

THE GERMANTOWN POISONING.

Full Report of the Circumstances Attending the
Sickness of the Hanna Family.

Special Correspondence of the Cincinnati Gazette.

DAYTON, O., May 17.

I came to Dayton to-day to investigate the circumstances attending the alleged poisoning in Germantown.

The families concerned in the poisoning case are well to do farmers, the Hannas living about a mile and a half northwest of Georgetown, and the Earharts living about two miles beyond. Both are Pennsylvania Dutch by birth, and have been regarded as industrious, orderly, and honest. The families are connected by marriage, Michael Earhart having married Mary Hanna, who is a daughter of John Hanna, sr., about a year ago. The Earhart family is composed of Sarah Earhart, seventy years of age; Michael Earhart, her son, who is about thirty-two years of age, and his wife. The Hanna family is likewise composed of three members—John Hanna, sr., who is about sixty years of age; John, his son, aged about thirty-eight, and his sister Catharine, evidently of nearly the same age.

The families have been on intimate terms ever since they became neighbors, and, until the recent poisoning affair, there had never been either misunderstanding or coolness.

On Tuesday, the 22d of April, at a little after 1 o'clock, Sarah, Michael, and Mary Earhart drove up to Hanna's in a wagon, on their way home from Germantown, and stopped for dinner, to which they sat down with old Mr. Hanna and Catharine. Soon after they started home, and John Hanna, who had been out in the field of a neighbor, John Rhoads, reached home for dinner. He helped himself to a cold lunch from the cupboard, and drank a cup of coffee from what remained over from the family dinner, which Catharine was keeping with the intention of heating over for supper. He had not finished the cup when he was seized with a violent spell of vomiting, accompanied with severe pains, and followed with a burning sensation in the stomach, and an uncontrollable appetite for acids. He obtained quiet on drinking some herb tea, after which he went to bed.

At about dark Catharine prepared supper for her father and herself, heating over the coffee, of which about three pints remained from dinner. Both were seized with vomiting at the table, accompanied with pains such as those experienced by John in the afternoon, only more severe. They passed the night in great agony, all of them sick and alone. Katie pulled off the old man's boots, and he managed to crawl off to bed upon his hands and knees. In the morning Katie, believing the coffee to have been the cause of their sickness, threw the balance out, and sent a neighbor for Dr. Donnellan. The Dr. recognized symptoms of poisoning, and, examining the coffee pot, discovered small granules, which he took to be white arsenic, on the sides and in the bottom with the small quantity of grounds remaining. He drew off about a thimbleful of the fluid, and scraped out the grounds, which he sent to Prof. Wayne, of Cincinnati, for analysis, and the answer was returned that they contained arsenic.

The Hannas were sick seven or eight days, and, as soon as he was able, the old man swore out a warrant before Squire Frank, of Germantown, charging Sarah and Michael Earhart with unlawfully, maliciously, and feloniously mixing a drachm or more of arsenic in coffee with intent to take the lives of the three. The examination took place on Thursday last, G. W. Mayer, Esq., of Farmersville, ably conducting the prosecution.

In the examination Catharine stated that, after dinner was over, when she was putting the things away, old Mrs. Earhart took a seat near the stove in the outdoor kitchen, where she was at work; that she asked her to go into the house, where it was pleasanter, but the old woman declined, saying the kitchen was good enough for her. The coffee pot was on the stove, and the old woman sat within a foot and a half of it and remained in the kitchen while she was running back and forward to the house, and the cellar. It is believed that it was at this time that the poison was dropped into the coffee.

Michael Earhart denied that he had been to the drug store that Tuesday morning, and of course that he had bought arsenic at any time, and the old woman denied also that she had ever purchased or administered any. Shrewd cross-examination caused Michael to contradict his statement in some respects, and R. W. Schaffer, a druggist's clerk, testified that he had sold arsenic on that day to a man who looked very much like Michael Earhart. He wouldn't like to swear, but he thought it was him.

Both parties were bound over in \$1,000 each, bonds for which were easily furnished by Michael, but only with extreme difficulty by his mother. John Ryder, her brother, a wealthy farmer, refused a note for \$800 from Sarah Earhart, as security for his bond, unless she would give a mortgage for the remaining \$200. At night, when there was a prospect of her remaining until morning in the custody of the officers, some kind of arrangement was made, and John Ryder and Elijah Foutz signed the bond.

The case will probably come up before the grand jury in Dayton this afternoon or tomorrow morning.

The Hannas are a most innocent and inoffensive family, with scarcely combativeness enough to defend themselves in the ordinary affairs of life. In conversation with your correspondent on Saturday, Catharine hesitated for some time to speak of the affair, admitting that she had been poisoned, but saying that "she wouldn't like to say anything against Granny; they had always been good friends, and she hadn't nothin' agin her now." John, her brother, however, said that "Granny came over while they were sick to inquire how they were, but they wouldn't have anything to say to her, and she soon withdrew."

On the death of the Hanna family, unless a new will should be made, the entire property would fall to Michael's wife—a fact which many regard as the clue to the attempt upon their lives.

Since the above case became noised over the country, reports of other crimes arose and flew like wildfire, until in almost every house there was some new story of the woman's guilt. Out of the mass of them there are a number which are generally credited from the familiarity of her neighbors with circumstances attending the affairs. She is charged with having poisoned her husband 18 or 20 years ago; of having poisoned the wife of Michael, who died seventeen months ago. Of the latter charge the physician, Dr. Hinkle, states that the lady, who was a daughter of Mr. Abner McLean, had been slightly ill, and believing she had about recovered, left her in the care of Sarah Earhart. In less than twenty-four hours she was dead—her husband saying, from inflammation of the bowels. The next charge is that of killing the child of Martin Foutz, of West Alexandria, her son-in-law, by administering arsenic spread on bread and butter. Dr. R. D. Huggins, who attended the child in its last moments, says the symptoms were altogether those of poisoning by arsenic. It is said that Mr. Foutz, who was a gentleman of wealth and social position, believed her guilty of the last two mentioned; that knowledge of it, without courage to call her out, so preyed upon his mind that he became melancholy, and soon after hearing of her attempt upon the lives of the Hannas he went out and shot himself through the head with a rifle.

Another charge is that of killing a woman, who is said to have been the first wife of Michael, a few years ago, in Indiana. The question of a wife in Indiana was a disputed one, some people asserting that Michael was a widower when he married Miss McLean, which he denied, insisting that she was his first wife. People in West Alexandria, where the family was better known than in Germantown, add barn burning and poisoning of animals to the old woman's crimes, but there is no proof of this, or anything more than suspicion to warrant the charge.

Arrangements have been made for exhuming the bodies of Mrs. McLean, Earhart, and the child of Martin Foutz some time during the present week, when an analysis will be made of the content of the stomachs.