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NO. 17.

A MURDER MYSTERY.

S. P. Donkel, an Old Resident, the Victim.

The people of this community were greatly shocked last Tuesday by a report from up the river that old-time resident of this place had been foully murdered and his body buried in a spot little likely to attract the attention of searchers. The victim was S. P. Donkel, who for some time had been engaged with his son Cleveland in putting up hay on the Pelton place, 18 miles south of this place. On Sunday, September 6th, Mr. Donkel was seen by several persons at his camp near the Pelton barn. A shed near the barn was used by Mr. Donkel as a camp and it was there that the mysterious tragedy occurred. Both father and son had planned a trip up the river for Monday morning but when morning came Mr. Donkel, senior, complained of being unwell and sent the son, Cleveland, ahead, promising to follow later in the day. This was the last seen of the victim alive. When Cleveland Donkel returned he found no trace of his father about the camp and inquiries developed the fact that no person in the vicinity had seen his father since the fateful Monday.

The neighbors rallied to the aid of the dead man's family and soon a searching party was scouring the vicinity for some trace of the lost man. No results came from the search and the party again took up the work near the camp where the victim was last seen. While at the camp the attention of Wm. Vandeventer was attracted by the appearance of the place where the campfire had burned and he began to probe the earth underneath the ashes. He found the soil loose as if recently disturbed, and by digging down the remains of Mr. Donkel were disclosed two and one half feet under ground. The party immediately ceased digging and Cleveland Donkel at once started for Prineville and notified the county officials of the discovery. On Wednesday a party composed of Sheriff Smith, Coroner Crooks, Assistant District Attorney Bell and Dr. Belknap went to the scene of the crime and unearthed the remains. Coroner Crooks empaneled as a coroner's jury, T. S. Hamilton, Wm. Vandeventer, C. B. Allen, Dick Vandeventer, C. M. Willey and Ralph Caldwell. The inquest was held Thursday morning and the three sons of the deceased narrated to the jury all they knew concerning the disappearance of the deceased. An inspection of the body showed that the victim had been shot a little above and behind the left ear, a thirty-two caliber bullet being found in the brain. The jury brought in a verdict that the deceased had come to his death by a party unknown to the jury.

The deepest mystery shrouds the whole tragedy. Every evidence of the deed seems to have been wiped out and the disposal of the body shows marvelous shrewdness on the part of the murderer. Who did the deed? What was the motive? Was it robbery, revenge or plain depravity? These questions are at this time unanswerable and bid fair to remain so. Even the fate of the victim might have remained forever a mystery had it not been for the thoroughness and acuteness of the searching party.

Simon Peter Donkel was born at Williamsport, Penn., May 16th, 1837, and at the time of his death was in his 67th year. At an early age he left his native state and lived for several years in each of the states of Michigan, Iowa and Minnesota, coming to Oregon in 1887 and settling in Columbia county in the vicinity of St. Helens. From there Mr. Donkel and family removed to Clatsop county where they lived for some time, finally coming to Crook county in the spring of 1899. The ranch now owned by C. W. Willey was purchased by Mr. Donkel on his arrival in Central Oregon, and here the family made their home until last winter, when they removed to the Collin's place two miles north of Deschutes. The death of Mrs. Donkel June 19th was a sad blow to the family, and immediately following they again took up their residence at the Meadows where a ranch was rented.

Mr. Donkel's remains were brought to this place Thursday afternoon and consigned to their last resting place beside those of his wife. At the grave a short song service was conducted by the Misses Iva West and Marion Wiest. The surviving children, Wallace, Isaac, Cleveland, Iva and Bessie, have the sympathy of the entire community in their bereavement.

School Opens

School opened Monday with Mr. Rowan in charge and a good attendance, twenty-two scholars being enrolled. Considering the short notice given of the opening of school the showing is very good and it is probable that the capacity of the schoolroom will be taxed to its utmost before the end of the school year.

The school board has ordered a new dictionary and this together with the apparatus on hand will furnish a fairly good equipment for a school of its size. The board has advertised for bids for supplying fuel for the year. A practical course in bookkeeping has been introduced into the higher grade and will be continued during the year. This study encourages neat and legible writing, gives accuracy in figures and spelling and is a subject much needed in every occupation.

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