

The Thames Shooting Case.

At the Thames Police Court last week Myra Taylor, 38 years, was charged with having on the 26th of August, at the Thames, attempted to murder Michael Whelan.

The accused, who wore a black skirt and a light fawn coat with fur-lined collar, still appeared in a very nervous state, and while the charge was being heard sat with bowed head.

Mr E. Clendon appeared on behalf of the accused.

Michael Whelan, who appeared in court with his head bandaged, said he was a coach-driver, residing at Karangahake. He knew the accused, Myra Taylor. He had known her for several years—about six or seven—at Grahamstown, Thames. The last time he saw her previous to the occurrence was at Karangahake, about two or three months ago. They parted bad friends. He said that he was to be married, but that he did not want her to be running about after him. He said he intended to settle down. She said, "All right, my boy. The day you marry is the day you die."

Accused interjected: "I did not say such a thing."

Witness: That was what she said. Accused (hysterically): "Oh, how can you tell such lies! It is a wonder that God does not strike you dead." Mrs Taylor then burst into tears.

Whelan, continuing, said he reached his house on the night of the assault, and was just about to knock when a person came round the passage. He thought it was a man. The person had on a mackintosh and felt hat, and had a dark moustache, but no whiskers. The person came round the corner of the house, and he said, "Hello, Ernie, old chap, are you getting home?" There was no reply. The figure, coming slowly towards him, he said, "Have you been on the 'tid' (meaning drink), old chap?" but he got no reply. He jumped off the verandah, and playfully put his arms round the person's body. The stranger's face was averted all the time, and he did not know who it was, but shoved the person towards the gate. The person did not struggle, and he thought that he (or she) was having a lark. He caught the stranger by the left wrist with his left hand, put his right hand on the shoulder, and said: "What's your — game, old chap?" The person put the right hand under the mackintosh and pulled out a revolver. He saw the flash, and let go the person's left hand, and grabbed the revolver, saying, "You cur, would you do that?" As soon as the shot was fired the person was on the ground. He punched his assailant on the face and said: "You —, whoever you are." When the revolver went off his hat went off his head, and he received a wound on his head. He went down on his knees to kneel on the person. He identified the clothes found on the accused as similar to those worn by the person who assaulted him.

In cross-examination Whelan admitted intimacy with the accused. He said he was tired of her, but could not get rid of her.

Continuing his evidence, Michael Whelan said that after the assault he could have got hold of the revolver, but he did not wish it to be said he had shot himself. He got up and walked away about 15 yards, and then the person started to move, and he (witness) ran away from the police station in Queen-street. Witness then went to the police station, but no one was there. About three or four minutes afterwards Constable Reid came along, and witness told him someone had been trying to put his light out. Witness went to the hospital about eleven o'clock in company with Constable Reid and Jim Miller, where the doctor dressed his wound, after which witness went to Mr. Robert Wilson's house on Block 87, and stayed there that night. There were two wounds on his head. Up to that time he had no knowledge whether it was a man or

woman who had shot him, but thought it was a man. He thought he would recognise the hat and mackintosh the person wore. (The hat and mackintosh found in accused's possession at the time of her arrest were then produced, and witness said they were similar to those the person wore when he was fired at). He could not recognise the moustache (which was also produced). When he saw the revolver he concluded the person meant to kill him. Witness only heard one shot, and that struck him on the head.

To Mr. Clendon: Witness was married on the day after the occurrence. When witness first knew Mrs. Taylor, six or seven years ago, there was a Mr. Taylor and a child about eight years of age. His period of intimacy with Mrs. Taylor extended over five and a-half years, and they had practically been lovers during that time, but the affection was always on her side. Witness had told her dozens of times that he had enough of her affection. They corresponded with each other up to the time of witness leaving for Karangahake, 12 months ago, but he would not say he had not done so since then. Witness would not swear he had written to Mrs. Taylor about a month ago, addressing her "My darling," and winding up with "Yours lovingly." He generally signed himself as Jack or Jim, as it was her wish. Previous to going to Karangahake he had visited her house almost every night or else she would be after him in the street. During his stay at Karangahake she visited him about four or five times. His only reason for writing accused affectionate letters from Karangahake was because if he had not done so she would have been up there after him, and would have made a "holly show" of him before everyone. She had done so here at the Thames. He often came to the Thames and visited Mrs. Taylor at her house. He went there because if he did not go Mrs. Taylor would come and take him away from any girl he might be with. He would not swear that on each occasion he came from Karangahake to Thames he did not notify Mrs. Taylor he was coming. Witness wrote her letters because she always wrote, inviting him to come. He had burnt all the letters received from her. Witness never gave accused any money, but he had many a time sent her a pound, which he always got back. Witness did not owe her any money. He was quite clear Mrs. Taylor had not given him sums varying from £3 to 5/. He would swear that during the last five years Mrs. Taylor had not advanced him various sums amounting to £50 and £100. His presence at their house was frequently the cause of trouble between accused and her husband, and that was why Mrs. Taylor sent her husband to Auckland. Witness would swear he never struck Mr. Taylor, and once gave him a black eye, neither had Mr. Taylor ever attempted to put him out of the house. She had never told him that she would destroy herself if he married, but she had told him that she would destroy him. Witness was not at the house every evening at which Mrs. Taylor stayed during her last visit to Karangahake, but he was outside the gate each evening, except on the Sunday evening. Witness could not say he was the father of the two children referred to, for accused was a married woman, but he would admit that he had been intimate with her during the past five and a-half years. Neither of the children were born at Mr. Taylor's house, but they were born in Auckland. The children were put out to nurse, witness understood, because Mrs. Taylor considered children were a nuisance in the house. Witness had seen one of the children in Auckland. The accused had brought the child out into the street and shown it to witness. The quarrel at Karangahake was because witness told accused he was going to get married. Accused then told him she thought he was cruel. Her last words on that occasion were not "If you do not marry me, I will destroy myself," but that she would "do" for witness. On the night of the shooting, when witness came off the verandah, accused was about three or four yards away. He then

jumped off and seized hold of her, because, although he had spoken twice, he had not received a reply. Witness did not say at any time "I know who you are, you —." He had no difficulty in throwing her down, as she was very light. Witness grabbed hold of her left wrist with his left hand, and placed his right hand on her shoulder. The revolver went off when he had hold of her left hand, and it was only when he saw her raise the revolver past his face that he got hold of her right wrist. When her head was lying on his right shoulder he would swear she did not point the revolver at herself, but that she pointed it at him. The revolver went off during the time he held her wrist. After it went off he threw the accused down and had complete control over her.

Re-examined by Sergt. Clark: He was twenty-five last birthday. The revolver on the night of the shooting was as bright as half a crown. The revolver—an American nickel-plated, five-chambered one—was then produced, and witness said it was bright like the one he had seen on the night of the shooting.

To His Worship: Witness thought it was a man who had shot him, and could not swear who it was.

Constable Reid deposed to being on night duty on the 26th ult. At about half-past ten that night he heard what he took to be a revolver shot, and made in the direction of the Pacific Hotel, where he thought the sound came from. On arriving there he heard a man come around into Albert-street crying for help, and on reaching the police station found Whelan there. The latter told witness that he had been shot in the head, and witness took him to the hospital for treatment.

Dr. Aubin, resident surgeon at the Thames Hospital, deposed to dressing Whelan's wound on the night of the 26th ult.

To Mr. Clendon: The wound was under the scalp, and was not of a serious character. He found no traces of lead in it.

Frederick Eyre deposed he was a barman employed at the Royal Mail Hotel, Paeroa. A person came to that hotel shortly after six o'clock on the morning of the 26th ult. dressed in dark male attire, and wearing a skull cap, and asked for a room. The name of J. Lennox was given by the person, but the voice was of a feminine character. The person was of a slender build, and wore a small, dark moustache. Under the circumstances he thought it was a man. He could not swear if the suit produced was the one the person wore, neither could he identify the accused in the box as being that person.

Sergt. Clark then requested permission to dress the accused in male attire to see if witness could then identify her, but Mr. Clendon objected to that course, and His Worship, after consideration, held that it was unnecessary, as there was plenty of evidence to prove that accused had been clad in male attire.

Detective Miller deposed to arresting the accused on the present charge on board the steamer Taniwha at Paeroa, about twenty minutes to two p.m. on the 27th ult. She was dressed in a male suit (produced) at the time, and a mackintosh lay alongside of her. He asked her if she was a passenger by the boat to Auckland and she replied "Yes," and gave her name as Jack Lennox. At his request she showed him her luggage, which consisted of a portmanteau, containing a change of male attire, and said she belonged to Auckland. On being questioned where she had been since she arrived at Paeroa she said she had never left that place. Accused then put her hand in the left pocket of her vest, and witness, thinking it might be a revolver, took hold of her wrist, when she dropped a small bottle which was about half filled with laudanum. Accused said she wanted to see witness privately, and he took her away a few yards from the other passengers. She then said "Do you know me?" Witness replied "Yes, I believe you are Mrs. Taylor." She then said "Yes; you can let me go," but witness replied "No, I can't do that; you will have to come with me." Witness then arrested her and took her off the

steamer. She then said "I was mad and had to do it. I think it went off itself. I did not know I had touched them until I saw the blood." Witness then took her to the Paeroa police station and searched her, and accused told him she had left the revolver under the cushion of the smoking-room on the steamer. He then brought her through to the Thames, and on the way she said "I meant to kill him, and then kill myself." The false moustache produced accused took off when she reached the Thames. Accused stated she used the laudanum, as she was a bad sleeper at night, and also that Whelan drove her to it; that she was sorry now, and wanted to go away and never look at him again; that she must have been mad when she thought of such a thing.

Detective Madder deposed to finding the revolver under the cushion of one of the seats in the smoking-room of the steamer Taniwha on the latter's arrival at Auckland on the evening of the 27th ult.

John Craig, railway guard, deposed that on the 26th ult. a passenger, a stranger to him, got on the Thames train at Paeroa with a ticket for Parawai. At the latter place a fresh ticket was issued by him to the person for Shortland. He could not identify the accused as being that person, but whoever it was was dressed in male attire, with a Dr. Jim hat, was rather slight in build, and wore a small, dark moustache similar to the one produced. The same person travelled by his train as a first-class passenger to Paeroa from Shortland next morning. The party had a poor voice for a man. The person at this time had an overcoat on, and witness could not see the colour of the suit worn.

J. B. Mason, licensee of the Warwick Arms' Hotel, Thames, deposed that shortly after the arrival of the evening train from Paeroa on the 26th ult. a person dressed as a man came to his hotel and asked for a room. The person was apparently between 30 and 40 years of age, slightly built, with a dark moustache and no whiskers. The person had a very feminine voice, and wore at the time a mackintosh, and carried a portmanteau with an umbrella run through the straps. He identified the accused as the person who came to his hotel on the night of the 26th ult. dressed as a man. Witness showed the person to his room at the hotel. The individual asked if he should pay for the bed then, and witness replied yes. The party then said, "What time do you close," and witness replied, ten o'clock. The party then said, "I may be rather late, can I get in after that." Witness replied, "You can get in from the Pollen-street door up to eleven o'clock, and after that come to the Grey-street door, and ring the bell." The man then asked, "Where is the bell," and witness took him round to it and showed him. The man then went to his room, and witness did not see him again until about a quarter-past twelve. Witness was then in bed, but heard the bell, and he (witness) went down and admitted the person, who explained that he had lost his way and could not find the place. After that the person got into the wrong bedroom, and witness called his attention to the fact. From the way in which the person walked witness was then quite satisfied that his lodger was a woman.

To Mr. Clendon: On each occasion witness saw the party the latter had on a mackintosh. Witness never accused his lodger of being a woman, and knew nothing of her movements outside of his house. He could not say that she was not in her room at any time between seven and twelve o'clock that night.

This concluded the evidence for the prosecution.

His Worship, expressing the opinion that a very strong prima facie case had been made out, and that he would have to commit the accused for trial, Mr. Clendon reserved his defence. The prisoner was then committed to take her trial at the next criminal sessions of the Auckland Supreme Court, bail being allowed in two sureties of £150 each, and the accused in her own surety of £200.