

Charles Henry Elkins

**Isle of Wight County Press
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SHOCKING SUICIDE AT NEWPORT.

A CRUEL RUMOUR RESPECTING AN "AFFECTIONATE AND DEVOTED BROTHER" REFUTED.

On Tuesday afternoon Edward F. Blake, Esq., held an inquest at the Lamb Tavern, Newport, on the body of Charles Henry Elkins, aged 36, brother of the landlord of the house named above, who on the previous day committed suicide, under circumstances detailed below. Mr. Knott was chosen foreman of the jury.

George Molesworth Elkins, brother of the deceased, was the first witness. He was sobbing heavily, and on entering the room he expressed the hope that the jury would see the body, as some people had set about a rumour that deceased had been treated badly; he was sure it was quite the reverse.

The Coroner said the jury had viewed the body.

Witness then went on to say deceased was formerly a ship's steward, but had been living with him for some seven years and assisting him in his business. They had formerly been with each other in the Colonies. Deceased suffered from nervous debility, which during the last two months had become worse. He was always in bad spirits -Q. Had he any delusions? -A. Full of it. He was under the impression that he was liable for a penalty, and that he heard voices in the wall abusing him. Witness did all he could to convince him that it was not true. His appetite was generally bad, but witness had done his best to tempt him to eat. On the previous Sunday he seemed better and ate a hearty dinner. Deceased was afraid to go upstairs alone and witness had him in his room to sleep and made him as comfortable as he could. Deceased had a very restless night and he breathed heavily. They got up at 6.30 on Monday morning, earlier than usual, and went about the work of the house, and witness did all he could to comfort him. About midday witness was talking with a familiar country friend in the bar when deceased came in, and witness said "Hullo, how are you now, old boy?" and spoke to him with regard to what he would have for lunch. Deceased replied "Not quite the thing" - a usual expression of his - and left, and about six minutes after witness went to see what he had for lunch. Not finding him downstairs he went up, and in deceased's bedroom he found him on the bed with his throat cut and a razor lying in a pool of blood between his legs. He appeared quite dead. Witness ran downstairs for assistance and customers went up. As he was sworn to tell the whole truth he must say that deceased frequently had too much to drink. Out of the last 5^{1/2} years he should think he had been a drunkard 5 years. He could not prevail upon him. Deceased left off taking spirits about six months ago, and had been taking beer chiefly since. On Monday morning deceased was sober - he had had only two half-pints of beer to his knowledge, and on Sunday he did not drink much. Deceased was troubled with the delusions generally after he had been drinking. Deceased never threatened to commit suicide.

The Foreman: You are not surprised at him doing such a rash act? - Yes, I am more than surprised, because he was such a learned man. Deceased could not have been treated better.

The Coroner said he had heard nothing suggested to the contrary.

Mr. G. Quarrier (a juror): Has he not been queer in the head for some time past? - Yes, he had delusions.

The Coroner: Witness said he never threatened to commit suicide and that he did not believe he was likely to do such a thing.

Mr. Quarrier: He has been looking very strange for some time.

Witness said he asked deceased repeatedly to open his mind and let him share his trouble if he had any. Deceased said he had done no harm to any one that he had not atoned for, and that he was indebted to witness for the trouble he had taken with him. Witness told him he need not mention that; he forgave him a thousand times. Deceased said "That is all right, then."

Dr. Hutton Castle said he had known deceased several years, during which time he had attended him off and on. He was suffering from dyspepsia, depression, low spirits and general ill - health - no particular disease.-Q. Did you form any opinion what that arose from? - Yes.- Q, What was it? - Excessive drinking. I should like to mention that I never saw him intoxicated in my life. He had cautioned deceased against it in every possible way, and at times his warning temporarily had effect. He last saw deceased alive on Saturday evening, about 7.30. He visited him at his home. He had been attending him for several weeks past. Deceased was then in a considerably improved state from what he had been of late.- Q. Has he ever given you reason to suspect that he was likely to commit suicide? - Not the least, and he had never threatened it to my knowledge. He knew deceased had delusions which arose from excessive drinking. There was no insanity up till the day he committed suicide. Witness was sent for about 12.30 on the previous day, but was not at home then. He saw the body about an hour afterwards on the bedstead. Life had been extinct for about an hour, he should say. Deceased's throat was severely cut - there were at least three cuts, which were quite sufficient to cause death. The first cut apparently proved abortive, the second severed the windpipe, and the third just below also severed the windpipe and the blood vessels, and he was not sure there was not a fourth cut. He was not surprised that a man like deceased, who had been drinking to excess, should eventually become mentally damaged; he should almost expect it. It might come on suddenly. The fact that a man had been drinking a great deal and then abstained might hasten it.

The Coroner said in view of the rumours complained of by deceased's brother, he would like to ask the doctor what was his experience of his treatment of deceased.

The Doctor said that he had been there a great many times at different parts of the day, his visits being wholly unexpected, and his impression formed on the evidence of what he saw was that he had rarely, if ever, come across a more devoted and affectionate brother than the last witness; it was extraordinary. He tended deceased more like a mother than a brother (hear, hear).

Mr. J. R. Hayles (a juror) said he had frequently talked with Mr. George Elkins respecting deceased, and he was sure deceased could not have had a kinder brother (hear, hear). He fully confirmed the doctor's statement on that point (hear, hear).

The Doctor said, in reply to a question, that he had thoroughly examined the body and found no marks of ill-treatment whatever (hear, hear).

Mr. T. Simmonds (a juror) said that he always considered that the two brothers got on very well together.

The Coroner, in briefly summing up, said it was evident from what they had heard that deceased committed suicide whilst temporarily insane. He regretted that rumour had cast any reflection on deceased's brother, who, they must all be satisfied after hearing the evidence, had done his very best for deceased (hear, hear). Of course, a man who was addicted to drink was very difficult to manage. He took it that their verdict would be that deceased committed suicide whilst temporarily insane.

Mr. Williams: Would you not say that it was caused through excessive drinking?

The Coroner: I don't think so.

The Foreman: It will not make the case any better (hear, hear).

The Coroner said it was not for him to decide. The verdict was theirs.

Mr. Williams said it would be an honest verdict if they made the addition he suggested.

The Coroner said he would leave it to them, as they were responsible. What did the foreman think?

The Foreman: I should say temporarily insane and stop at that (hear, hear).

Mr. Williams: I don't press it, only the evidence of the doctor made it clear.

The Foreman: It won't help us in any way.

Mr. Williams suggested instead that they should add to the verdict a rider to the effect that having carefully inquired into the matter they were satisfied that the deceased's brother had shown more than usual affection and attention towards the deceased (hear, hear).

The Coroner agreed, and the suggestion was adopted, the Coroner stating that he would acquaint Mr. Elkins with the decision in that matter before leaving.

The funeral of deceased took place on Thursday at Carisbrooke Cemetery, the Vicar (Rev. A. W. Milroy) impressively officiating. The coffin was covered with beautiful floral tokens from numerous friends. Deceased was a respected member of the R.A.O.B. The Order was represented at the funeral by Prime Joseph Reed, P.P., of Battenburg Lodge. The chief mourners were Messrs. George Molesworth and Henry Elkins (brothers), Messrs. William Elkins and William Woods (cousins), and Messrs. E. Saunders, C. Barton, and J. Reed.

MR. GEORGE M. ELKINS desires to sincerely thank all those who so kindly sympathised with him in his trouble and bereavement.

Transcription by Kate MacDonell for the Friends of Newport and Carisbrooke Cemeteries,

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