

## INSANE OR CRIMINAL?

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A case was recently tried in the criminal court of Baltimore which presented so many alluring mysteries from both medical and legal aspects that it is deemed worthy of record. The accused, Miss C., was forty years of age, and a teacher in the public schools of Baltimore. Her father, who was born in Germany, was a man of the highest integrity, widely known and greatly esteemed in Baltimore. He died at the age of 57; his wife, also German born, lived to the age of 74. Of the eight children born to this couple, but three lived to maturity. Miss C., who was one of twins, was always remarkably healthy. She passed through the public schools, and finally graduated from the normal school. At the age of fourteen she went to Germany, where she remained for a year and a half. She began to teach when she was eighteen, and had been teaching steadily up to the time of her arrest. As a teacher she was efficient, faithful, and unusually popular. During her twenty odd years as a teacher in the public schools, she was, of course, known to a large number of people, and yet her character and life appear to have been irreproachable. I had many interviews with her, and found her an exceedingly agreeable conversationalist, well educated, and possessing a varied fund of information. Her manner was modest, and free from embarrassment or affectation. Her memory was remarkably retentive and accurate. She was a member of a prominent church in this city, and took great interest in church matters and was an officer in the Sunday-school.

From these facts may be gleaned an idea of Miss C.'s family and personal history, her relations to the community in which she lived for more than forty years, and her personal traits. Now let me present a brief resume of the facts that led to her arrest. In relating them I use the notes taken during many in-

terviews when she told her story to me personally. Some six or eight years ago, so her story runs, while engaged in translating a scientific book, she was brought into relation with certain persons who had a scheme to publish leaflets to be used mainly in schools. Writers and artists were to form this company, and the leaflets were to be published and sold. She represented that this scheme was carried out and became phenomenally successful. A department was added to this, after a time, to import and distribute kindergarten supplies. The offices of the company were in New York, Boston and Denver. A woman, whose name she gave, was the president of the company, and Miss C. said that she had often seen her, and regularly corresponded with her. Miss C. stated that she had put about a thousand dollars, that she had saved, into this scheme and receiving such handsome dividends had spoken to her friends about it. She did not, she said, solicit subscriptions, but when her friends heard of it, they besought her to get stock for them. She accordingly received her friends' money and issued certificates of stock therefor. It may be said that the certificates of stock which she issued to her friends were not engraved but were simply typewritten. During a period of six or seven years there passed through her hands in this manner something like \$150,000. Of this large amount about one-half was paid back as dividends (15 to 20 per cent annually), and to redeem stock, leaving about \$75,000 unaccounted for. The remainder, she said, continued invested in the concerns above alluded to, and would surely be repaid. She was arrested in July, 1900, on the charge of obtaining money under false pretenses, at the instance of two persons who held certificates of stock in the company, and wanted their money back. After a preliminary hearing she was released on bail.

Such is a very brief outline of the facts as related by Miss C. Now for an analysis of these statements with some comments upon them. There is no doubt of the fact that Miss C. actually obtained this money and paid back as dividends about one-half of it. A diversion might be made here as to the credulity and gullibility of people who intrusted such large sums, as many of them did, to a woman destitute of business experience, without any sufficient guaranty, but this is a sociological question apart

from the present inquiry. Miss C. kept no books, but from memory and memoranda, furnished a fairly accurate list of the money received and expended, which showed that there remained an indebtedness of some \$75,000 to be accounted for. What became of this large sum of money? She assured me again and again, as she also did her counsel, that this money had been paid over to the "company." She would never give the address of the president of the supposed company, or the exact location of the offices in any one of the three cities where they were said to be. Many times I pressed her for more definite information, but she absolutely refused to give it. I said to her, for example, "Miss C., do you not know that if you can prove that this is a genuine business transaction, it would be regarded only as an unfortunate speculation and that you could not be held liable, while on the other hand if you give no information you will go to the penitentiary?" To which she would invariably reply, "Yes, I know that, but I do not care if I do go to the penitentiary, I only want to pay back the money. If they would only wait, every cent will be returned. If people could trust me six months ago, why cannot they do so now?" The only reason she ever gave me for not revealing the addresses of the offices of the company was that the company had all the business it wanted, and did not care for publicity. Her whole manner indicated an absolute belief and confidence in the return of the money. Her counsel, one of the most distinguished criminal lawyers that Baltimore has ever produced, told me that to him she seemed absolutely sure of the ultimate return of the money. Time and again she went with her creditors to banks in the city, assuring them that a large sum of money was there, only to be met by the surprised denial of the teller. She even went to her counsel and said that she had \$800 and asked whether she should pay it back. Upon being told to bring the money to counsel's office, she said she would, but returned the next day to say that she had given it to a lawyer instead, to lock up for her in his safe. This it need hardly be said was false. She insisted so strenuously that her trial be postponed from time to time that this was actually done in several instances. It might be added that before counsel had been provided for her, she went to the State's Attorney and told the

story given above. She could show no receipts for the money she claimed to have paid to the supposed company, and would not say, except in a vague way how the money was paid, "sometimes in cash, sometimes in drafts." No returned checks were ever discovered. In her anxiety to delay the trial she went so far as to send bogus telegrams from New York and Chicago, signed by the supposed president of the company urging its postponement.

What became of the money? That she did not use it herself was abundantly proven. She lived in the most simple manner; her dress was always plain, she wore no jewelry, did not entertain, and had no expensive tastes. Her salary as a teacher was ample for her support. Yet in a few years \$75,000 disappeared as completely as if it had been burned and the ashes scattered to the four winds. The doctrine of "*chercher la femme*" properly modified, was applied with no definite results. She lived a simple life, with no admirers, certainly no lovers. I frequently questioned her closely about the possible use of the money. "How would it be possible" she would say, "for me to have been so intimate with any person as to give away such large sums of money without people knowing it?" And I was forced, from my knowledge of the facts, to admit the truth of this proposition. Or again when I told her that I thought that she had hidden the money away, her answer would be "Where could I have hidden it?" In short the use to which this money was put remains a profound mystery. In the annals of criminology the disappearance of such a large sum of money, with no rational explanation of its use is to say the least very unusual. In this particular case I thought often of the possibility of Miss C. having been the dupe of some unusually skillful operator or the victim of an unscrupulous lover. No facts, however, were forthcoming to substantiate this theory. At no time did Miss C. manifest any emotion, or show the slightest fear of the consequences of her actions. She spoke of going to the penitentiary with the utmost equanimity. She knew, of course, that the repeated examinations of her, made by alienists were for the purpose of eliciting symptoms of insanity. She also fully realized the fact that the only possible door of escape was into an insane asylum. Yet she besought me several times, and also wrote to

me not to set up the plea of insanity. The reason she gave was, that if she was found insane, she would be debarred from the opportunity of making money by her pen; that no publisher would accept manuscript from an asylum. When I told her that she had no literary talent or experience, and could not make any money by writing, she instanced the cases of Sir Walter Scott, Kipling and other celebrities.

The story she told on the witness stand was substantially the same as has been related, except the interweaving of more details. During the course of the trial she was entirely composed, laughing now and then at what seemed to her ludicrous statements, and exhibiting entire indifference to her fate. My testimony, and that of a distinguished alienist of this city, was mainly to the effect that our examinations of Miss C. revealed no trace of mental unsoundness, but that taking the whole facts of the case into consideration, Miss C.'s actions might be accounted for by the existence of an insane delusion. The jury found her guilty, and the judge sentenced her to five years in the penitentiary. To sum up the case: a woman of good antecedents, carefully brought up, of excellent education and unblemished character, a successful and popular teacher, an affectionate and considerate daughter and sister, holding a position which gave her ample support, living a simple unostentatious life, persuaded a large number of people to subscribe to a scheme which was purely fictitious, collecting about \$150,000, of which amount \$75,000 remains unaccounted for, while the most careful scrutiny fails to reveal how she has spent a cent of the money; absolute reticence as to the disposal of the money, in spite of the fact that the penitentiary stared her in the face, no evidence of any distinct delusions, and finally, even after conviction, an apparent implicit belief in the return of the money. Was she simply the dupe of designing persons, or was she insane? Who can tell?