

SHOCKING AND FATAL OCCURRENCE AT ASHOVER.

Ashover and the neighbourhood were thrown into a state of the most intense and painful excitement by an occurrence that happened at that place on Monday, 23d May, the fatal result of which has shed a general gloom over the minds of the inhabitants. It appears that on the evening named, between 5 and 6 o'clock, a large black terrier dog, apparently mad, entered the town from the Matlock-road, and in its progress through the streets bit one or two other dogs. The alarm was immediately given, and different individuals loaded their fire-arms for the purpose of shooting the dangerous animal. When the dog passed the house of Mr. Richard Eaton (formerly Governor of the County Gaol, at Derby), that gentleman, accompanied by his son William and daughter, hastened up stairs into a room facing the street, from the window of which Mr. Eaton intended to shoot the animal, should it return that way. As they were standing near the window, Mr. Eaton holding the gun, which was loaded and on full cock, his son put a percussion cap on the nipple, and had scarcely done so, when, owing to the nervousness of Mr. Eaton, who did not know that the cap had been put on it, the gun went off, and the contents passed through the unfortunate youth's right arm into his body. He immediately fell, and the screams of the young lady, who had been standing close to her brother's elbow, caused Mrs. Sharp, a lady who was visiting at the house, to rush up stairs, when she found the hapless youth lying on the floor, his arm dreadfully wounded, and the blood flowing profusely. She immediately raised the window, and called to a man who was standing in the street to run for Mr. Mackarsie, surgeon. As she had come up stairs, the agonized father ran past her, exclaiming, "What shall I do! my dear boy—my dear boy!" Miss Eaton followed her father down stairs soon after Mrs. Sharp came into the room, to tell him that her brother was better, but she had scarcely got down when a second report was heard, and on going into the garden she was horrified to find her father lying on the grass-plot, with a brace of pistols by his side, one of which had been discharged through his head. Mr. Eaton never spoke after he was found, life being then nearly extinct; his son, who was quite sensible to the last, and gave a clear account of the first sad event, expired the next morning about 8 o'clock. Mr. Mackarsie arrived as early as possible, but unfortunately surgical aid was unavailing. The deceased gentleman was devotedly attached to his family, especially to the unfortunate youth whose untimely death we have narrated. The latter was about 17 or 18 years of age, and was apprenticed to Mr. Dearden, Bookseller, Carlton-street, Nottingham. He had come over for a jaunt in consequence of the marriage of an elder brother, who resides at Nottingham, which ceremony was fixed to take place on the following Wednesday; and his father had, on the day of the fatal occurrence, expressed to different persons his high anticipations of pleasure from the wedding jaunt in the society of his family, and his warm sense of the amiability and promise of his son. Two of Mr. Eaton's elder daughters were at Nottingham at the time, and a messenger was dispatched on Tuesday to acquaint them with this sad visitation.

At the time of this truly melancholy visitation in her family, Mrs. Eaton was absent, having gone to visit Mrs. Holland, of Ford-house. With the most praiseworthy wish to save her from the shock of an unadvised communication of the sad tidings, the Rev. J. Nodder started from Ashover to meet her, as soon as he became aware of the circumstance. But by this time, Mrs. Eaton—who had been to Bakewell in Mrs. Holland's carriage, and had got out at Not-cross, in order to walk the short distance home—was returning by a different route to that which the rev. gentleman took. Mr. Taylor, however, having met Mrs. Eaton, conducted her to Mr. Nodder's house, where part of the mournful news was broken to her with due care. She had been previously led to suppose that something was wrong from the language used to her by an old woman whom she had met, but was unaware of the extent of the misfortune.

The dog was speedily destroyed after it had passed Mr. Eaton's house, and in the course of the evening two others, which it had bitten, were also shot. It is not known to whom the dog belonged.

INQUEST ON THE BODIES.

The inquest was held on Tuesday morning, at the Black Swan Inn, before J. Hutchinson, gent., coroner for the hundred of Scarsdale, and a respectable jury, consisting of the following gentlemen:—Mr. Richard Gregory, foreman; Messrs. George Smedley, Samuel Lomas, Wm. Hopkinson, Wm. Gregory, Thomas Sharp, Joseph Taylor, Joseph Marsden, Henry White, George Allen, John Bassett, and Samuel Mellor. Having been sworn, the jury proceeded to the residence of the deceased, for the purpose of viewing the bodies. That of Mr. Eaton presented a dreadful spectacle, the deadly massive having passed quite through the head a little above the ears, and the face being almost covered with the blood which had flowed from the eyes and mouth. A portion of the brain protruded from each of the wounds made by the bullet. In the room where the son had been shot, his body was laid out, and presented a no less dreadful sight, the right arm being fearfully shattered above the elbow, and there being a large wound in the side. In the window a pane of glass was broken, apparently from the concussion of the air by the report of the gun, and the top of the window frame and part of the ceiling were thickly spotted with blood. Several of the jurymen, who had familiarly known and highly respected the deceased, were deeply affected by the view of their bodies. On the return of the jury to their room at the Black Swan, the first witness examined was

Mrs. Sarah Sharp, who deposed that she knew the late Mr. Eaton, and was at his house on a visit on the day of his death. Between 5 and 6 o'clock in the evening, Mr. Eaton, his son and daughter, and witness were looking through the window at a dog which was supposed to be mad. Mr. Eaton ran up stairs to get his gun, and load it; his son and daughter followed, and they had not been up stairs more than three or four minutes when witness heard the report of a gun up stairs, and immediately afterwards a fall and the noise of the breaking of some glass. Witness heard Miss Eaton scream out, and immediately ran up stairs to see what was the matter. At the top, witness met Mr. Eaton, who appeared greatly distressed, throwing his hands up and down, and crying, "What shall I do! my dear boy—my dear boy!" At the door of the room, witness met Miss Eaton, who was very much distressed, exclaiming, "My brother is shot!" Witness went forward into the room, to assist Mr. William: she first opened the window and called to a man who was standing by to run for Mr. Mackarsie, surgeon, and then immediately attended to the unfortunate youth. His dress was much destroyed by the shot, and he was lying on the floor with his right arm under him, not being able to rise. Witness gently moved him, so as to get his arm from under him, and waited by him till Mr. Mackarsie came. He was quite sensible to the last, and told witness that he had assisted his father in loading the gun, and had been putting on the cap when the accident happened, at which time all three were standing close to the window. Ever since last winter, when Mr. Eaton had been ill, and had lost the use of one side, he had been very nervous, and not well in his general health. Mr. William said he supposed it was from his father's nervousness that the gun had gone off. Witness did not see anything of Mr. Eaton after she met him on the stairs, for she remained in the room with his son. After a while, on looking round, she saw the gun in a corner of the room, near the wardrobe: before that she never thought of it. Between 7 and 8 o'clock, witness saw the body of Mr. Eaton brought into the parlour where it now lies. He always at night kept his fire-arms up stairs, but at other times they were kept in different parts of the house.

Ann Wheatcroft sworn—Witness lives near Mr. Eaton's house, within about ten yards of it. About six o'clock last night, witness saw Mr. Eaton go out of his house by the back door into his garden: just before that she had heard the report of a gun, a scream, and the noise of some glass falling, which had caused her to go to the house to learn what was the matter. It was about a minute after this when witness saw Mr. Eaton go into the garden: he did not seem to walk any quicker than he usually did. When witness got to the door, Miss Eaton came down stairs, and called to her father to tell him that William was better: witness having told her that Mr. Eaton had gone into the garden, she immediately went thither. Witness heard her scream, and followed her into the garden, where she saw Mr. Eaton lying on the grass, and his daughter trying to lift him up. Witness went towards him, and untied his neckerchief; as she was doing so, the wind came out of his throat, and he ceased to breathe. Two pistols were lying near him, one of them loaded, and the other discharged. A bullet appeared to have gone in at one side of his head, and passed out at the other, forcing out a portion of his brain.

Two of the Jurymen said that they arrived at the spot just after the latter fatal event, and that the deceased had then ceased to breathe, although the action of the heart had not ceased: he was quite dead before the surgeon could arrive. The pistols were rifle-barrelled, and loaded with ball. The Eatons were a remarkably affectionate family.

The Coroner said he thought it was clear, from the evidence, that the deceased William Eaton had been accidentally shot by his father; and that the latter deceased had gone into his garden in a paroxysm of grief at the unhappy occurrence, and destroyed himself, being of unsound mind at the time.

The Jury immediately returned the following verdict:—"The deceased William Eaton was accidentally shot by his father, Richard Eaton; and that the father, in a fit of insanity brought on by a paroxysm of grief, destroyed himself."

The distracted state of mind into which Miss Mary Eaton had been thrown by these heart-rending scenes, rendered her quite incapable of giving evidence on the inquest: the very clear and satisfactory nature of the evidence adduced, however, enabled the Coroner and Jury to dispense with an examination which must have been so painful to the feelings of the afflicted lady.

On Saturday, the bodies of Mr. Eaton and his Son were buried in All Saints Church-yard, the Rev. J. Nodder, Vicar of Ashover, officiating on the mournful occasion. There were two hearses and one coach, and 12 pall bearers. The mourners were:—Mr. Eaton, Mr. J. Radford, Mr. Hewitt, Mr. Richard Hewitt, Mr. William Hewitt, and Mr. J. H. Cock.

[Information of the above lamentable event reached us the day previous to our last publication, but we considered it better to wait the holding of the inquest, than to give insertion to what then necessarily was a very imperfect statement.—Ed. D. M.]

SUMMER CIRCUIT OF THE JUDGES.

On Thursday morning the ensuing Summer Circuits were appointed in the Judge's Room of the Court of Queen's Bench. It was expected that an alteration would have been made in the circuit, but it is understood that an act of parliament is required for the purpose.

NORTHERN CIRCUIT.—Lord Denman and Mr. Justice Maule.

OXFORD.—Lord Chief Justice Tindal and Mr. Justice Erskine.

HOME.—Lord Abinger and Mr. Justice Coltman.

MIDLAND.—Mr. Baron Parke and Mr. Justice Patteson.

NORFOLK.—Mr. Baron Alderson and Mr. Justice Williams.

WESTERN.—Mr. Justice Wightman and Mr. Justice Cresswell.

NORTH WALES.—Mr. Baron Gurney.

SOUTH WALES.—Mr. Baron Rolfe.

The Judge at Chambers during the long vacation—Mr. Justice Coleridge.

PROSPECTS OF THE HARVEST.—The accounts from the provinces augur most favourably for the agriculturists. The corn crops throughout large districts of Limerick, Cork, Clare, and Galway, are represented as being in a very forward state, and that several fields of wheat are already running into ear. On Wednesday a large field of meadow hay was cut down near Loughrea. The *Tipperrary Free Press* remarks—"The present broken weather, fluctuating between copious showers and glowing sunshine, is peculiarly favourable. The spring corn is coming up with great vigour and freshness. Potato planting and turnip sowing are proceeding favourably. Never was the land in finer heart." The reports of the May fairs also continue favourable.