

**TRAGIC SUICIDE ON THE LINE
THE INQUEST**

As the last train from Ventnor was proceeding to the Esplanade station on Friday night a woman was seen to throw herself in front of the engine. The driver applied his brakes with the utmost promptitude but the train passed over her and she was decapitated. The woman proved to be **Kate Elizabeth HARRIS** (54), domestic servant at "Fernside," Ashley Road. It seemed she frequently suffered from ungovernable fits of temper and her last employers, Mr. and Mrs. DIXON had acted with great forbearance and gave her good advice which had little effect and it was whilst suffering from depression at being given notice that day that caused her to take her life in such a tragic manner.

An inquest was held on the body of deceased at the Primitive Methodist Schoolroom, High Street, on Tuesday by the Acting Coroner (Mr. F. S. JOYCE) when the body was identified by Adelaide Maud Mary HARRIS housekeeper, of Parkstone, who said she corresponded with deceased whom she last saw alive in October last. Recently witness wrote and informed her of the death of their aunt and deceased wrote back expressing her regret and saying she was willing to pay anything towards the funeral expenses. She said she was quite happy.

The Coroner asked witness if there was not trouble some time back and witness replied in the affirmative. She then went to see her in hospital when she was told that her sister had attempted to poison herself.

Did you know how long she was under treatment there? - Yes, about a fortnight or three weeks.

Is there any insanity in the family? - None whatever.

Did she give any reason for it? - She said that nobody wanted her and she was tired of life.

Mr. Alfred DIXON, independent, of "Fernside," Ashley Road, suggested that deceased had been in his employ for about five months and so far as her work was concerned had given entire satisfaction. She was, however, subject to violent outbreaks of temper and he referred especially to January, March and April. He called in his own doctor (Dr. PRIDMORE) to see her, and later deceased's own medical attendant saw and prescribed for her. On Wednesday she had her usual half day out and on Thursday evening when she brought in the coffee he asked her why she gave way to these violent outbreaks of temper and used such extreme language towards Mrs. DIXON. She replied she did not know. He then pointed out to her that it was impossible for such a state of things to continue and would she give the reason for it? "NO," she replied, "there is no reason." He told her they could not have their lives spoilt in that manner and if she could not guarantee that she would behave better she would have to find another place, otherwise she had a home for life as they were perfectly satisfied with her work.

The Coroner: Did you know that she had attempted to poison herself? - Yes, we knew that and we hoped that a change would do her good and that in new circumstances and surroundings she would be better.

There was no adequate reason for these outbursts? - There was no practical reason whatever. We did everything to make her comfortable.

Witness related the circumstances on Friday last. His wife asked deceased in the evening to prepare something for him, as he had been an invalid, and she said she would not do so and when she asked her to prepare the spare bedroom for someone who was coming she answered impudently. When they rang for her to clear away there was no response and they found she had left the house. They 'phoned to her doctor as they knew she was to see him that week-end and Dr. SMITH replied that the deceased seemed much upset because she had received notice, and did it mean that she was to leave at once? He replied certainly not, as they had intended going away in May, but would arrange for someone to be in the house with her. About 8 p.m. Dr. SMITH brought her to the house and deceased must have left about half an hour afterwards.

The Coroner: Apart from these violent outbursts of temper she did not appear to be a person of unsound mind?

Witness said he would term it intermittent insanity. At other times she was quite alright. He added that as soon as they missed her from the house he 'phoned the police.

George Henry JENVEY, porter at the Esplanade Station residing at 10 Station Street, stated that on Friday evening he was standing on the up platform waiting for the mail from Ventnor to come through and as it was just coming observed a woman take a couple of steps across the platform and deliberately jump into the forefeet, head foremost over the rails. The engine was at once on top of her and she was decapitated. The engine driver applied the brakes immediately and the train was pulled up smartly, it was all over in an instant. The police and doctor were sent for and the body was removed to the mortuary. Witness heard no sound and he noticed nothing peculiar in the woman's behaviour previously.

George VALLENDER, engine driver, 10 Cross Street, Eastfield, said that on Friday night he was driving the train which left Ventnor at 8.43 for Ryde Pier. His mate, BRADFORD first drew attention to deceased by exclaiming "Look up, mate, we are over a woman." At that time he was on left hand side of the engine and applied the brakes immediately but they had passed over the body.

John BRADFORD, fireman, said that when approaching the platform of the Esplanade Station, he saw a woman jump over. They were about six yards from her. He called out to the last witness. It was impossible to have pulled up earlier.

Dr. Agnes Price SMITH, Dover Street, deposed that deceased was one of her panel patients about the end of October. She came to her weekly in November when she had slight bronchial trouble. She gave her advice as she was much depressed, and did not see her again until the end of March, when she prescribed for her. Witness asked her if she was in the same situation that she went into in December, and she replied "Yes, I am very happy there." On Monday in last week she received a 'phone message from Mrs. DIXON and she went to the house. Deceased was very depressed cried a good deal, and said she gave way to temper. She told her to stay in bed and she would come again the following day, when she was up and opened the door for her. She then seemed quite normal and she told her she felt much better and was brighter. On Friday Mrs. DIXON 'phoned about her, saying she was nervous concerning her as she had been given notice and had threatened to do away with herself. Then about 6.45 the same evening deceased came to her surgery, complaining of her head and crying. She stated she had been given notice but did not want to leave, remarking, "I have got a very good place there." She said she had a month's notice and witness brightened her up saying she could soon get daily work.

The Coroner: She was not unfit for service?

Witness: Oh no. She took her in a taxi to Mrs. DIXON's and she was quite rational.

The Coroner: There are plenty of posts of that kind open to people who will work.

The sister of the deceased in answer to the Coroner, said she (deceased) was 37 years with a lady at Tonbridge who had died and she believed she got into a depressed state as a result.

The Coroner remarked that the poor woman did undoubtedly indulge in these violent attacks from time to time. He did not suggest there was the slightest blame attaching to anyone. Mr. DIXON seemed to treat her with the greatest kindness forbearance. In some houses a master or a mistress would not tolerate it for a moment, and deceased appeared to suffer from these periodical outbursts and intentionally destroyed herself. Her mind was sufficiently disturbed to make her insane, and he mentioned that she was evidently one of a large type of people who were not quite normal, but not bad enough to be confined. One, however, could readily see from the point of view of her employers, and Dr. SMITH's statement, that there could be no blame attached to anyone. He sympathised with her relatives and recorded a verdict that she was accidentally killed by a train at the Esplanade Station, and that she was in an unsound state of mind at the time. He added that the driver of the train showed the greatest promptitude in pulling up as he did.
