

# ALEX. MASTERTON SHOT

## J. Neale Plumb Murders the Banker in the Burlington.

### HIS PLOT MOST DELIBERATE

He Writes the Reasons Which He Claims Justifies the Act—Says His Victim Ruined His Life.

Alexander Masterton, seventy-two years old, a wealthy banker, whose home was in Bronxville, and who was a Director in the Farmers' Loan and Trust Company, at 22 William Street, was shot and killed shortly after 1 o'clock yesterday afternoon in a room on the third floor of the Burlington apartment house, at 10 West Thirtieth Street, by J. Neale Plumb, a retired merchant, fifty-five years old, of 70 West Thirty-eighth Street.

Masterton was shot five times; once in the back and four times in the leg, and he died an hour later.

The two men, both well-known in business and financial circles of the city, met at the apartment house by appointment, and the sole purpose of Plumb, according to his calm admission, was to commit murder. The tragedy was the culmination of lifelong enmity between them.

When arrested a few minutes after the deed had been committed, Plumb's only comment was:

"It was on account of the children."

#### HAD TYPEWRITTEN STATEMENTS.

That the deed was fully premeditated was acknowledged by Plumb, who had two typewritten statements addressed to the public and comprising sixty-three pages, or about 12,500 words. In these documents, in many respects among the most remarkable that have ever come into the possession of the police, the murderer has laid bare a tragic history of his relations with Masterton.

He accused Masterton of having hounded him with vindictive animosity for upward of thirty-seven years. Since the time of his marriage engagement to his wife, in 1862, he alleges that Masterton had followed him like a sleuth, endeavoring at first to turn his wife against him; then, in later years, alienating the affections of his children.

With many expressions of hatred, malice, and despair the statements set forth how, after the death of Plumb's wife, Masterton obtained control of her estate as executor and became the guardian of the three Plumb children, a son and two daughters.

Plumb then charges that Masterton, through an elaborate system of conspiracy and intrigue, induced his son to marry a disreputable woman, and later persuaded his eldest daughter to wed a dissolute and impecunious Englishman, and influenced his youngest daughter to forsake him. Not an incident of importance connected with the family in the last forty years has been omitted, and the statement ends with gloating promises of vengeance.

Many days, evidently, were consumed in planning the revenge. Then Plumb put his affairs in shape.

#### THEY WERE ALONE TOGETHER.

The incidents immediately preceding the tragedy may never be known unless Plumb chooses to describe them, for the two men were alone together when the deed was done.

Mr. Masterton was the receiver for the estate of Jane Dwyer, to whom the Burlington belongs, and went there daily for luncheon. But that he met Plumb there yesterday by appointment was shown by a letter taken from his pocket after his death by Capt. Price of the West Thirtieth Street Police Station. The letter was as follows:

I will be at the Burlington with my bag containing "private papers," &c., to deliver to you on Wednesday at 1 P. M., and you can then decide when I shall send the other large packages referred to. I am very busy packing up, &c. Business matters might prevent my keeping an engagement Wednesday, in which case you may expect me on Thursday sure.

J. NEALE PLUMB.

It was learned that Plumb had previously asked Masterton to meet him, as he was about to sail for Europe, and that Masterton made the appointment at the Burlington. Both men arrived there at about 1:30 o'clock and went to Room 86 on the third floor, which is a part of the suite of Manager Cole. The door was closed, and a few minutes afterward Ellen Reilly, a chambermaid, heard the sound of angry voices coming from the room. One man was heard to say:

"I'll take so much and no more."

#### FIVE SUCCESSIVE SHOTS.

Immediately there were five shots fired in rapid succession. The woman screamed and ran, and a moment later Plumb dashed out of the room. He ran to the elevator. Berry Hicks, the elevator boy, had heard the shots, however, and he refused to allow Plumb to enter the car.

Plumb then ran down the stairs, but the elevator had arrived at the ground floor ahead of him, and he found a group of excited employes of the house barring his egress by the main entrance. He ran into a small reception room, evidently expecting to find a window, but, discovering none, quietly sat down. In the meantime Patrolman William H. Diehl of the Broadway Squad arrived. He found Plumb standing quietly in the reception room, holding a pistol in his hand.

Policeman Diehl drew his pistol as he approached, but Plumb stepped forward, with the butt of his revolver extended toward the policeman.

"I was waiting for you," he said, as he gave up the revolver.

It was a new five-chambered Smith & Wesson of .38 calibre. Plumb was making a tremendous effort to be calm. He was taken at once to the West Thirtieth Street Station House.

#### MASTERTON LAY ON THE FLOOR.

Masterton was found lying on the floor of the room on the third floor, his clothing saturated with blood. He was still alive, but unable to speak. He was placed on a bed, and Dr. Asch of 5 West Thirtieth Street was summoned.

He found that all five of the shots fired by Plumb had taken effect. One of the bullets had entered the small of the back a few inches to the left of the spinal column, and, ranging upward, had come out under the right armpit. The other four missiles had struck the right leg, one passing through the upper portion, emerging near the groin. Another had entered just below the knee, passing out through the calf. A third had passed through a little lower down, while the last had entered the ankle.

It was apparent that the man could not live, but under stimulants he revived so as to be able to speak. He was asked if he wished to go to the hospital. He replied no, and word was sent to the Coroner.

Capt. Price arrived, and to him the dying man gasped that Plumb had shot him. He died shortly afterward without having made any other statement, and before the Coroner arrived. The only paper found upon his person bearing upon his relations with Plumb was a letter from the latter making the fatal appointment.

#### PLUMB SEEMED NONCHALANT.

Plumb had been arraigned at the police station charged with felonious assault. He delivered to the Sergeant at the desk a small hand satchel containing documents of various kinds, among them being his long statement to the public. In the satchel were all his private papers. He appeared cool and said very little. He was well dressed in a light business suit and derby hat, and wore some expensive jewelry.

"Why, hello Price!" exclaimed the prisoner when the Captain entered. "I remember you very well, although I haven't seen you for years."

"Mr. Plumb," said the Captain, "I am

sorry to meet you under such circumstances. Mr. Masterton is dead."

The prisoner placed his hands in his pockets, and, hanging his head, said:

"It was all on account of the children, and it had to be. The man has hounded me for years. He has ruined me financially, has alienated the affection of my children, and broken up my home. It had to be."

#### TAKEN BEFORE A MAGISTRATE.

He was taken before Magistrate Deuel, in the Jefferson Market Police Court, and remanded to the custody of the Coroner. He was taken back to the West Thirtieth Street Station House. He asked that his lawyer, J. Henry Thompson, of 52 Wall Street, be sent for, which was done. Mr. Thompson said:

"Plumb was not responsible for what he did. He was broken down by worry."

Plumb was then locked in a cell in the Tombs.

The body of the murdered man was taken charge of by his two sons-in-law, C. P. Fibbals and W. N. Ferris, and removed to an undertaking establishment at 638 Sixth Avenue, where an autopsy will be held to-day. Afterward the body will be taken to Bronxville for burial.

#### PLUMB SEEMS WEAK MENTALLY.

While the murder was committed by Plumb with undoubted premeditation, it is believed that the man has been weakened mentally.

Capt. Price, who knew Plumb many years ago, said that he was then living in affluence in a mansion on Fifth Avenue near Fortieth Street, and owned a large estate on Long Island. He was an intimate friend of the late Chester A. Arthur.

He resided for a time in Europe. Later he lived in fine style in his villa near Islip, Long Island, and spent money lavishly.

Some time ago he had a row with his son, J. Ives Plumb, and the latter obtained possession of the property. The senior Plumb then left Islip. For about two years Plumb has been living in handsome bachelor apartments at 70 West Thirty-eighth Street.

#### WROTE OF A "CONSPIRACY."

Mr. Plumb had drawn up two long and carefully elaborated papers detailing what he calls the "Masterton Conspiracy," and giving his reasons for the premeditated killing of Alexander Masterton. One of these statements bears the following as a sort of title and explanation:

"To all whom it may concern: Why J. Neale Plumb shot Alexander Masterton."

This is the briefer of the two, although embracing some seventeen pages of typewritten legal cap. The other statement is an elaboration of this one, and all the matters of the shorter story are given with minuter details and explanations. It contains forty-six type-written pages.

The following are Mr. Plumb's words, contained in the statements:

"The reason for taking this serious step was that for upward of thirty-five years, commencing as far back as 1862, at the time of my marriage engagement, this man has followed me like a sleuth hound. Yet I was never able to discover the cause or motive for his vindictive animosity toward me, as when he commenced to attack me I had never seen the man or ever heard of him."

"As it was impossible for me to have any peace or happiness where this man was, at the earnest solicitation of my wife, I leased our Fifth Avenue residence to the late Robert L. Hargous for a long term of years and sailed for Europe with my wife, son, two daughters, and servants in November, 1876, intending to make our permanent home abroad."

#### DEATH OF MRS. PLUMB.

"On Feb. 6, 1877, Mrs. Plumb died suddenly in Paris of heart disease, and in the following May I returned to New York with my children and went at once to our country home at Deer Range, Islip, L. I., to make it our permanent home."

"The next conspiracy of Alexander Masterton against me was in 1885, known as 'the Washington conspiracy' by my friends in New York and Washington, where my daughters were residing with their godmother, Mrs. Richard C. Brum, at her residence, 1516 K Street, the object of which was to induce my daughter to join against her father in proceedings then pending in court and to prevent him superseding Masterton as guardian."

"Masterton in 1886 found another opportunity to do me a grievous injury. My son, Mr. J. Ives Plumb, at the time was a student in the Troy Polytechnic, studying civil engineering, when he became acquainted in 1885 with a Troy girl by the name of Anna Burton."

Mr. Plumb says that he tried to prevent his son's marrying her, but young Plumb was aided by Masterton, and the marriage followed, and the couple made their home at Deer Range, Islip, Long Island. The statement continues:

"And now I come down to the last conspiracy of Alexander Masterton, which has culminated his long years of cruel, vindictive oppression, by his punishment decreed by an outraged God."

"Soon after my son's disgraceful marriage in 1886, at the earnest request of my daughters, we went to Europe and made a new home at Southampton, where we were as happy as it was possible to be with such a dark cloud hanging over our family in the moral death of my son."

#### HIS DAUGHTER'S MARRIAGE.

"Early in November, 1888, my daughter made the acquaintance of a man by the name of Ramsey Nares, a notorious fortune hunter. He had been bragging about the clubs and elsewhere that he was going 'to bag the little American Miss.'"

"The detectives finally placed in my hands through the medium of Mrs. Ubsdell's confidential 'French maid' the copy of a note from Nares to Mrs. Ubsdell, in which he says:

"My Darling Angel: If you will do your part as well as I am doing mine everything will come out all right, and I will draw up an agreement and bring it up to you to-morrow night. If you succeed in our American scheme, so that I can bag that little Miss P. and her fortune, I will stipulate and agree, when I come into her fortune, to pay you the sum of \$1,000, and to Miss Coles the sum of \$500."

The statement says that Plumb learned through paid spies that the interviews between his daughter and Nares had been carried on with the connivance of a Mrs. John A. Ubsdell, an American, whose husband had charge of the Eads jetties near New Orleans. Nares finally followed Miss Plumb to this country, married her at the home of her brother at Deer Range, Islip, L. I., and carried her back to England."

#### HIS OTHER DAUGHTER LEFT HIM.

Then followed a long account of how, according to information given to Mr. Plumb by his detectives, Masterton and J. Ives Plumb induced the younger daughter to leave her father, who afterward found her in the Victoria Hotel. This was in 1888. Lenita, this younger daughter, went over to New Jersey and then to Troy, N. Y., where, Plumb says, she was kept as a prisoner. Finally she settled down at the home of Alexander Masterton, in Bronxville.

When Lenita Plumb was taken to the Victoria Hotel, the statement says, she was lured there by the assurance of J. Ives Plumb that her sister and father were there, but she was met by "Alexander Masterton, Rosewell G. Holston, and David McClure, who, with her honorable brother, made up the 'combine' of four who had bonded themselves together to work out this crime."

Of certain reports about himself, Mr. Plumb says:

"These untruthful and outrageous statements upon my honor and integrity as a parent and a gentleman were added to and embellished and cooked up by David McClure."

#### DAUGHTER'S LETTER TO A FRIEND.

The last part of the longer statement is entitled "Retribution," and consists of a letter which Plumb says was written by his daughter, who married Ramsay Nares. This letter is preceded by the following:

"A few months ago an intimate friend of my daughter received a letter from Mrs. Nares, under date of Jan. 15, 1899, in which she says:

"Everything my dear papa had said and predicted in regard to Mr. Nares has turned out exactly as he said, and true in every particular; and I am painfully impressed with the fact, which I now realize when it is too late, that my husband married me only for my money, and to be able to live a life of idle luxury and dissipation with his boon companions, male and female."

"I was made the victim and tool of the rascality of Alexander Masterton and David

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McClure, who were not only feathering their nests all the time at my expense to the tune of \$50,000 for legal expenses, and which went into their pockets, but the still more painful and sad reflection that they made me the instrument for gratifying their spite and vindictiveness against my beloved father, my deeply wronged and ever-loyal father—and may God forgive me.”

To these statements Mr. Plumb had added a sort of postscript, which brought the story down to the eve of the killing of Alexander Masterton.

In this postscript Mr. Plumb wrote:

“The ‘man’ who has brought all this trouble upon me in my declining years, the ‘man’ who broke up my happy home and separated me from my children, and severed all the tenderest and most sacred relations known to man and a loyal and loving father, no law can reach. In all these years I have never lost sight of the day when Alexander Masterton would have to make a personal accounting to me.”

“No man has a higher regard for human life than I have; but the just and righteous punishment of Alex Masterton is decreed by an outraged God, and I am simply the humble instrument in His hands, for He has selected me as His chosen instrument of earthly vengeance.

“I have rid the world of a man who was not fit to live, and whose death a thousand times over could never atone for the monstrous and cruel wrong done me.”

The postscript was in Mr. Plumb's own handwriting, while the rest of the statement was in typewriting.

## MR. McCLURE'S STATEMENT.

David McClure of the law firm of Turner, McClure & Rolston, 22 William Street, whom Plumb referred to in his statement, was shown that part of the statement which referred to him.

Mr. McClure said that he did not care to talk about the matter, and expressed great surprise that Plumb should have written such a thing about him.

“It seems to me,” said McClure, “that Plumb has been letting his troubles pray on his mind to such an extent as to cause mental derangement.

“I was always friendly with Plumb and he seemed pleased with the manner in which I attended to his business. I knew that he and Masterton had troubles.”

Rosewell G. Rolston, Mr. McClure's partner, said that he knew nothing about the cause of the shooting whatsoever.

J. Henry Thompson, another lawyer who was engaged in the Plumb family litigation, said last night that the action of Mr. Plumb in killing Masterton was a great surprise.