

**THE STORY OF A SHOCKING CHILD
MURDER WHICH TOOK PLACE IN
PEGG'S GREEN
IN 1865**

**"THOSE WITHOUT PROPERTY AND
WEALTH SERVED THOSE WITH IT AND
WERE DESERVING OF CHARITY"**

BY SAMUEL T STEWART - SEPTEMBER 2021

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INTRODUCTION

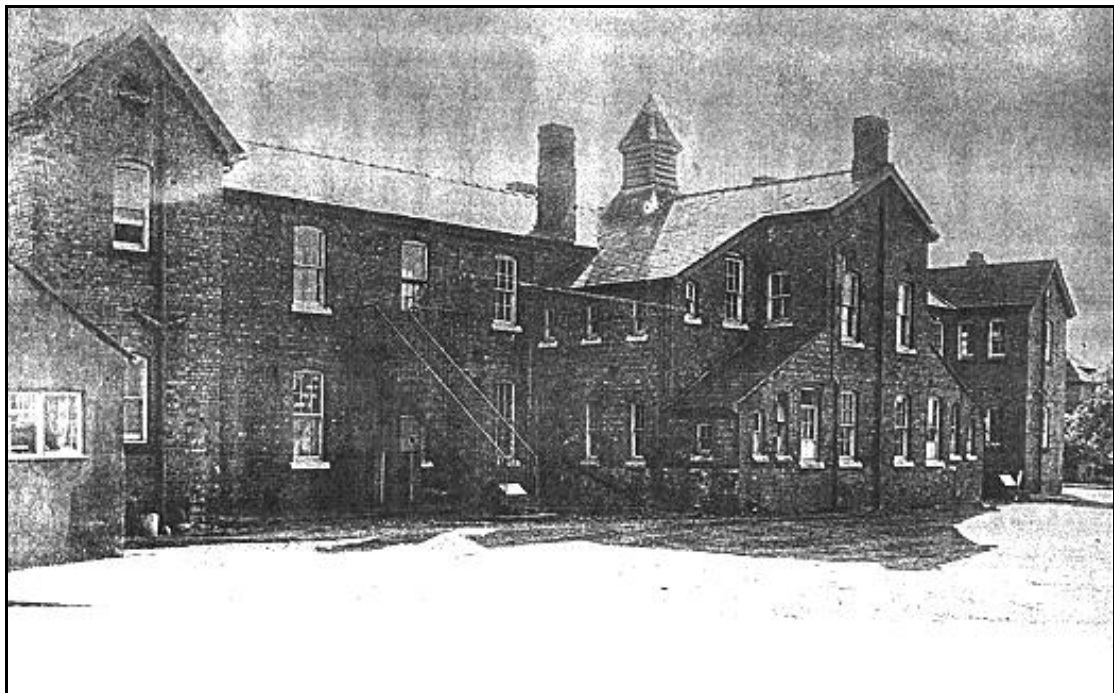
The wilful child murder of Zadock Atkins at Pegg's Green by his destitute mother Eliza Adkins, who drowned him by throwing him down a well, excited much interest in the newspapers both locally and nationally.

An attempt has been made by the author to provide the readers with an overview of this dreadful and upsetting case, and its relationship to the guardians of the poor and the Loughborough Union Workhouse.

The reader will need to make up their own mind from the evidence presented here, as to whether Eliza would have committed the murder of her son if the parish had granted her the 2s. per week which she had pleaded for but instead forced her to go into the Loughborough Union Workhouse or "house" as it was colloquially referred to.

Yes, Eliza did tell some lies, but these were clearly only out of desperation in order to try and persuade the parish to grant her relief from her destitution.

The evidence has all been transcribed from various newspaper reports to try and provide a balanced perspective of the case for the modern day reader. By the very nature of the subject there is considerable repetition.



The New Loughborough Union Workhouse

This was a classical style workhouse designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott with W. Bonython Moffatt using their standard plan and built between 1837-8. It had a taller pedimented centre of four stories with three storey wings and an Italianate bell-turret, and was designed to house 350 inmates. The contractor was Myers of Hull and Wilson. The original costing was £5,647, although this rose to £6,550 on completion. The workhouse building was demolished in 1993 after it was put to use as an "Old

People's Home" !! The new Loughborough Union Workhouse was built in 1838, to replace the old workhouse on Nottingham Road which later became used as the Star Foundry c.1870. The new Union Workhouse was built after the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act (the New Poor Law), in 1834 which meant that people had to enter the workhouse in order to seek help, rather than be given relief money by the local parish. It was located on Derby Road, in the area between what are now Regent and Leopold Streets.

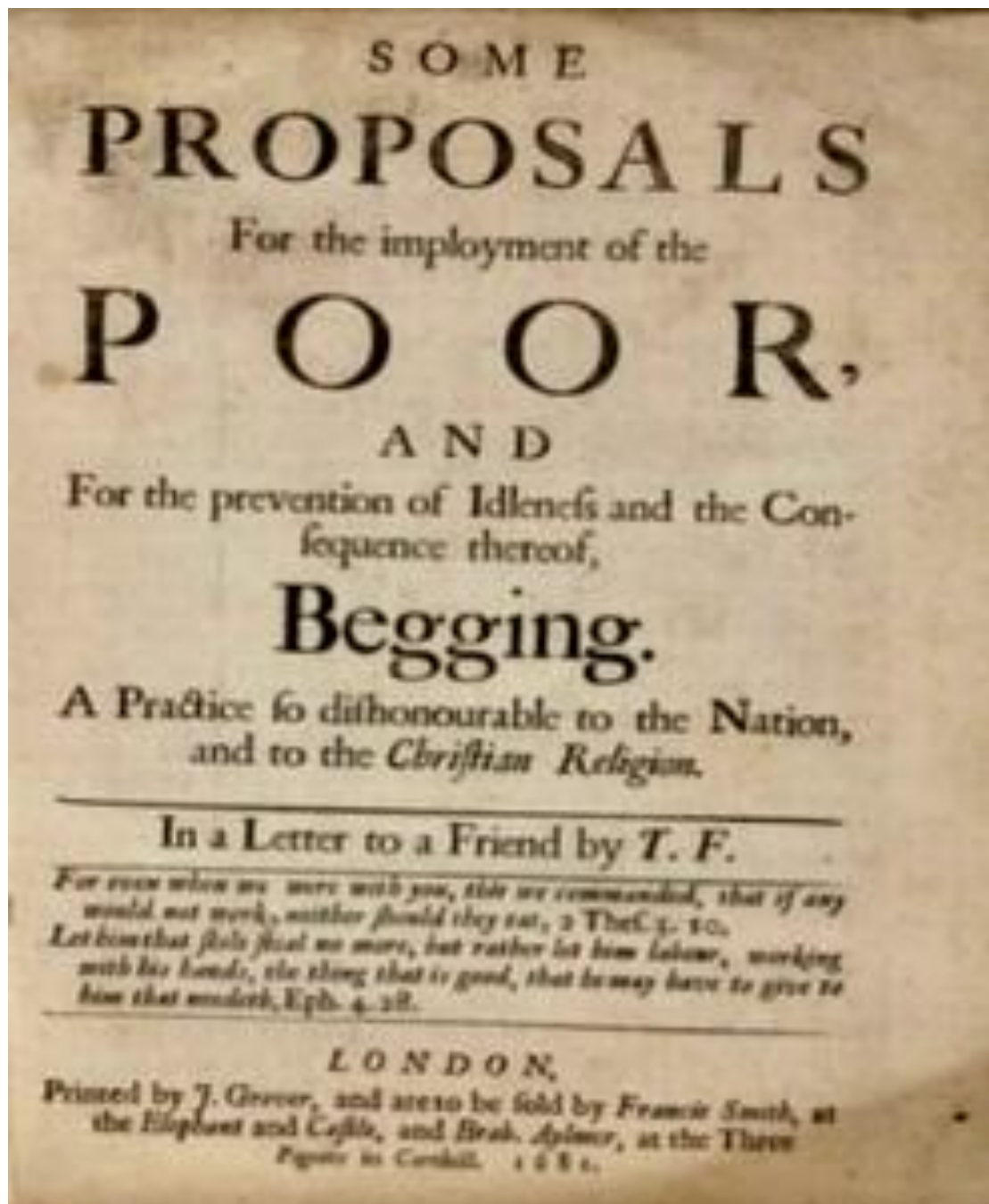


A typical workhouse scene

The Poor law was created in 1834 and it was an idea to reduce the cost of looking after the poor, take the beggars off the street, and encourage the poor to work harder to support themselves. The law was passed by Parliament. The Poor Law became a statute law because the government thought it was their fault that the poor people

were poor, and since the government felt responsible for the poor being poor they created the Poor Law. This was passed as a way to stop giving money to the poor, who were still on the streets. If those on the street wanted help getting off the streets they were able to go into workhouses (and work for a pittance). Once in there it would have been extremely difficult to extract yourself into normal society of course.

Also in the workhouses were orphaned children without parents and abandoned children, the physically and mentally sick, the disabled, the elderly and unmarried mothers.



THE INQUEST ON THE DEATH OF ZADOCK ADKINS

Transcribed from The Loughborough Monitor -
Thursday, August 3rd, 1865

SHOCKING CHILD MURDER NEAR ASHBY-DE-LA-ZOUCH

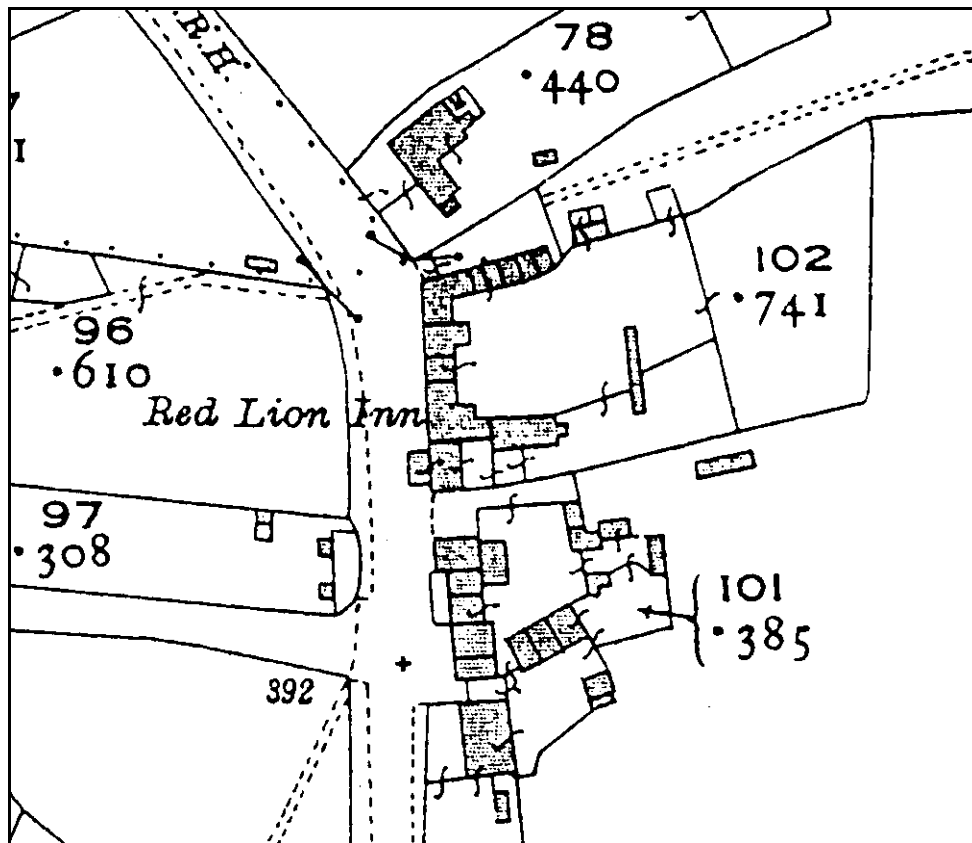
FULL REPORT OF THE INQUEST AND COMMITTAL OF THE ACCUSED FOR TRIAL

Considerable excitement has been occasioned at a village called Pegg's Green during the past days by the discovery of the body of a little boy, named Zadock Adkins, four years old, in a well which was situated on the top of a mound in a field belonging to Mr. Walker, at an early hour on Saturday morning last, and whose body was not identified until the following day as that of the son of Eliza Adkins who formerly resided with her husband George Adkins who died six months ago, in the same village. The particulars of this shocking affair will best be gathered from the sub-joined evidence taken at the inquest on Tuesday last **at the house of Elizabeth Hout, the Red Lion Inn, Pegg's Green**, before the coroner, J. Gregory, Esq.

Cont'd on next page



An early 1900s photograph of the Red Lion Inn at Pegg's Green. Picture the scene with a large crowd of people shouting and jeering whilst the inquest was taking place inside.



The above is an extract from the 1885 issued O/S map. The Red Lion, now a converted residential accommodation is situated on Nottingham Road formally known as Frogatt's Lane and Main Street. School Lane is on the left before you get to the former Red Lion Inn going north.

[A history of the Red Lion Inn is free to download and read on the author's website under the general heading of public houses.](#)

Continuation from previous page

The court was opened shortly after eleven o'clock, and some inconvenience was caused by the great crowd outside keeping up an almost incessant noise throughout the enquiry.

The following were sworn on the jury :- Wm Kidger (foreman), Price Kidger, Thomas Cox, Thomas Kirby, Thomas Gostelow, William Gostelow, John Kendrick, Jonas Knight, James Fletcher, William Fletcher, Thomas Haywood, Jesse Sketchley.

The prisoner was accommodated with a chair just behind the witnesses, but she maintained almost perfect silence during the whole of the enquiry, displaying a sullen temper and frowning face. She appeared to be very restless during the sitting of the court, but afterwards she was observed to be much more buoyant in spirit, and when she left at the close, in charge of Inspector Ward, for Ashby police station, she turned round to the crowd who jeered her, nodded and smiled to those whom she recognised. At the commencement of the inquest she kept her head buried in her hands, but when requested by the officials, removed her hands and continued to hold down her head throughout the whole of the proceedings. She is a woman of about 50 years of age, and her features are unmistakably marked with the troubles and cares of the world. She is somewhat tall, and has a very sallow complexion, a furrowed

mouth and large projecting teeth, and leaden eyes. Her hair approaches to greyness, and this was set at the front in paper for curling. She was attired in a black straw bonnet neatly trimmed, a black shawl, and scanty grey dress, and presented a very clean appearance.

After the jury had been sworn, they went to view the body and also the well, and on its reassembling, the prisoner was asked by the coroner what was her name. She made no reply, but on the question being repeated and the coroner telling her that she must answer him, she said her name was Eliza Adkins.

The coroner : Are you a widow woman ?

Prisoner : Yes, sir.

The coroner : I shall be glad if you will attend to the evidence that is going to be given by different witnesses. If you have any questions you would like to put to them after they have given their examination in chief, you can do so.

The enquiry then proceeded. -

John Walker was the first witness called : He said I am a farmer and live at Pegg's Green, in the township of Thringstone, in the parish of Whitwick. I occupy the field in which there is a well at the back of my house. A foot-road runs through the field from one part of Thringstone to the other. At the side of the foot-road at the distance of 100 yards from my house is a draw-well which is used by myself exclusively. I have occasionally let people draw from the well. There is a lid to the well for which I keep the key, and I have occasionally allowed the neighbours to get water from it, when they require it up to one o'clock in the morning. It is always kept locked : when I have lent people the key they have always brought it back when they have done with it. It was locked on Friday night last. The lid of the well is in a dilapidated state. The plank on the outside of the lid was broken some time back by a beast trampling on the edge of it, and since then I have laid a loose log of wood against it, to stop up the hole. That log was there on Friday last. About seven o'clock on Saturday morning, Harriet Bird, a young woman, a neighbours daughter, came for the key. She brought it back again in about five minutes, and said there was something in the well, as she could scarcely make the bucket dip. I left home after that, and on my return in about an hour, I was informed that the body of a child had been found in the well. There was nothing in it the night before, as I went up to the well at five o'clock to draw the cows some water. The water is very shallow, it never stands more than three or four feet deep, and I should have noticed had anything been in it. The well from the surface to the bottom is about five yards deep.

Confirmation of Walker's statement by a Juror : I did not go to the well when I was first informed that there was something in the water. I thought some children might have put a brick in, and that it could have been got out easily enough, I had no idea of anything of this kind

Inspector Ward here asked the accused whether she wished to ask the witness any questions, but she remained perfectly silent.

Harriet Bird deposed : I am a single woman and live at Thringstone. About seven o'clock on Saturday morning, I went and fetched the key of the well from Mr. Walker to draw some water. I unlocked the lid and put the bucket down, but before I did so, I noticed something of a light colour in the well. I got some half buckets full of water up, and after that locked the well up and took the key back to Mr. Walker and told him there was something in the well. The log of wood was in its proper place. I noticed a few loose pieces of grass floating in the well, and some of them came up in the bucket. I was at the well at seven o'clock on Friday morning and saw something then

on top of the water. The bucket did not dip right then. No one accompanied me to the well then.

Henry Elliot : I am a collier, and live at Thringstone. On Saturday morning I went to the well about eight o'clock to get some water to last us over Sunday, as usual. On going up to the well, I met Waring's girl coming back with two buckets of water. I then went to Mr. Walkers for the key, but was told that it was out, and on my getting up to the well, I found it locked up and the key lying on the stand. Waring's girl having left it there. I drew two buckets of water and took them home. On returning to the well, I found three women there, Mrs. Brown, Mrs. Crofts, and Mrs. Willett. Mrs. Brown said she could see to the bottom of the well, and it was perhaps a stone they saw. Mrs. Crofts said it was not, it was like a child's hand. I looked down the well, examined the water particularly, and saw there was a child lying at the bottom, face upwards, under the water, with both its hands raised upwards as if grasping something. I went down to Mr. Walkers to see if he was at home, but he had gone a shepherding. Mrs. Walker sent for her husband's brother, Drayton Walker, and he was at the well before I arrived with a ladder. I put the ladder in, and went down and fetched the child up. The body was not very stiff - the legs were, but the arms were pliable. Drayton fetched a board and we carried it down to an empty house belonging to Mr. W. Hoult. The clothes of the child were not torn ; it was well dressed and had shoes, and had not any cap on. There was some chickweed in the well, and it seemed as if it had been pushed off the ground at the surface where it grew, (at the top of the hole covered by the log at the back of the well) into the water.

Confirmation by the Jury of Eliot's statement : When I fetched the water out on the Saturday morning the buckets dipped well - there was three feet of water in it. The child was a stranger to me. I left the lid unlocked on getting the two buckets of water out, as I saw a girl coming up to the well. I was at the well on Friday morning, but did not see anything in it then.

Richard Orton, surgeon : I am a surgeon at Coleorton. On Saturday morning at half past eight o'clock, I was sent for to see the body of a child. I was busy in my surgery so I sent my nephew, Richard Orton, as an assistant surgeon. I followed soon after, and inquired what was the matter. I found the child lying in Mr. Hoult's empty house. I saw that it was a male child, three or four years old, and that it had been drowned. I lifted up the clothes a little behind and above the left ear, which were wet with a little sand, but observed nothing but a bruise and dirt attached to it. I pressed the chest and there came a little saliva and froth, which is common with cases of drowning. The body was perfectly fresh, but it must have been in the water some hours. On Monday morning by the coroner's directives, I made a post mortem examination of the body, but found no other external marks beyond those I have mentioned. On examining it internally, the organs were in a perfectly healthy condition, having no more in the stomach than a little gastric juice, water and a few gooseberries, some of which were perfectly whole. My nephew assisted me in the post mortem examination, and from the appearance we both came to the conclusion that the child had come to its death by suffocation caused by drowning. I remember being at the birth of the child. I know the accused, as I attended her on her confinement, about four years ago this month. She was then living in this neighbourhood, at Peggs Green, 300 yards from the well, along with her husband. I attended her husband who was lame for about six months. They left the neighbourhood, and I saw them no more until five or six weeks back, when the accused called upon me and asked me to draw her up a petition by which she could get something from the charitably disposed in the neighbourhood who knew her, as she was destitute. I believe then she said she came from Birmingham. She had not the child with her. She appeared to be destitute,

but not knowing her again, I declined to draw up the petition. I saw no more of her until she was in custody.

Richard Orton, surgeon, and nephew of the last witness, and who assisted at the post mortem examination of the deceased, corroborated the previous evidence. He said, on opening the body we found nothing more as to the cause of death than is usually the case in drowning—water and air were mixed in the lungs, showing that the child had expired in the water. It was a well developed and well nourished child. I should say that the mark at the back of the ear was caused by the child's head knocking against the side of the well or striking the bottom.

Sarah Castledine ; I am a single woman and live with my mother and father in Cabbage Street, Whitwick. On Friday night about six o'clock I was sitting at the door sewing in company with Emma Moore, when the accused, who is behind me, came up carrying a little boy, the deceased, on her back. She took him off her back and came up to me and asked if I would allow her to sit down and rest a time. I said "yes" and got her a chair and a stool for the boy to sit on. I asked her how far she had come and she said a good way and that she had got a good way to go—she was going to meet a friend of hers. She then asked me about the Coleorton coal pits, where the water burst in some time ago—whether they were being worked or the water was still in them. I said I thought they were being worked. She then asked whether they gave away as much charity at Gracedieu as Miss De Lisle did. I said I thought not. The baby then began to show symptoms of being tired and fainting. The prisoner asked if she might have it on her knees for a quarter of an hour to go to sleep. I consented. She then pulled the deceased's round hat off, put it on her lap, and it went to sleep. She sat with it asleep until between 8 and 9 o'clock ; during its sleep the child mourned and sighed, and the prisoner kissed it several times, saying "Yes my love." Prisoner was all of a tremble during the time she sat in our house. When she said she was going, my mother said I was going that way and I could carry the baby, but the prisoner said "Oh, no, she need not, I can carry it myself." The child had very bad boots on, and the prisoner, while she was in our house, called my attention to them by saying that she had some better boots in her basket, but she had taken the new pair off and put the old ones on on purpose to ease the child's feet, which were blistered. Prisoner left and went round by Mr. Hallam's corner in the direction of Thringstone. The prisoner carried the child out of our house while it was asleep, and she said when it awoke it would walk as fresh as ever. At about one o'clock, I was shown the child by P.S. Peberdy, in company with my mother, and I at once identified it as the prisoner's from its wearing apparel. I am sure the prisoner is the woman too ; as she was dressed the same as now. The child had on a pork-pie cap.

Ann Lacey : I live at Gracedieu. Years past I knew the prisoner well. I knew her formerly as Eliza James, daughter of Thomas James, a neighbour. About the time of Belton fair a week ago, she came to me to inquire about a *situation that was vacant at "Mr Mills". I went with her to Mr Mills, and prisoner got the situation as housekeeper, and stayed with Mr Mills for one month. From Mr Mills she went into the Loughborough Union Workhouse. I did not see her again until last Saturday going between half-past five and seven o'clock. We had not got down stairs, and the prisoner came and called us up. When I got down stairs she came inside and I said to her, "Eliza, what has brought you here so soon; you haven't run away from the Union". She said there was no running away from there when once in ; that she gave proper notice to them to come I out. I asked her where the boy was, and she said it was dead and buried. It died very suddenly of the croup, and was well and dead in the hour. I did not ask her where it died, but I said "You ought to go down on your knees and thank the Lord for taking it from you—it has missed a world of trouble."

She remained at our house, and had her meals there until six o'clock at night. I did not talk much to her, as I went about my work. She had a little basket., which she took away with her. In the course of the day I saw Mr Mills in the lane. I told him that the prisoner was at my house, that she had come out of the Union, and had buried the baby. Mr Mills agreed to have her back again on Monday, but the prisoner left my house to go to Breedon where her sister lived to fetch her clothes, so as to go to Mr Mills.

By the Jury : The reason she went into the Union was to relieve the child. She could maintain herself. The parish would not make her any allowance to the child. She had a deal of walking and trouble to get relief. She stayed at her sister's, at Breedon, while she was at Mr Mills. The sister could not afford to keep the child. I don't know whether she tried at Breedon for relief. She tried at Belton, and also at Loughborough. One of the jury said Breedon was in the Shardlow district, where the child was living, but the prisoner lived in the Loughborough district.

By juror : The prisoner told me she would sacrifice half her wages to maintain the child if the Board would do the remainder. The court here adjourned for half-an-hour for refreshment. On its re-assembling, Catherine Black was called.

Catherine Black said : I live with my husband at Osgathorpe. I know the prisoner. My brother, John Cross, married her sister. I had not seen her very lately, On Saturday night last, between six and seven o'clock, the prisoner came to my house. She would have to go through Osgathorpe on her way from Gracedieu to Breedon. I met her in the garden, and asked her if she had come out of the Union, and she replied, "Yes." I then asked her where the child was, and she said it was dead. I afterwards, when I had been for some water (from the brook), asked her what the child had died of, and she said it had died of the croup. I asked her whether it was buried, and she said it was—that it was well and dead in an hour. She also said that the neighbours subscribed 1s 6d for the child's burial. I said to her that a child had been found drowned in a well at Griffydam, (Pegg's Green). She replied, "Poor fellow." She then left and said she was going to her sister's at Breedon. She did not remain in our house above ten minutes. I went away with her a little way.

By a juror ?? : I felt very unwell, but I don't know that it arose through talking about the child having been found in the well. I cannot recollect that I said the police were in search of a woman.

Inspector Ward to the prisoner : Have you any questions to ask this house? Prisoner (in a very low tone) : "No, sir".

John Smith : I live at Osgathorpe, and am a framework. knitter. I have seen the body of the child in question; it was the prisoner's child. I have known it since Whitsuntide. I worked at Breedon as a sawyer, and it was there, at John Cross's, the prisoner's brother-in-law, that I saw it. I have seen it frequently. as I worked with John Cross. The prisoner was a stranger to me until then. The child used to take notice of me, and I used to take notice of it in return.

P.C. William Marriott deposed : I am stationed et Breedon. On Sunday last, from information I received, I went over to Wilson and found the prisoner at the house of John Cross (who was married to a sister of the prisoner's). I found her talking to John Cross in a garden at the back of the house. I told her I should charge her with drowning her child in a well at Pegg's Green, on Friday night. She made no reply. When I was taking the prisoner through the house she took up a basket which was lying on the table. I took possession of it, and found it contained a pair of child's

boots, nearly new, also amongst other things a piece of cord, new, and a few rough red gooseberries. I then took her to the police-station at Ashby-de-la-Zouch, and left her in charge of Inspector Ward.

P.S. Thomas Peberdy said : On Saturday last I received information of a child having been found drowned in a well at Pegg's Green. I went to Peggs Green at once and saw the body of the child, but did not see any marks of violence on it. I was shown the well from which the child had been taken. I examined the well top. The lid was locked down, and the end plank of the well frame was missing. A post was rolled against the hole. I measured the hole where the plank should have been : it was 31 inches in length and 6 inches wide. I was satisfied the child had not fallen in by accident, so set about making necessary inquiries. There was no identity of the body until about one o'clock the following day, when I showed it to the witness, Sarah Castledine. I was present when the well was cleared out on Monday. The well was five yards deep and there were four feet of water. The water was got out and the dirt at the bottom scraped out with a shovel. Amongst the dirt were two "rough red" gooseberries. It was possible for the child's body to be pushed through the aperture ; but impossible for it to get through accidentally or without force behind it.

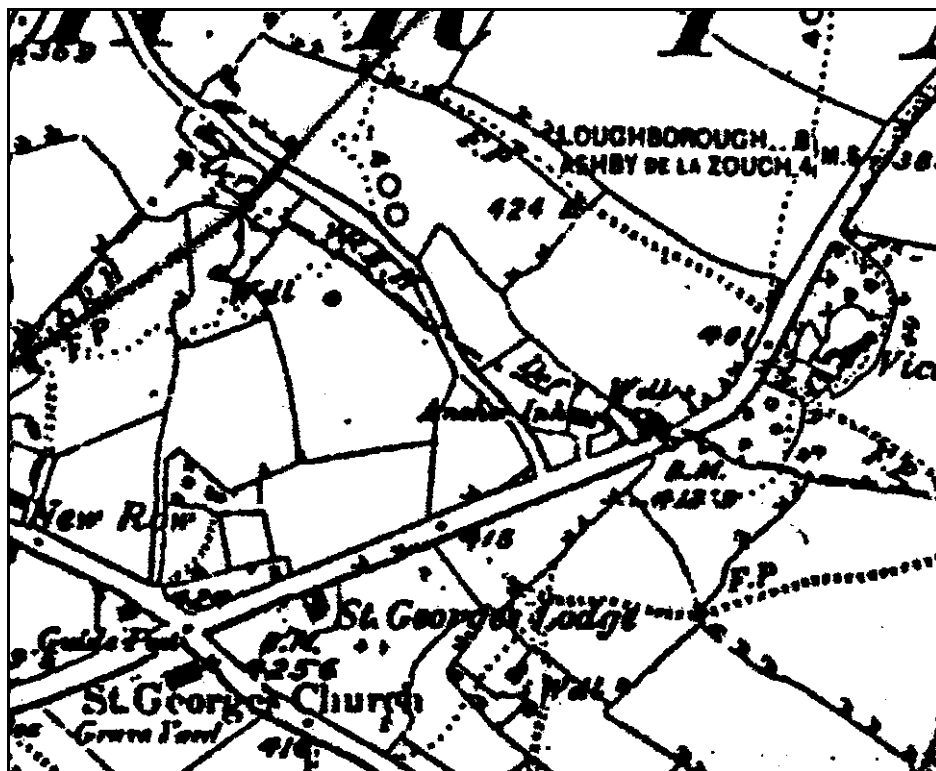
Inspector Ward said, this was the whole of the evidence he had to adduce, upon which the Coroner told the prisoner that she had heard all the witnesses had said about the case and asked her whether there was any statement she wished to make. There was no occasion for her to say anything unless she wished to do so, because if she were tried on the charge of disposing of the child to rather killing it, that might be given in evidence against her on her trial. But if she wished to give any explanation about the death of the child, now was the time for her to do it.

The Prisoner : "No, sir".

The Coroner : You don't wish to say anything ? The Prisoner : "No sir". The Coroner then addressed the prisoner, and said that from the evidence he saw no other than one verdict they could come to. Their first point was to consider whether the child came to its death by drowning, and secondly whether it could have got into the well by accident, or whether it was put into the well by somebody. There could not be any questionable doubt as to the child having got in by accident, but if they did entertain that doubt, they could return a verdict that it was drowned ; but by whom it was put in that well there was no evidence to show. He feared from the evidence that had come before them then, that they could not come to any other conclusion than that it was put in by the prisoner. As to her state of mind and any circumstance connected with the relief of the child, they had not anything to do with on that occasion. Their sole duty now was that they ought to inquire as to how, and by what means the deceased came to his death—whether by accident or wilfully. They knew that the woman was seen with the child between nine and ten o'clock on Friday evening, in Whitwick, for she was identified by the young woman at whose house she stayed for a short time. She left the house with the child asleep in her arms, and nothing more was seen of her until the following morning. About six o'clock, when she was seen by Mrs. Lacey, she was asked by Mrs. Lacey about the child, and they would recollect that the witness said to her "Where's your boy, and she said it is dead and buried, that it died very suddenly of the croup, and that it was well and dead in an hour." Then the next Saturday evening she gave much the same account to Mrs. Black, who asked her " Where is your child?" and she said it is dead, that it had died of croup, and that it was well and dead in an hour, and the neighbours subscribed 1s 6d for its burial. That they knew must be a perfect untruth, because there was the child found dead in the well on the Saturday morning. Therefore, it must have been a late get-up by the prisoner for the purpose of deceiving her friends. Therefore, they would

state whether they were of the opinion that the child was put into the well by the prisoner or not ; but he must say that he could not see how it could have got there except by the aid of the prisoner. There was also a mark of violence on the child, and although Mr Orton seemed to say that might have been done after the child got in the well, still there were four feet of water in it, and it seemed more probable that the wound was caused by pressure through the aperture Those were the principal points, but there were other more minute circumstances, such as the two gooseberries found in the stomach, some in the basket, and some at the bottom of the well. It would be therefore, for them to say whether the deceased was put into the well wilfully, to destroy life, and if so, their verdict could be no other than that of wilful murder. There could be no explanation for putting the child in the well, excepting the intention of killing the child. If extenuating circumstance were to be produced hereafter—whether the prisoner was in her right mind, that must be taken into consideration at the Assizes. It was nothing that a coroner's jury had to deal with, and if her friends were desirous of producing such evidence, they must produce it on that occasion. He thought their verdict could be no other than that he had suggested to them.

The jury were then left to deliberate, and after three quarters of an hour consultation, they returned a verdict of WILFUL MURDER against the prisoner, who was again brought into the room and informed of the result, and committed for trial at the next Assizes on the coroner's warrant. The witnesses was bound over to appear at the Assizes, and the prisoner was taken to Ashby-de-la-Zouch police station in a trap, in the charge of Inspector Ward, amid some slight jeering on the part of the crowd outside the Court ([The Red Lion Inn](#)).



The well in which Eliza Adkins drowned her son Zadock is thought to be that shown on the above extract from the 1881 first edition 6 inch map. It is just to the east of where the former "Anchor Inn" is shown in the centre, adjacent to the former Ashby to Loughborough turnpike road.

**THE TRIAL OF ELIZA ADKINS AT
LEICESTERHIRE WINTER ASSIZES
ON SATURDAY DECEMBER 9TH 1865**

The following is transcribed from two editions of the **Leicester Chronicle**

**THE MURDER AT PEGG'S GREEN
TRIAL & CONVICTION OF
ELIZA ADKINS FROM PEGG'S GREEN**

Mr. Justice Mellor took his seat at a quarter to ten o'clock this morning. The case of Eliza Adkins indicted for the murder of her child did not appear to create so much excitement as might have been expected, the court not being more numerously attended than ordinarily.

Liza Adkins (42) was indicted for the wilful murder of Zadock Adkins, her son, on the 29th of July. – Mr. Palmer and Mr. Graham prosecuted; and Mr. Merewether defended the prisoner. – The prisoner, a spare sorrowful looking woman, was dressed in a neat black gown and bonnet. On being arraigned on the indictment, she pleaded not guilty.

Mr. Palmer having briefly stated the facts of the case, called - John Walker who was examined by Mr. Graham. He said he lived at Pegg;s Green, in the parish of Thringstone ([Township of Thringstone within the ecclesiastical parish of Whitwick](#)) . He had a well on his premises which was generally kept locked : He kept the key of it himself. He remembered Friday, the 28th of July last. He was at the well on that day about five o'clock in the evening, and drew some water. At that time, as far as he could judge, there was nothing in the well, which was about five yards deep, and generally was about three or four feet deep of water. That evening he locked the door, and took the key with him. Their was a portion of the framework, in which the lid was fixed, broken away, leaving an aperture about 6 inches by two and a half feet. The next morning he gave the key to Harriet Bird, about seven o'clock, and she brought it back in a few minutes.

Harriet Bird, examined by Mr. Palmer, said she lived at Pegg's Green. On Saturday morning, the 29th of July Mr. Walker lent her the key of the well about seven o'clock. She unlocked the well and drew some water. She dipped the bucket three times, because she could only get half a bucket full at a time. She had drawn water before and the bucket generally filled. She drew some grass up in the bucket. She returned the key to Mr. Walker.

Mr. Elliot, examined by Mr. Graham, said he lived at Thringstone, and knew Mr. Walker's well. He was there on Saturday, the 29th of July, about eight o'clock in the morning : there was a girl of Waring's also there.. He went to draw two buckets of water, and having done so he took them away and returned, and was about to draw two more, when, from what some woman said, he looked down the well, and saw there was a child in it. He then went to Mr. Walkers and fetched a ladder, and went down the well and brought the child up. It was dressed : but had no cap on. He did not know the child. He laid the child on a board and carried it to Mr. Hoult's empty house, where he left it. He saw no mark of violence on the child.

Sarah Castledine, examined by Mr. Palmer, said she lived at Whitwick, and was unmarried. Knew prisoner at the bar. On Friday night, 28th July, she came to her

house a few minutes before seven o'clock, when she (witness) was sitting against the door seaming. She came from the direction of Loughborough, and had a child on her back - a boy about four years old. Prisoner asked her if she would allow her to sit down and rest, and witness got prisoner a chair and a stool for the little boy. They both sat down, and witness asked how far she had come, and she replied she had come a long way, and had a long way to go, as she was to meet her friends. Prisoner asked her whether the water was still in the pits, or whether they were being worked again. She replied that she thought they were being worked. The water had broken into some of the pits, but she could not recollect if anyone was drowned. Prisoner then asked if there was as much charity given away at Gracedieu as formerly, and witness said she thought not. The little boy then began to show signs of growing tired and faint, and she (witness) asked the prisoner if she would allow her to take him on her knees to have a quarter of an hours sleep, and she did so. She also said that the child had worn a pair of new boots, but she had taken them off and put him on a pair of old ones to ease his feet, which were blistered. The child had a cap on, fastened with a piece of elastic beneath his chin, which she took off. Prisoner remained at her house till between eight and nine o'clock. She put the child's cap on and left the house, and her mother told her (witness) to carry the child for prisoner, but prisoner declined, and said she could carry it herself, and that when he awoke he would walk as fresh as ever. Prisoner went in the direction of Thringstone, and she saw her no more. On the following Sunday morning, P.C. Peberdy sent for her at Mr. Hoult's empty house, at Thringstone, and I saw a dead child lying on a board there. It was the same child as she saw with the prisoner. It had a dress on, but no boots or stockings or cap.

By Mr. Merewether : Prisoner was carrying the child on her back when she came to her house, with its feet under her arms. It was then awake. The child could not sit, and prisoner asked her permission to take the child on her lap to sleep. Prisoner did not say that her husband had been a collier, and there had been a sad accident at pit.

John Smith (examined by Mr. Graham) said he lived at Osgathorpe ; that was a mile and a half from Pegg's Green. On Sunday, July 30th, he went to W. Hoult's empty house at Pegg's Green, and saw the body of a dead child there. That child was the prisoner's. He knew it from working with her brother in law, where the child used to visit frequently. The child's name was Zadock, and about four years old.

By his Lordship : it was a fine lively child.

Ann Lacey examined by Mr. Palmer said she was the wife of John Lacey, and lived at Gracedieu, which was a mile from Thringstone. Had known the prisoner years back as a neighbour. Prisoner had been in service with Mr. Mills, about a month : he lived at Belton. Prisoner got Mr. Mill's situation on the 19th of June this year. When she went to Mr. Mills, she left her child with her sister at Breedon. Prisoner was at a deal of trouble about applying for relief for the child while she was at Mr. Mills. I remember the morning of the 29th of July. On that morning, witness heard someone making a noise outside her door, about six o'clock. She called out "Hallo!". There was a reply, but witness could not distinguish what was said. It was the voice of Eliza Adkins and witness called out, "Surely Eliza, you have not run away from the Union." She replied that there was no running away from there once in. Witness then went downstairs, and repeated the same words to the prisoner, who came into the house. She then asked prisoner where the boy was, and she replied "dead and buried." Witness replied "dead!" and prisoner rejoined. Yes, it was well and dead in an hour, and died of the croup." She then went about her work, and said no more to the prisoner respecting the child. Prisoner remained in the house with witness that day till

nearly six o'clock at night when she left to go to Breedon. During the time prisoner was at her house, Mr. Mills came and spoke to her against the house. Some conversation took place about prisoner returning to his service. Prisoner did not ask her to go to Mr. Mills. Witness knew prisoner's husband : he lived formerly in service with prisoner's father, who was a farmer at Belton.

Catherine Black (examined by Mr. Graham) said she was the wife of Samuel Black, and lived at Osgathorpe. She knew prisoner, whose brother married the (witness's) sister. On the 29th of July, prisoner came to her house, between six and seven o'clock in the evening. Asked prisoner if she had come from the Union, and she replied yes. Asked her where the child was, and she replied that it was dead, and that it had died of the croup, but did not say when it had died. Prisoner said that neighbours subscribed 1s..6d. towards the funeral. Told prisoner a child had been found at Griffydam, and she exclaimed "Poor fellow !", Griffydam was near to Pegg's Green. Prisoner then left the house, and said she was going to Breedon, where her sister lived. -

By Mr. Merewether : Did not know that her husband was a collier, and crippled in the pits?

P.C. William Marriot, examined by Mr. Palmer said, on Sunday night, July 30th, he went to the home of John Cross, at Wilson - that was the house of the prisoner's brother-in-law. He found prisoner there, and charged her with drowning her child in a well at Pegg's Green, on Friday night July 24th. She made no answer to the charge. Apprehended prisoner, and brought her through the house. While passing through the house, she picked up a small basket which stood on the table. He took possession of the basket and examined the contents. There was a new pair of child's boots, slightly worn, in the basket and a piece of new cord.

P.S. Peberdy, examined by Mr. Graham, said, he was stationed at Whitwick. On Saturday, July 29th, he went to a well at Pegg's Green, and examined it. A slab was broken off. He measured the aperture : it was 31 inches in length, 6 and 3/4 inches wide in the middle, and narrow at the ends. Had seen the body of the child, and was of the opinion that it could not have got in by accident. It would require some force to push it in, and would be put through by that means. The depth of the well was 5 yards, and the water 4 feet. Had the well cleaned out and found two red gooseberries of the same description as those in prisoner's basket. The next day he showed the child to the witness Castledine, who identified it as that of the prisoner's.

Richard Orton, examined by Mr. Palmer, said he was a surgeon and lived at Swannington. On the 31st July, he, in company with his nephew, made a post mortem examination of the body of the male child. The body was at Mr. Hault's house, in the parish of Thringstone (at Pegg's Green). There were slight marks of violence behind the left ear ; but no other marks of violence on the body. He supposed that the mark must have been caused by a scratch occasioned by forcing the child down the well, or by coming in contact with something at the bottom. The lungs were healthy, and would not likely present that appearance if it had died of croup. In his opinion, the child had died of suffocation by drowning. He had seen many cases of drowning and the appearance of the body of the child was similar to that he had observed in other cases.

By Mr. Merewether : Knew prisoner's husband. He was a collier, and got crippled in the pit. He attended him for at least 6 months, on account of the colliery. He attended the prisoner in her confinement, and was attended by her husband at the same time. The day on which the child was drowned, her brother was brought home from the

Lunatic Asylum in Leicester, to be buried. Members of prisoner's family were not quite right. About a month before the accident, prisoner called at his surgery to ask him to draw up a petition to take among the charitably disposed, to see if she could raise something.

Francis Bangham, surgeon, of Ashby-de-la-Zouch, examined by Mr. Palmer, said he was in attendance of Mrs. Ward, wife of Inspector Ward, of Ashby. She had the misfortune to be in the accident at Wellingborough, about three months ago. She was brought back to Ashby, and he had attended her since. She was quite unable to travel to Leicester to give evidence : she had no memory. The accident had affected her heart. By Mr. Merewether : She was not unable to travel in his opinion. His lordship asked Mr. Palmer what he said to that? The statute only provided for the absence of persons who were either dead or unable to travel. Mr. Palmer referred to a case in which paralysis was held sufficient to prevent a witness travelling. His Lordship thought if Mrs. Ward were able to travel, the jury ought to have an opportunity of seeing her. Mr. Bangham said he was of the opinion that it would be dangerous for Mrs. Ward to travel to Leicester to give evidence.

A discussion thereupon arose between the learned Judge and the counsel engaged in the case as to whether this was sufficient to entitle the prosecution to put in the deposition of a witness. Eventually, Mr. Merewether withdrew his objection, and Mr. Justice Mellor stated that the spirit of the statute which requires that the witness should not be able to travel must be looked to, and that it would be an idle ceremony to bring a witness who could not give evidence. After some further discussion as to whether the depositions of Mrs. Ward should be admitted, his Lordship decided that they should be received, remarking that he should lay the whole circumstances before the Secretary of State, and leave him to ascertain whether he had taken the right course or not.

Her deposition was then put in and read by Mr. Platt. the clerk of Assize. The witness stated that she was the wife of Police-inspector Ward :-

"On the 2nd of August the prisoner sent for me, and said to me, "I want you to write me two letters, and when you have done them I want to open my mind to you, and I wish you to see the magistrate. You will do it better than me ; my heart will be so full. Then I shall feel more comfortable. It is trouble that has brought me to it. I wanted the parish to allow me 2s. a week. They would not, but said I must go into the house. I could have got my own living. I went into the house but the treatment was so bad I could not stay. I went in on Saturday and stayed till the following Friday, and I did not know what to do, for I had no home or friends in the world. I could have a place for myself, but I did not know what to do with the child. I could not bear to see it suffer and that made me do ill. God knows I did not do it with any bad intent. I know the poor child is in heaven now, out of all its trouble. If they had not caught me that night they would not have had me, for I should have destroyed myself as well as the poor child. The poor child cried so much I could not bear to see it. I attempted to speak to it once, but was not allowed, and the child was dragged away and beat, and I was not allowed any supper, and it was more than I could bear."

The prisoner when asked if she had anything to say before the magistrates, said, ""Through trouble I did it, because I was homeless and friendless ; that is all I wish to say."

Mr. Palmer having reviewed the evidence.

Mr. Merewether in a long eloquent and impressive speech, addressed the jury on behalf of the prisoner, during most profound silence. The defence set up was temporary insanity.

His Lordship then proceeded to sum up the evidence, which occupied about half an hour. At the conclusion of his remarks, the jury retired, and after an absence of ten minutes returned into Court. Having answered to their names, the clerk of the arraigns said:- Gentlemen of the Jury, are you agreed upon your verdict?

The Foreman; We are.

The clerk of the arraigns; Do you find the prisoner guilty, or not guilty ?

The Foreman; Guilty.

The clerk of the arraigns to the prisoner; You stand convicted of Wilful Murder; what have you to say why the Court should not give judgement against yourself to die, according to law?

The prisoner, almost inaudibly, "Nothing".

The Crier of the Court having commanded silence, his Lordship assumed the black cap, and addressed the prisoner in the following terms:-

Eliza Adkins, after a careful investigation into the circumstances of this case, you have been convicted of the crime of wilful murder – the murder of your own son. I have no power to hold out to you any prospect of mercy, the prerogative of mercy rests with her majesty the Queen, acting under the advice of her Ministers; and I beseech you, therefore, not to indulge in any expectations which may turn out to be delusive; but I beseech you, with true repentance and with prayer, and supplication to that great Being, who is long suffering, rich in mercy, and ready to forgive, and confess your sins, so that through the confession and intercession of Christ our Saviour, your sin may be pardoned, and that you may therefore be forgiven, as regards that sin before the face of Almighty God. I have only to pass on you the sentence of the law, and that sentence is that you be taken from hence to the place from whence you came, and from thence to the place of execution, and that you there be hanged by the neck till you shall be dead, and that your body afterwards be buried within the precincts of the prison in which you were last confined after your conviction, and may God in his infinite compassion have mercy upon your sole.; - His Lordship was deeply affected during the delivery of these remarks.

The prisoner, who maintained a calm and equable demeanour throughout the trial, was then removed from the dock, apparently quite unmoved by the awful sentence which had just been passed upon her.

A CHRISTMAS STORY

Transcribed from an article in the Daily Telegraph which was repeated in "The Chronicle & Mercury, United" - December 16, 1865

THE PEGG'S GREEN MURDER

Stories are all the vogue now – Christmas stories, told on cream-tinted paper, with gold edges on it, and with ever so much crimson and green on the covers; stories all about princesses, giants, and fairies, and showing how, in that highly desirable world of fiction, the bad people always come to grief, and the good ones “marry and live happily ever afterwards”. No misery ever lasts very long in them ; no ugly problems are left unsolved. The last pages, instead of being blistered with tears, as those of life so often wound up with a jolly settlement of everybody and everything. Let the little ones think it all true. Time enough for them to find out what a very different world they will have to deal with ; and what agony, despair, and crime close the last chapters of many a story that God writes in the great book of Life which has Eternity on both sides of its covers. We have a little story to tell to the oldsters before they settle down to their Christmas dinners with that comfortable conviction which roast beef and plum pudding inspire, that everything has gone right since Christianity came.

Our story is not very fit for Christmas, except to make the beef taste of tears, and the plum pudding stick in the throat with shame and pity. Before you set to work on these religious luxuries, good public, permit us to ask “if you have such a thing as two shillings about you”. Of course you have, and the multiple of that sum for a number of weeks. Well, spend them now as you like ; but last summer you might have brought a child's life and a woman's soul for two shillings a week sterling. People ought not to complain that “things are dear” when such a bargain as that can be made in England. Now, we repeat, it is too late; for the child's life – price one shilling – is gone to Him who in all His treasury of planets and suns has nothing richer or dearer than a child's life ; and the woman's soul is so stained with murder, that the shilling is wanted now for five yards of hempen rope to choke it out of her on the gallows. In spite of these particulars, so tantalising to a commercial people, the story, we say again is *not* a nice story ; the details are very unpleasant, the characters stale and vulgar to the last degree, and the chief personage a widow of forty-two, haggard and grizzled before her time. Such as it is however, this is how it was told at the Leicester Assizes.

Eliza Adkins was the widow of a farm servant, who died and left her with one child, aged four. Let us note in passing that the story-books would have made some provision or other for an honest woman in such a case. Reality didn't. The mother went into service and put the child out to nurse; but that demands funds, and Eliza Adkins only just earned her own living; so she applied to the workhouse for two shillings weekly to maintain the child. The workhouse said she must come in to the house, which she did. After she had been in Loughborough Workhouse a week, she left it, according to her own story, “because the treatment I received was so bad I could not stay, and because they dragged the child away and beat it, and I couldn't bear it”. According to the story of the officials, confirmed by the guardians, she went away because the workhouse was thoroughly comfortable, and because “these paupers” have a nasty way of liking to starve, and of bringing everybody into publicity and trouble.

Anyhow, Eliza Adkins, with the child tied on her back, and a basket containing a pair of little boots in it, some gooseberries, and a bit of rope, came forth. If the public

prefers it, let us take the guardian's view, and say that people of her kind like starving. The next scene is in a cottage at Whitwick, where she called, and asked leave to sit down. There is nothing like direct narration in Christmas stories, so we will ask Sarah Castledine to go on here. She was the cottager, and she testified that "the prisoner had a child on her back, a boy about four years old, and asked if she could sit down, and she and the child sat down for about half an hour. She said she had come a long way, and had a long way to go to meet a friend. She asked if the water was still in the pits. The water had broken into some pits some time ago. I told her I thought they were at work again. She asked if there was as much charity given away as there used to be. I told her, I thought not. The boy began to look tired and faint, and she took him on her knee, and he went to sleep. She said it had very bad boots on ; she had a better pair, but she had taken them off to ease its feet. She was all of a tremble while she was at our house. When she left I was going out on an errand, and my mother said I could carry the child a little way. She said "Oh, no ; I will carry it myself. When it awakes it will walk as well as ever". She left our house between eight and nine, and went in the direction of Thringstone, and I saw her no more".

You must dip, good public into the last part of our story to do full justice to this little bit of narrative, and we doubt if you then will find any other Christmas tale of the day so interesting. "The friend she was going a long way to meet" was the good old friend of the poor and broken-hearted, whom it is wicked to go to meet, and for whom we must all wait – Death. She meant to drown the child and hang herself ; loving the boy so well, meantime – the story books never thought of this! – that she takes off the boots that pinch him, as he toddles by her side "to meet the friend". "Are the pits full of water?" "No!" Then Friend Death won't be met there; but the well at Thringstone ([Pegg's Green](#)) will do! she passes that about nightfall; and having made up her mind, Eliza Adkins falls to casual topics. "Much charity given away here?" she asks ; Sarah Castledine "thinks not". Eliza Adkin obviously "thinks not too", since, for lack of two shillings a week, she is going to send her son presently to heaven, and herself, if the "pulpits" are "all right", to hell.. And look at these paupers who murder, and cottagers that poach. What a brutal set they are! Sarah Castledine, instigated by her mother, wants to carry the woman's child, and the widow, with the well and the rope in her mind, is yet woman enough not to trouble the poor people. Well, we have spoiled our story by telling all the plot; but we do think that the little conversation at Whitwick reads the better for what's coming.

"What's coming", has of course been guessed ; the summer night passed, and Eliza Adkins turns up in the morning, at another cottage, without the child. Having murdered him, and meaning to murder herself, a lie or two more or less can't improve the Devil's bargain ; so she says he died of croup, and that the neighbours clubbed 1s. 6d. to bury him. She tells Ann Lacey that ; and again we digress to observe what an ungrateful set the poor are to the nice workhouses and the generous overseers. "Oh!" says Ann Lacey, "dead and buried, is it? What reason you have to be thankful for taking him from the frowns of the world, and the frowns of the parish?" If kind Ann Lacey had known how much closer her bad grammar came to the truth than good grammar could have done, Eliza Atkins would have missed that little bit of parochial philosophy. But meantime, somebody going to the well for water finds the child there, and fishes it out, with some gooseberries and grass. The constables immediately seek the mother, and find her at her brother-in-law's. The well was kept locked; so Eliza Atkins, after all those incidents of changing the little shoes, and nursing the boy, and refusing to part with him for a minute to any body, had positively broken a hole in the well-cover by way of a gate to Death and Heaven. That was her view, and nothing else; witness her confession to the wife of the police inspector. She said to her, "I want you to see the magistrates. You will do it better than me, my heart will be

so full. Then I shall feel more comfortable. It is trouble that has brought me to it. I wanted the parish to allow me two shillings a week. They would not, but said I must go into the house. I could have got my own living. I went into the house, but the treatment was so bad I could not stay. I went in on Saturday and stayed till the following Friday, and I did not know what to do for I had no home or friends in the world. I could have a place for myself, but I did not know what to do with the child. I could not bear to see it suffer any longer, and that made me do ill. God known I did not do it with any bad intent. I know the poor child is in Heaven now, out of all its troubles. If they had caught me that night they would not have had me, for I should have destroyed myself as well as the poor child. The poor child cried so much I could not bear to see it. I attempted to speak to it once, but was not allowed, and the child was dragged away and beat, and I was not allowed any supper, and it was more than I could bear”.

That’s the workhouse, where “everybody was so kind”, as the Loughborough Guardians say; and of course they spoke truly. To the magistrates the poor creature moaned out, “Through trouble I did it, because homeless and friendless ; that is all I wish to say”. On her trial she pleaded “not guilty”, “in a low but firm voice”, the reporters say, as if she did not expect the gentlemen to understand her way of meaning it. She was tried; she was sentenced; she lies for death at Leicester Gaol; and that’s our Christmas story. If we thought any judge would hesitate to recommend the commutations of her sentence, we would not say a word, for out-and-out the kindest thing to Eliza Atkins would be to borrow her own piece of rope from the basket and send her from a world which she has little reason to love, and which for her could have little happiness in store. But of course her life will not be taken. All the rest of her days, however, must be doomed to prison-toil, and all her nights must be devoted to memories of the summer evening when one of the two found “Friend Death” at the bottom of a well. We can’t of course object to the punishment; but let us also remember what it is to sit down and see your baby die on your lap, or else go back to the Loughborough workhouse. We wish that Loughborough workhouse could have some sentence passed upon it, and that the tariff of lives and souls would get cheaper, so that somebody could buy them; and, above all, we wish that some better moral could be found for our story than “God help of the poor, and be patient with the Christianity of the nineteenth century”.

The Star of Gwent - Saturday 23 December 1865

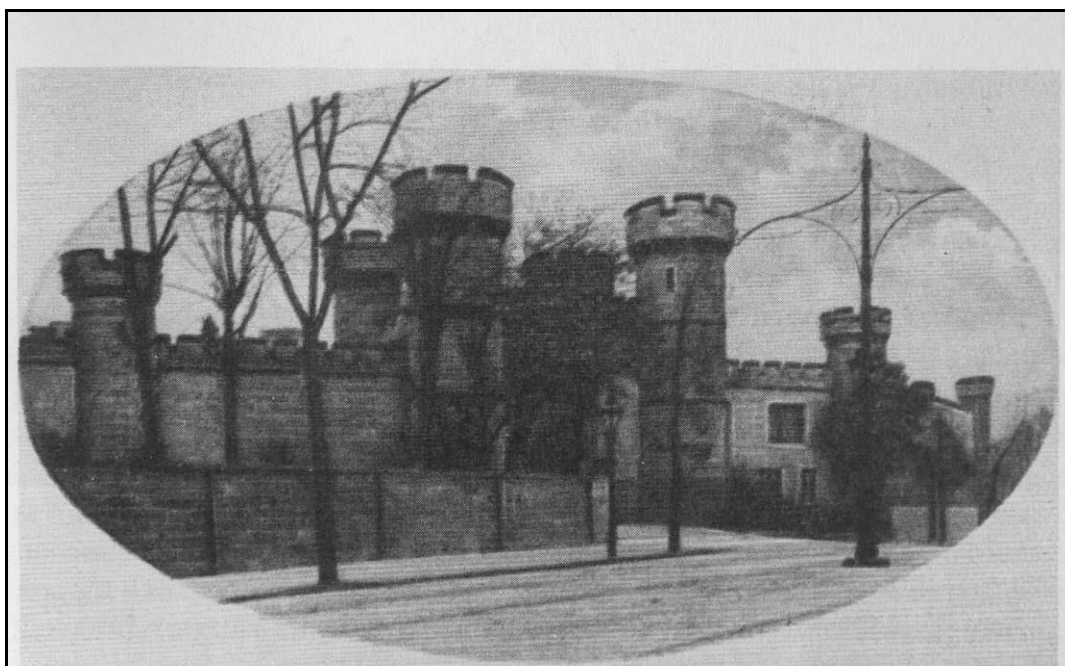
At present, the case of Eliza Adkins is exciting all the sympathy which Christian people at this season of the year can dispense. I suppose all your readers know that this poor woman, being barbarously treated by the workhouse authorities and officials, separated from her child, and deprived of her meals because she complained of the unkindness, was driven to quit the workhouse ; and having scarce any human alternative, she drowned her child, intending to commit suicide afterwards. She was found guilty of murder before Mr. Justice Mellor, at the Leicester assizes.

She is now reprieved. That she should ever have been sentenced to death is harsh. She acted when in a state of temporary insanity, caused by the inhuman treatment of the workhouse people. If anyone ought to be punished, it is the workhouse master, who was the prime cause of the murder. Pleasant to contemplate at Christmas time !!

A REPRIEVE FOR THE DEATH SENTENCE ANNOUNCED

It was announced in several of the later press reports that humanity would forbid the enforcement of the extreme penalty for Eliza Adkins, and the Crown did grant a reprieve on 15th December, with a view to commutation of the sentence.

How many years Eliza Adkins spent languishing in Leicester Gaol is not known. Maybe she actually died there.



Welford Road Gaol, Leicester, built in 1828

TWO ANONYMOUS LETTERS TO THE EDITOR OF THE PALL MALL GAZETTE BY J.O.

The Pall Mall Gazette - December 18th, 1865

CORRESPONDENCE THE TERRIBLE CASE OF ELIZA AND ZADOCK ADKINS

TO THE EDITOR OF THE PALL MALL GAZETTE

SIR, - At the present moment a mother is lying in Leicester Gaol under sentence of death for the murder of her child. I earnestly recommend her case to the consideration of the Poor Law Board. I do not anticipate the wretched creature will be hanged ; I even doubt whether she will be punished ; and certainly no punishment with the laws of England can inflict can be half so hard to bear as that which she has already undergone at the hands of the poor-law officials, not because she was idle or dishonest or dissolute, but simply because she was helpless and poor. Her story, told by herself to the wife of a policeman who arrested her, and since tested by a coroner's inquest and by the jury which found her guilty of murder, runs thus:-

She was a widow, with one child, the boy Zadock, four years of age. Her calling was that of a farm-servant, and as her character was good and her habits industrious, she would have no difficulty in supporting herself had it not been for her son. But no employer would admit little Zadock on his farm. So was compelled to apply to the guardians of the Union in which she had a settlement for relief. She asked for but 2s. per week, which would have enabled her to provide for the child. In most unions, special consideration is shown for widows with orphan children, and outdoor relief is freely granted to them. But in the Loughborough union, this merciful custom appears to be unknown. The guardians refused Eliza Adkin's request and would only grant her "the house". The poor widow knew but too well what "the house" meant, and kept out of it as long as she could ; but at last she was compelled by utter destitution to give way and become an in-patient of the Loughborough Union. She was there treated worse than any farmer would treat an animal for which he had any regard, for she was separated from her boy, and yet located so near him that she could hear him wailing for her night and day ; she could hear him beaten for doing so ; and when she entreated to be allowed to comfort and cherish him, she was herself punished for her impertinent interference by being denied of a portion of the scanty workhouse fare to which she had a legal right. This torture - and every mother will know that no torture could be keener - she bore for six days, and then she could bear it no longer, and left the workhouse, taking her child with her. She had no claim on any one save the Loughborough guardians, and she had tasted of their tender mercies and had found them too cruel to be endured. She had not a farthing or a friend in the world. She was utterly helpless and hopeless. What could the wretched woman do ? This is what she did :-

Sarah Castledine, examined by Mr. Palmer, said - About seven o'clock on the evening of the 28th of July the prisoner came to our house. She had a child on her back, a boy, about four years old. She asked if she could sit down, and she and the child sat down for about an hour. She said she had come a long way to go to meet a friend. She asked if the water was still in the pits. The water had broken into some pits some time ago. I told her I thought they were at work again. She asked if there was so much charity given away as there used to be. I told her I thought not. The boy

began to look tired and faint, and she took him on her knee, and he went to sleep. She said it had very bad boots on ; she had a better pair, but she had taken them off to ease its feet. She was all of a tremble whilst she was at our house. When she left I was going out on an errand and my mother said I could carry the child a little way. She said, "Oh no ; I will carry it myself. When it awakes it will walk as well as ever." She left our house between eight and nine, and went in the direction of Thringstone and I saw her no more.

The next day, the body of a child was found in a well at Pegg's Green, in the Township of Thringstone. The mother was shortly after apprehended in Wilson, after travelling through Griffydam and Breedon, and made no attempt to deny her crime. She told her miserable tale to a policeman's (Inspector Ward) wife at Ashby, whose evidence before the court was as follows :-

On the 2nd of August the prisoner sent for me, and said to me, "I want you to write me two letters, and when you have done them I want to open my mind to you, and I wish you to see the magistrate. You will do it better than me ; my heart will be so full. Then I shall feel more comfortable. It is trouble that has brought me to it. I wanted the parish to allow me 2s. a week. They would not, but said I must go into the house. I could have got my own living. I went into the house but the treatment was so bad I could not stay. I went in on Saturday and stayed till the following Friday, and I did not know what to do, for I had no home or friends in the world. I could have a place for myself, but I did not know what to do with the child. I could not bear to see it suffer and that made me do ill. God knows I did not do it with any bad intent. I know the poor child is in heaven now, out of all its trouble. If they had not caught me that night they would not have had me, for I should have destroyed myself as well as the poor child. The poor child cried so much I could not bear to see it. I attempted to speak to it once, but was not allowed, and the child was dragged away and beat, and I was not allowed any supper, and it was more than I could bear".

When Eliza Adkins was asked by the judge what she had to say in her defence, she simply replied, "I did it through trouble, being homeless and friendless ; that is all I wish to say." The report of the trial in the *Times* winds up with the following comfortable paragraph :- "It may be stated that an inquiry had been instituted by the *guardians of the Loughborough Union* into the circumstances of this case, and they arrived at the conclusion that there had been no improper conduct on the part of the officers of that union."

But I would ask the Poor Law Commissioners, Sir, whether there has been, or is to be, any inquiry into the manners and customs of the Loughborough guardians themselves towards the poor. Nobody can doubt that had Eliza Adkins been able to obtain outdoor relief from them to the amount of 2s. a week, she would not at this moment have been a convicted murderess, and her child would have been still alive. Nobody can doubt that her request was refused because the guardians knew that the prospect of the house would be so dreadful to her that they would in all probability escape having to relieve her at all. And their calculations have turned out well for them and the ratepayers whose interests they so well represent, for neither Elisabeth Adkins the murderess nor he the murdered boy will ever claim relief from them again.

If outdoor relief is ever permissible, it surely ought to have been permitted in this case. The guardians of a union have two conflicting duties to discharge : one towards their destitute poor, the other towards their ratepayers. But it seems to be nobody's province to see that in keeping down the rates the guardians do not grind the poor, and so drive them to crime and despair, as they have actually driven this homeless, friendless, and penniless widow now lying under sentence of death in Leicester gaol

for the murder of her orphan boy. We are constantly assured that the English poor law never breaks down ; it must, however, be admitted that the English pauper constantly breaks down under the misery which it inflicts under the sarcastic guise of "relief."

Your obedient servant

Nice, Dec, 14th, 1865

J.O.

The Pall Mall Gazette Wednesday 10th January 1866

To the editor of the Pall Mall Gazette

Sir, - I am rejoiced to see that the attention of the Poor Law Board has been attracted to this case, and that an enquiry is about to be instituted into the manner in which the Loughborough Workhouse Union officials dealt with Eliza Adkins and her child. As the woman has been reprieved, she will be able herself to give evidence as to the treatment she received in this establishment.

The Loughborough guardians have, I learn, formally recorded their displeasure that I should have ventured to call the attention of the Poor Law Board to this matter, without having obtained fuller and more correct information about it than they believe me to possess.

My reply to them is that when I wrote on the subject of Eliza Adkins she lay in Leicester Gaol a condemned criminal waiting execution. Had I had the wish or the power to have instituted any inquiries into the manner and customs of the Loughborough guardians in dealing with their poor, there would have been no time for me to have done so before the woman was hanged. I wrote on the only information that was accessible to me - the *Times* reports of the inquest of the child and on the trial of the mother ; and I quoted verbatim and at length the evidence up to the present moment, I believe un-contradicted, on which the woman had been condemned to death , and on which my comments were based

If at the public enquiry which is about to take place, the Loughborough guardians can show that they dealt mercifully with the widow and the orphan whom it was their duty to relieve, I submit that I shall deserve their thanks rather than their censure for having thus given them an opportunity of relieving themselves from a very grave imputation which now rests upon them.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Jan. 8th, 1866.

J.O.

AN ENQUIRY ORDERED INTO THE LOUGHBOROUGH UNION WORKHOUSE

TRANSCRIPTIONS OF TWO NEWSPAPER REPORTS OF AN ENQUIRY ORDERED BY THE POOR LAW BOARD TO ASCERTAIN WHAT TRUTH THERE WAS IN THE STATEMENT OF ELIZA ADKINS THAT SHE WAS INDUCED TO MURDER HER LITTLE BOY BY THE CRUEL TREATMENT SHE RECEIVED IN THE LOUGHBOROUGH UNION WORKHOUSE

REPORT A - Leicester Mail - Saturday 27th January

On Thursday last, a Poor Law inquiry commenced at the Loughborough Workhouse, before **E. Weale, Esq., Poor Law Inspector**, into the case of Eliza Adkins, who murdered her son Zadock Adkins, 4 years old, by throwing him down a well at Pegg's Green (near Thringstone, Leicestershire), in July last, and who will be remembered for her committal by the Ashby-de-la--Zouch bench, who alleged her reason for committing the deed was her poverty, and harsh treatment she had received when in the Loughborough Union, Her statement was that she wanted the parish to allow her 2s. per week for the child, as she could support herself, but they would not and said she must go into the house. She went into the union but the treatment was so bad that she could not stay. She went on the Saturday and left the following Friday. She did not know what to do as she had no home in the world. She could have got a place for herself but did not know what to do with the lad, for she could not bear to see him suffer so, and that was the reason she did it. The child cried so bad while in the union that she could not bear to hear it. She endeavoured to speak to it once, but it was dragged away and beaten, and she was not allowed to speak. That was more than she could bear.

This statement was at the time denied by an "extraordinary meeting*" of the Guardians, and the fullest publicity given to the resolution they arrived at. The matter having been taken up by several newspapers, in which the guardians were subject to severe censure, public opinion in the locality has assumed a strong form, and a general voice has been raised against the administrators of the Poor Law. This has resulted in the investigation, which took place on Thursday morning, at the Union Workhouse in Loughborough.

The guardians present were : —Messrs. Angrave, (chairman), C. Bosworth, (vice-chairman), Lomo, Onion, Foulds, Burchnall, Hopworth, Kidger, Hallam, Walters, Rowbottom, Foulds, Cotton, Poyner, Rev. E. Smythies, Cayless, Carton, W. B. Carton, Burrows, W. C. W. Woodroffe, J. Landar, W. Wild, jun., H. Cramp, C. Thurlby, and R. Lacey. The Ven, Archdeacon Fearon, Rev. R. J. Bunch, B.D., Rev. J. B. Ottley, and E. C. Middleton, Esq., J.P., were also present.

Mr. Weale said he attended there for the purpose of enquiring into the case of Eliza Adkins, who made a statement to Martha Ward confessing to the murder of her child, and in which she complained of the harsh treatment she had received in the Union. Her statement was read by Mr. Weale, as given above, after which he said it was as to the truth of the statement of the unhappy woman that they had to enquire. He should also have to enquire into the steps the guardians took to make the enquiry, which no doubt they had got on the minutes. He did not know what witnesses had to be called.

Mr. Hepworth wished to know whether any questions might be put.

Mr. Weale said he would answer any questions that might put to him ; all questions through the witnesses would have to put through him.

Mr, Hepworth wished to know whether the board would be justified in giving the woman out-door relief, when she was known to have no character. Mr. Weale said he was not there to question the power of the board. The Board had power to administer relief as they thought desirable. At present that was not the question. He had to enquire the truth of the allegations. What it had to do with was simply the alleged ill-treatment in the workhouse.

Robt. Judd, relieving officer, was the first witness called. On being sworn, he deposed : I live in Loughborough. I am the relieving officer of the Loughborough Union, and have been so situated for 25 years. The woman Eliza Adkins, made an application to me for relief on Monday, the 26th of June, 1865. She resided at Belton, which is one of the parishes in my district. She told me she also resided at Sheepshed, also in the district. She said she was destitute. I then asked where she was living in Sheepshed. She said at Mr. Mills, and I told her that was in Belton : "what are you doing there?" I asked, Mr. Mills is a farmer. She said she was housekeeper, Mr. Mills is a farmer. I asked "what wages are you receiving?". She hesitated then very much indeed, and at last she said I am receiving 1s. 6d. per week. I said, "that is very little for a housekeeper, perhaps you are maid of all work, what family have you?" When I asked her who she was, she said she was the widow of Geo. Adkins, and that he died at Bourdon on the Waters, Gloucestershire. I asked what he died of; she hesitated a good deal, and I said "of course you know what was the matter with him". She then said, "I believe it was the small pox". That made me suspicious that she was not giving a correct statement. I asked, "where was he buried", She replied—in the churchyard of Bourdon, and that he had been dead about 5 mouths previously. I asked her what she had been doing since then. There was a good deal of hesitation there, and at last she said she had been to Birmingham. I asked tier what she had been doing there. She said she had opened a tripe shop, and found it did not answer, and she came up here amongst her friends, to see if they would advance her some more money. I understood her to say she had got about £9 from them, and that she went to Birmingham again, but business did not answer, so she gave it up and returned to some friends in the neighbourhood of Sheepshed. She told me she had only one child, and that it was with her sister at Breedon-on-the-Hill, in the Shardlow Union. I told her I would take her case before the board; which I did on the Tuesday week following, the next board day, July 4th. She appeared before the board, and I think the board did not seem satisfied about her statement. She stated her case, and the board after some conversation, ordered the case to stand over till the next board day. There were no Sheepshed Guardians here in consequence of it being Sheepshed feast, and that was the reason it was adjourned. She appeared before the board on the 18th of July, when she again stated her case, and an order was given to her by me at the request of the guardians for the admission of herself and child into the Workhouse. She did not bring her child to the board. She said the name of the child was Zadock, and that it was four years old. I know no more of the case further than the conversation I had with her afterwards. She came to me at Sheepshed during the feast week, and said she thought it was a hard case the board would not allow her 2s. per week for the boy. I told her she had hired herself to Mr. Mills for very much less wages than a girl would get, and that it was not customary to allow a widow out-door relief for one child, particularly as she had hired herself out for less than her services were worth. I wrote to the relieving officer at Bourdon on the Waters in the beginning of August, and

asked him if a person of the name of Geo. Adkins had died there. He replied that no such death had been registered by him in the death register.—(The letter was put in)—I also wrote to Mr. Haywood, of Stowe-on-the-Wolds, and asked him the same question, I received no answer from him and since then I got Mr. Wilson, the master of the Workhouse and superintendent registrar, to write. He did so, and received a reply, which he will put in.

By Mr. Weale : I had not known or see the woman before she applied to me. She was received into the Workhouse by Mr. Wilson the master.

The Inspector remarked that he had not to enquire into anything about the order the guardians gave, but only to the statement about the ill-treatment. He had no right to call in question the mode in which the guardians administered relief. By law he was prevented from making an enquiry into such matter.

John Wilson - Master the workhouse, and superintendent registrar of the Loughborough Union, said that of July the woman Adkins came into the house by an order from the guardians dated the 18th of July. She applied for admission for herself and one child named Zadock, which I have entered as three years old. The order which I produced is endorsed by the doctor. She was admitted "in the usual course." (Mr. Weale : I don't like "the usual course.") After being cleansed and her clothes changed she was placed on the ward for aide bodied women, and the child was sent to the school. She left the Workhouse on Friday, the 28th of July, after breakfast. During the whole the time she was in the workhouse I say upon my oath that she was not punished. Mr. Weale : You are sure?—Yes, Mr. Weale, never punished in any way? No : Mr. Wilson - she never had her meals stopped. Mrs. Wilson changed her diet once, because she was unwell. She had the diet of the house or something better. The food of the child was not stopped. I don't know or believe that the child was punished by the schoolmistress or any officer. I am sure it was never punished by me. The only complaint the woman made was one I heard that she was unwell. That I heard one day as I was going round the house with my wife, the matron. I asked her if she was an opium eater, and she said "no." Either my wife or myself suggested a dose of salts, and the matron sent her to the sewing ward. I cannot say whether any alteration was made in her diet. I believe she took the salts. I never had any conversation with her. Our attention was directed to the child by the schoolmistress as being a fine boy. He occasionally cried when at his meals. I saw the child cry in chapel on the Sunday morning during service, and that was the only occasion I saw it so. It was taken out. It always had its meals in the same ward as its mother, excepting one day, when we took all the children to the Forest for a treat. The mother saw it go, and likewise when it came home ; it was one of the party. it is not unusual for children in the workhouse to cry after their mothers ; they do so occasionally. The child with the rest seemed to enjoy itself in the forest with the schoolmistress there. I wrote to Mr. Hayward, registrar of Stowe-on-the-Wold, enquiring if George Adkins had died in his district in the year 1833 or to the date of my writing to him, on the 4th of August. I received a reply which I produce. This was put in, and it stated that there was no such death as George Adkins or Atkins entered during the period.

Anne Frances Wilson, wife of the last witness, and matron of the workhouse, deposed : I remember Eliza Adkins coming into the workhouse with her child on Saturday, the 22nd of July. I don't remember seeing or speaking to her specially until Monday, the 24th. I told her to go to the washhouse and wash. She did not say anything, and was employed at the wash all day. The next morning I saw her at the gate ; she was with the other women, looking at the children and infirm inmates, who were going to Charnwood for a treat. After that I saw her in the washhouse at her

work, but she did not say anything to me. On that day I sent to all the inmates in the house a slice of plum-pudding by way of treat. On Wednesday morning I was with my husband going round the house, when I saw her sitting still. I asked her, why are you not at work. She said she was not well, and complained of a headache. Mr. Wilson asked her if she was an opium eater, and she said "no". We told her to take a little medicine—some salts—and go into the sewing room. I sent her in the evening some tea instead of porridge, which she should have had, and was told she was better. On Thursday morning I saw her in the sewing room at work. I have no recollection of speaking to her, but I saw she was better. I did not see her again before she went out. I swear she was never punished or had an unkind word spoken to her while she was in the house ; certainly not by or my husband. She never had her food stopped. The child never had its food stopped ; we never think such. (Mr. Weale : I want you to state it as fact.) Witness: It was never punished. I never saw the child speak to its mother. The child had all its food in the same room as its mother. On Thursday she was with the child in the waiting-room for an hour, as is the custom Thursdays. She had every opportunity three times day of speaking to her child. No woman in the house ever punished her for speaking to the child. No child has ever been punished to my knowledge for speaking to the mother. By Mr. Weale : The woman never made any complaint to me while she was in the house excepting as to her being poorly on the day stated, neither did she complain as to the treatment of her child in the house.

Mary Ann Tyler, wife of John Tyler, hawker, said in July last, I was an inmate of the workhouse, and was then a single woman. I recollect the woman Eliza Adkins and her little boy being admitted into the house on Saturday night. I bathed them and changed their clothes. I saw her every day while she was in the house ; she went out on the Friday morning following. During the time she was in the workhouse she was never punished to my knowledge nor had she her food stopped. The child was not punished, neither had it its food stopped. I never knew of her food being changed at all. Mr. Weale : Did not she have tea one day?— She had tea two nights—Monday and Tuesday night instead of porridge. They always had tea on wash days. The inmates prefer tea to porridge. We all like it best. She complained to me about being poorly and I told her to go in the sewing room. I fetched her some salts on my own accord. I gave her half a cup full, or a little more. She seemed better in the evening ; she did not complain so much.

Mr. Jarratt (the Clerk) : On Monday dinner time, I saw Eliza Adkins in the passage leading from the parlour to the women's day room. Two of the inmates—one Ellen Harrison and the other whose name I do not know—were with her. I asked the three women who had been to the back door? Ellen Harrison replied that Eliza Adkins has been speaking to her boy. I said, "You should not have gone there you'll be getting into row." I did not see Mrs. Adkins, or any child there, when I locked the door. I did not hear any child cry. I left the three women in the passage, Mrs. Adkins spoke to me several times about going out, I asked her where she was going to and she said she did not know. I told her she had better stay and pacify herself until after the board day when the Guardians would see what they could do. She said she would go at once for it was worse than being in prison ; she frequently heard the child cry and she could not speak to it. I never saw her speak to the child at anytime while it was here. I saw the child four times a day, and never saw or heard it cry; it always looked clean and cheerful. She left the house Friday morning, I dressed the child. When she left I asked her which way she was going, and she said she thought she was going Leicester road, but did not know. I told her the child would not able to walk as its shoes were so bad, and she said it would be obliged to, and that it would have a better pair of shoes after a bit.

By Mr. Weale - I was in the house for nearly three years. During all that time Mr. and Mrs. Wilson have been master and matron. I have never seen them treat any of the inmates with harshness, unkindness or cruelty. On the contrary, as far I have seen, they have always shown kindness and consideration to the people.

Jane Incram, schoolmistress in the house, said—I distinctly recollect the woman Adkins and her boy Zadock coming into the house at the end of July last. I spoke to her the night she came in, when I asked her the little boy's name and age. She replied that his name was Zadock, and that he was nearly four years old. On Sunday she asked if she might sit at another table, so that her boy might not see her, as she thought it would prevent his crying for her. I told her she might, and she went and sat behind some other women. On Wednesday morning I saw her in the breakfast room, resting her head on her hand on the table. I asked if she was unwell, and she said she was not. She came to the school door every afternoon about four o'clock while she was in the house, and asked if she might give her child a little bread and butter. I told her she might, and she did so. I always gave it to the child. Mrs. Adkins never saw the child on those occasions, or asked to see it. The child cried the first night when he saw his mother at the supper table, and also at breakfast time, and in the chapel on the following day. He never cried at any other time that I know of, certainly not in the school; where he appeared very happy. On Tuesday, he went with the other children into the Chamwood Forest; he appeared very happy. The other children in the school seemed very fond him. He was never punished at any time while he was in the school, either directly or indirectly; he never required punishment and he never had his food stopped. I don't know that the mother was punished in any way. She never had her food stopped, for she had her meals under my superintendence, excepting the day when the children went to the forest. I was not present that day when she had her dinner and supper. She never complained to me of the ill-treatment of herself or child while in the workhouse. She saw her child go to, and return from, the forest. She went out to the gate. I have been schoolmistress for nine months, and during that time have never seen or known of any inmate, man, woman, or child, being ill-treated in the workhouse. The boy was an intelligent boy.

Mary Ann Haymer, single woman, an inmate of the Workhouse for the past two years, said : I recollect Eliza Adkins coming into the house. She was placed the same ward with me, and was washing with me on the Monday and Tuesday after she came in. She always had her meals in the same room with me. She never had any meals stopped, nor was she punished. She never complained of the way she was used in the Workhouse or that her child was ill-treated there. I never heard of the child being punished ; I don't believe he was. I never knew the master, matron, schoolmistress, or any officer to be unkind or cruel to any of the inmates ; to the contrary, they are kind and attentive to the people. I have no occasion to complain, and have never seen other people have cause to complain. I once heard the woman Adkins say the Union was more like a prison, as they could only walk about the yard, and sooner than she would stay, she would either make away with herself and child or serve in prison. She asked me on Thursday, the day before she left, how deep the locks were. I told her I could not tell. She asked how far they were from here, and I said they were almost close by. She enquired how long bodies were before they came to the top, and I told her nine days and to give over the talk, I was tired of it. I never told the master or any of the officers of this conversation until I had heard that she had killed the child.

By Mr. Jarratt : On the Thursday afternoon she asked me what notice she should have to give before she left. I told her two or three hours, and to mind she did not do what she had talked about doing. She replied she was going out, and should never come in any more.

Mr. John Wilson was recalled and said : I am quite sure the woman never made any complaint to me about the ill-treatment of herself or child while she was in the house.

The Inspector thought they had got sufficient evidence from the inmates, but three others, named Sarah Pacey, Hannah Stones, and Sarah Ann Barker, were introduced into the room, all having been sworn. They said : We are all inmates of the Loughborough workhouse. and were so in July last, when the woman Adkins came in. She occupied the same ward we did, and was not punished while she was in the house. Neither of us know or believe that her child was ever punished. They always took their meals regularly. We never knew their meals to be stopped. During the time we have been in the house—Barker nine months, Lacey nearly three years, and Stone two years—we have all been treated by the master and matron kindly and tenderly. We have never known any inmate to be unkindly treated.

The **Rev .J. B. Ottley**, incumbent of Thorpe Acre, chaplain of the workhouse, said : I occasionally come to the workhouse. I come twice every Sunday, and more than once on average other days of the week during the year. I have been chaplain for ten years. I don't know how long Mr. and Mrs. Wilson have been master and matron, but they have been more than three years. I have seen a great deal of them during my visits. Their conduct to the inmates has been kind and considerate, and they have been very attentive to the ornament and decencies of the place. I consider them highly respectable people, incapable of cruelty, and highly qualified for the situation they hold. I consider them kind hearted people. I have known the schoolmistress since her appointment. I have seen a good deal of her, and likewise consider her a person of kind disposition.

The **Venerable Archdeacon Fearon**, said: I have known Mr. and Mrs. Wilson since they have been here. My opinion of their general character is that they are exceedingly well qualified for their office. From what I have seen and heard, I should consider them to be very kind and humane people, and incapable of treating any inmate with harshness or cruelty.

The **Rev. K J. Bunch**, rector said:- I have known Mr. and Mrs. Wilson since they have been in office. My opinion as to their general character coincides with that of the Ven. Archdeacon Fearon. During the seventeen years I have been at Loughborough, the successive Boards of Guardians have appeared to desire their officers to treat all inmates with great kindness and consideration.

Mr. E. C. Middleton, J.P. said:- I do not act as a member of the board. I am the treasurer of the Union. I know Mr. and Mrs. Wilson, but more of the former who has had to come before me on frequent occasions in my capacity as magistrate. I fully concur in the remarks by the Ven. Archdeacon Fearon and Mr. Bunch. Having been over the house frequently, when certifying to cases of lunacy. I am sure from the happy appearance of the inmates that nothing like harsh treatment or unkindness has ever been used by the master or matron towards them.

Wm. Grimes Palmer, surgeon to the workhouse for 24 years, deposed:- Mr. and Mrs. Wilson have been master and matron of the house for more than 3 years. I have had constant opportunities of seeing them, frequently daily. I have seen them with the inmates. I never saw Adkins, she was not on the sick list. I passed her when she came to the house. I consider the discipline and management of the house excellent, and the conduct of Mr. and Mrs. Wilson towards the inmates, kind, considerate and humane. I have not known instances of harshness towards a single inmate. I think the house is in excellent condition. Everything is provided for the comfort of the inmates, and treatment of the sick. The whole establishment is admirably conducted.

Barker, Stacey, Stone and Harmer were recalled, and in answer to questions by the inspector, said they did not know any inmate in the house likely to give any additional evidence as to the treatment of the woman Adkins. They had not heard of any inmate speak of other facts.

Mr Weale said he did not know who to call, therefore had to ask the four women whether they knew of any fresh evidence.

Eliza Kelly, sister to George Adkins, deceased, the late husband of Eliza Adkins, was here called. She said, I am a married woman, my husband is named Thomas Kelly, a blacksmith, residing at Sheepshed. I last saw him twelve months last June. He was a labourer. About the latter end of last February, Eliza Adkins called at my house, I said "you are a stranger" meaning that I had not seen her for a long time. She said she had brought me bad news. I said "what", and she replied that my brother George was dead. I asked her how long he had been dead and she said seven weeks that day. She said he died at Bourdon-on-the-Water, Gloucestershire. Mr. Judd, my sister, and others have made enquiries at Bourdon, and cannot learn that he is dead. We don't believe he is dead, as we have not heard it from anyone else. Mrs. Adkin's daughter Julia, who used to live with her aunt at Breedon, told me that my brother died about a mile from Boudon on the Waters, at a fever house. This is a different account to what her mother gave. I have seen my niece who said my brother died at Birmingham. I don't know whether my brother is alive or dead. My brother had another child about eight years ago. I never knew of them passing in my other name.

The Rev. Mr. Smithies suggested the propriety of a statement being made as to the giving of relief, but Mr. Weale said the Guardians administered the relief at their discretion. He had no wish to have such a statement unless they liked. He had not the power to ask for it. If the chairman wished to make such a statement, they must let it be clearly understood that he did not call for it, because he had no power to enquire into the administration of relief by the Guardian's. He now wanted to know the steps the Guardians took towards the enquiry.

Jabez Jarratt, clerk to the Guardians of the Loughborough Union., said on the attention of the Guardians being drawn to the evidence of Martha Ward, in the case of Eliza Adkins, charged with the wilful murder of her son Zadock, I received a requisition signed by two Guardians on the 6th of August. I convened a special meeting on the 8th. They examined Mr. and Mrs. Wilson, Miss Ingram (the schoolmistress), Mr. Whiteacre (the porter), and three of the inmates, Sarah Ann Barker, Mary Ann Shepherd, and Mary Harmer. I have the depositions they made. At the conclusion a resolution was passed to the effect that that it was the opinion of the meeting that there was not the slightest truth in, or foundation for the statement made by the woman Adkins, but that on the contrary, during the stay in the workhouse both she and her child appeared to have been treated with great kindness both by the officers and inmates. On the 23rd December I received a communication from the "Poor Law Board" forwarding an extract from the "Pall Mall Gazette", and the board passed a resolution calling for an investigation.

The Chairman of the Board (Mr. T. C. Angrave), said:- He did not know that he had any statement to make only that he was perfectly satisfied with the evidence given, which corroborated what they had done before, and that they immediately took what they thought were was the proper steps in investigating the statement of the poor woman. The evidence had been, as they had seen, against the truth of their statement, and there was no doubt that the evidence laid before them previously by

the witnesses at the first investigation was correct, and that they ought not to have had the aspersions cast upon them which as a board by the public press in many instances. He thought they ought to stand clear in that respect, and that they all ought to feel very much obliged to Rev. Mr. Bunch for the manner in which he had spoken of the general kindness of the members of the Loughborough Board of Guardians. He was quite sure as far as he was concerned that they acted firmly, kindly, and considerately to all who came before them and that they endeavoured to consider the interests of the ratepayers as well as those who were relieved.

The **Rev. Mr. Smithies** said:- There were one or two points he wished to go to the world. The first was that as soon as the statement of woman Adkins was put forth, by the master's request they held an investigation at once, and examined all witnesses who were at that time able to throw any light upon the matter. **Several weeks after a letter signed by "J.O." appeared in the "Pall Mall Gazette", and their attention was drawn to it by the "Poor Law Board", calling upon them for any observations they might offer on the matter. The members of the board determined upon calling upon the Poor Law Board to grant them an official investigation into the proceedings of the officers. They had heard the result that day and it was necessary that the statement should go forth to the public. The evidence given had not surprised any member of the board for they were well acquainted with it before, and they knew that the woman Adkins would be likely to make such a statement to clear herself from the horrible crime. So far from her having been ill-treated while in the house, she appeared to have been favoured. It was necessary that the statements made that day should not be confined to the Poor Law Board, but that an impartial statement of the truth should go forth to the world. He hoped he should be excused, but they had a strong feeling in reference to the matter, and he hoped that no garbled statements should be sent forth, but the distinct and impartial truth. It had been said by a local paper that the Guardians did not want such an investigation, and that they were forced to have one, but the result of that investigation, would show that it was an unjust aspersion and that the charges were made by an anonymous letter writer in the "Pall Mall gazette" and local papers, without any investigation of the evidence. He had no doubt the case would receive perfect justice at the hands of the Inspector, and that the evidence taken would be put in such form as to make the matter clear to the world at large.**

Mr. Weale said his duty would be to lay the whole of the depositions which had been taken before the Poor Law Board, which he would do at an early date. He had endeavoured to obtain the whole of the facts. He must say that when the woman made the statement it was impossible for them to have had the investigation then, as it had taken place before her trial it might have proved injurious to her. The Poor Law Board on being applied to, instructed him to hold the inquiry, and he should transmit it to them. As to publicity being given to the matter, they had the local press. What course the Poor Law Board would take to give it publicity, it was not in his power to say. His duty was to lay it before them at the earliest possible date. If anymore evidence could be given he should be glad to take it down. He had re-called the four women before him so that they might say if they had heard of anyone who knew of any addition facts, and it appeared they did not. Therefore, he could not do anymore than close the enquiry, and express his obligation to them for meeting him there on that occasion.

Mr. Smithies was sure the Guardians would express their obligations to Mr. Weale for the full and impartial investigation that had taken place. (Cheers).
The inquiry was then closed shortly before half-past two o'clock.

REPORT B - Pall Mall Gazette - Saturday 27th January 1866

THE LOUGHBOROUGH GUARDIANS AND ELIZA ATKINS

The inquiry ordered by the Poor Law Board to ascertain what truth there was in the statement of Eliza Adkins that she was induced to murder her little boy by the cruel treatment she received in the Loughborough workhouse, took place the day before yesterday. The proceedings, as reported in a local paper, are so instructive as to the method of a poor-law inquiry as to make it worth while briefly to epitomize them.

Mr. Weale, the poor-law inspector of the district, opened the business by reading the case for the complainant-namely, her deposition before the magistrates at Ashby-de-la-Zouch. He then proceeded at once to call evidence in contradiction of it. First, Mr. Robert Judd, who said he had been relieving officer for twenty-four years, related the history of Mrs. Adkins's application for relief, which was made last June, and in the course of his story it came out that she had told some falsehoods about the place of her husband's burial. Indeed, it was not quite certain that he was dead at all.

Then Mr. John Wilson, the master of the workhouse, was called, and said that Mrs. Adkins was under his charge a little less than a week. He never knew either her or her child to be punished, and he only heard the child cry once, which was when he was in chapel on Sunday. "It is, however," said this profound observer of human nature, "a very frequent occurrence for children to cry after their mothers." Mrs. Wilson confirmed her husband's evidence.

She also had never known either Mrs. Adkins or her boy to be punished; certainly the child had never been punished for speaking to his mother-in fact, she had never seen him speak to her at all. As a proof of her own humanity, Mrs. Wilson mentioned that when on a certain day the old people and the little children were sent out for a treat in Charnwood Forest, little Zadock Adkins being among them, she sent all the women who had to stay at home and work a slice of plum-pudding. Mrs. Adkins was one of these, and as she appeared to be unwell, Mrs. Wilson ordered her to have some tea instead of porridge.

Miss Ingram the schoolmistress, also said that there had been no punishment inflicted on either Mrs. Adkins or the little boy. Mrs. Adkins asked permission to bring her child a piece of bread and butter in the schoolroom every afternoon, which Miss Ingram kindly allowed her to do; but on those occasions she never saw the child, and did not wish to see him. Miss Ingram did not say how she ascertained that. She added that the other children all appeared very fond of little Zadock, and he never disagreed with them.

The other witnesses connected with the workhouse were pauper inmates, some of whom are said to have been residing there for several years, and their evidence was little more than a recapitulation of that given by their superiors.

Mrs. Ann Tyler, however, who seems to have been a sort of wardswoman, admitted that, one day when she inquired who had gone to the back door, another inmate told her it was Mrs. Adkins, who had been to speak to her little boy. Mrs. Tyler therefore felt it her duty to rebuke the mother, which, according to her own account, she did in these words "you ought not to have gone there ; you will be getting me into a row." She had also heard Mrs. Adkins say she would leave the workhouse, "for it was worse than being in prison. She said she frequently heard her child cry, and she was

unable to speak to it. She never saw her speak to the child during the time it was in the house."

The guardians then called witnesses to character. Their chaplain and surgeon, the Rev. E. Smythies, and Mr. A. W. G. Palmer (officers appointed and paid by themselves, and removable at their pleasure), declared that the workhouse authorities were all very humane people, and a clergyman of the town and a magistrate (an ex officio guardian) supported this testimony.

Upon this the chairman congratulated his brother guardians on the result of the inquiry, and declared it was a complete answer to the aspersions of the Pall Mall Gazette and other newspapers. But the evidence was all on one side. No one was called on behalf of Eliza Adkins. The wretched woman is in prison, no doubt ; but an order could have been obtained from the Secretary of State to have her brought up. This was not done ; and we hope we may be forgiven for thinking that an investigation conducted in her absence was necessarily one-sided. The witnesses called were interested in disproving her assertions. If anybody was guilty of harsh treatment towards her or her child, it must have been the master or matron, the schoolmistress or the pauper wardswoman, whose evidence forms the case for the defence. These persons were not cross-examined, and upon their unsupported and unchecked evidence the Poor Law Board will have to give its decision. The evidence of the paupers as to the particular case and as to the general humanity of the workhouse authorities is, it must be remembered, that of persons who regard the house as their asylum for life, and who are not probably disposed to jeopardize their own comfort by indulging a spirit of criticism but even their depositions lead to a strong suspicion that if they had been cross-examined the case would have borne a different complexion. It is at least worthy of notice that the matron, the schoolmistress, and Mrs. Tyler, severally admit that they never saw the child speak to his mother, although the schoolmistress mentions a fact which shows the affection that subsisted between them, and the pauper woman says that when she was told of the mother speaking to her child she scolded her for it. Of course it may be that Eliza Adkins is, as the Loughborough guardians are anxious to make it appear, a very bad woman, and it may also be she was very well treated in the workhouse ; but an inquiry conducted like that of Thursday last does not prove anything.