

Richard Pittis

The Hampshire Advertiser - January 16 1869

DEMISE OF MR, RICHARD PITTS, JUN.— On Tuesdays morning the inhabitants were much shocked at the heavy tidings that Mr Richard Pittis, Jun, of 123, High Street, grocer and wine and spirit merchant, had, in a fit of insanity destroyed his own life. Only the day before he had seen the grave close over his beloved mother. The lamentable event has cast a gloom over the whole town and neighbourhood. Deceased, a kind hearted man of strict integrity and a most agreeable neighbour, was for some years a member of the Town Council, and, in all relations of public and private life, he trod well in the paths of duty. On the same day Mr, F, Blake, coroner, held an inquest at the Bugle Hotel touching the death of deceased. The jurors, having viewed the body, returned to the hotel, whilst the coroner and the foreman of the jury, remained and took down a brief statement made by the surviving widow. The following was the evidence taken:-

Mrs, Ann Pittis, widow of the deceased, said, — I left my room this morning about 8.10, and went down stairs, leaving the deceased awake in bed. He was very quiet this morning, said but few words, he was even more depressed in spirits than of late. His mother's death had a marked effect on him. After being absent from the room about fifteen or twenty minutes, I returned, and, seeing the deceased was not there, I went to the closet door of the dressingroom, and on opening it, found that he was suspended from the other side of the door.

Isaac Golden, assistant to the deceased, said,— I last saw him alive at 7.15 last evening in his own, house, and then he appeared to be very much depressed, more so during the day than he had been during the last six weeks or two months. The depression had increased since his mother's death. He had an idea that his mother's death had been hastened by anxiety about his ill health. This morning, whilst I was sitting at breakfast, I heard stamping overhead and ran up to the deceased's bedroom and though into the dressingroom, and found deceased suspended by the neck by his silk handkerchief, which was fastened to an iron clothes-peg at the top of the door, which is over six feet high. There was a chair placed near the body. Deceased was in his night clothes and socks. I hastily drew out the knot, which had nearly slipped, and sent for a medical man. Deceased was warm, but he did not breathe, and I found that the heart did not beat. I have never known him attempt anything of the kind before. It was his custom of late to take breakfast in bed. Mrs. Pittis went down and held family prayer and then took up his breakfast. She was carrying his breakfast when she found him dead this morning.

Joseph Groves, graduate of medicine at the London University, said,— Deceased was my uncle. I have been with him constantly lately. He was out of health ever since last spring, and has been very depressed during the last months. He was uncertain as to what he should do with business, and I know of no other matters that troubled him. When in health he applied himself closely to business. He feared that if he left business he should not have sufficient occupation. Since Saturday last he has been labouring under delusions. He was much excited about his mother's death, and expressed fears that she had suffered anxiety about the state of his health. On Saturday he imagined that his family would be impoverished. Sunday night, when we reasoned with him on the point, he admitted that our reasoning was good, but said the idea remained, I do not think that the impression was removed from his mind. Yesterday he was much agitated and I had great difficulty to persuade him to attend his mother's funeral. At the funeral he manifested no natural feeling, and was quite callous and much excited. I advised him to attend the funeral, as I feared that that he would, after it had passed,

accuse himself of not attending it. He was apt to accuse himself. I saw him again between 8 and 9 o'clock in the evening, and the he appeared much better, but the delusion remained. I have remained with him of late during the night, and he has slept much more quiet of late, but last night I did not remain with him. He has discussed with me the subject of insanity and suicide. He expressed fears that his mind would give way. I gave directions that he should not be left alone, and was seldom left; but he said he had been watched, therefore his family did not like to appear that he was watched lest it should irritate him. He dreaded lest his mind should give way, on account of the shock it would likely to give his father. Deceased took but little nourishment, and his bodily health was much impaired. He suffered much from neuralgia since this time last year.

Dr, Castle, of the University of Edinburgh, said, - I was called to see the deceased about 8.30 this morning, and found the body on the floor of the dressingroom and circumstances were explained to me. The body was warm, but the deceased was quite dead and the hands were cooling. The face was livid. He appeared to me to me to have been dead about half-an-hour. I have no doubt that strangulation was the cause of death. It was death, and not suspended animation.

The Coroner briefly addressed the jury on the very clear evidence adduced as to the deceased's state of mind, and a verdict of "Temporary insanity" was returned.

Transcribe by Ben Marden (Pseudonym) for the Friends of Newport & Carisbrooke Cemeteries (c) 2017
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