

# HOLMES CONFESSES 27 MURDERS

THE MOST AWFUL STORY OF MODERN TIMES TOLD BY THE FIEND IN HUMAN SHAPE.

Every Detail of His Fearful Crimes Told by the Man Who Admits He Is Turning Into the Shape of the Devil.

## THE TALE OF THE GREATEST CRIMINAL IN HISTORY

The following statement was written by me in Philadelphia County Prison for the Philadelphia Inquirer as a true & accurate confession of all particular & general crimes I have made or made me. I make it fully apprehending all the horrors it contains show it condemns me before the world.

Signed H. H. Holmes

Phil 9<sup>th</sup> 1896

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During the past few months the details have been repeatedly expressed that I make a detailed confession of all the graver crimes that I have committed. I have been tried for murder, convicted, sentenced, and the first step of my execution upon May seventh, namely, the reading of my death warrant, has been carried out, and it now seems a fitting time, if ever, to make known the details of the twenty-seven murders, of which it would be useless to say I am not guilty, in the face of the overwhelming amount of proof that has been brought together, not only in one but in each and every case; and because in this confession I speak only of cases that have been investigated and of no others, I trust it will not give rise to a supposition that I am still guilty of the murders which I am withholding.

To those inclined to think thus, I will say that the detectives have gone over my entire life, hardly a day or an act has escaped their closest scrutiny, and to judge that I am guilty of the murders which I am withholding, they have traced out to cast discredit upon their work. So marvelous has been the success of these men into whose hands the proving of my guilt was given, that as I look back upon their work it seems almost impossible that men gifted with only human intelligence could have been so skillful, and I feel that I can here call attention to what the prosecution at the close of my trial was denied the pleasure of stating, concerning their ability, though no words of mine can fittingly express what the world at large owes to these imperial and unflinching representatives, and more especially to Assistant District Attorney Barlow and Detective Frank Geyer and to O. La Forrest Perry, of the Philadelphia Mutual Life Association of Philadelphia; for it is principally owing to their unerring judgment, skill and perseverance that in a few days I am to be forever placed beyond the power of committing other, and perhaps, of more heinous crimes. Surely justice, if attended by such servants as these could no longer, in the sense of making mistakes, be appropriately portrayed as being blind.

I am moved to make this confession for a variety of reasons, but among them are not those of bravado or a desire to parade my wrongdoings before the public gaze, and he who reads the following lines will, I beg, make a distinction between such motives and a determination upon my part to enter plainly and minutely into the details of the case without favor or bias. And having done so have chosen to make it public by publishing it in THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER.

A word as to the motives or causes that have led to the commission of these many crimes and I will proceed to the most difficult and distasteful task of my life, the setting forth in its horrid nakedness the record of the premeditated killing of twenty-seven human beings and the unsuccessful attempts to take the lives of others, thus branding myself as the most detestable criminal of modern times—a task so hard and distasteful that beside it the certainty that in a few days I am to be hanged by the neck until I am dead seems but a puny thing.

Acquired homicidal mania, all other causes, save the occasional opportunity

for pecuniary gain having by others been excluded for me, is the only constant cause, and in advancing it at this time I do not do so with the expectation of a mitigation of public condemnation, or that it will in any way reach in my favor. Had this been my intention I should have considered it at the time of my trial, and had it used as my defense.

All criminologists who have examined me here seem to be unanimous in the opinions they have formed, although one inexplicable condition presents itself, viz: that while committing the crimes these symptoms were not present, but commenced to develop after my arrest.

Ten years ago I was thoroughly examined by four men of marked ability and by the pronounced being both mentally and physically a normal and healthy man. To-day I have every attribute of a degenerate—a moral idiot. It is possible that the crimes, instead of being the result of these abnormal conditions, are in themselves the occasion of the degeneracy.

Even at the time of my arrest in 1894 no defects were noticeable under the searching Bertillon system of measurements to which I was subjected, but later, and more noticeably within the past few months, these defects have increased with startling rapidity, as it made known to me by each succeeding examination until I have become thankful that I am no longer allowed a glass with which to note my rapidly deteriorating condition, though nature, ever kind, provides in this, as in the ordinary forms of insanity where the sufferer believes himself always entertained and called to my attention, I do not notice my infirmity nor suffer therefrom. The principal defects that have thus developed and which are all established signs of degeneracy, are a decided prominence upon one side of my head and a corresponding diminution upon the other side; a marked deficiency of one side of my nose and of one ear, together with an abnormal increase of each upon the opposite side; a difference of one and one-half inches in the length of my arms and an equal shortening of one leg from knee to heel; also a most malignant distortion of one side of my face and of one eye, so marked and terrible that in writing of it for publication, I feel that I am doing a disservice to the public, although I was a ward at the time to conceal it as best I could, described that side of my face as marked by a deep line of crime and being that of a devil—so apparent that an expert criminologist in the employ of the United States Government, who had never previously seen me said within thirty seconds after entering my cell: "I know you are guilty."

Would it not, then, be the height of folly for me to die without speaking, if only for the purpose of justifying these scientific deductions and accrediting what is due to those to whom

society owes so much for bringing me to justice?

The first taking of human life that is attributed to me is in the case of Dr. Robert Leacock, of New Baltimore, Mich., a friend and former schoolmate. I knew that his life was insured for a large sum and after enticing him to Chicago I killed him by giving him an overwhelming dose of laudanum. My subsequently taking his dead body from place to place in and about Grand Rapids, Mich., as has been so often printed heretofore, and the risk and excitement attendant upon the collection of the forty thousand dollars of insurance, were very insignificant matters compared with the torturing thought that I had taken human life. This, it will be understood, was before, by constant wrongdoing, I had become wholly deaf to the promptings of conscience, for prior to this death, which occurred in 1886, I beg to be believed in stating that I had never sinned so heavily either by thought or deed. Later, like the man-eating tiger of the tropical jungle, whose appetite for blood has once been aroused, I roamed about the world seeking whom I could destroy. Think of the awful list that follows. Twenty-seven lives, men and women, young girls and innocent children, blotted out by one monster's hand, and you, my reader of a tender and delicate nature, will do well to read no further, for I will in no way spare myself, and he who reads to the end, if he be

charitable, will in the words of the District Attorney at my trial, when the evidence of all these many crimes had been collected and placed before him by his trusty assistants, exclaim: "God, help such a man!" If uncharitable or only just will he not rather say: "May he be utterly damned," and that it is almost sufficient to cause one to doubt the wisdom of Providence that such a man should have so long been allowed to live. If so I earnestly pray that this condemnation and censure may not extend to those whose only crime has been that they knew and trusted, and in some instances loved me, and who to-day are more deserving of the world's compassion than censurer.

My second victim was Dr. Russell, a tenant in the Chicago building recently renamed "The Castle." During a controversy concerning the non-payment of rent due me, I struck him to the floor with a heavy chair, when he, with one cry for help, ending in a groan of anguish, ceased to breathe. This quarrel and death occurred in a small outer office, and as soon as I realized that my blow had been a fatal one and I had recovered somewhat from the horror of having still another victim's blood upon my hands, I was forced to look about for some safe means of concealing the crime. I locked the doors of the office, and my first intention was to dispose of the body to a Chicago medical college, from one of whose officers I had previously obtained dissecting material, as they believed, but in reality to be used in insurance work. I found it difficult, if not impossible, thus to dispose of it, and was directed to call upon a party to whom I sold the bodies and whose name I withhold, but I have confessed his name to parties in whom I have confidence.

To him I sold this man's body, as well as others at later dates. In short, in this writing, in each instance when the manner of the disposal of their remains is not otherwise specified, it will be understood that they were turned over to him, he paying me from \$25 to \$45 for each body, and right easily could he, during the same investigations, go from room to room in the building when each was more or less grossly familiar to him, it is not necessary for me to add the efforts of his friends to shield him when it became evident that he had talked too freely for his own safety should not have saved him from being compelled to turn over the remains of these persons for decent burial to the various museums where they were sold.

The third death was to a certain extent due to a criminal operation. A man, who was a friend and schoolmate, and partially responsible for both the operation and the death. The victim was Mrs. Julia L. Connor. A reference to almost any newspaper of August, 1895, will show the details of the horror of this case, as they were worked out by the detectives, therefore making it unnecessary to repeat it here, save to add that the death of the child Pearl, her little daughter, who is the fourth victim, was caused by poison, and that the man and woman above referred to were equally responsible with myself for the death of the child. It was by an instigation that it was done, as I believed the child was old enough to remember of her mother's sickness and death. They wished, at that time, to place the child in the care of their aged parents, who lived south of the city, but were overruled by my opposition. Owing to the suddenness of the third death, a certain note of the awful list that follows. Twenty-seven lives, men and women, young girls and innocent children, blotted out by one monster's hand, and you, my reader of a tender and delicate nature, will do well to read no further, for I will in no way spare myself, and he who reads to the end, if he be

the fifth murder, that of Rodgers, of West Morgantown, Va., occurred in 1888, at which time I was boarding there for a few weeks. Learning that the man had gone on a fishing trip with me, and being successful in allaying his suspicions, I finally ended his life by a sudden blow upon the head with an oar. The body was found about a month thereafter, but I was not suspected until after my trial here, and even then by a fortunate circumstance succeeded in having the report publicly denied, but did not succeed in changing the opinion of fifty or more persons living in the town who had recognized my picture in the daily papers.

The sixth case is that of Charles Cole, a Southern speculator. After considerable correspondence this man came to Chicago, and I enticed him into the Castle, where, while I was federate struck him a most vicious blow upon the head with a piece of gas pipe. So heavy was the blow it not only caused his death without a groan and hardly a movement, but it crushed his skull to such an extent that his body was almost useless to the party who bought the body. This is the first instance in which I knew this confederate had committed murder, though in several other instances he was fully as guilty as myself, and, if possible, more heartless and bloodthirsty, and I have no doubt is still engaged in the same nefarious work, and if so is probably aided by a Chicago business man.

A domestic, named Lizze, was the seventh victim. She, for a time, worked in the Castle restaurant and I soon learned that Quinlan was paying her too close attention and fearing lest it should progress so far that it would necessitate his leaving my employ I thought it wise to end the life of the girl. This I did by calling her to my room and suffocating her in the vault of which so much has since been printed, she being the first victim that died therein. Before her death I compelled her to write letters to her relations, and to Quinlan, stating that she had left Chicago for a Western State and

should not return. A few months ago the prosecution, believing from certain letters purporting to have been written by her since she was killed, at once showed me their willingness to give me a fair trial by having this publicly known, she being a witness that I could have used to great advantage in the Fitzsimmons case.

The eighth, ninth and tenth cases are Mrs. Sarah Cook, her unborn child, and Miss Mary Harcamp, of Hamilton, Canada. In 1888 Mr. Frank Cook became tenant in the Castle. He was engaged to be married to a young lady living at some distance from Chicago, who later came there and was married to him in my presence, by the Rev. Dr. Taylor, of Englewood, Ill. They remained in the Castle, and for a time I boarded with them. Shortly Miss Mary Harcamp, of Hamilton, a niece of Mrs. Sarah Cook, came to Chicago and entered my employ as a stenographer. But Mrs. Cook and her niece had access to all the rooms by means of a master key and one evening, while I was busily engaged preparing my will, they both entered the room of the last victim for shipment, the door suddenly opened and they stood before me. It was a time for quick action, rather than for words of explanation upon my part, and before they had recovered from the horror of the sight, they were within the fatal vault, so lately tenanted by the dead body, and then, after writing a letter at my dictation to Mr. Cook that he had tired of his life with him and had gone away not expecting to return, their lives were sacrificed instead of giving them their liberty in exchange for their promise to at once and forever leave Chicago, which had been promised them in return for writing the letter. These were particularly sad deaths, both on account of the victims being exceptionally upright and virtuous women and because Mrs. Sarah Cook had she lived, would have soon become a mother. Soon after this Miss Emmeline Cigrand, of Dwight, Ill., was sent to me by a Chicago typewriter firm to

fill the vacancy of stenographer. She had formerly been employed at Dwight where she had become acquainted with a man who visited her from time to time while she was in my employ. She was finally engaged to him and the day set for their wedding. Several years previous, before I had ever taken human life, I had known of certain life insurance work I had engaged in, and when, in after years, he sought to take the life of the young man and I finally resolved that I would kill her instead. And upon the day of their wedding, even after cards had been sent out announcing that I had occurred, she came to my office to find him within the secret room, and

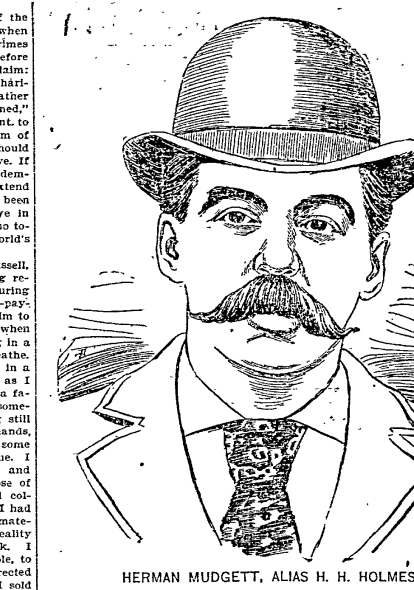
bid me good bye. While there I asked her to step inside the vault for some papers for me. There I detained her, telling her that she would write her husband that at the last moment she had found that it would be impossible to live happily with him and consequently had left Chicago in such a way that search for her would be useless. I would take her to a distant city and live openly with her as my wife. She was very willing to do this and prepared to leave the vault upon completing the letter only to learn that the door would never be again opened until she had ceased to suffer the tortures of a slow and lingering death.

Then follows an unsuccessful attempt to commit a triple murder for the \$300 that my agent for disposing of "stiffs" would have given me for the bodies of the intended victims, who were three young women working in my restaurant upon Milwaukee avenue, Chicago. That these women yielded to tell of their experience to the police last summer is due to my foolishly trying to perform all of them at one and the same time. By their combined strength they overpowered me, and, screaming into the street, called only in their night robes. I was arrested next day, but was not prepared. To this attempt to kill could very justly be added my attempt to take the lives of Mrs. Pitzel and two of her children at a later date, thus making the total number of my victims 33, instead of 27, as it was through no fault of mine that they escaped.

My next attempt was carried out with more caution. The victim was a very beautiful young woman named Rosine Van Jassand, whom I induced to come into my fruit and confectionery store, and, once within my power, I compelled her to live with me there for a time, threatening her with death if she appeared before any of my customers. A little later I killed her by administering ferro-cyanide of potassium. The location of this store was

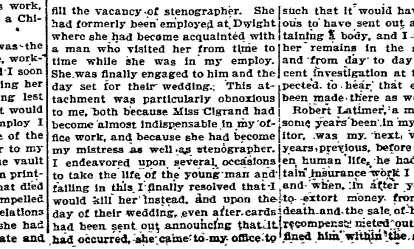
in 1891 I associated myself in business with a young Englishman, whose name I am more than willing to publish to the world, but I am advised it could not be published on my unsupported statement, who by his own admission, had been guilty of all other forms of wrongdoing, save murder, and presumably of that as well. To manipulate certain real estate securities we held so as to have them secure us a good commercial rating was an easy matter for him and he was equally able to interest certain English capitalists in patents so that for a time it seemed that in the near future our greatest concern would be how to dispose of the money that seemed about to be showered upon us. By an unforeseen occurrence our rating was depressed and it became necessary to at once raise a large sum and this was done by my partner enticing to Chicago a wealthy banker named Rogers from a North Wisconsin town, in such a manner that he could have left no intelligence with whom his business was to be. To cause him to go to the Castle and within the secret room under the pretense that our patents were there was easily brought about, and so that to force him to sign checks and drafts for seventy thousand dollars, which we had prepared. At first he refused to do so, stating that his property that we offered him in exchange would be useless to him without his money, that it was too old to again

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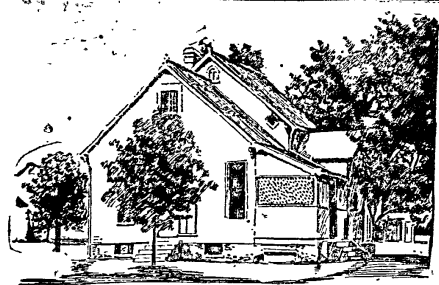
HERMAN MUGGETT, ALIAS H. H. HOLMES

THE CALLOWHILL STREET HOUSE, WHERE PITZEL WAS MURDERED.



HOLMES, WRITING HIS CONFESSION





THE IRVING COTTAGE WHERE HOWARD PITEZEL WAS MURDERED

## HOLMES' CONFESSION

Continued From Page Eight.

through the cover of which I made a small opening. Here I left them until I could return and at my leisure kill them. At 5 P. M. I borrowed a spade of a neighbor and at the same time called on Mrs. Pitezel at her hotel. I then returned to my hotel and ate my dinner, and at 7:00 P. M. went again to Mrs. Pitezel's hotel, and aided her in leaving Toronto for Ogdensburg, N. Y. Later than 8:00 P. M. I again returned to the house where the children were imprisoned, and ended their lives by connecting the gas with the trunk, then came the opening of the trunk and the viewing of their little blackened and distorted faces, then the digging of their shallow graves in the basement of the house, the ruthless stripping off of their clothing, and the burial without a particle of covering save the cold earth, which I heaped upon them with childish delight. Consider what an awful act this was! These little innocent and helpless children, the oldest only being 12 years of age, a puny and sickly child, who to look at one would believe much younger; consider that for eight years before their death I had been almost as much a father as though they had been my own children, thus giving them a right to look to me for care and protection, and in

your righteous judgment, let your bitterest curse fall upon me, but again I pray upon me alone! There is little more to tell. The next day was passed in burning the children's clothing and in resting from my terrible night's work, and upon the 27th I called an expressman and had the trunk removed from the house, and after giving the keys to a neighbor went away never to return. From Toronto I went to Ogdensburg, from there to Burlington, Vermont, where I hired a furnished house for Mrs. Pitezel and mine for a few days prior to my arrest in Boston. I wrote her a letter in which I directed her to carry a bottle of dynamite that I had previously left in the basement so arranged that in taking it to the third story of the house it would fall from her hands, and not only destroy her life, but that of her two remaining children, who I knew would be with her at the time. This was my last and my only remorseful act, this, which I intend to be my last public utterance for these irreparable shortcomings. To do so with the expectation of even one person who has read my confession to the end, believing that in my depraved nature there is room for such feelings, is I fear, far more than would be granted. I can at least, and do refrain from calling forth such criticism by openly inviting it.



Benjamin F. Pitezel.



Alice Pitezel.



Howard Pitezel.



Mrs. Pitezel.



Nellie Pitezel.



Pearl Connor.



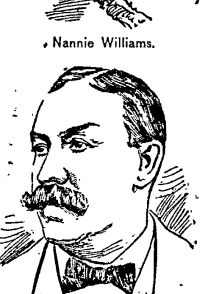
Minnie Williams.



Nannie Williams.



Mrs. Julia Connor.



Detective Geyer.

## HOLMES' BUSY DAY

The Murderer Realizes That His Time Is Growing Short.

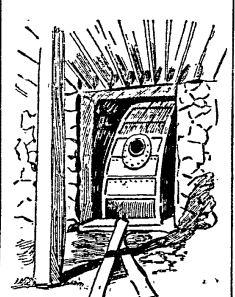
Holmes is now using every second of time that is left to him to put his affairs in shape. All day yesterday he sat in his cell hard at work with pencil and paper. Once in a while he would turn around to chat with a keeper or a prison official who passed down the corridor. He was at all times cheerful and good-humored. It was evident that his confession has taken a great load from his shoulders. Holmes' cell presents an interesting picture. The furnishing is meagre. There is the usual cot and stool, and in one corner under the narrow-grated window is a table on which are paper and pencils. It is here that Holmes sits most of the time hard at work. To a staple in the floor of the cell is fastened a stout iron chain, and are used to manacle unruly prisoners. Holmes has taken this chain and arranged it in the form of a cross. At times the eyes that have seen so many

## HOLMES' ARREST

How the Insurance Company Worked Out the Great Case.

Soon after the body of Pitezel was discovered on September 3, 1904, and the insurance money paid, Inspector Gary of the Police, very much interested, discovered that a fraud had been perpetrated against the company. With special agents against the company, who had been sent to the house by the insurance company, he started out to unravel the mystery. The task was an enormous one. It was at nothing in the way of expense. Agents and Pinkertons were sent out everywhere and Holmes' movements were finally traced. At last the man was captured in Boston after an exciting hunt through New England.

During that chase the insurance people picked up many things that afterwards led them to unravel the great mystery and convict the man of murder. At the time of the arrest the fidelity of the man was not known. Holmes' friends did not know the full depths of the man's infamy. At this time even the authorities took little interest in the case. The belief of the insurance company that Pitezel was murdered and that Holmes was the murderer, led them to an affidavit which was made by O. F. Perry prior to Holmes' arrest. From that time Holmes has maintained his innocence until he made his confession to The Inquirer.



The Gas Tank in the Castle, Chicago

death agonies turn furtively and glanced at the crude reminder of the crucifixion as though the arch fiend were trying to gain some measure of forgiveness for his many crimes. Father Dalley, who is Holmes' constant attendant, is giving the murderer what solace he can. Holmes fully realizes that his time is growing short, and that the hours are now slipping away faster than ever. Once yesterday the murderer turned and glanced at the calendar. "I haven't got much time left," he remarked, "and I still have a great deal of work to do." When he wrote his statement for The Inquirer, repudiating the false confessions he appeared in certain papers he tore a corner of the paper and kept it. "The clock is getting short," he remarked, "and I must look after the clock and ends."

## GEYER'S SEARCH

The Detective Writes a Book Telling How He Solved the Pitezel Mystery.

Up to the time the Supreme Court sealed his fate H. H. Holmes believed that he would escape the gallows. Outwardly his front was as bold as a lion's. In court and out he spun fairy tales to the authorities and mocked them in his sleep. He had been dealing with less careful men it is likely that he would even now be a free man. Holmes was arrested on November 17, 1904, in Boston on a charge of defrauding the Fidelity Mutual Life Association of this city. On September 3 of the same year the body of the man then known as Perry, afterwards identified as B. F. Pitezel, was found in the house, No. 1212 California street, soon as he was arrested Holmes expressed his willingness to tell the entire contents of it and the collection of the insurance money. He was permitted to talk, and he proceeded on the first of a series of rambling statements that eventually tangled him up. For a long time he succeeded in keeping the authorities off the right track. But the officials were patient. Link by link they worked on the case until they finally reached the conclusion that Holmes must have murdered the three Pitezel children.

## HIS LETTER TO MRS. PITEZEL

It was decided to release Mrs. Pitezel from custody in June, 1906, and to take up the hunt in earnest. The day the sorrowing mother left Moramensing Prison she was handed a letter from Holmes. Viewed in the light of subsequent developments, that letter seems to be as great a series of cold-blooded lies as ever mortal penned.

The document has but recently been made public by Detective Geyer in his book, "The Holmes-Pitezel Mystery." The quotations from Mr. Geyer are also from the same work. It reads:

PHILADELPHIA, June 17, 1903. Mrs. Carrie A. Pitezel:

Dear Madam: I have been exceedingly anxious during the last few months to communicate with you, but have been headed off in every direction. I learn that you will shortly be set at liberty, and I shall take this letter to City Hall with me and then give it to my attorneys to be sent to you, as the prison regulations do not prohibit my doing so.

I have been repeatedly called cruel and heartless during the past six months, and by those who were at the very time doing more than I that was both cruel and heartless towards you. Within ten days after you came here arrangements were made with my attorney to furnish bail for you and a house to live in. We were refused permission to see you, although you remember coming here from Boston it was promised I should see you. Later I offered to make arrangements with your lawyer for the same.

Continued on Page 19.

District Attorney George S. Graham.

To The Philadelphia Inquirer  
I positively & emphatically deny the accusations that any confession has been made by me except one & which is the only one that will be made. This original confession to the one given to the Philadelphia Inquirer & alone is genuine, all others are untrue.  
Signed H.H. Holmes  
April 11/4 1896



