LUETGERT'S EXPERT SCORES THE FIRST FOR HIS SIDE.

Dr. Riese Boiled a Body in the Sausage Maker's Vat, but the Residue Differed from the State's in Size, in Color and in Odor.

By Julian Hawthorne.

CHICAGO, Sept. 28.—When adjournment was taken this afternoon many persons pressed around Luetgert to congratulate him on the result of the day's work. The first of the defence experts had been most of the day on the stand, and had undergone Mr. McEwen's cross-examination. He had announced the results of various experiments on which he has been engaged during the past three or four months, with regard to the dissolution of human bodies in caustic potash.

While these results tallied in the main with the claims of the State, so far as the effect of the solvent upon the body was concerned, in some respects they differed from them. If the conditions of the defence experiments were in all details identical with those under which Luetgert is supposed to have annihilated the body of his wife, then there is ground for maintaining that the State is in error. Like causes produce like results. But if, as seems at first impression more probable, the differences observed are due to difference in the conditions, to be hereafter pointed out, then we are where we were before.

Discrepancies to Meet.

It is possible at this time to speak conclusively of McEwen's cross-examination. Questions were asked, the bearing of which can be known only after we know the inside of the State's theory. I can say, however, that the State may intend to show that something else besides the body of Mrs. Luetgert was in the vat that May night. The most important discrepancy between the findings of the State experts and those of the defence seemed to-day to concern the residue after the boiling or dissolving was over, its amount and consistency. It would not seem a hopeless task to bring about a reconciliation on this point; but we shall enjoy ample opportunities to determine that within the next few days.

The expert testimony, if important, was also heavy; but we were cheered by the interposition of some more alibi and insanity testimony; nor were we permitted entirely to forget the Saturday night ball, near the factory. There were also long waits for defence witnesses, who were rather tardy or altogether fugitive and, during these pauses, we were not forbidden to whisper to one another and alter the posture of our legs. It was close in the court room and the atmosphere was soporific; every seat was filled, and there was a standing throng at the door.

There Was No Beating.

If the gentlemanly, bald-browed, spectacled family physician of the Luetgerts, who attended the vanished lady more than once every three days last year, had been permitted to prove her insane he might very likely have made the attempt; but, unfortunately, his testimony was found not to be admissible. But he testified that the sausage maker had refrained from beating or swearing at his wife during his professional visits to the house, but had always appeared the kind, indulgent husband.

There was also some information about a sweled tongue, but presently the Judge interrupted these artless disclosures with the remark that he had had enough of that, and that if the State didn't object he did, because he didn't think any light was being thrown upon the case. So the doctor went away to attend to his large practice, and we were constrained to give our attention to the Mr. Arnold who had contemplated making a loan to the Luetgert business. He, too, was cut off by His Honor in his prime, and neither of these gentlemen underwent cross-examination, which must have mortified them.

But when Armadale Opdyke came to the chair we had a good time. He is the picturesque figure of the trial thus far. He is a wandering fruit vender and camper-out on country roads; ready and fluent, smart and imaginative; but not quite up to the curves of State's Attorney Deneen.

His Solitude Disturbed.

He told us that he had been belated on the highway forty-five miles out of Chicago and had made his bed by the roadside. His solitude, however, was agreeably disturbed by the advent of two ladies, one weighing 125 pounds, the other 100. They had shawls drawn over their heads and garments of both were dark—either dark brown or black he declined to say. They had asked the way to Elsinore, and there had been other conversation, which the Judge sternly excluded, remarking that there were lots of strange women going around all the time. So Mr. Phalen passed up his tintype, which Armadale promptly and positively identified: "That is the woman—yes, sir."

Mr. Deneen rose. He discovered that Armadale's places of residence had been many, and that none of them had succeeded in retaining him long. Had he ever seen the lady's picture in the Daily News? He had, but what else the paper contained he knew not, nor was he cognizant of the day, the week, or the month when it was brought to his attention.

"Know the year?" enquired Mr. Deneen.

The witness was sure it was this year. And he had first identified his wayside acquaintance as Mrs. Luetgert by that Daily News picture.

Delighted the Audience.

What day of the month was it that he met the woman? It was the 9th of June. Warm night? No; cold. Snow? No, no snow. There was a house 200 feet away—a farmer's house.

"Was he a fisherman?" Deneen asked.

"Well, he might have fished; he was a farmer."

The audience was delighted.

"Do you recognize this photograph?" [showing State exhibit No. 9.]

"Little too full in the face," said Armadale, handing it back with a smile.

"That is all."

"Were you here yesterday?" asked His Honor, as our modern Autolycus was reaching for his hat. It was yesterday that the other alibi witness broke down, and the Judge, perhaps, thought that Autolycus's postiveness was due to a desire not to disappoint the defence in the same way. But our friend declared that he had not been in court either yesterday or the day before. By how many a gypsy camp fire will he tell the story of how he testified in the Luetgert trial.

More About the Dance.

Miss Shaughnessy said that she met Emma Schimpke and Rose, and not Gottlebe, at the Diversy Hall dance on the night of the 1st of May. Emma and Rose were there for one dance, and then went away. She could not remember any one else who was there except that between 8 and 9 o'clock Mr. Luetgert himself looked in for a moment and had a glass of beer at the bar. She went to the Diversy dances whenever there were any to go to. She could not be sure whether it was cloudy or not; it was not cloudy in the hall.

Another Diversy Hall habituee, Ida Larsen, a pretty girl in a vermillion shirtwaist, saw Emma and Rose at the dance on Saturday night at 8. She, Emma and Rose remained till midnight, and danced every dance. Mr. Luetgert came in and treated all the girls at the bar. We may yet discover a witness who saw him dance the couchee-couchee. She was at the hall whenever there was a dance—Saturday nights invariably. She could not say whether the night were cloudy or clear. Upon the whole, this Saturday night of the first of May seems to have been one of the most extraordinary nights in the calendar.

August Reineman, guardian at the factory, came to the stand with a hurdle fifteen feet long, which turned out to be the gate of the factory elevator, and there was a plank waiting out in the corridor, which it was decided not to bring, as the State "acknowledged" it. The idea was to show that Blaike might have got into the factory basement on murder night otherwise than by the barricaded door.

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Dr. Riese Appears.

After this counsel for the defence uplifted their voices and called for more witnesses, as Owen Glendower called spirits from the vasty deep. They came not, and so Dr. Riese, the expert, went on the stand. An expert who has been dissolving remains steadily for four months is naturally full of his subject, and Dr. Riese, in addition to this, and to having been educated at German universities, and at an American insane asylum, was provided with a sesquipedalian vocabulary, the like whereof had not till then been promulgated from the chair. I don't mean scientific terms; I mean polysyllables. One held one's breath with anxiety lest all the syllables might not succeed in emerging from the Doctor's mouth, but he took his time with them, and there were no casualties. Let me add that the Doctor appeared thoroughly well informed on dissolutions.

With occasional cautions from His Honor, who seemed to fear that the doctor aimed to put his complete autobiography to the jury, the doctor told the story of the vat. And very curious it was to listen to the man of science making his calm, unimpassioned statement of a deed which, as closely as possible, resembled that supposed to have been performed by Luetgert, only with the murder left out.

It Wouldn't Boil.

He told how he put in the potash, and added the water, and turned on the steam, and tried—but failed—to make the mixture boil; and then how he took the corpse, which was only seventy-two hours old, which was comparatively fresh and perfect, except for a part of the brain, and which weighed only seventy-eight pounds, though it had a "fair" covering of fat over it, and slid this corpse into the steaming solvent. The mixture did not actually bubble, as a boiling mixture does, but only steamed. He kept it going three and a half hours.

All this while Luetgert listened closely with his eyes on the witness, and occasionally that here and there he might—if he had wanted to—have got up and explained that in his experiment he had done a little differently. But he kept his seat.

After the brew was done, the doctor had tried to shovel up the bones with a coal shovel four feet long, the blade ten inches square; but had met with poor success. He had flushed the vat with the hose pipe; but here he was interrupted by McEwen, who said that the State did not claim that Luetgert had flushed the vat until after the residue had been allowed to run out by the bunghole. He also interrupted his description of trying to burn the bones in the smoke room by igniting the sawdust; affirming that the State did not allege the bones to have been burned in that way.

The Residue Differed.

The testimony which the doctor gave as to the action of the solvent upon various substances, such as wool and linen, metals, leather, animal tissue, and bones, was just the same as that adduced by the State except that the bones seldom held out at the articulating surfaces, and that the bones of the wrist, the sesamoids, and other small bones, were almost or quite destroyed.

Briefly, then, Mrs. Luetgert's body might have been destroyed substantially as the State claims. But when we come to the residue found in the bottom of the vat and on the floor of the basement, the difference is marked. In the first place, there was incomparably less of this residue than the State found. The entire amount of "gluey, slimy substance" left from the experiment would not, the Doctor declared, have much more than filled a quart measure. The liquid portion of the residue was not thick or viscous, but of about the consistency of tea, according to the doctor, and neither it nor any of the residue had the slightest offensive odor; on the contrary, "seems to have had a rather agreeable fragrance;" the doctor compared it to the smell of a "laundry."

State Must Explain.

Moreover, it was quite different in color from that obtained by the State; the latter was described as reddish, while the defence's corpse yielded a grayish substance. These three discrepancies—the amount of residue, its smell, and its color—were the only significant ones, but they are important, and the State will have to account for them. And now, if the defence can prove that the rings are not Mrs. Luetgert's, something will have been done toward increasing the distance between that noose and Luetgert's neck. Let them prove, beyond that, that the bones exhibited by the State are not human, and he may begin to pack his trunk for home.

Meanwhile the alibi theory, over which so much time has been expended, has broken down; nor is there much hope left of disproving the assertions of the Schimpke girls, and of Nicholas Faber, that they saw Luetgert and his wife enter the factory about 10 o'clock that Saturday night. But, as I intimated a week ago, it is round the vat and in it that the real battle must be fought; everything else is subsidiary. Mrs. Luetgert may continue to disappear, and any other allegations of the State may stand; but if only she can be kept out of the vat all will be well.

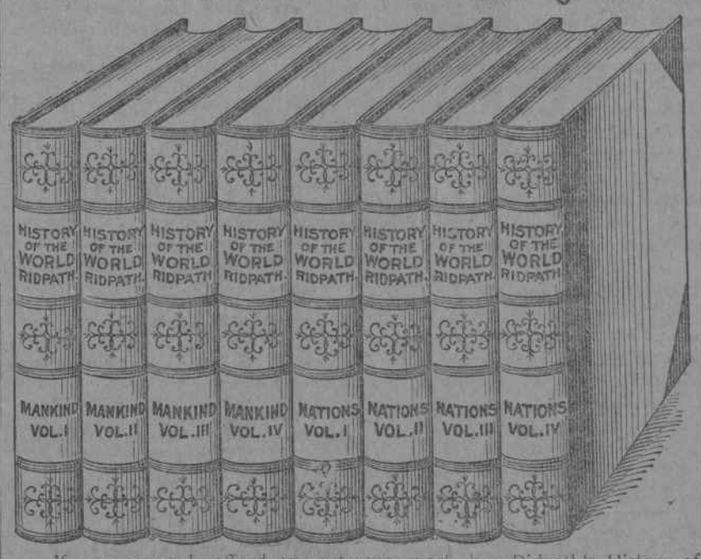
Explanation Hinted At.

Toward the end of the cross-examination McEwen asked the witness whether a body could be dissolved in a smaller amount of solvent as easily as in the amount contained in the vat, and the doctor reluctantly admitted that such might be the case. Then His Honor let a little more of the cat out of the bag by inquiring whether, had two bodies been in the vat, they would both have been dissolved as well as one only had been. To this also the doctor was constrained to reply affirmatively; but he added that if "more than two" were put in, he thought, they would be less completely dissolved. The residue would be thicker, or more jelly-like.

Further than this the State would not show its hand, but it is obvious, of course, that they must design to show that the conditions under which Mrs. Luetgert's body is supposed to have been destroyed were very different from those assumed by the defence. Those barrels of grease and "scraps" may appear in an important role before we are done. But I have no authority for this suggestion, and I will only add that I have seen very few dramas in which the interest has been so successfully maintained to the last.

Mrs. Luetgert, as She Was Photographed Eighteen Years Ago.

The Wanamaker History Club



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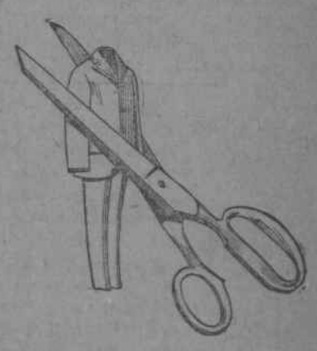

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