

REMARKABLE SUICIDE ON RYDE PIER

On Wednesday morning a great sensation was caused throughout the town by the report that John Henry BRADING, of Stanley House, George Street, who, for some 20 odd years, had been a clerk in the employ of the Ryde Pier Company, had committed suicide in the most determined manner in the new Pavilion. It seems that BRADING, who was about 42 years of age, had been for many years at the Pier Gates, but when the new Pavilion was opened he was transferred to the ticket office at the Pavilion, it is said that this was accompanied by a reduction of his salary from 27s per week to £1, but Mr Bannister HOWARD, the lessee of the Pavilion, assures us that this could not have been the cause of the suicide, because BRADING did not suffer pecuniarily, he having paid BRADING more than the amount of the difference for looking after tickets and doing odd jobs, which he could do without interfering with his other work. It is to be feared there were other causes which led to the unbalancing of the poor fellow's brain. His brother had persuaded him to take the pledge, and the sudden transition no doubt caused the depression of spirits which was remarked by those who knew him. Under ordinary circumstances, BRADING was extremely chatty and lively, but, after taking the pledge, though he did his duty as usual, he became reserved in his manner. That he had carefully planned the rash act is evident. It was not BRADING's duty to lock up the Pavilion, but he applied for the keys of the building, on the ground that a fire might break out there, and that he ought to have the opportunity of prompt access. His request was acceded to. On Tuesday, too, seeing one of his brother employés, named PRAGNELL, repacking a case, he asked for a bit of the cord with which it was tied, which was given him. On Tuesday night BRADING remained at the ticket office till the performance was over, and settled up as usual with the lessee. The Pavilion was then locked up for the night, and his fellow employé asked if he was going to ride up the Pier in the electric railway. BRADING, however, said he would sooner walk, and started as if to do so, but he must have turned round, unlocked the door of the Pavilion, and proceeded to the first landing. There he must have divested himself of his socks, boots, hat and coat. Why he should have done this it is rather difficult to understand, unless it was to avoid attracting the attention of the night watchman by making a noise. At 6 next morning, one of Messrs ROE and GRACE's workmen, who was still employed in finishing the decorations, found the body of poor BRADING suspended lifeless from the balustrade. The foreman was sent for, who cut down the body. BRADING had apparently sat in a chair, while he tied one end of the cord round his neck and the other round the knob of the balustrade, and then jumped over. He must have soon died.

The Deputy-Coroner (Mr E. F. BLAKE) held an inquest at the Gem Inn, Hill Street, on Wednesday afternoon. The jury was composed of—Mr E. W. LEONARD (foreman), Messrs WOODS, W. ANDREWS, WATSON, TANSOM, J. LOADER, H. WHITTINGTON, W. NAUGHTON, H. JAMES, MARKS, W. HOOPER, F. MEE and E. ELDRIDGE.

The jury having viewed the body, the following evidence was taken.

Henry Charles EYRES deposed that he lived at 9, Nelson Street, and was a plumber. On Tuesday afternoon he was on the Pier from 2 o'clock till 7. He was in the Pavilion the whole of the time. He had only known deceased since he had been in Ryde. He was working for the contractors. Deceased was in the employ of the Pier Company. Witness saw deceased in his ticket-issuing office on Tuesday at half past five. Deceased asked witness if he would have a cup of tea, which he refused. He did not notice anything strange. He thought he was more jolly that day than he had been. He saw nothing peculiar about him. Witness went to the Pavilion again on Wednesday morning, arriving just after 6 a.m. The foreman opened the entrance door first for the men to enter, and told witness to go right through into the concert hall and open the big doors for the men to go in by. As witness went through the first doors of the hall entrance, he looked on the staircase and saw a chair on the fire landing on which was a coat and hat. Some boots were on the floor by the side of the chair. He did not take much notice of this, and was going through to open the doors of the entrance of the concert hall, when he happened to look round and saw BRADING hanging from the second post of the staircase.

By the Coroner.—The post supported the bannisters.

Witness, continuing, said the alarm was given to the foreman, who at once came in and cut deceased down. The foreman felt deceased, and found that he was quite cold and almost stiff.

By the Coroner.—He had never seen anything in deceased to lead him to suppose that he would be the sort of man to do such a thing. Witness had been working in his present position for two or three months. Deceased had been there since the Pavilion was opened.

By the Foreman.—Witness had no conversation with deceased. Deceased was rather reserved.

Arthur DENHAM deposed that he was in the employ of the Ryde Pier Company. He had known deceased for about four weeks. He was in the same employ as witness, and issued tickets for the Pavilion. Witness saw deceased every day, and was with him all day on Tuesday, except during usual meal times. He did not notice anything strange in him. He was generally rather lively, and had been rather more so during the last few days. Witness did not think he was the sort of man to commit such an act. He had not complained. He had not seen any difference in his demeanour. He had lately worn spectacles, but did not complain of them. He said he could read without them. Witness saw him last at 9.30 on Tuesday evening. That was when the Pavilion closed. Witness was supposed to be the last man there, but he generally came out with BRADING. On Tuesday evening they came out together.

The Coroner.—Who has the keys of the Pavilion?— I have.

The Coroner. —What happened when you came out?—Deceased went down the four steps leading from the Pavilion, to walk up the Pier.

Witness, continuing, said he noticed nothing peculiar in him.

The Coroner.—Do you know where he was found?—Yes.

How could he get in there? --The only way he could get in would be by the Club entrance. When the workmen left, it was their orders to give either myself or BRADING the keys.

Who had them on Tuesday night?—Deceased had both keys.

Witness, continuing, said the keys were afterwards found in his office. Deceased had never complained of anything to witness.

The Coroner.—You were surprised to hear that this had taken place?—Yes.

Witness said he never seemed low or depressed.

The Foreman.—Was he of sober habits?—He signed the pledge a fortnight ago. Previous to that I had not known him long.

The Coroner.— Had there been any difference since he took the pledge?—Yes.

In what way? --He seemed brighter.

What was he before? How did he alter?—He seemed much brighter in spirits since he took the pledge.

P.S. MARTIN explained that the keys of the Pavilion (produced) had been in BRADING's charge. These keys were found locked in BRADING's office, so that he must have unlocked the Pavilion doors, and then returned to his office, and from there to the Pavilion again.

Walter BRADING, living at 2, Beech Road, Newport, deposed that he had been staying with his brother for the last fortnight. He saw him every evening. Witness had come down to work at Ryde. Just about the time witness came down deceased became a teetotaler, partly from witness's inducement. He did that because witness thought he over-indulged. He had not seen him the worse for drink for a long time. On Monday evening he last saw him alive between 10 and 11. He was then perfectly sober, but not so cheerful as he had been. He had been rather like that for the past fortnight. He made no complaint, but he was much more reserved than usual. Witness had never heard him threaten anything.

The Foreman.— Are you aware of any reasons for deceased being depressed?

Witness.—He had some little difference with his employers, which he thought was his own fault. I think he was rather depressed because of that.

The Foreman.—He had no notice to leave? —Oh, no.

Alfred WOODWARD, M.R.C.S., deposed that he was practising at Ryde. He had known deceased for many years, but had never attended him. On Wednesday morning at about 7.30 he was sent for and found deceased in the mortuary. He was quite dead, and had been dead for some time. He examined him, and found a deeply indented mark round the neck, from ear to ear, as if produced by a thin cord. He had no doubt that that was the cause of deceased's death.

The Coroner.— Of course you cannot tell us the state of the man's mind, but you can tell us this: Assuming that a man had been in the habit of drinking considerably, and then all of a sudden gave up the whole thing at one time, might it not have some effect on his mind?—It is quite possible.

The Coroner. —Could it be possible for a man's mind to be affected in that way?—I can remember two other cases in my time, of men's brains being turned in this way.

P.S. MARTIN produced a letter, which had been found on the deceased, addressed to his wife. There were also found a watch, which was still going, a purse containing £1 8s 11d, a knife, two gold rings, and some tobacco.

The Coroner said he did not like to exercise the power he had in opening the letter. He was in the hands of the jury.

The Foreman suggested that the letter be handed to Mrs BRADING, who could tell them if there was anything in it affecting the case.

This was done and it transpired that the letter only contained a formal farewell to his wife, child and brother.

The Coroner, in summing up, said that this occurrence was a most unfortunate one to have happened, and at first he was rather at a loss to conceive what was the cause that had led this poor man to commit such an act. The evidence, however, had cleared this up in his mind. The evidence that led him to think that this man's mind was deranged when he committed this act, was the evidence of the brother. The leaving off of drink would have a considerably depressing effect upon him. There were two verdicts they could arrive at— that he was of unsound mind, or that they could not give an opinion on this point. The brother of the deceased had very properly told them the truth, and he said that at times the deceased had perhaps taken too much for him. He and others had tried to get him to abstain. This, coupled with the worry the brother had told them of, was, in his opinion, enough to turn his mind, and to prove he was not accountable for his actions.

One of the jury said that the uncle of the deceased had committed suicide.

The Coroner.—That adds to the strength of my supposition.

The jury returned a verdict of "Suicide, whilst of unsound mind."
