

PEMBROKESHIRE ASSIZES.

The commission for these assizes and the assizes for the Town and County of Haverfordwest were opened at the Sheriff's Hall on Monday before Mr Justice Stephens. His Lordship arrived from London by the evening express train, and was met at the railway station by the High Sheriff of Pembrokeshire, Mr C. Mathias, and his deputy, Mr R. T. P. Williams. The High Sheriff wore his uniform as Major of the County Yeomanry. His Lordship was conveyed to his lodgings in the carriage of the High Sheriff, escorted by a detachment of police.

On Tuesday morning His Lordship attended St. Mary's Church, where a short service was held by the Sheriff's Chaplain, the Rev D. E. Edwards, Rector of Hodgeston.

His Lordship took his seat on the Bench shortly before 11 o'clock.

The following gentlemen composed the GRAND INQUEST FOR THE TOWN AND COUNTY OF HAVERFORDWEST.

F. L. Phillips, Esq., Pembrokeshire (foreman); R. H. Buckley, Esq., Narberth; G. E. Carrow, Esq., Haverfordwest; W. S. de Winton, Esq., Haverfordwest; L. A. Col F. P. Edwards, Esq., Haverfordwest; T. R. Owen, Esq., Haverfordwest; T. J. Phillips, Esq., Haverfordwest; E. S. Protheroe, Esq., Dolewylm; H. R. Shield, Esq., O. H. S. Williams, Esq., Slade Hall; C. H. Allen, Esq., Robeston Hall; R. P. L. Penn, Esq., Camrose; L. Samson, Esq., Southwell.

The following were sworn as JURORS: James Thomas, Esq., Rock House, (foreman); L. L. Brigstocke, Esq., Market Street; T. Baker, Esq., High Street; P. P. Ellis, Esq., High Street; C. P. Green, Esq., High Street; J. James, Esq., Castle Square; W. John, Esq., Quay Street; L. Roberts, Esq., High Street; J. A. Rees, Esq., Bridge Street; J. W. Shadle, Esq., High Street; W. Williams, Esq., Dolewylm; T. J. Webb-Bowen, Esq., Haverfordwest; W. Williams, Esq., Market Street; J. James, Esq., Spring Garden; F. R. Greenish, Esq., Great Street; T. R. Dawkins, Esq., High Street; E. H. Ellis, Esq., Dow Street; C. O. Brown, Esq., Market Street; J. A. Bland, Esq., Old Bridge.

His Lordship, in charging the Grand Jury for the Town and County of Haverfordwest, said he had the honour on several occasions, although it was some years ago, of charging their predecessors on the different cases that came before them, but he did not think that in the course of his experience he had ever had to try a criminal case of any great importance in their jurisdiction. On the present occasion he was sorry to say there was such a case—a case not of the first importance, but certainly of very considerable importance. That was a charge brought against a woman named Sarah Ann Thomas, shortly for the administration of poison to her husband and her mother's child. The poison which was said to be administered was threefold—there was partly an administration of strychnine, partly an administration of aromatic vinegar, and partly an administration of a thing which except that it was a poison, he knew nothing about, namely, scrotopine. He was afraid that the case would run to considerable length, but although the charge was certainly a serious one, he did not think there would be any great difficulty in dealing with it. The charge was he was afraid rather complicated, because there were various provisions for punishing the improper administration of poison, and he presumed when the officer of the court drew up the indictment he would charge the different offences which certainly closely resembled each other, although there were distinct and important differences between them. There were three great heads under which the administration of poison might be placed. The first and most important, and though he was happy to say it was not the one they had to deal with on the present occasion, was the charge of administering poison with intent to commit murder. Of course, that was a charge inferior in gravity only to the charge of actual murder itself, because if a person administered poison to another with the intent to murder, although for some reason he did not succeed in killing him, yet the moral guilt was just the same as if he had killed him. The danger to the person was practically very much the same, and in short the crime depended rather upon the wilful administration of the poison—the intention in the mind of the person who administered it, than upon the actual result that ensued. The law upon the administration of poison was this—that any one administering it with intent to murder was guilty of felony and was liable upon conviction to a punishment which he need not mention. Everyone was guilty of the crime of felony, who himself administered poison with intent to kill, or caused it to be so administered, or took, or attempted to administer it. For instance a person might put arsenic into a glass of medicine or some other fluid, and try to get a person to take the arsenic, and that case would be clearly an attempt to administer it, or an attempt to cause it to be administered. That was a most serious crime. He had to tell them, and it would be a satisfaction to them to know that in the present case the only evidence of intent to murder was found in the deadly nature of the poison used. Speaking generally without reference to particular circumstances at all, they would say that a person who administered poison to another so as to endanger his life, doing so maliciously but without any particular intention at all, he might still be found guilty of the offence, but was liable to a very much less punishment, for in itself it was of a much less serious nature. There was another form in which the accusation might be made, and that was unlawfully and maliciously administering or causing to be administered or attempting to administer to another person any poison or noxious thing with intent to injure, aggrieve, or annoy. That was formerly not a criminal offence at all. It was a remarkable circumstance that until comparatively recent times, the administering of poisons, even with intent to murder, was not a special offence, and was not liable to any very heavy punishment, but this section punished all cases in which persons wilfully and without lawful excuse administered any noxious thing with intent to injure, aggrieve, or annoy. If a person gave another poison not with the object of doing him some serious injury, but for the purpose of making him ill so that he could not go about his general business, or in fact to aggrieve or annoy him, then that case would come under the section to which he had just referred. He would just add in that connection that in all cases of intent, it was important to be clear in mind that a man was always presumed to do that which was the natural consequence of his act. The natural consequence of administering poison certainly would be, speaking generally, unless the contrary was proved, to injure, aggrieve, or annoy. Those were points they had to consider. He had no doubt the indictment would be put before them, and he would impress upon them one point, that if they thought the poison was administered, not with the intent to kill, not with the intent to do grievous bodily harm, but with the intent to injure, aggrieve, or annoy, then they should find a true bill. The facts of the case were comparatively simple, and he thought they would have no difficulty in concluding that poison was administered to one or more persons in the house about the time to which the indictment referred—namely the middle of March. The day was immaterial, but it was on one day, or perhaps two days in the middle of March the poison was given. It seemed the prisoner was a servant to Mr David Evans, who was a veterinary surgeon, and lived and practised in Haverfordwest. There were several circumstances connected with that profession, which made them highly important in the case. One thing was that he had a considerable quantity of deadly poisons in the house, including strychnine, atropine, which appeared to have been used, and also aromatic vinegar. Those poisons were contained in bottles which were kept in his surgery, and anybody in the house could get at them, not a very careful or reasonable thing to do, but he seemed to have kept his poisons in that way, so that anyone in his employ who was so-called might poison himself or

had in his family, besides other persons, a child 2½ years old. The prisoner had not been in his service a very long time; she came on the 26th of February and these matters happened in the course of the month of March. He did not agree to trouble them with any details about the matter; they would have to be gone into again with the minutiae which their importance required. The child was not very well and prisoner gave it various things, some milk for one thing. After drinking what was given to her the child became very ill, not being well before; it became very hot, restless and suffered very much other ways. It was attended by Dr Williams, and they would hear from him what the symptoms were and how he considered they might have been caused. At one time the child seemed to have been better, but it did not agree with it, and on one occasion it got so bad that it had a fit of convulsions. There were many symptoms—blistering, a great sensation of being hot, and a great deal of suffering of various kinds. She also gave a cup of tea to her master, which had an extremely bad taste and he believed that it had the same kind of effect upon him; he got very thirsty, his throat and mouth burnt very much and he was so thirsty that he drank a great deal of water. On one occasion, after taking one of these things, he became extremely ill, and began to lose the use of his limbs. It was important that what he tasted was an extremely bitter taste, which he supposed they knew was the taste of strychnine. After some further observations, his Lordship remarked that there were two heads of evidence which it would be very important to inquire into. One of them was absolutely wanting—there was no evidence at all, to cases of poisoning it was usual, when they took the form of charges of murder, to enquire—Why in the world should they have done it? Why should this person have given the man arsenic, prussic acid or whatever it was? No doubt in poisoning cases as a general rule a good deal of suggestion appears as to what motive it might be founded upon. In the present case there was absolutely no evidence of motive—there was nothing to show that anything was to be gained by the death of the little boy. There was nothing to show that the prisoner entertained any grudge against her master or against the boy or against any body. The evidence of motive was certainly wanting, but on the other hand the evidence of the actual fact that he did receive poison seemed to be very strong. It seemed to be perfectly clear that he received poison in one way or other and that poison was strychnine, which hardly looked like accidental poisoning. There did not seem to be, looking at the evidence, to be any reason to suppose the case would very greatly depend upon the niceties of chemical enquiry, which always placed a judge and jury who had to deal with cases of the kind in considerable difficulty.

His Lordship, addressing the Grand Jury for the County of Pembrokeshire, said he had simply to tell them that there was no business to come before them.

CHARGE OF ADMINISTERING POISON WITH INTENT TO INJURE.

Sarah Ann Thomas, aged 15 years, was charged with unlawfully and maliciously administering on March 15 to David Evans a large quantity of a certain deadly poison called strychnine with intent to injure, aggrieve and annoy him.

The prisoner pleaded not guilty.

The prisoner was further charged with feloniously administering on the 19th of March, to Arthur Roderick Evans a quantity of deadly poison called carbolic acid, and inflicting upon him in so doing grievous bodily harm.

The prisoner pleaded not guilty.

Mr Arthur Lewis and Mr Glasodine, (instructed by Mr D. H. Brown) were for the prosecution; the prisoner was defended by Mr Lloyd Morgan and Mr E. Bowen Rowlands (instructed by Mr W. J. Jones).

The charge of administering on March 15 a deadly poison to Mr David Evans with intent to injure, aggrieve and annoy him was then proceeded with.

Mr Arthur Lewis stated the facts to the jury, and called.

Mr T. P. Reynolds, who proved the accuracy of a plan of the premises of Mr David Evans, which he had prepared.

Mr David Evans examined by Mr Glasodine: I am a Veterinary Surgeon and practice at Haverfordwest. My surgery is part of my dwelling house. The bottle produced containing liquid strychnine was one that was kept on a shelf in my surgery. The label was in the same condition. The prisoner I believe can read. She was in my employ as a nurse; she came into my employ on the 26th of February. On Wednesday, the 12th of March, I had been very ill from an attack of influenza. On that day about 12 o'clock, I had a cup of tea and breakfast, in bed upstairs. The first cup tasted all right. I asked for half a cup. My wife rang the bell, and the prisoner came up. My wife asked her to take the cup down stairs and bring up another cup of tea for me. The girl took the cup away. The prisoner returned with a cup of tea. I was still in bed. The prisoner handed me a cup of tea. I tasted it and swallowed a mouthful. I thought it tasted funny, and asked my wife to taste it. 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