

YOUNG WOMAN SOON TO BECOME MOTHER SLAIN; MYSTERY IN CRIME

Mrs. Valentine Brandon Murdered in Her Home on Second Street Yesterday, and Police Officials are Confronted With Most Baffling Case in the Criminal Annals of the City

BALTIMORE DETECTIVES ON CASE

Husband of Dead Woman Reported Gruesome Sight That Greeted Him Upon His Return From Work in the Afternoon--Body Found in Pool of Blood on Her Bed--Sleuths Busy Running Down all Reports

Police officials of Annapolis, with the aid of a trio of Baltimore city sleuths—Detective Lieutenant Schanberger and Detectives Poffler and Kratz, all of the headquarters force—are today endeavoring to unravel the mystery surrounding the death of Mrs. Lottie May Halslup Brandon, wife of Valentine N. Brandon, a stenographer employed at the Naval Experiment Station here, who was slain in her home on Second street, in the western section of the city, some time yesterday. Discovery of the crime was made by the husband of the unfortunate woman upon his return from work shortly before 5 o'clock in the afternoon, and he immediately reported it to neighbors.

The tragedy is the most baffling that has ever occurred in the criminal annals of the city and besides is a horrifying one in the extreme. There is a total absence of any motive, and although the police officials and detectives have been scurrying about to gather evidence that might lead to a tangible clue, they have so far been unable to gain anything that would furnish a basis upon which to work. Last night the husband of the slain woman was subjected to a grilling examination at the hands of the Baltimore city detectives, and nights also have expounded a number of other persons, mostly neighbors and acquaintances of the Brandon family.

With her skull crushed in at the frontal bone and her neck bearing indications that she had first been choked into unconsciousness, the body of Mrs. Brandon was found yesterday afternoon crumpled in a heap across the bed in her room. Mrs. Brandon, a pretty woman of 20 years, had been in delicate health for the last several months and soon was to become a mother. The finding of her lifeless body as before stated, was first reported by her husband upon his return from work in the afternoon. Mr. Brandon, according to statements to neighbors and also to the police officials, returned from his work shortly before 5 o'clock, and entering the bedroom of his modest home, he saw his wife lying across the bed. Approaching her, he says, she appeared to be ill and his first thought was that she had been seized with a fainting spell, as she had been subject to such attacks. He immediately enlisted the aid of several of his neighbors and further investigation revealed the fact that his wife was dead.

Then a report of the affair was made to the police officials of the city, and Dr. William S. Welch, a police justice, who acted as coroner, viewed the body. His conclusion was that the woman had been dead for five hours or more. Later Dr. Welch summoned a jury of inquest. This body held a brief session last night, heard evidence of several persons and was then discharged until Wednesday of next week, to await the outcome of the in-

The detectives and police officials were scouring here, there and everywhere about the city today seeking any possible evidence that might tend to establish the guilty party or parties, but up to 2 o'clock this afternoon they had not gathered any tangible clue. All sorts of reports were circulated about the city regardless of their source, the detectives followed them up in the event that they might bear fruit. A prominent official of the county, speaking of the tragedy today, stated that it is the most cold-blooded affair he had ever heard of in these parts.

A further examination of the body of the unfortunate woman made this morning, revealed the following injuries, which indicate that she must have had quite a struggle with the person who slew her: There are bruises about the wrists, as though she had grappled with her assailant; bruises and skin abrasions on both knees; pink marks of finger nail cuts in the neck, in addition to the ghastly wound in the center of the forehead, a hole about the size of the end of one's thumb, which caused the fracture of the skull.

The body of the victim has been prepared for burial at the establishment of Taylor and Monk, and will be shipped to her former home in Washington late this afternoon, where burial will take place, probably tomorrow.

Mr. H. T. Connolly was named as foreman of the coroner's jury appointed by Coroner Welch, and the other members are: J. W. Armitage, Charles Stapp, David Myers, Henry Wooten, Frank Hutchinson, John L. Gates, Frank Stronmyer, Philip Beale, Harry Beale, M. D. Elliott and Moses Kiteel.

The theory has been advanced that Mrs. Brandon probably was attacked while she was washing the breakfast dishes, owing to the fact that a few unwashed utensils were found on the kitchen table, but the fact that her body was only partly clad would scarcely bear this out. The kitchen on the whole, was in good order, with the exception of the fact that the door to the refrigerator was found hanging by one hinge and this was not the case when Mr. Brandon says he left the house in the morning about 8 o'clock. There were no blood spots on the floor or any other indication that the slain woman might have had a struggle, so the murderer must have accomplished his dastardly deed on the bed. The head of Mrs. Brandon lay in a pool of clotted blood, and there were splotches of blood all over the bed coverings.

A rather singular thing is the fact that the blinds of the kitchen were drawn down and the kitchen door was found locked. Neighbors had noticed the blinds being down and thought it rather queer, though they paid little attention to it, but naturally discussed the incident after the tragedy was discovered. Another queer thing is that the tea left on the kitchen

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When the body of Mrs. Brandon was viewed by the police authorities, it was only partly clad, being clothed in a negligee shirtwaist and white skirt, and no undergarments, it is stated. Although pale and haggard, she appeared as one might when asleep. Upon further examination, it was discovered that she had been dealt a severe blow on the frontal bone, just below the hair, and finger nails pierced the skin where the murderer had choked her. The body was stone cold and those who viewed it were horrified at the crime that had been accomplished by a low-life brute. One of Mrs. Brandon's stockings lay on the floor near the bed and the garter dangled from her ankle.

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A rather singular thing is the fact that the blinds of the kitchen were drawn down, and the kitchen door was found locked. Neighbors had noticed the blinds being down and thought it rather queer, though they paid little attention to it, but naturally discussed the incident after the tragedy was discovered. Another queer thing is that the ice left on the kitchen steps some time during the morning, had almost melted away. This is taken to indicate that the tragedy must have been committed during the forenoon. Certain persons in the neighborhood, stated last night that they saw Mrs. Brandon coming from a West street store along about 10 o'clock in the morning, although according to information gathered today, these persons are not sure that it was yesterday or Tuesday that they saw her.

All Annapolis is shocked over the horrible tragedy that virtually snuffed out the lives of two persons. News of it spread rapidly about the city last night, and on Second street in the vicinity of the Brandon home and along West street people gathered in groups and loitered around until late in the night. At times it became necessary for the police to force them back to a certain distance.

That Mrs. Brandon was choked into unconsciousness before the fatal blow on the forehead is the prevailing belief about the city today, for it is more than passing strange that none of the neighbors heard any cries or other form of commotion, and the Brandon home is situated in what is known as Friend's row, a thickly settled section of the west end. Mrs. King, wife of Mr. Thomas A. King, an instructor at the Naval Academy lives next door. She said she heard no unusual