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SAD SUICIDE NEAR CRAWLEY.

FATHER'S DESPAIR THROUGH THE WAR.

Very sad circumstances were brought to light at the inquest on Monday afternoon on the body of John Johnson, a stockman at Belle Vue Farm, Tilgate, Crawley, who shot himself on the previous Friday evening. It transpired that one son of the deceased had been killed and another badly wounded at the war, and the third son was being called up shortly. "This is the last blow," he was heard to say, "we have sacrificed two, and that ought to be enough." There is a large family, five young children being still at home, and the deceased's wife is in a delicate state of health and arrangements had been made for her to undergo an early operation. This series of misfortunes greatly affected the deceased and it was noticed that his manner had been very strange of late. Just after he had been told his tea was ready on Friday evening a gun shot was heard outside the house and the deceased was found under a yew tree with a bullet wound through his head, appearances suggesting that the poor fellow had placed the barrel of the gun in his mouth, the bullet penetrating the brain and emerging at the top of the skull.

The inquest was held at the home of the deceased by Mr. Vere Benson and a jury, of which Mr. W. Noakes was the foreman.

Annie Johnson, the widow, who was much distressed when giving her evidence, said the deceased was 52 on the day of his death. At about 3.15 o'clock on Friday the deceased came in for a rifle, saying Sammy Gates wanted it to shoot deer. Witness was not surprised at this, because Mr. Gates had borrowed it before for deerstalking. The rifle was an old cavalry carbine, which was brought from Peking by her dead brother, who secured it during the last China war. Deceased took the gun out and she did not see him again until 4.45, when she sent to the buildings to tell him tea was ready. He said, "All right." Five minutes later she heard the report of a gun and rushed out and saw the deceased standing in the cart shed. "Oh, dad, you did frighten me," she said, and he replied, "Oh, did I." He had the rifle in his hands. Witness went indoors, and as the deceased did not come in to tea she sent her son Jack out to him. Jack came back again and directly afterwards witness heard a second report, and her daughter Minnie came running in, saying, "Oh, come, dad's hurt himself." Witness and Jack ran out at once and found the deceased lying under the yew tree on the lawn. He was bleeding very much from the mouth, but there was no sign of life and he did not say a word. The rifle was lying by his side. The deceased had been depressed for a long time, owing to the war and the death of one of their sons. Another son had been badly wounded, and now the third son was about to be called up. Deceased had been restless and had had no sleep for a long time. When he heard that the third son was to be called up to join the Colours he said, "This is the last blow. We have sacrificed two, and that ought to be enough." Deceased had influenza some four years ago and he also had his head injured in a motor accident, and since then he seemed a little queer every time he had a cold in the head. He had not had a doctor lately, although he had been so depressed. He would not see one. On the evening before the affair he was very restless. He would lie on the couch, then jump up and walk about; and he went out of the house and looked into the sky, running his hands through his hair at the time. He had never threatened to take his life.

Minnie Johnson, a daughter, said she was standing by the back door when she heard the report of a gun. She ran round to see who had fired it and saw her father lying under the yew tree. She did not see any signs of life and rushed in for her mother.

Jack Johnson, a son, said he went to look for his father after what his mother had told him, about 5 o'clock. He saw him near the buildings, and when his father saw him he picked up the rifle from behind the oatbin and walked towards witness, who asked him what he was up to with the rifle. His father replied that Gates wanted it for deerstalking. Deceased then followed witness towards the house. Witness went indoors and had just sat down to tea when his sister Minnie ran in and told them about their father. Witness had not heard the report of the gun.

P.C. Steer, stationed at Three Bridges, stated that at 6.15 on Friday evening information was brought to him of the occurrence, and he at once went to Belle Vue Farm and saw the body of the deceased lying upon a door. He examined him and found he had been shot in the mouth, from which, as well as the nose, blood was oozing. There was a wound at the top of the head, suggesting that the bullet had gone right through. He was handed the rifle (produced). There was one empty cartridge case in the barrel, and there was also a little blood at the end of the barrel.

Replying to the Coroner, the son Jack said there were two cartridges kept in a cupboard upstairs and they were missing. He recognised the cartridge case produced as being one of them.

In reply to a juryman, Mrs. Johnson said the deceased left no writing of any kind.

The Coroner said it was evident that the deceased had been greatly depressed of late on account of his misfortunes, and the worry had brought about a morbid condition of mind over which the deceased apparently had no control. There was not much doubt that at the time the deceased was suffering from temporary insanity.

The jury returned a verdict that the deceased committed suicide during temporary insanity, and they handed their fees to the widow.

THE FUNERAL.

The last act in the sad tragedy took place on Wednesday, when the funeral took place of the deceased amidst every sign of sympathy and sorrow. The Curate (the Rev. I. C. Blower) officiated both in the church and at the committal service. The body was enclosed in a coffin of polished elm with brass furniture, which bore the inscription: "John Johnson, died 17th March, 1916, aged 52 years." The family mourners were the widow, Private William Johnson and Mr. Jack Johnson (sons), Mrs. Lucena, the Misses Nellie, Mabel, Minnie and Olive Johnson (daughters), Mr. E. Lucena (son-in-law), Miss Irene and Miss Ivy Lucena (grand-daughters), Mr. Samuel Johnson (brother), Mrs. Burrage and Mrs. Ayling (sisters), Mrs. S. Johnson, Mrs. H. E. Hearsey, Mrs. J. Denman, Mrs. C. Payne (sisters-in-law), Mr. W. J. Denman (brother-in-law), Mrs. Jeffery and Miss Ayling (nieces). Mr. W. Noakes, steward of the Tilgate Estate, was present. At the graveside were Miss M. Hooker, Miss E. Rice, Miss Privett and Miss E. Hilton. The floral tributes were of a beautiful character. Those sending and the inscriptions were:—

In loving memory of my dear husband and our father, from his sorrowing wife and children.

In loving memory of dear Dad, Annie and Ted.

With love, from Minnie.

From his loving daughter Olive.

To our dear brother, from sisters Millie and Lizzie, and William (Hove).

With deepest sympathy, from his loving brother, sister-in-law and family.

To dear grandfather, with love, from Ivy.

To dear grandfather, with love, from Irene.

With deepest sympathy, from his brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, Jack, Harry, Charlie, Kittie, Millie and Vasliti, and Harry and Nellie (Canada).

In loving memory of dear Jack, from his brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law—Albert, Will and Fred, Elsie, Nellie and Olive.

To dear Uncle Jack, from his loving nephews and niece, Dick, Ted, Walt., Bert, Jim and Bessie.

To dear uncle, in loving remembrance, niece Bessie (Brighton).