

The Manchester Cab Mystery

Peter Tomlinson

On the morning of Wednesday, 27th February, 1889, the inhabitants of Manchester awoke and were startled to read newspaper articles reporting that on the previous evening a gentleman had been found dead in a "Growler" (four wheel) cab in the heart of the city under mysterious and suspicious circumstances.

This book chronicles the events around this true crime that at the time was termed the "Manchester Cab Mystery." John Fletcher, a successful and wealthy businessman, was found close to death in a cab, in the heart of the city of Manchester, on a cold, 1889 February evening. He died on being conveyed by the police to the Manchester Royal Infirmary. Jerome Caminada, a Chief Detective Inspector in the city's police force, was immediately assigned to the case to determine if Fletcher's death was due to natural causes or if something more sinister had taken place. Within three weeks the alleged culprit, Charles Parton, was arrested and tried for the murder of John Fletcher.

The book is divided up into five sections. The first, chronicles the judicial enquiry and events of the case as they would have unfolded in the media at the time before inhabitants of the city, and the country at large. The second section, spotlights Jerome Caminada, Manchester's most acclaimed detective, and how he tracked down the suspect speedily. The third details the trial of Parton at the Liverpool Assizes. The fourth section summarize the press commentaries following the trial. It also covers the medical debate between physicians published in the *British Medical Journal* over the quality of the forensic data and highlights the level of sophistication of forensic medicine at the time. The final part presents Parton's version of the events in his own words and contains a contemporary description of prison conditions.

The Manchester Cab Mystery is not only a gripping story of true-life crime, but a moving commentary on the lives of the Victorian urban poor and the fate of those condemned to experience the nineteenth-century criminal justice penal system.

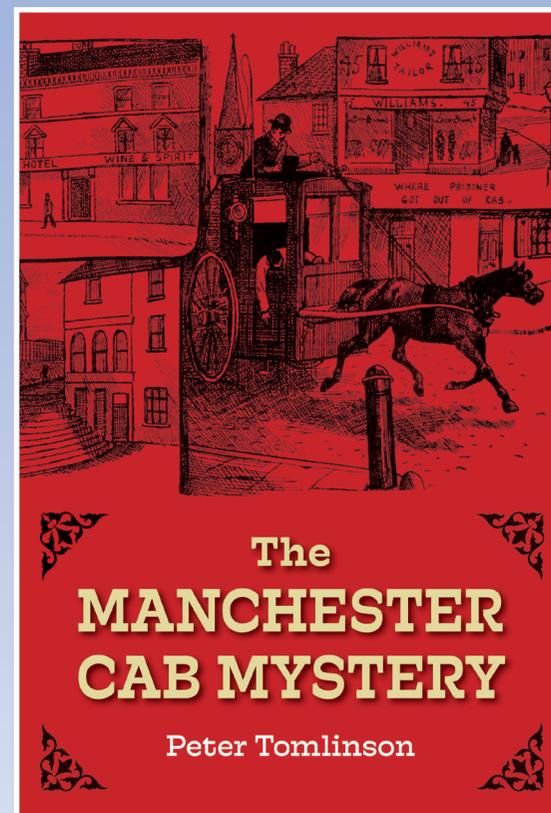
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Peter Tomlinson was born, raised and educated in Manchester. Having studied Chemistry at Manchester University, he pursued a career in the pharmaceutical industry moving to Canada in 1989, where he established his own pharmaceutical consulting company. He has, however, retained a keen interest in his home city and its history, which has led him to study in detail the circumstances of *The Manchester Cab Mystery*, and to produce this book.

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