

Reported in Bell's life in Sydney and Sporting Review  
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### **ATTEMPTED MURDER AT MARYPORT -**

On Wednesday a most diabolical-but we are glad to say,'- unsuccessful-attempt' to murder was made in the public streets of Maryport. Mr.Fleming Coward, formerly locker of Customs at Maryport, deliberately fired two pistols loaded with ball, at Captain McNeil, in the open street. The first shot did not take effect, though the two men stood close together; and hence the second, which was attended with much more serious results. The ball entered the right side, and the Captain immediately staggered and fell. A crowd soon collected, the unfortunate man was removed home, and medical aid at once procure. It was ascertained that the wound was not of a very dangerous character. The bullet after entering the side, struck the breast bone, which was slightly splintered, and finally, longed under the arm on the other side, from whence it was extracted. After the occurrence Mr. Coward made no attempt to escape, but walked about in the streets until he was apprehended by Mr. Haigh, the superintendent of police.

The position in life occupied by the victim and the intended assassin has caused the greatest interest to be excited by the circumstances, apart from its fearful nature. Family intrigue, love, jealousy, conjugal infidelity, and other similar ingredients, have contributed to bring about the tragic occurrence. The victim, Captain James McNeil, we understand, is a considerable ship owner, and having by industry and perseverance realised a competency, had retired from active participation in the perils of the deep. Since retiring from the service he has resided at Maryport, where he was generally, if not universally respected, as a man of ordinarily inoffensive habits. At the time of the said occurrence, his wife was confined by indisposition, and, no doubt, she suffered severely from the shock which the intelligence would cause to her feelings.

The culprit, Fleming Coward, is a powerfully built man of about forty years of ago. He is the son of Mr. Fleming Coward, formerly collector of Customs at the port of Workington; but who for a number of years previous to his death fulfilled the duties of landing

waiter at Londonderry, in Ireland. His ill-fated son has been twice married. His first wife was the daughter of Captain, Dixon, of High Church street, Whitehaven. His second and present wife was a Miss McNeil, sister of Captain McNeil, the victim of the outrage we are now called upon to record. Coward, it appears, was in comparatively easy circumstances, as he became possessed of some property in Whitehaven, in right of his first wife. Up to about two years ago he filled the situation of locker in the Customs at Maryport. He was then removed to Liverpool, it appears he did not like the change, and he turned his attention to emigration. Having finally determined on seeking to advance his fortune in Australia, he set about providing for the comfort of his wife and family, until such time as he should be in a position to send for them to join him in his new home. He opened a provision store, in which, to all appearances, his wife would be able to obtain a livelihood for the time.

After Mr. Coward's departure for Australia it appears that his wife, from some cause or other, was induced to change the plans which had been laid down by her husband. Acting, it is reported, on the advice of her brother, Captain McNeil, she broke up the provision establishment for the purpose of following her husband. Along with another married sister (whose husband had also preceded her to the "diggings") she took a passage for herself and children in the emigrant ship Lord George Bentinck, Captain Robinson, commander. After her arrival in Australia circumstances of a delicate nature occurred which so affected her husband's happiness that he declined to live with her. He ascertained that during the voyage out an adulterous intimacy had sprung up between the captain and his wife, which ended in the seduction of the latter. What amount of evidence the unfortunate man had of his wife's infidelity it is of course impossible to say, but it was sufficiently strong to effectually ruin his peace of mind. His feelings were so outraged that he determined to return home immediately for the express purpose of being revenge on the persons who had contributed in any way to his ruin. It appears that he suspected that his brother-in-law, Captain McNeil, was the principal cause of his wife breaking up her establishment in Liverpool, the stock of which was sold at a great sacrifice. He appeared to have formed

the determination of extorting from Captain McNeil £500, being the amount he alleged which had been sacrificed by the sale.

Since his return to England he has resided in Whitehaven, where he has a married sister; and though he has frequently sought to obtain an interview with his brother-in-law, his endeavours were without success until the day above stated. On Tuesday afternoon he left Whitehaven for Maryport, at which time, we are informed, his appearance was rather wild and haggard. Having provided himself with two pistols both loaded with ball, he went to Captain McNeil's house, in High-street, a little after 2 o'clock in the afternoon. He insisted on seeing the captain, and the latter, in order to prevent his sick wife being disturbed by any altercation which might take place, came out of the house into the street. On the captain leaving the door Coward took up a position so as to prevent him returning into the house, and demanded £500 from him, as compensation for the loss he had sustained by the breaking up of his house in Liverpool. It is said that Captain McNeil refused to make any reply, and the upshot was that Mr. Coward drew forth a pistol which he had concealed in his pocket, and shot Captain McNeil. The prisoner was removed to Carlisle jail on Thursday. We understand that he only expressed his regret that the bullets were not fatal, in which case he should have met his fate cheerfully, as life had become a burden to him.

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