

TUESDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 25, 1864.

INQUEST.

An inquest was held on Friday by John Gleeson, Esq., City Coroner, assisted by a respectable jury, on view of the remains of the late Mr. John Sheehy, a trader of this city, who was found drowned in the river Shannon on the previous day, and whose body was discovered and brought ashore by a poor woman who was gathering drift wood for the purpose of making firing, and looking along the river's edge for "waifs and strays" washed in by the tide to enable her to support two orphan children.

The inquest was held at the house known as the old "Spinning-wheel," and which had been the residence of the deceased.

Sub-Inspector Channer officially attended the inquest and took charge of the investigation on the part of the public.

The police had a woman of the name of Margaret Kenny in custody, as she was seen last in company with the deceased on Wednesday evening shortly before, it is supposed, the deceased was unhappily drowned.

The first witness examined by the Coroner was Andrew Downes, who deposed—I am a publican, and reside and carry on business in Brunswick-street, in this city; I knew the late Mr. John Sheehy, and I saw him last alive between 7 and half-past 7 o'clock on the evening (Wednesday) before last outside my house; he had been previously in my house, having come into it at about 20 minutes to 7 o'clock, and where he remained for, I should suppose, 40 minutes; the woman now in court was with him all the time he remained in my house; I did not know the woman before that; the deceased and the woman had two pints of ale each, which they drank; I could not notice by the deceased that he had anything drunk when he came into my house, but I remarked that he kept constantly grinding his teeth; both the deceased and the woman sat right opposite my counter in my shop; the woman now present paid for the drink; I went out to get tobacco, and on my return I saw the deceased and the woman pass by my door and proceed towards the steps of Mr. O'Neill's stores, where he placed her in a sitting posture and then sat down beside her; the woman's stomach became sick and she discharged it; he then got up and walked towards the Wellesley Bridge; I told the woman that it was a shame for her to be with that man (meaning the deceased), and that I knew him well, and I asked her who was her husband, upon which she made answer and said that "her man was a man that gave employment to every one;" I asked her who was he, and she replied that he was gone towards the Wellesley Bridge, and that I knew him well; I then left her and went home.

The woman, whose name as already stated, is Margaret Kenny, and who wore a brown cloak, here said that "she was not there at all," on which the Coroner cautioned her against making any statement, and that if she did so, it would be taken down and used against her hereafter, if it were necessary to send her before another tribunal.

In reply to the Coroner, Mr. Downes said the reason why he asked the woman "who was her husband," was, that she did not present the appearance of a woman of the town; the cloak on the woman on that evening is the same as she now wears, but it was reversed—I mean thereby that it was turned inside out, and when the deceased and the woman first came into my house, I remarked to my wife, "that is old Sheehy, the merchant;" my wife said "she thought not;" but after they had sat a while in the box opposite the counter, my wife went over and observed them, and, having returned, I asked her whether it was not as I had said; and she replied that "she thought it was;" when the deceased was going towards the bridge he staggered, but was not so far gone as not to be able to take care of himself, in my opinion.

The next witness was Margaret Downes, who, on being sworn said, in reply to the Coroner—I am the wife of Andrew Downes, the last witness; I knew the person of the late Mr. Sheehy; he was in my house on the evening (Wednesday) before last; I heard my husband examined, and I entirely concur in his evidence; I was not in my shop when the deceased came into it; I was then up stairs; and I just came down when my husband made the remark that, "that is old Sheehy, the merchant;" I did not then think it was, but I walked over and looked into his face and into the face of the woman that was with him, and I then saw that it was Mr. Sheehy; that woman who was then with him I now identify in court (she here pointed to the prisoner, Margaret Kenny); she wore a cloak then in the form in which it has been out on her now by order of the Coroner, but it was reversed during my husband's examination.

The prisoner here again denied that she was in the witness' shop on the occasion spoken of.

The witness proceeded—While the deceased and the woman were in the shop I saw the deceased put his arm round her neck, upon which I walked over and looked into the pints to see if they had been emptied, and I then asked, "are you done with these pints?" the woman replied, "we are, child;" I then said, "I want this place," and added, "you ought to be ashamed of yourself, and it would be better for you to be saying your prayers," to which she made no reply; I took particular notice of the woman's cap; both then went out; I did not observe the deceased stagger; the reason why I took notice of her dress was, that my husband remarked to me that she looked like a married woman; I was anxious that they should leave, and I looked into the pints to take them away and to get rid of the company.

The Coroner said that he would not be doing his duty towards the public if he did not express his approbation at the conduct pursued by Mrs. Downes on this occasion, for it was such as to elicit commendation, and, if imitated by others who kept public-houses, the public would have less cause of complaint than they had, and which complaints were, he was sorry to say, in many instances but too well founded.

Thomas Latchford was the next witness, and on being sworn, said—I live in Sexton-street, and I am one of the toll-collectors on the Wellesley-bridge; on the night in question (last Wednesday), this man, the deceased, passed over the bridge between seven and eight o'clock; a woman followed after in a short time; I knew the deceased by appearance but not by name; the deceased went up the road in the direction of the workhouse; he was followed by a woman who kept behind him, say about twenty yards or so; he paid the toll for two, which I took to be for himself and for the woman who followed after; I did not require any toll from that woman; they returned back again, and the same distance as at first was maintained between them, on coming back; it was not eight o'clock when

they returned, and he paid again for two; the man appeared to be quite steady at the time; the woman was not under the influence of drink nor had she the (to me) appearance of it; I would not know the woman, but the cloak which she wore over her head appears to be the same cloak as that worn by the prisoner, but I would not know the woman at all, but the cloak worn by that woman looks like that which is now worn by this woman in court; Mr. Sheehy, after going, as I would say, into town, returned again; on this second occasion the watchman had not come to his post, which he does generally about nine o'clock or shortly before that hour; the deceased went a second time over the bridge and paid for one, himself only; no one accompanied or followed him then; he walked very slowly with his head bent downwards as if in a contemplative mood of mind; he made no observation to me at any time, only handed me the toll which he had a right to give; he passed over the bridge, and stood for a few minutes against Mrs. Gabbett's wall, and then went down in the direction of the Messrs. Russell's Factory, and I did not see or hear of him until yesterday evening when I heard that he was found drowned.

To a Juror—I leave the toll house at six o'clock in the morning, and during the whole time I was on duty; no one passed over the bridge to answer the description of the woman now in court; it may be possible that she may have passed, but the probability is that I would have noticed her; I might be taking toll from one person when another might slip past, but it is highly improbable that it should happen without my seeing the person.

To another Juror—The deceased walked slowly and steadily along as if thinking.

Mr. Channer here intimated to the Coroner and the Jury that the prisoner had formerly been a servant in the employment of the family of the deceased.

Catherine Birch, on being sworn and examined, said—I am a widow and I live in Love-lane; I have two orphans depending on me for their support; I follow no business except going from door to door to look for a bit, and I go down the river bank almost every day to look for "kippens" for firing; I went there on yesterday, and just as I passed the factory I met a woman, a Mrs. Dwyer, and we talked together, and when parting we said to each other, "God help us;" I then looked out into the river at the tide to see if it would put anything ashore for me, and I saw a black thing floating in the water, and I thought that it was an old tarpaulin, and I wished to get it as I could sell it for my children's supper, and fearing that it would float away from my reach I went into the water above my hips, but could not reach it; I then went further out and when I got near it I thought it was a cloak that was blown off a woman's shoulders as she was crossing the bridge; and I then said if I recover it I will get something more for it than for an old tarpaulin, so I went out farther into river; I then laid hold of it and felt it soft; it is not a tarpaulin, said I; I then pulled again, upon which the coat opened and I saw the hair then floating, and I cried out to Mrs. Dwyer, who was standing on the little bridge, Oh, Lord, said I, it is a man I have; it is a Christian, said I, get some one to help me; so she called on Mr. M'Inerney and his children; and Mr. M'Inerney and his sons came down from the yard where they were at work, and the eldest boy came to me and helped me to get the deceased ashore; we then turned him on his back and the first thing we observed was the guard of his watch, which I gave to Mr. M'Inerney; I then searched his pockets and got no money, only a knife, one key, a spectacle case, and a pipe, and a bill of some money; Mr. M'Inerney placed all these things under a stone and never put them into his pocket, but left them under the stone till the police came; Mr. M'Inerney sent Mrs. Dwyer for the police, who came at once, and then all the articles were given over to them; none of us knew who the deceased was; Mr. M'Inerney thought he was a pilot, but then he found to the reverse that it was not; I thought myself a great soldier until this time, and so I was until it was all over, when I fainted off as dead as a flounder, and I would be shortly as stiff as the poor man only for the care bestowed on me, God bless them who did so.

Patrick M'Inerney was then called, but as he had no additional evidence to give he was not sworn or examined.

Sub-Constable Hynes of Thomondgate police station deposed that he was on duty at Wellesley-bridge, when a report was brought him that a man had been found drowned in the river near Messrs. Russell's ship yard. He proceeded there and saw the deceased lying on the ground; Mr. M'Inerney handed him a watch and the other articles mentioned by the last witness. The papers found on the deceased were of no consequence; they were only rough memorandums about some dealings in pigs with the houses of Materson of Limerick, and Waters of Ferrybank, Waterford.

The Constable said that there were no marks of violence on the person of the deceased, except a slight scratch on the bridge of the nose.

Mr. Channer directed the Coroner's attention to three girls from the factory who had been summoned as witnesses to establish the fact of the prisoner having been in company with the deceased in Brunswick-street.

The Coroner said that he would have the girls sworn *pro forma*, to establish their claim for expenses as witnesses, and to warrant him in giving them 1s. each, all he had in his power to grant them. He had received an order from the Board of Superintendence to give no more coffins. On a former occasion when a similar order had been issued he attended at the Board and showed them how disgraceful it would be to the city to refuse to give a coffin to any poor creature who was deprived of life, and they were kind enough to authorise him to use his own discretion in the matter, but since then they had issued a prohibition. At all events, the Act of Parliament was very stringent. It says that the Coroner may grant 10s to bury a stranger, but then comes the question who is a stranger? Is it one wholly unknown or one wholly destitute without friends and without means? At all events the board had decided the question, for on Tuesday last they sent him an order intimating to him that they would pay for no more coffins. He would, however, swear the three girls and the old woman Mrs. Dwyer, in order to justify him in giving them 1s each as witnesses expenses.

Edward Sheehy, son to the deceased, was then sworn and examined, and said in answer to the Coroner, the deceased John Sheehy was my father; he dealt in the sale and purchase of pigs; he was about 58 or from that to 60 years of age; I saw him last alive at about 8 o'clock on ere yesterday, in this house, and he was then in good health; he had no bank-notes about him, but he may have had some silver. The watch produced was his; he was a widower, unfortunately for himself; what I mean by that is, that if my mother was alive it would not be said that he was seen in company with any woman; he used to take a little liquor by times, but he was by no means a drunkard; I knew the prisoner, she had been in our service at the time of my mother's death, about 7 months ago, and she remained in our service for about a month after that event.

The jury having stated, in answer to the coroner, that they did not require the evidence of any medical man as to the cause of death, the inquiry closed.

The coroner said that whatever degree of immorality might be attached to the conduct of the woman then in court, the evidence of Mr. Latchford had entirely exonerated her from any participation in, or knowledge of, the death of the deceased, and whatever suspicion might attach itself to her moral character in consequence of crossing the bridge and going up a lonely road at a late hour at night, the jury had nothing to do with it. The jury should also consider that she returned with the deceased into town and did not accompany him the second time across the bridge, as deposed to by Mr. Latchford, who said he saw the deceased cross a second time, walking slowly, and in a contemplative state of mind. This evidence, therefore, exonerated her, and the jury had no right whatever to inquire into her morality, however severely they might censure her want of any.—The only question they had to enquire into was how the unfortunate man came by his death.

The jury, after some deliberation, returned the following verdict:—"That the deceased was found drowned in the Shannon, near the Wellesley-bridge, but there was no evidence to show in what manner he came by his death."

The woman Kenny was discharged.

Mr. Meara, one of the jurors, recommended that the jurors subscribe something each for the benefit of the poor Widow Birch, who rescued the body of the deceased from the Shannon. The call was unanimously responded to by coroner and jury, and a sum of 12s. was the result, which the poor creature received with expressions of heartfelt gratitude.

Thursday's racing in Mallow was most successful, the different events on the card being all well contested. Nine horses went out for the first race, a free handicap, about three miles, the winner to get 60 sovs.; second horse, 5 sovs.; 2 sovs. entrance, with 3 sovs. additional in case of acceptance. There were 10 horses entered, but Mr. Purcell's Carte de Visite was scratched, having won on the first day. The race was a good one, and but for Nancy Till going at the wrong side of the post when leading the lot with Mary May, she had a first-class chance of winning. Mr. Wrixon's Nameless came in first, with Mr. Lane's Simpleton second, and Mr. Fitzgerald's Lady Arthur third. The Selling Race (beats), the winner to get 30 sovs. was won by Mr. R. H's Don Carlos, beating three others in both heats; and the Consolation Plate, the winner to get 30 sovs. was carried off by the gallant little gray, Nancy Till, beating three others, and winning the two first heats cleverly. The Mallow Plate of £100, and the Dunhallo Hunt Race did not fill.

FLAX.

The increased cultivation of flax is a question vitally affecting the future prosperity of our country.—We are of those who regard the flax movement as a most important one to the South and West of Ireland. We know the difficulties which surround it. We know the retarding effect of seemingly unconquerable