

The Tragic Story Of The Short Life Of Bridget Baker.

14/05/1888

The news of a terrible murder was received in Brisbane on Saturday night by the police.

From the particulars to hand, it seems that a little girl named Bridget Baker, the daughter of a selector at the Bunya Reserve, on the South Pine-road, about fourteen miles from Brisbane, had been taking her father's dinner to him, to the place he was working at, about a mile and a-half from home.

She was accompanied by her little brother, a boy of about 4 years of age.

The girl, who was hardly 9 years of age, delivered the dinner to her father at about 3 o'clock, and then left to return home.

The road she followed was simply a bridle track through thick scrub, and the little boy states that when about half way along the road a blackfellow suddenly jumped out of the scrub in front of them, caught up the girl in his arms, and took her away into the scrub.

The boy at once ran home, where he arrived breathless and crying, and informed his mother of what had taken place.

From the fact that the girl had been horribly outraged some twelve months ago near the same spot, and then by a man whom she described as being a blackfellow, the unfortunate woman became almost distracted.

She at once ran out to the spot described by the boy calling to her aid in the meantime a neighbouring selector.

On arriving at the place the terror of the pair was excited to the utmost extent by observing stains of blood upon the track and upon the scrub in the vicinity.

A few minutes' search disclosed the fact that there was a well-defined track of blood marks leading away into the scrub, and this was immediately followed, the horrible evidences becoming more distinct at every step, and also being found on the bushes about the height of a man's shoulder, as though a body had been carried through the scrub.

After a quarter of a mile had been traversed, the lifeless body of the child was found, bearing every indication that a most brutal murder had been committed.

The body was lying on the back, with the clothing saturated with blood.

The head of the child had been cut and bruised in many places, and blood was still flowing from the wounds, which were of a fearful nature.

Other evidences pointed to the fact that the child had been outraged before being murdered in a most brutal fashion.

The news was brought into town on Saturday night by a mounted messenger, and communicated to the police.

Dr. Wray (Government medical officer), Detective Grimshaw, and Mounted-detective Johnston were at once despatched to the scene of the tragedy; but Dr. Wray and one of the detectives returned yesterday morning.

The detective went back to South Pine almost immediately with two members of the mounted police and a black tracker, and last night every effort was being made to capture the murderer, who it is believed has not had time to make good his escape.

The locality where the murder took place is described as being very densely covered with scrub. The timber for some distance around has been ring-barked and become bare, and a very heavy growth of lantana covers the ground.

All the appearances lead the police to believe that the child was first of all outraged close to the track, and then for some reason not yet apparent murdered at the same spot. The wounds, which are confined to the head, were evidently inflicted with some blunt instrument, such as a heavy stick.

Immediately after committing the murder the blackfellow must have taken the body upon his shoulders and carried it away to hide, this being clearly shown by the blood marks on the lantana bushes, which correspond with the marks upon the ground.

It will be remembered that about twelve months ago the girl was outraged in a most brutal fashion near the same spot, the injuries she received nearly resulting in her death.

The girl stated that her assailant on that occasion was a blackfellow, and as the little boy who accompanied the girl on Saturday says that it was a blackfellow who then took her into the scrub, there is reason to believe that the same man is guilty in both cases, and that revenge perhaps for the pursuit to which he may have been subjected on the previous occasion is the motive for the murder in this instance.

Dr. Wray, the Government medical officer, who made an examination of the body, states that he left town at midnight, and arrived at the scene of the murder at about 3 o'clock yesterday morning.

He found that the body had been conveyed to the residence of the parents, where it had been laid out and washed, and the clothes removed.

He made a post-mortem examination of the body; and, beginning with the head, which seemed to have been battered in a most ferocious manner, he found at the back three scalp wounds, penetrating to the bone.

On the top of the head there was a most peculiar wound, which the doctor was unable to account for in any way. There were two round holes the size of a florin, about an eighth of an inch apart, and the skull had been driven in upon the brain, which was protruding. The two wounds made the form of the figure "8."

In front of the ear on the left hand side of the head there was another wound penetrating to the bone, the nose was broken, and there were contusions all round the throat as though an attempt had been made to strangle the child or stop her cries.

From the small of the back to the shoulders were contusions, which made the doctor think that the child must have been dragged some distance. There were also contusions on the thighs, and numerous evidences of outrage.

The injuries, the doctor states, must have been caused by heavy blows with some blunt instrument.

When he saw the body life must have been extinct some ten or twelve hours, but the mother stated that when the body was found, shortly after 3 o'clock on Saturday afternoon, it was quite warm.

14/05/1888

A girl, aged 9 years named Bridget Baker, was murdered at Bunya, South Pine road, on Saturday afternoon the murderer is supposed to be a blackfellow, who had outraged the girl on a previous occasion. (1887)

15/05/1888

The investigation into the murder of the girl Bridget Baker, whose mutilated remains were found near her father's home at Bunya last Saturday afternoon, has taken an extraordinary though not altogether unexpected turn.

Suspicion has attached to the parents of the unfortunate child on account of the similarity of the story now told with that of the previous outrage of the girl twelve months ago, and the fact that in both instances a blackfellow was said to have committed the offence.

Nothing at all reliable could be elicited from the little boy who was with his sister at the time of the fatal outrage, as his accounts have been most contradictory.

From circumstances, which came to the knowledge of Senior-constable Primrose yesterday, he arrested Mary Baker the mother of the murdered child, and had her conveyed to the Brisbane lockup.

The woman gave her age as 30; neither her appearance nor her behaviour is at all prepossessing. She did not appear to be greatly distressed at her imprisonment.

Mrs. Baker remained in the lockup during last night and will appear this morning before Mr. Pinnock, P.M., charged on suspicion with the murder of her daughter.

After the evidence regarding the arrest, Inspector Lewis will probably apply for a remand that further inquiries may be made.

17/05/1888

Inspector Lewis has received a report from Detective Grimshaw, who is in charge of the police, detectives, and trackers who are now engaged in endeavouring to bring the perpetrator of the Bunya outrage and murder to justice.

From this report it appears that the affair is a most mysterious one, and the work of the detectives is beset with difficulties on all sides.

Good tracks of the murderer's feet were discovered in certain places, but when they were followed up it was found that they had been blurred or obliterated by the zealous though careless search parties, which had trampled over the place where the murder was first discovered.

Added to this difficulty is the fact that the little boy, who was with Bridget Baker when the man seized her, makes so many different statements that it is impossible to tell which to believe. He now says that they sat down on the journey for some time, and, after they had risen and going some distance into the scrub, a blackfellow, dressed in a coat, trousers, and

cap, rushed out from the bushes, seized the girl, snatched the dinner basket from her hand, and taking out the knife struck her on the face with it, and then carried her into the scrub.

Mounted-constable Primrose found the knife, which was in the basket in the scrub, and it looks like a weapon with which all the wounds with the exception of those on the skull might have been caused. These must have been inflicted with some blunt heavy instrument.

The police have now evidence that there has been a man, supposed to be an aboriginal, hanging about the district for a good many months. He has not been seen by anyone, but he has been in the habit of pilfering provisions from the houses in the neighbourhood, and the footprints he has left after these raids lead to the belief that the thief was a blackfellow, and besides no struggling whites have been seen about Bunya.

The police are under the impression that the man who murdered Sarah Baker is identical with the ruffian who outraged her a year ago.

The country round about is very rough and mountainous, and there are indications which show that the murderer made for the rocky and heavily timbered country forming the head of the South Pine River, which the blackfellow is supposed to make his headquarters.

The police have been very hard at work, and for two days were almost without food.

On Tuesday night Inspector Lewis sent up an abundant supply of provisions.

There are now two black trackers at the scene of the murder and a number of foot and mounted police, and detectives are scouring the district.

26/05/1888

At the Police Court yesterday morning Mary Baker was brought up on remand, charged with the murder of her daughter, Bridget Baker, near Bunya, on Saturday, 12th May. Mr. P Pinnock, P. M., presided, and the other gentlemen on the bench were Messrs. W. Widdop, J. Petrie, W. F. F. Jones, W. Power, M.L.C., A. R. James, W. Wilkins, J. D. Bergin, and J. W. Leo. Inspector Lewis again prosecuted.

The evidence previously taken having been read over to the accused the following witnesses were examined:- Hugh O'Loan, constable, stationed at Pine River, he said that he knew the accused and her husband, Peter Baker; he was at their house, which is situated about half a mile from Bunya State school, on Sunday, the 13th instant, and saw Senior-constable Primrose and others there; he produced a rough map of the district, and corroborated the evidence given at a former sitting of the court by Primrose as to the finding of traces of blood, and the taking of measurements; he knew the child Bridget Baker when alive, and saw the body, which he examined; all the bleeding must have been from wounds on the head; he was at Baker's house on Saturday, 10th instant, along with Inspector Lewis; the inspector took a photograph from a book, which was on a ledge in the room, and handed it to him; he knew the original of the photograph, whose name was Thomas McPhee, at Mountain Camp, about eight miles from Baker's house; he saw McPhee and showed him the photograph; McPhee made a statement to him at the time.

Senior-Constable Primrose deposed that he saw the accused at her house on Sunday, 13th instant; he asked her if she had any suspicion of who had committed the murder, and she replied, "Yes, 'tis some of the Italians, it is no blackfellow"; two Italians live at Bunya; he

then asked accused what she meant, and she stated that she meant Kongnasai, or some of the men who were camped with him; between 6 and 7 o'clock on the morning of that day Mrs. Baker, with her son James, a boy of 6 or 7 years of age, accompanied him to the spot, where the body was reported to have been found; some conversation took place between him and the accused; he asked her what she thought could have been the motive for the murder, and she answered she did not think that outrage had had anything to do with it; on going up the track to within 100 yards of Morgan's barn, the prisoner, pointing to a spot towards the hill, said that was the place where Jamie came running down screaming that a blackfellow had carried Bridget into the scrub at the spot where the clot of blood was discovered; she said it was there she found the child's hat and bag; on either side was thick lantana bush; accused further stated that when she sent off her husband's dinner, she put a table knife with a broken handle into the bag, and that when she found the bag on the track the knife was not in it; a careful search was made for the knife, but no trace of it could be found.

Some eighty yards further on there was a pool of blood, as if the body had been laid down at that place; a little distance off Mrs Baker showed the spot where she said Ellen Collins and she found Bridget's body; on portions of the track the marks of blood were very distinct; in reply to another question, she said she had shown him enough, and would do no more, and, pointing to Detective Grimshaw, asked what he meant by being there; he told her it was his duty to do what he could to find the child's murderer, and accused again answered in the same words and turned to leave the spot; he asked her to wait a bit, and at that moment Grimshaw, Johnston, and O'Loan came up; accused went away, and witness, Grimshaw, and Johnston returned along the track; about 3ft from the spot where he first saw the clot of blood he found at the foot of a bush a broken-handled table knife; it was not hidden, and he thought that if it had been there when he for the first time visited the place he would have seen it; on the 17th instant he was in company with Constable Orton and a black tracker named Roberts; the latter showed him a piece of brown paper with marks apparently of blood upon it; in consequence of what he was told by Roberts he went with Orton to the vicinity of Morgan's barn; there Roberts picked up another piece of brown paper, also with marks apparently of blood upon it; a number of pieces of similar paper were subsequently got about that place; on the 13th May he had a conversation with the accused; he asked if the chemise the child wore at the time of the murder had any stains upon it except that of blood, and she answered in the negative; he then asked her if she thought her daughter had been outraged, and she replied that she did not think so; she also stated that she had washed the chemise on bringing it home; he did not see the chemise, but saw the girl's dress, which was saturated with blood; accused said that when she washed Bridget's body she also washed the chemise, not thinking anything about the matter.

Constable Orton, stationed at Pine River, said that on the 17th instant he was alone with the accused in her house; he asked her what had made the dog so uneasy the night before; he had been encamped at Collins's farm, and had heard the animal furiously barking; accused said that Tom McPhee was down last night, and that was the reason the dog made such a noise; she asked him if any more pieces of brown paper had been found, and he replied he did not know; Mrs. Baker then said, "Tom McPhee killed the child"; he thereupon asked

her why she suspected McPhee of being the murderer, and she answered that she had her own reasons.

Accused: Did I not say it might be Tom McPhee who left the papers about? Witness: No.

Accused: That is what I said.

The magistrate: Give me the very words the prisoner used.

Witness: Tom McPhee killed the child.

This concluded the hearing of the evidence, and the prisoner was remanded till Thursday, 31st instant.

29/05/1888

Ever since the arrest of Mrs. Baker, who stands charged with the murder of her daughter at Bunya on the 12th instant, the police have been busily engaged making further inquiries with reference to the tragedy.

It has been found that the charge made by Mrs. Baker against Thomas M'Phee is utterly without foundation, as the man on the day upon which the murder was committed was engaged in building a sheep pen at a place seven miles from Bunya, and all his movements on that day have been traced.

Satisfactory evidence to prove an alibi in the case of the Italian Conngacei has also been obtained, for it is known that on the day in question he came into Brisbane in a spring cart and was present at the polling for the South Brisbane election.

Other evidence has been obtained which goes to show that no blackfellow had any share in the murder, but although a circumstantially supported theory can be set up the whole thing is still to a large extent involved in mystery.

1/06/1888

Mary Barker, charged with the murder of her daughter Bridget at Bunya, was brought up at the Police Court yesterday, and after some, further evidence had been taken was remanded until Friday, 8th June.

1/06/1888

Mrs. Baker again appeared on remand at the City Police Court yesterday morning before Mr. P. Pinnock, P.M., and a full bench of justices, charged with murder committed on her daughter Bridget, near Bunya, on the 12th May Inspector Lewis prosecuted. The evidence taken at the previous examinations of witnesses was read over to the prisoner.

Dr. Wray, Government medical officer, deposed that on Sunday, 13th May, he went to Mrs. Baker's house at Bunya, accompanied by Detectives Grimshaw and Johnstone; he saw the accused there, and the dead body of a female child apparently about 9 years of age; he made an external examination of the body, and immediately after a post-mortem examination in the presence of Senior-constable Primrose; he found a cut on the left temple 1 in. in length, penetrating into the bone; on the right cheek, close to the nose, a wound 1¼ in. in length, and also penetrating into the bone; the nose was fractured, and there was a wound on each side, cutting the cartilage; he found on the skull three cuts, one about 1¼ in. in length, one 1½ in. long, and the other 1 in. in length; through one of the

wounds the brain protruded; on removing the scalp he found the skull fractured; under two of these wounds, two circular pieces of bone were penetrating into the brain; the fractures were joined, and formed the figure 8; there was a slight wound on the top of the head, about half an inch in length; there was a bruise on the right side of the neck about an inch in diameter, and also marks of bruises and contusions on the back between the shoulders; these marks, which were three or four in number, gave him the impression of having been caused by a light cane, and were 5in. or 6in. long; those on the legs had the appearance as if they had been produced by a birch or a few twigs bound together; the marks on the back and legs had, in his opinion, been caused before death, but had been quite recently made; if the marks were made on the day of the death of the child they would be more distinct on Monday by daylight than when he made the post-mortem by candle-light on Sunday morning; there were no bruises on the child's thighs, but the private parts had, in his opinion, been cut with a bluntish knife; he did not think that the last-mentioned injuries could have been caused by the child having been outraged by a man; the hair on the head was cut very short for a girl; the skull of a child of 9 years would be easily fractured; he made an examination of the internal organs, and found them healthy; in his opinion the immediate cause of the child's death was compound fracture of the skull; the wounds inflicted on the child's private parts would not cause immediate death; the body of the girl was generally in a healthy condition; the wounds on the back of the head did not exactly correspond in shape with the fractures on the skull; there was also a wound on the top of the head half an inch in diameter, and not penetrating the skull; the scalp wounds could have been caused either by a gouging chisel or a piece of blue metal or quartz with a moderate sharp-cutting edge; the wounds he described as having been caused by a cane or birch could not have been caused by the child being dragged along the ground; supposing that, some matted hair and blood were found adhering to the stump now shown him, and the stump were almost buried in the ground, considerable force must have been used in striking the child's head against it in order to leave the hair and blood upon the stump.

By Mr. PINNOCK: A child, after receiving such injuries as he had described on the head and skull, might live some minutes, but would be unconscious and not able to scream.

Hetty Collins, daughter of Elias Collins, residing at Surrey Farm, Bunya, said she had known Mrs. Baker about six years; she remembered that on Saturday, 12th May, when she was in her father's house, her attention was attracted by someone screaming in the direction of accused's house; that was at half past 2 o'clock; she ran up the road towards Baker's; she met Mrs. Baker on the road running towards her; witness said to the accused, "What's the matter, Mrs. Baker?"; Mrs. Baker, replied, "My Jimmie came running down to tell me a blackfellow had run away with Bridget"; she said to Mrs. Baker, "Where has Bridget been?" she replied that Bridget and Jamie had been with their father's dinner; the accused asked witness if she would come and tell Mr. Baker; and she accompanied the accused to her husband, who was working on the Bunya-road; witness told Baker that his wife had told her; the three of them then returned as far as the road that turns off to Baker's house, and she went home; when she first saw Mrs. Baker the accused wore a blue and white striped dress, tucked up from the bottom, and tied round the waist; she wore no head covering; witness noticed Mrs. Baker's hands were soiled, but saw no traces of blood stains about the person of the accused; the dress produced was similar to that worn by Mrs. Baker, and she did not now see any marks of blood upon it; after leaving the accused and

her husband, witness went straight home, which she reached at five minutes past 3 o'clock; she knew a man called William Cagnacci, to whose house she immediately went, but did not find him at home; Cagnacci's house is about half a mile off; the accused is a woman of a violent temper.

By the Accused: She said Mrs. Baker had a violent temper because she had come to her father's house and stormed at her mother; swearing dreadfully.

By the Bench: That occurred over two years ago and was the only time she had seen Mrs. Baker in a violent temper; she was not on intimate terms with the accused.

Wm. Cagnacci, a farmer, residing at Bunya, 200 or 300 yards from the State school, said he knew the accused; on Saturday, 12th May, he left his place at a quarter-past 6 in the morning to come to Brisbane; he was engaged by Mr. Bridge, the schoolmaster at Bunya, to drive him and his daughter into the city; he left Brisbane to go back to Bunya on the same day shortly after 3 o'clock, taking Mr. Bridge and his daughter in the spring cart; he had known the accused nearly seven years, and considered her a woman of a quick and cruel temper, and had seen her strangle a dog which she possessed and also a cat by means of a rope; when the accused lived next to him at the German paddock, he had seen her throw a knife and cup at her daughter Bridget; at the time he asked her if she wished to murder the girl, and she replied that the knife would not cut butter; he had seen Mrs. Baker in a bad temper frequently; he knew nothing whatever of how Bridget Baker came by her death.

By the Bench: The occasion he had mentioned was the only one he had seen the accused guilty of any act of cruelty towards her children.

The accused put several questions to the witness, but did not shake his testimony, and then said that the statements he had made were not true.

Thomas McPhee, farm labourer, deposed that on 12th May he was working at Mr. McConnaghy's at Mountain Camp, about nine miles from Mrs. Baker's house; he had known the accused about two years; on the day in question he was engaged in building a milking shed with a man named Jonathan Sloan; on Wednesday night, 16th May, he was at Mrs. Baker's house from twenty minutes past 7 till twenty minutes past 8; the dogs were barking about the place; he said to accused and her husband, "This is an awful thing about the murder," and he asked if there was anybody to blame, to which accused replied, "No, for Cagnacci was in town"; he had heard that Mrs. Baker had said that he killed the child; he knew the girl Bridget Baker; he did not see her on Saturday, 12th May: on that day he never left the stockyard at Mountain Camp; while he worked about Bunya he frequently visited at Baker's house; he gave a photograph of himself to Mrs. Baker about eight weeks ago.

Aaron Collins, son of Elias Collins, deposed he lived with his father at Bunya; had known the defendant for the past six or seven years; remembered Saturday, the 12th instant; at about 2.30 p.m. on that day he was working on his father's farm, about 300 or 400 yards from the house, when his attention was attracted by hearing someone scream; immediately afterwards he saw his brother Frederick, and in consequence of something his brother told him witness went to Baker's house; he there saw the three children - Johnny, Jimmy, and Martin Baker; Jimmy was playing; witness spoke to him and then returned to the farm by

the same track as he had come to the Baker's house; on the track as he was going to Baker's house he found a girl's hat and a bag [witness here pointed out on a plan the place where he found the article].

[At this juncture Mr. Blood Smyth entered the court and informed the bench that he appeared for the defendant.]

Witness, continuing, said: The hat and bag shown him were those he saw on the track; any person passing along that track could have seen them; as he was returning by that track he saw the defendant about two yards from Morgan's barn; she was alone; the defendant spoke to him, saying "Oh, my Bridget, my Bridget! I can't find her"; witness said, "Where is Mr. Baker?"; defendant replied, "He is down the track searching for Bridget"; defendant had a hat and bag in her hand similar to those witness had seen on the track; she held out the bag and said, "Look at the blood on it"; witness looked and saw what appeared to be spots of blood; defendant went on towards her home and witness went along the track in search of the defendant's husband; at the junction of the old track and the new, where witness saw the hat and bag, she met the defendant's husband,

Peter Baker; he had a conversation with Baker; witness searched the spot and saw traces of what appeared to be blood; he followed the traces by himself along the bridle track for about twenty yards, going towards the bridge marked "E" on the plan; he afterwards saw Mr. Baker and his son Jimmy standing a short distance up the road; five minutes after he first saw the defendant he saw her again in company with her husband and son Jimmy; in that time the defendant had had time to go to her home and return to where he saw her husband and Jimmy standing; witness called out to them, "I have found traces of blood"; the three of them came to where witness was; they all then followed the traces of what appeared to be blood down the bridle track about 100 yards; the blood was on the left side of the track as they proceeded; the blood on the track was very distinct; the track down to the bridge was three or four feet wide; at the end of the 160 yards the traces of blood turned off at right angles from the track into a thick scrub; they followed the traces seventy or eighty yards when they met with a large patch of what appeared to be blood near a stump; they then began to search the scrub, and a few minutes afterwards Peter Baker left, saying he would go for the police or send a message; witness, the accused, and Jimmy Baker then continued the search, and in about an hour's time they found the body of the child; witness saw it first; the accused was a few yard behind witness; the body was lying on its back; the clothes of the child were over the head back and front; the body from the breast downwards was naked; on discovering the body the defendant exclaimed, "Oh, my Bridget; Oh, my Bridget"; "she is murdered"; witness could not see the face or head of the child at that time; the defendant pulled the clothes off the face of the child, who appeared to be dead; the defendant took up the body of the child in her arms and carried it about 120 yards towards home, and then asked witness to carry the child up the hill; that would be past the spot where he saw the hat and bag; he took the child from defendant; the body of the child rested on his right arm; he believed the defendant was facing him when he took the child; he carried the body to within eighty or ninety yards of Morgan's barn, and the defendant then took it from him; he did not go all the way with the defendant; the body of the child was just warm when he took it from the defendant; in carrying the child he got some blood on his clothes, but not much; he produced the shirt and trousers he was wearing at the time; the marks on the shirt were caused by blood from the child, and the

marks on the left leg of the trousers were either caused by blood from the body or also from off the bushes; after accused had been carrying the child witness noticed some blood on her dress; he did not notice any wounds on the body of the child except those on the head; where he first saw the body of the child lying the ground was sloping; the head was down the slope; the track along which they went used to be a dray track.

John Cash, timber-getter at South Pine, deposed that on Monday, the 14th May, he was at the house of the accused; he went there to go to the funeral of the child Bridget Baker; he saw Sergeant O'Loan there, and spoke to him in front of the house near some orange trees; after speaking to O'Loan the accused came and spoke to witness; she said, "Who do they suspect for doing this?"; witness replied, "I don't know"; defendant said, "Do they suspect me for doing it?"; that was in the afternoon before the child was buried; the body was taken to the grave in a spring cart.

George Biggs, farmer, residing at Bunya, deposed that he took a parcel to the defendant about the middle or towards the end of March; it was about 18in. to 2ft. square, and was wrapped in brown paper; he believed it was one large sheet of paper; the parcel contained a dress for the defendant; he took the parcel to his own house and the defendant's husband took it away.

Catherine Dunlea, wife of Patrick Dunlea, deposed she lived on the Bald Hills near the South Pine River; on Monday, the 14th May, she was at the defendant's house; she asked the defendant if she suspected anybody of the murder of the child.

The witness here objected to repeat the words used by the defendant in replying, but offered to write them.

As Mr. Blood Smyth raised no objection the witness was allowed to write the words.

Mr. Lewis then read the words aloud "Who the devil should I suspect for it? Let the bastard lot find it out" (meaning the police).

Witness continued: Defendant said the Italians had done it.

Constable Orton, recalled and resworn, deposed that the witness Aaron Collins had pointed out to him a spot marked "D" on the plan; witness was searching near that spot with a black tracker on Sunday last, and he found a stump standing about 6in. or 7in. out of the ground; he noticed on the stump some small fine hairs and what appeared to be blood near the root of the stump; [witness here produced the stump, and pointed out the blood and hair on it]; he took some leaves off the stump on which was what appeared to be blood; [leaves produced]; the stump was about 15in. or 18in. from the spot pointed out by Collins; he also noticed about 18in. from the stump a clump of grass, which also appeared to be stained with blood; on Monday, 28th May, he dug out the stump in the presence of Senior-constable Primrose and Elias Collins.

At this stage Inspector Lewis informed the bench that he did not propose to call any more witnesses that day, and applied for a remand till Friday, the 8th June, when he hoped to conclude the case.

The bench remanded the accused accordingly.

9/06/1888

At the Police Court yesterday, before Mr. Philip Pinnock, P.M., and a full bench of justices of the peace, Mary Baker, on remand, was again brought up on suspicion of having murdered her daughter Bridget at Bunya on the 12th May last. The court was crowded. Inspector Lewis appeared to prosecute, and Mr. Blood Smyth for the defence.

Garibaldi Atkins, a farm labourer, residing at South Pine River, deposed that he was at the defendant's house on Sunday, 13th May last; he saw the dead body of a little girl; he did not know the girl before; the defendant's husband was crying and the defendant told her husband to shut up; she came into the room where witness and one Thomas Dunne were standing and said to Dunne, "Why the hell don't you chuck him out, Tom?"; witness then went outside; before defendant's husband came in with the coffin she said "He wouldn't go out of the place when the first thing happened but the bastard will have to go now"; witness understood her to refer to what had taken place on a previous occasion when a blackfellow was said to have ravished the child.

Arthur Tester, a bushman, residing at the South Pine River, deposed that he was at the house of the accused on Sunday, 13th May, and saw her husband there; he saw him afterwards in the evening, but could not say the exact time; it was dark; he knew the deceased child when she was alive; Baker was crying at the time mentioned over the body of the child, and accused said, "Shut up," and added "Why the bloody hell don't you chuck him out, Tom?" Tom was a young fellow who lived there; accused then said they were a lazy lot of bastards; previous to this she said "That the bastard would not go out of the place the first time it happened, but he would have to go out now"; witness knew the locality pretty well - it was very lonesome.

Detective Grimshaw, stationed in Brisbane, deposed that he knew the accused now before the court. He remembered Saturday, 12th of May last; on that day accompanied Dr. Wray to the house of the accused, together with Senior-constable Primrose; it was about half-past 2 o'clock on the Sunday morning when they got there; he saw the body of the female child there, and was present when Dr. Wray made a post-mortem examination of it; he saw the accused Mary Baker, now before the court, there; said to her, "Do you suspect anyone of murdering the child?"; she replied, "I've told all I know about it"; witness replied, "I want to know; you have told me nothing yet"; Senior-constable Primrose said, "This is Detective Grimshaw, and we want to try and find the murderer, and we want you to tell us all you know about the matter; "Do you think it was a blackfellow?"; she replied, "I don't know, I suspect some of them Italians"; witness said, "Do you suspect any of them in particular?"; she replied, "I suspect Cagnacci"; and in answer to another question she said he must have got some of the others to do it; witness asked her if she knew anyone else who was likely to have done it, and she replied, "I don't know I can't tell you any more"; witness said, "In what position was the body lying when you found it?"; she said, "Ask young Collins; I did not take particular notice, he found it"; witness said, "What did Jimmy say to you when he came home?" meaning the child; she replied, "He told me a blackfellow took Bridget into the bush"; witness asked, "What did you do?" and she replied, "I ran on to the hill and cooeyed; I then went to the slip-panel, where I met Miss Collins, and she went with me to my husband"; witness said to accused, "Where are the clothes that Bridget was wearing?"; this conversation took place in the room where the body was laid out; she went to the end of the room and brought witness a small dress and petticoat (produced); they had what appeared to be blood on them; witness said, "Wasn't

she wearing a chemise?" she replied, "Yes," and went and brought the article, which he now produced; witness noticed that there was a piece out of it, and that it had apparently been recently washed; he said to the accused, exposing the side from which the piece was cut, "Why did you wash this chemise?" she replied, "I did not think it was any harm, I wanted it to put on the child"; he said, "Where is the piece that is cut out of this?" she replied, "I do not know, I could not find it"; the stains on the chemise (now produced) were on it when he found it, and they appeared to be blood stains; the accused did not say anything about the piece being cut out of the chemise till he spoke to her about it; witness afterwards accompanied the boy Jimmy a distance of about 400 yards along a track from the house leading to the Bunya-road; the boy pointed out a place to him where there appeared to be blood; they then crossed a culvert over a creek and he turned off into a scrubby bush where he saw Senior-constable Primrose and Detective Johnson, a man named Fitzgerald, and the accused; he was shown two other places where there appeared to be blood; on Tuesday, 15th May, he went back to the place where the body was said to have been found; he was accompanied by Detective Johnson and a black tracker named Carlo; about fifty yards from where the body was said to have been found he saw Detective Johnson pick up four pieces of rag; witness had since fitted those rags into that part of the chemise from which a piece was missing (pieces produced by Detective Johnson and fitted into the torn chemise, exactly corresponding to the shape of the missing fabric); those pieces were in the same condition now as when found, except that there had been four small pieces cut out by the analytical chemist; he could see no difference between those portions that had been cut out and the chemise - the stains were apparently of the same character on both; there was a little short circular cut on the chemise, and there was a wound of exactly similar mark on the face of the deceased child; witness produced a portion of a second child's chemise which the accused had handed to him; it was in the same state then as now, except that a small piece had been cut out for the analytical chemist.

Mr. Blood Smyth, declined to cross-examine the witness.

Detective Johnson deposed that he was stationed in Brisbane and knew the accused now before the court; he went to her place on the morning of the 13th May; he had a conversation with the accused; he said, "This is a sad affair; I am very sorry for your trouble; I wish I knew the blackfellow who did it"; she replied, "No blackfellow ever did it"; on Tuesday, 15th, witness was searching the bush near where the body was said to have been found in company with Detective Grimshaw; he found the four pieces of rag (produced) and handed them over to Mr. Mar, the analytical chemist; they were in the same state then as they were now.

Senior-constable Primrose, recalled, deposed that he remembered a conversation which took place between the accused and her husband on the subject of the boy Jimmy; witness was camping at Baker's house on that night; witness said to Peter Baker, the husband of the accused, "Was Saturday the first day the girl and boy took your dinner?" Baker replied, "Yes," and added that herself, pointing to his wife, had brought it to him before; witness said it was strange that a blackfellow should come across her on that day; the accused replied, "Didn't I tell you before it was no blackfellow, it was Cagnacci's lot, Cagnacci had a spite against me because I blamed him for stealing a muscovy drake"; She added, to her husband, "Didn't I want you to leave this place long ago?"; she then got excited and said to

her husband, "Now, call me a liar"; he remembered Monday, 14th of May; examined the body of Bridget Baker on that afternoon after the doctor had made the post-mortem examination; the marks on the back were more distinct than when he first saw them; when he made an examination of the ground about 130 yards from the spot marked "D" on the exhibit, he found a paper previously mentioned by him bearing what appeared to be blood stains, and found at different points up to accused's gates similar pieces of paper; he remembered himself and others going out to the Bunya on a subsequent date; little Jimmy Baker was with them at the time, about eighty yards in front of them and at point "D"; he told witness something, and pointed up the track to the right of point "D" going towards Baker's house and up a hill; he could see about twenty yards up the hill, but not to the top of it; from point "D", where the first blood was said to have been found, to the culvert over the creek was about eighty yards, and the width of the track was ten yards, so that any person who had carried the dead body of the child must have carried it for eighty yards along an open track ten yards wide; on Saturday last, 2nd June, witness made another search of the prisoner's cottage, and found a pair of scissors (which he now produced); they were hanging up on a nail in the room where he first saw the dead body; the scissors were blunt; he had cut cloth with the scissors and cut it in the same jagged way as the chemise produced was cut [Mr. Smyth objected to this evidence, and objection sustained by the bench]; if the child had been struck on the head with those scissors, and the handles were struck with a stone or other heavy weapon, it would have made a wound in the shape of the figure 8; he handed over those scissors to Mr. Mar for examination, also a knife, pieces of blotting-paper, the hat, bag, and the dress which the accused was said to have worn at the time, and a piece of rag; it was a clean piece of calico that he tried to cut with the scissors.

Robert Mar deposed that he was Government analyst for Queensland and an analytical chemist; he knew the various police-constables and detectives concerned in this case, who had handed over to him various articles [list read]; among the articles he received from Senior constable Primrose was a knife; on several of the other articles he received from the senior-constable, including six pieces of paper that were pinned together, there were blood stains; there were bloodstains on the body and skirt of the woman's dress, the knife, scissors, and a piece of linen rag; he found no stains on the rag or hat; he could not say what blood it was on some of the articles handed him by Detective Grimshaw; he likewise found blood on other articles, including the chemise, dress, and petticoat, and the four pieces of rag he had obtained from Johnson; he likewise found blood stains on the grass that had been handed over to him; he had not yet finished his examination; on the stump of wood he had not yet found any blood stains; he found the blood on the scissors near the hinge - a small spot; believed that the blood stains he found on the chemise and the four pieces of rag had been diluted with water; he believed there had been a considerable surface of blood on the chemise; the spot of blood on the scissors was not where he would expect it to have been made by cutting through the chemise, which had blood on it; the blood stain had not been cleaned; it was not impossible that the blood got on it by that means, but it was highly improbable.

By Mr. Blood Smyth: The scissors did not look as if any attempt had been made to clean them; the stain might have got on the scissors through their being thrown upon a rag on

which there was blood; he found a very little blood on the knife - about half-way up the blade; the mere wiping of dried blood would not, in all probability, remove it.

Inspector Lewis said that was as far as he could take the case that day, and he would accordingly ask for another remand for a week.

Mr. PINNOCK said the prisoner appeared to him to have been suffering great pain all the morning, and he thought she should be seen by a medical man.

Inspector Lewis said that she had the advantage of seeing the doctors at the gaol, and understood that she had done so.

The case was then further adjourned until next Friday.

16/06/1888

At the Police Court yesterday, before Mr. Philip Pinnock, P.M., and a "full bench of justices, Mary Baker, on remand, was again brought up on suspicion of having murdered her daughter, Bridget Baker, on the 12th May last at Bunya. Inspector Lewis prosecuted, and Mr. Blood Smyth appeared for the defence.

The accused sat with downcast face, but appeared to be listening to the evidence attentively.

Robert Mar, Government analytical chemist, recalled and resworn, deposed that the blood found in the articles he had examined, as stated in his previous evidence, was that of a mammal; if the blood had been obtained fresh it would not have been possible to say with absolute certainty after microscopic examination whether the blood was human; all the blood on the articles examined by him was the same with the exception of that on the knife and scissors; the fact of the blood coming into contact with a metallic substance would cause the difference in the blood that he saw; he examined the arm of the dress body (produced) and cut a piece out of it; if he were passing near enough to a person wearing this dress body he thought he would notice that the stains were blood; he remembered getting some human hairs from Detective Grimshaw; he did not find any hairs on the stump handed to him by Constable Orton, but noticed some on a leaf handed to him by that constable; he also received a portion of hair from Detective Grimshaw, which was said to have been got off a piece of wood which was taken off the stump he received from Constable Orton; the hairs he received from Detective Grimshaw and those on the leaf and piece of wood bore such a similar appearance that he believed they were hairs from the same person; it was all hair from the head of a human being; he handed all the articles he received from the police back to them; they were in the same state now as when he received them, except the pieces he had cut out for his tests; the blood stains were on the left arm of the dress body.

Detective Grimshaw recalled and resworn: Produced some hair which he had cut off the deceased Bridget Baker's head on Sunday morning, 13th May, at Bunya; handed this hair to Mr. Mar for examination; Mr. Mar had kept a portion of it.

David Charles Fitzgerald, a municipal inspector for the City of Brisbane, deposed he knew the defendant; he was at her house on Sunday morning, 13th May last: he had a conversation with the defendant respecting the deceased child Bridget Baker; he knew the child; the defendant said "Cagnacci, or some of the Italians have killed the child, I am glad

it is killed or dead;" witness could not say whether she said killed or dead; he said "Why?" defendant replied, "For what happened it before;" witness asked, "Did the child take the dinner to the father every day?" she replied, "No, I did ;" witness said, "It is a strange thing the same blackfellow met the child to-day that did twelve months ago before;" defendant replied, "I told you before it was no blackfellow who killed the child;" the dead body of the child was in the house at the time he saw it.

By Mr. Blood SMYTH: Defendant had told him of a blackfellow meeting the child twelve months before, she had never told him about a blackfellow meeting the child this time.

Sergeant O'Loan recalled and resworn: Looking at rough plan saw a culvert or bridge over the Blind Creek; from that point to Collins's house as the crow flies would be about 400 yards or about 700 yards following the track; Collins's house was visible from the top of the hill above Morgan's farm.

By Mr. Blood Smyth: He had measured the distances approximately.

Senior-constable Primrose, recalled and resworn, deposed he had produced twenty pieces of paper; he handed them to Mr. Mar; he produced all the pieces of paper he had produced in his evidence; the stains on the six pieces of paper are smeared; two of the pieces of paper were stuck together when he got them; the papers were in the same state now as when he got them, except that pieces had been cut out by Mr. Mar; the six pieces of paper pinned together were found between the culvert and Morgan's barn in an open patch in a line almost parallel to the track from Morgan's barn to the culvert; there was a narrow piece of scrub about ten yards through, dividing the track from the open piece of ground; if a person was carrying the body of the child from the point marked "D" on the plan to point marked "E", would be seen plainly from both sides of that scrub; he produced the articles he had handed to Mr. Mar; he had a pair of woman's boots at the barracks.

At this stage, Inspector Lewis said he had to get several other witnesses, and the doctor who would have to be examined would not be able to do what was wanted for another week. He would have the case finished that day next week.

Mr. BLOOD SMYTH said in that case he would apply for bail.

Mr. PINNOCK pointed out that the bench could not allow bail in a case of this kind, and Mr. Blood-Smyth having satisfied himself on the subject by referring to the Justices Act, the bench remanded the defendant till Friday next.

23/06/1888

Mary Baker, on remand, again appeared at the Police Court yesterday morning, before Messrs. P. Pinnock, P.M., W. Widdop, T. Forrester, W. Wilkins, A. McNish Fraser, G. Prentice, and W. H. Knowles, J.J.P., in answer to the charge of having murdered her child Bridget Baker, near Bunya.

Inspector Lewis prosecuted, and Mr. Blood Smyth appeared for the defence.

The following further evidence was taken: Dr. Hill said that on the 6th April, 1887, the deceased Bridget Baker was brought to his house by Senior-constable Fay for examination; he described the nature of the injuries, which he said were caused by a foreign substance; he thought a stick had been used; the child was admitted to the

Children's Hospital, where he attended it for some weeks, and when discharged the child was on a fair way to recovery.

Mr. BLOOD SMYTH objected to this evidence going in.

Mr. PINNOCK said he had carefully considered the matter, and he thought it was Inspector Lewis's duty to give this evidence. A note of the objection was taken.

Hettie Collins said she heard both cooeing and screaming on the day of the murder; it was that of a woman; she afterwards met the prisoner near the turn-off to witness's house; at Cagnacci's house she saw Mrs. Cagnacci, Presgardie, John Macmahon, and another woman.

Mr. BLOOD SMYTH objected to this evidence as totally irrelevant, but the bench admitted the evidence. Objection noted.

Aaron Collins, recalled and resworn, said he did not notice a piece cut out of the deceased's chemise when he found her first.

By Mr. SMYTH: The child was lying on her back when he found her; the hole in the chemise might have been underneath her.

Fred Collins also said he heard a woman crying out on the 12th May; he told his brother Aaron.

Richard Bridges said Cagnacci drove him into town on the day of the murder; his daughter and a miner accompanied him in; they left Bunya at 6.15 a.m., and started for Bunya again at 3.15 p.m.

John Macmahon, a miner, said he lived in a tent about 100 yards from Cagnacci's house; between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. on the 12th he was working in a gully; he then had his dinner in his tent; afterwards went to Cagnacci's house; he saw no strange man about the place on the 12th May.

George Biggs said he saw the prisoner on the 13th May at her own house; witness said, "This is a terrible affair about poor Bridget"; she replied, "Yes, I told Peter to clear out long ago (referring to her husband); I knew something worse would happen to her; but he wouldn't clear out, but he'll have to go now"; he afterwards asked her, "Where is Bridget?"; accused showed him into a room where the body was lying; accused lifted the head roughly and said, "Here's two holes here"; she afterwards said, "She's been ravished, too"; witness examined the body and said, "Oh, no!"; he had not seen any blackfellow about the district for four years; accused was not a timid woman, for frequently he had met the children and sometimes the prisoner at night on the junction of the roads waiting for provisions.

William George Hoare, a sawyer, living at South Brisbane, said he had lived near the accused at the North Pine six years ago; the child was then nearly 2 years old; he saw her strike the child with a stick.

Mr. SMYTH said it was disgraceful to admit this evidence.

The prisoner here commenced crying.

Mr. PINNOCK said he would not hear Mr. Smyth at all if he made such remarks.

Witness resumed: The blow knocked the child down and made her turn black in the face; prisoner was in an awful temper; she had a very rash temper; one day she "went for him" with a pitchfork.

M. Pares was then sworn as Italian interpreter, and Prosgardie was examined; he said he saw no stranger, black or white, about the neighbourhood on the day of the murder, or for some days previous to it.

Carlotta Cagnacci said that on the morning of the 12th May her husband went into town; she knew nothing about the murder.

Maria Gruandess deposed that she was at Cagnacci's house on the day of the murder; she did not know anything about the murder, nor did she see Bridget Baker on the 12th May.

Joe Nassilong, a Sandwich Island man, living at Mountain Camp, Samford, stated that he was at McPhee's all day on the 12th May; Tom McPhee was there all day too; he never saw Bridget Baker, nor did he know the prisoner.

Mary Ann McPhee said she resided at Mountain Camp with her brother-in-law, the former witness; her brother-in-law and witness were at their house all that day; she did not know the prisoner.

Dr. Wray deposed that on the 18th instant he received the body of the deceased, and made a further examination of the skull; he found one fracture (on the top of the head) more than on the first examination in all, three fractures; the last fracture alone might not have caused death, but it probably did; either of the other two might have caused it; witness then pointed out on the skull the fractures described [as soon as the prisoner saw her child's skull she began crying]; considerable force must have been used to inflict the injuries.

Senior-constable Primrose, recalled and resworn, said he saw the prisoner on the 7th April, 1887, at her house, when he told her he belonged to the police, and had come to make inquiries about an assault that was committed on her daughter Bridget on the 4th; in reply to witness, prisoner said, "Jimmie came running down there (pointing to a track in the scrub) and said that a blackfellow had rushed out and knocked Bridget down; Bridget came running along afterwards with her clothes up and her legs covered with blood; prisoner said she found no stains about her child, but she saw a piece of iron on the track, but the next morning it was gone; prisoner also described a blackfellow at the time; the prisoner also described the blackfellow who committed the last assault, and the two descriptions tallied exactly; on both occasions she said Jimmie had given her these descriptions; on the first occasion a strict search was made for the described blackfellow, but no trace was found; on the 14th May witness was at the defendant's house, where he heard Peter Baker say that his children brought his dinner about 1 o'clock on the 12th May, that they remained with him for about half-an-hour, and then ran away singing".

The case was then adjourned till Tuesday.

27/06/1888

Mary Barker, on remand on a charge of having murdered her daughter Bridget Baker at Bunya on the 12th May last, again appeared at the Police Court yesterday morning before

Messrs. P. Pinnock, P.M., W. Widdop, Geo. Wride, J. D. Bergin, James Hamilton, H. P. Fox, T. S. Hawkins, J. Barker, J. W. Leo, T. Forrester, J. Ruxton, and Samuel Unwin, J.J.P. Inspector Lewis prosecuted, and Mr. Blood Smyth appeared for the defence. The following additional evidence was elicited:

Mary Wright deposed that on the 7th April, 1887, she was at the Bunya State school; she knew both the prisoner and her deceased daughter Bridget; on the 4th April they both came to the schoolhouse; when witness first saw them the prisoner was half carrying and half dragging the deceased Bridget by an arm; Bridget's clothes were all up around her waist; defendant said that her little son had run home and told her that a blackfellow was killing Bridget; she also said she ran out of the house and then ran back and took up her baby; she ran along the track and met the two children; she asked Jimmie where the blackfellow was, and he pointed out where he had run to; witness heard the prisoner shouting and screaming as she came to the school; defendant said Jimmie told her that the blackfellow had on a cap and was a young fellow; the defendant gave no further description but Jimmie did; witness could not say whether the prisoner was present or not when the description was given; witness carried the child into the house and undressed her; from her waist to her feet she was covered with blood; witness gave the dress, petticoat, and chemise to Senior-constable Primrose on the 7th April, 1887; witness had never seen any blackfellow, of the description given, about the place at anytime; at this time there were more than half-a-dozen female children attending the school.

Mr. SMYTH objected to this evidence in toto, and the objection was noted down.

Inspector LEWIS said it had been rumoured that tracks leading from the spot where the murder was committed had been found by the police, and he would like to examine Mounted detective Johnson about them.

Mr. PINNOCK said he thought it was quite right to call him.

Sergeant O'Loan, recalled, said that on 22nd May last he saw the hammer produced in the defendant's house; there were dark stains on the handle and on the face of it.

Mr. PINNOCK said he thought Mr. Mar should examine the hammer.

Witness resumed: The hammer was just outside McCarthy's house among some more of the prisoner's things, which had been removed to that house.

By Mr SMYTH: He took particular notice of it; he first saw the hammer before the body was exhumed.

Mounted-detective Johnson, recalled and resworn, deposed that on the 15th May last he found the four pieces of rag previously mentioned; previous to that day a great number of persons had been walking about the place; Mr. Wright, David Chan, Fitzgerald, Senior constable Primrose, Detective Grimshaw, a blackboy named "Carlo," and witness were among the number; he saw a track leading to the Blind Creek - leading to Baker's house; witness had often tracked with blackboys within the last twelve months and previously; on top of the ridge about 400 yards from the spot where he found the rags he found a bare-foot track on a piece of fresh cow dung; the big toe and ball of the foot were distinct, but not the heel; the toe pointed at right angles to a bee line from the track to the place where the body of deceased was said to have been found; the paddocks about there were full of

cattle; about a mile and a half or two miles further on he found another track - about three miles on the Brisbane side from Collins's house; the track, which was a bare one, measured over 10in. in length; he found the same track in several other places in the same locality; on the 20th May he picked the track up again, and found one track in Ah Foey's garden, about six miles from Bunya; witness got an exact impression of Ah Foey's foot, and that impression corresponded with the other tracks; another track also ended at Ah Foey's garden.

Mr. BLOOD SMYTH then cross-examined the witness on the position of the tracks.

By the Bench: He was first shown the spot where the body was said to have been found on Sunday, 13th May last; on Tuesday, 15th May, he found the four pieces of rag; Detective Grimshaw, Senior-constable Primrose, Fitzgerald, the prisoner, and her son Jimmie were present when the spot was pointed out on the 15th May; all except the prisoner and her son Jim searched on that day; when the pieces of rag were found Detective Grimshaw and "Carlo" were with witness; the rags were found about forty or fifty yards away from the spot where the body was said to have been found; it was possible that he might have passed the rags, before he found them, without seeing them; they were found (in a line) between the spot where the body was said to have been found and the first tracks on the ridge.

By Inspector LEWIS: He and Grimshaw searched Ah Foey's house and found nothing to throw suspicion on him; he found a stick with fresh blood on it; it was 8ft. long - a basket-stick; there were signs showing that fowls had been killed there; in April 1887, he searched for a blackfellow for more than a month; there were nineteen others who also searched, but no trace of a blackfellow was found.

Inspector LEWIS said the only living witness who saw anything done to the deceased was James Baker, 6 years of age, and he made a statement which he (Mr. Lewis) would ask to be taken in his worship's private room, as the witness might be frightened.

Mr. PINNOCK said he did not think it would be wise to publish the boy's statement in case it would not be received in the higher court. He would take it before himself, the counsel, the prisoner, and the prosecutor.

The case was then adjourned till Tuesday.

4/08/1888

Whatever regrets may mingle with the conviction, all sensible people must feel that the Attorney-General has done right in finding "no true bill" against the woman Baker, who has for so many weeks lain under the charge of murdering her own child in what is known as the Bunya tragedy, and in ordering her release from custody.

As the case dragged its wearisome length in our Police Court, everybody saw that the detectives, however strong their suspicions, had absolutely no evidence that could go before the jury, and that nothing but the hideous character of the crime justified a committal for trial.

It was obvious enough that Mrs. Baker, whose natural object it was to have the murderer of her child punished, had done her best, either intentionally or through the heedlessness of passion, to throw the case into confusion. There was strong reason to believe that the

incoherencies of the little boy's story were due to his mother's instructions or ravings. Her own story was hopelessly confused and her assertions contradictory.

The blackfellow, with whose horrible atrocity of outrage and murder the community was shocked ten weeks ago, turned out to be a myth; and against the neighbours foreigners in origin-whom Mrs. Baker afterwards accused, there was not a shadow of evidence, or even of suspicion, beyond her own assertion.

Yet what evidence was all this that she had herself committed the murder?

Examinations of tracks and analysis of blood marks, real or supposed, led to no reliable conclusion; the motive inferred from Mrs. Baker's wish to leave the district, and her triumph in the thought that her husband must now leave it, was altogether inadequate for so horrible a crime; and her personal character, bad as it obviously was, was too slight a foundation on which to rear the charge.

We did not wonder indeed that these things put together should kindle suspicion; we think they do, and the suspicion will not be quelled by the abandonment of the prosecution; but we question whether without something more positive behind they justified the apprehension of the prisoner, or at least her detention after it became apparent that no really implicative evidence was forthcoming.

We cannot but feel that such a fearful charge as that of the murder-and the murder under specially horrible aggravations-of a little girl by her own mother, should not have been so lightly advanced, or so tenaciously prosecuted on such feeble grounds. At the same time we cannot but recognise the fact that from the first the police, in their investigation of the case, have had to contend with the gravest difficulties, and that the worst of them have arisen from the conduct of the woman, who should have been the first to offer assistance.

It would be absurd to take the position, though it seems a favourite one with some journals, that every problem of this kind is as a matter of course soluble, and that necessarily the police are to be blamed if it is not solved. Still in these cases, as everywhere, difficulties as a rule yield to perseverance; and we hope that the police, instead of being disheartened by their failure up to this point, will set themselves the more earnestly to the elucidation of the mystery.

The credit of the colony, and the comfort of parents in the lonely bush, alike demand that no effort should be spared in bringing the criminal to justice.

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