

# THE FATAL EXPLOSION AT EAST GREENWICH.

As briefly announced in our last impression, Mr. Cartter, on Thursday, the 30th ult., held an inquest at the Board Room Greenwich Workhouse, touching the death of Mary Mahoney, aged 34, of 10, Marsh-lane, East Greenwich, who died at the Greenwich Union Infirmary at five o'clock on Wednesday morning from burns received by the explosion at the Powder Works, East Greenwich.

Michael Mahoney, a labourer, of 10, Marsh-lane, East Greenwich, identified the body as that of his daughter, who was a single woman. She worked at Messrs. Dyer and Robson's Ammunition Works, and had been with the firm six years. Witness had several times seen the deceased while she was in the infirmary. She did not give witness any account of the accident.

William Law, foreman at Messrs. Dyer and Robson's works, said the deceased's duty was to press fog signals in No. 19 Shed. This shed was isolated from the others, and was situated in the Marshes. Emilly Gilbert worked in the same shed. All that deceased had to do was to place the signals in a die and swing a hand fly press round which would punch the signals. The fog signals were put together before they went to the press. Deceased's companion was engaged at the same work. The shed was about six feet by five in size. The women would be about three feet apart and would have about 800 signals in the shed at the time. The signals were taken from No. 30 Shed by the last person who put them together. Witness visited the shed about half-past three, and watched the operation of pressing about five minutes. The employes had to take the signals out of the press by hand. They were not supposed to use any instrument. There was an iron shield round the press, so that if anything happened they would be protected. The front of the body would be entirely protected. There were two doors in the shed. The women were not allowed pockets in their working dresses, which were supplied by the firm, nor were the men allowed pockets in their trousers. The employes also had to change their boots, and were supplied with overalls and slippers. In the shed in which the accident took place they used slippers. On and off the deceased had been employed on the firm eight years, but the day of the accident was the first day she had been employed at this kind of work. After watching the operation for some time, he turned round to go to No. 20 Shed, and had some about three yards when he received a blow on the head. Oh looking round, he saw smoke issuing from the shed, and ran inside and found deceased on the floor. He pulled her out of the shed, and tore off the serge dress she was wearing, and was then exhausted. All that deceased said was "Oh, Mr. Law." Witness did not see the other woman until she was being put in a light van. She must have been blown out or jumped out of a shed when he got the blow on the head. He had no idea how the accident occurred. They had never had an accident of this kind before during witness's time. The factory was inspected by Colonel Majendie on behalf of the Government twice a year. The accident was reported to the Inspector, who visited the shed on Thursday. Powder might drop out of the signals, but there was not supposed to be any loose powder about. When witness was in the shed he saw no powder about. A hundred signals might have exploded, but he could not say. He thought it would require a flame to make a quantity of signals go off, but one might go off by pressure. As a practical man, witness could not suggest any improvement to the dies to prevent the occurrence of a similar catastrophe in the future. The machine deceased was working was a new one, and had been in use a week or trial.

Dr. A. J. Bathe, assistant medical officer, said deceased was admitted to the Infirmary about ten minutes to four on the 20th ult., suffering from burns on the face, neck, hands, arms, and legs. He had no hope of her recovery from the first. For the first three or four days she appeared to be progressing, but subsequently became delirious, and died at five o'clock on Wednesday morning from exhaustion. One day he had a conversation with the deceased, and she said "I was pressing one of the signals and it went off;" and on another occasion when she was sensible he asked her what in her opinion made the signal go off, and she said, "I ought to have pressed it in the middle, but I believe I pressed it on the side."

Mr. Dyer, called, said the jury could visit his shed and see the machine in operation if they liked.

The Coroner said he proposed to adjourn the inquest to a date when he would have the assistance of Colonel Majendie, the Government inspector.

The inquest was then adjourned for a week.