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THE VICTIM OF A QUACK - MAY 1881 STORY FROM DR. FRANCIS TUMBLETY & THE RAILWAY RIPPER

BY MICHAEL L. HAWLEY

Two related questions come to mind when evaluating the plausibility of Scotland Yard suspect Dr. Francis Tumblety actually having been Jack the Ripper. First, why would an American doctor obsessed with killing sex workers travel across the Atlantic Ocean to do it? There were plenty of prostitutes in the slums of each of the major U.S. cities that he haunted. An article in the *Buffalo Times*, 27 June 1903, stated:

"In [New York City] he was one of the best known habitués of the Tenderloin streets after midnight, and was known as "a night hawk" or "masculine street walker". Dr. Tumblety was well known in this city [Buffalo] several years ago, especially to the night workers, the police and others, for his habit of prowling the streets at night made him a familiar and well-known figure."

If Tumblety was Jack the Ripper, the solution to this question is that he did kill in the United States, thus, he killed on both sides of the Atlantic. This leads to the second question. Were there any unsolved Ripper-like murders (or assaults) of women in America where Tumblety cannot be eliminated as having committed the crime?

The answer to the second question is an overwhelming yes. An exhaustive search through newspaper archives revealed 39 unsolved murders of women walking the streets at night in the U.S. where Tumblety cannot be eliminated as having been in the area. Most had their *'throats cut from ear to ear.'* In numerous accounts, Tumblety was identified as being in, or near, the location of the crime scene and within days of the murder. Additionally, there were 37 attempted murders and assaults discovered, which are unsolved to this day. Luckily, in most of these cases, a physical description of the offender was given and matched a physical description of Tumblety. In one case, the newspaper reporter knew Tumblety was in town and suggested he attacked and harassed the two victims on the previous evening. Sadly, most women who were murdered in the late 19th century in the U.S. while

walking the streets at night were also outraged – a late 19th century term referring to rape - and/or robbery. These women were eliminated from having been possible victims of Tumblety, because of his intersex condition of not having a working penis. Further, if there was evidence of robbery for financial gain, they were also eliminated, since this likely would not have been a motive.

Although well-known for having an unusual and extreme hatred of women, especially street walkers, Tumblety was never known to have physically attacked a woman. Nor, though, were the modern-day serial killers Israel Keyes, Dennis Rader, a.k.a., the BTK Killer, Ted Bundy, Andrei Chikatilo, a.k.a., the Rostov Ripper, Joseph DeAngelo, a.k.a., the Golden State Killer, Richard Cottingham, a.k.a., the New York Ripper, and Long Island (Gilgo Beach) Serial Killer suspect Rex Heurermann, just to name a few. If it was not for modern forensics, such as the use of familial DNA testing, most, if not all, of these serial killers would never have been known. Their stories are cautionary tales about rejecting a suspect by using their known history.

The timeline of when this rash of unusual murders and assaults occurred was between 1880 and 1900. Curiously, all 76 murders and assaults in question occurred at or very near the railways or railway stations. At the time, there was no federal law enforcement, so a serial killer getting off at a train stop, committing murder, and then quickly leaving the area on a train, would have been invisible to contemporary investigative methods focused upon a local offender. Francis Tumblety was a train-travelling transient; constantly on the railways and never being in one location for more than a few days or weeks. The map shows the locations of the 76 unsolved murders and assaults of women walking the streets at night. Superimposed is Tumblety's ANNUAL travel pattern along the railways.

Even more intriguing are the details of each of these murders and assaults. The following is just one of those stories...



Thanks to a portion of a coroner's inquest having been published in contemporary newspapers, we have a unique opportunity to review the details of a May 1881 unsolved murder and mutilation of a young woman on Long Island, New York. According to the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 4 September 1881, the remains of a young woman were found in the woods near Freeport, Long Island, on Friday, 26 August 1881:

The head, arms and legs were cut off, and the internal organs removed. The head and arms were wrapped in one bundle, and the body and legs in another.

Coroner J. H. Denton, of Hempstead, began a coroner's inquest on Saturday, 27 August 1881. Denton's opinion was that the woman had fallen victim to malpractice; the product of an abortion gone wrong where the parties involved attempted to dispose of the body. Because an abandoned wagon was found near the area, Denton believed that the victim was attacked 'a few miles from where the butchered body was found.' He also concluded that the remains were brought from Manhattan and then deposited in the woods of Long Island:

The bundle must have been carried across the fields, or along the railroad track, for a considerable distance, as there is no public thoroughfare within a quarter of a mile of the woods in which the bundles were deposited.

At the inquest, the young man who found the body, Joseph Ritchie, testified that the woods were owned by Mrs. Raynor R. Smith. He also stated that the location where the remains were found was only four hundred feet from the railroad tracks of the Montauk Railroad and just three-quarters of a mile from the Freeport Depot.

A Dr. Raine testified as to his inspection of the remains, stating that the victim was a female of about thirty years of age. After extensive detail of the condition of the remains, he stated that the skin of the throat had cuts from a sharp instrument. He also saw no fractures to the skull.

According to the *New York Times*, 30 October 1881, in an article titled, 'The Victim of a Quack,' the police revealed the identity of the woman. Her name was Ella, or Ellie, Clark, aged 27, who had formerly lived in New York City but had moved to Stamford, Connecticut, where she had worked as a domestic servant for the wealthy Brooks family for the last five years. The Long Island detective in charge, Detective Steven Payne, determined that she had come to New York City specifically to get an abortion. The *New York Times* article continues:

It is known that here [New York City] she sought the assistance of a notori-ous quack. It is believed that he killed her by his quack treatment, and then cut up her remains, packed them in the manner in which they were found, and caused them to be removed from the City in the hope that the crime would never be brought to light. Coroner Denton says that this man is now under the constant surveillance of the New York Police, and that his arrest on the charge of malpractice is only a question of time . . . How the body was removed from this City is still a mystery.

According to the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 27 November 1881, Ella Clark was involved in a love triangle with the family's coachman, John Spencer, and another domestic servant, Ellen Mills. While Ella Clark was intimate with Spencer and wanted him, Spencer decided to marry Ellen Mills. Ella Clark had gotten pregnant, then decided to have an abortion.

The comments in the *New York Times* article about a quack doctor in New York City that Clark went to see immediately bring up the possibility that this man was the quack doctor Francis Tumblety. However, it was not. The physician Clark sought out was Dr. James C. Thomas, whose office was at 107 W. 47th Street. Thomas lived in what was, and is, the Diamond District of Manhattan. In the early nineteenth century, diamond merchants established themselves on 47th Street. Immediately west of the Diamond District is the Theater District of Manhattan, where most of the established theaters were. In fact, 107 W. 47th Street is at the northern border of the Tenderloin District and could be considered part of the Tenderloin.

Soon, the inquest determined the series of events from when Ella Clark left Stamford, Connecticut, to when she went missing in New York City. According to the *New York Times*, 27 November 1881, and the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 11 December 1881, Ella Clark came to New York City on 2 May 1881, and arrived at her brother's Manhattan home at 740 3rd Avenue, which was a few blocks from Grand Central Station. Her brother's name was Lawrence Clark. According to the *New York Transit Museum*, New York City banned soot-belching steam engines south of 42nd Street, keeping the pollution away from the major population area. The magnificent Grand Central Train Depot opened on 42nd Street in 1871, which connected all rail traveling north and northeast to locations such as Albany, New York, and Boston, Massachusetts.

Lawrence testified at the inquest stating that he brought Ella to a friend of hers on 2 May, a Mrs. Kennedy of 327 E. 27th Street. Ella never told Lawrence that she was pregnant; just that she needed to see Dr. Thomas. Lawrence stated that he never saw

Ella again and contacted Mrs. Kennedy 9 or 10 days later. Kennedy told him she had not seen Ella since 5 May. Lawrence then reported her missing to the police.

Mrs. Kennedy testified to the jurors that Ella stayed at her home from 2 May to 4 May and then left to visit Dr. Thomas at his office. She brought with her a satchel and a bundle. Kennedy then stated that Ella returned that same day, telling her that Dr. Thomas was not home. Kennedy noticed that Ella no longer had the satchel and bundle. Kennedy then stated that Ella left for Dr. Thomas's office the next morning on 5 May never to see her again.

A *New York Times* reporter spoke directly to Dr. James C. Thomas, who stated:

I will tell you very gladly all that I know about the matter. Something like five years ago the girl was in the habit of calling to see my cook and the latter one day asked me if I could not find a place for her friend Ella. I replied that my business was not hunting places for servants, but that I would see if I could not secure a situation for her. The wife of Mr. Thomas Brooks, now of Stamford, Conn., but who at that time was residing on East Forty Fourth Street, between fifth and Madison Avenues, was in need of a servant and took the girl into her family and she became a great favorite, and Mrs. Brooks, I learned, regarded her as her best servant. Before I proceed further, I will say now that I never saw the girl professionally, and I never saw her to my knowledge after the family of Mr. Brooks left New York.

Dr. Thomas then told the reporter that, in May or June, Ella Clark's brother approached him on the street and told him that his sister had said she was coming down from Stamford to be under his care. He told the brother that he had never seen her at all. Dr. Thomas then told the reporter that the first time he heard that Ella Clark went missing and then was murdered was from reading the newspapers. He then said that Mrs. Kennedy—although he did not know her name—approached him on the same day he read about the murder in the papers:

. . . a woman came to my house and asked to see me. She was crying when I entered my office. She inquired "Are you Dr. Thomas?" I told her that I was, and she surprised me by exclaiming, "I'm going to be arrested and so are you." I asked what for and she said on account of the Ella Clark affair. The woman said that the girl came to her house and stayed a week. She told the woman that I had treated her and was very kind to her. When she left the woman's house she said she was going to my house to stay. I informed the woman that I was not in the habit of admitting patients to my house. In fact it was a thing that I never had done and what was more I never would do it. . . It is quite evident that the girl Ella Clark used my name as a cloak and a cover to her acts and movements.

Even though the Dr. Thomas lead for investigators was promising at first, it was a dead end. Police became convinced that Ella Clark never met up with Dr. Thomas. Still, an Associated Press article, as published in the *Buffalo Morning Express*, 18 November 1882, reported that the verdict rendered by the coroner's jury was that Ella Clark was the victim of malpractice.

Once all leads from New York City dried up, Detective Payne's attention was then on Long Island where the dismembered body was found. Payne continued to believe that Clark died from an abortion gone wrong and became convinced it must have been a Long Island physician. He was first convinced it was Dr. Charles R. Smith, of Freeport. An article in the *New York Times*, 8 March 1882, began:

On Saturday last, Stephen Payne, a local detective, residing at Baldwins, Long Island, made a complaint against Dr. Charles R. Smith, of Freeport, before Justice Losee, of feloniously placing the dead body of Ella Clark in the woods at Freeport with the intent to conceal the murderer.

Dr. Smith, though, insisted on his day in court to clear his name. Smith went to the justice, gave himself up, and demanded an examination. After re-viewing the arguments and evidence, the justice discharged him from custody.

Curiously, Detective Payne, who was completely convinced Dr. Smith had killed Clark, became just as convinced that it was a different physician from Long Island one year later. According to the Brooklyn Union, 4 May 1883:

Detective Payne, who has been long working on the case, claims to have secured proof that the remains were those of Ella E. Clark, of Bridgeport, Conn., who was missing from her home in April or May 1881, and that she was brought to the house of Mrs. Morgan Carman, at Milburn, now accused of causing the death of Mrs. Sidney S. Smith, of Oceanville, by malpractice, and that Ella Clark died at Mrs. Carman's from the effects of criminal medical practice.

Morgan Carman was never charged with the murder of Ella Clark, and the murder remains unsolved to this day. Detective Payne was consecutively convinced that Dr. Thomas was the cause of Clark's death, then Dr. Smith, and finally Morgan Carman. What all three failed leads have in common is that Detective Payne, along with the coroner, assumed—as fact—that Ella Clark died during a failed abortion. It may have been true, but recall that the organs were missing from the corpse. There was no physical evidence that Ella Clark had received an abortion. Also, Payne and the

19th CENTURY MANHATTAN

Quack doctor, James Thomas
office at 107 W. 47th Street.

Ella Clark arrived
from Stamford CT
on May 2, 1881.
Brother met her
and brought
her to Mrs.
Kennedy's home.

Quack doctor, Francis
Tumblety's office at
77 E. 47th Street.

Mrs/ Kennedy's home
(327 E. 27th Street).
Ella stayed from May 2 to
May 4, 1881

coroner believed that the offender wrapped the body parts and threw them into the woods to keep them from ever being discovered. This leads to a problem. If someone, especially a physician who had an office near the woods where the body parts were found, was attempting to dispose of the body parts in order not to be connected to Ella Clark, why leave the head with the rest of the body? If by chance the corpse was discovered, only the head (at that time) could be used to identify the victim. A physician would have known this. Once the victim was identified, detectives could piece the puzzle of her known whereabouts together, as they did with Ella Clark. Chances of getting caught rise exponentially with the head in the picture.

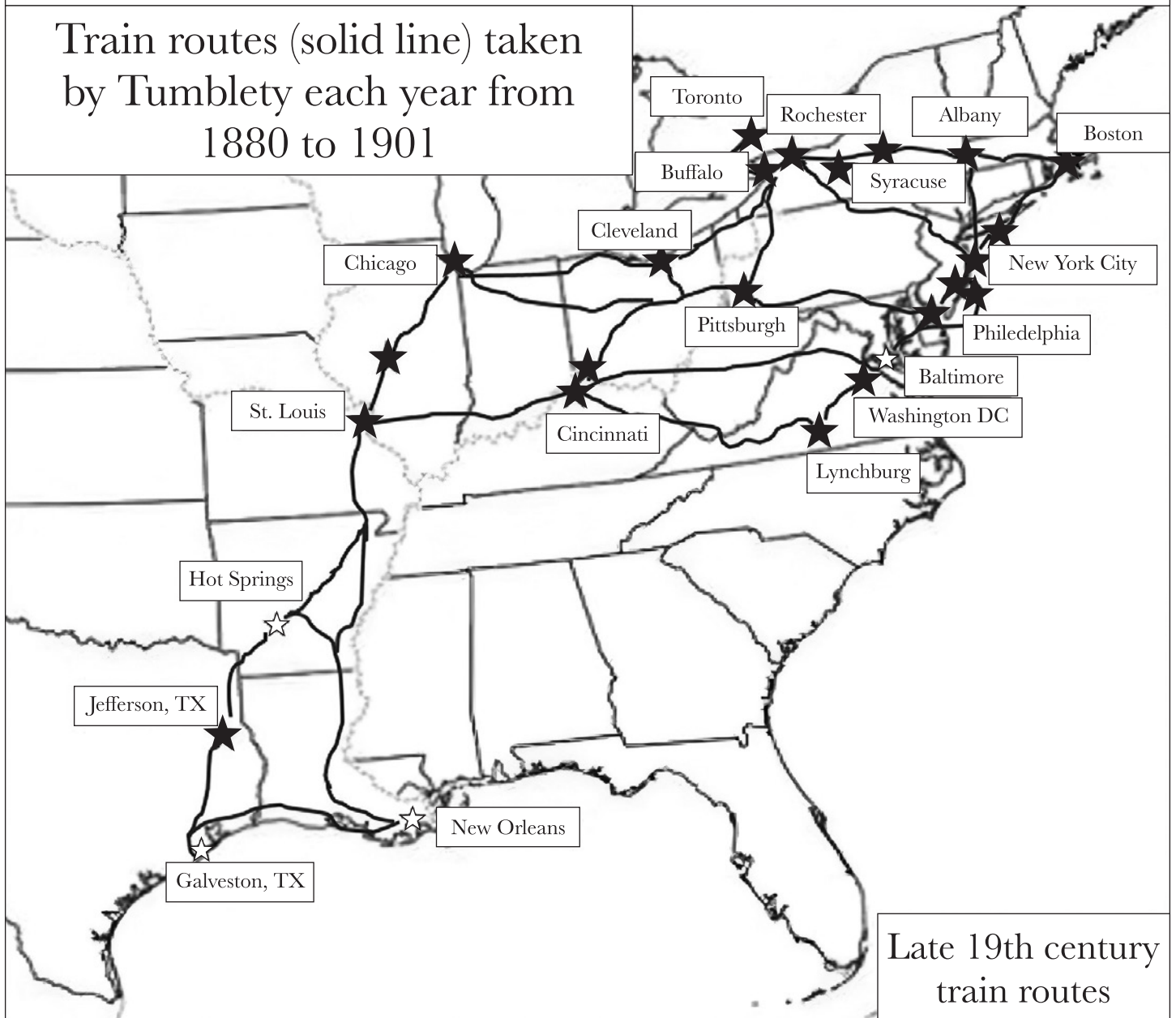
Burying the head in a separate location, or even burning it, would have been so easy.

There is another possibility that matches the evidence: Ella Clark had a fatal encounter with a serial killer after leaving Mrs. Kennedy's home. Ella Clark left her home on the morning of 5 May 1881, with the full intention of getting an abortion. Mrs. Kennedy recalled that when Clark returned to her home on 4 May, she did not have the satchel and bundle and said that she would be *returning* to the quack doctor's office for the next few days. A logical answer is that Ella Clark met up with someone on 4 May whom she believed was going to give her an abortion, then left



The locations (solid star) of the 76 unsolved murders & assaults of women neither raped nor robbed (1880 - 1901).

Train routes (solid line) taken by Tumblety each year from 1880 to 1901



the satchel and bundle at their office. If it was not Dr. Thomas who Ella Clark met up with, which quack doctor, or so-called abortion expert, did she ultimately encounter? Clark had lived in New York City for over twenty years of her life and, thus, would have known the area, including people and businesses. There were likely very few quack doctors in that particular section of Manhattan, and less than one square mile from Mrs. Kennedy's home was the location of Francis Tumblety's office at 77 E. 10th Street. Attorney William Burr recalled Tumblety still having an office in Manhattan just seven months earlier, in the late summer of 1880, as reported in the *Rochester Democrat and Republican*, 3 December 1888. In Burr's comments, he said:

At this time [beginning in June 1880] he [Tumblety] kept an herb store, or something of that sort, at No. 77 East Tenth street.

Tumblety's office was also within walking distance due south on Park Avenue from Dr. Thomas's office and was actually one-third the distance closer to Mrs. Kennedy's home than Dr. Thomas's office. While we cannot be certain that Ella Clark met up with Francis Tumblety the quack doctor—and future Jack the Ripper suspect—the coincidences are intriguing. Tumblety had promoted his skills in dealing with medical issues, such as abortions, in the past. He had given a young Protestant woman medicine to abort in Montreal, Canada, many years earlier. Further,



Tumblety was known to have been in New York City in May 1881. According to the *Leavenworth Times*, 25 May 1881, Tumblety filed a lawsuit against the *New York Times* for not retracting its report on his arrest and incarceration in New Orleans for allegedly pickpocketing the pocketbook of Henry Govan just two months earlier. He had to have been in New York City to file the lawsuit.

There is even the possibility of a chance encounter of Ella Clark meeting Tumblety just on the street because this was Tumblety's backyard. Ella's brother, Lawrence, lived next to Grand Central Station, a location the transient Tumblety was constantly at when taking a train to Boston, Albany, or any location to the north. Dr. Thomas's office was in the Diamond District, and we know Tumblety always had on his person multiple diamonds. Additionally, just a few blocks west of Dr. Thomas's office was the Theatre District, and Tumblety loved theatre. When young Martin McGarry was hired by Tumblety to be his travel companion, McGarry told a reporter that Tumblety took him to the theatre in Manhattan. According to the *New York World*, 5 December 1888:

He took a liking to me, and that day I was employed by him. My duties were not hard. I was always to be near him. He got up at 11 o'clock when he would usually send out his jug for a pint of old ale. He breakfasted in the house and then walked around town. Usually he went up to the Morton House, where he pointed out the actors to me and told me who they were and what they did. Sometimes in the afternoons we would drop in to the matinees.

The Morton House was at 19 East 16th Street next to Union Square. Union Square was within walking distance, a few blocks to the west of Mrs. Kennedy's home. Lastly, Dr. Thomas's office was in the northernmost section of the Tenderloin, where Tumblety was known to prowl. Francis Tumblety had any number of reasons to encounter Ella Clark on the streets of New York City—planned or otherwise.

Recall that Ella Clark's corpse was found near the railroad tracks in Long Island, just east of Brooklyn. Clark's corpse had to have been moved south past the Brooklyn Bridge, which would have had to pass the last-known address of Tumblety's office (documented just months earlier) at 77 East 10th Street.

Even the condition of the corpse coincides with Tumblety's MO, not to mention that it was found near a railroad, Tumblety's preferred method of travel. The organs were missing. Because of Tumblety's interest in human organs, such as the time he attempted to steal the organs of James Portmore in St.

John in 1860, it can be argued—if he was the killer—that just before or just after he dismembered the body, he kept them.

Tumblety was also interested in dismemberment, or amputation. Dr. J. H. Ziegler was the young physician with whom Tumblety spoke each night at St. John's Hospital in St. Louis in 1903 from 2 May to 28 May—the latter being the day of Tumblety's death. Dr. Ziegler stated that Tumblety would discuss medicine with him daily and that Tumblety would quiz him on how to handle patients in an office setting in the country. He then pointed out that the questions Tumblety asked required medical knowledge. Ziegler stated that they talked about surgery, and Tumblety asked him what kind of operations he had seen. Ziegler stated, "He [Tumblety] would ask about an amputation; if I had seen any amputations, and I told him I had."

Note the surprising coincidence between Mary Cassidy and Ella Clark in connection with Tumblety. Just days before the Cassidy murder, Tumblety was wronged (in his mind) and lost the subsequent lawsuit case; just before Clark's death, Tumblety, who was wronged two months earlier, filed a lawsuit near the time of her death. Serial killer Andrew Urdiales admitted that when he was wronged in January 1986, he then went out searching for a woman to kill with a knife in order to release his rage. He found Robin Brandley, aged 23, and stabbed her 41 times. This rage attack was very similar to the attack of Whitechapel murders victim Martha Tabram, who was stabbed 39 times in the early evening of 7 August 1888.

A Google search using the names of these 76 victims comes up empty, meaning their stories were lost to history. Resurrecting their voices may just have revealed one or more late 19th century serial killers.

Even though the coincidences are numerous and intriguing, there is no direct evidence that the quack doctor Ella Clark likely went to on 5 May was Jack the Ripper suspect Dr. Francis Tumblety. Still, we *cannot eliminate* Tumblety as possibly having been the killer; therefore, Ella Clark's unsolved murder is worth considering in the list of possible murder cases attributable to Francis Tumblety. Either way, at least the Ella Clark case is no longer hidden from history.

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REVIEW OF THE JUNE 2024 MEETING

BY LOUISE GRACE

Tumblety & The Railway Ripper **Michael L. Hawley**

The presentation at The Whitechapel Society meeting on 6 June 2024 was a first in many ways! Not only was it a talk about JtR suspect Francis Tumblety, not only was it delivered to those present at the Crutched Friar on the big screen, but the speaker was actually zooming-in live from New York!

Though our sound and technology expert, Steve Rattey had done a trial zoom with the speaker back in March, there were sound issues (or more a lack of) at the beginning of the meeting but a blue-tooth speaker produced from behind the bar came to the rescue and it was with great relief that Tony was then able to introduce our speaker from across the pond, Michael L. Hawley.

Mike, renowned on both sides of the Atlantic for his research into Francis Tumblety is the author of a new book “Dr Francis Tumblety & The Railway Ripper”.¹

Mike started his talk by saying that the information about Tumblety is limited, patchy and often incorrect. He reminded us that the famous helmeted picture of alleged-Tumblety that is often banded about (see the Francis Tumblety page on Wikipedia) was not of him at all and suggested that it was his young “coachman” Mark A. Blackburn. Mike paid credit to Neil Storey for discovering an undisputed picture c1875 which was first published in 2012 in Neil’s, “The Dracula Secrets: Jack the Ripper and the Darkest Sources of Bram Stoker”.

Mike laid out what was known about Tumblety’s time in Whitechapel in 1888. Tumblety was received into custody on 7 Nov 1888 and charged with gross indecency and indecent assault against four young men. He posted bail twice, at his remand hearing on or about 8 November and at his committal hearing on 16 November. After the grand jury returned a

True Bill on 18 November, virtually guaranteeing a custodial sentence, he fled the UK for France and from there left for the US at noon on 24 November. It didn’t go unnoticed that as Tumblety left the country, so the Whitechapel murders stopped!

Inspector Walter Andrews of Scotland Yard had been dispatched in late November 1888 to escort a prisoner wanted in Canada for financial crimes. Upon his arrival in Halifax, New Brunswick, on 8 December 1888, he received additional orders; the New York World reporting on 20 December, “to find the murderer in America, having left England three weeks ago.” Although, Tumblety arrived in New York on 2 December 1888, he vanished three days later, just after the 4 December papers reported on a Scotland Yard detective staking out his New York room. Inspector Andrews was directly quoted by a Canadian reporter on 20 December about the treatment he expected to receive in New York City, which all but confirms that Andrews did indeed travel to New York. The ship he sailed back to Liverpool, left three weeks later.

Just as Guy Logan stated in his 1928 book, “Masters of Crime”, Andrews’ mission was a failure and he returned to England. This mission, as reported by a California newspaper, was to find similar crimes in America that would help connect Tumblety to the Whitechapel murders. And though Andrews clearly failed in his mission, it became increasingly clear through the rest of the talk that Mike, 140 years later, had succeeded.

Mike then went on to discuss a number of unsolved murders and assaults on women that occurred in the US between 1880 and 1901. In fact, Mike’s book identifies 76 and these crimes had a number of significant things in common:

- The victims were neither raped nor robbed (Tumblety’s intersex condition meant he could not rape)
- The attacks all occurred outdoors, at night, and near railway stations





Michael L. Hawley

– Witnesses/ victims all described a very tall well-built man with a large moustache.²

It was at this point that Mike produced his pièce-de-résistance!

A very detailed map of the U.S. showing the location of these crimes and train routes taken ANNUALLY by Tumblety during the period of 1880 to 1901 (this map is reproduced on p20 though it had greater impact on the large TV screen in the Crutched Friar).

Mike discussed several of these cases and that of Ella Clark is on p16 of this edition.

Mike had made a very strong case for at least some of these 76 crimes to have been committed by Francis Tumblety and as he pointed out, only one of them would have had to have been perpetrated by The Great American Doctor for that to alter the whole narrative about Tumblety’s involvement in the Whitechapel Murders.

Certainly, the Littlechild letter of 1913 identifies an “American quack named Tumblety” as a “very likely suspect”.

Mike finished by outlining Tumblety’s latter years:

Tumblety continued to live a transient lifestyle traveling from city to city in the U.S. up until the year of his death in St. Louis, in 1903 at the age of 73. His death certificate stated he died from nephritis (kidney disease), but his known kidney and heart condition was likely caused by his neurosyphilis. His niece had his body moved north to Rochester where he was buried in the family plot in the Holy Sepulchre Cemetery next to his father, mother, and brother Lawrence. Curiously, while the gravestone states, “May They Rest in Peace” under the names of his father and mother and “May He Rest in Peace” under his brother’s name, nothing is written under his name.

Our very grateful thanks to all the hard work that Mike put into this meticulously researched presentation. Also, our thanks to Steve and Tony for their IT skills and for the member who came to our rescue with the blue-tooth speaker (you know who you are!).

Be sure to read Mile’s article about Ella Clark on p16.

NOTES:

1. Published by Sunberry Press in August 2023, available on Amazon, both kindle and paperback.
2. Tumblety was known to be at least 5ft 10ins.