

INQUEST.

About six weeks ago a middle-aged woman, who earned a livelihood by dealing in rags, pins and needles, and other articles of this description, with which she used to travel through the country, and whose real name was Johanna Kerivane, or Kirwan, but who was known to some people as Jude Sweeny, became missing from her home, which was in the parish of Annagh, in this county, and from her usual visiting places; at first her absence caused surprise, but as she was constantly moving about it did not create much uneasiness, at length she became nearly forgotten, until Sunday last, when a female body, in a state of complete nudity, was discovered floating in the Shannon, opposite the Ferry Slip. The finding of the body being quickly circulated over the city, a concourse of people collected, and on its passage from Russell's slip, where it was first deposited, to the dead-house at Barrington's hospital, it was recognised, although horribly disfigured, to be the corpse of the missing woman. The police then made enquiries and in consequence of the information which they received they arrested the son of the deceased on suspicion of being the actual cause of, or if not an accessory to his mother's death, and on yesterday the city coroner, John Gleeson, Esq., proceeded to hold an inquest on the remains at the city infirmary. The Mayor attended. The prisoner who is of low stature, and 18 years of age, and of great shrewdness, was present during the proceedings, and paid marked attention to the evidence of the witnesses, to some of whom, particularly his relatives, he put questions in a manner and with a tone of voice which denoted that they were no especial favourites of his, and they by their replies demonstrated that they had no good opinion of him. The coroner intimated that as this was a most serious case he would not allow any one on the jury except a householder or a rate payer, and having cautioned the prisoner not to say or do anything that would criminate himself, the following jury was empanelled:—Jeremiah Naughton, (foreman); Robert M'Clure, Patrick Verlin, James Goodwin, Edward Carr, John Blandford, Nicholas Lynch, Wm. Smith, John Lalor, Wm. M. Sheehy, Martin Curtin, and Wm. Ryan.

The jury then proceeded to view the body which presented a most fearful spectacle.

Thomas Price, who found the body, was first examined. He said—I am a ferryman plying on the Shannon, and from the ferry-slip to the North Strand; and on Sunday last about twenty minutes or a quarter of an hour to 4 o'clock, p.m., I had some people in the boat crossing the river when I saw a human body in the water, and most of those in the boat being females, I did not wish to make any alarm; nor did I until I landed the passengers, and then I took Mr. Wm. Bromwell and Matthew Tyrrell, another boatman, into the boat with me, and rowed out over the body again, which was at the Limerick side of the river; when I came over the body I put out the boat-hook and applied it to the body to raise it, but the flesh gave way, and I did not succeed in that attempt; Tyrrell then got the "painter" of the boat and put a bow line hitch upon the body's leg; he then put down his hand, took the leg, and put the nose upon it, and thereby the three of us raised the body, and pulled it along the water until we came to Russell's beach, upon which we hauled the body, which was that of a female, and we then gave it over to the police. I say, in my opinion, that the head must have been caught between rocks, or that there was a weight attached to the neck to keep the body in the water; it was lying about fifty yards from low water; and it is my opinion that it must have come down the ly bye; there are plenty of rocks there in that part of the river with which I am well acquainted, being 44 years a ferryman there.

The jurors and coroner decided that they would not examine Mr Bromwell, and Tyrrell, the other boatman, as they would only tell the same story, but in as much as the coroner could not pay a witness unless he was examined to entitle him to the very limited remuneration of 1s, awarded him by the act.

Matthew Tyrrell, the second boatman, was then examined, and he said that he heard Price's evidence, and that it was correct; the body when found was in a state of nudity.

The prisoner, Pat Kerrigan, asked the witness if the ribbon which was about her neck "was squeezed about it?"

The witness said that he did not see any ribbon on her neck at all, as he got into his own boat while the other was taking the body down to Russell's slip, and when they lifted her legs in the water her head went down, and he saw no ribbon at all.

Tyrrell grumbled much at the miserable amount of remuneration awarded them, and said that if this was the case corpses might float through the river and no one would take any trouble about them.

The coroner said that he had no power to give a larger sum, as the law prevented him from being as liberal as he could wish. In fact the act was a dead lock upon humanity.

Catherine Keogh—I live in market house lane, and am a married woman; my husband's name is John Keogh; I knew Catherine Kerrigan these several years; I knew her dead when I saw the dead body on Sunday last; the toes were exposed, and I knew her toes by the shape of them; she had a wide foot, and the toes descended out from each other, and Constable

Griffin asked me to examine the body, and the moment the cloth was removed I knew her by her hair and by her toes; I saw her before the accident occurred; the accident was her drowning; that was tomorrow six weeks when I saw her alive at her sister's house which is my brother-in-law's house; that day she had a little sup taken as the morning was wet, and she was sitting by the fire, but I did not see her take a sup.

Prisoner—Did you see any money with her?
Witness—I did not.

Mr. Verlin—When was she raised?
The next day her little boy, the prisoner, came looking for her, and said that she was not at home before him, and from that day down to the present I heard no more about it.

The witness held a piece of ribbon in her hand, she said that she got it on the deceased's head yesterday; it was tied under her chin, but on her head it was buried into the skull where the skull was broken in; in the morning when the deceased was sitting she had a stuff gown on and a clean cap, and was tolerably comfortable; I knew (said she) this ribbon before, and I saw it on the deceased; when I got it on yesterday to rinse a part of it went away in the water, but she had this ribbon on when last I saw her alive.

In answer to the prisoner—She said that she saw none of the clothes belonging to the deceased at the house of Paddy Keough.

The prisoner said that his mother had money about her, but how much he did not know.

Witness—I never knew her to have money, but I knew her to be a sober decent woman coming in and out.

Doctor Kane, who was in a hurry to attend elsewhere, was examined by the Coroner—I am a doctor of medicine and also surgeon; I visited the body of the deceased; the body is in a very advanced state of decomposition; every bone in the head and face is broken, in fact, there is hardly any remains of them except the lower jaw; there are no remains of the face or head except a part of the back and scalp to which some long hair is attached; there is a fracture of the left arm above the elbow joint; the whole of the skin covering the abdomen is open, and some of the intestines are exposed, but this may be the result of decomposition; the abdomen may have burst, and the washing of the water may have removed the intestines; the injury on the head must have been produced by direct violence of a very severe and direct character, but whether that injury occurred before or after death I can form no opinion; I now state as matter of opinion only, and not as evidence that it occurred to me that a hard rock falling on the head might produce this effect, or suppose the body getting under the keel of a vessel, which lay on the head of the deceased, this result might be produced; or again, suppose the body was floating, and that it came in contact with the gates of the dock when they were shutting to, the head might be crushed in that way, but the action of the current on the body driving it against a rock would not cause the fracture I have described; nothing, unless the crushing between the gates, or in the other way I have alluded to—namely, a crushing by the keel of the ship, could produce that fracture; but a body coming against a rock, or any other obstruction, would not produce the result I have described.

Mr. Gamble was next examined, and the substance of his evidence was, that he knew the deceased, who was a dealing woman, and that he always found her to be honest and sober. He then gave a detailed account of stories told him by the prisoner relative to the disappearance of his mother, none of which were true. An old woman, the sister of the deceased, deposed that Patrick Keogh was in bed blind drunk when the prisoner left, and when the deceased followed him.

The inquest adjourned.

The adjourned inquest was resumed to-day at 1 o'clock, at Barrington's hospital, and in consequence of what transpired in the course of the proceedings yesterday, the authorities arrested Patrick Keogh, the husband of the deceased's sister, and he was this day placed as a prisoner before the jury. Up to two o'clock there were only three witnesses, (watchmen,) examined, and the only material fact elicited was, that at one o'clock in the morning the prisoner Keogh was up and sitting at the fire, and not in bed drunk as was sworn by the witness yesterday. Both the coroner and jury expressed themselves in strong terms of reprobation of the manner in which the watchmen, without exception, gave their evidence.

The jury returned the following verdict:—"We find that the said Judith Kerivan's body was found in the river Shannon, near Howley's quay, in a state of nudity, and that the said Judith Kerivan had received injuries on the head and face, and left arm above the elbow joint, which caused her death; but by whom such injuries were so inflicted is to the jurors unknown, but that same were inflicted by some evil-minded person, or persons."