

# The Electric Chair or Why the Sentiment in Oklahoma Suddenly

Ardmore, Okla., March 5.

**W**HO fired the shot into the body of Jake L. Hamon on November 21, which ended the life of the multi-millionaire Oil King and Republican National Committeeman at Ardmore, Oklahoma?

The approaching trial of Clara Smith Hamon, his sweetheart, on Thursday, March 10, will clear up a mystery which has set the State of Oklahoma by its ears.

As Hamon lay dying he declared that he had shot himself accidentally while cleaning his automatic pistol. But Clara Hamon is declared to have said that she fired the shot that mortally wounded her lover.

This is the first important and vital fact which must be established beyond any doubt at the approaching trial. Very few people who have studied the case think that the jury will have any difficulty in deciding whether the Oil King's dying statement was made to hide the true facts and escape scandal.

If, then, the jury believes that Clara Hamon's hand held the pistol

that fired the bullet that killed Hamon, many questions at once arise which will influence the decision of the jury whether Hamon's sweetheart was a deliberate murderess and should go to the electric chair—or whether the girl is guiltless and should be set free.

Either one or the other of these verdicts must be brought in by the jury to satisfy the public feeling in Oklahoma. No compromise verdict will do.

The many phases of the case, the various motives which may be urged by the Attorney-General who is conducting the prosecution, and the explanations and answers which will be put forward by the lawyers for the accused woman are discussed elsewhere on these pages.

Extracts from the remarkable and rather hysterical diary of Clara Hamon have already been printed, as well as a very circumstantial statement alleged to have been made by the woman, explaining how she came to shoot Hamon and the facts and circumstances leading up to the alleged murder.

On the last page of the woman's diary, written on the very eve of the shooting, was pinned a letter from a woman who signed herself Frances. This was at first thought to be a love letter from some woman to Hamon which Clara Hamon had intercepted and which had worked her up to a jealous rage which culminated in the shooting. But investigation shows that this very remarkable love letter from the woman Frances was addressed to Clara herself, and that Frances is a very intimate personal acquaintance of the Hamon woman and not of Hamon. It is a curious letter.

## The Curious Love Letter That Was Pinned to Clara Hamon's Diary

**"MY DEAREST PAL:**  
"Just received your letter of Friday eve and was more than glad to hear from you, and I appreciate all you said about me, and hope you never change, for it's lots of consolation to me. You are more than 'wonderful,' and time will not change my thoughts and everything I have for you. . . . Wish I could be there to help you pack, for I know you have your hands full. It would give me untold pleasure to be with you and do all I could for you. Know you must be tired after all you have done and have to do. While you are packing and working along, please remember there is a 'helper' who would love to relieve you of some of your worries and work.

"Am sure your visit at your sister's was pleasant in a way, but was a sad parting for all, especially for the children.

"Am glad you enjoyed what you found there on your arrival, and wish I could repeat all I sent, and I could do it every day, but since I cannot, there will be something for you wherever you may go, so you will be sure to know I am 'with you' in every one of your and 'our' days.

"I missed the 'hurried' good-bye, and looked for it, but was sure you were trying. There is a burning in the last good-bye, and I will never forget your last words; though they were sad to me, they cheered me wonderfully, and hope it may be 'some of these days.'

"The moon has been very pretty past few nights, and it has carried much and brought more to me. 'Have started me a little 'hook,' which you will see, and I hope it brings more to you than I put in it, for I will try and keep on trying, because I am pretty sure it will please you.

"It's mighty lonesome and blue around here, and there are so many things I miss, but in all the 'missing' there is a 'something' that is with me, that I cannot lose, and will never lose it, believe me.

"It is my only treasure and the only one I can keep, if I lose everything else. The cord is still 'golden,' dear Pal of Mine, and hope there will not be one thing to ever make it tarnish. Disappointments are bitter; that's why I don't want any to happen. As far as myself is concerned there won't be, and am sure you feel the same.

"Good-bye, dearest Pal, friend and all, and I am going to be at my best as long as there is hope, and after that I'll be just 'the same,' so the memories will be sweet as they are now.

"Good-bye, good luck, and may your health come back anew, and if you ever need me, you can rest assured I'll be 'waiting,' also watching for your commands, and will do all I can to fulfill the request WHENEVER you may ask it.

"I am blue to-day, but GOOD, and hope you are speeding along contentedly and look back to see one whom you HAVE MADE, and remember I love you and will always be 'for you,' regardless of what might happen.

"God bless you and keep you safe—give the encouragement, health and all that I prayed Him to give you.

"Worlds of love to you from one who is thinking deeply and cares more than you know. These lines are from the bottom of my heart to a REAL PAL from one who has always been true.

"FRANCES."

"But I would not cry out. I was too proud.

"Then he had another thought. Instead of breaking my fingers he would test his strength by twisting the flesh of my hands in a circular fashion until the flesh should break. He proceeded to strip my hands of skin.

"We talk about physical agony. We read about

the tortures of the inquisition. I have known them as only a fiend could conceive them—a fiend of his strength, working on one of my weakness and of my pride and love.

"How, I don't know, but there came an instant when I succeeded in jerking loose my tortured hands. They were bleeding from every pore. They were torn.

"He watched me quietly for an instant, that beastly sneer on his lips. He lighted a cigar and this is what he said to me: 'I would as easy slit your throat as draw on this cigar.'

"He felt for his knife—the knife I had picked up and hidden under the paper. Then he reached for his watch chain. Last Christmas I had given him a gold chain with a small knife attached.

"This knife was gone. He leered at me foolishly for a moment. Then his face set in a way that's horrible to remember. He started to lunge toward me across the floor. His arms were outstretched and his fingers clutching the air grotesquely.

"Instinctively I reached behind me. On the window sill I felt my handbag. It was open. Inside my hands searched for and found my gun.

"He had given me this gun himself not so long ago—and ordered me to carry it always, especially to protect a diamond worth \$10,000 which he had presented to me.

"I levelled this gun at his head. I cried out for him to stop. Of course, I should have asked him to throw up his hands. But I didn't do that because I could not think. I just held the pistol toward him and motioned him to swing around from in front of my door.

"He eyed me without a word and slowly followed my motions. I got close to the door. I had him in the centre of the room I was on the verge of escape. This was working out the way it should have been. 'But in his drunken mood he must have thought I was getting ready to kill him and run from the room, possibly locking the door behind me.

"There was a chair close to his left hand. He lifted his right one suddenly and switched off the light.

"The chair was swung over his head. I could see the movement faintly from the light reflected from the street arc. He rushed at me with the chair up. He struck down savagely at me.

"He struck me with the chair. As it came down the gun went off. It's true, I held it in my hand and had it pointed at him. But I swear to God I didn't pull that trigger. It may be that nobody in the world will believe me, but I swear to God the gun went off because of the blow he gave me with the chair.

"He fell on the floor, he spoke. The shot had sobered him instantly.

"Clara, you've hit me, you've hit me, he sort of half-way moaned.

"I stood there above his body in the dark of the room. I became a crazy woman for a moment.

"I began screaming out, 'Oh, I didn't, you know I didn't; you know I never could have done it. I didn't do it. I didn't do it.'

It has been intimated that this alleged confession will be denied by Clara Hamon. It is thought possible that she will claim that Hamon spoke the truth in his dying statement that he accidentally shot himself. Just what the defense will take as its position as to the shooting is not clear. It is reported that the accused woman will ad-

Continued on Next Page.



Clara Smith Hamon—Did She or Didn't She Shoot Mr. Hamon?

**N**OBODY was better known throughout the length and breadth of the State of Oklahoma than Jake L. Hamon. He was a multi-millionaire, he had his finger in the great oil developments of the State, he was the local political emperor of the State, and he was the representative of Oklahoma on the Republican National Committee.

Hamon had involved himself in a love affair with Clara Smith Hamon and had separated from his wife and child. Hamon had been to the National Convention in the early Summer, had worked hard as political boss at the November national election, and had seen his candidate, Senator Harding, elected to the Presidency.

At once there loomed for Hamon vistas of political importance as a national figure. With his candidate in the executive mansion and his party in power Hamon began to build air castles of his own future greatness in Washington. Securely entrenched in political power in his own State of Oklahoma, Hamon felt that he had outgrown the limitations of local boss, and might find it convenient to spend a good deal of time at the national capital and sit in the councils of his party in Washington.

But Mr. Harding and Mrs. Harding are rather old fashioned in their ideas of clean family morality. It would never do for Hamon to take his sweetheart and his ill-smelling scandal to Washington with him. It, therefore, became expedient and convenient to make overtures to his outraged wife, who was living apart with their child in Chicago, to return to him and wear the mask of domestic felicity.

In this arrangement there was no place for Clara Hamon.

It appears that Hamon thought out this situation, and perhaps with rather brutal frankness told his sweetheart that the time had come to throw her over. Hamon was accustomed to make and unmake little politicians and office holders at his will and convenience. If Clara Hamon stood in the way of his ambitions, why should she not be dropped as he would have dropped a political associate who interfered with his plans?

So the time came in the latter part of November when they fixed upon the final day—the day of parting. According to the assertions of Mr. Sam Blair, a very efficient and very reliable staff correspondent of the Universal Service and the Chicago Herald-Examiner, Clara Hamon told of

Hamon's arranging a marriage for her with his nephew so that she might use the name Clara Hamon on her travels with him. Then in these words she gave the story of the last day:

"Listen. I want to tell you first of that day and night—of the night he was shot.

"For ten years—you know—we had been—he had dominated me. I hated him and yet I loved him. That day of November 21 we were to part for good.

"It was my decision and his. His wife was returning to him from Chicago. He had grown to be a power in money and politics. I had made him what he was, but I had no desire to remain with him and share in the glory.

"As for him, he was about to step out of the rough character, become a home-abiding husband, something of a power in his church, and, consequently, better able to grasp the higher political opportunities that both he and I knew lay just ahead.

"And I—for ten years, I had been fighting that soul-racking battle to free myself from him—to be just good, as other girls are—as every girl wishes to be for the sake of my father and mother—and for the sake of Jimmie, here."

She reached out an arm suddenly and drew to her the brother—typically a college boy of clean-cut features and eyes.

"Oh, it was for Jimmie's sake that I wanted to leave Jake Hamon forever," she said. "I wanted him to be able to go through college with head up—never knowing nor suspecting that his sister was not—was not—"

"And so, you see, that day was to have been our last together. We had made up our minds.

"We had promised each other that not a thing should happen to mar the sanctity of the time. It was sacred for me, because he was the only man in all my life.

"It had been sacred for him, too, for he loved me. He was a man who sought after every woman he encountered, but he loved just me. Often, he had told me—it had become a pet expression with him—'Clara, I love you better than all the world; I love you better than my children.'

"And so, that morning, we were sad, but each was trying to conceal the sadness so as to give the other one, last happy memory.

"There were politicians in Ardmore whom he had to meet. That angered him at the start, for he wished the day alone with me.

"He saw these men. I know he met them in the sort of mood which made him an easy victim for the madness which later came.

"The day passed. Instead of our being together as we had desired, he was forced to run constantly to his office. Each time he came back to me he had more drink than before.

"Always in the past, he had been able to achieve what you call 'carrying' his liquor. But as this day wore on and I got furtive glimpses of him I became convinced that he was crazy.

"Crazy is the word. The way his eyes were glowing, his lips twitching, his fingers clenching.

"Until that day he invariably masked himself in public as a gracious man. There were those who always thought of him as a 'good sport.' But toward evening he forgot to pretend in public what he was not behind the door or our room.

"I met him on the veranda of the Randol Hotel at close to 6 o'clock. He screamed at me—jerked me down into my chair. I begged him to take me to the room, if he was bent on a quarrel.

"I wanted to save him and me from the ignominy of a public fight. He made me keep my seat until he left his own and lurched across the street once more to his office.

"After he had gone back again to his office I felt strangely worn and old. So this, I thought, was to be the ending of our last day. I would to God, now, that it had ended as I believed at the moment it was finishing.

"My automobile was waiting out in front. I decided to drive alone and seek what refreshment the evening air would give.

"In possibly half an hour I returned. I was heart-sick. I felt no better.

"The last day, the last day, kept ringing in my ears.

"But how I hated him for the scene he had made on the hotel porch.

"How I hated myself because I had yielded to his dominance for so long.

"I went to my room—No. 23. His room was No. 29. I locked the communicating door between. I locked my own door. I could hear him beyond the partition. He evidently was more angry even than before.



Reading the Love Letter from Frances, Which at First Was Believed to Give the Clue to a Motive of Jealousy.



## The beginning of the end

Clara Hamon and Memorandum She Wrote Under the Photograph.

"I telephoned for some food. The negro porter—Bill—came with food. At his heels rushed Mr. Hamon. I could not put him out.

"I got rid of the porter. I knew another terrible scene was coming.

"Mr. Hamon flung himself down on my bed. He was disgustingly intoxicated. He called me—he called me a terrible name. He wanted to know whom I had been riding with.

"He knew—he knew, oh, so well, that never in ten years—since I was seventeen—had I even so much as raised my eyes at another man. And yet, on that last day, he chose to pretend he was doubting me.

"His knife—Mr. Hamon's knife—fell out of his pocket as he lay on the bed. I don't know why—it must have been Providence—I picked it up and concealed it on the table under a newspaper.

"He got up from the bed. He grabbed me. His fingers went deep into my throat. I couldn't scream.

"He laughed, that harsh, snarly laugh of his which he was careful not to give in public—but it was a laugh I know well. It came the time he struck me on the head.

"He grabbed my hands. He laughed and laughed, and tried to break my fingers. He crushed them backward on the knuckles. 'Has anyone ever tried to bend your fingers back until they broke? It is pain; it is pain.'