

THE TALBOTS

HISTORY OF THE ASSASSINATION

OF
DR. P. H. TALBOTT,

AND
THE TRIAL OF HIS TWO SONS

ALBERT P. AND CHARLES E. TALBOTT,

FOR THE MURDER.

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TO THE READER.

No trial ever held in Northwest Missouri ever created such intense excitement as the trial of Albert P. and Charles E. Talbott, for the murder of their father, Dr. P. H. Talbott. So great has been the desire to get the full proceedings of the trial that the Maryville *Republican* concluded to publish a complete history of the crime and trial, taken from the notes of its shorthand reporter. The publishers have aimed at facts, instead of sensation. To those who want a faithful and correct history of the trial, this book is inscribed.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

A September night in all its beauty; a full moon struggling through masses of rifted clouds; a farm house nestled in among the trees, such is the scene to which we transport our readers. A silent form creeps stealthily up to a window from which streams the light of the evening lamp. There is a flash, a stunning report, a shivering of glass, a shriek from within, and the husband and father, pierced by the assassin's bullet, falls bleeding and dying in the midst of his family.

Home is the most sacred of places, and should be the most secure; no wonder, then, that when the news came that Dr. Perry H. Talbot, a prominent citizen of Nodaway county, Missouri, had been shot down on his own hearth-stone, the entire community, in which he lived, was thrown in a state of terrible excitement. Who could have done the bloody deed? What was its object?

That our readers may more fully understand what follows, a short sketch of the murdered man, and his habits of life, will not be amiss.

Dr. Perry H. Talbott was born in Fairfield county, Ohio, on the 5th of February, 1827. Here he grew to manhood, receiving a good education. In the year 1849 he graduated from the Sterling medical college of Columbus, Ohio, with honor to himself and class. Early in the next year, he started to seek his fortune in the far distant west. In Northwest Missouri he found a home and friends. In the year 1852, he joined the throng of gold seekers, then crowding to California. The year 1853 again found him back in Missouri. Soon after his return he met Miss Belle McFarland, of Page county,

Iowa, was smitten by her many charms, and in April, 1854, the two were united in marriage. From all accounts Dr. Talbott was a typical borderer. He was fond of cards, and tradition still speaks of his skill in that direction. As a skillful physician, his reputation spread far and wide. When the country was new and thinly settled, his professional visits extended for miles in every direction. Dr. Talbott and his old gray mule are historical figures in the annals of Nodaway county.

He accumulated property rapidly, and became quite prominent in local politics. He represented the county in the legislature in the years 1856 and 1857, and made a good record as a legislator. During the war he espoused the side of the Union, and was surgeon of the Twenty-fifth Missouri Volunteers.

After the war he once more entered the political arena, and became an aspirant for congressional honors. He was a candidate before different conventions, but failed of a nomination. In 1872 he made the race for congress as an Independent Democrat on the O'Connor ticket. In 1876, he became prominently identified with the Greenback Labor movement, and devoted his entire energies to the success of that party, and was recognized throughout the State as one of the most prominent and enthusiastic lecturers. He took an active and leading part in all the State and National conventions of his party, his speeches, especially the one before the Toledo convention, obtaining a wide notoriety.

He was a man of much more than ordinary ability, and had an indomitable will. His egotism was wonderful, and his ambition was fully as great as his egotism. He seemed to think that upon his shoulders rested the hope of the country. He, no doubt, classed himself with the ablest statesmen of the age. This over-weening estimate of himself, often made him appear ridiculous in the eyes of his friends.

In appearance, he was tall and of rather commanding presence. His hair and beard were as dark as the raven's wing, and his eyes were deep-set, restless and of a cold bluish gray. At times they had the uneasy expression of a person slightly deranged.

As a friend and neighbor, Dr. Talbott always stood high among those who knew him. As a husband and father, he seemed to have no affection whatever. His home was the abode of discord and the demon strife seemed to reign supreme. He took no pleasure in beautifying or adorning his home and was miserly in all that pertained to it. He took no pride in his children, and to all appearance cared nothing for their moral or temporal welfare. They grew up neglected, and when young were like untamed Indians. It was no unusual sight to see one of his little daughters dash across the prairie on her pony, bareback and astride, or standing erect and riding like a veteran circus performer.

The house was an arsenal of small arms, and both girls and boys were familiar with their use. It was cheerless and comfortless, and looked more like the abode of extreme poverty, than that of a man in comfortable circumstances.

CHAPTER II.

THE ASSASSINATION.

Dr. Talbott, at the time of his death, was the editor of the *Greenback Standard*, a paper published at Maryville, Mo. His home was seven miles southeast of the city, but the greater portion of his time was spent in town. His assassination occurred on the evening of September 18, 1880. The following, taken from the *Maryville Republican*, gives full particulars of the awful crime:

All remember the terrible excitement which pervaded all classes when, some few years since, a man by the name of Tansy was discovered traveling through the

country with the gory corpses of five mangled, murdered victims in his wagon. The populace arose in their fury, and swift vengeance was meted out to Tansy. Since that time Nodaway County has not been thrilled with such horror as when the news came last Sabbath that Dr. P. H. Talbott had been foully assassinated in the midst of his family. The Doctor attended the Fair Saturday and returned home about six o'clock, when he found a call awaiting him to visit a sick child at Mr. Leighty's, who resides some three miles south of him. He returned about nine o'clock, put up his horse, and went into the house. His wife and his son Albert were in the room, the rest of the family having retired. He handed Albert a copy-right of a speech which he is having printed. Mrs. Talbott was lying on the bed with her head toward the foot. Albert was sitting by the table on the north side of the room, his arm on the window-sill. The Doctor had taken off his coat and was sitting on the bed when the fatal shot was fired. The testimony of Mrs. Talbott and Albert will give full particulars of the shooting, with their version of the affair.



The above is a diagram representing the room in which Dr. Talbott was shot. It is a room about sixteen feet square, fronting to

the west, and which was used by Dr. Talbott and his wife as a sleeping-room, and by the family as a sitting-room.

A—Is the bed with the head against the wall.

D—Door.

W—Windows.

T—A table where the Doctor was accustomed to write, and on which a lamp was burning.

S—Is where his son Albert was sitting with his right arm resting on the window, through which the fatal shot was fired.

B—Is the position of Dr. Talbott—in a sitting posture on the side of the bed.

C—Is where the bullet struck the wall after passing through Dr. Talbott's body.

E—In this corner were two loaded shotguns, one of which was seized by Albert when he ran out to discover the assassin.

The door on the south side leads into a hall, which runs through the center of the house.

Mrs. Talbott was lying down, with her head at the foot of the bed.

The Doctor was struck in the right breast, the ball passing clear through him, drawing blood on the calf of the leg of his wife, and striking in the plastering. The ball is a large, conical one, weighing an ounce and a half, being full large enough to be shot out of a shotgun.

He had his hand up to his breast when the ball struck him and his thumb and middle finger was shot off. His wound was indeed, a fearful one. To most men it would have meant almost instant death, but the iron will of the Doctor sustained him until two o'clock the following afternoon, when he felt his end approaching. His family were called around him, and he took each by the hand and bade one and all a sad farewell. At two and a half o'clock p. m. his eyes closed in death, and all was over.

Hearing of the tragedy early Sunday morning, we drove out to the Doctor's residence, reaching it about eleven o'clock a. m. We found him in a dingy room, the diagram of which has just been given. It was a most uninviting looking place. The floor was bare, the bed poor, the windows covered with tread-bare curtains, and every thing about the room bore the looks of poverty and decay. He was very weak from loss of blood, but his mind seemed perfectly clear. He was the same Dr. Talbott as in health. His iron will showed itself in every action, his ruling passion in every word. The cold, cruel hand of Death could not divert his mind from that which

had been its goal for years. Reaching forth his hand as calmly as if he were going on a journey for a day, he exclaimed: "I am glad to see you. Speak well of me when I am gone; I would do as much for you." "Oh God!" he groaned, "this is terrible. Shot down like a dog in my own house! Abraham Lincoln was assassinated because he dared to free a race, I, because I dared to speak against the money power of the land." "Doctor," we asked, "do you have any idea who did this terrible crime?" He shook his head sadly, and said: "No, I have none. I have no enemies that I know of, who would do such a deed. I sometimes think my opposition to national banks has so aroused and alarmed the bankers that they have sent a secret agent here to assassinate me. Just think," he added with a glow of pride. "I was ready to publish a book which would have revolutionized the whole system of finance. Last week I was in correspondence with a candidate, [Chambers—Ed.] for the Vice Presidency of the United States, and now, here I am shot down in the midst of my family by some cursed assassin. My life's work cut short. O, 'tis hard! 'Tis hard!" and he groaned in anguish of spirit and turned away his head.

This was the only time we saw him express any emotion. He bore his sufferings without complaint. As far as we know, not a word of the future escaped him. When Sheriff Toel found the bullet, and it was shown him, he quietly remarked: "That means death." But he struggled manfully against it to the end, and only yielded to the grim monster at the last moment.

After his death a Coroner's jury was summoned and the following testimony of Mrs. Talbott and Albert threw all the light on the homicide which is known at present:

TESTIMONY OF MRS. TALBOTT.

My name is Belle Talbott, I am wife of deceased; am forty-seven years of age. On the night of the homicide, the deceased, myself, and my oldest son, Albert Perry Talbott, were in the room, where the Doctor was shot. In the room immediately above us on the second floor, Jennie and Angie Talbott, aged respectively eleven and thirteen years,