

A Second Road Leading to Scotland Yard

By Michael Hawley

New York World London chief correspondent E. Tracy Greaves broke the story of Scotland Yard arresting a New Yorker named “Dr. Kumblety” on suspicion for the Whitechapel crimes, wiring a newscable dispatch to New York on Saturday, November 17, 1888. The story was part of a larger article consisting of four separate Whitechapel investigation stories, having as its headliner the arrest of Captain of the Royal Horse Guard, Sir George Arthur. Foreign correspondents from US newspapers and the *Associated Press* who were stationed in London received the majority of their news on the Whitechapel investigation from two credible and timely sources, the London dailies and informants inside Scotland Yard itself. In the case of the November 17, 1888, *New York World* newscable, none of the Whitechapel stories were published in the London papers with Greaves even stating that the Sir George Arthur “affair was kept out of the newspapers.” In two earlier articles on the Whitechapel case, Greaves openly admitted his use of a “Scotland Yard informant”,



Francis Tumblety

Chicago Tribune, Sunday, 7 October 1888, THE WHITECHAPEL HORRORS.
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LONDON, Oct. 6.— . . . I learned today from a Scotland Yard man working on the case that the mysterious American who was here a few months ago offering money for specimens of the parts taken from the bodies of the victims has been discovered . . .

The World (Evening Edition), Tuesday, October 9, 1888
[SPECIAL CABLE TO THE EVENING WORLD.]

LONDON. Oct. 9.—I am informed by a gentleman, who stands in close relations at Scotland Yard, that several of the leading detectives have thrown over the clues and ideas heretofore taken up a dare working on an entirely new and most remarkable theory. . . . My informant tells me that a well-known...

In the case of the November 17, 1888, dispatch, the report is written from the perspective of the police, beginning sentences with, “It occurred to two policemen,” and “The police say.” In view of this, Greaves likely received the information on Dr. Kumblety’s arrest directly from Scotland Yard.

Thanks to the dispatch automatically being sent through telegraph repeater stations in New York City, the report was quickly published in numerous partnering North American daily city newspapers, such as the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *Boston Globe*, and the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, on

November 18; however, the true identity of this doctor was still unknown. There was no Dr. Kumblety living in New York.

Investigative reporters combing their newspaper archives, city directories, or court records, would have found nothing. However, four major New York newspapers, the *World*, the *Sun*, the *Times*, and the *Herald*, not only correctly identified the New York doctor within 24 hours, reporting it in their respective November 19, 1888, issues, but they also published relatively extensive historical details on him. The doctor was the notorious and eccentric Indian Herb doctor, Francis Tumblety, inventor of a preparation of the cure of pimples who maintained an office in New York since the early 1860s.

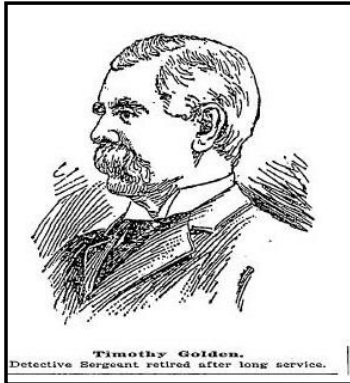
In effect, the story of Dr. Francis Tumblety being arrested on suspicion for the Whitechapel murders did not come from E. Tracy Greaves, but from another source, a source that simultaneously gave each newspaper complete confidants that the suspected New York doctor was Tumblety. This source was New York City's Chief Inspector Thomas F. Byrnes and his detective division.



**New York City Chief Inspector
Thomas F. Byrnes**

The *New York World* did indeed publish the November 17, 1888, dispatch on November 18, 1888, yet they purposely omitted one of the four Whitechapel investigation stories, the Kumblety story. Their London correspondent stated in the telegraph that the doctor was a New Yorker, so the *World* clearly postponed the story for a day until they could discover who this “Dr. Kumblety” was, investigating it on November 18, 1888. As evidenced by their November 19, 1888, report, they, along with reporters from the *Times*, *Sun*, and *Herald*, went to Chief Inspector Byrnes’ office, knowing full well Byrnes had a working relationship with Scotland Yard when dealing with criminals travelling across the Atlantic. Note what Chief Inspector Byrnes stated to a *New York World* reporter just two years earlier in January 1886:

...Of course, it is a great help to a man in my [Inspector Bymes] business to keep well posted on the movements of all the big criminals, not only in this city but all over the United States and part of Europe. Now, here, for example, is a letter from our correspondent from London. It contains, as you see, details of the movements of several well-known American crooks who have found New York too dull a field and went to England a few months ago.. The same system of correspondence follows their movements there, and I can tell almost to the day where they have been. When they make up their minds to return to America I know by what steamer to expect them, and my men are ready to meet them at the steamer's pier and keep an eye on them as long as they remain in New York. (Author emphasis added.)



Det. Sergeant Timothy J. Golden

The following statements in the November 19, 1888, newspaper reports support Inspector Byrnes and his office informing the press that Dr. Kumblety was, in fact, the notorious Dr. Francis Tumblety. In their November 19, 1888, article, the *New York Herald* stated, "The prisoner has been known to Inspector Byrnes for over twenty years..." The *New York World* states, "Ever since his identity became known here he has been under surveillance of Inspector Byrnes's officers."

There is another story reported in three of the four New York Tumblety articles, which could only have come from Byrnes' office, each publishing facts unique to their particular version, further supporting his office informing the press of Tumblety's London arrest. One of Chief Inspector Byrnes' right-hand men was Detective Sergeant Timothy J. Golden, who was working in his office on Wall Street crimes in 1888. Byrnes and Golden had such a strong relationship that they deliberately retired on the same day:

New York Herald, Nov 19, 1888

...Some days after this exposure the Doctor met Editor Ralston in the barroom of the Fifth Avenue Hotel. Mr. Ralston was at the time chatting with Supervisor Briggs and Central Office Detective Timothy J. Golden. Tumblety assaulted Ralston and a lively fight was the result, in which the editor came off first best. Tumblety afterward wanted Mr. Ralston to fight a duel, but the latter said that the fellow was really not worth fighting with. Detective Golden arrested Tumblety for assault, but Ralston declined to make any complaint and the prisoner was let go. This occurred about 1872.

New York Sun, Nov 19, 1888

...Editor Ralston of Frank Leslie's Illustrated Weekly "wrote him up" in a way that was displeasing to him, and when he saw Ralston in the barroom of the Fifth Avenue Hotel a few days afterward he hit the editor in the face with his glove and demanded the pleasure of a meeting, with swords or pistols, on the Elysian Fields. Ralston preferred fists on the spot, and drubbed him. Detective Timothy Golden arrested Twomblety, but as Ralston, who had had satisfaction enough, refused to prosecute. Twomblety was released.

New York World, Nov 19, 1888

...One day a brief history of the man appeared in Frank Leslie's paper, showing him up in his true colors. A few evenings later Editor Ralston, of the journal, was enjoying a tete-a-tete with a friend in the Fifth Avenue Hotel café, when in popped Dr. Twomblety. The latter immediately accused the editor of writing his history and followed up the abuse by

assaulting Mr. Ralston. The doctor was arrested, but discharged the next morning, as Editor Ralston refused to prosecute.

If the reporters approached Chief Inspector Byrnes' office armed only with one fact, the New Yorker arrested on suspicion was named Dr. Kumblety, and Byrnes was not forewarned by Scotland Yard who this truly was, then the likelihood of them arriving to the same conclusion – with such confidence - is near impossible. There was no “Dr. Kumblety” in their records. Instead, the reporters came out of the November 18 meeting with Byrnes' office fully confident that he was Dr. Francis Tumblety (or Twomblety in the case of the *World* and *Sun*, yet this was still the same notorious “pimple banisher” who came to New York from Nova Scotia decades earlier and who fought Editor Ralston).

Chief Inspector Byrnes' January 1886 comment to a *New York World* reporter that he had an effective line of communication with Scotland Yard on criminals of mutual interest did indeed extend to Whitechapel murders suspect Francis Tumblety. Tumblety escaped England, transiting across the Atlantic from Havre, France, and arriving in New York on December 2, 1888, onboard the steamship *La Bretagne*. His escape was not known by reporters until December 1, 1888,

Special to the New York World.

LONDON, Dec. 1.--The last seen of Dr. Tumblety was at Havre, and it is taken for granted that he has sailed for New York... (New York World, Dec 2, 1888)

Even so, Chief Inspector Byrnes was informed of his expected arrival prior to this,

TWOMBLETY ARRIVES.

“Dr.” Francis Tumblety or Twomblety, who was arrested in London on suspicion of knowing something about the horrible Whitechapel murders. ...he had sailed from there [Havre] for this country. Inspector Byrnes said yesterday that he knew of Tumblety's expected arrival in this city a week ago and had determined to make sure that his information was correct... (The Sun, Dec 4, 1888)

Chief Inspector Byrnes had two of his men, Detective Sergeants Crowley and Hickey, waiting on the docks for Tumblety to disembark, just as he claimed was his practice in the January 1886 *New York World* report, “...and my men are ready to meet them at the steamer's pier and keep an eye on them as long as they remain in New York.”

Significant is the *New York World* reporter who broke the story that Tumblety had escaped England and was last seen in Havre, France, one day before he arrived in New York Harbor. It was London correspondent E. Tracy Greaves, the very same reporter who not only broke the Kumblety story but who also claimed to have a Scotland Yard informant. After reporting Tumblety's escape, Greaves

reminded the readers that the Whitechapel murder suspect was being held for trial on the gross indecency and indecent assault arrest,

New York World, December 2, 1888

LONDON, Dec. 1. ...It will be remembered that the doctor, who is known in this country for his eccentricities, was arrested some time ago in London on suspicion of being concerned in the perpetration of the Whitechapel murders. The police, being unable to procure the necessary evidence against him in connection therewith, decided to hold him for trial for another offense against a statute which was passed shortly after the publication in the Pall Mall Gazette .

Scotland Yard's interest in Tumblety after his escape must have been specific to the Whitechapel investigation and not for the gross indecency case. Tumblety had posted bail from his gross indecency and indecent assault case on November 16, 1888, for a court date at Central Criminal Court scheduled for November 20. The misdemeanor case was legally postponed until December 10, 1888, meaning a warrant for his arrest was not issued until his no-show on that date. Greaves having a Scotland Yard informant suggests it was Scotland Yard who identified him in France, especially since the information was so accurate. Reinforcing this is Chief Inspector of Special Branch, John G. Littlechild's comment in his private letter Sims dated September 23, 1913, "[Tumblety] jumped his bail, and got away to Boulogne. He shortly left Boulogne and was never heard of afterwards." This begs the question, if there was no warrant issued until December, then why was he identified by Scotland Yard in France around November 24? The answer is their primary interest in Tumblety was the ongoing Whitechapel murder investigation and not the gross indecency case.

Scotland Yard's concern about Tumblety as a Whitechapel murder suspect after his escape is supported by Chief Inspector Byrnes' comments to the reporters. Byrnes responded not about the gross indecency case but about the Whitechapel murders case,

...Inspector Byrnes was asked what his object in shadowing Twombly. "I simply wanted to put a tag on him." he replied, "so that we can tell where he is. Of course, he cannot be arrested, for there is no proof in his complicity in the Whitechapel murders, and the crime for which he was under bond in London is not extraditable."

"Do you think he is Jack the Ripper?" the Inspector was asked.

"I don't know anything about it, and therefore I don't care to be quoted. But if they think in London that they may need him, and he turns out to be guilty our men will probably have a good idea where he can be found." (NY World, Dec 4, 1888)

While *New York World* London Chief Correspondent E. Tracy Greaves sent the newscable dispatch on November 17, 1888, breaking the story of a New York doctor being arrested on suspicion of the Whitechapel crimes, it was Chief Inspector Byrnes' and his office who informed the press that this man was none other than the celebrated Dr. Francis Tumblety. Both, E. Tracy Greaves and Chief Inspector Byrnes, received their information from the very same organization investigating the Whitechapel murders case, thus, there were two roads leading to Scotland Yard. Scotland Yard's

knowledge of Tumblety being in France in November 1888 and their informing Chief Inspector Byrnes of Tumblety escaping and on his way back to New York confirms their continued interest in Tumblety as a Jack the Ripper suspect.