

SUDDEN DEATH IN A LOFT

On Saturday evening last, a man named William JUMAN, aged 31, better known as "Darky," was found dead in some stables in High Street. Deceased had been in the habit of sleeping in these stables, and his death there caused some excitement in the neighbourhood. On the discovery of the man's body, several medical gentlemen were called to examine it, but life was extinct. The body was conveyed to the mortuary, and an inquest was held at the Gem Inn, Hill Street, on Monday afternoon. ---Mr Edward William BIGGS was chosen as foreman.

Charles CRABB, living at 5 Preston Place, deposed that he was a van driver. He knew deceased, whose name was William JUMAN. He had no trade. Witness had not known where he lived for the last eighteen months. He slept generally in a shed belonging to Mr PURNELL, in Albert Place, High Street, rented by Mr. WYATT. He had slept there for the past three months. Witness last saw him at about 6.30 on Saturday night, when he came into the mineral water factory adjoining the shed. He asked witness to do his dress up for him "as he was all of a tremble." He said he felt bad. Defendant adjusted his dress, and he then crawled up the lane towards the shed. About a quarter of an hour afterwards he went up to the shed to satisfy the neighbours and found that deceased was lying down in a corner upstairs. Witness said "Bill, are you there?" Deceased replied "Yes Charles. Let me rest." Witness could just see him, and when he said "Good-night Charley," he said "Good-night Bill" and left him. He had seen him there one day before, and then went up and disturbed him, because he did not know whether he was dead or not. Had given deceased a parcel of food on Friday, but he could not eat it, nor could he drink some tea that was made him by one of the neighbours. There was nothing peculiar about him on Saturday night, except the trembling. He was sober enough to walk, but he had had a little.

The Foreman.---You say he had been drinking. That's a broad statement.

The Coroner.---He only says that he had had a little.

P.C. NEWNHAM deposed that he had known the deceased very well for some years. He had had no regular home for some time. Witness last saw him alive about a week ago, but noticed nothing unusual about him then. He spoke to witness on that occasion as he passed. On Saturday night at a quarter-past 10, he was on duty in the lower part of High Street, and was called by some of the neighbours to Albert Place. He proceeded there, and in a store upstairs, he saw the deceased, William JUMAN, in a corner, lying on his back. As he knelt down and felt his forehead, deceased gasped. Witness then sent for a doctor. He spoke to deceased, who made no reply. Dr WOODWARD came at once and pronounced the man dead.

Mr Alfred WOODWARD, M.R.C.S., deposed that he had known the deceased for four or five years, and had attended him for slight complaints. He had not seen him for more than two years. He was sent for at once and went to the shed in Albert Place, and upstairs in a loft he found deceased lying with some sort of clothing over him. He was then quite dead. The place was very cold. He made an external examination, and did not find any evidence of violence. He then ordered the body to be taken to the mortuary. There was no outward sign to indicate the cause of death, and the body was not in an emaciated state. He gave it as his opinion that deceased had died from natural causes.

The Coroner.---Would a quantity of alcohol take away a man's appetite?

Witness.---Certainly it would.

Continuing, witness said that he had heard that deceased had been irregular in his habits.

The Foreman.---Do you think that the cold had anything to do with it?

Witness.---Something to do with it.

The Foreman.---To what do you attribute the trembling?

Witness.---Drinking deeply would affect the brain, the kidneys, or the heart, and either would cause trembling.

The Foreman.---Would the cold have caused it?

Witness.---The severe weather. Acting on a broken constitution, might have caused it, although he might not have had much alcohol at the time. The shed was not a fit place for even a strong man to sleep in.

The Foreman said he had heard that on the afternoon a man gave deceased 2d. worth of whiskey and water. People might have thought that deceased was drunk, but he did not think he could get enough for that.

The Coroner, in summing up, said it was not absolutely necessary that they should say whether this man died from apoplexy, disease of the heart, syncope, or anything else, as long as they were satisfied that he died from natural causes, and that there was no blame to be attached to anyone. He came to the conclusion that the deceased had led a more or less irregular life for some time. The severity of the weather they had on Saturday, no doubt, with a man in the state of the deceased, would have a greater effect than it would upon a man in ordinary health. He thought it was not difficult for them to come to the conclusion that he died from natural causes, and that there was no blame to be attached to anyone. Even for a strong man this shed was not a fit place to sleep in, and if this man was in a weak state it would have a very bad effect upon him.

The jury returned a verdict accordingly.

The Superintendent of the Police remarked that the man had been warned away from the shed several times by the police.

ISLE OF WIGHT OBSERVER Saturday 2nd November 1895

A PAINFUL CASE.---The death of the man JUMAN in a loft at Ryde, has naturally caused no small amount of commiseration. We have so many local agencies for looking after the poor, that, at first sight, it seems a reflection upon these that such a case should have occurred here. No doubt, the sudden change from the genial warmth of September to the white frosts from which we have recently suffered, has been trying even to those who are surrounded by comforts. Still more trying must such a change have been to one who had to make the best of things in a draughty loft. JUMAN's ancestors too, judging by his appearance, must have come from some spot not very far from the equator. He was evidently a half-caste, and almost as dark as the average negro. Naturally, he did not possess the power of resisting cold to the same extent as an ordinary Englishment and, moreover, had lowered his vitality by irregular habits. The sudden cold was, evidently, only one of the contributory causes of the man's death. Still, it does seem singular that when people saw the poor fellow suffering as described, no one had humanity enough to call in a doctor, or arrange for his removal to some Infirmary, but allowed him to remain in a miserable loft, and die like a dog. There are plenty of benevolent people in the town, and if those who knew of JUMAN's condition had only made it known, something would have been done for him. JUMAN might not have been in all respects, a creditable specimen of humanity, but, as far as we know, he was tolerably honest. He has not been often at the police court, except in the capacity of a spectator.

The reluctance even of the poor and ailing to take advantage of the shelter of the Union has been very marked. We have heard a reason given for this which makes us hope that the Master and Matron just appointed by the Guardians will, under the influence of a more sympathetic Board, mete our kinder treatment to the unfortunate than we fear has been always the case in the past.
