

MURDER.

Yesterday se'nnight came on, at the Haverfordwest Assizes, the trial of John Griffith, for the wilful murder of his wife by poison. The Attorney-General addressed the Jury in an impressive speech, stating the leading particulars of the case, and then called his evidence: the first and principal witness, Dinah Eastance, gave her testimony with so much accuracy and firmness, as to induce the learned Judge to pronounce her a valuable member of society, and a credit to the country in which she lived. Her evidence being supported by other witnesses, after an able summing up, the Jury found the prisoner *Guilty*. The Judge then proceeded to pass the dreadful sentence of the law on the unhappy wretch; and in a solemn and affecting address conjured him to spend the small period of time that remained to him in this world, in preparing himself to appear before another and a more awful tribunal, as he would in a few hours be launched into eternity.

We have been thus concise in our relation of the proceedings in Court, to enable us to go more at length into the confession and conduct of the prisoner. In a few minutes after his return to the gaol, he was visited by the Rev. Mr. Luke, at his own request, to whom he disclosed the shocking fact that he was not only guilty of the crime for which he was about to suffer, but that he had also murdered his first wife, and had destroyed both by administering arsenic to them. He said that he had employed a fellow-servant to purchase the arsenic for him with which he poisoned his first wife, pretending that he wanted it to kill the rats and mice that infested his house, instead of which he administered the poisonous drug to his wife. He acknowledged that he purchased a shilling's worth of arsenic himself, for the purpose of destroying his second wife, and that he gave her the first dose in some budram (oatmeal gruel) on Monday morning the 25th of February last; this not taking immediate effect, and his conscience upbraiding him, he went the next morning to Dr. Freeman for advice, but the same evening he gave his unfortunate wife a second dose in some treacle, which soon deprived her of life. He admitted that she was a good woman, and possessed an excellent temper; and said that he had no object in view in thus murdering his two wives, but that "the Devil persuaded him to do it."

His conduct after condemnation manifested the deepest contrition for the horrible crimes of which he had been guilty; he prayed constantly, expressed his fears that he should not be considered worthy of Divine Mercy, but blessed God that his offences had been brought to light, as it was fit they should be punished.

On Saturday morning, at eleven o'clock, he was conveyed from prison to meet his fate; he appeared fully resigned, and joined in prayer with the clergyman: he then addressed the numerous spectators both in Welsh and English, exhorting them to take warning by his miserable situation, and confessed that he had poisoned both his wives, to which he had been tempted by the Devil. After bidding his hearers an eternal farewell, he was turned off the ladder, and died without a struggle.

This wretched criminal was 26 years of age, and was born in the parish of Mote, Pembrokeshire; his parents being poor, he received no education, and could neither read or write. About two years since he married his first wife, whom he deprived of life in eight or nine weeks; his neighbours strongly suspected him at the time, but no enquiry took place. He soon after married his second wife, by whom he had a fine boy; he went to reside at Cuckow, near Haverfordwest, last autumn, where he accomplished his diabolical purpose of again destroying the partner of his bed; but the very means he used to prevent suspicion and conceal his crime produced an opposite result, and led to his detection: he endeavoured to prepare the minds of his neighbours for hearing of his wife's decease, by saying that he had seen her laid out on a table, and a candle hopping upon her; and at other times, that he had seen a woman's hand and arm carrying a candle about the house, which he knew to be his wife's left arm by a mark thereon; that he was sure she would not live with him long; and that she was swelling, and very unwell, which was proved to be without foundation. These assertions caused him to be suspected when his wife died; she was buried on the 1st of last month, but the body being taken up on the following day, and opened, a considerable portion of arsenic was found in the stomach, upon which he was instantly apprehended and committed for trial. It was impossible to prove that the prisoner had administered the poison, the evidence against him therefore could only be circumstantial, but his own conduct, as above related, furnished such strong presumptive proof against him, that not a doubt of his guilt existed in the minds of the Court, Jury, or auditory, which was subsequently confirmed by his own confession.