SIR ROBERT’S REVELATION: A DEFINITELY ASCERTAINED FACT OR ANOTHER DEAD END?

18882016
THE LIGHTER SIDE
OF MY OFFICIAL LIFE

SIR ROBERT ANDERSON
K.C.B
MATTHEW ANDERSON
Sir Robert Anderson's Father
and to hear him say prayers at night was enough to make a saint out of a sinner.’

My father’s elder brother Samuel was at school at Rugby, but he himself was educated privately, only record of his school-days I have found is of his obtaining ‘First Rank Honours’ in seven subjects at the Bective House Seminary, at the age of 14.

On leaving school he was given a good opening for a business career in a large brewery; but after eighteen months he turned away from this, and entered Trinity College, Dublin, where he graduated B.A. in 1862 with Moderatorship and medal, receiving the LL.D. of his Alma Mater in 1875.

Of his University life he always cherished pleasant memories, especially associated with the College Historical Society, of which he became Auditor, a position corresponding to that of President of the Union at Oxford or Cambridge. In after years the Librarian, in

writing to thank him for the gift of his books, said, ‘The Society wishes to return the gratification, not only for the immediate honor you have done it, but also for the more permanent distinction which you have conferred upon it as an ex-Auditor and Honorary Member.’

His friend since those college days, Lord Rathmore (then David Plunket), wrote only ten months before Sir Robert’s death, ‘Your references to the past helped me, like Clarence Mangan’s poor old battered Barmecide, to “call up many a glorious show which the pall of oblivion hides” the gay days when you and Tom Snagge (best good fellows) and Ashbourne and FitzGibb and Freeman Wills and Lecky, and many another more or less famous Argonaut, sailed out with from the old T.C.D. harbour on life’s journey. You and I now alone remain! And you “on” still with all your remaining canvas. More power to your elbow and to your heart!’ And now Lord Rathmore, too, has reached the journey’s end.

The story of my father’s conversion was told recently in the Life of Faith. He was brought up in a Christian home and had been known as a religious life, with occasional fits of penitence and anxiety; but the conversion of one of his sisters the vices held in Dublin by the Rev. J. Denk
Dear Mr. Anderson,—It gives me great pleasure to inform you that the Queen has been pleased to approve that you should be created a Companion of the Bath on the occasion of the New Year, in recognition of the valuable services which you have rendered to the community during your tenure of the office of Assistant Commissioner of Police. And it affords me great satisfaction to be the instrument of making known to you Her Majesty’s gracious intention.—Believe me, yours very truly, Salisbury.’

On his retirement he was advanced to the rank of K.C.B.

‘Oh, but he is a pioneer,’ said Lord Guthrie, the Scottish Judge, when I was introduced to him South Africa as the son of Sir Robert Anderson. The reference was of course to my father’s work in behalf of reform in our methods of dealing with the various types of criminals, especially whom he styled ‘professionals.’ In the 19th Century and other reviews and maga-
DAYS OF MY YOUTH

SIR MELVILLE L. MACK
LATE CHIEF OF THE CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS SCOTLAND YARD

LONDON: EDWARD ARNOLD.
SIR ROBERT ANDERSON
K.C.B., LL.D.
and
LADY AGNES ANDERSON

By their Son
A. P. MOORE-ANDERSON
M.A., M.D.(Cantab.), of Cape Town

Foreword by
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CRIMINALS AND CRIME:
SOME FACTS AND SUGGESTIONS

BY

SIR ROBERT ANDERSON, K.C.B., LL.D.

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SIR ROBERT ANDERSON AS ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER OF METROPOLITAN POLICE.

Photo by Adolphus Tewr

[To face page 26.]
“MY REMINISCENCES”
Sir Robert Anderson K.C.B

Although for many years regarded as a terror to evildoers and as the chief criminal expert in this country, Sir Robert Anderson, late of Scotland Yard, is by nature a scholar, singularly modest and affable. His theological writings have won him a high place amongst the thinkers of the day. In his books, especially “Crime and Criminals” and “Sidelights on the Home Rule Movement,” he narrates more fully his experiences.

WHENEVER my friends press me to write my Reminiscences, I remind them of my resolve first to embark upon salmon-fishing, and then to set about the compilation of a book of Reminiscences, when my mental faculties begin to fail. I am not vain enough to believe that the particulars of my birth and upbringing are of any interest. I will only say that in the same year which gave the Empire its present ruler I was born in Ireland, of Scottish stock that for several generations had settled in the sister kingdom. And I always imagined I was Irish until the Home Rule movement exhibited to me my error; for, having no “nationalist” aspirations and no tendency to sedition, I could not be “Irish” in the now accepted sense of the word.

I may add in passing that when I entered Trinity College, Dublin, as a Presbyterian, every member of the governing body and all the fellows and professors belonged to the Established Church, and at that time a spirit of narrowness and bigotry, little known on this side of the Channel, was all too rife outside the walls of Trinity College. It was unknown within them, as my relations both with the “dons” and with my fellow-students abundantly proved. But with neither was the question of my being a Presbyterian of more account than whether I drank tea or coffee for breakfast.

But Maynooth has changed all that. The pupils there were so separated from life around them that even in the playfields they were generally required to talk in Latin. “Do you mean,” I remember asking one of them, “that you have Latin for losing your leg-stump at cricket?” “Yes,” he replied, with a laugh; “but I don’t think Cicero would understand it.”

My special knowledge of the Fenian movement began with the State Trials of 1865. Not that I was professionally engaged in those prosecutions, for my standing at the Bar was too junior for this. But my father, the Crown Solicitor, was permitted by the law officers to depute the duties of his office to my brother, the late Sir Samuel Lee Anderson, and never was there between brothers a closer friendship than ours. And it came about that not only were the Crown briefs at my disposal, but also the confidential reports and secret information which had led the Government to bring the leaders of the conspiracy to account.

In those stirring days the Permanent Under Secretary at the Castle was Sir Thomas Larcom. When, after the change of Government in 1866, Lord Mayo (then Lord Naas) was casting about for someone to whom he might entrust a task of an exceptionally confidential kind, the Under Secretary recommended
me for the work. Though dangerous conspiracies had been rife in Ireland for years, there existed no Secret Service organization or Intelligence Department of any kind at Dublin Castle. America being then the hotbed of Fenianism, our Minister at Washington and some of our Consuls in the United States procured much valuable information about the progress of the movement, and all their despatches were communicated to the Irish Government. But so secret were they regarded that they were put away without being even "registered" in the Chief Secretary's office. Especially confidential reports from the Irish magistracy and police were treated in the same manner. So it came about that when the new Chief Secretary sought information respecting the history of the conspiracy, the task which confronted him was to master the contents of a cupboard in which all these documents lay heaped up in an undigested mass. And the task which Lord Mayo entrusted to me was that of compiling a précis of these secret papers and of the other official archives relating to Fenianism.

Then came the "Fenian rising" of March, 1867, I was paying an after-circuit visit in the country when a summons from the Attorney-General recalled me to Dublin. Some hundreds of the "insurgents" had been marched into the city in custody, and after a very summary magisterial hearing, committed for trial for high treason; and I was charged with the duty of sift'ing all these cases with a view to selecting those which were worth bringing to trial.

Here again my work was appreciated by Lord Mayo, and I found myself still further drawn into Government employment. That a man of my age should be accorded a position of such responsibility and trust as that which I held in Dublin Castle at this time is explicable in only one way. I was my brother's brother, and therefore credited with the qualities which made him the trusted adviser of the Irish Government in all administrative matters. An exceptional capacity for affairs and imperturbable amiability of temper are rarely combined as they were in his case, and, though not many years my senior, he was regarded as a Nestor in the councils of "The Castle."

In 1865 an American Fenian named Rickard Burke settled in Birmingham as "arms agent" to the conspiracy. He was a man of such mark in the organization that if the career of the notorious Kelley (the chief organizer) had been cut short by a conviction Burke would have succeeded him as "C.O." This man fell into the hands of the police, and was committed to the House of Detention at Clerkenwell.

We received information of the fullest and most explicit kind that a plot was formed for his rescue, and we sent a warning to London in the following terms: "The rescue of Rickard Burke from prison in London is contemplated. The plan is to blow up the exercise walls by means of gunpowder; the hour between 3 and 4 p.m.; and the signal for 'all right,' a white ball thrown up outside when he is at exercise."

It all occurred exactly as thus described. Change the tenses and it would read as a record of what actually took place. Moreover, an amazing part of the story is that there was a "full-dress rehearsal" of the plot the day before the actual explosion. On the afternoon of December 17th (1867) a barrel of gunpowder was brought to the place on a barrow. The preconcerted signal was given—a white ball was thrown over the wall of the prison yard. Burke "fell out" on the pretense of having a stone in his shoe, and retired to a corner of the yard, which, as was proved next day, was a perfectly safe retreat. For some unaccountable reason, however, the fuse when lighted failed to explode the powder. Consequently the execution of the plot was postponed till the morrow.

The warning having been heeded, the conspirators repeated their performance. Once again the cask of powder was rolled to the place agreed upon; the white ball signal was given as before. This time there was no failure—the explosion followed. The prison authorities, however, had taken the precaution of exercising the prisoners in a different yard; and thereby the whole purpose of the plot was thwarted.

A new generation has arisen since then.
Harcourt’s guests would bar an opportunity for “talking shop.”
Vain hope! Sir William tackled me in a characteristic manner the moment I appeared in the drawing-room, without even taking me aside. “Why had I not seized that money?” I pleaded that the law was against me. The “Bah!” with which he turned away from me made me feel that I had fallen grievously in his esteem.

I may mention here another nocturnal experience of a different kind. It was while I was living with Charles Reade, the novelist, long ago in his house at Albert Gate, which he afterwards christened “Naboth’s Vineyard.” It was this house, by the way, in which Mr. Rolfe received his visitors in “A Terrible Temptation.” Late one night, on arriving home, I discovered I had forgotten my latch-key. Unable to rouse the inmates, I decided to enter burglariously. My experiences of criminal courts had given me a theoretical knowledge of the business, and it was with a light heart that I dropped into the area and attacked the kitchen window. Of course, I had no fear of the police. Neither had I any cause to dread a pistol-shot in entering the house. But the kitchen window refused to yield, and such was the effect of spending twenty minutes in that area that the sound of a constable’s tread in the garden made me retreat into the coal-cellar. I felt then that my case was desperate. There being no steps to the area, escape was impossible, and a new bolt on the window baffled me. There was nothing for it—I was driven to break the glass. It is extraordinary what a noise it makes to smash a pane of glass when one does it deliberately. To my horror, it was so great that the passers-by were attracted by the sound. Luckily for me, they had no bull’s-eye lantern to flash into the area, and as I had again taken refuge in the cellar they could see nothing to account for the noise. As soon as they were gone it was the work of a moment for me to shoot the bolt, open the window, and scramble into the house.

But my adventure doesn’t end here. The next morning the police were sent for, and the detectives investigated the crime. The broken glass and the finger-marks gave proof of a felonious entry; but nothing was disturbed and nothing was stolen. The case was most mysterious, and it passed into the statistics as an undetected burglary. I need hardly add that when I afterwards told Charles Reade the facts the novelist’s delight was unbounded.

As for the moral of my story, it is this. I know the popular idea exists that serious crimes against property are like many serious crimes of violence—i.e., the result of accidental circumstances or sudden passion. It is not so; such crimes are deliberately planned and executed by expert criminals.

When it comes to such special feats as safe-breaking, for example, the men competent for the task are so few that some police-officers could probably write down the names of them all from memory. When a crime of a certain sort occurs, it is not necessary for the police to hold a “Sherlock Holmes” inquiry. The practical problem is to discover what members of certain definitely
known gang of thieves had a hand, either active or passive, in the crime.

Experience proves that the men competent to plan and execute crimes of a special character are limited in number, and they are definitely known. When such crimes occur, therefore, the list of men who are in that line of business is examined. Some of them are found to be in seclusion — "doing time"; some of them are known to be out of London in the course of their business; others are proved to have been at their registered addresses on the night of the crime. So by elimination the list becomes reduced to working dimensions, and it is not difficult to go on eliminating one name after another till the delinquent is found. But to find the criminal is often easier than to obtain evidence on which to charge him.

On taking charge of the Criminal Investigation Department in 1885 I was no novice in matters relating to criminals and crime.

Besides my experience at the Bar and on the Prison Commission, Secret Service work had kept me in close touch with Scotland Yard for twenty years, and during all that time I had the confidence not only of the chiefs but of the principal detectives. As a consequence, I embarked on my duties with very exceptional advantages. Notwithstanding all this, to my surprise I found myself credited with a vast amount of ignorance by one of my principal subordinates. When any notable crime occurred and I began to investigate it, as Sherlock Holmes, he used to listen to me in the way many people listen to sermons in church, and at the conclusion he would stolidly announce that the crime was the work of So-and-so, naming one of his stock heroes — "Old Canary," "Wirth," "Sausage," "Shrimps," or "Quiet Joe." And I soon found that my prosaic subordinate was right. Great crimes are the work of great criminals.

There is nothing spontaneous and occasional about the crimes of "professionals." Take the case of a "ladder larceny," for example. While the family are at dinner the house is entered by means of a ladder placed against a bedroom window, all outer doors and ground-floor windows having been fastened from outside by screws or wire or rope. Wires are stretched across the lawn to baffle pursuit in case the thieves are discovered. A case of the kind occurred some years ago at a country house in Cheshire. The next day brought the chief constable of the county to Scotland Yard. Such a crime, he said, was beyond the capacity of provincial practitioners, and he expected us to find the delinquents among the criminals on our list at Scotland Yard. He gave me a vague description of two strangers who had been seen near the house the day before. An hour or two later I handed him three photographs. Two of these were promptly identified as the men who had come under local observation, and arrest and conviction followed. They were well-known "ladder" thieves.
BEWARE GUARD DOGS
No parking in front of these gates
In Loving Memory of
BETSY,
she was born in
WOOLF ABRAHAMS
who died 18th August 1819,
AGED 51 YEARS.
Sincerely remembered
by her husband, children,
brothers, sisters, relatives and friends.
A loving wife and mother thus,
united to all who mourn her,
in hope she lived in heaven, she was,
her life was sweet, her death peaceful.
May her dear soul rest in peace.

In Loving Memory of
WOOLF ABRAHAMS
who died 26th January 1943,
AGED 85 YEARS.
Mourned by her
Sons, Daughters,
Sons-in-Law, Daughters-in-Law,
Grandchildren,
Relatives and Friends.

In Loving Memory of
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Grandchildren,
Relatives and Friends.
IN LOVING MEMORY OF
MATILDA
BELIEVED WIFE OF THE LATE
MORRIS COHEN,
WHO DIED 19TH MARCH 1939
AGED 84
30TH ADKAR 5699
HOUNRED BY HER CHILDREN, GRANDCHILDREN, BROTHER, RELATIVES AND FRIENDS.
In Loving Memory of
WOOLF ABRAHAMS.
WHO DIED 2ND JANUARY 1944.
AGED 82 YEARS.
MOURNED BY HIS
SONS, DAUGHTERS,
SONS-IN-LAW, DAUGHTER-IN-LAW,
GRANDCHILDREN,
RELATIVES AND FRIENDS.
May his soul rest in peace.
Sir Robert Anderson
K.C.B., LL.D.
A TRIBUTE AND MEMOIR

By A. P. Moore-Anderson, M.A., M.D.