

LYDNEY WIDOW POISONS HERSELF SAD DISCLOSURES

At the Police Station on Monday afternoon Dr. Macartney held an inquest relative to the circumstances attending the death of Rosena Maria Dovey, 36 years of age, charwoman, widow of Frederick Dovey, of 39 Queen Street, Lydney, which took place on the 10th. inst.

Clara Sterry, wife of Henry Sterry, carpenter, 29, Albert Street, Lydney, deposed that the deceased was her sister, and was 36 years of age, and followed the occupation of a charwoman. On Saturday, the 10th. inst., at 4.30 p.m., she was fetched by Mr. Walter Millward, who said, "will you come; Mrs. Dovey has taken something." He did not say what she had taken. Witness went to the deceased's house, and found her on the sofa, and exclaimed "Rose what have you done?" Witness immediately administered an emetic of milk and salt and water, but it did not take effect. Pointing to the bottle (produced) deceased said "I have taken that." It was labelled carbolic acid. Witness told her she would send for a doctor, and deceased replied "Yes." She died between five and six o'clock. Witness did not know anything of the wedding arranged between deceased and her lodger Bourne.

Robert Charles Bourne (20), collier, deposed he had lodged with deceased for just over six months. He did not live with her as man and wife, and she did not say she was pregnant by him or anyone else. She said she had something the matter with her, but she did not say she was pregnant. – Replying to the Coroner the witness said about two months ago he gathered from the deceased's remarks that she was enciente, but later she said she had got rid of it. – The Coroner:- She conveyed to you the meaning that she was pregnant – Yes. – The Coroner reminded the witness that he was upon his oath, giving evidence in a serious enquiry. Think carefully of what you say, and say nothing but that which is true. Now tell us the exact words. – The witness: She said "Something's the matter with me, but you will stand to it?" I told her "Yes". Continuing the witness said deceased since told him she was alright, and that there was nothing the matter with her. If she was pregnant he would have admitted being the father of the child. Witness was going to be married of the 3rd. inst. – last Saturday week – at Chepstow Registry Office. Notice had been given of the wedding. Deceased asked him to accompany her to her sister's on Primrose Hill, on 30th. Sept. – The Coroner : What did she want you to accompany her up to her sister's for? – The witness : She wished me to go up with her for the walk; I think it was for paying some club money. – The Coroner : and in consequence of your refusal she broke off the wedding. – The witness : Yes. – The Coroner : Did she go to Chepstow for the purpose of being married? She might have gone you know, and you did not turn up. – The witness : No Sir, she did not go. –

The Coroner : So you were not the defaulter? – The witness : No, Sir. Continuing the witness said the deceased told him when she went out of the house that she was going “right up to Williams’s and stop everything.” That was because witness would not accompany her to her sister’s. He remained in the house until Wednesday, the 7th. inst., and then they had a bother because he did not go to work that morning. She told witness to “clear out of the house, and never come there again.” On Saturday, the 10th. inst., witness visited the deceased’s house about four o’clock, and paid her 8/- which he owed her. Deceased asked him to go back and lodge with her again, he refused, whereupon deceased remarked “If you don’t come back again, you will never see me alive” – The Coroner : Did she seem serious over it? The witness – No, I do not think she meant it. Proceeding, Bourne said he replied “I do not think you will do a thing like that.” I also said “You told me to go from here, and I am going.” I then went away. A minute later I heard Millward calling me, but I did not understand what he was saying. Deceased was very fond of me – The Coroner : This is a serious matter I must put the question to you again; Did you live together as man and wife? We did not live entirely as man and wife, but practically we were. We did not occupy the same room, but still our relations occasionally were those of man and wife. – Mr. Albert Nemes (a juror) : Is it a fact you owed deceased several pounds? – The witness : It might run into a couple of pounds, but she told me that when we got married that would amount to nothing. – The Coroner : You said just now on oath that you owed her 8/-. – The witness : That was for that week. – The Coroner : If you suppress any material fact of that sort it is not telling the truth. You owed deceased more than the 8/- you paid her. – The witness : It might be a couple of pounds. She did not know how much it was, nor I didn’t. The last two months I have earned I have given her. – The Coroner : Did you say when you paid the 8/- that you would keep on paying until you had discharged your obligations? – The witness : She said “never mind about that, let that bide, as long as you come back and lodge with me again.” – The Coroner : Did you promise to marry her on more occasions than one? – The witness : Yes. – A juror : Is it right there were four lodgers in the house at the same time? – The witness : No, only three; she turned me and Arthur Phillips out at the same time, and Millward remained. – The Coroner : Was deceased in the habit of taking drink? – The witness : No, Sir, she was a perfectly sober woman. – The Coroner : Why did she turn Phillips out? – Because he didn’t go to work on Wednesday. – The Coroner : She was not going to marry Phillips then? – She didn’t like Phillips when he came there.

Walter Millward (24), collier, deposed he had lodged with the deceased for about five weeks. He was in the house when witness last came in and paid deceased 8/-, and was present during the interview. Bourne had practically and substantially stated what took place, and what he said was true. Nothing else transpired but what the last witness had told them. When Bourne left, deceased went to the door and watched him up the

road. She then came back into the house, and witness lost sight of her for a few minutes. He did not know where the bottle (produced) was kept, and had not seen it before Saturday. Witness was in the back kitchen cleaning his boots when deceased came in and said "Walter I have taken some poison." Witness said "well what have you took", and she replied "carbolic acid". She asked witness to call Bob (meaning Bourne), saying he had gone up Queen Street. Witness shouted to Bourne, but he did not come back. When witness returned deceased asked him to fetch Clara (Mrs. Sterry), which he did, and then returned to the house. His relations with the deceased were of a perfectly proper character.

Dr. John Bertram McCabe said on the 10th. inst., he was called to the deceased about 4.45 p.m. He visited the house and found her completely collapsed, comatose, pupils contracted, livid, and covered with a cold clammy sweat, pulse more than regular, breathing stentorous, and the inside of the mouth and the palate was characteristic of her having taken carbolic acid. He saw the bottle produced, which was at the time uncorked. The lips were not much burned, and he came to the conclusion that the acid was taken from the bottle. There was no burns externally.

Dr. McCabe added that he sent for a stomach pump, but when it arrived the woman's condition was such that it was quite useless for him to do anything. In his opinion death was due to carbolic acid poisoning.

The Coroner having summed up.

After considering for a few minutes the jury, of whom Mr. Charles Kerwood was foreman, returned a verdict that death was due to carbolic acid poisoning, deceased having taken it during a fit of temporary insanity.

The Coroner said he might say his sympathy went out very strongly to all concerned in the matter. It was an unfortunate result to something which might have had a happy and better ending. Still they did not want to cause any feeling of sorrow or distress to anyone; she was dead, and the circumstances attending her demise, to say the least, were extremely sad, and he (the Coroner) was sure the jury and himself deeply sympathised with the relatives.

The bottle was an eight-ounce one, and when handed to P.C. Hazell only six ounces of carbolic acid remained in it. A label on the bottle bore the name of "H. P. Turner, chemist, of Lydney", but on enquiry P.C. Hazell found that Mr. Turner had no recollection of supplying deceased with the fluid.

Transcribed by Eric Nicholls