



THE
SUNFLOWER
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1897 MYSTERIES

“Hutchinson is getting to be a sensational town. While the Stella Mott case is still exciting the citizens who are not occupied in talking about the post office sensation, another startling event has come to light to claim its share of the public eye and tongue. Governor Leedy should put the state militia in charge of Hutchinson.” The Newton Daily Republican, January 18, 1897.



Miss Eva Wire

An Attempt At Rape. At 7:30 last night, at the home of Mrs. Newberne on the corner of Park and Maple streets, a bold attempt was made by a masked man to outrage Miss Mary Wire.

Miss Wire has been employed for some time as a domestic in the home of H. King, the furniture dealer, and is spoken of as a girl of good character by Mr. and Mrs. King, and by all who know her. She is an intimate friend of the Newbernes, and yesterday afternoon, as was her custom on Sunday, she went there to spend the evening.

The young lady had been keeping company with a young man for several weeks, and had told him that he might call at the Newberne home at 7:30 o'clock to see her. Mrs. Newberne, a few

minutes before this hour arrived, had gone to Church with her son, leaving Miss Wire alone. At 7:30 the girl says she heard a step on the porch and some one knocked at the door.

She opened the door expecting to meet the young man, but instead she confronted a man wearing a false face, and before she could close the door her caller seized her by the throat and pushed a saturated handkerchief into her mouth, to prevent her from screaming or giving an alarm, at the same time warning her that if she made any noise he would kill her. The man pushed her into the house and closed the door, then crowded her into another room. The girl struggled with him, but she was powerless in his hands. He grabbed a towel from the wall where it was hanging and bound her hands, then picked up an apron which had been thrown

across a chair and tied it across her face, and threw her on the floor.

Just at this time a neighbor woman was passing the house and as she passed her step upon the walk alarmed the man, and leaving Miss Wire, he hid himself in an adjoining room. During his absence she succeeded in tearing the bandage from her face, and making her way to a rocking chair she sank into it completely exhausted. This is all she distinctly remembers, except that when the man returned from his hiding place and found her sitting in the chair he snatched the handkerchief from her mouth and fled.

Apparently Miss Wire's boyfriend never showed up. An hour later the Newbernes returned and found Miss Wire still sitting in the chair unconscious. Dr. Hutchinson was summoned and for more than an hour he labored before his patient was restored to consciousness and told her story. It is his opinion that the handkerchief was saturated with chloroform and it was from the effects of this that she was rendered unconscious. However, there was an ugly mark on her forehead which indicates that she was struck a

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heavy blow, and it may have been this which rendered her helpless. Miss Wire is still at the Newberne home, but is reported as improving today. A reporter called on Mr. and Mrs. King this morning and conveyed the first information to them of the affair. They were greatly shocked over the news, and Mrs. King hastened at once to the girl's bedside. They say that Miss Wire is a quiet, well-behaved young woman, who has always conducted herself in the most ladylike manner.

Miss Wire could not identify her assailant, but describes him as being a man about five feet, nine inches tall, and stout built. He was dressed in a black coat and light pants, but she thinks they were the clothes of a laboring man. The police are on the lookout for some clue that will lead to the speedy arrest and punishment of the villain. *The Hutchinson News, Hutchinson, Kansas. Monday, January 18, 1897. Page 6.*

Miss Mary Wire, the young lady who was attacked by a masked man at the Newberne home last Sunday night, and whose condition was reported very favorably yesterday, is not recovering from the shock as rapidly as her friends had hoped.

Yesterday morning Miss Wire returned to the home of Mr. and Mrs. King. This morning, however, she was taken back to the Newberne

home and her condition is far from satisfactory. Miss Wire complains constantly of a serious pain in her head and since the attack Sunday night she has been at the point of complete nervous prostration. It is believed that the pain in her head is the result of the blow which she received on the forehead, and it is not considered a good omen. Her friend's fear that she is injured more seriously than was at first believed. *The Hutchinson News, Hutchinson, Kansas. Thursday, January 21, 1897. Page 5.*

Affairs are growing so desperate in Hutchinson that it is hardly safe for a lady to be alone anywhere. If we have not a Jack the Ripper among us, there is surely some one who might bear the name.

Ralph Barstow, the young man with whom she had made the appointment, was questioned by police that night but he seemed to prove an alibi by his family who say he was at home all the evening.

It is quite evident that this outrage was perpetrated by the same fiend that is responsible for Stella Mott's condition. **These two instances are so revolting, so beastly and inhuman that it is evident that some fiend, devil, or abnormal creature is among us whose presence is as dangerous as Jack the Ripper. A reward should be offered and a good one for anything that will assist society in ridding itself of the monster.** *The Hutchinson Gazette, Hutchinson, Kansas. Thursday, January 21, 1897. Page 5.*

Where Is Stella Mott? A Young Lady Disappeared Last Saturday In A Mysterious Manner.

Stella Mott, a young lady who had been living with her parents in the north part of the city, mysteriously disappeared from her home last Saturday night, and since that time there has been no trace of her. Her father has turned the case over to the police, but so far they have heard no word of her.

When the young lady - who is 18 years of age - left home Saturday evening she said she was going to visit some neighbors for a few minutes. Her parents thought nothing strange of this, and did not become uneasy until it began to grow late, and she did not return. Then a search was instituted, and it was learned that she did not go to the neighbors at all.

She wore the clothes she had worn about the house all day, not even wearing her hat, but simply a fascinator thrown over her head. This would indicate that she did not intent leaving home. But it is the theory of the police that the girl has eloped. A young man from Sterling is believed by them to be her company in the elopement, and consequently the police are trying to find them in some of the neighboring towns.

The girl's parents are greatly distressed through fear for the girl's welfare, and it is safe to say that if she will return, even if she brings with her the objectionable young man, she will be forgiven. *The Hutchinson News, Hutchinson, Kansas. Tuesday, January 5, 1897. Page 6.*

A Strange Story

Stella Mott Is Brought Home By Her Father But Is In Critical Condition and Not Able To Talk.

The story of the disappearance of Stella Mott, has been solved so far as the whereabouts of the girl herself is concerned. She is now at her father's home at 1012 North Poplar street, and she is in a critical condition both mentally and physically. But that is all that has been learned of the case as the girl has not sufficiently recovered from the effects, either of a drug or severe nervous shock, to tell her story.

Monday morning at daylight a young lady made her way to the farm house of R.M. Rowlands, one mile southwest of Burrton, and begged for shelter from the cold. She explained that she had walked from Sterling on Sunday and that she had found shelter from the storm of Sunday night in a straw stack on the farm. The girl's feet and limbs were so badly frozen that she was helpless when the farmer took her into the house, and she gave the name of Grace Burns. The rest of her story was that she had been living three miles north of Sterling with a grandfather, the father of her step-father. She had left there on last Friday afternoon to go to Newton where as she had been informed, her aunt Bertha Davis lives. She came through Hutchinson and in some way had lost her money and her extra clothing, and walked from Hutchinson to Burrton. It was Saturday evening when she passed Burrton and at dark she crept into the hay stack where she stayed Sunday and Sunday night.

The girl was taken to Burrton Tuesday morning and an attempt was made to find some trace of her people. Her story was not believed and it was evident that she was attempting to conceal her identity.

Late last night, the police of Hutchinson were telephoned and Mr. Mott went to Burrton at midnight last night. It proved to be his daughter, who disappeared from home Saturday night. So anxious was she to conceal her identity that she refused at first to recognize him, but later she acknowledged her attempt to deceive the people as to her real name.

She was brought here at 7 o'clock this morning on the Santa Fe, and taken to her home at once, where late this afternoon a reporter was informed that she was resting quietly. But she has not yet been able to tell what occurred to her during her absence from home. Her father was seen and talked freely of the girl's disappearance, and both the parents were overjoyed at the daughter's return. They are of the opinion that the girl was spirited away from home and the father informed the reporter that the physician had announced after an examination that Stella was drugged and that she was still suffering from its effects. Mr. Mott does not believe that the girl walked from here to Burrton, but that she was either taken there on the train or in a carriage.

Her feet and limbs were so badly frozen that it was feared at first that amputation would be necessary, but it is now believed that this may be avoided. "Until the girl is able to tell her story there is no clue by which the officers can work upon the case as she was not seen, so far as is known now, from the time she left home Saturday evening until she knocked at the door of the farm house Monday morning. Where she was during Saturday night and Sunday cannot be conjectured. It is evident that she was not in the straw stack as she claims, because she could not possibly have endured the storm during all that time. It would have been impossible also, for her to have walked to Burrton in the severe snow storm of Saturday night.

Mr. and Mrs. Charles E. Mott desire to express their sincere thanks to their many friends and the officers for the assistance rendered them in finding their daughter, Miss Stella Mott. If it transpires that Stella Mott was enticed from her home by some person and drugged, as is now supposed, the guilty party had better make himself scarce, as the people acquainted with the case are very indignant and greatly excited. *The Hutchinson News, Hutchinson, Kansas. Wednesday, January 6, 1897. Page 5.*

The Girl's Story. Miss Stella Mott has a strange story to tell of her experience. Her story is that on last Saturday she left home at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, and walked south on Poplar street to Second avenue. She intended to visit a friend, but says she liked to walk in the snow storm and went two blocks out of her way.

When she reached Second Avenue she turned east and was walking on the sidewalk, when she heard a carriage driven up behind her. This is all she remembers, she says, until she regained consciousness Monday morning, and then she was at the straw stack near Burrton. It was not yet daylight and she

walked about the stack in order to keep warm until she could see a house and apply for shelter. Her father believes that the girl was knocked down by a blow on the head Saturday evening, which rendered her unconscious. He says that she complains of a pain in her head over the right ear, and there is a contusion there which indicates that she had received a severe blow. It is his theory that she was then placed in a hack and taken to some room in this city where she was drugged, and that her captor or captors fearing that she would die, or was dead, had driven to the farm and dropped her at the straw stack. There were tracks in the snow at the stack, and near there, which bear out this theory.

The girl cannot give a description of the carriage, team, or driver, as she says she did not look up when she heard them coming behind her, thinking that it was only some one driving along Second avenue. The young lady is improving rapidly today and she will undoubtedly recover. *The Hutchinson News, Hutchinson, Kansas. Thursday, January 7, 1897. Page 5.*

Looking For A Clue. The police are still looking for any clue which may lead to clearing up the mystery of the disappearance of Stella Mott during last Saturday night and Sunday. The girl's story altogether is not generally credited, as it is believed that she could tell more about the case than she has told, if she desired to. *The Hutchinson News, Hutchinson, Kansas. Friday, January 8, 1897. Page 5.*

It is not within the memory of man, the oldest resident of Hutchinson, or the records of known crimes where a greater wrong was done to an individual than that perpetrated on the unfortunate young lady, Miss Stella Mott.

A week ago today Miss Stella was at her home on North Poplar street. She was sitting in the parlor with her mother, her little sister, and brother. The prospect out of doors was cheerless, stormy and cold, with the snow drifting in the streets. They had been reading and passing the time in conversation. Miss Stella, usually sprightly and cheerful, was none the less so on this particular afternoon. About 4 o'clock, she proposed to her mother and asked permission to visit a young lady friend for a short time, residing on Seventh street. The mother consented and Miss Stella, without making any change in her clothing with the exception of putting on a woolen shawl to protect her head and shoulders, started to make the visit, but she failed to reach the house of her friend. Late in the evening her parents growing uneasy, they sent to the house for her friend only to learn that she had not been there. Late at night the neighbors and the police were following every probable clue to find the lost girl. The agony of the parents was indescribable and heart rending. The search was continued Sunday and Sunday night. Telegrams were sent to all the neighboring towns. Tuesday evening a telegram was received from Burrton, giving the information that a young lady answering the description of Stella, was at the residence of R.M. Rowlands, a farmer residing a mile and half east of Burrton. Mr. C.E. Mott, her father, took the first train on the Santa Fe and reached Mr. Rowlands late at night. He found that Stella had fallen in the arms of good samaritans. She had come to the residence of Mr. Rowlands early Monday morning in a mental condition bordering on dementia. Both of her feet were frozen and there were marks on the left side of her face that might have been produced with a sandbag. All that could be done for the poor girl was done by the Rowlands and their neighbors. A physician was called and the attention given her was parental in the highest degree.

Now to return to the evening she left home. According to what can be gleaned in her partial rational moments, she proceeded south on Poplar street to Second street, she is conscious of hearing a carriage wheel behind her as if the wheels were grating on a curb stone. This is all that she remembers until Monday morning, when she came to her senses to find herself walking around a hay stack. Unable to take a direct line, she finally climbed on the stack and discovered Mr. Rowland's house. Keeping her eyes in that direction she reached the house and was cared for. Miss Dr. Messenger and Dr. McKee have attended her since she was brought home. They find that she has been heavily drugged and the exposure leaves her in a critical condition. Her mental condition is not such as to make her statements reliable.

Any insinuations reflecting on Miss Stella's character will be resented by all her neighbors and by everybody so fortunate as to know her. What is rarely the case, all the young ladies in the neighborhood are on terms of intimacy, all of them love her for her noble qualities. She was devoted to her parents and all her pleasures and delights were associated with home life. The young men of her acquaintance respected her but she was never forward in the society of gentlemen and preferred to mingle with those

of her own sex. We claim to speak advisedly on this matter as the Motts reside in the same block with the editor of this paper. *The Hutchinson Democrat, Hutchinson, Kansas. Saturday, January 9, 1897. Page 4.*

The fact that the physicians have found it necessary to amputate her feet, thus making Stella Mott a cripple for life, will have the effect of redoubling the efforts of the police to find the man or men responsible for her condition. Some one is responsible and if possible should be detected. *The Hutchinson News, Hutchinson, Kansas. Thursday, January 14, 1897. Page 5.*

Judge Botkin has introduced a bill providing for the castration of persons convicted of such crimes as those perpetrated on Stella Mott and Miss Wire. It was little thought that the Republicans would so soon be found endorsing Dr. Pilcher. It's a good thing Dawes is not attorney general or the judge might get prosecuted. *The Hutchinson Gazette, Hutchinson, Kansas. Thursday, January 28, 1897. Page 4.*

Appears To Be Happy. Miss Stella Mott, the young lady who figured in one of the most mysterious affairs that ever occurred in Hutchinson, now lives at Newton. She has fully recovered her health and appears to be quite as happy as the average girl. The affair has always remained a mystery, but whatever was the cause of her misfortune every one will be glad to learn of her present condition. She has been supplied with artificial feet. She is in a happy home, and life looks brighter for her than any possibility of the future would promise 2 years ago. Miss Mott has many friends among the young people of Newton and occasionally entertains at parties at her home. Happily her life does not seem to be clouded by that night of mystery and misfortune. *The Hutchinson News, Hutchinson, Kansas. Monday, January 2, 1899. Page 5.*

Another Chapter. People who have been in Hutchinson and Reno county, as long as seven years will remember the shocking story of Stella Mott. There is now another chapter in the history of her sad, and tragic life. She, last week attempted suicide by taking morphine in St. Joseph, Mo.

Shortly after the incident in Hutchinson it was found necessary to amputate both of her legs. She was fitted out later with cork legs and feet and was able to walk, though with a peculiar movement. Afterwards her parents moved away from here and she went with them, going to Kansas City, where she studied stenography and was for several years, or until recently, employed in the office of a law firm.

The attempt at suicide is told of in a general press dispatch from St. Joseph as follows: W.L. George and Estella Mott of Kansas City eloped from that city yesterday, came to St. Joseph, were married by Justice H.W. Burke, and endeavored to commit suicide at the Transit Hotel at 11 o'clock last night.

George is 24 years old. He deserted from Fort Leavenworth where he was serving as an infantryman May 19, 1902. Estelle Mott lives at 18 North Baltimore avenue, Kansas City, Kansas, with her father, who is a machinist in the employ of the Santa Fe railway. She is 25 and according to her statement at police headquarters has endeavored to commit suicide several times before.

Once she endeavored to freeze herself to death and lost both her feet. George was fearful of capture and persuaded Miss Mott, with whom he had been in love for a year, to come to St. Joseph, be married, and then commit suicide.

The couple retired to a room in the Transit Hotel at 10 o'clock and a short time thereafter each took a dose of poison, probably arsenic, a vial of which, partly empty, was found at the side of the bed occupied by the couple. A bell boy discovered that something was wrong. The police were summoned, a physician gave his services and the pair were soon removed from death's door. The groom will be held for the federal authorities who will punish him for desertion. The bride will be sent back to her people in Kansas City, Kansas.

In one of the newspaper reports she is quoted as saying that she went away from home in the snow storm when she was frozen, because she was disappointed in love, her parents opposing her desires for Mr. Burns. Some of her old neighbors, who generally liked the girl personally, believe that this is most likely the explanation of that episode which seemed so mysterious, and which for a long time struck such terror to Hutchinson people, that few of the women would venture out alone when it was at all dark. *The Semi-Weekly Gazette, Hutchinson, Kansas. Wednesday, October 5, 1904. Page 1.*

ST. JOSEPH - After the failed suicide attempt at the Transit Hotel, a second attempt was made later that day. Weary of life which she says has been fraught with sorrow and disappointment, Estella Mott George of 18 N. Baltimore, Kansas City, a bride of 1 day, made another unsuccessful attempt to commit suicide about 12 o'clock last night while lying on a bench in Central police station. "Will you please bring me a drink?" the woman asked of William C. Howard, the signal service operator. "I'm so thirsty and I feel faint." While Howard's back was turned the woman raised on her elbow and gulped down two capsules containing four grains of morphine each. Mrs. George then drank a cup of water and soon fell asleep. A half-hour later when Desk Sergeant Smith tried to arouse her he discovered what she had done. Smith carried the woman to Matron Welty's quarters in his arms and summoned doctors. The physicians worked with her for 3 hours before she was out of danger.

"I'm determined to die," she said as she tossed nervously, about in her bed this morning. "A greater and a higher spirit is calling me. Life has held nothing for me but bitter disappointment. The mind is indestructible and will dwell with that of my husband in the hereafter. I do not fear to die." Then Mrs. George, who is very frail, calmly detailed her unsuccessful attempt at self-destruction and told why she is anxious to end this life. She said she is 25 years old and was disappointed in love at the age of 17. Her father's family lived at Hutchinson, Kas., at that time and opposed her marriage. Then the girl left home and walked 20 miles into the country on a very cold and snowy day. Since the amputation of her legs below the knees she has used wooden and cork legs. This moved the big-hearted police officers to sincere sympathy when they discovered that she had tried to end her life. *The Hutchinson News, Hutchinson, Kansas. Hutchinson, Kansas. Saturday, October 1, 1904. Page 5.*

TOPEKA - 19 years ago, several men at Hutchinson, Kansas, slugged 16-year-old Stella Mott and took her to a secluded spot one winter night, the tragedy in the life of the mysterious "footless woman" who has been at the county jail, began. In the bitter cold, the girl was deserted. When found her feet were frozen. Later they were amputated above the ankles. Two weeks ago yesterday, Stella Mott, now 35 years old, came to Topeka from her home at 2321 Prospect in Kansas City, it is thought with the intention of taking her life. Going to a room in the Commercial Hotel, the woman drank from a little bottle containing a colorless fluid. The forgetfulness came. On the following morning she was taken to the county jail, ill and unable to remember anything of her past. Yesterday morning a Topeka customer of the Kansas City shop where Stella Mott had been employed, left some goods wrapped in a copy of the Daily Capital. One of the employes noticed a story about the "footless woman," in Topeka. Eva Mott, a sister telephoned to Sheriff L.L. Kiene. Last night the sister came to Topeka and took Stella Mott to her home. Waiting in Kansas City, a nervous wreck, was the aged mother of Stella Mott. Miss Eva Mott told the matron of the county jail of the circumstances of her sister's disappearance. Since her horrible experience at Hutchinson, Stella Mott has been despondent. 5 weeks ago she suffered a nervous breakdown and was forced to leave the milliner's shop for a time. 2 weeks ago it was thought she had recovered enough to return to work. She left home that morning and disappeared. At the Commercial Hotel in Topeka, Stella Mott registered as "Grace Burns." Her sister explained this. The "footless woman" had married a man named Burns and then she separated from him. The Motts were well known here, having lived out on Fourth avenue east. They left shortly after the tragedy to the then pretty 16-year-old daughter. *The Hutchinson Gazette, Hutchinson, Kansas. Sunday, August 9, 1914. Page 8.*

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