

Staunton Trial.

Mrs. Patrick Staunton said that the deceased had come to them at Cudham of her own free will. She was always nicely dressed and had clean clothes. On their arrival at Forbes Road she appeared perfectly sensible. At the Woodlands she had her meals with the rest of the family, and was constantly out and about. She came down daily to breakfast, and washed and dressed herself regularly.

Patrick Staunton asserted that he had frequently seen the deceased the worse for liquor. She had shown no surprise on hearing of the death of her child; the child suffered from convulsions, and it was at the mother's request that it was taken to Guy's. He knew that Alice Rhodes was passing as his brother's wife, but he was not aware of any criminal intimacy between them. No restraint of any kind was put upon the deceased at the Woodlands; he had noticed no change in her health until Monday, the 9th of April, and he saw no symptoms which could render the drive to Bromley inadvisable or dangerous. It was put to him by the coroner whether the removal, first of the child and then of the mother, was not to evade inquiry,⁴ and he answered indignantly in the negative.

Clara Brown was the only other adult—if a girl of sixteen may be so designated—who could throw light on the establishment at the Woodlands. She corroborated in fullest detail the evidence of the Stauntons. According to her, Harriet was out morning, noon, and night; she shared the family meals; she showed no signs of ill-health until the Monday before her departure for Penge, and during her last days at the Woodlands she ate heartily of cold roast beef, fowl, and steak. Witness declared that she had seen the deceased the worse for liquor, which she used to obtain from the village. At a later date, as will be seen, Clara Brown told a totally different story, and said that her original evidence was put in her mouth by the Stauntons.

Mrs. Butterfield was then called, and the other witnesses included—besides the flymen, the railway officials, the nurse, the undertaker, the lodging-house keeper, and the medical men—a couple of constables who had gone down to the Woodlands

⁴ Had No. 34 Forbes Road been situated a few yards further westward, it would have been within the boundary line of the county of Surrey, and the death would have been registered at Croydon.