



The Strange Affair of Madeleine Smith: Victorian Scotland's Trial of the Century

Douglas MacGowan

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It was a case that rocked Victorian society. Madeleine Smith, a young woman from a prominent Glasgow family, stood accused of the murder of her lover. The evidence against her seemed overwhelming. But after what was described as Scotland's trial of the century, Madeleine received the verdict of 'not proven' and walked free from the courtroom. Emile L'Angelier was a working-class immigrant from the Channel Islands. He and Madeleine began an illicit affair, which, two years later, she tried to end to marry a wealthier man. When Emile threatened to show her father their passionate love letters, she desperately agreed to continue their covert correspondence and meetings. Six weeks later, on March 23, 1857, Emile was dead from arsenic poisoning. *The Strange Affair of Madeleine Smith* gives the most complete picture to date of the events surrounding this infamous case. Douglas MacGowan's vivid account reads by turns like a thriller, a love story and a courtroom drama. He quotes extensively from contemporary sources, notably the correspondence between Madeleine and Emile, whose explicit content so shocked Victorian sensibilities. Ultimately he leaves it to the reader to judge Madeleine's guilt or innocence.

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