

DEPLORABLE SUICIDE.

We have to record the sudden death, the result of his own deliberate act, of a man who has long occupied a good position in Fremantle, and has been much esteemed and respected in his immediate circle of acquaintance. During the prevalence of the gale on last Saturday, and only a few minutes after an accident on the jetty had put in peril the lives of many persons, and seriously injured a Warder and two convicts, rumour flew through the town and that whispered to right and left Michael Lyons, a Principal Warder in the Convict Service and Compounder of Medicines in charge of the Prison Hospital, had fallen suddenly dead in his own house, under most suspicious circumstances. Lyons the day previous to his decease had been suspended from duty by the Surgeon Superintendent, who after his suspension is reported to have written to Lyons directing him to consider himself under arrest. We will not now consider what might be the charge, if any, which would have been brought against the unfortunate deceased, had he lived. It is sufficient that of his own will he has placed himself beyond the pale of human justice, beyond the ken of mortal scrutiny.

In consequence of the rumours which were afloat, a police investigation was made into the circumstances of the mysterious death, and on Sunday a jury was impanelled by the Coroner to make a *post mortem* examination pending the result of which examination the inquiry was adjourned.

The following evidence was elicited at the adjourned inquest held in the Court House on Tuesday at noon :—

MARGARET KELLY, the mother-in-law of the deceased deposed, that on Saturday at a few minutes past ten a.m. she went into the bedroom of the deceased, whom she found lying on his side. She thought he was asleep, he looked so composed. Noticing a peculiar appearance, she put her ear to his mouth, and placed her hand on his forehead. Finding it clammy, she said, "My God, Lyons, what is the matter with you?" and seizing his hand, found that though not cold there was no life in it. She ran over to Mr. Jose whom she sent for Dr. Attfield. The deceased had been subject to and had complained of a pain in his side. When questioned by the bench as to whether she had found any bottle or cloth in the bedroom, witness said, "As the Lord is my Saviour, I found nothing but his poor remains!" She noticed no peculiar smell in the room. The deceased had been up and was dressed in his shirt and drawers. Having been suspended the day before his decease, he had not risen so early as was his wont. The bedroom window was unopened.

LÆTITIA JOSE swore to remembering that on the morning of Saturday the 22nd inst., Mrs. Kelly came to Mr. Jose, and begged him to go for Dr. Attfield, as Mr. Lyons was dead or dying. She went over to Lyons' and took his hand: finding no pulsation, she thought he was dead. Mrs. Kelly was in the room. The

hand: finding no pulsation, she thought he was dead. Mrs. Kelly was in the room. The witness observed no pungent smell: she did not find any bottle or handkerchief, not dreaming of looking for such things. She had been in the bedroom during the sickness of a baby of Lyons' which died some time ago, and the bedroom was in its usual state. She did not notice whether or no, the window was open. Questioned by one of the Jury. When Dr. Attfield was sent for he could not come. He sent a message to say he was attending the men who had been hurt in an accident on the jetty. Lyons had been suspended; and considered that he was under arrest in consequence of a letter he had received from Dr. Attfield. Lyons had been ill and complained of a pain in his left side ever since the death of his child, which occurred about three months ago. Witness did not know that he had been taking any medicine to alleviate the pain.

ISABELLA TURNER, went to Mr. Lyons' house on the morning of the 22nd; saw Mr. Lyons lying on his bed with his face turned upwards; found Mrs. Kelly and Mrs. Jose in the room. She saw sundry bottles in the room, hair oil bottles and others on the drawers, but no phial; nor did she see any handkerchief or bottle on or near the bed. She noticed a smell as of strong tobacco in the room. The window was closed. She said "My God, how can this be?" No one suggested any probable cause for the death of the deceased. Because the room was untidy, she gathered up the clothing which was lying about, and carried it into the back room. There might have been a handkerchief or towel among the things; but there was such a variety that she could not say positively whether such an article was among them or not. Witness knew Lyons to be a temperate man.

Police Corporal WHEELER; deposed to hearing on Saturday near noontime, of the sudden death of one Lyons. Accompanied by a constable he went to the residence of the deceased, whose body he found lying on the bed. He believed him to be dead; there was no pulsation, but he noticed great heat in the corpse. Having sent for Dr. Attfield, and received a reply that that officer could not be found, he sent for Dr. Barnett who arrived immediately. Witness searched the bedroom carefully, found the window closed, and he drew down the blind himself. He thought that there was a peculiar smell in the room, more like the smell produced by the smoke of a cigar than that of tobacco. A bottle containing sweet oil stood on the chest of drawers near the looking-glass.

Searched the deceased's bed and another bed which was in the room; found neither vial nor handkerchief. He then asked for the clothes Lyons last wore, and found they had been removed to a back room. He found nothing in the pockets when he obtained and searched the clothes.

Cross-examined by the Jury:—The reason for his searching the house, witness stated to be in consequence of reports he had heard, among others a rumour that Lyons had poisoned

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By the Police :—At $\frac{1}{2}$ past 6 p.m., I noticed heat in the body.

H. C. BARNETT, L.R.C.P., M.R.C.S., J.P., Colonial Surgeon at Fremantle, sworn said :—At a little before 1 p.m. on Saturday, I was called by the police to Lyons. I found him quite dead at 1 o'clock. The body was very warm but perfectly rigid. The joints were stiff, and the jaws were firmly closed ; the face was livid. I detected a smell of chloroform in the room, although the window was open. I did not observe any bottle which might have contained the chloroform. On the following day I made, at the request of the Coroner, a *post mortem* examination, and removed the heart, stomach, and part of the lungs for analysis. The heart was filled with dark fluid blood : the stomach was empty, congested, of a purple color : the lungs were œdematous, that is filled with air, intensely congested and charged with dark colored blood. A diffused purple-color pervaded the lower surface of the body, very symptomatic in conjunction with the other circumstances, of the cause of death. I made a prolonged examination, the result of which is that, I consider that *strychnia* had been taken by the deceased, but *was not the cause of death*. Death was caused by the inhalation of chloroform, which produced congestion, and œdema of the lungs. The various symptoms in this case completely coincide with the symptoms hitherto medically reported of deaths from chloroform.

Cross-examined by the Bench. The heart was somewhat soft in tissue and fatty, but there was nothing in the state of the heart to account for death. The heart was in an early stage of disease. By the Jury. I should think that Lyons had been dead but a very short time before I arrived. It is very hard to say exactly how long he might have been dead. I do not think that medical assistance could have saved him. *Chloroform* and not *Strychnine* was the cause of death. I can conceive that a man, acquainted with drugs, might have taken strychnine with a view to self destruction, and finding that it caused him pain, might finish himself with Chloroform.

The jury having twice retired to consider their decision at length returned a verdict, " that the deceased committed suicide while in an unsound state of mind.

Lyons has left a young widow and a small family not too well provided for, to mourn the untimely and shocking death of their breadwinner.