

# THE IRISH TIMES

---

This page shows the article as it originally appeared in the newspaper. The article itself can be read on the following page.



---

This is the article's web address for reference.

<http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/archive/1925/0327/Pg005.html#Ar00504>

The User may not copy, reproduce, distribute, or create derivative works from the Content without expressly being authorised to do so by the relevant copyright owner. © Copyright 2008 The Irish Times. All Rights Reserved.

# DUBLIN MURDER CHARGE. MOTOR MECHANIC ACQUITTED.

Ralph Laffan, a young motor mechanic, was found not guilty in the Central Criminal Court, Dublin, yesterday, before Mr. Justice Sullivan, of the murder of Ernest Khan, a civil servant, on November 14th, 1923, in Stamer street, Dublin, and was put back to answer other charges.

It appeared from the statement of Mr. Carrigan, K.C., that Khan, who was a Jew, lives in Lennox street, and on the night on which he was shot had been at a Jewish social club in Harrington street. Between 11 and 12 o'clock he left the club for his home, accompanied by David Millar and two other young men. They stood at the corner of Stamer street for a time, and a motor car passed them. Khan and Millar were walking towards their homes when two men halted them, and asked their names and their religion. They told them that they were Jews, and the men used an opprobrious epithet and ordered them home. They had gone a few yards only when shots were fired at them. Millar was shot in the shoulder and Khan was fatally wounded. Before hurrying away to a waiting motor car the men fired again at Millar, who had gone to the assistance of Khan. In December last Laffan was arrested, and was recognised by Millar as one of the men who had fired at Khan. Laffan challenged the identification, and Millar replied, "I have no doubt you are the man, for your face has haunted me since that night." Laffan then said that he was the driver of the motor car, and that the men who were in it were his brother and a man named Conroy, who were officers in the National Army. When they

saw a group of men at the corner of Sláine street, his brother and Conroy ordered the car to stop, and got out. Afterwards shots were fired, and his brother and Conroy hurried back, and the car was driven to Reggan's Bush Barracks. Laffan added that he was so alike his brother—who had now left the country—that he was often mistaken for him.

#### BLOOD LUST.

"I despise," said counsel, "to suggest a motive, but I will tell you what it is in a word: it is blood lust, a passion for murder that has seized upon men. There are certain people in this country who want a stimulant from time to time, and they commit murder to keep themselves going. We know that the most awful crimes have been committed through this lust, and this unfortunate young civil servant was murdered by these three men without premeditation, just as a man, who, driving along the country, and seeing some game in a cover, takes his gun from under the seat and shoots pheasants, partridges and other birds. We have people amongst us who have fallen into such a state of degradation, even though they wore the uniform of a Free State officer, that they regard human life as of as little value as the sport that one finds in the fields. They had no quarrel with their victims, and no cause for it, except this passion for blood.

David Millar, in examination, said that he had no doubt that the prisoner was one of the men who shot them—except that his brother was the living image of him. "I have no doubt," he added, "that he is one of the men who questioned us that night."

Detective Sergeant Hughes gave evidence of a statement made by Laffan after his arrest, in which he admitted having driven the motor car with his brother and Conroy, who he picked up at the Theatre Royal. Laffan added that his brother had gone to Mexico.

#### THE DEFENCE.

For the defence, Mrs. Kathleen Laffan, the mother of the accused man, stated that he and his brother Frederick were very much alike. She had not heard from Frederick since last Christmas.

Colonel Charles Rustell, who had been an officer in the British Army, and is now in the Free State Army, said that he knew Frederick Laffan and the accused, and they were very much alike.

The accused man, giving evidence, told how

he picked up his brother, Commandant Conroy, and Colonel Slattery, at the Theatre Royal and drove them to Wellington Barracks. After a time he drove his brother and Conroy towards Beggar's Bush Barracks. At Stamer street they ordered him to pull up, as they wanted to interrogate men who were at the corner, one of whom appeared to have a rifle. They left the car, and he heard three or four shots. Then his brother and Conroy came rushing back, and he heard more shots. Conroy told him to "drive like blazes." They refused to tell him what had happened. At Beggar's Bush he asked them again what had occurred, and Conroy replied, "We had a row with a couple of Jews."

When the jury returned a verdict of not guilty, Mr. Carrigan asked that Laffan be put back to answer other charges.

---

Poplar (London) electricity undertaking showed a profit at December 31 last of £20,032.