



0. FLORIE IS CHARGED WITH MURDER - Story Preface

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Florence Maybrick, charged with killing her husband James, stands accused as a murderer in the dock. She was tried at a time when women were not allowed to sit as jurors. This image depicts a contemporary illustration of Florie as a widow and as a criminal defendant.

As Maybrick's condition worsened, his doctors prescribed meat juice (without any arsenic or strychnine). According to Florence, during the evening of May 9th, her husband asked her to add some of "my powder" to the juice.

Whether she actually added it—and if so how much—soon became a key question of fact. What was clear is that doctors found a half-grain of arsenic in the meat juice, although earlier that day tests on Maybrick's food, water, urine and feces revealed no arsenic traces.

On May 11, 1889 James Maybrick died. Within hours, Florie became a prisoner in her own home. Michael Maybrick had taken charge.

Three days later, Florence was arrested for the murder of her husband. A coroner, on May 13th, had found death was "due to inflammation of the stomach and bowels set up by some irritant poison."

Baroness von Roques, Florie's mother, hired a barrister who'd been highly respected during his prime. But in 1889, Sir Charles Russell was past his prime. He had suffered a string of losses and, just before representing Florie, he had fought a long, grueling trial.

A tired lawyer, past his prime, could only spell trouble for Florence Maybrick.

Nothing, however, could have been worse for Florie than the trial judge assigned to her case.

James Fitzjames Stephen was highly respected before 1889, but within two years of the Maybrick trial he was confined to an Ipswich insane asylum. Legal scholars who have reviewed the Maybrick trial agree that Justice Stephen made a mess of things.

As a result, the trial stands as a model of gross impropriety.

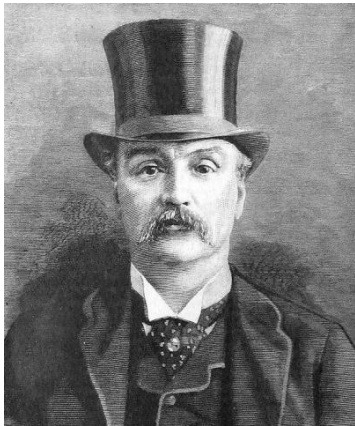
See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/FLORIE-IS-CHARGED-WITH-MURDER-Florence-Maybrick-Death-Sentence-Commuted)

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Media Stream



James Maybrick

Image online, courtesy Murderpedia.

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Baroness von Roques - Mother of Florence Maybrick

Image, described above, online courtesy Google Books.

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Sir Charles Russell

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James Fitzjames Stephen

Image contained in *My Lost Fifteen Years*, by Florence Maybrick, published in 1904. Online, courtesy Google Books.

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