

# KILLED OVER HALF DOLLAR.

*Murder Results from Fight  
About Small Sum.*

*Kerns the Victim of Heart's  
Too Good Aim.*

*Child Sees Father Shot Down  
by His Adversary.*

As the result of a quarrel over 50 cents, J. W. Heart, proprietor of a rooming house at No. 907 Maple avenue, shot Thomas Kerns, one of his tenants, at 8:20 o'clock last night, inflicting a wound which resulted in the death of the latter forty minutes later.

Heart was arrested immediately after the shooting; he did not deny that he had fired the shot, but asserted that he had acted in self-defense. On the other hand, members of the family of the victim claim that the shooting was unprovoked, and premeditated, and that when the shot was fired Kerns was unarmed and trying to leave the room.

The only eyewitness of the killing was the ten-year-old son of Kerns, and although his statement last night was, of course, favorable to his father, the child was so greatly excited that he hardly knew what he was saying, and told various stories. Mrs. Heart saw the fight that caused the shooting.

Kerns was a plumber, and with his wife and three children had roomed in an upper flat in the house owned by Heart for about a week. Owing to some dispute between them, Kerns told his landlord that he intended to move, and last night was the time set for him to vacate the premises. What the trouble was is not known to the members of their families, but there was an extremely bitter feeling between the men, the wives taking up the quarrel of their husbands, so that the relations between the two families were anything but pleasant.

When it came to a settlement of the rental Heart demanded one amount while Kerns asserted that he did not owe that much, the difference being 50 cents. Heart demanded the full sum, and although he accepted the money tendered by Kerns he again asked for the 50 cents which he claimed to be due him. This Kerns refused to pay, and asserted that he would not be held up by any man.

The Kerns family had their personal effects packed and were ready to move last night, when Heart went to their apartments to secure a settlement. The two men met in the kitchen of the flat occupied by Kerns, and there a violent quarrel occurred which was witnessed by William Kerns and Henry Kerns, aged 8 and 10, respectively. Heart left the place in a rage, declaring that he would get a policeman and "have the whole family arrested," as he expressed it.

## THE FATAL FIGHT.

This quarrel occurred early in the evening, and soon afterward William Kerns, the elder son, went off, leaving his father and little brother there. Heart, instead of securing the services of an officer, returned to the room and again demanded a settlement. Then occurred the fight which resulted in the shooting.

According to the excited statements of the child of Kerns, his father was not to blame for the fight. The child stated that Heart entered the room in a threatening manner, and demanded his money, which Kerns at once tendered him; then when Kerns tried to leave the room with a small valise, Heart shot him down.

## THE WIFE'S STATEMENT.

This version of the tragedy does not agree with that given by Mrs. Heart, who was directly behind her husband, and who saw the beginning of the fight. She stated that when her husband entered the room and asked Kerns for the money, Kerns began cursing him and without provocation attacked him. The two men grappled and there was a violent struggle during which Kerns seized a case-knife from the table and began slashing at Heart. The men fought all around the room, and Kerns finally threw Heart off his feet and was bearing him to the floor. At that moment Mrs. Heart ran screaming from the door, and a moment later she heard the sound of a shot. In less than a minute her husband came to his own room and told his wife that he had shot Kerns, adding that he was compelled to do it in defense of his own life.

## WOULD HAVE LYNCHED HIM.

Heart locked himself in his own room and awaited the coming of the police. It is well that he did so, for had he been in the hall when William Kerns and several of his friends returned they would undoubtedly have killed him.

The sound of the shot aroused the other inmates of the house, and several of them ran to the assistance of the wounded man. They found him lying on his face in his kitchen, unable to speak, and the blood gushing from his abdomen. Somebody telephoned for the police ambulance, and it was sent to the place with all speed. Detective Quinn and Patrolman Parker accompanied the wagon, and found the street blocked with people, and a dozen or more men were running through the hallways of the house looking for Heart. These men plainly told the officers that if they found Heart they would kill him on sight. They were led by William Kerns, who begged some of his friends to get a revolver for him so that he could kill the man who had shot his father. One man did produce a revolver, but was disarmed before he could use it.

The officers found Heart locked in his room, and as soon as he was satisfied who they were he opened the door and submitted to arrest. He was promptly handcuffed, and as the officers started to take him out of the house, a party of men in the hallway made a dash for him, but the officers drew their revolvers and stood off the crowd. Parker took the prisoner again into the room while Quinn held the crowd back. Several men tried to rush past him, but he knocked one man down and the others retreated.

Meantime Parker had taken Heart out the rear door of the house toward Santee street. At the door he was confronted by three men who tried to attack the handcuffed prisoner, but Parker covered them with his revolver and made them stand back. He then ran with his prisoner to a car and soon had him in the City Jail.

## KERNS NEVER SPOKE.

When Kerns was discovered by other inmates of the house he tried to speak, but was unable to do so. He was placed upon a bed and Dr. H. S. Crane summoned. He found the man almost beyond human aid, and although he did all that could be done for him, Kerns became gradually

weaker until 9 o'clock, when he died. His seventeen-year-old daughter and the doctor were alone with him when the end came. The wound was from a .32-caliber revolver bullet, which penetrated the abdomen, piercing the stomach and intestines and rupturing one of the larger blood vessels. Death was caused by internal hemorrhage.

Mrs. Kerns was prostrated by the shock and required the services of a physician. She repeatedly declared that her husband had been killed deliberately, without cause and said that he had never had any trouble with anybody until last night.

The Coroner was notified and by his orders the body of the victim was taken to Breese Bros.' morgue, where an inquest will be held at a time yet to be determined.

## HEART'S STATEMENT.

When taken to the Police Station Heart was cool and collected. He stated that he had acted in self-defense and that an impartial investigation would prove the truth of his assertion. Heart exhibited several slight cuts on the face and one on the lobe of his left ear in support of the statement that his assailant had attacked him with a knife. There was a bullet hole in the left side of his sack coat, also, and a cut in the celluloid collar he had worn.

Heart made a brief statement as follows: "Kerns was trying to get away without paying the full amount of his bill. He attacked me with a knife and was bearing me down when I was forced to shoot. In doing this I fired through the flap of my coat; you can see the bullet hole here. I would never have fired if I had not thought my life was in danger."

"After the shooting I locked myself in a room, not to avoid arrest but to save further trouble."

"I came here from Orange county a short time ago and I purchased the rooming-house only about a week ago."