

SHOCKING OCCURRENCE ON SHIP-BOARD.

An event of an unusually painful character occurred during the night of Saturday, on board the ship *Duncan*, of Liverpool, while lying near the Butts, in our floating-harbour. The *Duncan* is manned almost entirely by a crew of Indians, several of whom are of the Mahomedan faith. She has been undergoing painting and cleansing, and being much infested with rats, her commander, Capt. David Dryborough, determined on smoking her with sulphur, for the purpose of destroying those vermin. On Saturday morning he directed the serang (or boatswain) to dig two holes in the ballast and place in each of them a quantity of charcoal and 3lbs. of sulphur: this was done, and at about 11 o'clock a.m. the mass was set fire to, and all the hatches fastened down. The crew were all collected on deck, and were informed of what was going on; and the captain, who had the poop-house cleared for their occupation, gave positive directions that the hatches were not to be removed or in any way interfered with until an order to that effect was given by him. These directions were impressed upon the serang; and a ship-keeper who was employed to patrol the deck from 6 p.m. till 8 a.m. received positive orders to prevent any of the sailors from going below to sleep. The captain was on board as late as half-past 8 o'clock in the evening, and before quitting for the night repeated his orders. Soon after the skipper had gone away some of the men went on shore, and a Mahomedan sailor named Sali, and a Malay shipmate, picked up with a female of loose character, who consented to go on board their ship with them. They succeeded, with some difficulty, in getting on board unobserved, entered the fore-castle, raised half of one of the hatches, and either forgetful of what had taken place, or supposing that the fumes of the brimstone would by that time have been dispersed, they went below to sleep. At between five and six o'clock the removal of the half hatch was discovered by the steward, who, on looking below, was horrified at finding Sali and the woman quite dead, and the Malay in a state of insensibility. No time was lost in getting them all three out, and messengers were despatched for Mr. Davies, surgeon, of Queen-square, and for the captain, who having summoned the assistance of P.C. 60 and another constable, hastened on board the vessel. Mr. Davies, upon his arrival, found that the woman and Sali must have been dead for hours. For the surviving man he prescribed the proper restorative treatment, and we are happy to state that he is progressing fast towards complete recovery.

An inquest was held on the two bodies on Monday, at the Ship tavern, Butts, before J. B. Grindon, Esq., coroner, and a respectable jury.

David Dryborough, the captain, deposed to the facts before stated, and described the precautions which he took to guard against accident. He was obliged to sleep on shore himself, all the paint of his cabin being wet, but he gave every caution to the serang and the shipkeeper, and assured himself that the smoking for rats was known to all the crew. When called by the steward, at six o'clock on Sunday morning, he found Sali, who was about 25 years of age, dead. The other man began to sink towards middle day on Sunday, and witness caused him to be carried to the baths in College-green, where he had him placed in a bath at a temperature of 88 degrees; at the end of a quarter of an hour he gradually reduced the temperature to some extent; the man had since been getting better.

James Edwards, the steward of the ship, was called, as was also the serang, but they could give no account beyond the fact of the bodies having been found suffocated.

Mr. D. Davies, surgeon, deposed to having been summoned to the ship at shortly before 7 o'clock. The man and woman had both been dead some time; their features were placid, not a muscle had been distorted. Witness had no doubt that they had died from suffocation by the fumes of the burnt brimstone.

P. C. Davis 63 was called, but could throw no light on the matter, and

The Coroner said he apprehended that no good end could be obtained by prolonging the inquiry.

Mr. J. Rogers, foreman of the jury, said it appeared to him that the shipkeeper must have, in some way, neglected his duty.

The Coroner said he would ascertain how that was, and James Power, the shipkeeper, was called and duly cautioned. He stated that he was an old sailor, and had been employed as shipkeeper of the *Duncan*; was not asleep during the night, but he did not see the man and woman come on board, nor did he hear them open the hatches; they tried to come on board before 12 o'clock, but he would not admit the woman, and they went away, but returned twice, and, on his ordering the female off, again left; the last time was at about half-past 1 o'clock. Witness thought that they must have crept on board at about 2 o'clock, as he was forward at that time, and, owing to the construction of the vessel, a person when forward could not see over the deck; they must have then gone into the fore-castle, under which the half hatch was opened. The fore-castle deck was where the ship's people were living, and witness had no communication with it, as it was under the charge of the serang, and the sailors being Indians would not allow him to go there.

The Coroner said it appeared impossible, in the face of the evidence, to assign blame to any one but to the unfortunate people themselves; and the jury concurring in this view, a verdict was returned "That the deceased persons were accidentally suffocated by the fumes of sulphur."

The burial of Sali took place on Tuesday last in the unconsecrated part of the Arno's Vale Cemetery, and, it being celebrated, as far as might be, according to the forms of the Mohammedan ritual, it excited no small amount of interest among a vast crowd of persons by whom the procession was followed to the grave. Mr. White, of Lower Castle-street, was engaged as undertaker, and upon his applying to the Serang for instructions, that officer at first objected to having the corpse interred in England at all, and proposed that it should be prepared, hoisted aloft, and carried back to India for burial there. It was explained to him that the English laws and customs would not admit of such a proceeding; that although Mohammedans in religion, both he and Sali were British subjects in law, and that he must conform to the requirements of the country. He at length assented to the burial here, but demurred to having any coffin, which he could only be induced to acquiesce in upon a promise that the lid should not be screwed down, and that it should be made a foot longer than was required for the length of the corpse. Upon the undertaker proposing to dress the corpse for the grave, he said that operation must be performed by the faithful, and it was accordingly accomplished by the other Mohammedan sailors of the crew, about 18 in number, the oldest of whom officiated as a sort of priest, and as the process was going on sung a monotonous sort of chant, in which the others joined at intervals. The body was carefully washed and wrapped in a number of folds of white linen, which were occasionally sprinkled with water; and pads of cotton wool were bound to the shoulders, over the top of the head, and at various other parts of the body. The ceremony completed, the body was placed in the coffin, which, at the proper time, was hoisted on the shoulders of four of the Indian sailors for the purpose of being borne to the Cemetery. The old man who officiated as priest preceded it, at intervals muttering a sort of prayer, and the others surrounded it as mourners. One of the men next opened an umbrella, which he bore over the coffin until the corpse was interred. A second had a basin filled with copper money and rye, of which, before the procession started, he threw three handfuls among the crowd, leaving the coins to be picked up by any one who chose to take them. The first handful he threw towards the East, which was understood to imply the direction of the temple at Mecca, the second he threw towards the heavens, causing it to pass over the coffin, the third he flung behind him. During the progress of the procession towards the Cemetery he threw away more coin, and on being questioned by Mr. White respecting the intention of the custom, he stated that in India they threw away money to the poor according to the position of the deceased. If he was a poor man they threw away copper coins, if of the middle class silver coins, and if wealthy they threw gold and silver. This, no doubt, is suggested by the teaching of the Koran as to the importance of alms-giving, it being the Mohammedan belief that "prayer will carry a man half way to paradise, and fasting bring him to the door, while generosity, humanity, and benevolence will win for him admission, the best way of worshipping God being to show love for his creatures." It may also have something to do with the teaching of the prophet that the poor will enter paradise 500 years before the rich.

Arrived at the Cemetery, the undertaker was required to take off the top, which had been loosely placed over the coffin, which he did. The men then gathered around it, raised the corpse, which, after removing some of the bandages, they placed on its side. One of them then got a piece of earth, which he put into the mouth of the corpse, at the same time ejaculating what was supposed to be a prayer. Three stones were then placed in the coffin behind the corpse, and a roll of something resembling a stuffed stocking, and which most likely was an untwisted turban, was also deposited. The corpse was then lowered into the grave, and the men having each thrown some earth upon the corpse, crouched down in an eastern position round the grave, where they chanted a sort of short prayer or requiem. The grave was then filled in, and they returned to the city. As far as can be learnt from travellers, the ceremony did not very materially differ except as to the use of the coffin, from that observed in Turkey.

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