

1052

The Extraordinary Life and Death of Mary Anne Pierce, alias

LADY BARRYMORE,

Who was for some years the dashing Mistress of Lord Barrymore; afterwards she became upon the town, where her exploits in Flooring Beadles, Charles, &c. are well known. She was the terror of Police-officers and Publicans. Had been 150 times at Bow-street, and confined in every Goal in London.



THIS unfortunate woman, who, for many years past had been the terror of beadles watchmen, publicans, & police-officers, expired on Monday night at her lodging, a miserable attic, in the house No. 8, Charles-street, Drury-lane. She was twice taken to the station-house in Covent-garden on Sunday last for disorderly conduct, and discharged by Mr. Thomas, the superintendent, for at least the hundredth time. On being discharged for the last time, she addressed Mr. Thomas, saying, "I gave you a great deal of trouble, Sir, but I shall not give you much more. It is almost over with me." Mr. Thomas observing that she appeared faint and ill, advised her to go home and go to bed, & she left the station promising to follow his advice. But the ruling passion of her life, the love of gin overcame her resolution, for it appeared that instead of returning to her lodging, she found out some of her favourite haunts, and became again intoxicated. In this state she reached her home, where she was put to bed, and about midnight the owner of the house came to the station and gave information that the unfortunate woman was either dead or dying. Mr. Thomas immediately went to the house, supposing that she might have met with some ill-treatment, but on his arrival there at midnight, he found that she had been dead about ten minutes, having expired from a general decay of nature, brought on by her addiction to gin, and the miserable life she had led. For the last 15 years she had been a constant visitor at every police-office in London, & by far the greater portion of that time she has lived in prison. Her excess, under the influence of liquor, occurred so frequently, that the evening of the day on which she was discharged from prison generally found her there again. Her conduct in confinement formed a singular contrast to her behaviour on obtaining her discharge. In prison, where of course she had no opportunity of indulging in her favourite beverage, she conducted herself with so much decency and propriety, that Mr. Nodder, the governor of Tothill-fields gaol, usually appointed her to watch over the female prisoners in the capaci-

ty of matron, and he has often declared that he could not have selected a more fit person, and he always regretted, for her own sake, when the expiration of the term of her imprisonment took place. Her appearance on quitting prison was extremely decent, but the first use which she made of her liberty, was a visit to the gin-shop, and in half an hour after she might be seen staggering through the streets, followed by a crowd of idlers, plaguing and annoying the wretched woman. To avoid this she generally took refuge in a public-house, where she would demand more drink, & if refused, her first act was to smash the windows, and destroy every thing that came within her reach. These outrages of course led to her apprehension, but, being a powerful woman she seldom resigned her liberty without a struggle, in which her captors generally received some token of her prowess; and in the days of her strength the old watchmen were so fearful of encountering her Ladyship single handed, that they seldom presumed to approach her unless in a body, and even then they were frequently obliged to resort to a stratagem, before they could effectually secure her. The unfortunate woman, although reduced to the lowest state of misery and prostitution, was once the dashing chere amie of Lord Barrymore, with whom for a period she enjoyed all the luxuries and gaieties of life, living in a splendid house, and riding in her carriage. When this connexion terminated, his Lordship provided her with a husband in the person of one of his servants, named Pearce, on whom it is said he settled a yearly sum. The visions, however, of her former splendour haunted the unhappy woman, and her marriage with Pearce, produced continual bickerings and unhappiness, and finally led her to adopt the miserable course of life the irregularities of which obtained for her so much notoriety.

MORE PARTICULARS.

In her youth she was considered a remarkably fine woman, but of the last ten years of her existence, not less

than seven were passed within the walls of different prisons in the metropolis. She had been at Bow-street 150 times, but was never charged with theft. She was the dread of the licensed victuallers of Westminster, many of whom had cause to regret having refused to supply her with ardent spirits, as she invariably smashed the glasses & windows unless they gave her as much gin as she desired, gratis. Such was the extraordinary strength of this woman that she has been known to beat down three watchmen in succession, without any great effort, and set them at defiance. The last time she was brought to Bow-street-office she appeared to be in a consumption, and she told Mr. Minshall that "it was her last appearance on that stage;" &c. as her old friend and long acquaintance, Sir Richard (Birnie) was gone, she knew she should not long survive him." Few persons whose name are recorded in the annals of police, if any, have been so much before the public as Mary Ann Pearce, and on that account we give this record of her death.

SOLEMN VERSES.

Ah! who is she whose haggard eye
Shrinks from the morning ray?
Who, trembling would, but cannot
Frown the busy day?
Mark her pale lip, and cheek all o'er,
How deathly it appears!

See! how her blood-shot eye-balls
Torrents of briny tears, (pour)
Behold! alas, misfortune's child,
For whom no kindred grieves;
Now driven to distraction wild,
Her tortured bosom heaves!
Despis'd, yet dreaded, ruin'd, lost
Health, peace, and virtue fled;
On misery's stormy ocean tost,
Now stretch'd on dying bed.
Once were her prospects bright & gay,
Hope, smiling, blest her hours;
A vile seducer cross'd her way,
And cropt the blooming flower.
Dazzled by shining grandeur, she
Quits parents, friends, and home;
But soon reduc'd to misery,
An outcast vile to roam.
She, for relief, to liquor flies,
Which soon full havoc made;
Vanish'd the lustre of her eyes,
Her beauty soon decay'd.
Oft did she brave the winter's wind,
The driving sleet and rain;
And oft in prison dread confin'd
For months she would remain.
At length by drink and fell disease
Worn down to skin and bone,
Upon a wretched pallet laid,
No kindred nigh—not one.
She yields to death,—no pitying friend,
Her hapless fate deplores
Ye fair, take warning by the end
Of Lady Barrymore.

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