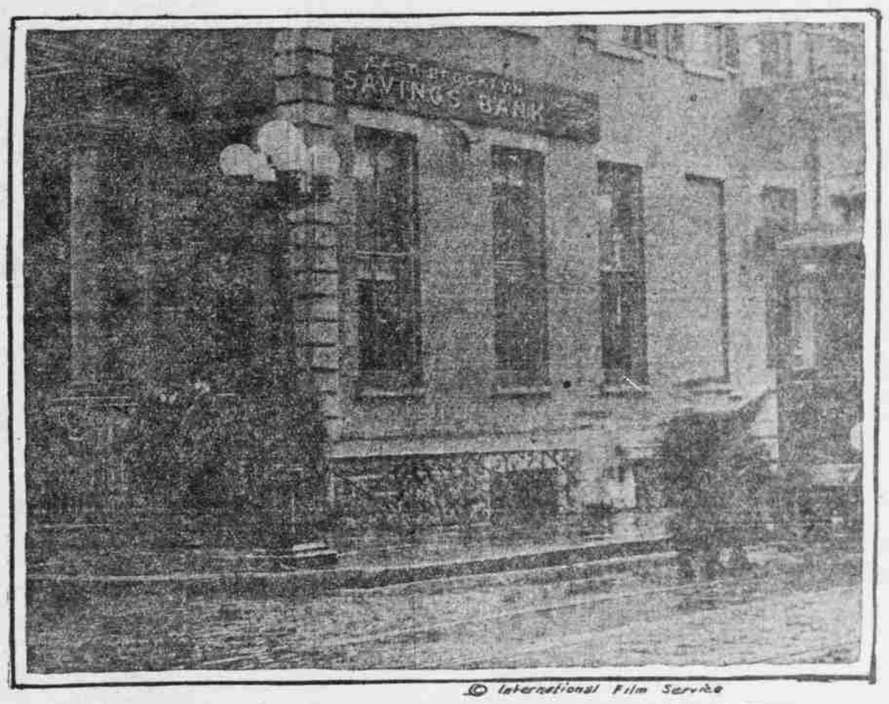
Look at This Face

Would You Believe It to Be That of the Most Astonishing Criminal in History?

Read What Others Say and What Hamby the Murderer Says of Himself in a Most Uncommon Interview

This is "George Fawcett Hamby," or So He Calls Himself, the Thief and Murderer Whose Good Manners and Utter Lack of Conscience Have Astonished and Confused All Students of Criminology.



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THE BROOKLYN (N. Y.) BANK IN WHICH HAMBY COMMITTED HIS LAST CRIME.

When you think of a criminal, particularly when you think of a thief who combines cool murder with his system, you are likely to have an image not only of a certain type of character, but of a man having certain outward marks of the thing he is. With this in mind, consider the case of George Fawcett Hamby, absolutely unscrupulous thief and murderer, recently sentenced to death. Read what is said of him by a great variety of persons who saw him and studied him at close quarters, and, more astounding still, what he said of himself in a frank interview with a woman who won his attention and confidence.

BY EULA McCLARY.

When you think of a criminal, particularly when you think of a thief who combines cool murder with his system, you are likely to have an image not only of a certain type of character, but of a man having certain outward marks of the thing he is. With this in mind, consider the case of George Fawcett Hamby, absolutely unscrupulous thief and murderer, recently sentenced to death. Read what is said of him by a great variety of persons who saw him and studied him at close quarters, and, more astounding still, what he said of himself in a frank interview with a woman who won his attention and confidence.

I SAW the most astonishing criminal in history while he awaited the call to the electric chair.

A boy—26 years of age. A clean-faced, clear-eyed boy. Nothing freakish or sinister about him. Just the sort of a young fellow you might meet without suspicion sitting at a mahogany desk in command of some big business enterprise.

George Fawcett Hamby is not his real name. But a man can die by any name.

At this writing he sits in the death house at Sing Sing with tobacco and books on psychology, theosophy, aviation and navigation. I found him awaiting death with no regrets for his deeds, for, as he said to the jury—as one who participated in the robberies which led to the shooting of several men—"every man had a chance."

The few weeks of life which still belonged to George Fawcett Hamby, who also calls himself Jay Boyd Allen, were to him merely the time which must elapse before he experiences the so-far most interesting phase of his soul's existence. He believes in evolution of the soul, via the reincarnation route. In answer to my question, "How do you look upon death?" he said: "It is interesting to contemplate what is beyond—if there is anything."

"You know," he continued, "if I feared death I would now be serving a life term in Washington. But I could not stand confinement and I gave myself up for the crime I was wanted for in New York state, that I might end it all quickly."

As to the electric chair this enigma among criminals believes there is no pain connected with it. He does not have any theories on the right or wrong of capital punishment, but believes that many men who would otherwise be a menace to society are frightened into decent living or to careers of crime by fear of capital punishment.

"Do you ever think about the sorrow and suffering you have brought to the wives, children or sweethearts of the men you have killed?" I asked him during one interview which will never be forgotten. For as I talked to the man who was sitting with a background of prison bars as the confessed murderer of three men and the robbery of many banks, I could believe neither my eyes nor ears as he dramatically unfolded in an impersonal sort of a way with no bravado nor regret his deeds of the past eight years.

"Never until I killed Bob," he admitted. "I was very fond of Bob and no one regrets his death more than I do. I meant to provide for his wife and adopted child, but with the others—well, I gave them a chance. It was all a part of my vocation. It was twenty to one in favor of the others. But usually I did not have to shoot. In the west men respect a gun. They would rather be live men than dead heroes. But, if you do shoot in the west you shoot to kill or they get you first. I guess I shot too straight in the Brooklyn bank."

"Has your sense of social obligation ever made you hesitate to carry out a planned robbery?" was another question it seemed the public would be interested in having answered. "No, never," he replied after a second's thought. "Once or twice before entering a bank I have thought I would rather not, but I always went on as I had planned for fear the men working with me would not understand and would think I had lost my nerve.

"I never could have controlled the men if they didn't know I never lost my nerve. I always found the opportunities for a robbery, made all the plans and directed the work. I never shot unless I had to. Sometimes the men I had selected to help me would lose their nerve and I could not carry out the plans. This happened in St. Paul. We were to hold up a certain bank one afternoon. One boy and myself were to go inside with a bag as if we were going to make a deposit. The third man was to come in, draw his gun and we were to make a quick getaway. But he did not come. The boy with me, now serving time in a Minnesota penitentiary, and I stood at the side desk making out a deposit slip. We waited as long as we could without exciting the suspicion of the bank officials and then said something about making the deposit the next day in a tone loud enough to be heard. When we got outside there, leaning up against the wall, was the boy we had been waiting for. He said he was not coming in until the policeman on the corner went and I almost lost my temper as I explained to him that the policeman left his post at 6 o'clock and the bank closed at 3. But he would not act, saying he did not like to commit a robbery with a policeman so conveniently near.

"I was without funds at the time and had been borrowing from a pawnbroker who, in the terms of the underworld, was a 'fence.' I did not want him to make fun of me that night when I told him I would not be able to pay my loan. So the boy who had been with me—whom I had had sleeping with me for some nights to keep him from telling anyone anything—and I gave the third chap the empty bag and let him go. I did not want him to know anything about me or where I lived. On our way to my rooms we passed a laundry which was in an inconspicuous place and on the spur of the moment I decided to get my funds there. I figured that it was possible that the laundry had not banked the day's receipts. I saw the safe door open. We walked into the laundry, which was peculiarly built. I sat on the counter casually, as if I had come in for a friendly chat, pulled my gun from the hip so it was hidden from the street and told the entire force, which included two men and several girls, to keep their hands just where they were. I could not tell them to throw their hands up because any one passing would understand. The poor stenographers were so frightened they held their hands rigid above the keyboard. I told them to drop their hands in their laps and not to be frightened. All this time the boy with me was standing still. It is a way with green men—they cannot act until commanded. So I ordered him to take the money from the safe. I could see as he put the bills in his pockets that we were not doing a very big piece of work. As we were ready to go I noticed a small suitcase on one of the desks. "Take that bag," I ordered, but one girl who was walking about as we came in and who refused to stop all the minutes we were there said, 'No,' you don't. That's my handbag and it has nothing in it but carfare and a few clothes!' 'All right,' I said. 'We will take the lady's word for it. Put the bag back.'

"The next day I read a small notice in the paper which said: 'Woman Route Bandits' and the article stated that the bag contained $46. Since it was not the company's money I forgave her. However, I began to realize then that a woman will not keep her word nor tell the truth.

"As we were leaving the laundry I held my gun in front of me and as I backed through the door I advised those left behind to keep off of the streets for a few minutes as it would not be safe to come out. I smiled good day and closed the door."

For a minute following this narrative the robber smiled reminiscently, then he said in the light and humorous manner he uses: "The boy with me wanted to make good in my eyes, I guess, for he opened the door on my gentlemanly exit and yelled: 'Yes, don't any of you come out or we'll shoot hell out of you.'"

One must know Hamby to appreciate how much of a hit such language would make with him. Vulgarity, strong language, even slang, is offensive. He did not say so, but there is no doubt in my mind that the accomplice ended his connection with Hamby then and there—even as Hamby made a vow that never again would he risk his professional respect over such a petty job. He held himself as a five-figured professional and nothing below $10,000 gave him the sense of exclusiveness his soul desired.

During the eight years he has made his living by robbing banks at the point of a gun, Hamby had never been under arrest until he gave himself up in Washington. Indeed, he believed that he never would be arrested, but that he would meet his end in a gun fight which he so loved.

"The play of the guns acted on me like military music does on a well-trained soldier," he told me. "I wanted money and the things money can buy, but more than the money, I craved the excitement of getting it and the automobile races it bought and the ease and books. Gun play certainly furnished the thrills and gave me a sense of elation."

The most noticeable things about Hamby are his gentle, manly characteristics, which are not veneered nor assumed, and his instinctive respect for women, though he does not believe they can keep their word or a secret. On his first trip east, while riding in an elevated train he arose and offered his seat to a woman.

"I always tried to quiet the fears of any women who were around when I was at work," he told me, "as I did the woman in the Brooklyn bank. I never could shoot a woman, I am confident. What would I do if she should refuse to do as I said? I'd run."

Of his mother he spoke with feeling. "No boy had a better chance to live the kind of a life you believe right," he remarked. "However, had my mother lived I should have done exactly as I have done. I should have gone to another country to work, no doubt, and hoped she would never find out. But I know myself."

Hamby was not flattered, nor pleased, to be called a second Jesse James. He believes that the methods of Jesse James and his contemporaries were crude and would not be feasible these days. It is the wish of this interesting occupant of the Sing Sing death house to be in a class alone, as the last word in up-to-date, five-figured high finance, as it were.

In eight years he has added to a seldom light money belt $400,000. Some of this he has had to share with his helpers with whom he never associated after the money was divided, thus avoiding the police.

Hamby will die, if the writer judges right, with no regrets expressed or unexplained. He told me that if he were free again he would reimburse himself from some bank and leave the country. "But," he emphasized, "I would never go away without funds." When his day comes to pass through the gate which leads to the electric chair Hamby will walk erect. He will not weaken. Not because he will not regret and repent, but because he cannot. The part of us we call a conscience, he seems to lack altogether.

Before closing the green gate on this youthful bank robber and murderer whose real name at this writing is not known, but which he confesses can be found in a combination of letters used in his aliases, hear his warning:

"Once you start you can never stop. There is only one way. Never begin."

WHAT THEY SAY OF THIS ASTONISHING MURDERER:

"The coolest one ever."—Inspector Faurot, Bertillon expert.
"The most unconcerned criminal I ever met."—Warden McCann.
"I never saw anyone more respectful to women."—Head jailer.
"One cool bird."—The other prisoners.
"An interesting study in human nature. Psychoanalyzed, Hamby would prove of real scientific value."—Dr. M. Keshner.
"Undoubtedly his acts are a form of sex perversion."—Commissioner of Health Copeland.
"Isn't he good looking and polite?"—Courtroom women.
"I don't think he's absolutely sane."—Hamby's lawyer.
"A second Jesse James."—Judge Fawcett.
"We find the defendant legally sane."—The Lunacy Commission.

BEAUTIFUL NATIVE WOMEN OF MEXICO STURDY WORKERS

Visit to Guatemala Without Seeing Marvelous Inhabitants of Inland Town Nearby Causes H. W. Patton and Crew of Mount Shasta Regret.

BY H. W. PATTON.

Letter No. 2.

OFF GUATEMALA, N. C. A., July 20.—(Special Correspondence).—We arrived at Salina Cruz, Mexico, about noon July 18. After a host of officials, all clad in spotless white and with manners as immaculate as their clothes, had come aboard and examined our papers with great exactness, the captain and myself went ashore in quest of the oil so urgently needed.

Our arrival at Salina Cruz was on the 30th day out from Grays Harbor. In that time we had plowed through 2900 miles of salt water—a little less than 100 miles a day and about four an hour. If luck stays with us we may have Christmas dinner at the "Cheshire Cheese" in dear old London. There is nothing in life so uncertain as a sea voyage on a cargo vessel with small auxiliary engines.

We dropped anchor outside the breakwaters and, as we rowed to the shore in the official boat, I was much impressed with the beauty and utility of the little harbor. It comprises about 20 acres of 35-foot water, amply protected by two breakwaters, on which are giant electric cranes which lift cargoes from the holds of vessels, deposit it in cars through hatches in their roofs, and in an incredibly short time the train is speeding on its way to Puerto Mexico, on the Atlantic side of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. There similar cranes lift the Pacific cargoes from the cars and deposit it in vessels bound for ports of the United States and Europe.

Railroad Opened in 1907.

This railroad was opened in 1907 and fully justified the expectations of its projectors. The operation of the Panama canal has, however, had a depressing effect upon this enterprise, and I fear Salina Cruz has lost its chance of becoming the Port Said of the Pacific, although it has many of the features of that redoubtable port.

This is the narrowest portion of the continent north of Panama, and it was here that Captain J. B. Eads wanted to build a ship railway that would transport the largest vessels from one ocean to the other without disturbing crew or cargo. The idea was pronounced entirely feasible, but efforts to enlist the necessary capital in England failed.

That country preferred to see us put up the money for the Panama canal and let her ships go through on equal terms with ours. Roosevelt was responsible for the digging of the canal and Wilson for giving England the best of it.

Inner Harbor Spacious Basin.

Landing at a dock in the inner harbor, which is a spacious basin with two swinging bridges over its entrance, we engaged a two-wheeled cart drawn by a most miserable little donkey. We soon were in the business center of the city, a half mile away. Every store and shop was closed and a funereal air pervaded the town of some 2000 inhabitants.

I found that it was the anniversary of the death of Benito Juarez, one of the greatest fighters for Mexico's freedom. He was born in this state of Oaxaca—pronounced wah-haw-cah—in 1806, of pure bred Zapoteca Indian parentage and spoke only that dialect until 12 years of age. But he obtained an education and became president in 1858.

It was Juarez who promulgated the reform laws, abolishing slavery and imprisonment for debt, divorcing church and state and granting religious tolerance. He led the fight against the French forces of Emperor Maximilian and signed the death warrant of that unhappy monarch. Juarez died while president on July 18, 1876.

Don Porfirio Diaz, the greatest Mexican, was also born in this state and was a pupil of Juarez. He had Indian blood, his mother being a Mixtoc. Diaz was president for 36 years, until run out of the country in 1912 by Madero. He died in Spain and, now that the people are beginning to realize what good he did, there is a movement started to bring his body back to the land he saved and to honor his memory in like degree with that of Juarez. Having visited Mexico during the reign of Diaz in the early '90s, and learning then what a splendid president and man he was, I took a mournful pleasure in adding my name to their subscription list.

Salina Cruz is not much for beauty or picturesqueness, but it does a large shipping business, all Pacific mail liners, many coasters and some big steamers flying the flag of Japan, calling there regularly. W. R. Grace & Co. have an office there, as it has in every Pacific port, and handles most of the shipping. Mr. Nyrup, the agent in charge, is one of the most courteous of gentlemen. He is also one of the best looking and while I was there was certainly one of the busiest. He told us that the same cyclone which we met on July 4 had visited Salina Cruz and that it looked as if the end of the town had come. He said it struck at night and he and Mrs. Nyrup, with their two children, fled from the house. However, it was only the tail-end of our cyclone and little damage was done. Had it been of equal force as when it struck us there would have been little left of Salina Cruz when we arrived.

Some 15 miles inland from Salina Cruz is the city of Tehuantepec, which is well worth visiting, I was told. It has a population of 10,000, with the women largely in the majority—about five to each man. I met a gentleman from Manzanillo who had been there before and was on his way again. He wanted me to go with him and regaled me with many stories of the beauty of the place and its female inhabitants. Words failed him when he tried to describe the latter, and he was a voluble talker at that. He said everybody smoked, even the very young.

"Why, listen," he said. "There is one sight worth going a thousand miles to see. The women there do not wean their children until they are about 4 years old, and I'll swear to you that I have seen a boy leave his mother's breast, sit down on the floor, roll a cigarette and puff away in great content."

I have heard a good many liars in my time, in many places and on many subjects, but I figured that this one was the chief, and that I had better get away from the danger of inoculation. I always try to tell the truth. So I again declined the invitation and bade the gentleman farewell.

Now, here on shipboard, I find positive confirmation of the truth of Mr. Manzanillo's story and I blush for the injustice which I did him. Before I left Salina Cruz, Mr. Nyrup gave me a handsome book called "Terry's Mexico," which, I think, the best guide book to this country ever written.

Women More Thrifty Than Men.

Also I want to do justice to the man from Manzanillo, so here is Terry's comment:

"The women are thrifty, animated and more enterprising than the men. The relative scarcity of males makes individuals of more importance than would be the case if the sexes were equal in number, and the passionate and jealous nature of the women is accentuated by this minority. Like the Burmese women, they are the workers.

"These olive-skinned queens of the tropics possess beautiful sloe-black eyes, superb teeth and luxuriant black hair. They are much addicted to wearing jewelry, preferably American $20 gold pieces, and it is not unusual to see a barefoot houri with a necklace worth many thousands of dollars. They bathe often and are clean. Many of the women smoke and some of the children are almost weaned on tobacco fumes. Like certain other native mothers, they nurse their children until they are 3 or 4 years old, and it is no uncommon sight to see a child descend from its mother's knee after a lacteal repast, repair to an easy chair, light a cigarette and enjoy an after-dinner smoke.

"On Sundays and feast days, when the women appear in all their grace of form and dress—for they are developed like Venuses and would make incomparable models for artists—the effect is wholly beguiling; a felicitous blend of southern Spain, the orient, of Mexico, and the lotus-eating tropics."

I passed the above along and the whole ship's company came aft and offered to forfeit a month's pay if the captain would put back to Salina Cruz for 24 hours. Think of being only 15 miles away from all that and not knowing it!

July 26.—Well, here we are, off the coast of Costa Rica, and likely to be here indefinitely. In fact, I don't know that we ever will get any farther, and I don't know that you will ever receive this letter. The truth is that our air compressor has gone bad and our engines are shut off, with little prospect of ever being started again. What makes it all the worse is that we are below 10 north, in what are the equatorial calms, or the "doldrums," where there is not wind once a year. Having no engine power and no wind there is nothing to do but wait for somebody to pick us up, or else send a boat ashore—120 miles off—and cable to Panama for a tug. The boat might get ashore and it might not. But we have water and grub and a splendid engine room force, so why worry?

Trip Resumed on July 30.

July 30—We are saved and are again speeding on our course with both engines running. The resourcefulness of Chief Tortensen, the industry of the engine-room force and a 12-horsepower sail hoist on deck, were the means of our salvation. The force rigged a compressor, fitted pipes from it to the air-tank below, started the standard sail engine, and soon had 250 pounds of air. This got the engines to going yesterday and they are still pushing us along at the satisfactory rate of six miles an hour. My guess is that we shall reach the canal by Sunday, August 3, or just 46 days from Grays Harbor. I was sure we would make it in 26 days and we are wondering how the other Mount vessels fared.

Yesterday a flotilla of seven steam vessels passed us, bound north. We were not close enough to make them out, but think they were United States naval ships on the way to the Pacific stations.

Gulf of Panama, Aug. 2.—Just before daylight today our good ship, the Mount Shasta, was struck by lightning three times in less than a half-hour. The damage was slight, the foretopmast being struck twice and badly shattered for several feet down. The other stroke connected with the electric wire and put all the port and deck lights out of commission. I was awakened by the most ear-splitting thunder I ever heard, and made for the deck. I got there after the first stroke, but was present at the other two. I stood near the electric wire when the lightning went along it, and I never before heard such a strange hissing noise.

We are now some 90 miles from Balboa and will be in tomorrow.

August 4.—What's the use guessing as to when a vessel will make her port? I said we would be in on Sunday, and here it is Monday night and we are still 40 miles from base. A head wind, an adverse current, and one engine shut down, makes against us. The glass is falling and we may have one of those celebrated Panama Gulf blows before morning and wake up 100 miles at sea. But I have faith we shall get in some time.

Balboa, Aug. 5.—Here we are after a voyage of 47 days and 16 hours from Grays Harbor.