



**Selection of newspaper cuttings about Oscar Slater  
(NAS ref. HH16/111/37/21, 27, 35, 48, 54, 57)**

# SLATER'S JOY AT NEWS OF RELEASE.

FIRST GLAD TIDINGS FOR MAN  
WHO HAS BEEN IN PRISON  
NEARLY 19 YEARS.

## INQUIRY DEMANDED.

EAGER TO FIGHT FOR HIS GOOD  
NAME WHEN FREE.

From Our Special Correspondent.

Aberdeen, Saturday.  
**T**HE news that he is to be released has been conveyed to Oscar Slater in Peterhead Prison.

The information seemed to come as a complete surprise, for he was almost overcome with delight.

Slater's sentence of death in 1909 for the murder of Miss Marion Gilchrist was commuted to life imprisonment. He has served 18½ years, and the decision to release him was announced in Parliament this week.

The date of his release is a closely guarded secret.



OSCAR SLATER.

## FIGHT TO PROVE INNOCENCE.

When Slater Re-enters  
the World.

**T**HINK of it! A man who for nearly 19 years has been a convict, but who all along has protested his innocence of the murder of which he was found guilty, receives the glad tidings that he is to be free. Who can describe adequately such a man's emotions?

Normally a "life sentence" lasts only about 15 years, and here is Slater, of whose innocence many people have for years been convinced, kept in prison for all these years.

### "When I Am Free."

He has talked constantly about his innocence, an ex-convict who served at Peterhead Prison, told the *Sunday Chronicle* yesterday.

"I do not care if I have to serve 30 years of imprisonment. I will try to prove my innocence immediately I am free, if only for the sake of my relatives," this man has heard him declare.

Now the day for which Slater has longed, and of which he has dreamed through 18½ years, is at hand.

"We cannot announce the release of a convict with a blare of trumpets," the *Sunday Chronicle* was informed at the Scottish Office in London yesterday.

"It is not anticipated, however, that there will be a long delay."

Sir John Gilmour, in his announcement in the House of Commons, stated that Slater would come out of prison "on licence," which means he will have to report periodically to the police, and suggests that the official grounds for the release is that Slater has completed the usual length (15 years) to which a life sentence generally runs.

### M.P.s Favour Inquiry.

The *Sunday Chronicle* understands that a large body of members of Parliament is in favour of an inquiry into the case of Oscar Slater.

The first move will be taken on Tuesday when the Secretary for Scotland will be asked whether he proposes to set up an inquiry into the evidence produced at the trial. In view of the disturbing effect of recent statements made involving not only the reliability of witnesses but the action of the police and criminal authorities taking part in the case.

It is stated that should Slater be released on ticket-of-leave—the normal procedure—he will immediately apply for a re-trial of his case.

Slater is believed to have received many offers of financial assistance.

# WHO DID MURDER MISS MARION GILCHRIST?



Miss Marion Gilchrist.

## Name of a Suspect Given by a Woman?—Analysis of the Motive.

In the light of latest sensational developments in the Oscar Slater campaign Sir Arthur Conan Doyle discusses the vital question: "Assuming that Slater is innocent who did kill Miss Gilchrist?" This is a masterly analysis of the case.

By SIR A. CONAN DOYLE.



Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

I SUPPOSE that there is no one now, outside the Scottish Office, who has read Helen Lambie's confession and has the slightest doubt as to the innocence of Slater.

Mary Barrowman has admitted that her evidence was dictated by officials and Helen Lambie has confessed in public that she not only did not recognise Slater as the murderer but that she *did* recognise someone else.

This entirely fits in with the otherwise inexplicable fact that she let the man pass her without comment.

The very delicate question now arises, "If Slater was innocent, then who was guilty?"

There is a dead woman there and Justice demands that we find who murdered her. Within certain limits it was never a difficult net to drag, and with the help of Lambie's statement it becomes still easier.

But can Lambie's statement be trusted. The answer to that is that the statement is—more credit to her—against herself. It is the statement of a remorseful, conscience-stricken woman. Also it corroborates the story of that noble man, Lieutenant Trench, the one conspicuously honest man in the whole sordid business. For these reasons I claim that Helen Lambie may now be believed.

Let us first look at the case as it was before this new element appeared. This nervous old lady, remarkable for her caution, opened the door herself, and conducted him to her sitting-room, some distance down the passage, where her body was found. Therefore it was someone whom she knew and whom she thought she had no reason to fear.

I need not add that the old lady did not know Oscar Slater. That unhappy man certainly spoke the truth when in the moment of his agony he cried out that he never knew such a person existed.

### Someone She Knew.

There is an alternative to the supposition that Miss Gilchrist admitted the murderer. That alternative is that the man was actually in the house at the time that Lambie went out, so that the assassin and his victim were left alone.

There are some arguments for this explanation. One of these is that Lambie, according to a most reliable new witness, declared a week before the crime that when she was out Miss Gilchrist would never open the door to anyone, and that if she went out without the key there was a private signal which had to be given before the old lady would open.

In the interview in which Lambie made this important statement she also said that Miss Gilchrist was apprehensive of being murdered.

It is stated also that Lambie within a few days of the murder was making applications for an engagement elsewhere as maid, in dread also.

If this were so it is difficult to think that the old lady would open the door in the maid's absence and we are thrown back upon the theory that the man was in the house all the time.

At the same time the argument holds good that this man was someone whom she knew, as otherwise she would certainly, on the sudden appearance of a stranger in her sitting-room, have uttered screams or in some way given the alarm.

We have to read Lambie's statement carefully to see what she says about the man whom she recognised. She says that he had visited Miss Gilchrist before, that Miss Gilchrist was very touchy as to any reference to him, and that she threatened to dismiss her without a character if she tried into her affairs.

In another sentence Lambie says that this man "was in the habit of visiting her." The identity and apparently the character or social standing of this man were known to the police, otherwise we can attach no meaning to the statement that when Lambie mentioned him they answered, "Nonsense! You don't think he could have robbed and murdered your mistress." "They scoffed at the notion," says Lambie.

### Out of the Past?

Apparently the man or men who called to see Miss Gilchrist at the flat had some very intimate business with her. She warned Lambie against "poking my nose into her business where her men visitors were concerned."

Lambie could recall one case where she found her having heated words with one man, who was afterwards shown out secretly so that Lambie should not see him.

If it were any of her obvious relations who came to her in this way why should she be so secretive? It suggests to me that there was some romance, some tragedy in this woman's life, dating perhaps far back, but having consequences now which were becoming manifest in her old age.

If they were honest, normal visitors why all this mystery? Lambie talks of "men out of the past who had a motive for killing her."

She even suggests that her mistress was expecting someone on the evening of the murder and sent her out in order to get rid of her. If this were so it would no longer be needful to explain the difficulty as to entrance or to imagine that the man was already in the house.

Granting that it was someone she knew, what was the object of the visit? As I read it, the man came with no intention of murder, for he seems to have been unarmed. He made some request, that request was refused, possibly with insult, and then in an instant of blind fury he struck the woman down with his fist, and then with his foot upon her chest he thrust down at her face with the legs of a heavy chair, exactly as Dr. Adams diagnosed at the time.

The fact that the underside of the chair was drenched with blood is corroboration enough. The idea that a tinctack hammer from a half-crown card of tools produced from Slater's trunk inflicted these frightful injuries by which one of the eyes was beaten into the brain is surely too absurd for argument.

What was the murderer's next move? He evidently knew the house well and had some definite object in view. There was something there which he had asked for, which had been refused, and which he was now going to get for himself. It was clearly something of great importance. What was that something?

We can only judge by his actions. Money and jewellery were in sight in the room to which he had hurried, but he left them there. If he snatched up a diamond brooch—and it has never been certain that he did so—it may well have been a blind as to his real intentions.

What he did was to hurry to a box in which the old lady kept her papers and to rummage among them. It was something in that box which was the reason both of his visit and of his crime.

It was a box of papers. Papers were scattered about. Did he get what he searched for? We do not know for certain, but the presumption is that he did not. He was interrupted by the ringing and knocking at the door.

Presumably there was someone, the old lady's lawyer for example, who would know if any important document was missing. There is no record of anything of the kind. It is probable, therefore, but not certain, that the criminal got no result from his crime.

But what sort of a paper could it be which a man was so keen to abstract or possibly to destroy? There are several alternate possibilities, and each of them has to be tested.

11/11/27 file

## SLATER TO BE DEPORTED?

NOT TO BE RELEASED FOR SOME DAYS.

From OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
PETERHEAD, Saturday.

It was not until last night that Oscar Slater was informed that shortly he would be liberated from the convict prison here, where he is serving a life sentence for the murder of Miss Marion Gilchrist in Glasgow in 1909.

During the afternoon a motor-car entered the prison gates and stayed for half an hour. Afterwards Slater was told of his impending freedom.

He was greatly elated on receiving the news and eagerly discussed his plans for the future. It is not expected, however, that he will be freed for some days yet.

*Although at present it is understood he will be liberated on licence, this is not definite, and it is quite possible that he will be deported.*

In any case there are many formalities yet to be carried out, and while these are decided Slater is following the usual prison routine.

### STUDY IN SPARE TIME.

He was out again this morning with a working party.

Peterhead prison, where Slater has been for 18½ years, is built on a bleak spot, one of the most easterly points of the Scottish coast, and huge breakers wash near the prison walls during wild weather.

During his imprisonment Slater has followed the usual prison routine, working in the quarry and about the prison buildings. He has spent his leisure time in studying languages and reading. He has been a keen student of the Bible, and although Jewish by faith he frequently attends church services.

Slater, I am told, is in good spirits since the news of his release reached him.

# JUSTICE FOR SLATER.

## ACTION BY THE GOVERNMENT.

## APPEAL OFFER.

## SPECIAL ACT TO BE PASSED.

THE "Daily News" campaign for justice to Oscar Slater—the first important success was his release from Peterhead gaol on Monday—was carried a step further in the House of Commons yesterday by the Secretary for Scotland, Sir John Gilmour, who announced the Government's willingness to remit questions connected with the case to the Scottish Court of Criminal Appeal.

**An Act of Parliament will be necessary to carry this out, and it is understood that a short agreed Bill will be passed before the session ends next month.**

The course of action proposed by Sir John Gilmour is exactly that urged by



Sir John Gilmour.

The Pilgrim, the "Daily News" special investigator. Our Lobby Correspondent, on Page Eight, explains the procedure that must now be followed to bring the case under review.

Slater heard the news at 6.30 last evening. For the moment he was stunned. Then he said to The Pilgrim:—

"This is the best news of all. This is what I wanted—the chance to establish my innocence and restore my name."

Slater's friend, the Rev. E. P. Phillips, the Jewish pastor, said:

"This is what we had hardly dared to hope for. I hope it means that not only Slater but also Lieutenant Trench will be vindicated."

[Lieutenant Trench, a Glasgow detective, was ruined and died a broken man through his efforts to establish Slater's innocence.]

### GLASGOW EXCITEMENT.

On all hands last night Sir John Gilmour's announcement gave the liveliest satisfaction. Mr. James Stewart, M.P. for St. Rollox, Glasgow, said: "I feel the Government have done the right thing now long years after it should have been done."

There was great excitement in Glasgow. Everyone was discussing the news, published in the evening papers, and it appears to be generally thought (telegraphs The Pilgrim) that the case will end in the complete vindication of Slater, whose supporters are in high spirits.

On the day of his release Slater received the following letter from Sir A. Conan Doyle:

"Dear Oscar Slater,—This is to say in my wife's name and my own how grieved we have been at the infamous injustice which you have suffered at the hands of our officials.  
Your only poor consolation can

*M. Hall*  
*M. Swan* File

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# Who did the murder for which Oscar Slater served 18 years?

## A man lets out the secret

by BRENDAN KEMMET

FOUR weeks ago Oscar Slater died. He holds an enduring place in the records of crime as a man who served 18 years in jail for a murder he did not commit. After his release he was given £6,000 in compensation.

Slater was convicted of the murder of Miss Marion Gilchrist, an 82-year-old woman found dead with her head battered in her home in West Princes-street, Glasgow.

Who committed the crime for which Slater suffered so long and so acutely?

Last week, moved by the news of the death of Slater, a man broke a silence he had kept for 40 years.

He came to me in the Glasgow office of the Scottish Sunday Express and said: "I know who committed the murder. I wish now to tell the story that would have saved Slater and sent two men to the gallows."

The man is 59. He has spent much of his life in prison.

At the time of the Slater case he was one of a gang of thieves in Glasgow.

This is his story:—

### Four in gang

THERE were four of us in the gang. The other three were:—

J— was always well dressed. His appearance and general build much resembled Slater's. But he was clean-shaven, whereas Slater had a moustache.

At that time he was aged about 22-25.

W— was not so much like Slater in build, but he had a broken nose (like Slater) and a moustache. He was about 40.

G—, a barman, the only married man of the four, at one time fairly prosperous.

### Man who did it

J— was the man who struck Miss Gilchrist down.

A fifth man whom I never met, comes into the story. He was the brain behind our robberies. He used to supply us, through W—, with information about the contents of houses, gleaned from charwomen and daily helps.

Before the Gilchrist murder a charwoman had told "The Brain" that in West Princes-street was an old woman who lived alone, with a large sum of money and a large quantity of jewellery in the house.

W— brought us that news. But she added he gave us was that of a Miss Crosbie, another old lady who lived alone near Miss Gilchrist, but who, we have since found reason to believe, was poorly off.

"The Brain," I think, had got the addresses of Miss Gilchrist and Miss Crosbie mixed up.

### Watched for weeks

For weeks we kept watch on the house of Miss Crosbie. Never once were we



Oscar Slater

was rare. I never again was sentenced in any court other than a High Court. My sentences rose with every conviction.

So for the greater part of the next 20 years I toiled and suffered in the granite quarries of Peterhead Prison—alongside Slater, the man I should have saved.

In 1921 I had six weeks of liberty, and for the first time in 13 years met W—. We met in a public house in Crown-street, Glasgow.

W— was more alarmed than pleased to see me. He was agitated throughout all of the brief time we spent together. But he did tell me what had happened on the night of the Gilchrist murder.

W—, he said, kept watch. J— went with his jemmy to the house.

He rang the bell. Miss Gilchrist, thinking it was her maid Helen Lambie (witness at the Slater trial) coming back, opened the door and then returned to her dining-room.

### Struck her down

J— struck at Miss Gilchrist, but did not knock her out as he expected. So he followed her, striking again and again with his jemmy, until she collapsed.

By this time the people underneath had become alarmed, and were making for Miss Gilchrist's. J— had no time to hunt for money or jewellery. He may have snatched a piece or two

hurriedly before he was disturbed, but to the best of my knowledge the two men gained nothing by the murder.

Now at the time of the trial a Miss Agnes Brown, a school-teacher, told the police that two men rushed past her in West Princes-street. One, she said, had his arm pressed close to his side.

That was J—, supporting the jemmy under his jacket.

Miss Brown, confronted by Slater at the identification parade, did not pick him. She knew that neither of the men who passed her that night was there.

She was not called as a witness at the trial.

The jemmy was thrown into the River Kelvin. J—, who lived in Partick, went home by subway.

From the day of that meeting with W— I have never seen any of the old gang. If W— is alive today he is over 80.

But Oscar Slater I did see, again and again. We became good friends in Peterhead. We never discussed the murder, for I was terrified to tell of what I knew.

### Slater's outburst

I used to wonder what he would have thought or done had he known that I, his constant companion in suffering, held the secret, and was indirectly the cause of all his misery.

Slater felt, sometimes justifiably, that the guards "picked" on him. Early in his sentence, when he spoke but broken English, I have seen him, with his gigantic strength, rush to the platform on which the guards stood, shake it till it trembled, and cry in a voice full of suffering: "Schlater—Schlater—why is it always Schlater?"

The outcry over the murder made the police of that day desperate to secure a conviction.

It was with relief that they pounced on a "tip" which was, according to underworld rumour, sent about Slater by a fellow gambler.

### Judge convinced

I firmly believe that the only person who was thoroughly convinced of Slater's guilt was the judge who sentenced him. And he was misled by the police, who called only a few hand-picked witnesses.

Witnesses who really did matter were never called to give evidence.

The verdict hinged on identity. Five witnesses said the man they saw fleeing from the scene of the crime was clean-shaven. Slater had a moustache.

In spite of that, Slater was convicted and sentenced.

The Glasgow police, to whom the facts related here have been submitted, say there is no question whatever of the case being reopened.

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"The Brain," I think, had got the addresses of Miss Gilchrist and Miss Crosbie mixed up.

### Watched for weeks

For weeks we kept watch on the house of Miss Crosbie. Never once were we lucky enough to catch her leaving the house un-attended.

Each of us took turns of visit- ing, on one pretext or another, but on each occasion Miss Crosbie answered the door.

I posed as a window cleaner; J— and G— as insurance agents.

During those weeks of watch- ing the name of Miss Gilchrist was never mentioned. I did not know of her existence until she ceased to exist.

A few months before the murder G— and I were arrested on a charge of reset (receiving stolen goods). He got six months, I got twelve. After our arrest, "The Brain" seems either to have discovered his error or for some reason sug- gested switching to Miss Gilchrist's house.

The murder was committed while I was in prison.

The first I heard of it was when a Glasgow detective named Gordon came to see me in Bar- linnie Prison.

### On right track

Gordon, had he but known it, was on the right track . . .

He had information, he said, that I, "and others unknown," had been watching and planning a robbery in the vicinity of the crime. "Who were the others?" he demanded.

I not only refused information, but I stoutly denied all know- ledge of the affair.

Some months after my release, the first instalment of fate's "bill of costs" for my silence was presented.

Gordon pounced on me for housebreaking, and brought several other charges against me. I was sent to a High Court, and received a five years' sentence.

I was 21 years old. A sentence of that type on a man of my age

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# OSCAR SLATER'S DEATH RECALLS FAMOUS MURDER TRIAL

## Lengthy Legal Battle Against Crown

Oscar Slater, who served 18 years in prison for a murder of which he was wrongfully convicted, died on Saturday at 25 St Phillans Avenue, Ayr, at the age of 76.

In 1909 he was convicted of the murder of Miss Marion Gilchrist at her home in West Princes Street, Glasgow, the sentence of death being later commuted to penal servitude. After a long agitation he was released in 1927, and in 1928 the Court of Criminal Appeal found that there had been misdirection by the Judge.

Since his release from prison he had lived mainly at Ayr. He had been an invalid for three years. Early in the war he was interned for a short time because of his German origin.

### Born to Misfortune

The case of Oscar Slater is one of the most famous, if not the most famous of all, in British criminal history, and it is appropriate that it should have had its first beginnings in obscurity. The man who inherited so much misfortune was born to inherit very little else. So far as appeared at the trial about his origins, he was a German Jew and his name was Oscar Leschziner. To avoid the military service compulsory in Germany, he moved to London, where he made a living as a bookmaker. About this time he also visited Edinburgh and Glasgow on several occasions. In 1902 he married an Englishwoman, but the marriage was not successful. In 1908, the time of the trial, he had been living with a Frenchwoman called Mlle. Antoine in circumstances which were commented on by the Judge to the detriment of his law and so won Slater his restitution after 20 years.

Slater and Mlle. Antoine had lived a cosmopolitan life between New York, London, and the cities of the Continent, where they ran social clubs. And there were other possible sources of income, for Slater variously described himself as a dentist and as a dealer in precious stones. In 1908 he was living at 69 St. George's Road, Glasgow, with Mlle. Antoine. His only occupation then, so far as appeared at the trial, was gambling in some of Glasgow's more modest clubs and raising money from a pawnbroker on a diamond brooch. Mlle. Antoine's contribution to the household expenses is irrelevant to the history.

### View of Murderer

It was a few days before Christmas of 1908 that the sensation broke out which was to last for 20 years. About a quarter of a mile away from Slater's flat the old lady, Marion Gilchrist, lived in West Princes Street with a young servant maid called Helen Lambie. There was nothing remarkable about the household, except that Miss Gilchrist kept a valuable collection of jewellery in her bedroom. On the night of December 21 Helen Lambie went out as usual for the evening newspaper, leaving Miss Gilchrist alone for about ten minutes. While Helen Lambie was away a Mr Adams who lived on the floor below was alarmed by noises coming from Miss Gilchrist's. He ran upstairs to see what was wrong, rang the bell, and got no answer. While he was still at the door Helen Lambie returned. She opened the door and went into the house while Adams stayed on the mat. As Adams stood there a man came from the bedroom in the flat. In Adams' own words at the trial—

I saw the man walk quite coolly till he got past me, then he went down quickly and banged the door at the foot of the close.

In the dining-room Miss Gilchrist lay battered to death; and beyond all doubt Adams and Helen Lambie had seen the murderer for a brief moment.

But when the murderer's name? and what...

asked to stop him when he got to New York. That was done. Mr Adams, Helen Lambie, and Mary Barrowman were then sent over to identify Slater. They had no difficulty about the identification, for as soon as Slater was brought in, handcuffed to a U.S. marshal, they cried out, "That's the man." It was stated afterwards that they had been shown a photograph of Slater before they left Glasgow. Slater came back to Glasgow to face his trial.

There was one piece of evidence taken in New York that is of considerable interest. When the question was raised of how the murderer got into the house, Helen Lambie said "Miss Gilchrist must have opened the door." The importance of that statement is perfectly set out by Mr William Roughead in "Knaves' Looking Glass."

When Lambie left the house that night she closed the street door. It was open when she returned. This could be done in answer to a ring, by a handle within the house door. Miss Gilchrist's invariable custom, if alone in the house, was in such circumstances to look over the banisters—the staircase is wide, open, and well-lighted—and if the bell-ringer was a stranger to her, or some one she did not wish to see, to retreat into her house and shut and bar the door. Slater, as I have said, was a strange-looking man of markedly foreign aspect, the last sort of person whom the old lady would voluntarily have admitted. The inference is plain: the visitor was known to Miss Gilchrist, otherwise, without two false keys (which no one ever suggested), it was virtually impossible for him to have got into the house.

Curiously enough, this point was never raised at the trial, and there was no suggestion that Miss Gilchrist knew Slater.

### The Crown's Case

The case against Slater was quickly built up. Several witnesses came forward to say that a man had been loitering at the corner of the gardens for some weeks and presumably keeping an eye on Miss Gilchrist's. These were easily able to identify Slater at a parade when he appeared among a company of typical Scots police and railway men. And in one of Slater's trunks a tack hammer was found that was put in as the lethal weapon.

The preliminaries settled, the hearing began in the High Court of Justiciary in Edinburgh on May, 3, 1909. Lord Guthrie was Judge. The prosecution was led by the Lord Advocate, Mr Alexander Ure, who later became Lord Strathclyde. He was assisted by Mr T. B. Morrison, K.C., later raised to the Bench as Lord Morison, and Mr W. Lyon Mackenzie. Slater's counsel were Mr A. L. McClure, K.C., afterwards Sheriff of Aberdeen, and Mr John Mair. The Crown Agent was Mr W. S. Haldane, now Sir William. Slater's agent was Mr Ewing Speirs, a Glasgow solicitor.

The first part of the Crown's case was based on the identification of Slater as the man who had been loitering outside Miss Gilchrist's and as the man who had run away immediately after the murder. Though there was disagreement as to details, the witnesses thought Slater was that man. The medical evidence by Professor Glaister and Dr Galt indicated that the tack hammer was possibly the weapon used; and Professor Glaister said he had found spots that might be human blood on a waterproof taken out of one of Slater's trunks, but it was impossible to make satisfactory tests. For the defence Dr Aitchison Robertson said he thought the tack hammer was an unlikely weapon to produce what Professor Glaister had called...

if the stains on the waterproof were Miss Gilchrist's blood, then he had destroyed the clothes he wore as watcher and kept the waterproof he wore when he committed the murder; (c) that there were discrepancies between Helen Lambie's evidence in New York and her evidence in Scotland. He then reminded the jury of the case of Adolf Beck, who was convicted through identification and sentenced for crimes he did not commit.

Lord Guthrie summed up with judicial fairness; but, perhaps with the Lord Advocate's speech in his mind, allowed himself some unfortunate comments on Slater's way of living. The jury took just over an hour to reach a verdict of guilty by nine votes, there being five for not proven and one for not guilty. After a passionate protest by Slater, Lord Guthrie sentenced him to death.

The proportion of nine to six must have been reflected in public opinion. Slater's agent prepared a memorial, and 20,000 persons signed a petition for commutation, which was sent to the Secretary of State, the grounds being that the evidence of identification was insufficient and that Slater's way of life had been given undue prominence. Two days before the execution was due the Secretary of State commuted the sentence to penal servitude for life. Slater disappeared into Peterhead Prison for the next 19 years.

### Inquiry Sought

But some eminent persons were dissatisfied with the trial. Mr Andrew Lang, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Sir Edward Marshall Hall, Sir Robert Stephen, and others less distinguished feared that there had been a miscarriage of justice. There was correspondence in "The Times" and elsewhere. The record of the trial, published by Messrs Hodge and edited by Mr Roughead, allowed the evidence to be examined in detail. In 1914 a Glasgow solicitor, Mr David Cook, sent a memorial to the Secretary of State for Scotland with application for an inquiry. The following questions were raised:—

1. Did any witness to the identification on the night of the murder name a person other than Oscar Slater?
2. Were the police aware that such was the case? If so, why was the evidence not forthcoming at the trial?
3. Did Slater fly from justice?
4. Were the police in possession of information that Slater had disclosed his name at the North-Western Hotel, Liverpool, stating where he came from, and that he was travelling by the Lusitania?
5. Did one of the witnesses make a mistake as to the date on which she stated she was in West Princes Street?

The Secretary of State then ordered the Sheriff of Lanark, Mr Gardner Millar, K.C., to hold a commission of inquiry. This inquiry was held in Glasgow. The hearing was secret. The witnesses were not on oath. Slater was not represented, but the Chief Constable gave the Commissioner every assistance.

### Detective's Fear

The chief witness at the inquiry was Detective Lieutenant Trench, of the Glasgow police. Trench had been one of the officers engaged on the case, and he feared that an injustice had been done to Slater in the matter of identification. Incidentally, it was Trench who broke the case, based on identification, against Warner, who was arrested for the murder of a Dundee woman. Trench was able to prove that Warner had been in Antwerp at the time. Was Slater's an analogous case? Lieutenant Trench thought he had more than analogy to go on. He stated to Sheriff Millar that Helen Lambie had said to a Miss Birrell on the night of the murder that the man who had come from Miss Gilchrist's room was one "A. B." an acquaintance of Miss Gilchrist. Helen Lambie and Miss Birrell had afterwards denied that Helen Lambie said...

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answer. Robert for Helen Lambie could tell that a diamond brooch was missing from the bedroom. At the same time some jewels of value were lying quite openly on the dressing table and other jewels in the wardrobe had not been touched. But there was another fact of possible importance—the box in which Miss Gilchrist kept her papers had been opened by some one in a hurry. There were thus two lines of investigation—through the clue of the missing brooch, pointing to ordinary theft as motive; or through the clue of the deed box, pointing to something more intimate. The police decided on the clue of the brooch and stuck to it with almost terrifying persistence.

### Girl's Evidence

Information was circulated and produced a message girl called Mary Barrowman, who said she had seen a man run out of the close door at the time of the murder. More: she could describe the man, and did so. After considering her statement along with those of Adams and Helen Lambie the police decided there must have been two men. Later on they gave up that view and concentrated on Slater.

The police information also produced one M'Lean, a cycle agent, who said that a person called "Oscar," whom he had met socially, had tried to sell him a pawn-ticket for a diamond brooch. He took a detective to Slater's house and there they found that Slater and Mlle. Antoine had left that night for Liverpool with all their baggage. These were suspicious circumstances; but when the police found the pawnshop they also found that the brooch had been pledged a month before, and finally Helen Lambie was able to say it had never been Miss Gilchrist's.

The clue of the brooch had completely failed; and, as there was nothing else to connect Miss Gilchrist and Slater, the case against that suspect seemed hopeless. Apparently there was never any proof that Slater had any dealings with Miss Gilchrist. However, the police refused to let go. They offered a reward of £200 for Slater's name and the New York police were

### Used Alias

A minor but important part of the evidence dealt with the manner in which Slater had left for New York. The fact that he had registered on the Lusitania as Otto Sando was adduced by the prosecution as a proof of guilt and interpreted by the Lord Advocate and the Judge as a flight from justice. But Mlle. Antoine said the alias was intended to put Mrs Slater off their track. One more part of the case must be noticed. Slater's servant maid admitted that Mlle. Antoine entertained men at her house both in London and in Glasgow with Slater's acquiescence. Again the Lord Advocate and the Judge made much of that evidence, with very important results.

The case thus rested on four main points—identification of Slater, the hammer and the waterproof, the flight from justice, and Slater's way of life. Mr M'Clure did not put Slater into the witness-box, though he always wished to give evidence on his own behalf.

The Lord Advocate's speech to the jury was a relentless statement of facts and inferences, and it was one of the best of its kind ever heard in that Court. The tone of the speech is very well expressed in the opening—

Up to yesterday afternoon I should have thought that there was one serious difficulty which confronted you—the difficulty of conceiving that there was in existence a human being capable of doing such a dastardly deed. Gentlemen, that difficulty, I think, was removed yesterday afternoon when we heard from the lips of one who seemingly knew the prisoner better than anyone else, who had known him longer and known him better than any witness examined, that he had followed a life which descends to the very lowest depths of human degradation, for by the universal judgment of mankind the man who lives upon the proceeds of prostitution has sunk to the lowest depths and all moral sense in him has been destroyed and has ceased to exist. That difficulty removed, I say without hesitation that the man in the dock is capable of having committed this dastardly outrage, and the question for you to consider is whether or not the evidence has brought it home to him.

Fortunately for Slater, the appeal Judges 20 years later had a more accurate or more scrupulous knowledge of psychology.

### Skilful Attack

Mr M'Clure was less impressive than the Lord Advocate, but he examined the various parts of the Crown's case with considerable skill and made some excellent points—(a) That Slater had first been suspected on a false clue; (b) that if he were the watcher outside the house, and

as a matter of fact, not matters, except to increase doubts as to the justice of Slater's sentence. Shortly afterwards Lieutenant Trench was dismissed from the police for divulging official information to Slater's agent.

It was in 1925 that the Slater case was revived through the publication of William Park's "The Truth about Oscar Slater." This book marshalled the various theories as to what happened in a way that increased public misgiving and strengthened the demand for another investigation. Meanwhile Slater was set free after 18 years in Peterhead. In November of 1927 the Government passed a retrospective Act allowing Slater to present his case before the new Court of Criminal Appeal, and in June of 1928 the last hearing began. The judges were:—The Lord Justice-General (Clyde), the Lord Justice-Clerk (Alness), and Lords Sands, Blackburn, and Fleming. The Lord Advocate (Watson) appeared for the Crown and Mr Craigie Aitchison, K.C., for Slater.

The appeal was something of a disappointment, for Helen Lambie—married and in America—refused to appear and could not be compelled. But medical evidence was led as to the possibility that Miss Gilchrist was killed with a chair that stood by her body; as to the conditions in which witnesses identified Slater in New York; and, with regard to the "flight from justice," that Slater had registered in his own name in the Liverpool hotel.

### Misdirection Appeal

The high-light of the appeal was Mr Craigie Aitchison's presentation of Slater's case. The Lord Advocate contented himself with reasons why the verdict should stand. After consideration the Court refused all grounds of appeal except the last, which was misdirection by the judge; but on that point the Court decided:—

It is manifestly possible that, but for the prejudicial effect of denying to the appellant the full benefit of the presumption of innocence and of allowing the point of dependence on the immoral earnings of his partner to go to the jury as a point not irrelevant to his guilt of Miss Gilchrist's murder, the proportion of nine to five for "guilty" and "not proven" respectively might have been reversed. In these circumstances we think that the instructions given in the charge amounted to misdirection in law and that the judgment of the Court before whom appellant was convicted should be set aside.

The rest of the story was an anticlimax. The Secretary of State for Scotland paid Slater £6000 as restitution. So at last the case ended and Slater lived out the rest of his days in obscurity and peace.

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