

Death of Mr. Joseph Trewavas, V.C.

THE INQUEST AND VERDICT.

The inquest on the body of Joseph Trewavas, V.C., whose sad death took place on Thursday morning, was held at the Wesleyan school-room, Paul, on Friday evening by Mr. Ed. Boase, county coroner.

THE CORONER'S OPENING STATEMENT.

The coroner, in his opening statement, said Mr. Trewavas had been found on Tuesday in the sitting-room of his residence with a wound in his throat which, apparently had been self-inflicted. The question to be considered was, what was his state of mind when he committed that act? He (Mr. Boase) had personally known the deceased and had always found him a bright, cheerful and sanguine man, and the last man one would expect to commit such an act whilst in his normal state of mind. He had served his country gallantly, and had won the highest and most coveted distinction that a member of our fighting forces could earn. He had always been highly respected by everybody. Acts like that were generally committed by persons of unsound mind, and they had not expected that Mr. Trewavas would inflict any such injuries on himself while in his normal state of mind. They would all join with him in sympathising with the family and friends of deceased, who mourned such a sad end to so gallant a career.

THE DAUGHTER'S EVIDENCE.

Sarah Trewavas, daughter of the deceased, said she lived with her father at Dumbarton House. Mr. Trewavas was 69 years old at his death. He had been in the navy, but retired when about 30 years of age, taking up the occupation of a fisherman. He had retired in turn from fishing eight or ten years ago. Since her mother's death witness had (together with a servant girl) lived with her father. He was usually of a bright and happy disposition. About three months ago he had a seizure, and since then had been under the attention of Dr. Fox. He had never been himself since the seizure, but latterly he was improving physically. She saw him in his room before he went to breakfast on the morning in question as she did every morning, to ask him if he would have it in bed. He elected, however, to have breakfast downstairs and ate a good one. He was peculiar at breakfast. He went upstairs and witness and the girl went on with the housework. Soon after she went to his room, and found him holding a newspaper, which it looked as if he was attempting to read, but was unable to do so. She went up again soon after and asked her father to go down in the sitting-room. She felt it would be better if she was near him so much as possible. That was at about nine o'clock in the morning. He was in a bright and happy mood then. She remained with him until about a quarter after ten. Then she went out to prepare the dinner and to attend to her other household duties, and she was in the midst of her work when her father came to the door of the kitchen and asked her "Where are my keys?" She saw that he had got into one of those little fits of rage which had affected him since he had had the seizure. She said "Surely, you have never lost your keys" and tried to conciliate him. She asked him if they were in his pockets, but after searching them he replied, rather testily that "they were not." He again asked her if she knew where they were and on replying in the negative got the answer, "You do." She then went with

him upstairs to try to find them, but their search was fruitless. She went downstairs, and her father retired to the sitting-room. In passing through the kitchen, she left a small cheese or dessert knife on a little round table in the kitchen. She went upstairs and when she returned she started working at another table and did not use that knife. Her father came in the kitchen and then went out again. Of course, there was nothing unusual in him going from one room to another, but though she did not see him, he must have taken the cheese-knife whilst he was there. He went into the sitting-room then and locked himself in. Considering her father's state of health at the time she thought the action rather suspicious, and going to the door, went down on her knees and looked through the keyhole to see if she could get a glimpse of what her father was doing. She could not see him, however, only his shadow going over the carpet. Then she called out to him asking him "what he was doing." He did not answer, and though she repeated her query time after time, could elicit no reply whatever. Shortly after, she heard a gurgling sound. She sent the girl for his brother, who arrived at the house about five minutes afterwards. As the windows were fastened, his brother burst the door open, and on going in she heard him make an exclamation which conveyed to her what had happened, and she fled. Since the seizure he had been getting childish. Whilst in his bed he often exclaimed that he wished he was dead, but had never made any threat to put an end to himself. After the act, Mr. Trewavas was attended by male attendants, who changed duties in rotation during the twenty-four hours, there always being two attendants at his side.

By one of the jury: Previous to the attack of the seizure he had had trouble with his lip by which he had lost a quantity of blood. She did not think, however, that had affected him seriously as he recovered in a couple of days.

THE BROTHER'S EVIDENCE.

Henry Trewavas, brother of deceased, a fisherman who had been living at Mousehole all his life, said he had always been on intimate terms with his brother. He generally saw him every other day. He had noticed a difference in the mental condition of his brother since the attack of seizure. He often spoke incoherently. Witness was sent for on July 18th at about 11.40 in the morning. He found the door of the sitting-room locked. He burst the door open, and on going in found about three pints of blood in a pool on the floor. He exclaimed "My God, what have you done?" His brother was lying down leaning on one arm with his hand over his throat. Witness did not notice any knife in his brother's hand. He ran out for assistance, and met his (witness's) wife at the door. She took the knife from the throat of the deceased. He then got some men to come in. Witness went home, and being of a highly-nervous temperament, the deed affected him so much that he fell into a kind of stupor for some time. A young man named Tregenza brought the doctor, who came between one and two o'clock. Dr. Jago came, however, at 12.30. He had not seen his brother since. Deceased was unable to speak when he saw him.

Mrs. Trewavas, sister-in-law of deceased, said after the seizure he became childish at times, used to ramble in his speech, and get into a temper without much reason. She went into the sitting-room on the day in question shortly after the door was burst open by her husband. When she stepped into the room, the knife was in deceased's throat and was held by the right hand. She took the knife away and threw it in the passage. The men came in, and then witness went out.

By one of the jury: Deceased only had his drawers and stockings on when found in the sitting-room.

DR. FOX GIVES EVIDENCE.

Dr. Fox, who had attended deceased, said until the seizure Mr. Trewavas had been a very bright and cheerfully-minded man. He had a stroke of seizure on April 23rd, and had not been himself since that date. Since the attack he had noticed great alterations in the mental condition of his patient. If deceased could not hear what one said he would get into a temper, and he was very depressed at times. Physically he had been improving lately, but his mind was deranged. He did not, however, threaten ever to end himself. Witness was sent for on July 18th, and arrived at one o'clock. He found Mr. Trewavas in the sitting-room lying down on the floor with only his drawers and stockings on, he having on neither shirt nor vest. Witness examined him and found the windpipe had been severed, and a cut extending from the left ear, under the throat, and on to the right ear. He was breathing through the cut, which was jagged and had evidently been caused by a cut from a knife which had been recently sharpened. It was pretty evident that the injuries were self-inflicted. He had a mattress brought down-stairs on which deceased was laid. He was attended night and day. He sewed up the cut with the aid of Dr. Jago, who was fortunately present, but the case was hopeless from the first. Deceased did not speak much. The cause of death was shock and haemorrhage, the result of the severance of the wind-pipe.

By the jury: He did not think that it was necessary, before the deed was committed, to place deceased under the care of male attendants. He had never threatened himself at all. There was no doubt that he was not in his right mind when he committed the act. He had not been notified at the time of the reported attempt of the deceased to jump out of the window, a story which he (Dr. Fox) believed to be a myth. With regard to Mr. Trewavas's trouble with his lip, that did not affect in any way his state of mind.

A FIERCE STRUGGLE.

P.C. Whells said he was called to the house on July 18th at about twelve o'clock noon. When he got there he found four men holding Mr. Trewavas. He was very violent, and they had to strain every effort to keep him down. He had not any knife then. Afterwards he heard deceased almost inarticulately exclaim "I was mad this morning." That was all he heard him say.

A verdict of suicide whilst of unsound mind was returned.

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