

## **HODGEN'S MAD DEED**

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### **MURDERS MRS. MOLLIE JONES AND SLAYS HIMSELF**

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#### **A Crime Which Startled the City Life of the Victims.**

In a small back bed chamber over Jörn's photograph gallery on North Fifth Street there was enacted yesterday at noon a tragedy which has not had a parallel in the criminal annals of this city for many years. As a result P.O. Hodgen and Mrs. Mollie Jones, both former residents of Pleasant Plains, are dead, their bodies bearing the marks of eight bullets, each one of which would have alone proven instantly fatal.

It was shortly before noon that two shots were heard by people in the neighborhood, the sound indicating that they were fired in the room described. Almost simultaneously with the reports the two children of the dead woman, a little boy and girl aged six and four respectively, came running from the stair way screaming "a man has shot momma." Thomas Brady, who was standing in front of Paullin & Patterson's across the street, ran over and hurried up the stairs. From the room at the head of the stairs he saw through the half open bed room door the murderer and suicide standing in front of the mirror with his face toward the bed. The screams of the woman and Hodgen's looks were such that he did not dare enter. In the meantime word was sent to police headquarters and officers Bargrye and McCaffrey hurried to the scene together with Gus Stender, the barber. The spectacle which greeted their eyes when they pushed open the door and entered the room was at once horrifying and sickening. The room was filled with smoke, the floor and bed were spattered with blood and the dual victims were gasping for breath on the bed. They were lying side by side fully clothed and there was no evidence of a struggle of any kind, not even against the encroachments of death. The murderer was lying on the right side and nearby lay a five chambered Smith & Wesson revolver, empty and smoking. In the woman's breast were three bullet wounds within a small compass almost directly over the heart. In the forehead were two more gaping holes and still another in the corner of the right eye. The victim was lying flat on her back and was so disfigured with blood and so discolored that she bore little resemblance to herself in life. Hodgen had a similar position. He had apparently thrown himself upon the bed after shooting the woman. His hat had fallen from his head to the floor and his necktie was burning from the firing of the revolver close to it. He had fired directly through the tie and when the shirt was torn away two bullet holes were revealed within an inch of each other over the heart. Death came to both within a very short time after the shots were fired. The appearance of blood on the floor indicated that the murderer had fired the bullets into his victim while she was lying prostrate upon the floor and that he then placed her upon the bed, leaving a trail of blood along the way.

Coroner Burkhardt was sent for and arrived on the scene shortly after the tragedy occurred. He searched the man's clothing and found but 40 cents in money. On his clothes he wore the insignia of the Odd Fellows, Masons, A.O.U.W. and Grand Army. On the bureau in the room lay a number of photographs of Hodgen around which was a crumpled piece of paper bearing these words:

This should be the fate of all lewd and home-wrecking women. Notify P.L. Dobson and Charles Becker, Pleasant Plains.

The note itself indicates that the murderer had gone to the room with the deliberate purpose of killing the woman, but later developments point to the fact that the note was written after he reached the place. He had prepared the way by giving the children 10 cents and telling them to go downstairs. Coroner Burkhardt summoned Foster, the undertaker, and one by one the victims were lifted upon a stretcher, covered with a black pall and carried through the curious crowd to the wagon waiting for them. The bodies were taken to the undertaking establishment and were there viewed by a large number.

### **Something About the Woman**

Mrs. Mollie Jones, the unfortunate woman in the case, was apparently about 30 years of age, well formed and not unattractive in appearance and manners. From witnesses who claim to know much of her history, it was learned that her husband, Charles Jones, is a saloonist now living in Peoria, but formerly living near the Hodgen family near Pleasant Plains. On the other hand the little boy, who is bright and quick to answer questions says his father died in this city about two years ago. After leaving Pleasant Plains, the story goes that the woman went to Chicago and kept a boarding house during the World's fair. Hodgen, who went up to Chicago about the same time and found employment as a policeman at the fair grounds, boarded at her house and renewed acquaintance and perhaps the attachment which were originally formed at Pleasant Plains. At the close of the fair Mrs. Jones returned to this city and took a flat over Bush's barber shop on East Washington Street. About three weeks ago she moved to the rooms where yesterday's awful event occurred. Here she had three roomers and one boarder. Hodgen, it is said, importuned her to rent him a room at both places, but as often as he asked it she declined. It was her custom when he came to conceal herself in one of the other rooms and instruct the occupant to say she had gone to town. This policy seemed to exasperate Hodgen and it is supposed that her continued snubbing of him led to the culmination of yesterday. Mr. Jorns says the woman was to all appearance a hard working woman and virtuous. Others tell a different story, but all say that her outward appearance was that of a good woman. In addition to keeping roomers she made some money by sewing. She treated her children well and was to them a provident mother.

### **Story of Hodgen's Life.**

P. Oscar Hodgen was 49 years old. While living in Pleasant Plains he sold agricultural implements and had charge of a grain elevator. He was the owner of a farm of 124 acres almost inside the village. At that time Mrs. Jones lived just across the street from him. They became acquainted with each other and their relations were such that the village began to gossip about it. At last matters came to a crisis. Mrs. Hodgen complained about her husband's conduct and by mutual agreement it was decided that they should separate. Before leaving he sold the farm for \$10,000 and turned over the notes and papers to his wife, giving her power of attorney, in order that she and her eight children might be well provided for. Hodgen had always been highly respected and was watchful of the comfort and needs of his family until his attachment to Mrs. Jones changed his attitude toward them. He left for Chicago and was engaged by the Pinkerton detective agency. In the meantime Mrs. Hodgen removed with her children to Afton, IA., where they had relatives and where they now reside. Hodgen was released from the Pinkerton's in March last and came first to Petersburg and then to this city a few weeks ago. His story in connection with the woman with whom he was infatuated since that time, has already been given. His friends say that Hodgen had been playing the bucket shop for some time and that he was practically penniless as a result of his speculation. To an intimate acquaintance a day or two ago he confided the fact that he was out of money and was going to

Chicago to attempt to retrieve his fortune there. He intended to leave last evening and it is not believed that he contemplated the destruction of his own life and that of his victim until he went to her rooms yesterday. He was seen on the street half an hour before the tragedy occurred. He was then in cheerful mood and talked hopefully of his prospects in Chicago.

Those who have had financial dealings with Mr. Hodgen in this city characterize him as one with whom it was a pleasure to do business. He was always prompt to meet his obligations and was honest in every particular.

### **Disposition of the Bodies**

The remains of Mrs. Jones will be taken to Petersburg for interment. Her mother and sister, Miss Nellie Carey, are living there. Miss Carey came here yesterday and will take charge of the children and care for them. The remains of Mr. Hodgen will be taken to Pleasant Plains and buried there under the auspices of one of the orders of which he was a member.

Coroner Burkhardt held an inquest last evening at his office. The testimony developed no essential facts further than those which have already been told and the jury returned a verdict that Hodgen was responsible for his own and Mrs. Jones' death.