

[Pierce, Porter P.]

The Body of Porter Pierce Found—Probable Murder

The mysterious disappearance of Porter P. Pierce, a young man of this city, and the excitement occasioned thereby, is fresh in the minds of all. Everything connected with the affair, has remained involved in impenetrable mystery since the evening of the 26th of January, until Monday, when his body was discovered by a colored man, floating in the Genesee River about seven miles from the city, and about three quarters of a mile from the Lake.

A Jury was immediately summoned by Coroner Prost, and from the testimony before it, we learn the following facts: The body had upon it the clothes worn by the deceased when he disappeared, with the exception of his two coats; suspended to the neck was his gold lepine watch, with the hands stopped at ten minutes before six. There was also found upon his person a gold pen, a pencil and pin cushion, but a bead purse known to have been in his possession, was missing. The right hand pocket of his pantaloons was turned inside out. The vest was unbuttoned, but perfectly whole, as was also the shirt. No money was found upon the body.

The most remarkable circumstance connected with the whole matter, however, is the fact that there is a frightful gash upon the upper and back portion of the head, which, from appearances—and the testimony of physicians bear us out in this opinion—could have been caused in no other way than by a severe blow with some heavy instrument.

The physician sworn before the Coroner's Jury, gave it as his deliberate conviction that the wound upon the head had been received before the body came in contact with the water. A portion of the skull had been broken, and jammed in upon the brain, the cavity being filled with clotted blood, while the upper portion of the scalp was as white as is usually the case.

There were some other marks upon the head, but none but what might have been caused by passing over the smaller falls, or coming in contact with drift wood in the river. One important question remains of course to be solved. How could his coats have got off his person, if torn off by the water or floating wood, without the least injury to his shirt or vest?

After a careful examination of the body, and of the facts in the case by a highly intelligent jury, they rendered a verdict that "he came to his death by a blow or blows inflicted by some person to the jury unknown." In this opinion, we believe the jury are sustained by nine tenths of the community.

The body was readily recognized by his father and brother, and a large number of friends, notwithstanding the length of time it must have lain in the water. The scene witnessed as the parent and brother discovered the dead body, was painful in the extreme. Satisfied, as they had been for a long time, that he was lost to them forever, the reality was of course still more heart rending.

The excitement in the city, since the discovery of the body, has been great, and a thousand ill-found rumors are afloat. Above we give all the facts and circumstances which have yet been developed. A more minute examination of the body will be made, and the opinion of medical gentlemen obtained as to the probability of the wound on the head having been caused by falling, or by a blow.

The fact that his coats were gone, while no other part of his clothing was disturbed or injured, the turning of the right hand pocket inside out, the disappearance of his purse, and

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we believe his wallet, and lastly the peculiar shape and appearance of the wound on the head, all have a tendency to convince the public that there has been foul play in the matter. To form such a conclusion, requires no stretch of the imagination, and yet all may have been the result of accident.

If, however, he had been crossing any of the bridges or races late at night, and fallen into the river, why is it that no possible trace of his whereabouts can be discovered after he left the door of the Arcade, about 7 o'clock on the evening of his disappearance? All is yet as dark as ever, so far as regards the important question as to how he came into the river, and may possibly remain involved in mystery forever. We await, however, the development of further facts.

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Funeral of Porter P. Pierce

The funeral of Mr. Porter P. Pierce, whose body was recovered the afternoon previous, took place yesterday at 2 o'clock from the Universalist Church. An appropriate and effective discourse was preached by Rev. Mr. Montgomery, which was listened to by an immense throng, the church being filled from one end to the other. A large number of Odd Fellows, of which order he was a member were present. A more melancholy spectacle has not been witnessed in our city in a long time.

Previous to being placed in a coffin, the body was again examined yesterday forenoon, by several medical gentlemen, who removed portions of the skull and the brain, and who, we understand, gave it as their opinion that the blow which caused his death, was inflicted previous to the body having come in contact with the water. In this view, we believe they were clear and decided—if such was the fact, by whom it was done, or under what circumstances, may, perhaps, forever remain enshrouded in mystery. At present it is so, but stranger things than the discovery of the author of this foul deed have come to light. The frightful gash upon the head may have been caused by falling into the river, but against such a conclusion, we have the deliberate opinion of several members of the medical faculty, and of nine tenths of the community who have heard the facts and circumstances.

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Transcribed on 22 Jun 2008 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY