

THE LATE MELANCHOLY OCCURANCE
IN SOMERS TOWN, READING

Henry Corderoy, who was brought before the Mayor and Borough Magistrates on Thursday the 6th inst., charged with wilfully shooting, with intent to kill, his wife, and who was remanded until Monday last, again underwent examination on that day, at the Magistrate's Room, in the County Gaol, when the depositions of the following witnesses were taken :-

Jane Corderoy, one of the prisoner's daughters, deposed: On Wednesday afternoon last, I was in the sitting room with my two sisters, at tea; my father and mother were in the bake-house adjoining. I had heard my mother say, previous to this, that she would let some one see the letter (a letter which she had accidentally discovered that day, written by her husband, and addressed to a woman named Cox, living in the neighbourhood) before she went to bed. At about five o'clock, father came into the room in which we were, from the bake-house, and bolted the door immediately after him. He was followed by my mother, who, coming up to the door, endeavoured to open it; in the meantime, the prisoner proceeded to the bureau, and taking a key from his pocket, unlocked it, from whence he took a pistol, which I distinctly observed: being very much alarmed, I directly ran out of the room, through another door communicating with the front shop, and called out, when I met my mother coming from the shop towards the sitting room. Immediately after, I heard the report of a pistol, and upon returning, saw my mother lying on the floor of the sitting room, across the door-way. I saw some blood on the floor, but did not then observe any upon her person: I directly ran for a doctor. I had not heard any words pass between them during the day. I knew father had a pistol in the house: I saw him hold it in my mother's face some time last winter, but do not recollect hearing him make use of any threat. About a minute elapsed between the time of this locking the door, and unlocking the bureau. I have never seen him make any bullets: he kept a gun in the room also. They (the prisoner and his wife) have frequently quarrelled, and once or twice within the past week, about a woman of the name of Cox. I heard my mother say she had found a letter that morning, but she said nothing to the prisoner about it in my presence. Mrs Cox was the cause of their dispute on the occasion alluded to, in the winter; but, having only just come down stairs, in consequence of hearing a disturbance, I did not know what had passed between them. The prisoner appeared to be in a very great passion when he came from the bakehouse: he said nothing to me, but locked the door, and took the pistol from the bureau, as it were by one impulse. I am quite certain he took the pistol from the bureau: he put his hand in his pocket to return the key, but did not take the pistol thence.

Hannah Butler, lives in Somers Town, and is the wife of Wm. Butler, carpenter and wheelwright. On Wednesday afternoon last, I was going up the square in which I live, and when near the garden-gate of the prisoner, I heard the report of a pistol; I saw smoke issue from his door, and I heard the prisoner say, "There, madam!" Upon going thither, I saw Mrs. Corderoy on the floor, with her feet on the sill of the door, and her head and body in the sitting room. I saw the prisoner standing near her, but knowing his desperate character, I was very much frightened, and hastily departed to a neighbour's. I had not heard the prisoner and his wife quarrel that day.

Eliza Davies, lives in Somers Town, with her husband, Thomas Davies. About five o'clock on Wednesday afternoon, I heard the report of fire-arms, upon which I ran up to the prisoner's house, and saw one of this daughters running from the bakehouse. I went through the shop, and saw the prisoner's wife lying (as before described) in the sitting room. She was on her right side, and bleeding profusely from her right eye: I saw a quantity of blood upon the floor. The pri-

soner was looking on her, and exclaimed, "There she is; I have shot her." I asked him to assist me in getting his wife up, and he did so, when we placed her in a chair. He then put his hand to his side pocket, and, making towards the bureau, said, "Now I will shoot myself." I immediately seized him by the hand, and prevented him, saying, "For God's sake, Corderoy: it will make the case worse." At this moment Mrs Corderoy caught hold of his apron string, and retained her grasp; upon which, he took her by the hand and kissed her, exclaiming, "My dear wife, I have murdered you." Mrs Corderoy looked up at me and said, "My dear Mrs. Davies, it's all through that good-for-nothing wretch!" The prisoner said, "It was passion," and, that he meant to shoot through the panel of the door for the purpose only of frightening her. He also said, that it was gone through her head, and must have come out at her poll: I accordingly untied her cap, but could perceive nothing indicating that such was the case. He did not say what it was. I have frequently heard words pass between them, but cannot say what was the cause of their disagreement. Two persons of the names of Wordsworth and Perry came in, whom I told what the prisoner had said about shooting himself. - A few other questions were put to this witness at the close of her examination, respecting the quarrels which had hitherto arisen between Corderoy and his wife, when she admitted that the prisoner's children had previously stated to her their belief, that their father intended to shoot his wife, and that he kept a pistol loaded for that purpose; it also came out, that on the same morning (Wednesday) they had called at witness's house, and requested her, if she should hear any serious disturbance between their father and mother, at home, to make some excuse and call upon them, in order that its continuation might be prevented.

Mr. James Wordsworth, residing near Somers Town, Reading, deposed: On Wednesday afternoon, I was walking at the bottom of my father's garden, which is near the prisoner's shop when I heard the report of fire-arms, soon after which I made towards Corderoy's house. I entered this shop and went through to the back room, where I saw the last witness (Mrs. Davies) supporting Mrs Corderoy, who was in a chair, bleeding from under her right eye. I noticed a great deal of blood on the floor. The prisoner was kneeling down before his wife, with a basin of cold water in his hands, wiping the blood from her cheek, as it issued from the wound: he turned round, on perceiving me, and said, "Here I am." Mrs. Corderoy had hold of his apron string, and I heard her repeat several times, "You cruel wretch! You cruel wretch!!" He afterwards put his arm round her neck and kissed her, and told me that he was attempting to shoot at the door, with a view of frightening her. He continued attending his wife until the arrival of a medical gentleman. The prisoner was then given into my charge, and I took him into the bakehouse. Upon being asked by my father's maid-servant, who had just entered, what he had put in the pistol, he replied, "You do not know; but I do. She is a dead woman, and you will see me hanged!" He appeared considerably agitated at the time. He made no attempt to destroy himself in my presence, but remained very quiet.

Robert Pike, of Hosier-street, Reading, deposed: At about half-past five o'clock on the evening in question, I heard that the prisoner had shot his wife. I immediately went to his house in Somers Town, and upon my arrival there, found the prisoner with the last witness in the bakehouse. I asked him where the pistol was, and he said, in the bureau: I then requested him to give me the key of the bureau, which he refused, saying that he would go and open it himself. I told him I could not allow him to do that, but he must give me the key: shortly after, however, he gave up the key, and I proceeded to the bureau and unlocked it, where I found a pistol (produced), which, apparently, had been very recently discharged. I found also three bullets, near the pistol, and a bullet mould, all of which are in the same state now as when I found them. I saw a powder flask, likewise, in another part of the bureau. The

prisoner said he had shot his wife, and he was very sorry; but it was only his intention to alarm her. I have known him 13 or 14 years, and have been in the habit of keeping his accounts. - Mr Pike also produced the letter, which has been before alluded to, and which, with the other things, he had since retained in his possession.

It having been alleged by one of the prisoner's daughters, that a man named Bond, a beer-shop keeper, living in the neighbourhood, had on two former occasions taken a loaded pistol from the prisoner, when he had called in to prevent him doing his wife any personal injury, the man (Bond) was brought up to be examined; but, from his exceeding stupidity, or unwillingness to give evidence against Corderoy, very little satisfactory information could be obtained from him relative to the circumstance. He admitted, after a number of questions had been put to him, (to some of which, though alike in purport, he gave contradictory replies) that he had been sent for on one or two occasions, (once, a day or two previous to the sad occurrence) to prevent the prisoner injuring his wife or children; that he had a pistol in his pocket, which he could distinctly see; but he denied ever having taken one from him, or having heard him threaten to shoot his wife.

This was the last witness examined: the prisoner asked no questions of any of the witnesses, neither did he say anything in his defence at the close of the examination, being advised by his solicitor to remain silent: he appeared to be deeply affected at times, and apparently, bitterly lamented the horrid deed of which he had been the perpetrator. He was allowed an interview with his brother, who conversed with him a considerable length of time. He was finally committed to take his trial at the ensuing Midsummer Assizes, on charge of shooting his wife with intent to kill her.

The prisoner having been removed from the room, **Mary Cox** was called up for the purpose of being questioned about a letter addressed to Corderoy, and supposed to have originated with her. It appeared that on Wednesday morning, the prisoner, wishing to convey some private communication to this woman, (in reply to the above letter which he had received from her,) endeavoured to conceal a note under the upper-crust of a loaf of bread; this being done, he sent the loaf to the house of Mrs. Cox, desiring the bearer of the same to place it into her hands alone; and, if she should be from home, to return it to him. The bearer (who, we understand, was one of his own children) accordingly proceeded with the loaf to Cox's house, and, upon requesting to see her, ascertained that she was gone out: agreeable to command, the child returned with the bread, which, however, accidentally came into the hands of Mrs. Corderoy, in the absence of her husband. The letter was soon discovered by the unfortunate woman, the mention of which, undoubtedly, gave rise to the fatal dispute between herself and the prisoner. The letter was directed to Mrs. Cox, and was written in Corderoy's own handwriting, but bore no signature. A search having been made upon the prisoner after he was taken into custody, a letter addressed to him, and likewise without signature, was found in his possession; from the nature of its contents, it was evident, that the writer of it was Mrs. Cox, in which she expressed, in lustful and unlettered terms, her unconquerable love and regard for the prisoner, at the same time assuring him, that they most eventually be united either in life or in death.

The woman, Cox, (who has a husband living), upon being asked if she knew anything of the letter, immediately acknowledged herself to be the author, with, apparently, the least possible concern or desire of concealment. Several other questions were put to her, to all of which she replied in the most unhesitating manner, sometimes amounting to insolence. She appeared, in fact, throughout her examination, to be utterly regardless of her own misconduct, or of the unhappy event which had taken place, partly through her own abandoned conduct. Indeed so much so, that it was at one time almost thought expedient to commit her, as an accessory; but, as sufficient evidence had not been produced to justify the Magistrates in taking that course, she was, after being severely reprimanded by C. S. Robinson, esq., discharged. The Magistrates then adjourned.

We understand the unfortunate woman, who is still lingering in the same precarious state, has had twelve children, eight of whom are now living; and that the prisoner, to whom she has been married nearly 36 years, is about 55 years of age.