

ISLE OF WIGHT OBSERVER Saturday 23rd January 1904

**EXTRAORDINARY FATALITY.
Poisoning By Misadventure.**

A great deal of painful sensation was created in Ryde on Wednesday by the news that an old and respected resident, Mr. LONG, had inadvertently caused the death of his wife by administering a dose of poisonous liniment in mistake for medicine. Mr. LONG, formerly a well-known tradesman of Ryde, and for many years a member of the Parish Church Choir, has attained the great age of 92 years. He and his wife have been living in Hill Street with a great-nephew and niece, but occupying a separate part of the house. On Monday Dr. PRESTON was called in to Mrs. LONG, who was suffering from bronchial trouble, and prescribed a liniment for external application, and some medicine to be taken internally. On Tuesday evening Mrs. LONG appears to have asked her aged husband to give her her medicine, and he gave her the liniment, from the effects of which, or from fright, she appears to have died in a very short time.

THE INQUEST.

On Thursday evening the Coroner (Mr. F. JOYCE) held an inquest at the Primitive Methodist Schoolroom, touching the death of Mrs. **Ann LONG**, wife of Mr. Henry LONG, of Hill Street, when the following evidence was taken.

May Eunice POLLARD deposed that she resided at Smithfield Cottage, Hill Street. The body viewed by the Coroner and jury was that of her great aunt, the wife of Henry LONG of the same place. She believed deceased's age was 82, but was not quite sure. Her great-aunt had not been well for some time. Dr. PRESTON came on Monday evening, and prescribed for her, but witness did not know what he prescribed, and did not send to the Dispensary for the medicine. Witness lived in the same house with her brother, Bernard Henry POLLARD, aged 19, but deceased and her husband looked after themselves. She was not nursing the deceased. No one was nursing her. Witness went up to her great-aunt about six o'clock on Tuesday, and told her that she would look up again. Just before eight o'clock, her great-uncle, Mr. LONG, called her. She went, and Mrs. LONG told her that Mr. LONG had given her a dose of the liniment instead of the medicine. Witness told deceased that she did not think she had taken enough of it to hurt her, and sent her brother round to Mr. LONG, who lived in Arthur Street, a son of the deceased, and he went for the doctor, who came about nine.

Had the doctor recommended any nurse to look after the deceased? - I don't know. I had not seen the doctor till the evening she died.

Was your great-aunt able to give any explanation?—She was able to say that her husband had given her this dose of liniment by mistake.

Your great-uncle is a very aged man, I believe?—Yes, I think he will be 93 in June.

And your aunt died the same evening? —Yes, about half-past ten. I was there, but I am, not quite sure about the time.

Do you know whether the doctor told Mr. Long that the contents of one of the bottles was for external application only? —No, I don't know whether that conversation took place at all.

The Coroner then produced two bottles, one an ordinary medicine bottle with the doses marked on it, and the other; a small bottle of blue glass, with a conspicuous orange-coloured label on it, on which the word "Poison" was printed in large black letters.

Did you see these two bottles in the room?—Yes.

Who went down to the, Dispensary for them ?—I don't know. Mrs. LONG simply lived in the house with us, but we did not have a lot to do with her.

I am not blaming you for not knowing, I am simply trying to find out who was sent to the Dispensary for them ?—I don't know, I'm sure. I noticed the little bottle, but I don't know where the big one was. I hadn't been up much at all.

Mr. DORE—(a juror).—I presume your uncle couldn't see very well; wasn't his sight bad?—No, not very bad. Very good for his age, I should think.

The Coroner.—I suppose your aunt and uncle looked after themselves ?—Yes, Sir, they did.

Dr. PRESTON deposed that Mrs. LONG was not a patient of his, but of his partner, Dr. MACKENZIE. He had never attended her before. Mrs. LONG sent down for Dr. MACKENZIE, and the message was transferred to himself, and he went to see Mrs. LONG on Monday evening, between half-past five and six o'clock. Miss POLLARD opened the door, and deceased came down to see him in the sitting room. He found she was suffering from a slight bronchial catarrh, for which he prescribed some medicine to be taken internally, and some liniment to be applied externally. The liniment he prescribed was composed of one ounce of liniment of belladonna and an ounce of acetic turpentine liniment. These two things were to be mixed and made a two ounce mixture. There were turpentine and camphor in the liniment which, in a sense, would be poisonous, but the belladonna would be the most violent poison. He simply gave the patient the prescription, and left her to send to the Dispensary to get it made up. It had been dispensed in a perfectly regular way, in a bottle which was quite in accordance with the regulations of the Pharmaceutical Act of 1864, which dealt with the sale of poisons. The Ryde Dispensary was always most particular with that sort of thing. That took place on Monday evening. It was not a very serious case. The bronchial catarrh was not very acute. The deceased was up and about, and he did not order her to go to bed. As she was not in a very bad condition he did not think it was necessary to send her to bed. On Tuesday evening, between half-past eight and nine o'clock, Mrs. LONG'S grand-daughter came down to him, and informed him that Mr. LONG (deceased's husband) who was a very old gentleman, when requested by deceased to give her her medicine, had given her the liniment instead of the medicine. He went up to see the deceased at once, and found her in a state of acute excitement, and in a very distressed condition. He had previously given instructions to the grand-daughter to administer an emetic. On his arrival he found they had not been able to do so, and he immediately administered an emetic himself, followed by a dose of castor oil. He had a great deal of difficulty in doing so, on account of the great state of excitement deceased was in.

Was she able to give an explanation of how it occurred ? - No I could get nothing out of her; she was too excited.

Was she in great pain?—No, I don't think she was in great pain.

Were these three poisonous substances which composed the liniment sufficient to cause death ?—No.

Not having regard to her great age ?— No, I think not. If that were analysed a very small

quantity of belladonna would be found in the bottle, and of course she only had a very small portion.

Well what do you think she died from ? —Shock.

Do you mean that she died from shock rather than from the effects of the poison ? —Yes, I think that would be a more correct way of putting it. I shouldn't think she had taken a third of it. She had had her chest rubbed two or three times, so she could only have taken a very small dose.

Did you, in the course of conversation with her, say anything about the desirability of having someone to look after her ? —No, I didn't think her sufficiently ill for that.

Did you inform the deceased, or anybody else, that the contents of the bottle which was to be used for external application was poisonous? ---No. it was dispensed you see and it had the poison label conspicuously upon it.

The Foreman.—Then you think it was the shock that caused her death ?—Yes. She was a very old lady, and my partner informed me that for a good many years she had suffered from a weak heart, and the effect of her being given a dose from a bottle marked "Poison" would naturally put her in a great state of consternation. A dose could not have produced the symptoms of poisoning within such a short time of taking it as when I saw her. The poison which would have had most effect would have been the belladonna, and that would not have produced the effects in the time.

What is the effect of belladonna?—It would have produced great exhaustion and delirium.

The Coroner—But I thought that it lowered the action of the heart?—So it does after a time, but the first effect is to bring on delirium very much like we see in delirium tremens.

Then you think that death was from the condition of her heart, and not from belladonna poisoning ?—Yes.

Not considering her extreme old age ?— I think not. I think if she had taken all the belladonna in the bottle of liniment it would not have killed her.

She knew she had taken the poison ? ---Of course, and I understood she was greatly perturbed.

The Chief Constable said the husband was present, if the jury wished to hear his evidence.

Dr. PRESTON did not think it advisable to call Mr. LONG. He did not consider he understood the gravity of the matter.

The Coroner said if Dr. PRESTON told him that as a medical man, on that ground he could exonerate Mr. LONG from appearing. Otherwise it was a very serious matter. They could let him go.

The Coroner then said if they were dealing with a man of an age to be responsible it would be considered a very serious matter for him. They would have to consider whether the poison was administered by accident. But at Mr. LONG'S great age they, might take it for granted. These two old people were approaching the natural end of their existence, and here they had a very aged husband attending an aged invalid. The doctor placed a favourable construction on the matter, and considered that death resulted from shock at deceased finding she had taken poison, rather than

from the effects of the poison. He thought, however, the commonsense view would be that, with an aged and weak person, the poison must have had something to do with it. It was for the jury to say whether deceased died from the shock of finding that she had had the wrong dose given her. Although the husband had not been called, he thought the jury might fairly give him credit for accidentally administering the poison, otherwise homicide would attach to him.

The jury found that the deceased had died from misadventure, her husband having inadvertently administered a dose of liniment containing belladonna, thereby causing a shock to the system from which she died.

Researched by
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