



# THE "CAT" WELL MERITED

## A glimpse at the News of the World for Sunday April 10th 1870

The prominent role that newspapers play in crime reporting is well established. It is also recognised that the selective portrayal of crime in the mass media, and newspapers in particular, help to construct and shape public perceptions and definitions of the 'crime problem' (Cohen & Young: 1973). Contemporary tabloid journalism in particular has established a

reputation for sensationalist presentation for crimes that contain violent and sexual aspects, with such newspapers being regularly charged with contributing to the amplification of violent and criminal behaviour.

What is too often forgotten is that this is not necessarily a contemporary reflection of a 'more violent society' or a new 'irresponsible tabloid press' - the weekly newspapers of the last century, such as *The People* and *The News of the World* may have lacked the impact of photographs, computer graphics and bold head-

lines, but the same concerns are apparent. *The News of the World* in particular began its life on Sunday October 1st 1843 - celebrating its 150th anniversary this year.

The following is a brief indication of some of the crime reporting content of *The News of the World* for Sunday April 10th 1870.

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### Reference

Cohen, S & Young J. *The Manufacture of News. Deviance, Social Problems and the Mass Media.* London 1973



**SHOCKING DEPRAVITY** - Alfred Woodhurst, an elderly man, surrendered to take his trial for unlawfully assaulting his own child, Eliza Woodhurst, a girl 11 years of age. He was also charged with an indecent assault. The Jury found the prisoner Guilty of assaulting the prosecutrix, and he was sentenced to hard labour for twelve months.

**THE DARING ROBBERY OF LUDGATE-HILL** - George Watts, 19, a well-dressed young man was charged with stealing a diamond pin, value £57, the property of Christopher Walton. On the evening of the 25th of March, about half-past five o'clock, the prisoner went into the shop and asked the manager to show him some ruby pins. Having selected one, the assistant offered to brush it up for him, and while he was doing so the prisoner deposited a shilling on the counter and said he was going a little further, and would call again for the pin when the assistant had packed it up. He then made off, but was pursued and captured. He said he was going home to get the money for the pin, which, however, was not found. It had been passed to a confederate. The jury found the prisoner Guilty, and a number of former convictions having been proved, Mr Griffiths informed the Court that during the last few months, Mr Walton had been robbed of jewellery to the amount of £500 under exactly similar circumstances. In one instance, Mr Fisk had been tripped up while following the thief, just as he had been in the present case. The prisoner was sentenced to 18 months' hard labour.

**ROBBERIES WITH VIOLENCE - THE 'CAT' WELL MERITED.** Robert Cherry, 21, and William Hall, 23, were indicted for a robbery with violence on Eliza Chapman. About

six o'clock on the evening of the 24th March the prosecutrix alighted from an omnibus, and, addressing Hall, asked the way to Roupell Street, Waterloo Road. He told her to go down Cornwall Road and take the fourth turning on the right. She did so, and found herself under a railway arch. There she saw Cherry, and asked him if that was Roupell Street. He said it was, and immediately seized her by the throat. She caught hold of the collar of his coat, and he then struck her a violent blow on the chest. Turning around she saw the prisoner Hall. Her watch and chain were then taken from her by Cherry, and both the prisoners ran away. Ever since the robbery she had been under medical treatment. For the defence it was attempted to be shown that it was not the prisoners who committed the robbery, but the jury, without any hesitation, found them Guilty. The Recorder ordered Cherry to receive 20 lashes with the cat, and be thereafter imprisoned and kept to hard labour for 18 months. Hall, who had not used any violence, he sentenced to 12 months' imprisonment without the cat.

### THE DISTRESSING AFFAIR AT SPITALFIELDS

On Thursday, in consequence of information received by the police authorities, a police-sergeant was sent to a small house at Rotherhithe, and there saw Henry Parker, the woodchopper, against whom a coroner's jury returned a verdict of Wilful Murder for stabbing, in Bacon Street, Spitalfields, on the night of the 12th of March, James Rutter, his brother-in-law. The sergeant arrested Parker, who was at once conveyed to the Spital Square Station and placed in a cell. Parker has made the following statement: "I and Rutter had a row, and he knocked me down three times. I asked him to stop, but he

would not. I then struck him with the knife to stop him killing me. I never intended to kill him. After I struck him he fell, and then I became alarmed and ran away. I met a man that I knew, and he advised me not to drown myself and not to give myself up to the police. He said that Rutter might not be dead. I then left the neighbourhood, and I never went on the canal bridge in the Kingsland Road, therefore no woman ever saw me trying to leap into the water. I met with some friends, who paid me money, and I moved about from lodging house to lodging house. The first that I knew about Rutter's being dead was through reading it in a newspaper that I bought the first thing on the Monday morning after I left Bacon Street. I never intended to kill Rutter."

### BRUTAL ASSAULT ON A WOMAN.

Thomas Hogan, a tailor, was charged with committing a brutal and cowardly assault. Mary Nugent said that she was in High Street, Aldgate, looking in a shop window, when the prisoner, who was a stranger to her, struck her from behind several blows on the right jaw, loosening all her teeth on that side of her head, and cutting the inside of her mouth fearfully. He also struck her several times under the left breast, from which she still felt a great deal of pain. Some persons interferred for her protection, and then he ran away, but was caught and given into custody. He was very drunk at the time. The prisoner in defence said he was very sorry for what he had done. He had given his wife the money to pay the rent and she had spent it in drink. That exasperated him, and coming down the court he saw the complainant, who looked very much like his wife, and he just gave her a slap on the face and pushed her away. Sir Robert W Carden sentenced him to 1 months' hard labour without the option of a fine.