

The Times Issue 04 May 1846

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HORRIBLE TRAGEDY

“On Saturday afternoon, about 3 o'clock, a most dreadful occurrence took place on Battersea-bridge, a mother throwing into the river Thames her three children, two of whom were drowned. It appears from enquiries made on the spot, that about the hour above stated, a young woman, decently clad, was observed to proceed on to Battersea-bridge, from the Chelsea side, accompanied by three children, one a boy, about seven years of age; a girl, about four years of age; and an infant in arms, also a girl, about 10 months or a twelvemonth old. When she got to the middle of the bridge she walked to and fro a few yards in a hurried manner, and then threw the children one after the other over the railings into the river, and was getting over the balustrades herself, when she was prevented doing so by the passers by, who secured her, and gave her into the custody of policeman Woolgar, V 54, who opportunely came up and took her to the station-house, in Milman's row. At the station-house she stated her name to be Eliza Clark, her age 24 years; that she is the wife of William Clark, a journeyman painter, living at No. 7, Cumberland-street, Marlborough-road, Chelsea, and that the children were her own.

During the time occupied by the above proceedings, attempts were being made on the river to save the unfortunate children, which were successful in one instance, that of the second child (a girl), four years old, which was immediately carried to the Swan public-house, at the Surrey side of Battersea-bridge, where it received every attention that its exhausted state demanded, and is recovering. The infant child was also promptly got out, but life was quite extinct, and the body was carried to the Adam and Eve public-house in Duke-street, Chelsea, where it awaits the coroner's inquest.

Shortly before 4 o'clock the wretched woman was removed in a cab to the Westminster police-court, Vincent-square, for examination.

EXAMINATION OF THE PRISONER

As the Westminster police-court was about to close, at 5 o'clock on Saturday afternoon, Eliza Clark, aged 24, residing at No. 7, Cumberland-street, Marlborough-road, Chelsea, was placed at the bar, before Mr. Burrell, charged with throwing her three infant children into the Thames from Battersea-bridge.

The accused, who is stated to be the wife of a journeyman painter, although somewhat meanly dressed, was a pattern of cleanness and neatness, and had the appearance of a respectable and quiet woman.

James Perryman, potboy at the Adam and Eve, Duke-street, Chelsea, said – At about 5 minutes before 3 this afternoon I was in the back yard of our house, which looks upon the Thames, and is close to Battersea-bridge. I was on a sudden startled by hearing something splash in the water, and I looked towards the spot, and saw a second child go from the centre of the bridge into the water, and then I saw another one go in from the

same place. I immediately went and told my mistress that I had seen a woman throw her children over the railings of Battersea-bridge into the water.

Mr. Taylor, the chief clerk. – Did you see any person throw the children into the water?

Witness. – Yes, after hearing the first splash, which I suppose must have been caused by a child, I saw the prisoner throw the two others into the river; there did not appear to be much struggling.“

Examination continued. – The children were alive at the time they were thrown into the water. I saw one of them kicking as it fell into the water. I told my master, and we jumped into a boat and put off towards them. I saw a man afterwards bring a child out. I afterwards went on the bridge and saw the prisoner standing near the parapet.

Jesse Hattan, a gardener at Wandsworth. – I was passing over Battersea-bridge, at about 3 o'clock, when I observed the prisoner walking backwards and forwards in a very hurried manner, and as she seemed to be in the act of jumping over, I took her by the arm. I asked her what she was going to do, and she said she had thrown her children over there. I looked over, and, seeing two children in the water, inquired what she did it for? She said, "Distress. She thought she had better see her children go before her." I called a boat, and saw one child picked up and taken to the Swan public-house, on the Surrey side of the bridge.

Mr. Burrell. – What age did the child appear to be?

Witness. – about 2½ years.

On the prisoner being asked by Mr. Taylor whether she wished to put any questions to the witness, she replied, with much eagerness but in a subdued tone, "Have you got my baby?"

John Hinchin, a labourer, was crossing the bridge when the prisoner called out, "Here, here, do you see my children in the water." She repeated this four or five times. Witness went to the spot and saw the children floating in the water. Witness observed, "I never saw so affecting a sight." One child appeared to be about two years and a half old; the other younger. Witness saw but two. Witness saw one picked up, apparently the eldest; the other floated a few yards higher up and disappeared, and, although the witness looked several times, he could not see it.

Thomas Fordery, a waterman, who passed by directly after the children had been thrown into the water, proved picking up one and taking it to the Adam and Eve.

Police-sergeant, 20 V, informed the magistrate that the child was dead which had been taken to the Adam and Eve. Dr. Wansborough had attended her, and had used every means that could suggest themselves to restore her, but in vain.

Robert Woolgar, 54 V, stated that on hearing that a woman had thrown her three children into the water, he took her into custody. She said that her husband had ill-used her; that he would be home again at night to ill-use her, and her three children should not see it.

Mr. Burrell inquired as to the fate of the poor children?

The police replied that the one at the Swan gave every prospect of recovery; there was a second still in the water, and a third dead at the Adam and Eve, as had been stated.

Mr. Burrell asked the prisoner whether she wished to say anything?

Prisoner looked eagerly around her, and ejaculated in a low tone – He said "Good by," when he went out this morning; he has not said so for a long time before. He doubled his fist in my face when he went out, and said, "I'll come home thundering drunk, and I'll be hung for you." He broke the panel of the door by knocking my head against it.

Mr. Burrell. – Have you anything to say to drowning your children?

Prisoner (incoherently). – "Suppose I had died my poor children would be starved to death. It's a hard struggle now to get them a bit of bread. I have done all I could."

Mr. Burrell remanded the prisoner until Wednesday.

The distressing and melancholy affair has created an intense sensation throughout the neighbourhoods of Battersea and Chelsea, and during the remainder of the afternoon the bridge and waterside were crowded by persons anxiously watching the search making for the body of the missing child, which continued until dark, but without success. A large crowd was also collected around the police-station in Milman's-row, which is near Battersea-bridge, until the removal of the miserable woman for examination at Westminster police-court.

From inquiries which have been made by the police since the examination, it appears that the wife, about three-quarters of an hour before she threw her children into the water, called with them at the house of her uncle, Mr. R. Champ, No. 13, Wellington-street, Manor-street, King's-road, Chelsea, and there complained of the ill-treatment she alleged she had received from her husband, and remained there about a quarter of an hour, and Mr. Champ, seeing her excited state, asked her on leaving to come back to his house for tea, as by that time his wife would be home. She, however, said she could not promise, as she was going under the arch of Battersea-bridge, a remark which Mr. Champ unfortunately took no notice of at the time, and she then left, taking the three children with her. That was about half-past 2 o'clock. About a quarter of an hour after her departure one of Mr. Champ's children found a letter on the bed in one of the rooms into which Mrs. Clark had been, which she gave to her father. It was addressed to William Clark, her husband, and on its being opened, the contents were found to be to the following effect: -- That her husband had for a long time past continually ill-used her on coming home drunk; that he had a night or two before come home and knocked her head through the panel of a door; that she hoped that he would treat his next wife better than he had her; that she wished to see her children go before her; and that before he would receive that letter she and her children would be under Battersea-bridge.

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William Clark, the husband and father of the children, is by trade a journeyman painter, and up to 10 o'clock last night he had not been since the morning, nor had the police been able to succeed in their enquiries as to whose employ he is in, or where he is at work.

The house in which the family lived, No. 7, Cumberland-street, Marlborough-road, Chelsea, is, it appears, let out in tenements. Clark and his wife occupied the front parlour, a room but scantily furnished. The former bears the character of a very dissipated man, while his wife is stated to bear a most excellent character, and is a remarkably quiet and meek woman. Clark is stated to have been formerly in the police, it is believed in the G division, but was dismissed for misconduct.

Mrs. Innwood, a lodger in the house, states that she heard Clark and his wife quarrelling on Friday night; but she could not be got to state to what extent the quarrel was carried. Mrs. Clark, she stated, had that (Saturday) morning said that she had had quite enough to make her go and drown herself.

No trace had up to 11 o'clock last night been discovered of the eldest boy William, seven years of age, whom some people think was not with her at the time that she threw the two younger ones into the water, and in case that should be the fact, the police last night sent a description of the boy throughout the different divisions. He is stated to be of a dark sallow complexion, very dark under the eyes, very thin, and dressed in a corduroy suit of clothes, without any cap or hat on, a brown Holland pinafore over his dress, and a pair of new leather boots on.

The statement contained in the letter before spoken of, left behind by the wife, is much supported by the examination of the room made by police, as one of the panels of the door, an upper one, is found to be broken, and the fracture is a very recent one.

The search for the other body will be resumed at daybreak this morning."

The Times Issue 05 May 1846

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THE LATE MURDERS AT BATTERSEA BRIDGE

"Yesterday afternoon Mr. T. Wakley, M. P., held an inquest at the Adam and Eve Tavern, Duke-street, Chelsea, on view of the body of Jane Clark, aged only 12 months, one of the unfortunate children thrown over Battersea-bridge on Saturday last. The particulars of this horrible affair, as far as they had transpired, appeared in The Times of yesterday.

The coroner arrived at 2 o'clock, at which time a great number of persons had assembled outside the house, and the inquiry seemed to be looked forward to with considerable interest, which was consequently increased by a knowledge of the fact that the husband of the unfortunate woman would be present as a witness.

The jury having been sworn and a foreman chosen,

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The Coroner directed that Hawkins, the summoning-officer, to produce the deceased child. The officer returned in the course of a few minutes with the body, which he laid on the table, and uncovered it for the inspection of the jury. A more beautifully formed and finer-grown child for its age there could scarcely be seen.

The Coroner remarked that the appearance of the child indicated that there had been no immediate want of food; and inquired whether there was any witness present to identify the deceased, when,

The summoning officer said, that the father of the child was in attendance. This person was then brought in, and he appeared to engage general attention. His age was apparently 28 or 30, and he was evidently suffering from great mental excitement.

The witness having been sworn, said my name is James Richard Clark. I am a painter, residing at no. 7, Cumberland-street, Chelsea. The body of the child on the table is that of my daughter. She was just turned 12 months. The last time that I saw her alive was on Saturday morning, at from a quarter to half past 5. She was then in bed alongside of me. There was no one else sleeping in it. Her mother was up. I left the child there, and quitted the house at half-past 5 o'clock. I went to work at the Constitution public-house in Churton-street, Vauxhall-bridge-road, leaving three children at home. Their names were William Matthew, aged 7 years last January; Emma, turned 2 years; and the deceased. They were all well. My wife was there at the same time. She appeared very well when I left. I told her I should not be home so early that night, as, being Saturday, I should stop and have a pint of beer along with my mates. She made no remark, and was apparently in her usual state of mind. We have been married four years. I have two children with her, but the eldest is by my first wife. She is sober and a well-conducted woman, and attended to her duties as a mother. She had not complained to me of a pain in her head. She was up all the previous night. I did not know the reason, and I did not ask her why she sat up. When I got home on Friday night, about half-past 11 o'clock, I had had about two or three pints of beer. I was not sober, nor yet drunk. I know perfectly well what I was about. Nothing particular passed, but we had some word about the boy. I said I suppose he has been nursing all day, when she replied, "D_____ and b_____ the boy," and then I gave her a slap in the face, and never spoke to her afterwards.

A Juror. – Did you strike her more than once?

The Coroner. – He is not obliged to say that he struck her at all. He is not bound to say anything to incriminate himself. I dare say, gentlemen, you will not have an opportunity of seeing the person charged with the murder of this child. Her husband may say what he likes about her. All manner of statements may be made against her in her absence, and she has no means of hearing and rebutting these statements. I really cannot go on with the evidence. When you are here to discharge a solemn duty you cannot enter into it properly without the presence of the accused party. The coroner then ordered the body to be removed.

The Coroner. – Have you ever known your wife to make an attempt on her own life?

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Witness. – About a month after I married her I was told that she tried to poison herself. I don't know it from my own knowledge – I was informed so. No medical man was then called in.

The Coroner. – You have not yet stated what your wife was doing the night that she was up?

Witness. – I don't know, I was asleep, and I don't know whether she had lain down at all. She had never been up all night before. When I went out in the morning she was not crying.

A juror. – Did you ever hear her speak disrespectfully of the boy before?

The Coroner. – I have already stopped that question.

James Perryman, pot-boy at the Adam and Eve, said, that in the afternoon of Saturday last, about five minutes before 3 o'clock, he heard a splash in the water, and on looking up the river he saw a child thrown over the bridge. Witness at that time was in the garden at the back of the house. He went and informed his mistress of what had happened, and she told his master, who was in the cellar. He went and got a pair of skulls and pushed a boat off. Mr. Reeves and a stranger got into the boat, but he did not see the children got out. When he got to the bridge he saw a man carrying the deceased up the steps.

The Coroner. – Did you see any person on the bridge when the children were thrown over?

Witness. – Yes; a woman with a black shawl on. I saw her drop the third child in.

The Coroner. – Did you ever see that woman before?

Witness. – Not to my knowledge.

A juror. – Would you know her again?

Witness. – I think I should. I went on to the bridge and saw her.

Thomas Fordrey, a waterman, of Wandsworth, said that he got the deceased child out of the water. He knew of its being in from hearing an alarm on the bridge. Witness saw the deceased floating on the surface of the river, about 40 yards above the bridge. There were marks of blood on the child's cheeks. Deceased was brought to the above house, a medical gentleman was sent for, and everything done to restore it, but without success.

The Coroner inquired if there was any evidence to bring forward that would identify the woman as being the party who threw the children into the water?

Mr. Superintendent Bicknell, of the V division, said, that there were two persons, one named Hinchin, and the other Jesse Hammond, gardener to the Earl of Besborough, at Wandsworth.

Hawkings replied that he had not summoned Hinchin, but that the Earl of Besborough's servant was in attendance.

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Jesse Hammond, the witness alluded to, was then sworn, and stated that on the afternoon in question, he was passing over Battersea-bridge in his Lordship's cart, when he observed a woman cross hurriedly from the lower to the upper side of the bridge. He saw no children with her, but her actions were so extraordinary that he got out of the cart, and said "My good woman, what are you going to do?" She replied, "Why, you look there; you will see my children." He looked in the direction she pointed, and saw the children in the water. There were two of them. He called for a boat directly. His reason for calling to the woman was because he thought she was going to make away with herself. She had her hands and one foot on the railing of the bridge. She did not call for assistance. He did not know the woman or her name. He had no doubt that it was the same who threw the children into the water. Should know her again. She was not intoxicated.

By a juror. – She said she threw the children in.

The Coroner, addressing the jury, said – If it is your desire, gentlemen, that an application should be made for the production of the accused woman at the adjourned inquest, it shall be made.

A juror. – Do you think the application will be successful?

The Coroner. – No. Indeed I do not; but it is nothing more than right that the accused should be present to hear what is stated against her; and, as proof of how important it is to the interest of a prisoner, he would mention a case that occurred the other day. An inquest was held upon a woman who was alleged to have been murdered by her husband; and a woman who came forward to give evidence perjured herself the first word she spoke. She was not aware that the accused was at the time in the room. He rose, and through the Court put several questions to the witness. She committed such gross perjury that she was ordered to leave the room. He would only remark, that had that man not been present, the woman's statement would not have been received in evidence – probably would have remained uncontradicted – and the accused party committed to take his trial mainly from her testimony. The worthy coroner then made some remarks relative to the conduct of the Commissioners of Police and magistrates in throwing obstacles in the way of justice, instead of assisting, as he thought they ought, all coroners juries.

The Coroner then inquired of the superintendent of police if his request for the production of the prisoner had been made known to the magistrate.

The superintendent replied that one of the sergeants had attended the Westminster police court that morning.

Sergeant Brien (20 V) said that he had seen the sitting magistrate, and that he stated he had no power to send her there.

The Coroner then said, it would be necessary to adjourn the inquest, as there was no proof before them of the cause of the child's death. It might have arisen from a blow, but to be satisfied on that point it was absolutely necessary that the body should be opened.

The inquiry was adjourned for a week, and the witnesses and jury bound over to appear.

The Times Issue 05 May 1846

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WESTMINSTER. – On Mr. Burrell entering the court yesterday morning, police-sergeant 20 V immediately ascended the private platform, and advancing within a foot of the magistrate, informed him that the coroner (Mr. Wakley) had sent his compliments and desired that the magistrate would send Eliza Clark, the unfortunate woman who stands charged with the murder of her children by throwing them into the Thames from Battersea-bridge, before him at the inquest.

Mr. Burrell, who spoke in a very low tone of voice, and part of whose observations were consequently lost, replied, "You can give my compliments to the coroner, and say that I cannot comply with his request. This matter has been very frequently agitated, and Mr. Jardine has written a very excellent pamphlet on the subject. I cannot apprehend that there will be the smallest difficulty in the matter, as the female is clearly identified as the person committing the act." After another remark which was inaudible, Mr. Burrell added, "I should be glad to render Mr. Wakley any assistance I legally could."

Immediately after this, James Clark, the husband of the unfortunate woman above alluded to, was charged with being drunk and incapable of taking care of himself.

Andrew Mackarstie, a sergeant of the V division, said that about 2 o'clock on Sunday morning the defendant and his stepmother, with a man, came to the police-station in Milman's-row, Chelsea, and inquired about the deceased children. At that time witness could see that the defendant had been drinking, and that he had otherwise been excited. At a quarter past 2 they all left together, accompanied by a police-constable; but on going along the King's-road the defendant suddenly left the party. In a few minutes afterwards witness was going down Beaufort-street, when he observed defendant muttering some incoherent language with respect to his children. As he was proceeding hurriedly towards the Thames, and evidently in a state of great excitement, witness considered that he was neglecting his duty if he did not secure him.

Mr. Burrell. – I suppose you would not have taken him otherwise.

Sergeant. – My impression was, that in his then state of mind he might commit some rash act.

Mr. Burrell. – Did he make any other observation?

Sergeant. – he said he was going to the Thames to look after his dear children.

Defendant denied that was drunk, but said that he was very much excited. He did not hear of the melancholy intelligence of his wife destroying the children until between 8 and 9 o'clock on Saturday night, when he was first apprized of it by a man named Bartholomew, who met him in Royal Hospital-row.

Mr. Burrell re-called the sergeant, who declared that the defendant had been drinking very freely, and smelt of liquor.

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Mr. Burrell fined him 5s., which was immediately paid.

The defendant's stepmother, who held the surviving child in her arms, a fine girl apparently about three years and a half old, entreated with tears in her eyes, that she might be permitted to keep it. She would undertake to bring it up, and take every care of it.

Mr. Burrell, after a private conversation with Mr. W. Taylor the chief clerk, directed her to keep it for the present."

The Times Issue 07 May 1846

Page 8 column A

"WESTMINSTER. – Yesterday having been the day appointed for the re-examination of Eliza Clark, the unfortunate woman who stands charged with the murder of her children by throwing them into the Thames from Battersea-bridge the court was crowded almost to suffocation with persons anxious to catch a glimpse of the prisoners, and hear the proceedings.

THE LATE TRAGEDY AT BATTERSEA BRIDGE

The prisoner, Eliza Clark, who has been before described as a person, although poorly clad, of exceedingly neat and cleanly appearance, was immediately after the disposal of the night charges brought into court. Her husband, who was fined at this court on Monday for drunkenness was standing at the end of the dock, and as she ascended the steps leading to it she caught a glimpse of him, and her countenance, before serene, assumed an expression of horror, and she sank on the seat. Her husband covered his face with his right hand to hide his features, and immediately moved to another part of the court. We are not aware whether the magistrate noticed this, but he immediately ordered that her husband should leave the court.

The evidence of the witnesses, which was taken on Saturday and fully detailed in our paper of Monday, was then read over, and they were severally asked whether they wished to add anything to their former statements, and replied in the negative. At the conclusion of the deposition of James Perryman, the potboy at the Adam and Eve, the only witness who positively saw the prisoner throw her children into the river.

Mr. Taylor enquired whether he was quite certain that the prisoner was the woman who committed the act?

The boy replied that he was.

Mr. T. W. Wansborough, surgeon, of Rose Cottage, King's-road, Chelsea, was then examined. – He was called to see a child at the Adam and Eve, shortly after 3 o'clock on Saturday afternoon, which appeared to be from 9 to 12 months old. On his arrival he found Mr. Dixon, another surgeon, there, and found that the child had been just taken out of a warm bath. The child was dead, and appeared in falling into the water to have received a blow that had stunned it. Assisted by Mr. Dixon, he endeavoured to resuscitate

it without effect, and it having been communicated that another child had been taken to the Swan, and was without medical aid, he and Mr. Dixon left the dead to assist the living, but had only proceeded half across the bridge, when on being informed that a medical gentleman had arrived at the Swan, and that their attendance was therefore not required, they returned. Witness had since, by the direction of the coroner, made a post mortem examination of the body, and had no doubt that the child's death was caused by drowning, accelerated by a blow on the head, caused by the child falling on its head on the bed of the river.

Mr. Wansborough was anxious to make a statement with regard to the unsound state of the unfortunate woman's mind, but Mr. Burrell was of opinion that he had no right to hear any medical evidence excepting that relating to the cause of death.

Richard Champ, of 13, Wellington-street, Chelsea, uncle to the accused, was then put into the witness-box, and said – The child I saw dead on Saturday, at the Adam and Eve, was my niece, but I don't know her name. The prisoner had three children residing with her at home; two of these were her own, the third was a child of her husband's by a former wife. I saw them between 2 and 3 o'clock on Saturday. The prisoner called at my house at that time with the children, and remained until nearly 3 o'clock.

Mr. Taylor. – Did she say anything about her husband?

Witness. – She spoke about her husband's having ill-treated her.

Mr. Taylor. – Did she appear disturbed in her mind?

Witness. – She appeared very well in her mind.

Examination continued. – My house is half a mile from the bridge at Battersea.

Mr. Taylor. – Did you find any letter left at your house?

Witness. – Yes; I found a letter left on my bed.

Mr. Taylor. – How soon was that after she had left?

Witness. – About a quarter to 4 o'clock.

Mr. Taylor. – Can you say who wrote that letter? Can you say whether it is the prisoner's writing?

Witness. – No; I cannot. I could not read it; I gave it to Mrs. Champ.

Examination continued. – One of the children, a boy between 7 and 8 years of age is still missing. I have seen the child that has been recovered, and is in the hands of the prisoner's husband's step-mother; and that is one of my niece's (the prisoner's) children, that was at my house between 2 and 3 o'clock on Saturday afternoon.

Eliza Garman, of 8, Manor-row, Queen-street, Chelsea, aunt to the accused, sworn. – The eldest child was 7 years of age on the 30th of January; the second, named Emma will be three years old next April; and the deceased, Jane, was a year old last April.

Mr. Taylor. – Has any letter been shown to you?

Witness. – Yes; a young woman brought one to me.

A letter was handed to witness by Mr. Bicknell, the superintendent.

Mr. Taylor. – Is that the letter?

Witness. – Yes, it is.

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Mr. Taylor. – Now look at it attentively and say whether you know the handwriting?

Witness. – Yes, I think I do.

Mr. Taylor. – Whose writing is it?

Witness. – I think the prisoner's, but I would not swear positively.

Mr. Burrell. – Have you any doubt that it is her handwriting?

Witness. – I have no doubt that it is her handwriting.

Mr. Taylor. – Have you ever seen her write?

Witness. – No, but I have seen her writing. I have had several letters from her.

Mr. Thomas Bicknell, superintendent of the V division, produced the letter which he had received from the last witness.

The letter, which was written in so bad a hand and so misspelt that it was exceedingly difficult to read, was here put in, and ran as follows:-

"Eliza Clark, wife of James Richard Clark. – Now, my Jemmy, you need not trouble me with any more of your threats, because I don't mind, and hope that the next wife you get you'll know how to use them, as you have to me, and bid me good bye in the morning, and come home at night and knock my head through the panel of the door, and break my rest the whole of the night, and swear in the morning that you would come home drunk at night and kill me; and I'd rather prefer seeing my children go before me, and then I shall know they did not starve."

On the back of the letter was written:- "And if you go to Battersea-bridge, you will find the children there;" and it was addressed to her uncle Champ.

The prisoner's former statement, which was given in our paper of Monday last, having been read over, she was asked whether she wished to add to it, and replied in the affirmative.

Prisoner then said in a low, subdued tone of voice – We were married in 1841, and my husband has been frequently out of work, and we have seen a great deal of distress. In the first year he was 13 weeks out of work at one time, and when my Emma was a baby we were so badly off that I was obliged to go to service, and had half-a-crown a-week; but when he got work I went home again. In the next year he was out of work for four months, and I have on many a night wrapped my poor child under my shawl and gone out into the streets and begged to support us. He has been out of work for two months this year, and last week I took off my flannel petticoat and pledged it to support my family, and I was obliged to sell the remaining little rags of clothing belonging to myself and my children on Saturday morning to buy the poor little creatures bread, and then we had nothing left but the things we stood upright in.

Mr. Taylor. – Have you anything to say in answer to the charge against you?

Prisoner (calmly). – He was a good husband when sober, but, like other men, when drunk was violent. He was a good husband and a good father when sober.

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The prisoner was then fully committed to Newgate for trial, and the witnesses bound over to prosecute.

The prisoner then quietly walked out of the dock, looking vacantly around her."

The Times Issue 12 May 1846

Page 7 column E

THE LATE MURDERS AT BATTERSEA-BRIDGE

"Yesterday at 4 o'clock, Mr. Carter, the Coroner for East Surrey, resumed the inquiry into the circumstances attending the death of William Matthew Clark, aged seven years, one of the unfortunate children thrown over Battersea-bridge, on Saturday, the 2d instant. The body had been found in the work-gate hole of the Vauxhall and South Lambeth water Works, abutting on the river, and about 200 yards below the Red-house. It was taken to the above house, washed, and afterwards identified by the father. On Saturday, Mr. Carter opened an inquiry which, after two hours duration, he adjourned, for the purpose of having a post mortem examination of the body. The witnesses then examined, with but one exception, had given their evidence previously, both at the Adam and Eve, Chelsea, and at the Westminster police-court, and, therefore, any repetition would be unnecessary. Yesterday a number of witnesses were examined, but as their testimony was given in the earlier part of the day, at the inquest held before Mr. Wakley, upon the body of Jane Clark, the infant child, a reiteration would be useless. The only witness not examined, as before stated, was Mr. Tatham, of Belmont-place, Wandsworth-road, surgeon. This witness stated, that having received an order from the Coroner to make a post mortem examination of the body of the deceased, he proceeded to do so that morning. He first examined the body externally, and could find no mark of violence existing that was likely to cause death. He then removed the scalp from the head: the skull was entire, and the brain and other parts were perfectly healthy. He did not open any other portion of the body, as it was too far advanced in decomposition to have enabled him to arrive at any satisfactory conclusion. The deceased had died from submersion. The coroner having examined all the witnesses, summed up the evidence with minuteness and clearness, and left it to the jury to say how the deceased had come by his death. And whether they considered the woman, Eliza Clark, was the person who had so caused that death. The room was then cleared of strangers, and after a lapse of 10 minutes it was announced that the jury had returned a verdict of "wilful murder against Eliza Clark".

The Times Issue 16 May 1846

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"CENTRAL CRIMINAL COURT, Friday, May 15

OLD COURT

(Before Mr. Baron Alderson and Mr. Justice Coltman)

THE MURDER AT BATTERSEA

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Eliza Clark, 24, was indicted for the wilful murder of Jane Clark, by throwing her into the waters of a certain river, in which she was drowned and suffocated.

Mr. Clarkson was retained to defend the prisoner. Mr. Ryland held the depositions by direction of the Court, and stated the case for the prosecution.

The unhappy prisoner seemed hardly conscious of her situation, and exhibited a most wild and haggard appearance. She was allowed to be seated during the trial.

As the circumstances of this most distressing case have been so repeatedly before the public in the course of the last few days, it will be quite unnecessary to detail the evidence on the present occasion. The prisoner, who appeared to have received the most brutal ill-treatment from her drunken and dissolute husband, in a fit of desperation and madness thus occasioned, was proved to have thrown her three children from Battersea-bridge into the river, and was in the act of jumping into the water herself when she was apprehended. It was proved that the wretched woman had always exhibited the utmost kindness for her children, and that on the day before the melancholy occurrence she had pawned a portion of her scanty clothing to get food for them.

Dr. Wansborough, the medical gentleman who was called in upon the occasion, described the state of the prisoner shortly after the occurrence, when it appeared her pulse was at 180, and she exhibited every appearance of a person bereft of her senses.

Mr. Clarkson made a most eloquent and feeling appeal to the jury on behalf of his unhappy client, contending that the evidence clearly made out that the prisoner was not criminally accountable for the act she had committed.

Mr. Baron Alderson having summed up, the jury retired. They were absent rather more than an hour, when they again came into court, and returned their verdict, finding the prisoner Not Guilty, on the ground that at the time she committed the act she was not in such a state of mind as to render her responsible for the consequences.

The prisoner was in the usual form ordered to be detained during Her Majesty's pleasure."