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The trial of Florence Maybrick received extensive press coverage. This contemporary drawing depicts Florie reading a statement to the judge and jury—something which her defense counsel should never have permitted. It proved to be a disastrous mistake.

Florence Maybrick's trial took place at St. George's Hall in Liverpool. It began with the Crown's Opening Statement presented by lead counsel John Addison. The case was finished in seven days and received extensive press coverage.

Even now, more than 100 years later, it is difficult to believe that Florie's jury was never told about the extent of Maybrick's addiction to arsenic and strychnine. Even so, they knew that he had taken "the powder" and his chemist told the court and jury about Maybrick's medicine. The press reported it as well, drawing the public's attention to Maybrick's arsenic-related appearance.

Sir Charles Russell—Florie's lead counsel—made a serious mistake at the end of the proceedings. Instead of controlling his client—and the trial—he allowed Florence to make a statement to the court.

Trying to explain that she used flypaper to make a cosmetic concoction, and that her husband had asked her for some of his "white powder" (which she gave to him), Florence pleaded her innocence to the jury. But since this was the first time she had made such a statement during the trial proceedings, her efforts backfired. Her counsel should have anticipated that result.

Trial judges in British courts are allowed to comment on the evidence. This is a procedure which ought to be—and usually is—handled with great care. But Justice Stephen, who abhorred Florie's affair with Brierly—and bluntly said so—told the jury that Florie's statement was a lie.

The judge took a very long time to summarize the case against Florence. Many of his facts were completely wrong. His bias was clear.

Before Florie's lawyer allowed her to make the ill-advised statement, most trial observers thought the verdict would be "not guilty." After the statement, and the judge's comments, it took the jury about 35 minutes to find Florence Maybrick guilty of capital murder.

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

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See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

Media Stream



John Addison

Image online, courtesy [Casebook.org](http://www.casebook.org) website.

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James Maybrick and His Arsenic Addiction

Image, published in *The Echo* on the 5th of August, 1889, online courtesy JTR Forums.

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Florence Maybrick at Her Trial

Image of Florence Maybrick during her trial, online courtesy Murderpedia.

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