

# Black

# Mountain

# Murder

"I'LL keep it as secret as Cole's murder" was a familiar saying to many people in Belfast until the middle of last century. The origin of the saying was a crime which was never solved and which created a sensation 200 years ago.

On February 13, 1753, a cattle drover, William Cole, his daughter Elizabeth, and a woman named Mary Maguire, who was either a servant or a visitor to the house, were brutally murdered with an axe.

All three were asleep in Cole's cottage, near the white rock on the Black Mountain, when some person or persons unknown attacked them. Whoever committed the crime then set the thatch on fire, after taking whatever money or valuable he could find.

The flames were seen by the occupants of the nearest cottages, who tried in vain to make an entry and later searched the surrounding district for the murderer.

At a coroner's inquest in Belfast two days later, it was stated that the person or persons responsible for the murder had not been found.

The reason for the crime was believed by the authorities to be robbery. Many Belfast people, however, were convinced that the real motive was jealousy, arising from the presence of Mary Maguire in the house.