

SHOCKING SUICIDE.

INFORMATION was brought to Burrowa on Monday that James Cunningham, over 70 years of age, an army pensioner, and for the past nine months employed by Messrs. P. and J. Corcoran looking after their slaughter-yard at Thomas Corcoran's old farm, had committed suicide by shooting himself. The District Coroner (Mr. Wotton, P.M.), held an inquest on Tuesday. After viewing the body at the place, the inquiry was adjourned to Burrowa, and was concluded in the charge room of the lock-up.

Senior-sergeant Prior deposed that on going to the hut which deceased occupied, he found him dead, in a reclining posture near the bunk, resting on some fire-wood near the fire-place; a piece of string was fastened to the trigger of a gun, and deceased's right foot, bared, was through a loop at one end of the string; the rifle had recently been discharged; he observed portions of the skull scattered about, and a portion hanging by the skin over the forehead; the rafters of the hut over the place where deceased lay were studded with shot; two boxes of caps, one open, were on the bunk; there was a ball of string, corresponding with that fastened to the gun, and a pocket-knife with which he had evidently cut the string attached to the trigger; the body was cold and stiff, and death had apparently occurred some hours; there was a great quantity of blood on the floor, and portions of the brain were scattered about.

James King, in the employ of Mr. A. D. Middleton looking after sheep-paddocks, deposed that on Monday morning he saw deceased, who had been away for some days in Burrowa; about 9 o'clock that morning he brought some pigs down to the yard, as he promised deceased that he would look after any straying during his absence; deceased asked him if he could stay at his camp, as he had told Mr. Corcoran that he could not do the work, and would leave until he got well; he complained of pains in the head, and was retching; witness said to him that drink was the cause of it, but he replied no, that he had a very bad cold in the head; about noon witness called at the hut again, and found the door fastened inside with a rail against it; he peeped through an opening, and saw deceased lying down, with a gun beside him; he was somewhat surprised and puzzled, and going back some time after, he saw deceased still in the same position; met Mr. Patrick Corcoran coming out, and informed him of the affair; never heard deceased say he would commit suicide, or make use of any idle talk in that way.

Patrick Corcoran, grazier and butcher, deposed that deceased was in care of the slaughter-yard for about nine months past; he told him on Saturday that he was going away, as he did not feel well enough to do the work. [Mr. Corcoran's evidence as to the position of the body and other particulars was similar to that given by Senior-sergeant Prior.]

Thomas Hayes, hotelkeeper, Burrowa,

given by Senior-sergeant Prior.]

Thomas Hayes, hotelkeeper, Burrowa, deposed that deceased was at his place from Wednesday evening until Sunday morning or evening; he had business at the Land Board on Wednesday; he started to go home on Saturday, but returned saying he was too ill to go on; told him to remain until he felt well; he had drink at the place, but was not drinking to excess; for nearly two days he was in bed, and had very little drink.

Dr. Protheroe, Government medical officer for the Burrowa district, deposed that he had examined the body that morning, and found a wound in the trachea, or wind-pipe; it was a gun-shot wound, discharged against the trachea; the shot went out at the base of the skull, tearing away portions of the skull and scattering the brains about; from the position of the wound and other particulars given by those who first saw the body, he had no doubt that the wound was self-inflicted, and death must have been instantaneous.

The jury returned a verdict of suicide, but could not say in what condition of mind deceased was at the time of shooting himself.

The unfortunate man was a native of the county of Armagh, Ireland, and formerly he belonged to the Eleventh Battalion of Royal Infantry. He was a pensioner, and had seen 21 years' service, 10 of which he spent at the Cape and three in the East. His discharge papers showed that rheumatism was the cause of his leaving the service. He had three good conduct badges.