

## SINGULAR CASE OF POISONING.

Yesterday, at Hanley Borough Police Court, John Wheatcroft, herbalist, and Edmund Davis, his assistant, were charged under the Pharmacy Act of 1868 with selling a poison without labelling the wrapper in which it was contained. Mr. Ashmall appeared for the defendants.—The Chief Constable explained that the defendant Wheatcroft kept a shop for the sale of herbs in Parliament Row, and a Mrs. Bratt went there for some herbs, being supplied with belladonna, which nearly cost her her life.—Mrs. Bratt, who has charge of the School Board offices in Lichfield Street, Hanley, said she called at the defendant's shop on January 25, and saw Davis. She asked for some burdock, enquiring if it was not a good thing for the blood, and being told it was, with two other herbs mixed with it, she said she would have the three sorts, and paid Davis 6d. for a parcel wrapped in a piece of newspaper. There was no label on the wrapper. He told her to make a decoction, and take a wineglassful three times a day. She did as he told her, and when she went to bed, at ten o'clock, she took a wineglassful, and gave her daughter two table-spoonsful. Her daughter immediately complained of a nasty taste in the mouth, and witness began to reel. She got into bed, and knew nothing more until eight o'clock the next morning. She had been confined to the house ever since until that morning, and had been in bed nearly all the time. She had suffered a great deal of pain, and she was still suffering from the effects of the mixture. (The witness appeared to be very weak, and gave her evidence seated.)—Sarah Bratt, her daughter, said her mother, directly after swallowing the mixture, exclaimed, "I am going so bad;" and witness, who slept with her, went to her, and saw she was black in the face. She procured assistance, and ran for the doctor. She (witness) was also very ill. She had a nasty taste in the mouth, and felt almost blind, and was very giddy. She had to feel her way along. She also was parched with thirst, and she was obliged to return before she had gone far, for water.—Mr. Wilson, M.B., assistant to Mr. Spanton, surgeon, said on the morning of the 26th January, a little after midnight, he was called to see Mrs. Bratt. He found her quite delirious. Her face and chest were covered with a scarlet rash. The pupils of the eyes were widely dilated, and insensible to light. Her mouth was very dry, and she could not speak distinctly. She did not seem to see any objects presented to her distinctly. She could not swallow, nor understand what was said to her. The pulse was full and beating at the rate of 160 a minute. Witness came to the conclusion that she had been poisoned by some narcotic. He went for the stomach pump, but she was too restless for him to attempt to pass it without assistance. He gave her a quarter of a grain of morphia sub-cutaneously, as she could not swallow. He went for Mr. Charlesworth, surgeon, and on his return with that gentleman he gave her another quarter of a grain of morphia sub-cutaneously.—Mr. Charlesworth agreed with witness that Mrs. Bratt had been poisoned by belladonna. The daughter's eyes also were dilated, and appeared insensible to light. He advised her to take an emetic, which she did. He and Mr. Charlesworth went to the police, and returned with Inspector Wall, when he found Mrs. Bratt drowsy from the morphia. They shook her, and she awoke, but dropped off to sleep again. Her pulse had sunk to 120. The pupils of the eyes were still in the same condition. Witness went back to the surgery for some spirits of sulphuric ether and brandy as a stimulant. About two o'clock in the morning her breathing was getting slow—about eight a minute—but her pulse was still going at from 112 to 120. She went quieter, and in another quarter of an hour breathing was four per minute. He went for Mr. Charlesworth again at 2.45. He kept up artificial respiration with the galvanic battery for half an hour, and used hot applications to different parts of the body. About four o'clock she began to improve, and half an hour later she could swallow. She was delirious again for half an hour, and then dropped off to sleep. He left her at 5.30, and saw her again at 8.30, when she was much better. All the symptoms were those of poisoning by belladonna. The roots produced were belladonna, and a decoction from them would make a powerful poison.—Mr. Ashmall said the defendant denied most positively that any belladonna was supplied to Mrs. Bratt, or was among the roots produced. What was thought to be bella donna was burdock.—Mr. Hamshaw (magistrates' clerk) said there was some similarity between belladonna and burdock, but Mr. Wilson had sworn that it was bella donna. The defendants were not scientific men, and might have mistaken one for the other.—Mr. Ashmall submitted that Mr. Wilson might have been mistaken. At any rate there was a doubt in the case, which he claimed for the defendants the benefit of.—Mr. Narramore (one of the magistrates) said the Bench were satisfied that the effects were such as would be produced by belladonna, and that it was sold without being labelled.—Mr. Ashmall contended that there was no proof that Mrs. Brett's illness was caused by the roots she bought of the defendants. He further submitted that if the magistrates decided to convict, they could not convict Wheatcroft, who was not present when the sale took place.—The Mayor said it was a very serious case, and Wheatcroft would pay £5. and costs. Davis would be discharged.—Wheatcroft was then charged under a bye-law of the borough with circulating bills of an offensive and indecent nature, and was fined 5s. 6d. and costs.