

THE MOSS SIDE LUNACY CASE

THE circumstances under which MOSES JENKINSON, an aged lunatic, belonging to Moss Side, near Calderbridge, met his death, were so peculiar that we cannot but feel that a grievous wrong would have been inflicted upon more than one individual had not the whole facts of the case been made the subject of a searching inquiry by a Coroner's Jury. JENKINSON, who was upwards of 75 years of age, had, it appears from the evidence taken at the inquest, been in "a queer way" for a long time. Latterly he became violent; steps were taken for his removal to a lunatic asylum; and on Tuesday, the 11th of this month, he was admitted into the county asylum at Garlands. Immediately after his admission he was examined by Dr. CAMPBELL, the medical superintendent of that institution, who found that his new patient was suffering from serious bodily injuries, from the result of which he died in a couple of days. Dr. PAGE and Dr. CAMPBELL, having made a *post mortem* examination of the body, described it as almost covered with bruises, to say nothing of ten broken ribs.

To ascertain, if possible, how the poor old lunatic had received such dreadful injuries as to cause death was the task set before the Coroner's Jury at Carlisle this day week; and although the evidence laid before them presents features of almost a tragic interest, they appear to have had no difficulty in arriving at the conclusion that no blame whatever attached to the officers of the Asylum or to any person connected with the case; but that "death arose from accidental falls and from the necessary force which was employed to restrain the patient." If there had been the least reason to believe that JENKINSON had received his mortal injuries at the hands of any of the attendants at the County Lunatic Asylum, the circumstance would have gone a long way towards destroying the confidence of the public in what we believe to be an admirably managed institution. Not only is there no foundation for such a supposition; but the evidence placed it beyond a doubt that JENKINSON received his injuries before his removal from his home at Moss Side. Indeed, the Jury had before them as a witness Mr. JOHN RENNEY, of Carleton, near Egremont, from whose evidence it seems certain that many of JENKINSON'S injuries were received on the Sunday night preceding his removal to Garlands. Mr. RENNEY told the Jury that he had been intimate with Mr. and Mrs. JENKINSON for about thirty years. For a month or so he had known that his old friend had become of unsound mind, and went to see him on Tuesday, the 4th inst. JENKINSON'S behaviour upon that occasion was so violent and peculiar as to leave no doubt that he had become bereft of reason. On the Friday night following, Mrs. JENKINSON sent a message to Mr. RENNEY to the effect that her husband was worse; and on the Sunday following, Mr. RENNEY, like a kind neighbour, again went to Moss Side where he remained till next day.

Mr. RENNEY spent such a night with the lunatic at Moss Side as he is not likely to forget as long as he lives. About a quarter-past eleven JENKINSON got suddenly out of bed. He thought he was in a lodging-house, and wanted to go home. Shortly afterwards fighting commenced between the two men, and continued through the main part of the night. "On one occasion," Mr. RENNEY informed the jury, "he got me by the throat, and told me he would choke me. We had so many scuffles I could not tell you how many. When I attempted to get him to sit down he resisted me. He had been a wrestler in his young days, and he tried to put in what they call the 'chip' to trip me up. The struggles arose from my resisting his attempts to get out. Once over he succeeded in getting me down, and we fell together more than once; I could not say how many times. I used no more force than I considered necessary to do my duty. I took great care not to harm him if I could help it. We closed holds from time to time like wrestlers. The room is a very small one, and contained chairs and tables, and he upset both chairs and tables, and knocked the light out in our scuffles; and I should explain his broken ribs by his falling in that way."

What sensational novel or drama ever contained a passage of more "thrilling interest" than Mr. RENNEY'S recital of the occurrences at Moss Side during that memorable Sunday night? Not many men could have displayed such an amount of coolness and courage as Mr. RENNEY must have done in a situation so fraught with peril. Although, as we have already said, it is extremely probable that JENKINSON, in his struggles with RENNEY, received some of those injuries which proved mortal, not the slightest blame can attach to the latter. As the Coroner remarked, he seemed to have acted the part of the Good Samaritan. He was protecting the old lady from the violence of her husband; and in doing so he ran considerable personal risk. It is impossible to believe that Mr. RENNEY did anything unfair to his old friend, or that he treated him with unnecessary harshness. It is, we think, extremely satisfactory that all the facts of this sad case were so clearly brought out at the Coroner's inquest; and we feel assured that those who carefully peruse the evidence will have no hesitation in coming to the conclusion that the Jury gave a proper verdict.