

## CHARGE OF POISONING IN BEDFORDSHIRE, AND COMMITTAL OF THE ALLEGED MURDERER.

Sarah Daisley, a young woman of attractive appearance, was charged on Thursday, at the Mansion House, with having murdered her two husbands and her child. Superintendent Blunden, of the Bedford police, stated, that on Monday last, in consequence of a report that William Daisley, husband of the accused, residing at Wrestlingworth, had been murdered, the body was disinterred, and an inquest held, which was adjourned till Friday that the contents of the stomach might be analysed. As soon as the report got circulation, the prisoner left Wrestlingworth, in company with a young man (Samuel Stebbing), and came to London, where she was apprehended. The prisoner, who seemed to think nothing of the charge, and said she was most anxious that an active inquiry should be made into her conduct, stated, in answer to questions from the Lord Mayor, that she was 19 years old when she married her first husband, who lived six years afterwards, and that her second husband lived two years and 19 days after their marriage. Her child was ten months old when it died; she did not run away when the inquest was summoned, but came to London to look for a situation, as the parish refused to do anything for her.—Inspector Woodruffe said that she came away with a young man, and that her character was of the worst kind.—The Lord Mayor said he had been told that she was going to be married again by banns, and that a person who heard of the reports about her interfered and prevented the ceremony.—The prisoner denied this; but Woodruffe said the information was correct, and that a person had observed to the young man (John Waldoek), "Surely you are not going to marry that she-devil, who has already murdered two husbands and a child." Waldoek was somewhat astonished at the information, and expressed his intention to the Rev. Mr. Twist, the clergyman of the village, who had already published the banns, of breaking off the match. This led to inquiry, and the exhumation of her last husband's body, in order that a medical examination might be made. Both husbands had died almost suddenly, and in the vigour of youth and health; and there was (so the inspector said) little doubt that the prisoner had poisoned them both, and also her child.—The Lord Mayor handed the prisoner over to Superintendent Blunden, who soon afterwards departed for Bedfordshire with her in custody. The prisoner's father, who is dead, resided at Potton, a small village a few miles from Wrestlingworth; he was a tailor, and has left a large family.

## THE CORONER'S INQUEST.

The enquiry into the circumstances of the above extraordinary case was resumed on Friday, at the Chequers Inn, Wrestlingworth, before Mr. Edward Eagles, coroner for Bedfordshire, and a respectable jury of parishioners.—The accused arrived at Biggleswade on Thursday night, from London, in the custody of Superintendent Blunden, and so great was the excitement occasioned among the towns-people by the publicity of the result of the medical examination of her late husband's body, that some difficulty was experienced in conveying her from the coach-office to the Golden Eagle, at which house it was arranged she should pass the night.

On Friday morning she was conveyed over to Wrestlingworth, and on the re-assembling of the jury, at ten o'clock, she was brought into the inquest-room, to hear the evidence adduced on Monday last read over. The prisoner appeared to be much affected at the charge against her, and the levity of demeanour which characterised her, when brought before the Lord Mayor on Thursday, was no longer observable in her manner.—Before detailing the evidence, which was of a most extraordinary and voluminous character, it may be necessary to state that on the exhumation of deceased's body, in consequence of certain rumours relative to his death, the contents of the stomach were extracted and put into a sealed bottle, which was forwarded to the Bedford Infirmary, where an analysis was made by Messrs. Hedley and Hurst, surgeons of that town, the result of which is given below.

The following is a brief summary of the evidence deposed to by the several witnesses:—

Elizabeth Daisley said deceased was her son. She recollected his being taken ill in October last. He was taken ill on one Sunday, and died the next. Mr. Sandhill, a surgeon, residing at Potton, attended him, and told witness that he was not in any danger. Deceased was much worse on the Wednesday, but rallied again, and was better on Saturday. He was again taken worse in the evening of that day, and died the next morning. Witness was with him when he died. Deceased pointed to his throat, and said, "It lays just here, mother."

Ann Mead, aged 14, said she was an orphan, and resided at Tadlow, in Cambridgeshire. She had formerly lived at Wrestlingworth with Mr. and Mrs. Daisley, and left there in consequence of being ill on the Wednesday before deceased's death. Saw Mrs. Daisley make three pills on Tuesday. She made them in a blue saucer, and wrapped them up in a piece of newspaper. Recollected Mrs. Daisley asking her husband to take the pills. Deceased said he could not take them. Witness endeavoured to persuade him, and took one herself, saying, "See me take one of them." Deceased then took the other two. Witness became ill soon after, and Mrs. Daisley scolded her for having taken the pill.

Mary Carver said she accompanied the accused to Mr. Sandhill's at Potton on the Tuesday after her husband was taken ill. Recollected Mrs. Daisley asking for some pills. Mr. Sandhill gave her some, which he called resting pills. On their way home the accused threw away the pills which Mr. Sandhill had given her, and taking three others from her pocket put them into the box. She said she had purchased them from Mrs. Gurry, and that they would do her husband more good. They were larger, and of a darker colour than those she received from Mr. Sandhill. Witness was with deceased at the time of his death. He was "wonderful" sick.

John Hanley, thatcher, lived next door to deceased, and recollected that he and his wife fell out on the day after Michaelmas-day. They were quarrelling for some time, and came out of the house together. The prisoner said, "I don't care a curse for such a man as you; I'll be a match for you some day." It was the second Sunday after this that the deceased was taken ill.

Mr. John Sandhill, surgeon, recollected being called in to see the deceased by the accused, who seemed in great distress of mind. Witness prescribed a saline draught, to allay the irritation under which deceased was labouring. Remembers the accused coming for more medicine, but has no recollection of giving her any pills. Has entered the mixture supplied in his day-book, but has no entry of pills. Did not consider deceased in a dangerous state, and was astonished to hear of his death. Expressed a wish to open the body, but both the accused and her mother-in-law objected.

John Daisley, brother of the deceased, was with him when he died. Recollected the accused mixing a small white powder with some water out of the teapot on the Saturday night, and asking the deceased to take it. He refused at first, and accused said, "Mr. Sandhill says it will make you worse or better." He then took it, and an hour after was taken sick and vomited water and blood. He asked for drink several times.

John Waldoek knows the accused, and was about to marry her a fortnight since. Recollected her coming to his cottage at Cockayne Hatley some time last June. Witness asked her how she liked a married life? She replied, "Very well; but she had got an ailing husband; that she should soon follow him to the churchyard, and would be glad to do it." Witness broke off his match with the accused in consequence of something which he heard.

The identity of deceased's body having been proved by the parish clerk, Mary Bull was the next witness called. Knew the deceased, and went to lodge at his house on the Wednesday after he was taken ill. He complained of a load on his chest, and was very sick. Did not see any medicine administered, but saw the last powder deceased took. It was contained in a tencup, and its colour was white. Mrs. Daisley had been persuading deceased to take it. He refused, and witness asked him to do so. Deceased still refused, and the accused said, "Give me the cup, Mary, and go you down stairs; I will give it to him." The accused had been absent from home two hours that afternoon, and on her return she told witness that she had got a powder from Mr. Sandhill for her husband. She told deceased he must take the powder or else he would not be any better. He took it ultimately, and in less than an hour was taken worse, complaining of his throat, and retching violently. His mother was sent for after this, and was with him when he died. Deceased puked into a hand-basin, which was emptied by his wife or mother.

By the prisoner: I did not taste of the powder, but put it to my lips as it intending to do so.

Gilbert Daisley, another brother of the deceased, corroborated this witness as to the administration of white powder to the deceased, and added, that accused observed Mr. Sandhill had said, "If that operated right he would soon be better, and if wrong he would soon be dead."

Rebecca Craft keeps the New Inn on the road between Baldock and Biggleswade. Knows Sarah Daisley, and recollects her calling at witness's house on Thursday week. Witness's husband asked the accused where she was going, when she replied that she was going to a lawyer's at Baldock, and added, that a young woman had been saying that she had poisoned her husband, and that she was determined to have his body taken up, to come at the bottom of it. Accused left in about an hour, going towards Biggleswade, and afterwards returned in the opposite direction with a young man who had a bundle under his arm.

Sarah Gurry was the wife of Ebenezer Gurry, baker, of Wrestlingworth. Knew Sarah Daisley, who had been in her employ at day work nearly two years. Witness sold drugs, and the accused sometimes waited in the shop. Never sold poison, and was confident that no arsenic has been in the house during the two years she has had the shop. Was with deceased at his death, and does not recollect his being sick. Had sold three pills to Sarah Daisley during the week her husband was ill.

This witness was subjected to a very close examination by the jury, and in answer to a question as to whether she had not stated that deceased had been poisoned, she replied, that when she heard that arsenic had been found in the deceased's stomach, and that the accused had absconded, she said it had a very dark look, but nothing more.

Ebenezer Gurry corroborated the last witness's statement.

Mr. G. D. Hedley, surgeon, of Bedford, said he was present at the exhumation of deceased's remains on Monday, the 20th instant. The muscles were fresh and undecomposed, and there was less appearance of putrefaction than might have been expected in a body recently interred, although deceased had been buried nearly six months. There was a considerable redness in parts of the intestines, and in some places patches of a bright yellow colour. In one spot some white powder was observed, having the appearance of a calcareous deposit. A ligature was passed round the œsophagus, and another on the rectum, and the whole of the bowels included between were removed to the Bedford Infirmary, for the purpose of analysis. On examination the stomach was found to contain two ounces and a half of a dark-coloured fluid, which deposited a white powder. The same powder was found in various places over the interior of the stomach, and also adhering to the œsophagus. A few grains were taken off, and on applying the usual tests a yellow precipitate was thrown down, which tested by March's apparatus, deposited a ring of a metallic nature. The contents of the stomach were then boiled and filtered, a lemon-coloured precipitate being obtained. On applying the tests a metallic powder was deposited, which, on being heated, was converted into a powder, which, on examination, proved to be white arsenic.

By the Coroner: Are you of opinion that there was a sufficient quantity to cause death?—Witness: Certainly; and from the appearances which I have described. I have no doubt that deceased died from the effect of arsenic. I also believe the extraordinary preservation of the internal parts of the body to have resulted from arsenic. Five tests had been used, and all agreed.

Mr. Hurst, surgeon to the Bedford Infirmary, concurred in the opinion expressed by Mr. Hedley as to the cause of deceased's death.

Samuel Stebbing, the young man who accompanied the accused to London, was next called, but nothing material was elicited from him, beyond the fact of his having cohabited with the prisoner for several days last week.

This being the whole of the evidence,

The Coroner thanked the jury for the attention they had given to the inquiry, and having briefly commented on the circumstances of the case, desired them to give it their most serious consideration, and, if they felt that any reasonable doubt existed, to let the accused have the benefit of it.

The jury retired for a few minutes, and on their return pronounced the following verdict:—"That William Daisley died from the effects of arsenic administered to him with a guilty knowledge by Sarah Daisley, his wife."—The Coroner remarked that the verdict was equivalent to a full murder against the accused, and the several witnesses being bound over, the prisoner was fully committed to Bedford Gaol to take her trial at the next assizes.

The inquiry lasted seven hours, during the whole of which time the accused appeared to suffer extreme mental anguish. Captain Boultbee, chief superintendent of the Bedfordshire Police, and several county magistrates, were in attendance during the whole of the proceedings. Immediately after the close of the inquiry the accused was conveyed to Bedford in custody of Superintendent Blunden.

The excitement caused in the neighbourhood, and indeed throughout the county, by the disclosures which have taken place, is intense, and the feeling is very strong against the wretched woman. She appears to be about 28 years of age, and is possessed of considerable personal attractions. She has no father living, but her mother resides at Potton, a small village near Wrestlingworth. It is currently reported that the accused cohabited with her second husband before the first was dead, and that the former was in some way concerned in the death of the latter. The first husband's name was Simeon Mead; he had one child by the prisoner, and both lie buried in Tadlow churchyard, Cambridgeshire.

Mr. Cooper, the surgeon, has been elected coroner for Portsmouth, by a majority of eighteen over his competitor, Mr. Newbyn, solicitor.

Mr. Perry, late secretary to the Medico-Chirurgical Society, is the new inspector of prisons, vice Dr. Short, deceased.

Mr. Meymott has been elected surgeon to the Surrey county gaol, Horse-monger-lane, after a hotly contested election, by the casting vote of the chairman. Mr. Harris was the other candidate.—Medical Times.

TREATMENT OF THE CRIMINAL LUNATICS.—At a late meeting of the governors of Bethlem Hospital, Sir Peter Laurie, the president, being in the chair, it was moved by Lord Shaftesbury, and agreed to unanimously, that when visitors went through the wards, &c., the attendants be ordered not to mention the name of any patient, even if required to do so by the visitor. All the criminal lunatics are dressed alike, and no distinction is allowed to be made in their treatment.