

Surrey Advertiser 15 June 1867

## SHERE

**A REFRACTORY JURYMEN.**—At the inquest on Monday, reported below, two jurymen were late in their attendance at the inquest. The coroner remonstrated with them, impressing upon the whole of the jury the necessity and importance of punctuality. Mr. John Upfold said the coroner was bound to allow the jury a quarter of an hour's grace. The coroner said such was not the fact, but Mr. John Upton seemed to think he knew more of "the law" than Mr. Woods, the coroner, did. After the jury were sworn, Mr. Upfold declined to view the body, having already done so on his way to the house where the inquest was to be held. He seemed to think it would have been more convenient for the jury if the inquest had been held at the house of the deceased man. The coroner told him the law was compulsory, and that after being sworn he was bound to go and view the body. If he did not do so, he should put the law in force against him. Mr. Upfold seemed inclined to remain obstinate, but was remonstrated with by his brother jurymen. He, however, thought better of it, and at last reluctantly consented to go, and the matter ended.

## THE DEATH BY LIGHTNING.

At noon on Monday, an inquest was held, at the Garibaldi Inn, in this village, before C. J. Woods, Esq., coroner for West Surrey, on the body of Charles Cannon, a farm labourer, aged 25, who, on Friday last, was killed by the dread visitation of lightning, under the following circumstances of peculiar and melancholy interest.

The jury having viewed the body, which presented marks of rapid decomposition, visible particularly in the blackened features, which however were as tranquil as in sleep,

Thomas Mansell, a boy 13 years of age, was the first witness called and deposed:—I work for Mr. Dartnell, farmer, who lives at Cottrell's Farm, in this village. Charles Cannon also worked for Mr. Dartnell. On Friday last, I and Cannon were at work on Dilton Farm, ploughing. Cannon had charge of one plough with two horses, and I was holding another two-horse plough with reins. I was standing still and taking out the horses of my plough while the deceased was ploughing towards me. There had been thunder and lightning during the day. As I stooped down to unhook the traces, I saw Cannon trotting his horses, as if to get them to the end of the field. There was a clap of thunder, and on looking round I saw that all were on the ground quite still. I went up to see what was the matter, when I found Cannon lying on his back on the right side of the plough close to the handles, and quite dead. I went and told his wife and also Mr. Dartnell.

Mr. John Dartnell, of Shere, farmer, deposed:—I hold Dilton's farm in Shere parish. The deceased was in my employment. About 2 o'clock on Friday afternoon last, the previous witness Thomas Mansell came and told me that the lightning had struck two horses and killed a man. He seemed very much frightened and agitated, and said he could not go back with me. I went to Carthouse Field, where I found the horses lying side by side, in front of the plough and quite dead. Cannon was lying dead in the position described by the boy. I examined the body but saw no marks about it or on the clothes. There were no marks on the horses. I had the body of Cannon removed to his own house, and Mr. Capron, surgeon, was at once sent for. There had been a good deal of thunder on Friday. I noticed a fracture of the wood-work of the plough, which had before been perfect; but I did not see any marks on the ground. The fracture might have been caused by the jerk when the horses fell.

Mr. E. Capron, of Shere, surgeon, said—About 3 o'clock last Friday I was sent for to Dilton's Farm. I proceeded there as quickly as possible, and saw the dead body of Cannon, and examined it. I found no external marks. I made a further examination on Sunday with the same result. When I saw the body on Sunday I distinctly observed a smell as of burnt hair, but I saw no singeing or burning of the body. I examined the carcasses of the horses but saw no marks upon them. They appeared to have died instantly. I examined the deceased's clothes very carefully, but saw no appearance of burning on them. A knife and a tobacco box of steel, which had been in deceased's pocket were handed to me. On examining the knife I found it to have been magnetised sufficiently to attract a needle from the perpendicular. The tobacco box was also magnetised, but in a slighter degree. [On examination by the coroner the box and knife were found to be equally magnetised]. On Sunday decomposition was setting in rapidly. The rigidity, however, was not so marked as usual.

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Mr. Dartnell, in answer to the coroner, said the bodies of the horses did not appear to be decomposed when removed.

A jurymen said he noticed a slight singe on the ear of one of them.

Mr. Capron, on resuming his evidence, said it was the opinion of some medical men that in cases of death by lightning the blood did not coagulate so quickly as in ordinary cases, but others differed on this point. In his opinion the man Cannon died from the shock of the system. It frequently happened that in case of death from the electric fluid there were no signs of injury either externally or internally.

The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental Death," and generously handed over the amount of their fees for the benefit of the widow of the unfortunate man, who is left with three children to support.

Hundreds of people have visited the spot where the deceased and the two horses were stricken, and the testimony of the villagers agree that never in that rural neighbourhood, was there a more sudden exemplification of the terrible power, that "dwells in the lightning, and rides on the storm."