

***The Trial and Behaviour of Herman Strodtman, who murdered  
his Fellow-prentice, robbed his Master, and set fire to his house.***

HERMAN STRODTMAN was indicted at the Old Bailey, on three several indictments. The first was for the murder of Peter Wolter, his fellow servant, on the 27th of April, 1701: the second, for breaking open the house of Messieurs Stein and Dorien, and stealing a watch and other things, the property of the said Peter Wolter; and the third for stealing divers goods, the property of Herman Frederick Dorien, on the day before mentioned.

From the depositions of the witnesses It appeared, that the prisoner having been discharged the service of Messieurs Stein and Dorien, for some misdemeanours, about three days before the fact was committed, took lodgings at the Sun Alehouse in Queenstreet, and told the master of the house, that his father was a merchant in Saxony, and that he was come to London to learn the English language, after which he was to go to the West Indies; and that his cloaths were to arrive that evening by the carrier.

About eight o'clock he told the landlord that he was going to drink with some of his countrymen, and as he might probably stay late, desired they would go to bed if he did not return by eleven o'clock; which they accordingly did; but the next morning, being Sunday, he came home between five and six o'clock, bringing with him a bundle, which he said contained his cloaths, which he had fetched from the carrier's; he carried the bundle up stairs, and locked himself in the room: these cloaths were proved to have belonged to the deceased.

Mr. Stein deposed, that the prisoner came to his house on the Saturday to take away his cloaths; but as he was not at leisure to examine his trunk, he told him he must call another time; on which the prisoner (as he thought) went away. That the next morning, between four and five o'clock, the maid came to him and informed him that there was a smoke in the house, and she suspected that some part of it was on fire: on which he began to search, and finding that the smoak came through the chinks of the chamberdoor where the deceased lay, he dispatched the maid for a pail of water, and entering the chamber, saw the chest of drawers on fire, which, however, by the help of the water, he soon extinguished.

That the maid then went to Wolter's bed-side, in order to wake him, but soon found that he was dead, though warm. Hereupon Mr.

*Engraved for the Tyburn Chronicle.*



*Herman Stredtman, in the Act of murdering  
his fellow Prentice Peter Wolter.*

Stein immediately sent for a surgeon, who not being able to bleed the deceased, took off his night cap, and found a bruise on the left side of his head near the eye: but as the skin was not broke, the surgeon made an incision, and found that the skull was broken in three pieces.

Mr. Stein then searching the chest of drawers, discovered that the cloaths and watch of the deceased were taken away; on which he began to suspect the prisoner, and was determined to have him apprehended, which was easily effected the next day, when several pick-lock keys were found upon him.

The prisoner, when at the bar, pleaded that he went to Camberwell, and from thence to the Red House at Deptford, where he was met by a pressgang, who imprisoned him, but speaking nothing but Dutch to them they let him go: that he then went to an alehouse, where he fell into company with a man who was called John the Painter, and told him that he had left his master, who had stopped his cloaths, desiring him to go with him to fetch them away, to which he consented: that they got privately into the house, where they concealed themselves till one o'clock, and then went into Wolter's chamber: that John the Painter struck the deceased with a piece of wood, upon which the prisoner told him that he had done a very ill thing, and he would not be concerned any farther: that John the Painter took the goods, and set fire to the house, after which they went away together, and being come to his landlord's door, he knocked, and the other gave him the goods.

The improbability of this story was so great, that the Jury did not hesitate to bring him in guilty; in consequence of which, he received sentence of death; after which he ingenuously and fully confessed the crime he was guilty of, and hoped that all persons would take warning by him, and watch and pray, lest they should fall into temptation.

Being told that the dead warrant was brought down to Newgate, he said, "The Lord's will be done. I am ready to die. I am willing to die. Only I beg of God, that I may not, as I deserve, die an eternal death; and though I die here for my most heinous and enormous crimes, yet I may, for the love of Christ, live eternally with him in Heaven."

All the time that he laid under sentence, his behaviour was such as became a penitent sinner; yet sometimes he seemed to be in great despair of salvation, feeling, as he expressed it, that his repentance was not great enough, and therefore he was extremely troubled in his mind, and was afraid that God would not accept him.

This unhappy youth, who was about eighteen years of age, when he came to the place of execution, prayed most fervently, sometimes in English, and sometimes in his own language. The following is his confession, which the Ordinary took in writing from his own mouth, and then reading it twice over to him, he solemnly declared it to be the truth, and signed it with his own hand, desiring that it might be printed.

*The Confession of Herman Strodtman.*

IN the year 1683, or a little before, I was born at Revel in Lifland, and had the happiness to come of a good family; my parents being of some account in the world, and also a godly and religious people, who took great care of my education.

About the year 1694, my father sent me to school to Lubeck, where I continued till Michaelmas 1698. From thence I went to Hamburgh, and staid there till I set out for England. I arrived at London in March following, and (together with one Peter Wolter, who came with me to England) was bound apprentice to Mr. Stein and Mr. Dorien, merchants, and partners in London. Peter Wolter and myself, having been fellow-travellers, and being now fellow-prentices, we lived for some time very friendly and lovingly together, till about August last, when his sister was married to one of our masters, Mr. Dorien. Then he began to be so proud, and so very domineering over me, and abusive to me, that I could not bear it. We had several fallings-out, and he did twice beat me, once before the maids in the kitchen, and at another time in the compting-house; and often complained, and told tales of me to my masters, thereby creating me their ill-will; so that they kept me close at home, and would not give me the same liberty, which my fellow-'prentice and myself before had, of sometimes going abroad for recreation. Upon this account I conceived an implacable hatred against him, and the devil put it into my heart to be revenged of him at any rate. First I designed to do it by poison, having to that purpose mixed some mercury with a certain white powder which he had always in a glass in his chamber, and of which he used to take a dose very often for the scurvy: but it being then winter-time (I think the latter end of December, or beginning of January) I found he had left off taking his powder; and so I might wait long enough before I could see the effects of my poison, if I staid till he took that powder again. Therefore I thought of another way to dispatch him, and this was by stabbing him. And as I was, or thought myself daily abused by him,

so my hatred and spirit of revenge grew hotter against him every day; insomuch that now I came to be apprehensive, that if I continued longer in the house, I could not forbear doing him open mischief, and laying violent hands upon him. Whereupon I desired one of the maids to beg of my maisters to send me to the West-Indies; but they resolving nothing in the matter, and I being in haste about it, shewed myself very uneasy under this uncertainty; and my anger against my fellow-'prentice did so increase, that the Dutch maid took notice of it to me, and gave me very good advice to be meek, patient, and dutiful, which would have been very happy for me if I had taken. But I was under too great temptation to be in any condition of good admonition from friends. The great enemy of my soul was now very busy about me, and would not let me rest till I had executed this damnable design he had put me upon. On Good-Friday morning, my master sending me of an errand, I took from thence opportunity of going to Greenwich, with a design to return home on Saturday; but being now unwilling to kill my fellow-'prentice before he had received the sacrament, which he was to do on Easter day, I went to Greenwich, and on the Saturday sent a letter to my maisters, telling them (what the father of lies had dictated to me) that I was pressed, and was to go to Chatham, and there to be put on board one of the king's ships on Easter Monday. Being still at Greenwich, I was met there by a young man, who knew me, and at his return to London, told my masters that he thought I was not pressed as I pretended. Upon which my master Stein went down to Chatham, to know certainly whether it was so or not, but could not find that any such young man as myself had of late been pressed there, or brought thither.

On Easter day I went to church at Greenwich, both morning and afternoon; but the Lord forgive me, my heart was then very far from being intent on what was good. Towards the evening I came to town, and lay that night at the Dolphin inn, without Bishopsgate; and the next morning returned to Greenwich, and was there, and at Woolwich, up and down thereabout, till the next Tuesday, when I came to town, and lay in Lombard-street, and on Wednesday morning went down again to Greenwich. On Thursday evening I came to town again, and returned to Greenwich no more. Upon this, I went to my masters, and told them by word of mouth, what I had writ to them before, namely, that I was pressed. They said, they could not believe it; for they had made an enquiry into that matter at the place, and found no such thing; and were so angry with me, that they bid me be gone. Upon which I went away, and took a lodging in Moorfields,

and lay there that night and on Friday night; and on Saturday I took other lodgings at the sign of the Sun, an Ale-house in Queen-street, London, Now I had a key to the fore-door of my master's house, which I got made for me a long time before Christmas, by that which was my masters, that I might (unknown to them) go in and out when I pleased; intending at first no other use of it, but to have the liberty of taking my pleasure abroad, oftener than they would allow. But the devil at last taught me another use of this key. For by the help of it, I came to my master's house on Saturday in Easter week, about half an hour past eight at night; and being got in, I first hid myself behind the entry door, upon my hearing a noise of somebody going up stairs. When this was over, as I supposed the way was clear, I went up one pair of stairs first; and entering the room where I used to lie, next the compting-house, I went to the tinderbox, struck fire, and lighted a candle. Then I took my masters dark lantern that was there also, and went up another pair of stairs, and having got into an empty room, adjoining to Peter Wolter's chamber, I shut myself in there, where I was no sooner placed but I heard a noise, as if somebody was coming up. Upon which I put out my candle, and some time after fell asleep. About twelve o'clock being awake, and supposing that Peter Wolter and the rest of the family were a bed and fast asleep, after I had been some time hearkening, and perceived all was very quiet in the house, I went down again to my room one pair of stairs, where the tinder box lay; and having lighted a candle a second time, entered the compting-house, and there took out several notes and bills, and some money; I then went up again two pair of stairs first, carrying with me a certain piece of wood where with they used to beat tobacco, which I found in my chamber. When I was got up stairs, I sprung into Peter Wolter's chamber, and coming to his bed-side, opened the curtains, and, with my tobacco-beater, knocked him on the head, giving four or five blows on the left side of it, and another on the right. When I had given him the first blow, then my heart failed me; yet being afraid to be discovered by the noise he made with groaning, I followed close the first blow with three or four others, and then had not courage enough to give him any more. Therefore to stop his groans, I took his pillow, and laying it on his mouth, pressed it hard with my elbow, as I sat on the side of his bed; and by this means stopt his breath, and stifled him. And thus it was I most barbarously murdered this poor creature, whom I intended (had this failed) to have shot to death, having brought with me two pistols ready charged for that wicked purpose. The Lord forgive this sin ! - When I perceived that he was quite dead, I proceeded to search his breeches and chest of drawers,

and took a note of 20 l. with some money, out of his pocket, which, with what I had taken out of the compting-house amounted to 8, or 9 l. Then I packed up some of the linen and woollen cloaths, and having made a bundle of them, went down with it one pair of stairs, and threw it out of the window, into an uninhabited house.

Then I went up stairs again, and having cut my candle in two (both pieces being lighted) I set one in the chest of drawers, and the other on a chair close by the bed-curtains, intending to have burnt the house, in order to conceal by this heinous fact, the other two of theft and murder, which I had now most barbarously committed. Then I went through a window into the house where I had flung my bundle, and staying there till about five in the morning, I went away with that bundle to my lodgings in Queen-street, where I put on clean cloaths, and then went to the Sweeds church in Trinity-lane. There I heard the bill of thanks read which my masters had put up for their own and their neighbours preservation; at which my heart sunk down, and I had a great check of conscience, and could not forbear shedding tears, which I hid (all I could) from an acquaintance of my mafterSj who was in the fame pew with me, and told me that my masters house had like to have been burnt the last night, it being set on fire by an accident yet unknown; but the mischief which it might have done, through God's mercy, was happily prevented by the Dutch maid, who first smelt the fire, and saw the smoak, and thereupon called her master, and fetched a pail of water, by which means it was presently put out.

This he told me as we came out of church, and at parting we appointed to meet again at two o'clock upon the outer-walks of the Royal Exchange, in order to go together to the Dutch church in the Savoy. I went to the Exchange accordingly, and waited a while, but he not coming I went alone to Stepney church. After church I walked in the fields towards Mile-end, where I saw at a distance, two Dutchmen that were hanged in chains. Then I was struck with some remorse and fears, and said to myself, "Thou may'st come to be one of them, and be made a like spectacle to the world." As I went on I came to Blackwall, and there saw another person (a Captain of a French pirate) hanged in chains in that place. Then the same thoughts again returned upon me, viz. that it might come to my lot to have such a shameful end. Thus providence having led me to those dismal and ghastly objects, I came back to my lodging with heavy thoughts, but not at all awakened to repentance; for I was in a spiritual slumber; still under the power and dominion of the devil, so as my heart did not relent at what I had done; but on the contrary,

that if I had failed of murdering my Fellow‘prentice in his bed, I would have destroyed him some other way; and particularly designed to have pistoled him, as he was going for his masters letters to the post-house, or at his going back from thence, as I had also once laid in wait under the arch in Austin-friars to have done it, if he had come out at that time. Being come back from my distracted walks to my lodgings at the Sun Ale-house, I supped and went to bed, after I had said my prayers; but, God knows, I was then in a very unfit condition to pray: but the Lord has been infinitely gracious and merciful to me, in giving me a heart, as well as a mouth to pray; for which his glorious name be eternally praised.

The next day, being the second Monday after Easter, I went in the morning to the White Horse-inn without Cripplegate, to receive money upon one of those bills I had stolen out of my masters house, namely, the 20 l. bill; but the man who should have paid it, being gone out, I was desired to come again about twelve which I did: in the mean time I went to a Goldsmith that I knew in Lombard-street, who would have sent me that morning with some money to his sifter, who was at boarding-school at Greenwich; but I told him I could not go before the next day, and then I would. Before I came away from him he told me, that a young man (one Green) had been there enquiring after me. Upon which I desired him to tell that young man, if he came again, that I would come back to look for him there about one. Then I hasted to the White-horse again, and found the party, but he told me he had no Orders to pay the money upon that bill. With this answer I returned to my lodgings, and when I had dined, I went again to the Goldsmith’s in Lombard-street, where I found my master Stein with another gentleman, and my countryman Green. My master asked me whether I would go willingly to his house, or be carried thither by two porters; I said I would go. So after some questions about the horrid facts I had committed at his house, and my denying of them, I was searched, and the bill of 20 l. which was in the deceased's pocket, was found upon me. Then he asked me where I lay; I told him in Moor-fields ; we went there to my former lodgings; but the people of the house told him I did not lie there now.

By this my master finding I was unwilling to let him know where I had lain, or how I had disposed of those things which I had stolen out of his house, promised me, if I would confess, no harm should come to me; for he would take care to send me presently beyond sea, Upon this I freely told him all the truth; where I lay, and where those goods of his were. He soon after took coach, and carried me to my lodgings in Queen-street, where he received the bills, cloaths,



money, and all that I had thus stolen, and then carried me to Sir Humphry Edwin, who, upon his examination of me, and my own confession of all those facts, did (most justly, I must acknowledge it, and the providence of God in it) commit me to Newgate. This only I will say, that had I been tried the first sessions after my being there, I would have pleaded guilty, as I was advised to do by the Minister of Newgate, and others my spiritual teachers and good people. But I was taught, by some persons in Newgate, to deny all upon my trial, they framing for me, and industriously teaching me, the story of John the Painter, and all that stuff, which I then alledged at the bar for my defence: all which I now confess to be utterly false in every part of it, I not knowing any such person as John the Painter in the world ; and none being privy to or aiding me in those hellish crimes of mine, but the devil who had put me upon them. And this I do not only confess with sincerity, but heartily repent of, and with the greatest sorrow and humility beg God's pardon for my having endeavoured, with presumptuous lies, to conceal what God would have brought to light, and openly punish me for in this world, that I might (I hope) avoid eternal punishment in the next. I therefore give him the greatest thanks I am capable of, for the time and opportunity, and grace he has given me to repent, and to be reconciled to him, through the blood of my Saviour Jesus Christ: and I earnestly pray him to bless all those who have been instrumental to my apprehension and condemnation, as well as of my conversion : to bless the King with a long life, and prosperous reign upon earth, and to give him at last the immortal crown of glory: to bless all my judges, whose justice to me I again acknowledge, and my unjust denial to them, of the facts I stood charged with before them, I humbly ask their pardon for. And I pray God in my heart, to remember his mercy to my poor father (if yet alive) and my sisters and brothers, with all the rest of my friends and relations: to bless and prosper my masters and their family ; to pardon all my enemies (if I have any) and pour down his blessings upon all good people of God; upon his church, these nations, and the whole world; and to have infinite mercy upon my sinfull foul.

This I implore on, the bended knees of my heart, overwhelmed with grief, and bathed in tears of a sincere repentance; acknowledging that if God was no more merciful to me than I was to that poor creature whom I barbarously murdered, I should be undone to all eternity. But he is infinitely good and gracious, who will not suffer my foul to perish. Therefore I will magnify him as long as I live; and within a few hours sing with the blessed saints above, the

joyful song of deliverance and of praise, and hallelujah to him my heavenly Father, and to my dear Redeemer, for evermore. Amen and Amen.

Newgate,  
June 17,1701.

HERMAN STRODTMAN.

He was executed at Tyburn on the 18th of June, 1701.