

LONDON, APRIL 28.

ATROCIOUS AND MYSTERIOUS MURDER.

On Tuesday night, William Corder was brought before Matthew Wyatt, Esq. at the Lambeth-street Police Office, in custody of Lea, the officer, charged with the perpetration of as dark and foul a murder as perhaps ever stained the annals of crime. Its accomplishment took place nearly a twelvemonth since; and on the morning of the day we mentioned, far from the scene of his diabolical offence, while sitting in imaginary security, the accused was taken into custody.

The unfortunate victim was an inhabitant of Polstead, in Suffolk—her name Maria Marten; and the prisoner appears to have been impelled to the frightful act, by fear of the discovery of some former offence. He was on Wednesday brought up for a short examination, prior to his transmission to Suffolk. His age he stated to be twenty-four. His complexion is florid; but during the time he was at the bar, it varied considerably. His dress was fashionable; and, when taken into custody, he, in conjunction with his wife, kept a boarding-school for ladies, at the Grove-house, Ealing-lane, Middlesex. Many rumours are afloat relative to his crime, but the real particulars, as far as they have as yet transpired, are as follow:—

For some years past the prisoner, who is a person of some property, and at the time of the committal of the offence with which he is charged was resident at Polstead, kept company with the unfortunate deceased, the daughter of a small farmer living in the vicinity of that village. An illicit intercourse was the consequence of their acquaintance; and a child the fruit of their commerce. This, it is rumoured, was murdered by the prisoner; and the mother being aware of the revolting event, made use of it by a threat of discovery, to extort from her paramour a promise of marriage. On the 18th of May last, he called at her father's house, and then expressed his willingness to have the ceremony performed; but in order that it might be private, and as much concealed as possible, he said his wish was to have it celebrated by license, and not by banns. The next day he appointed for its celebration at Ipswich, and still anxious to ensure the greatest secrecy, he prevailed upon the hapless young woman to dress herself in his clothes, and accompany him to a part of his premises called the Red Barn, where she could exchange them for her own, and where, he told her, he had a gig in readiness to convey her to the church on the following day. Both of them, on his persuasion, then left the house, one going through the back door, and the other through the front, it being understood that some of the clothes of the deceased were to be sent back to her mother's. Instead, however, of the prisoner taking her, as he had promised, to Ipswich, he—there is the strongest reason to believe—cruelly, and with the coolest premeditation, barbarously murdered her, actuated by his fears of her giving publicity to his former foul offence, and buried her body in the barn where it has since been discovered; as on the night when he stated he was at Ipswich, he was seen by her brother passing from the Red Barn to his own house, with a pickaxe over his shoulder.

On the ensuing Sunday the prisoner called upon Maria's mother, and to her anxious inquiries after the situation of her daughter, he replied, that he had left her at home, as it would take over three weeks to procure the licence. To calm her uneasiness, however, he said that he had for a while secured her a comfortable place with an old school-fellow, and that until their marriage could be accomplished she was to remain at Yarmouth.

Some months passed over, and whenever the poor girl was inquired after, Corder's general answer was, that she was well and happy; and on two several occasions it being observed that it was extraordinary she did not write to her friends, he met the remark either by saying that she had a sore on the back of her hand which prevented her holding the pen—that her business was so pressing, that she had no time; or that she was so completely occupied with her attentions to him, that a communication with her relatives was a matter of a secondary consideration. These vague excuses were received as satisfactory until last August, when he hurriedly left the country, and came up to London, but previously to his doing so, and to remove all suspicion, he called upon the parents of the murdered girl, and told them that he was then hastening to his Maria, and that they would shortly be united.

From that period up to last Saturday, they heard no more of their daughter, nor could they learn whether or not she was in existence, with the exception of the occasional letters which they received, bearing the London post-mark, from the prisoner, in which he represented that he was married to Maria, was extremely comfortable, and desired to be remembered to them all.

The circumstances that have led to the discovery of this most atrocious crime, are of an extraordinary and romantic nature, and manifest an almost special interposition of Providence in marking out the offender. Some weeks since, the mother of the deceased had several dreams which much agitated her mind. On two several nights she dreamt that her daughter was murdered and buried on the right hand bay, as she calls it, of the further side of Corder's Red Barn; the suspicion that such was the case was forcibly impressed upon her, and it became a subject of conversation between her and her husband.

So lively were her feelings, and so convinced was she of the truth of the augury, that on Saturday last she prevailed upon her husband to ask the steward of Mrs. Corder, the prisoner's mother, for permission to examine the Red Barn, and see if he could find out any of her daughter's clothes. The permission was granted, and strange to say, in the very identical spot which the mother had dreamt of, was found, at two feet underneath the surface, the body of his unfortunate child. As may be imagined, it was in an advanced state of decomposition, in fact a complete skeleton, and was enclosed in a sack—a circumstance that in itself indicates violence and the desire to conceal the murderous crime. The clothes were somewhat perfect, and by these she was identified. Her ear-rings, a silk handkerchief, a comb, a Leghorn bonnet, trimmed with black ribbons, were almost as fresh as when she left her father's house; and she had on the identical shoes which she wore on the night on which she was murdered. Another singular event connected with this transaction in the identification of the body, arose out of the exclamation of the deceased's sister, who, on its being removed from the sack, said that it could be at once ascertained whether it was that of her relative by examining the lower jaw, in which one of the teeth was wanting. This was done and found to be the case.

Information of the discovery, which has thrown the village of Polstead into the greatest excitement, was early communicated to W. Weyman, Esq. the Coroner at Bury St. Edmunds. He at once instituted an inquiry, and from the circumstances that came out on it, he was induced to dispatch Ayres, a constable, in pursuit of the prisoner. He arrived in town on Monday, and having applied to this office for assistance, the business was placed in the hands of Lea, who certainly has discharged his office with intelligence, activity, and industry. With a loose clue, afforded him by the country constable, he traced the prisoner, first to Gray's Inn-terrace, and from thence through a number of intermediate places, to his residence at Ealing-lane, near Brentford, where he apprehended him. A degree of stratagem was necessary to obtain an entrance, and he procured it by representing that he had a daughter whom he was anxious to place under the care of his wife. On going in, he found him in the parlour, with four ladies at breakfast. He was in his dressing-room, and had a watch before him, by which he was minutely the boiling of some eggs. Lea called him on one side, and told him that he was a London Police Officer, and had to apprehend him upon a most serious charge. He seemed somewhat alarmed, and, at his request, they retired into the drawing-room, but on his being made acquainted with the nature of the offence, he denied all knowledge of it, as also of his unfortunate victim. Lea, after having secured him, proceeded to search both his person and drawers, and discovered a number of letters from a person named Gardner, in which warnings were held out, and cautions given of a singular description. He also found a case of detonating pocket pistols, maker's name, "Harcourt, Ipswich," together with a powder flask, and a quantity of balls. It appears from a document, found in his possession, that he proposed leaving this country for the Continent as he was provided with a passport, dated 20th of December, 1827. Previous to his removal to town, his brother-in-law, a most respectable man, having ascertained the serious offence of which he was accused, questioned his sister as to the length of time she had known the prisoner before she had married him? She answered only for nine weeks, and that she first became acquainted with

him, through the medium of a matrimonial advertisement at a pastry-cook shop in Fleet-street, to which he had given a reference. She married him at the Church of Saint Andrew, Holborn, in November last, and was then quite unaware of his being guilty of any offence. Her brother felt quite indignant at the hasty manner in which she had united herself, and expressed his intention by no means to shelter a person capable of committing so inhuman an offence.

On Wednesday the prisoner was transmitted, to abide his fate, to the County Gaol of Suffolk. His wife, whose impression that the charge against him is that of bigamy, was with him in the lock-up room during the greater part of the forenoon; and so lively a sensation has the affair caused in Suffolk, that Sir Wm. Rowley, M. P. and one of his brother Magistrates came expressly up to town to trace out the murderer.

The Inquest has not yet terminated. It was adjourned to a future day, in order to procure the fullest testimony.

FURTHER PARTICULARS.

POLSTEAD, Friday Morning.

On Wednesday Corder was sent, under the custody of Lea, of Lambeth-street, and a country constable, named Ayres, by the Defiance coach to Colchester. During their journey the prisoner conducted himself with such an astonishing degree of levity as to disgust every person on the roof of the coach, much more those who were acquainted with the nature and heinousness of the offence with which he was charged. At nine o'clock the prisoner arrived at the George Inn, Colchester. The news of his apprehension had some way preceded him, and immense crowds were collected before the Inn. Lea conducted his prisoner to the room appropriated to the coach passengers, intending that he should remain there until he could place him in a situation of greater security, but the press of the crowd was so great, and their anxiety to gain sight of the prisoner so intense, that the officers deemed it absolutely necessary to remove their prisoner to a place of security, and requested Mr. Smith, the landlord of the George, to procure a private secure room. This was done instantly, and some common, but necessary refreshments having been supplied to the prisoner, Lea left him in the custody of Ayres, while he proceeded to the gaol of the town, a corporate one, by the bye, and yclept "the Castle." There he saw the Governor, Mr. Smith, to whom he stated his business. Mr. Smith inquired whether he had a warrant for his commitment to that specific gaol, and on learning that he had not, he refused to receive him. Lea finding all his remonstrances against this decision ineffectual, proceeded to the house of Mr. Abal, a magistrate, to whom he stated the case, and Mr. Smith being sent for, he justified the proceeding on several distinct grounds. He urged that the offence with which the prisoner stood charged was out of the jurisdiction of the Castle of which he had the charge; besides, he had nobody to mind him, and he might do mischief to himself. The small gaol belonging to the county of Essex, which is adjacent, was next mentioned, but on the ground that this was insecure, and some other objections being raised, it was finally argued that the prisoner should remain at the George Inn for the night, and he was accordingly taken to an upstairs room, where he was secured by being fastened by one hand to the bed-post, and by the other to the wrist of his bed-fellow, the constable Ayres.

Before retiring to rest, he wrote a letter to his mother, of which the following is a verbatim copy:—

Colchester, George Inn, Wednesday night, 11 o'clock.
Dear Mother,—I scarcely dare presume to address you, having a full knowledge of the shame, disgrace, and I may truly add for ever, a stain upon my friends, family, and late-formed connections. I have but few minutes to write, and being unfortunately labouring under this serious charge, I have to solicit that you will receive Mr. Moore on Friday morning, with whom may, probably, be my injured, lawful wife. I must do her the justice to say, worthy and affectionate. I have always experienced from every branch of the family the kindest treatment—I hope and trust the same will be returned from you the short time they continue in this part of the country, which I am sorry to have to state to hear the event of this dreadful catastrophe. I am happy to hear you are tolerably well, considering the circumstances. I may, perhaps, be allowed an interview with you in a day or two, but that is very uncertain. Must beg to subscribe myself, your affectionate son,
"W. CORDER."