

TE, SEPTEMBER 12, 1889.

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SHOCKING MURDER OF A
BROTHER NEAR ST. COLUMB.

THE ASSASSIN TAKES HIS OWN LIFE.

A terrible case of murder and suicide took place near St. Columb last Thursday evening. Two brothers named James and Joseph Ball lived at a place called Trevenna, about half a mile to the north of the church village of Mawgan. Joseph was married and had two children. James lived in an adjoining cottage with his mother and his brother Samuel. It appears that an altercation took place in the morning between James and Joseph with reference to a cat which the former had shot, and James shortly afterwards left home and did not return until half-past six o'clock, when he appeared to have been drinking. He went into the house and took down his double-barrel breech-loading gun, which he only purchased last week, and remarked to his married sister, who happened to be there, that he was "going out to shoot Joe." He thereupon rushed away towards a meadow where his brothers Joseph and Mark were saving some clover. He went up to Joseph and said to him "Your time is short," on which the latter ran off, when James fired at him, wounding him in the back. The poor fellow fell to the ground. Mark, seeing what had happened, ran away for assistance.

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A young man named Rawlings was passing the house, and was told by the sister what her brother James had threatened. At her request he hastened to the meadow, and on reaching the top of the hedge he saw Joseph stagger to his feet, run a few steps, and then fall down. James then went up close and discharged the contents of the barrel into his chest, inflicting fatal injuries. James then sat down by the side of his brother, and was heard to exclaim, "My God, I have killed Joe!" He then re-loaded the gun and placed the muzzle towards his face and pulled the trigger. The charge appeared to pass over his head. He then ran across the field, and, leaning against the hedge, succeeded in killing himself with a second charge, which blew off the top of his head. The double act of murder and suicide was witnessed by the young man Rawling.

The police having been sent for, Inspector Voss and P.C. Roberts immediately proceeded to Mawgan, where they found that the bodies had been removed to Trevenna. P.C. Richards, who is stationed at Mawgan, heard the shots fired whilst on his beat. James Ball was twenty-six years of age, and was of a very gloomy disposition. Joseph was forty-one years old. Their occupation was chiefly trapping rabbits, in which they did a large business with dealers in Birmingham, besides working for the neighbouring farmers. Joseph was a particularly steady and inoffensive man. Much sympathy is felt for the family, who are respectable, industrious, and deserving people, and the sad affair has caused great excitement in the neighbourhood, particularly in the romantic and quiet village of Mawgan, which at the present time is crowded with tourists and other visitors.

THE INQUEST.

An inquest was held on Friday by Mr. Hamley, county coroner of the Bodmin-district, in a room lent by Mr. Drew, of Trevenna Farm. Mr. Roberts was foreman of the jury, and Inspector Voss watched the case on behalf of the police.

The first witness was Mary Bazeley, who said: I am the wife of George Bazeley, and sister of James and Joseph Ball. I live at Trevenna. Last evening, near six o'clock, James Ball came into the kitchen, took down his double-barrelled gun from where it was usually kept, and said, "Now, I am going to kill Joe." He had been drinking all day. He left home in the morning at nine o'clock and did not return until six. He said he had met his brother in the morning, and he said something to him which he did not like. He was going to kill Joe and then kill himself. I tried to take the gun from him, as I had seen him place the cartridges in the barrels, but I could not get it away. His brother was working at Bollingey, a short distance off, and I was going to tell him what Jim had said. When I saw Jim coming after me in a very excited state I was afraid he was about to shoot me, and I went back again to tell Mark, another brother. As I went down the road I met John Rawlings, who was standing by a gate with a horse. He said to me, "Where are you going in such a hurry?" Just then there was a report of a gun, and I said "Jim has killed Joe," and Rawlings immediately went towards the field where they were at work.

The next witness was Mark Ball. He said I am a brother of James and Joseph Ball. I was working in a field with Joseph yesterday evening about six o'clock, when I saw James come there drunk, with a gun in his hand. He approached us, and said, "Now, Joe, you are not going any further." Joe ran away a few yards, and Jim fired at him. He fell, but rose again, and went a few paces before he dropped. Then Jim leaned down and fired close to his head.

The Coroner: Did the contents of the second barrel kill him immediately?—Witness: I believe he was dead before that—when he fell the second time.—Where do you live?—At Bollingey.—Are you aware that there was any ill-feeling between the brothers?—I did not know of any.—Do you say that when he came into the field Jim was staggering a good deal?—Yes, he had been drinking for some days.—But the other witness says he had been at work?—Yes, a little, but he had been drinking hard for several days; he could not walk straight.—Did the contents of the second barrel go between his shoulders?—Inspector Voss: The witness did not see that.—A Juryman: The first time the shot was scattered about between his arms.—The Coroner: How far was he away when he fired first?—About ten yards. Both charges entered his back.—When he spoke, Joe made no reply to exasperate him, did he?—No, sir.

Maria Ball said: I am the wife of the last witness. When this occurred I was on the waggon, loading clover. I saw Jim coming up the field.—What state was he in?—He had a gun in his hands and was looking like a wild man. I said to Mark, "Here's Jim coming."—Where was Joseph then?—Very near me, packing clover. Jim came up

"Here's Jim coming."—Where was Joseph then?—Very near me, packing clover. Jim came up within a little distance and said, "Joe, you won't go any further." Joe looked up at him and said "Get away."—He thought Jim was joking, perhaps?—I suppose he thought he could not mean it, sir. He brought down the gun and put in a cartridge. Mark, my husband, said, "Joe! Run! He's going to shoot you." Joe ran a little way, and then Jim fired the gun, and he fell down on his face. He held his head up from the ground, and I saw Jim put another cartridge in, and Joe rose up and staggered a little way, crying "Don't, Jim! Don't, Jim!" Then he fell down and never rose any more.

Were you on the waggon the whole of this time?—Yes, sir.—He died immediately then, I suppose?—I think he died when he fell for he was covered with blood, but Jim fired at him again.—Do you know anything about their previous quarrels? Were they on friendly terms?—I never knew anything about it. Jim appeared to be very tipsy. His eyes were shining, and he looked like a wild man.

Inspector Voss remarked that a Mr. Jones and a Mr. Brewer both saw what became of Jim after he had murdered his brother, and John Thomas Brewer, son of Mr. Brewer, farmer, of Trevedres, who was called, said he was working in a field near by at this time. His attention was first called to the matter by Mrs. Ball saying "Jim is going to shoot Joe," and she was on the waggon loading clover. I saw Joe run a little way.—How far off were you?—About 500 yards. Jim fired, and Joe fell, but in a minute he rose again, and went about ten yards before he fell for the last time. Jim ran

ten yards before he fell for the last time. Jim ran forth and fired on him, as I thought, the second barrel, standing in front of him at the time. I could not see Jim any more just then, as he ran towards the gate. In about five minutes I saw Jim come over the hedge towards me and stumble. He got up, ran down the field, and fell among the turnips. He placed the butt end of the gun between his legs, and the muzzle in his mouth, pulled the trigger, and fell right back.

Did you go to him?—I did not go to him then, but to Joe, whom I found on his back, dead.—Did you go to Jim at all?—Yes, a few minutes afterwards.—Who was the first to go to him?—A man called Jones. When I went down the field I saw Jim lying on his back with part of his head blown off.—You saw the whole of this from your field?—Jim was in the field with me when he fired at himself.—Do you know upon what terms the brothers were?—No.—In what state was Jim?—When he got over the hedge he staggered about a bit, but he went down the field like a hare.—Inspector Voss: It has not come out yet that Jim fired at himself while he was sitting close to his brother. That will appear in the next case.—The Coroner having observed that the evidence was very clear, the inquiry into the manner of the death of James Ball was proceeded with, and fresh witnesses were called.

John Rawlings said: I live at Little Lanherne. I was going home from work last evening about six o'clock, when Mrs. Bazeley overtook me going down the road. I said, "How are you in such a hurry?" and she replied, "James has taken his gun and gone to shoot Joe." I immediately got off my horse and jumped over the gate, when I

heard the report of a gun. Mrs. Bazeley said, "I am in a hurry," and she replied, "James has taken his gun and gone to shoot Joe." I immediately got off my horse and jumped over the gate, when I heard the report of a gun. Mrs. Bazeley went straight down the road saying "Now he has done it!" I ran across the field as fast as I could, and saw Joe fall. He got up again and rambled a few paces, and fell a second time. Jim walked very slowly up behind him and shot him again. Next he sat down by the corpse, placed the gun between his knees, directed the muzzle at his head, and fired. It appeared to me that the charge went over his head and never touched him at all. He rolled over on his right side, picked up his hat, which had been knocked off by the gun, and ran down the field. He halted when he had gone three parts of the distance to the hedge, put the

gun between his knees, and fired again at himself, and then, as he fell, I saw his hat and part of his head fly up. Mr. Brewer and his son were in the field, but when Jim saw them he veered to the left to avoid them, running very fast. I could not say how he pulled the trigger, for the turnip plants were up to his knees. I ran up to where Joe's body lay, and when we had carried it home I went down the field to Jim. He was quite dead, and part of his head was blown away. I had not seen either of the brothers that day previously for I had been to St. Columb market.

John Jones, a farmer of the neighbourhood, said: I was going down the road last night when I saw Joseph Ball, Mark, and his wife loading clover. They were about two hundred yards from me, when I heard the report of a gun and terrible screams. I went towards the spot whence the noise had come and met Mrs. Mark Ball and Mrs. Joe Ball. The latter asked me to run up and assist her husband. She knew that he was shot, but did not understand that he was dead. I went up to the hedge and saw Jim sitting down between the waggon and the dead man. I shouted to him, and at that moment I saw him pull the trigger of his gun with knee or foot, and heard the report. I shouted to him again, and he ran away out of the field. I went down with Mr. Brewer, and we found Jim lying among the turnips flat on his back. The top of his head had been blown off. The gun was lying between his legs, the muzzle pointing towards his head. The girdle he had been wearing round his waist was fastened in a loop to the trigger, so that he might have pulled it with his foot or knee.

his foot or knee.

This concluded the evidence, and the CORONER, in summing up, said: There can be no doubt that this poor man was murdered by his brother, Jim, who must have been in a hopelessly drunken state, fired the contents of two barrels at him and there is no other conclusion at which you can arrive than that he was wilfully murdered. Of Jim's having committed suicide, also, there can be no doubt, and the only question for you to consider is the state of mind in which he was when he committed the act. If you think he knew what he was about you must return a verdict of *felo de se*, and if you think he was of unsound mind you must say so. There is a third course open to you—that of returning an open verdict—remark- ing that the evidence is not sufficient to show the state of deceased's mind at the time. In Joseph's case the shooting was evidently premeditated, and you will have to return a verdict of wilful murder by Jim.

Several jurors remarked that Joseph was the most inoffensive of men, and that when not in drink Jim was very quiet. The verdicts were:— "That Joseph Ball was wilfully murdered by his brother James," and "That James Ball committed suicide by shooting himself while in an unsound state of mind."