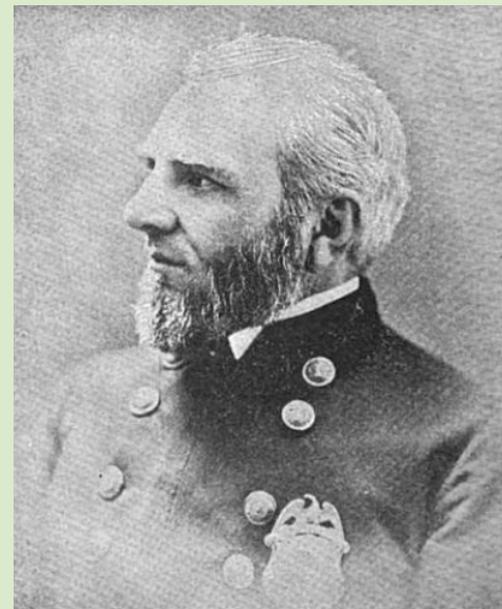


# Tumblety's Rings

By MIKE HAWLEY

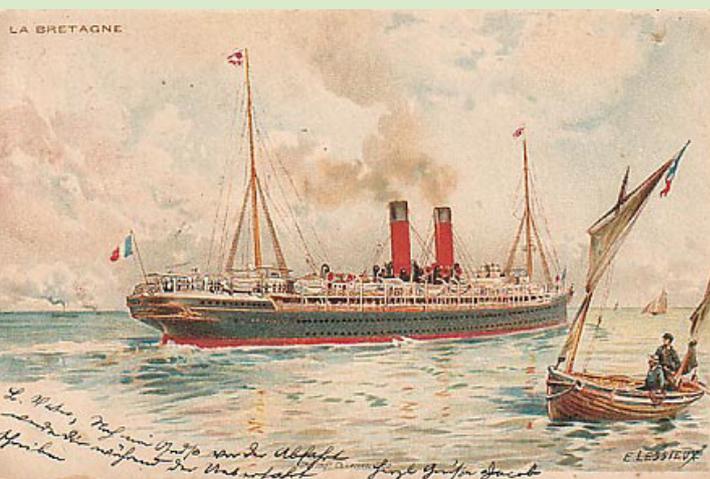
Two days after Scotland Yard Assistant Commissioner CID Robert Anderson personally cabled Brooklyn's Chief of Police Patrick Campbell about Whitechapel murder suspect Francis Tumblety on 22 November 1888, Tumblety had successfully made his escape out of England<sup>1</sup>. He did not use his usual port of entry and exit at Liverpool on the west coast where his niece lived, but he unexpectedly took the back way on the east coast across the English Channel to La Havre, France, and boarded the transatlantic steamship *La Bretagne*.

When he arrived on the New York docks on 2 December wearing a long English cloth ulster and a derby hat, he had with him only an umbrella, two canes tied together, and a 'small steamer trunk'<sup>2</sup>, most likely leaving behind many personal items in order to make a quick and quiet exit. What he did not leave behind, and regularly kept on his person, were his usual pair of large diamond rings and his gold watch. During the later years of Tumblety's life, he rarely travelled without having in his pockets his complement of jewelry, cash, and a few letters from important people attesting to his character and social class. Upon his death fifteen years later in St Louis, Missouri, at St John's Hospital, an inventory of his personal possessions revealed his usual jewelry/cash travel companions, but two other items were also cataloged that had never been associated with Francis Tumblety before; a set of relatively



Patrick Campbell

inexpensive imitation rings. In 1903, Scotland Yard no longer had any interest in Francis Tumblety and this fact went unnoticed until nearly a century later when Stewart Evans had rediscovered this Ripper suspect in the early 1990s. It was soon realized that Ripper victim Annie Chapman had similar rings stolen off her body by the killer, thus, the connection was made. Could Tumblety's two imitation rings be the same rings as Annie Chapman's? Arguments for and against were made within the Ripperology community and the latter eventually won the day, and the issue seems to have been settled. Thanks to a number of new discoveries pertinent to this issue, it is now prudent to re-examine these arguments, opening up the possibility that it was premature to reject the idea of Tumblety possessing Chapman's rings *for these reasons*.



*La Bretagne*

1 *The Brooklyn Citizen*, 23 November 1888.

2 *New York Herald*, 4 December 1888.

A number of the most persuasive arguments against the idea of Tumblety possessing Chapman's rings center mainly upon differences in assessed values between the two sets. Research on Francis Tumblety's rings and their assessed 1903 value was accomplished by Tim Riordan<sup>3</sup>. On 26 April 1903, Francis Tumblety checked into St Johns Hospital in St Louis, Missouri, *incognito*, under the alias Frank Townsend, for the purpose of dying, which occurred one month later<sup>4</sup>. Once he desired to make out a final will and testament, it required him to finally reveal his true identity, but he then requested that no family members be informed and be at his side. The state of Missouri required that if no family members were available to take charge of a deceased's



St Johns Hospital, St Louis

assets and personal items, a public administrator assumed that role. In 1903 Gerrard Strode was the public administrator for St Louis and he ensured that Tumblety's estate was handled properly. Specific to the rings, Strode assigned a group of three people to arrange the inventory of Tumblety's possessions. Riordan states,

*To do so, he [Strode] had to get three "disinterested householders" to view the goods and provide a monetary value for them. There was no set procedure for selecting these men nor any information on their knowledge of what they were valuing. Arthur Marshall was a law clerk and had been a collector in the assessor's office. Strode had also been in that office and may have known him. A second man, Samuel H Batavia, seems to have left no record of himself. These two names were filled out on the form before the inventory and they may have accompanied Strode to the hospital. The final man, A B Walker, was a retired school janitor and may have been associated with the hospital. While he signed the form, his name is not listed in other parts. None of these men can be shown to have any experience in valuing jewelry nor is there any indication how they came to the assigned values<sup>3</sup>. [underline added]*

Riordan then published the results of the personal inventory and their conclusion to the assessed values of the jewelry,

*The personal possessions that these men viewed were few:*

- One cluster ring of 17 diamond stones, \$75.00
- One five stone diamond ring, \$60.00
- **Two imitation set rings, \$3.00**
- One old gold watch, \$10.00.

Note that Riordan's presentation of the three responsible for assessing the monetary value of Tumblety's jewelry items casts doubt upon its credibility. First, the one and only requirement for viewing the personal goods and assigning a monetary value was that the three assigned to this task be merely 'disinterested householders'. This might effectively eliminate bias or favoritism, but it gives no assistance to obtaining an accurate monetary assessment. The three questionable householders selected by Strode certainly support this point. Marshall was only a law clerk in the office likely having no background in jewelry, Batavia was an unknown, and Walker was a retired janitor.

Another argument forwarded by Riordan suggests that since the diamond rings were so undervalued as compared to previous assessments of Tumblety's diamond rings - from thousands of dollars to less than a hundred dollars - that the \$3.00 value for the imitation rings is correspondingly drastically undervalued,

*The value of the jewelry is considerably less than reported at other times but there is no way to know if those were inflated values or if these are deflated. When arrested in Washington, 13 years before this, Tumblety had on two diamond rings, each valued at \$2,500, as well as a smaller ring worth \$200. In certain circles, a great deal had been made of the two imitation set rings which have been suggested as "trophies" taken from one of the Ripper victims. As Tumblety was known to wear many rings and the inventory seems to undervalue these, it is more likely that they were part of his own adornment...<sup>5</sup>*

3 Riordan, T B. *Prince of Quacks: The notorious life of Dr Francis Tumblety, charlatan and Jack the Ripper suspect* (2009).

4 *The St Louis Republic*, 29 May 1903.

5 Riordan, T B. *Prince of Quacks: The notorious life of Dr Francis Tumblety, charlatan and Jack the Ripper suspect* (2009).

Riordan confirms his undervaluing/credibility arguments about the 1903 St Louis inventory assessment in a comment on *casebook.org* on 18 February 2009. Riordan stated,

*Tumblety's jewelry was seriously undervalued by the public administrator of St Louis. There were some strange problems with the assessment, including enlisting the janitor of the hospital as one of the assessors...*<sup>6</sup>

Besides Riordan's arguments, another persuasive argument negating the possibility of Tumblety's rings matching the Ripper victim's rings states that \$3.00 for any kind of ring during the Victorian Era is not cheap and would have been out of the price range for an unfortunate like Annie Chapman. Wolf Vanderlinden used this argument on the same *Casebook* thread on 18 February 2009,

*The two "cheap" brass rings found among his possessions are a bit of a non-starter. They were appraised at being worth \$3 so they were hardly "cheap" for their time and were probably more expensive than Annie Chapman could afford (or afford to keep without hocking).*<sup>7</sup>

These arguments have been very convincing to the Ripper research community as evidenced by very little discussion about this issue since, but additional evidence has come to light, which may alter this perception. First to evaluate is the 'credibility of the 1903 assessors' argument. Note what the Missouri Association of Public Administrators states,

*Public Administrators serve as **court appointed** [emphasis added] Personal Representatives in decedent's estates, and as guardians and/or conservators for individuals who are unable to care for themselves or their property when there is no one else to serve.*<sup>8</sup>

The fact that public administrators are court appointed means the results of their assessments are legal issues and might be argued in probate court. Even though the only mandate for assigning someone to personally handle and assign monetary values to personal items was that they be 'disinterested householders', the public administrator - Gerrard Strode in Tumblety's case - was still ultimately responsible for the accuracy of the results. With competing arguments on both sides of any case, accuracy and verifiability in jewelry assessment values is critical. Assigning Arthur Marshall, the first householder, with his experience as a legal clerk in the Public Administration office now makes perfect sense, especially when the Tumblety case actually did make its way into court.

Riordan then dismisses the second householder, Samuel H Batavia, as insignificant since there is no record of him. Record of him has now been discovered and even his occupation. Note the following 29 October 1902, *St Louis Republic* article,

***Tale of Treasure Secreted in Tarrieu Homestead To Be Told in Court Since Old House is Dismantled. Heirs of Mrs Frances Roberts Seek to Recover Hidden Treasure.***

*In the walls of the old Larrieu residence Mrs Roberts is supposed to have secreted \$4,000 years ago. The building was recently demolished by William Lohrengel who discovered some of the money, which he says, 'has been chewed up by rats.'*

*What has become of \$4,000 in gold, Mexican dollars and currency which Mrs Frances Roberts is said to have secreted in the old Larrieu homestead at No. 6715 Water street at a time when the presence of Indians in that neighborhood made her cautious? Is a question that will be asked in the courts.*

*William Lohrengel, a contractor and builder living at No. 6714 Pennsylvania, who was arrested Monday on a warrant sworn out by Samuel H Batavia of the Public Administrator's office charging that he found the treasure and failed to turn it over to Mrs Roberts's heirs, will sue Mr Batavia for damages...*  
[Emphasis added]

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6 Another Twomblety Oddity, available at [forum.casebook.org/showthread.php?t=2238&page=2](http://forum.casebook.org/showthread.php?t=2238&page=2).

7 Ibid.

8 Missouri Association of Public Administrators, Founded 11 March 1981, available at [www.mapainfo.org/mapa2/index.cfm](http://www.mapainfo.org/mapa2/index.cfm).

It seems that Samuel H Batavia had enough experience and credibility that Gerrard Strode trusted him with swearing out warrants, an action which could ultimately be on the other end of a lawsuit, as in this case. This certainly suggests that Batavia was up to the task of properly handling Tumblety's personal items.

Riordan then claims that the third householder, A B Walker, was just a retired janitor. A search for all 'A B Walkers' living in St Louis, Missouri, around the time of Tumblety's death did not reveal a retired janitor, but it did reveal a person involved in St Louis hospitals (such as the hospital Francis Tumblety died in) who had experience in handling documents, and personnel and administrative issues. Near the same time as Tumblety's death in St Louis, an 'A B Walker' held the position as a hospital clerk and chief clerk,

*Annual report of the Health Commissioner for the year ending ..., Volumes 5-6  
St Louis City Hospital year ending 1873,  
A B Walker, Clerk*

*Mayor's Message, St Louis, MO, to the Municipal Assembly of the City of St Louis,  
for the Fiscal Year Ending 12 April 1897  
City Hospital - Miscellaneous.  
A B Walker, Chief Clerk (temporary)*

Notice that the 'A B Walker' registered in health commissioner's report and the mayor's message not only lived in St Louis, Missouri, just as the 'disinterested householder' did, but he also lived there at the same time, was involved with St Louis hospitals, and had his first and middle name published in initial form as 'A B' Chances are this A B Walker and the disinterested householder involved with Tumblety's possessions were the same person. Thus, it is perfectly plausible and appropriate for a hospital clerk to be selected by the public administrator, especially if he worked in the same St Louis hospital that Tumblety died in.

In view of the above series of revelations, the 'disinterested householders' were actually well qualified for the task of completing an inventory of Tumblety's jewelry. How about being credible in assessing the value of the jewelry? Since the assessment was still the responsibility of the public administrator *and* the results were intended to be used in court, thus crucial to be accurate, how difficult would it have been for one of the 'disinterested householders' to suggest taking the jewelry to a local jeweler for a qualified opinion?

Next to evaluate is the 'undervaluing' argument. Riordan points out that the 1903 public administrator value assessment of the diamond rings were near one hundred dollars, while all other value assessments of Tumblety's diamond rings were much greater, in the thousands of dollars. His unquestioned assumption is that the thousand dollars assessments were the correct assessments. Is he correct? We need to take a closer look at the thousand dollar assessments, beginning with the assessment Riordan himself referred to in *Prince of Quacks*. Riordan states that when Tumblety was arrested in Washington DC thirteen years before this, he had on two diamond rings, each valued at \$2,500, as well as a smaller ring worth \$200. The following is the *Washington Post*, 18 November 1890, newspaper report Riordan references,

***Dr TUMBLETY IN TOWN***

*At the station the doctor was searched, and an unexpectedly large number of valuables were secured from him [Tumblety], amounting in worth to several thousand dollars. There were \$250 in greenbacks, a check for \$160, and two magnificent diamond rings, each worth, he claims, about \$2,500. The brilliant glitter of the diamonds dazzled the eyes of the officers. The doctor also had a gold watch and a ring of rubies, set with small diamonds, worth about \$200. [underline added]*

Note that the person who assessed Tumblety's jewelry in this article was Francis Tumblety himself. Riordan is suggesting we trust Tumblety's value assessment of his jewelry over the assessment of the St Louis public administrator's office. Since Tumblety would have every reason to inflate the assessed values, it certainly casts a new light upon why the public administrator's office requires 'disinterested householders' to obtain the monetary values of personal jewelry possibly being contested in probate court.



*Tumblety*

The following are a majority of the sources for Tumblety's diamond rings being assessed in the thousands of dollars or of extreme value,

**Daily Picayune ( New Orleans, La.), 25 March 1881, Dr FRANCIS TUMBLETY**

He was lodged in the Third Station, where he gave his name as Dr Francis Tumblety. On his person, were found two extremely valuable solitaire diamond rings, two cluster diamond rings, a large amount of money, stocks and bonds, and a magnificent gold chain and a small gold watch. [underline added]

**Arkansas Gazette, Little Rock, Arkansas, 19 April 1891, COUPLE OF BURGLARIES**

HOT SPRINGS, April 18. Thieves went through the Plateau Hotel last night, securing about \$8,000 in money and diamonds, Judge A.M. Duffie, of this city, and that well-known mysterious individual, Dr Frank Francis Tumblety, being the victims. The thieves secured a gold watch and a considerable sum of money from Judge Duffie, and \$2,000 in cash and diamonds valued between \$5,000 and \$7,000 from Dr Tumblety. It was well known that Dr Tumblety had the money and valuables and carried them on his person, besides valuable papers. No clue to the identity of the thieves. [underline added]

**Oakland Daily Evening Tribune, 8 December 1890, JACK THE RIPPER, HISTORY OF FAMOUS Dr TUMBLETY...**

This description is that of the arrested man, except that now Tumblety's hair is gray and he dyes his moustache to make it black. When arrested at Scotland Yard Tumblety had two or three thousand dollars worth of diamonds and jewelry in his possession. [underline added]

**The New York World, 29 January 1889,**

The doctor produced from an inside pocket two magnificent diamonds, one thirteen carats and the other nine carats, both of the purest quality, and a superb cluster ring set in diamonds. He said that, in his opinion, his arrest was due, in a measure, to the police desiring his diamonds and thinking they could force him to give them up. [underline added]

In each of the above cases, valuing Tumblety's diamonds in the thousands of dollars most likely did not come from a qualified diamond assessor or even a jeweler. In the case of Tumblety's diamonds supposedly being stolen by thieves, how do we know his diamonds were stolen in the first place? Clearly, Tumblety himself had to have reported this to the authorities, since the diamonds were nowhere in Tumblety's room for the authorities to discover. Tumblety then would have been the source for claiming that the diamonds were valued between \$5,000 and \$7,000.

How did *The New York World* reporter who gave Tumblety his interview in late January 1889 know that the two diamonds Tumblety pulled out of his pocket were thirteen and nine carats, respectively? The source had to have been Tumblety, especially since the article was put in print so quickly, giving very little time to escort Tumblety to the nearest jeweler in order to receive an accurate assessment.

An argument can now be made that the diamond rings that Francis Tumblety carried around with him for so many years were actually valued near one hundred dollars and not in the thousands. So, if it is true that Tumblety's diamonds were correctly valued much lower, would they have even been diamonds? The answer is most likely, yes. First, the Public Administrator report did not state 'imitation diamond rings', and it certainly mentioned the two set rings as imitation, thus, they understood the classification of imitation jewelry. Second, large diamonds actually were and are valued at various amounts. Note what is stated in *The Practice of Banking* (1883),

*The yellow diamond is largely obtained in South Africa, and is of considerably less value than the white diamond...*<sup>9</sup>

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9 *The Practice of Banking, Effingham Wilson, Royal Exchange, London, Volume 2, June 1883, page 526, (John Hutchison).*

But, the *New York World* reporter claimed the diamonds were of the purest quality. Albeit, a reporter is not qualified to assess the value of diamonds, maybe they did not have a yellow hue to them. Note what *The Law Practice of Banking* was concerned about in 1883,

*The yellow diamond is largely obtained in South Africa, and is of considerably less value than the white diamond, but by introducing the former into a dye of aniline violet (yellow mixed with violet light producing white light) it assumes all the appearance and brilliancy of the latter, as was found to the cost of some diamond merchants who have been recently imposed upon by the trick. A little rubbing with soap and water removed the violet, and the yellow re-appears.*<sup>10</sup>

In the Victorian Era, there was a common enough practice of faking the value of diamonds that diamond merchants and jewelers had to be aware of it. The following 1882 newspaper source even explains how this fakery practice can make diamonds valued in the tens or hundreds look as if they were white diamonds valued in the thousands,

*Lancaster Daily Intelligencer, 24 November 1882, DIAMONDS, N.Y. Times.*

*Some very interesting and important experiments with diamonds have lately been made at the Paris Academy of Sciences. An experienced diamond merchant bought not long ago, a fine white diamond for \$4,600. One morning he gave it a good washing with soap and water, when what was his consternation to find that it had turned yellow, which sent its value down to \$800. The matter was brought to the attention of the academy, and experts submitted a report, which showed that diamond whitening is a fraud easy to accomplish and as easy to detect. By plunging a yellow diamond into an aniline violet dye it becomes white, while at the same time it loses neither its transparency nor brilliancy. In fact, on making the experiment, the experts had in a few minutes transformed several yellow stones into a fivefold value. Take a yellow diamond dip it even into no stronger dye than violet ink, wash it with water to remove any discoloration, and the effect is immediate. The dried diamond remains white... [underline added]*

It would not be a surprise to many that Francis Tumblety might resort to trickery, such as faking the quality of his large diamonds. Even though he was wealthy, he was also known for being very cheap.

Interestingly, the discovery and sale of South African diamonds mentioned in *The Practice of Banking*, which allowed the middle class to afford them, occurred in the early 1870s. The first time Francis Tumblety was reported to possess large diamonds was in the above 25 March 25 *Daily Picayune* article, conforming to the possibility that Francis Tumblety purchased large South African diamonds **having a lesser value**.

Next to examine is the argument stating that \$3.00 for imitation rings are out of the price range for Annie Chapman. First, note how the 1903 monetary assessment stated the imitation set rings as compared to the other jewelry:

- One cluster ring of 17 diamond stones, \$75.00
- One five stone diamond ring, \$60.00
- Two imitation set rings, \$3.00
- One old gold watch, \$10.00.

It does not say that the two imitation set rings are valued at '\$3.00 apiece', but it only says '\$3.00'. This could just as easily, if not more appropriately, mean that both rings added up total a value of \$3.00, and each ring would be worth approximately \$1.50 apiece.

Also, missing from these arguments is a detailed account of Annie Chapman's imitation rings, other than the assumption that they were imitation rings so cheap that an unfortunate would not hock them for cash. In order to properly compare the imitation rings Francis Tumblety owned in 1903 with the imitation rings stolen off of Annie Chapman's body in September 1888, we will also need to examine the evidence specific to the physical features of Annie Chapman's stolen rings. Jane Coram, in her article, *Doing 'Write' by Annie - A Closer Look at Annie Chapman's Murder*, she goes into detail about Chapman's rings<sup>11</sup>. She states,

10 Missouri Association of Public Administrators, Founded 11 March 1981, available at [www.mapainfo.org/mapa2/index.cfm](http://www.mapainfo.org/mapa2/index.cfm).

11 Jane Coram, *Doing 'Write' by Annie - A Closer Look at Annie Chapman's Murder*, *Ripperologist* No. 73, November 2006.

Edward Stanley, also known as 'The Pensioner', was a very close friend of Annie's; in fact she shared a bed with him some of the time, although it seems as if Edward had the odd dalliance with Annie's friend Eliza as well. He was, however, in as good a position as any to describe the rings that Annie wore. At the inquest he was quizzed about them by the coroner and his reply was quite illuminating.

Q. Coroner: When did you last see her (Annie) alive? -

A. Stanley: On Sunday, Sept. 2nd, between one and three o'clock in the afternoon.

Q. Coroner: Was she wearing rings when you saw her?

A. Stanley: Yes, I believe two. I could not say on which finger, but they were on one of her fingers.

Q. Coroner: What sort of rings were they—what was the metal? [underline added]

A. Stanley: Brass, I should think by the look of them.' [underline added]

The Coroner mentioned additional details in his summary report,

*There are two things missing. Her rings had been wrenched from her fingers and have not been found, and the uterus has been removed. There was an abrasion over the bend of the first joint of the ring finger, and there were distinct markings of a ring or rings - probably the latter. If the object were robbery, these injuries were meaningless, for death had previously resulted from the loss of blood at the neck. Moreover, when we find an easily accomplished theft of some paltry brass rings and such an operation, after, at least, a quarter of an hour's work, and by a skilled person, we are driven to the deduction that the mutilation was the object, and the theft of the rings was only a thin-veiled blind, an attempt to prevent the real intention being discovered.* [underline added]

Coram then discusses a report from the Metropolitan Police specific to the value of Chapman's rings,

*A Metropolitan Police Criminal Investigation Department report made on the 19 Sept 1888 (52983)<sup>12</sup> does help to determine whether or not the rings appeared to be valuable or not: 'The deceased was in the habit of wearing two brass rings (a wedding ring and a keeper) these were missing when the body was found and the finger bore marks of their having been removed by force. Special enquiries have been made at all places where they may have been offered for pledge or for sale by a person believing them to be gold, but nothing has resulted there from'. [underline added]*

In the *The Scotsman*, 10 November 1888, an article titled, *Another Atrocious Murder in London Shocking Mutilation of a Woman in Whitechapel Details of the Crime*, gives additional details about Chapman's rings conforming to the Coroner's comments that they were a wedding ring and a keeper ring,

*...The police, on the statement of Farmer, are making a vigilant search for the mother, sister, and brother in law. A man named Chapman, from Oxford Street, has been found, but he proves to be no relation. It has been ascertained that the deceased woman did wear two rings at the time of her death. They were of brass – one was a wedding ring, and the other a keeper of fancy pattern. Both are missing, and the police are still searching for them.* [underline added]

The practice of using a less expensive keeper ring to guard the more expensive wedding ring is an English tradition, which began with King George III in 1761, who presented a keeper ring to his bride, Queen Charlotte<sup>13</sup>. By the late nineteenth century, this tradition spread to 'the common masses'. According to *The Scotsman* article, Chapman's keeper ring had on it a fancy pattern suggesting a value greater than the cheapest of brass rings, and then in turn suggesting an even more expensive wedding ring. Could Chapman have afforded this type of ring set? Generally, a wedding ring and its keeper ring were not purchased by the woman, but given to her as a dowry in a promise of marriage. At the time of her marriage, her husband, John Chapman, was a coachman and had a steady income. Even after their divorce, John Chapman continued to pay Annie ten shillings per week by Post Office order until his death on 25 December 1886. The Annie Chapman wandering the Whitechapel streets in 1888 may have not been able to afford brass rings valued at \$1.50 apiece (1903 dollar value), but her employed husband would have been able to.

12 Mike Hawley, *Charles A Dunham Part II: Tumblety's Anatomical Collection Reconsidered*, *The New Independent Review*, Issue 3, April 2012.

13 Antique Jewelry Investor, available at [www.antique-jewelry-investor.com/promise-ring-meaning.html](http://www.antique-jewelry-investor.com/promise-ring-meaning.html).



Annie Chapman with husband John  
Courtesy Neal Shelden and the Chapman family

Would Annie Chapman have hocked her wedding rings in 1888 if they had any kind of value to them? Even though Chapman was separated from her husband for years due to her drinking, he kept on giving her a weekly allowance up until his death, which indicates a continued bond between the two. Annie Chapman was known for being emotional when discussing her husband's death and earlier married life. If Chapman's rings were her wedding rings, there is evidence that she most likely would have kept them for sentimental value; memories of a better time. According to the *casebook.org* article, *Annie Chapman aka Dark Annie, Annie Siffey, Sievey or Sivvey*,

[Amelia] Palmer said that even two years later she seemed downcast when speaking of her children and how "since the death of her husband she seemed to have given away all together."<sup>14</sup>

It has been suggested that Chapman's brass rings were 'recently acquired'<sup>15</sup>, and if true, the wedding ring and keeper ring did not come from her husband. If the recent acquisition was through theft, then this supports the case for her possessing rings that she could not personally afford, but merely had before eventually hocking them. If she did buy them herself, then she must have spent enough to have a keeper ring covered with a fancy pattern. Conflicting with the 'recently acquired' suggestion is the statement made by the Metropolitan police that 'The deceased was in the habit of wearing two brass rings (a wedding ring and a keeper)'. A

*habit connotes an extended amount of time, as opposed to a recent acquisition, and her husband had only stopped paying her two years prior to her death.*

Even if we accept that Tumblety's imitation rings were very similar to the rings stolen off of Chapman's body, what other logical explanations are there to account for such a flamboyant dandy carrying around cheap imitation rings? One explanation is that the rings were purchased by Tumblety himself as complementary jewelry for his more expensive diamond rings. Assuming that complimentary rings valued at approximately \$1.50 a piece would complement diamond rings worth at least hundreds of dollars, a few problems still exist with this suggestion. On the two previous occasions that Francis Tumblety was searched and his personal items were reported - in New Orleans in 1881 and in Washington DC in 1889 - there was no mention of additional complementary rings, yet all of his other items were mentioned. Also, every time his expensive diamonds were reported on, the accounts give the impression that he did not wear them on his fingers, but carried them in his pocket. If so, there would have been no need for 'complementary rings' in order to accentuate beauty. Few would argue that the purpose of Francis Tumblety carrying around the large diamond rings, gold watch, and the letters from important people was to demonstrate his wealth and importance when needed, whether it was conversing in a hotel lobby or trying to get out of legal problems at a police station. The problem is that a set of two rings valued at \$3.00 would not have been useful in this regard, whether they were additional pocket-wear or worn on his fingers.

In the above excerpt, Riordan claims that Tumblety was known for wearing rings on his fingers, but does not produce any supportive evidence. If Tumblety was known for wearing rings on his fingers, then it would have been reported somewhere and most likely in numerous cases. After an extensive search and reviewing of dozens of newspaper articles and reports commenting upon Francis Tumblety, his dress, and his personal jewelry, I have yet to find a comment discussing him wearing rings (other than a fictionalized account of Francis Tumblety's supernatural origins). One just might be found in the future, but Francis Tumblety certainly was not 'known' for wearing rings.

14 Annie Chapman aka Dark Annie, Annie Siffey, Sievey or Sivvey, available at [www.casebook.org/victims/chapman.html](http://www.casebook.org/victims/chapman.html).

15 Ibid.



Illustration of an Irish famine ship arriving at New York

Another proposal suggests that the rings were of sentimental value to him, and they were probably his mother's old wedding rings. According to genealogist and researcher Bill Amos, Tumblety's mother, Margaret, with her husband, James, sired 11 or 12 children in Ireland<sup>16</sup>. James had moved to America first with the older boys and then Margaret and the younger kids - including Francis Tumblety - had finally made their way to America on June 21, 1847, on the famine ship *Ashburton*. All accounts suggest that James and Margaret were poor and would not have been able to afford a nice set of brass imitation wedding rings on their wedding day. If she did receive a wedding ring set, recall that James had moved to America and had left her in Ireland most likely in order to work enough to pay her and the younger kids' way across the Atlantic. Margaret, young

Francis, and a number of other children were living in Ireland without James. An article in the *Irish Times*, 20 October 2011, reported on the discovery of a mass Irish potato famine grave from around the same time frame<sup>17</sup>. Of the over 1,000 bodies found, only two rings were recovered. This suggests either that wedding rings were sold for food or that these poor families could not afford rings in the first place. Author/writer/researcher Siobhan Patricia Mulcahy explained in a personal correspondence that,

*There was an old tradition/superstition among poor Irish around that time that only a gold ring could be used at the wedding ceremony as any other metal would bring bad luck and some even believed that the wedding would be illegal if any other metal - other than gold - was used. Poor people often borrowed a gold ring just for the ceremony. The cheaper ring - brass, copper or whatever - was then worn by the bride to show that she was married after the ceremony.*

On the *History Learning Site*, *The Great Famine of 1845*, it discusses the poor Irish immigrants who sailed onboard the *Ashburton*,

*Some landlords resorted to forced emigration of their tenants in an effort to 'solve' the problem in Ireland. In October 1847, the ship 'Lord Ashburton' carried 477 Irish emigrants to North America. 177 of these people came from one estate owned by an absentee landlord. They were so poor that they were all but naked for the journey and 87 had to be clothed by charity groups in America before they could leave the ship. On this particular voyage, 107 people died of dysentery and fever. The 'Quebec Gazette' described the 'Lord Ashburton' and all that it represented as "a disgrace to the Home Authorities." The absentee landlord who had forced 177 of his tenants onto the ship was Lord Palmerston, the British Foreign Secretary at this time, and one of the most famous of Britain's politicians in the Nineteenth Century.*<sup>18</sup>

Margaret Tumblety, who travelled with son Francis to America on this very Irish famine ship on the previous trip, would have fit into this class of poor Irish families, and she would have been dealing with the same starvation pressures for her and her children. Chances are, she was married with a borrowed gold ring, and did not receive a brass ring as dowry because of these atrocious times and conditions. Even if she did acquire a ring, it would have been only a single brass or copper ring since this was not Irish tradition, yet that most likely would have been sold in order to eat. Even if James would have later purchased her a wedding ring, noting he died four years after her arrival to America, it would have been a single ring.

16 Tumblety Genealogy, available at [www.jtrforums.com/archive/index.php/t-5777.html](http://www.jtrforums.com/archive/index.php/t-5777.html).

17 Witnesses to a Catastrophe, available at [www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/sciencetoday/2011/10/20/1224306123786.html](http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/sciencetoday/2011/10/20/1224306123786.html)

18 *History Learning Site*, *The Great Famine of 1845*, available at [www.historylearningsite.co.uk/ireland\\_great\\_famine\\_of\\_1845.htm](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/ireland_great_famine_of_1845.htm).

Lastly, Francis Tumblety's mother passed away on 27 May 27 in Rochester, New York, so if he acquired his mother's rings, it would have been around this time. The problem is Irish tradition holds that wedding rings were passed down from mother to daughter and even granddaughter, not mother to son.<sup>19</sup> When Margaret passed away in 1873, there was at least one daughter still alive. Beneficiaries of Tumblety's will were his niece living in Liverpool, England, a Mrs Thomas [Bridget] Brady, his sister Jane Haynes in Vallejo, California, and two nieces who still lived in Rochester, New York, a Mrs Barrett and a Mary Fitzsimmons.<sup>20</sup> Also, if the two imitation rings were indeed of sentimental value because they were his mother's wedding rings, why did he not bequeath these to a niece or a sister?

If these rings did not come from his mother, yet they were still of sentimental value, maybe they were from his own failed marriage when he was a young man. Francis Tumblety did claim to his New York City landlord Mrs McNamara that the reason why he was out late into the evening was to visit the monastery to pray for his dearly departed wife<sup>21</sup>. On his death certificate, issued by the City of St Louis Health Department, it does state that he was widowed. Lastly, Charles Dunham, a New York City lawyer and Union Army Colonel, did claim Tumblety told him during the Civil War that the reason why he has nothing to do with women is because of his newly married wife to his surprise being an active prostitute. Even so, most researchers agree that Francis Tumblety, a known homosexual, was never married. The story to Mrs McNamara was most likely a cover up for his usual evening gay interludes, the source for the information on Tumblety's death certificate was most likely Tumblety himself, and the story he gave to Charles Dunham was most likely another cover up in order to explain to military officers why he hated women.

It may very well be true that Francis Tumblety's imitation rings were simply of sentimental value or even from some, as of yet, unknown and insignificant event in what was a highly colorful and eventful life. And it is true that there is no hard evidence, whatsoever, that Tumblety was keeping a trophy in memory of some horrible event, such as the mutilation of a poor unfortunate on the East End of London in 1888. On the other hand, how coincidental it is that, arguably, Scotland Yard's prime Ripper suspect in November 1888, who remained 'a likely suspect' in the eyes of Chief Inspector Littlechild even after it was later established that Mary Kelly and not France Coles was the last victim, was found with imitation rings similar to the rings stolen off the body of a Ripper victim by the killer, himself. There in one more tantalizing coincidence. During the 'autumn of terror' when Tumblety escaped from England, he used the alias *Frank Townsend*, and the only other recorded time he used this particular alias was checking into St John's hospital with his imitation rings in his pocket knowing full well he was about to die. This coincidence may be just that, a coincidence, but if he truly was the killer and the rings were meant as a reminder, then it would not be a stretch of logic to see this alias coming to the forefront of his mind when the hospital clerk asked him his name when he first walked into the hospital.

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19 Irish Wedding Rings, available at [www.weddingbands.org/irish-wedding-rings](http://www.weddingbands.org/irish-wedding-rings).

20 *Washington Post*, 16 April 1907.

21 Mike Hawley, *Charles A Dunham Part II: Tumblety's Anatomical Collection Reconsidered*, *The New Independent Review*, Issue 3, April 2012.



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