

The case was then to come up for preliminary hearing before the police magistrate.

In the forenoon of the following day all the town knew that Mary Byrne was charged with poisoning her late husband gradually with some preparation of arsenic.

This information had been laid before the authorities by the doctors who had made the post-mortem examination. The symptoms of Amos Byrne's illness had so baffled the skill of the regular factory medical attendant that, after securing Mrs. Byrne's consent, he had called in a brother practitioner, whom he had had in consultation, to assist in the autopsy. Even then it had been impossible to say exactly the cause of death, as all the organs of the man's body had been found in a healthy condition. It was only after careful and systematic scientific examination and analysis for days after the post-mortem that the true cause of death had been ascertained to have been arsenical poisoning. Hence the laying of the information and subsequent arrest of the pretty widow.

The afternoon of the preliminary hearing, Walter Hart sought the private office of his manager, Mr. Mason.

"Hart, this is a bad business," began the manager, as the foreman came in and closed the door.

"Yes, sir, it is, but I fully believe she is innocent," rejoined Walter, as he took the chair indicated at the side of the desk.

"Why, man, she is a most finished actress—there's a summons," pointing to a paper on the desk. "I've been served with a subpoena to give evidence as to what passed the other day between us at the cottage."

"But even supposing her capable of it, where do you suppose she got the poison?" argued the foreman, rather disturbed at the manager's reference.

"At one of our two drug stores, of course," confidently.

"I have been to both, and they positively state they have not sold any arsenic for a year, except in doctors' prescriptions; and not even any rat poison for two months—and certainly not to Mary."

"Why do you always call that woman Mary, Hart?"

"Well, she is an old friend—I always called her Mary—I couldn't go back on her at a time like this," and the foreman twirled the workman's cap in his hands.

"It's a bad case—there's the evidence of the two doctors," continued Mr. Mason.

"That's just what I came to see you about, Mr. Mason," explained Walter.

"What can I do?"