



Murder of Jeff Evilsizer

NewYork Herald Nov 24, 1883 A Witness Out of The Way A Nephew Shoots An Uncle To Prevent His Appearance Against His Father

St Louis, Mo., Nov 23, 1883

William Miller, a young man about twenty-two years old, is in jail at Richmond, charged with the murder of his uncle, Jeff Evilsizer. The crime was committed last Monday night in what is known as the Mud Creek Settlement, or Millerville, a locality remote from telegraph or railroad. On that night about nine o'clock after Jeff Evilsizer and family had retired, somebody outside the house called. The old man answered without opening the door, asking "Who is there?". The reply came "John Evilsizer" (Jeff's brother). The old man then opened the door and peered out into the darkness, but could see no one. He stood there nearly a minute, when suddenly there was a flash, a report, and the old man staggered back into the room and fell on the bed. A bullet had penetrated his abdomen, inflicting a wound that proved fatal twenty-four hours later. Before he died he stated he saw, by the flash of the pistol, that the shot was fired by Willie Miller. This news did not reach Richmond until Thursday morning, and when, about noon on that day, young Miller rode into Richmond on horseback he was arrested. He denied all knowledge of the killing. Thomas Miller, the father of the young man, has also been arrested. The Evilsizers and the Millers, though related, have been on bad terms for some time. There is a charge of horse stealing against old man Miller, and the case was to be heard this week at Richmond, with Jeff Evilsizer as the principal witness. The Millers have made repeated efforts to beg or buy off Evilsizer from testifying, and it is now thought the killing was done to get a dangerous witness out of the way. The two fami-

lies are very wealthy, both owning large and well stocked farms, besides other property.

NewYork Herald Nov 25, 1883 A Wife's Thrilling Story The Murder of Jeff Evilsizer Described-Lynching of Miller Probable

St Louis, Mo., Nov 24, 1883

William Miller, the nephew of the murdered man Evilsizer, of Richmond, Clay County, stands a pretty fair chance of being hanged, either by due process of law or otherwise, as the first sign of anything like quibbling, legal dodging or delay of any kind, will prove the signal for action on the part of people who claim to be prompted by a higher law than that enacted by the Legislature and administered by the courts. That this is recognized to be the case is evidenced by the fact that the Prosecuting Attorney has sent a number of messengers out into the Mud Creek District, where the murder was committed, to assure the people in a semi-official manner that the law will be promptly administered in this case.

THE WIFE'S STORY OF THE CRIME

Mrs. Evilsizer, wife of the murdered man, tells the following story of her terrible experience on the night of the killing.

"We had spent what seems to me now one of our most pleasant evenings, and been in bed about half an hour when some one hollered out in front of the house. I asked who was there. "John Evilsizer" was the reply. "What do you want, you good for nothing thing, this time of night", I inquired. Then I asked Jeff to get up and let the boy in. My husband went to the door and opened it. I heard the person on the outside step upon the stone steps for his boots scraped on them. "He's dressed up" I said to myself: "Somebody must be sick. The next moment the pistol flashed and

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my husband staggered back on the bed. He begged me to light the lamp and I did, so after waiting a few minutes for fear they would break into the house. The light soon went out, for we were out of oil. My husband raised his shirt and I saw he was shot in the right side. I said, "Who could have done this thing." He answered, "Willie Miller." All night he lay there writhing, shrieking, and calling for water, which I gave him. Oh, how I prayed for him not to die!

THE ASSASSIN LINGERING TO COMPLETE HIS WORK

"Three times I heard some one come around in their stocking feet and listen. I knew they were outside, and I expected they would come in and shouted for help, but nobody came. The nearest neighbor was a half mile away, and nobody passed along the road."

The Grand Jury has the case in hand and has examined a large number of witnesses. The proceedings are supposed to be secret, but the evidence leaks out almost as fast as the witnesses make their statements. It is claimed that enough evidence has been given to show plans for the killing of two other men, who are witnesses against Thomas Miller, the father of the alleged murderer, who is charged with horse stealing. The excitement and interest in this case are due to the fact that all the parties are very wealthy and prominent people.

WILLIE MILLER INDICTED

The Grand Jury at Richmond this evening found an indictment charging young Miller with murder. His is in jail, and the utmost precautions are taken to prevent lynching, and the jail is strongly guarded.

St Louis Globe-Democrat Nov 26, 1883 Issue 189 Col G

Evilsizer's Assassin

The Jail at Richmond Strongly Guarded, to Prevent the Lynching of Miller

Richmond, MO., Nov 25- All of last night lights glimmered from the windows of the residence portion of the County Jail, and occasionally a shadow was thrown across the curtains, showing the occupants of the room to be more or less restless, as if expecting something, their gestures being discerned from without. The occupants of the rooms were determined men, bent on resisting a mob. The jailer's family had been removed to a neighbor's house. The same condition of affairs exists tonight. At about 1 o'clock, or soon after midnight the prisoners of the jail, who are five in number, were aroused by persons peeping into the windows, both front and rear, and called to Col. Warrenstaff, the jailer,

when the men disappeared. Col. Warrenstaff found the prisoners greatly excited, except Miller, who was removed to the dungeon in the second story of the jail when the alarm was given. Mr Warrenstaff reassured them, saying that he would surrender his life in their protection, and as no further noise was heard, the fears of the majority of the prisoners were quieted. This was not the case with Miller, however. When the others felt alarmed he was not frightened, but when their fears were allayed, he became very nervous, praying the Sheriff not to let a mob kill him. He said the deathlike stillness boded him no good. He will be kept in the dungeon hereafter. This cell is quite strong, and is just at the head of a narrow flight of steps leading from the street door to the second story. The cell he formerly occupied is a very weak one, and an able-bodied man if permitted to work uninterrupted would be able to break into it in a couple of hours alone. Canterbury, one of the prisoners who is to be tried on a charge of rape, and who has already served seven years in the Ohio Penitentiary for robbery, says of the men peeping into the cell windows: He saw that one of them wore a cap, and that when they saw they had been discovered they crowded close to the walls of the building to keep from being seen. Today the stillness was ominous, and tonight in little knots of four and five on the different corners and at the hotels and restaurants, the situation is being discussed. One gentleman who knows whereof he speaks, if any one can know in a case like this, says no violence will be done, yet that trouble is even now anticipated is evidenced from the fact that one of the Constables of this township says he will surrender his office before he will help guard the jail. "I don't want to be killed," he said, "particularly by old army comrades, and if the men from the neighborhood of the murder come after Miller they won't leave the jail without him." The trial of the elder Miller for grand Larceny come up tomorrow. This is the case from which the murder of Evilsizer, it is supposed, was the outgrowth; and while tonight may pass quietly, a strong guard will be kept up, and should Miller be convicted, it is argued that it will tend to further incite the feeling against his son.

St Louis Globe-Democrat June 10, 1884

Criminal Calendar

Circumstances Connected with the Murder of Jeff Evilsizer

Arrest of Ex-United States Marshall Hall-Man, Woman and Pistol Missing-Safely Incarcerated

Richmond, MO June 9- A notable murder case was called up today in the Ray County Circuit Court. Public opinion is strong against William Miller, who is accused

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of killing his uncle, Jeff Evilsizer, and at one time there was a good deal of apprehension about an attack on the jail. Bad roads, as much as anything, exercised a restraining influence on the excited farmers of the vicinity of the assassination, and they did not carry out their threats.

Evilsizer was called to his door in the middle of the night of November 19. When he asked who was there a voice replied, "Johnnie Miller." As soon as the door was opened the farmer was shot through the stomach. He lingered in great agony, his wife being deterred from giving any alarm by the noises kept up outside, supposedly by the assassins. The man was reticent at first about naming his murderer, but finding that he must die, he told his wife and others that Willie Miller had killed him, adding "I recognized him by his big white hat." It was two days after the commission of the deed before much was known of it in Richmond, the county seat. On Monday night the foul deed was done, and on Wednesday evening young Miller rode into Richmond and stopped at the Wasson House. To a question put by the correspondent of the *Globe-Democrat*, he said: "I left home last Tuesday morning at daylight and have just got back from Waverly. I don't know of any news except there was a fire down our way." He knew nothing of the murder, he said, and proceeded to tell in detail where he had been. From his home he had ridden to the Lexington ferry, twenty-five miles, had crossed the Missouri, and had gone on to Waverly, twenty-three miles further.

A HORSE TRADE

For the motive of the crime it is necessary to go back to a horse trade which took place in Lexington on the 10th of April 1880. These feuds in farming communities smolder for years without dying out, and when the basis of the trouble is horseflesh, they seem to take on their most deadly character. On the day mentioned, Dr F.D. Beers, of Waverly, was at a livery stable in Lexington, where he met a man who traded to him a brown mare for a roan horse. The man represented himself to the Doctor as a renter living at Hardin, in Ray County, and stated that he wished to trade the mare to wean its colt, which had been left at home. This was on a Saturday, and less than a week later the Doctor left Lexington to pay a visit to a patient near Richmond. He visited a farmer, named Frazier, to whom he traded the mare he had got from the stranger at Lexington. The animal had been in Frazier's possession about three months when Evilsizer saw it. He claimed it was his, saying it had been stolen from him. Proving the mare to be his, Frazier turned the animal over to Evilsizer. Some six or eight days afterward Dr Beers paid another visit to Mr. Frazier. When the later told him of the mare being taken from him by Evilsizer, the Doctor then visited Hardin,

Richmond and other points, searching for the man with whom he had originally traded. At Hardin he learned that the representations made to him at Lexington were false, nothing being known of the man there, though he had claimed that place as his home. In September following Dr. Beers was at a Mr. Oester's to whom he told the circumstances already detailed, adding a description of the man. Oester readily recognized him from this description, and the next day he and the Doctor rode to Thomas Miller's house. Miller was at work in a field, and when they had got in speaking distance the Doctor asked Miller if he knew him. Miller said he did; that he had been wanting to see him ever since Frazier had been obliged to surrender the mare. He invited the visitors to dismount, and when near the house asked Dr Beers how the affair could be fixed up. On the terms that Miller would not be prosecuted if he paid for the trouble and what had been lost, a settlement was affected with Dr. Beers and the matter was dropped. The Grand Jury, however, took up the case, and Miller was indicted for stealing the mare. Just before this case was to come before the court, (Dr Beers stated to your correspondent), Miller left \$50 with F. R. Gautier, a lively man at...to be given him if he would not testify against him. Mr Gautier gave the money to a daughter of Dr Beers, but when she tendered it to her father, telling him how she came by it, he refused it, and it was returned to Gautier. This case was to be tried last November, and of course Beers and Evilsizer would have been the principal witnesses.

THE DEFENSE WAS A CURIOUS ONE

Jeff Evilsizer was Miller's brother-in-law, Miller says. Jeff gave him the mare for debt, and that afterward, as Mrs Evilsizer claimed the animal, Jeff swore that he had not done so. The mare was taken from the stable at night, and Miller alleges that Jeff was privy to the taking and selling of the mare, but afterward changed his position from fear of his wife and replevined it. Mrs Evilsizer, on the other hand, states that the feeling of the Millers toward her husband was very bitter, and that threats had been made against him in regard to this case; that instead of her husband owing the elder Miller they held a note against the younger one, on which there was a balance yet unpaid. This is the horse case. The theory on which the murder is accounted for is that young Miller had undertaken to put both Evilsizer and Beers out of the way before his father's trial. Evilsizer was killed, and within a few hours of that event young Miller was on his way to Waverly. At that place he saw Gautier, and manifested considerable anxiety to find Beers. He was asked by Gautier if his name was not Miller, and he denied his identity, but finally acknowledged his name.

EVLSIZER NEWSLETTER

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Murder-Continued

IN PURSUIT

When he learned that Dr Beers had left Waverly for Richmond, to testify in the larceny case, he got his horse and rapidly rode out of town, taking the road to Lexington. Seven miles or so from Waverly he overtook the Doctor, who was traveling in a buggy, but was not alone- a Mr Pickett, who, only last February, was threateningly warned to be quiet by the Millers, accompanying him. Miller rode on. When he reached Lexington, he stopped a short time, and at 3 o'clock that afternoon he started for Richmond, nine miles away, which he did not reach until nearly 9 o'clock that night. It did not take him so long to travel the distance between the two points, and it is part of the theory that as he went to Waverly to "finish" Dr. Beers, and was unsuccessful, he hid in the brush between the junction and the river, thinking the doctor would continue his journey through to Richmond in the buggy in which he left Waverly. Here again young Miller was foiled, the buggy being left a Lexington, and the doctor taking the train for Richmond the next morning. Miller is an honest looking country boy and when arrested at Richmond after he had been in town all night and about the Court House during the morning, he manifested no uneasiness and did nothing to betray

himself. The only time uneasiness was shown by him was when active preparations were made to defend the old stone fortress called a jail against an expected lynching party.

William Miller was the son of Thomas and Melinda Miller found in the 1880 Census of Ray Co, MO. Thomas was a brother to Elizabeth, wife of Jeff Evilsizer. They are found in the 1880 census: Ray Co, Grape Grove, MO HH125

Thomas Miller 42 Ire

Melinda J. Miller 38 MO

William M. Miller 18 MO (man who murdered his Uncle Jeff Evilsizer)

Ann E. Miller 16 MO

Mary E. Miller 14 MO

John A. Miller 11 MO

Hissie M. Miller 8 MO

Robert S. Miller 6 MO

The irony of this story is Thomas Jefferson's wife Elizabeth Miller was also murdered in 1891.