the unhappy wife, for whom she expressed the most heart-felt sympathy; while at the same time announced her friendship for both the husband and his mistress:

“This poor woman, Mrs. Perkins,” said the Phrynne, “is, I am sure, as innocent of any wrongdoing, since she married Charley, as a babe. And it ain't so much Charley's fault as it is Pauline Payne's. I tell you he ain't the first man she has brought to ruin. She has plotted for over three years the separation of Perkins and his wife, and she has sworn to put them apart at all hazards, and she has accomplished her purpose. Why, only a few weeks ago she told me she intended to put up a job on Mrs. Perkins that would furnish her husband with a handle that would enable him to swear positively that he had seen her visit houses of ill-fame. Her plan was to write a letter to Mrs. Perkins purporting to come from an anonymous friend, and in it state that if she (Mrs. P.) would visit an indicated house of ill-fame at a certain time she would find her husband enjoying

the society of a frail female there. The design was to entrap Mrs. P. into visiting the house in quest of her husband, who would be stationed with a friend convenient to the house so that he could perceive his wife enter and leave the place, and so enable him to swear that he himself saw her visit disreputable houses. Nor is this all. Charley Perkins, not less than a week before this lamentable murder, no, not murder, but sacrifice of his child; told me himself that he had now laid the train that would effect his long cherished wish of separation from 'that woman,' as he invariably termed his wife latterly.

"Previous to Charley Perkins' meeting with Pauline Payne his married life was a happy one. If his wife was ever so bad before he married her—which I don't believe—he married her with his eyes open, and he should have been man enough to have acted a man's part by her.

"The ENQUIRER too said the lady stated that Pauline was a Creole of education. This is not so. She was born in Covington, and she had not a perfect education. In fact she only knows enough to make a fool of her.

"Charley Perkins will live to rue the day he met this woman. She has put him in mortal fear of his life in Covington, and several times she walked up and down in front of his store with a pistol in her pocket with which to shoot him.

"The statement that Mrs. Perkins left him of her own accord is a false one. He drove her away, and when she wanted to come back to the city he did not want her to do so, and she came here only when Mr. DeCamp, Charley's partner, heard of the trouble, and gave Perkins the alternative either to take his wife home and support her or to leave the firm."

"Since that time he and Pauline have racked their brains to find some plausible excuse or pretext for procuring a divorce. Now, Pauline Payne has always been a good friend to me, and is to-day; and I would be glad to help or befriend her in any way if she needed it. But I want to see that poor, wretched woman done justice to; and I know that Pauline is at the bottom of the whole trouble, and I ought to speak. She is a dangerous woman—a terrible woman. It is not the first home she has broken up. It is not the first or the second or the third she has ruined."

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A Card from Mr. Charles L. Perkins.

To the Editor of the Enquirer:

I had hoped to have avoided rushing into print concerning my domestic troubles, and would have much preferred that the public would have learned through the medium of a judicial investigation the exact facts concerning the same, but the quasi authorized statement of Joseph Clare, which has appeared in the public press of this date, demands, injustice to myself and friends, that I should break the silence which I determined upon maintaining.

It is unnecessary that I should go into a detailed statement of my early acquaintance of her who subsequently became my wife. Suffice it to say that when just entering upon manhood, some eight years since, I became entangled with Julia A. Snell. I found her after she had already fallen, became infatuated, and was led on step by step until I married and sought to reclaim her. While it may be truly said that I have not been immaculate or faithful to my marriage vows; that I have, as most young men are likely to be, been led astray, yet in extenuation let me urge that before, at the time of and after my marriage, she knew my habits, character and disposition, and it was by her knowledge in this respect that not only did she obtain mastery over me, but which, in fact, led

to the marriage itself. Since she became my wife I have sought by every means in my power to elevate her social position, introducing her into the family circle and weaning her from the society and companionship of those who knew her before her reformation. I have always provided for her abundantly, and upon this score there has never been any complaint, nor has there been any serious disturbance between us because of my attention to others.

It is not necessary that I should at this writing go into a history of the introduction of Joseph Clare into my household, the facts which have already appeared in print are sufficiently accurate, nor that I should make a detailed statement of all that occurred between us, my wife, Clare and myself, upon that ill-fated night. Suffice it that I saw and heard enough to convince me that my wife had been faithless, and he to whom I had introduced her was, and had been for some time previous, maintaining criminal relations with her. Upon that very night, under my own roof, had they agreed to repeat that which so often had taken place between them before, waiting only until the child should fall asleep to accomplish their purpose. All this I had overheard myself, and even after I had forced the guilty pair into my presence, no positive denial was attempted on the part of either. True, when I mentioned dates as to previous occurrences, Clare would say, "No, not then;" but as to the offense, save as to date, no pretense was made as to the untruthfulness of the accusation. As to my wife she not only then freely confessed to me here intimacy with Clare, but has since repeated the statement to others of the family.

And now, let me ask what could I have done under the circumstances which then surrounded me other than I did do. I had no desire for a scene or a public exposure, I simply desired for the sake of all parties concerned to avoid as much as I possibly could the scandal which would follow. Of course, separation was inevitable, and I wished that might be accomplished as quietly as possible; therefore it was arranged at the urgent request of both myself and Clare that they might remain under my roof until the following morning, then she was to go to her father's home at Medina, Ohio, and he was to see her safely to the train. With this plan agreed upon, I left the house at six o'clock in the morning. The dreadful tragedy which followed, the public is already acquainted with. It is not my purpose now to trace the footsteps of Clare on the succeeding day, nor to correct the untruthful statements as to his movements which have been put forward by his friends concerning the same. Such an investigation here is uncalled for and would be out of place.

My only desire is to acquaint the public with his connection with the events of that fateful night, and now let me say, emphatically, that my transgressions, however unpardonable they may have been, did not enter into, nor did they form any part of the difficulties or quarrels of the night in question, nor were they in any way connected with the tragedy that followed.

My only request now is that the community will await the judicial investigation, which must inevitably follow, and then let the ax of public censure fall where the sworn testimony thus developed shall place it.

CHAS. L. PERKINS.