

GREATEST WOMAN CRIMINAL OF THE AGE

Mrs. Isabella J. Martin, the California Dynamiter and Poisoner as Revealed by "Baby John" Epitome of the Astounding Wholesale Murders That She Planned Out of Mere Revenge



"BABY JOHN" MARTIN



MRS. ISABELLA J. MARTIN

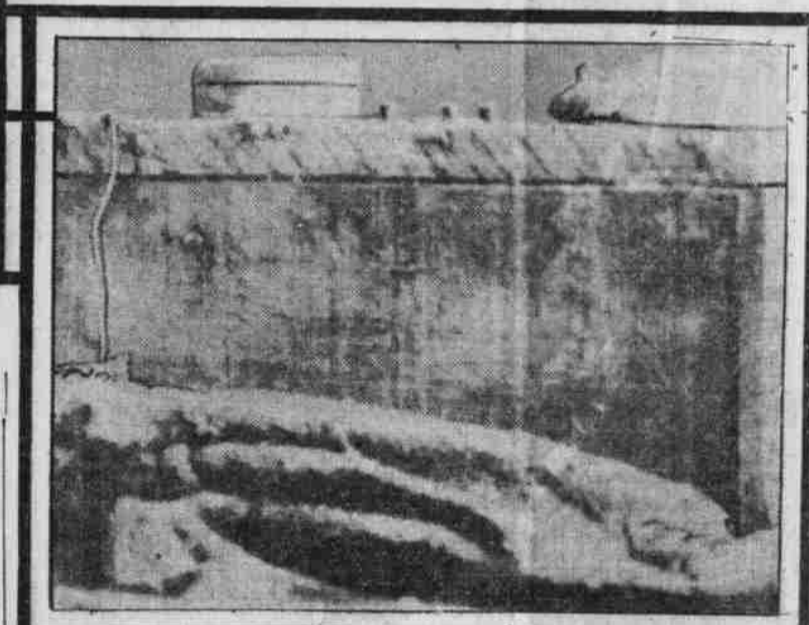
"BABY JOHN" IN THE LORD FAUNTLEERY GARB, MRS. MARTIN FORMERLY FORCED HIM TO WEAR

SUPERIOR JUDGE OGDEN, WHOSE HOME WAS PARTIALLY DESTROYED BY A MARTIN BOMB

POLICE JUDGE SAMUELS OF OAKLAND, CAL. WHO WITH HIS FAMILY WAS TO HAVE BEEN KILLED BY MRS. MARTIN



THE WRECKED OGDREN HOME



MARTIN BOMB, CONTAINING 70 STICKS OF DYNAMITE WHICH WAS TO HAVE KILLED JUDGE SAMUELS

WHEN "Baby John" Martin sat in the witness chair in the little courtroom at Weaverville, California, a few weeks ago, realizing that at last had come an opportunity forever to free himself from the terrible influence that had dominated his life since he was lifted from a cradle in a New York foundling asylum 14 years ago and taken into the care of Mrs. Isabella J. Martin, he sat there as a witness against the woman he has known all through his childhood as his mother, telling in slow deliberate manner the awful story of the crimes this woman had planned, branding her as subsequent disclosures justified, the greatest woman criminal of the age and one of the greatest of either sex.

The boy startled the entire assemblage with the recital, for he told the story of a woman who had designed to kill an entire community, who had arranged the bomb with which she compelled the boy to blow out the front of a judge's home intent upon killing the judge and his family; who had ordered the wanton killing of a mining prospector; who was ready to send hundreds of lives into eternity in order to dynamite the home of another magistrate; who had contrived to poison the spring of a neighbor near her home in the mountains, and who held in store sufficient of the terrible explosive with tins, fuses and acid to destroy blocks of property. He began his tale in a simple way, giving the facts to the authorities concerning the crime for which the Martin woman had finally been brought face to face with justice—the burning of the big Morris cattle barn on the range just outside the limits of the town of Weaverville, up in the Sierra Mountains of Northern California. He has concluded the story now, except for his testimony in court, when it is definitely decided just where Mrs. Martin will be tried and which one of the many charges she must answer.

Meanwhile, after 30 years of juggling with the law, of terrorizing officials, of torturing and hypnotizing the lad whom she had made the instrument for the operation of all her diabolical schemes, of scandalizing homes, of concealing startling sensations, of endeavoring to secure the fortunes of rich men who had died, through the claim that, in each instance, "Baby John" was the lawful heir to the particular estate—after 30 years of such intrigue, Mrs. Isabella J. Martin languishes in the misery of desertion and despair. She is in the town jail at Weaverville, closely guarded and carefully watched.

The woman in whose scheming has rested the fate of hundreds of unsuspecting persons, is coming to know the real weight of the law she has held so lightly. Men of prominence all over California sigh in relief when they reflect upon their experiences with Mrs. Martin and the boy and can now appreciate their fortune in the arrest of the woman before she had an opportunity of increasing her terrifying list.

Mrs. Martin is the widow of the wealthy John E. Martin, mineowner and holder of valuable property in San Francisco and Oakland, its suburb across the bay. She was in her prime one of the most beautiful of the young society matrons of Oakland. After her husband's death she left her home for the East and returned in a few years with the orphan child who, from the time he was swaddling clothes, has been called "Baby John" by Mrs. Martin until now he is known alone by this appellation.

In every other court proceeding in which she had ever participated, until she was met by the awful truth as it fell from the lips of "Baby John," in the words of his remarkable confession, Mrs. Martin's manner and knowledge of criminal law have influenced each situation. She has been both defiant and insistent upon her rights under legal technicalities which she could argue for hours. Despite her bold presence and tenacious spirit, she at all times entrenched herself behind the

silent warning that she was a woman and should be treated as one. She was feared in the Courtrooms and, when her eyes were within glancing distance, she was to all intents and purposes respected. Her right hand, suspiciously and menacingly held under her cape, sometimes compelled this respect. Her implied threats on many occasions reinforced these actions. Police officials and court officers could see the something that told of danger in the wild flashes of her dark blue eyes and in the thin firm lines of her lips. She was eccentric, yes; but her eccentricities were not what made her feared. It was the knowledge that her eccentricities indicated no sign of insanity, but rather told of the hard, cold cunning of the woman who had stepped in the wild flashes of her dark blue eyes and in the thin firm lines of her lips. She was eccentric, yes; but her eccentricities were not what made her feared. It was the knowledge that her eccentricities indicated no sign of insanity, but rather told of the hard, cold cunning of the woman who had stepped in the wild flashes of her dark blue eyes and in the thin firm lines of her lips. She was eccentric, yes; but her eccentricities were not what made her feared. It was the knowledge that her eccentricities indicated no sign of insanity, but rather told of the hard, cold cunning of the woman who had stepped in the wild flashes of her dark blue eyes and in the thin firm lines of her lips.

But that day in the Weaverville courtroom there was too deep a ring of steel and sincerity in what "Baby John" told to the small group of breathless listeners gathered about Mrs. Martin sat there and heard her doom, alone. She was at bay. The boy who had used in nearly every crime as the agent for attaining her horrible ends had deserted her. He had reached out and found a world he had yearned for, away from the spell of those eyes and the sharp sting of the leather lash that hundreds of times had eaten bloody paths into the flesh of his back. His testimony of an accomplice without detail of the carnival of killing that his "mother" had dementally planned for him to carry out. He acknowledged the burning of the Morris cattle barn, saying that he had been driven to the crime by the woman, Mrs. Martin sneered. She knew too well that the testimony of an accomplice without corroborative evidence would amount to naught. She thought that she still had the boy within her power. She thought that he had told only of the burning of the Morris barn, and that only because he had been frightened by District Attorney D. J. Hall. She did not know that the boy had privately told Hall everything. She did not know that he was just beginning to repeat the confession that would send her to the state penitentiary at San Quentin, California.

She drew herself up to the table as the boy concluded his recital of the facts concerning the Morris incident and then proceeded with the story of planning for the death of old John Lauk, the scheme to kill Postmaster Paulsen, of Weaverville, the placing of the seat of doom on the life of Harry Price, a Trinity County miner; the dynamiting of the home of Superior Judge F. B. Ogdren in Oakland; the sending of Judge Samuel's place in Siskiyou county to the infernal machine that would kill Police Judge George Samuels and his entire family; the burning of the home of Prosecuting Attorney Abe P. Leach (both of Oakland); the arming of her own cottage in Oakland; the concealment of explosives enough to make many more bombs, and last and not least of all, the arrangements for the poisoning of the water in the Weaverville reservoir with chemicals, so that everybody in the mountain town would die in the agony of poison.

Mrs. Martin had simply muttered and made notes, calmly, and yet in a dis-

play of the passion of anger that swayed her. She listened carefully to every word until the climax was reached by "Baby John," and then she knew that it was a case of fighting alone. She jumped to her feet and cried, "For God's sake, don't 'Baby John'! Don't, please don't!"

And then, when she saw what she had done, she collected her wits and continued in more dispassionate tones: "He's crazy; the boy's crazy, I tell you. He's lying; that's what he is, and I can prove it. Ask Dr. Austin Flint, and he'll tell you that 'Baby John' has never been right since he injured his head some years ago. I tell you, he's crazy."

But "Baby John" is not crazy. In fact, he is an unusually bright and an unusually handsome lad, with his faculties keenly developed. What is most remarkable for one whose entire life has been lived in an atmosphere of crime under the power of mind of a woman with no love and much hate in her heart, he has a faculty for telling the truth untaught by any omission of fact or desire for revenge. The story he has told remains unbroken. In each detail where he promised disclosures of importance he has kept his word with the authorities. Upon his arrival in Oakland from Weaverville he led Chief of Detectives Walter J. Peterson, Detective St. Clair Hodgkins, who is handling the case, and Captain of Police Lynch to De Fremery Park, in the heart of the city, and there in a grove of poplar trees he showed them the spot where a large iron box filled with dynamite, acid and fuse, had been cached by Mrs. Martin. He has also delivered into the hands of the police an alarm clock ingeniously fitted with additional mechanism, so arranged as to be capable of sending merric acid into set caps and exploding a charge of dynamite at any hour for which the alarm might be placed.

And so in the town of Weaverville, far up in the hills of California, this criminal has been ensnared in the law. Her arrest has probably prevented her being known to history as the greatest individual destroyer of human life, not forgetting the monster, Harry Orchard, from whom, says "Baby John," Mrs. Martin took her ideas concerning the infernal machine as a means of slaughter. For by May, if her plans had carried, everybody in Weaverville and in the small towns therabouts would have died to satisfy her craving to avenge.

The story of the lives that were to have been forfeited, of the woman's fiendish passion, and of "Baby John's" participation in the whole astounding affair is probably best told in the boy's open confession to Detective Hodgkins.

"As you know, Mr. Hodgkins," said the lad, "I am about sixteen years of age. Mrs. Martin, whom I have always called my mother, has at different times said that I am her son; that I am the child of the Princess Chimay, and again that I am just nobody's child—that she took me from a foundling asylum in New York when I was an infant. However, I have always been with her, and I thank God now that the spell has been broken. I am free, free for the first time in a life of misery and torture."

"Oh, it's good to be away from her. I feel better now. I can sleep nights, and I know that there will be no more beatings, no more orders to kill people. Maybe you will never know what kind of a woman Mrs. Martin really is, even after I have told my story."

"Well, to begin with, I want to say that I placed and fired the bomb last March at Judge Ogdren's house on Allee street in Oakland. She made me do it. I rode down there on my wheel after dark and sneaked through a vacant lot back of the Ogdren place. Hiding the bicycle, I stole along the sileway to the front porch, set the bomb on a seat there near the door, and then retraced my steps, taking with me one end of the fuse which I had attached to the box of dynamite. When I climbed over the fence into the lot again, I lit the fuse and then rode home. Mrs. Martin and I waited until we heard the explosion and then we went to bed."

"The next morning we heard that the force of the explosion had been outward and away from the house, and the affair was put down as a bad job. Nobody was hurt by the explosion, as you know, but a section of the house was torn away."

Here "Baby John" paused to listen to the comments of those who had heard this part of his story. When he had expressed his sorrow, seemingly sincere, because of his act, he continued his confession. He told of the manufacture of the bomb that was to have blown up Police Judge Samuels and his family. Several times at night, the boy said, Mrs. Martin and he had gone from their home at Twenty-first and West streets, in Oakland, to Judge Samuels' place in Siskiyou street, just five blocks away, carrying the infernal machine and intending to

place it. Each night the street lamp on the corner opposite the Samuels home shone too brightly, and finally, owing to the fact that Mrs. Martin thought her visits in that neighborhood might arouse some suspicion, the "job" was temporarily abandoned and left to be done at another time. Conditions arose which prevented them resuming the work and the infernal machine was buried beneath the Martin cottage in West street.

These facts had been told previously by the boy at Weaverville, to District Attorney Hall and Sheriff Barnett at Oakland had been communicated with Barnett and a posse upon receiving the information went that night to the Martin home and began a search for the bomb. They dug with picks under the house, gauging every stroke with the thought that the slightest carelessness meant the cost of their lives and the lives of many residents in the vicinity, besides incalculable damage to property. Giggling they picked away until past midnight Deputy Sheriff Brown, an expert on explosives, discovered the hidden destroyer.

It was taken to the county jail and the next day an examination of it was made. It contained 71 full sticks of dynamite. Deputy Brown, in his report to Sheriff Barnett stated that, had the bomb been exploded in front of the Samuels home, every house in the square would have been shattered and most of the occupants of them killed or badly hurt.

The infernal machine was constructed box-shaped and of wood. It was 36 inches long, 14 inches wide and 16 inches in height. In the center of the cover was a hole one and a half inches in diameter. To one side of this hole was placed a plaster of paris cast in which was set, with the mouth downward, a bottle containing muriatic acid. Attached to the cork in the bottle was a wire connecting a plaster of paris cast in which was set, with the mouth downward, a bottle containing muriatic acid. Attached to the cork in the bottle was a wire connecting a plaster of paris cast in which was set, with the mouth downward, a bottle containing muriatic acid.

Next door to where the dynamite box had been lying concealed for months, two shirts of 100 girls each have been at work in the Excelsior Laundry every day and every night. Had any concussion exploded the bomb, every girl at work in the laundry would, in all likelihood, have lost her life.

When the boy was asked to explain the plans for poisoning the water in the Weaverville reservoir, he said:

"We had purchased a large quantity of that acid which you found and we were to have dumped it into the lake. There were persons Mrs. Martin was after in Weaverville and she had decided upon this general plan as the best way of getting them. When the water should be low in the spring, I was to pour in the poison. In less time than it takes to tell we should have killed everybody in the town."

And with this simple explanation, he dismissed the reservoir case.

"Mrs. Martin's idea of killing old John Lauk, who lived near Brown's Creek, just above our mountain place, was also simple," "Baby John" went on. "We were to have poisoned the spring where he got his water. But Lauk was arrested for highway robbery, I think, and he went to prison for life."

And here "Baby John" laughed for the first and only time during the narration of his story.

An innovation in the business of murder which Mrs. Martin had entered into was the means she devised for doing away with Postmaster Paulsen, of Weaverville. In this postoffice the postmaster attends personally to the cancellation of all stamps. Mrs. Martin had skillfully fixed an explosive in the upper right hand corner of an envelope which she was to send through the mails and which, when struck by the cancelling machine, would have blown Paulsen to eternity and destroyed all traces of the paper containing it.

Harry Price, a prospector in the Brown creek and, at a secluded spot in the bend was to have been shot in the back. "Baby John" was under instructions to follow him along the bed of the creek and, at a secluded spot in the bend of the stream, far beyond the Young ranch, to shoot him from behind.

"The coyotes will finish our friend Price," was Mrs. Martin's expressed idea.

The heavy fall of snow last Winter is all that saved Price. The boy knew that in case of the body being discovered sooner than was expected he might be tracked and Price's death was consequently deferred until a better opportunity presented itself.

Day after day further bits of information are being gleaned. While the boy has shown no disposition to withhold anything, the disclosures he has to make are so many that some of them temporarily escape his memory. Only recently it was learned that Justice Samuel P. Hall, of the California Court of Appeals had also been doomed to death for his participation in a suit about a year ago, in which Mrs. Martin was a party. And in telling of the Judge Hall plot and recounting the Ogdren, Samuels and Leach attempts, "Baby John" has convinced the authorities that Mrs. Martin was actually in her murderous desires, not by insanity, but by a burning wish to attain her ends in the series of arson and other