

SLAYS HIS COUSIN, THEN TELLS PRIEST

Newark Man Confesses to the Police He Shot Man in Argument Over Board.

THOUGHT VICTIM HAD PISTOL

But Detectives Find Shiny Object Was a Cigarette Holder in the Shape of a Weapon.

James A. Betschick, 22 years old, shot and killed his cousin, James L. O'Brien, 28 years old, in their home at 150 Jackson Avenue, Newark, yesterday. Several hours later, after telling of the killing in a confession to the Rev. Matthew J. Toohey, Police Chaplain and Assistant Pastor of St. James's Catholic Church, near by. Betschick, accompanied by the priest, walked into the Market Street Station and surrendered to detectives who had been seeking him.

Urged by the clergyman to make a clean breast of the slaying to the police, Betschick said that he killed his cousin with a shotgun when O'Brien, during a quarrel in Betschick's room, made a move to pull out of his hip pocket what Betschick believed was a pistol. Some credence was attached to his story of the killing by the police when a silver cigarette holder, in the shape of an automatic pistol, was found sticking out of the hip pocket of the trousers worn by the dead man.

Betschick further explained that drink was at the bottom of the slaying. He said that he had boarded with his cousin at the Jackson Avenue address for several years, and had paid Mrs. O'Brien \$10 a week with regularity up to several weeks ago, when Betschick lost his job. He obtained a job as chauffeur last Wednesday, he went on, and when he was leaving home yesterday forenoon, O'Brien invited him to have a few drinks and then demanded that Betschick pay the board he owed.

Betschick said that he explained to his cousin that he didn't have the money, but would pay in a few days, when O'Brien attacked him. Mrs. O'Brien and another boarder parted the two men, and drove Betschick to his room, the prisoner went on, while Mrs. O'Brien went into the parlor and, in an attempt to calm the feelings of the cousins, began to play the piano. The prisoner said that O'Brien suddenly faced him in his room with his hand on a shiny object half drawn from O'Brien's hip pocket and threatened to kill him.

The slayer then added that he ran to a corner of the room, where he had placed an old shotgun which he had used on hunting trips, and, believing that O'Brien was intent on killing him, pulled the trigger. Mrs. O'Brien ran into the room as Betschick hurried downstairs to the street. Betschick said that he ran to a telephone in a near-by store, called up the superintendent of the City Hospital, and after telling of the shooting, urged that an ambulance be sent to the O'Brien home immediately.

Detectives arrived at the house with the ambulance and a hunt for Betschick was in full swing when the slayer ran to the rectory and asked to see the police chaplain. When Father Toohey appeared, it was reported, Betschick said: "Please hear my confession in a hurry. I have a terrible experience to tell you about." In the privacy of the confessional Betschick then was reported to have told of the shooting and urged the priest to accompany him to the police station.

A first degree murder charge was lodged against him, but the police admitted that if his story of his slain cousin's threat with the imitation pistol stands up, there is little likelihood that severe punishment will be imposed.