

## THE LATE ACCIDENT AT CHRISTCHURCH STATION.

C.T. March 13, 1886.

This (Friday) morning, Mr. Druitt, the coroner of the district, held an inquest at the commercial room of the Palmerston Arms, Boscombe, touching the death of George Toms, the railway porter, who was injured at Christchurch on Wednesday the 20th January, and who died on Monday last at the Boscombe infirmary.

Mr. Batt was chosen foreman of the jury, and the body having been viewed,

Elizabeth Toms, the wife of deceased, stated that she lived in the Portfield road, Christchurch. Deceased was a railway porter, and 29 years of age. On Wednesday 20th January, she saw him at the Boscombe infirmary at about 3 o'clock. He continued there till Monday last the 8th March, when he died at about 5.20 p.m., in her presence. During his illness he told her the accident was the fault of no one.

George Boncey, of Southampton, an engine driver, stated that on the day of the accident, he was driver of the goods train which left Southampton at 3.50, arriving at Christchurch at about 8.35 a.m. After he arrived at Christchurch he drew into the station, and work was carried on as usual. The shunting engine was taken out of the goods yard and did the shunting, while his engine was at a standstill. Toms, the porter, got between witness's tender and the waggons to couple them. He said "Ease up, driver," to enable him to hook on, as they were not quite close enough. Witness stood on the side plate, and saw Toms getting out backwards under the buffers. The light engine from Bournemouth to Ringwood was passing at the same time. He stepped out of the 6ft. way into the 4ft. way, about three yards in front of the passing engine, witness shouted at the top of his voice "Look out, look out," but the time was so short that the engine struck him and went over him, before he could hear. It was done so momentarily that the driver of the light engine had no chance to see him. Witness sounded his loud whistle freely, and attracted the attention of everybody at the station. He was quite conscious after the accident, and spoke freely.

Edwin Langridge, of Bournemouth, stated that he was the driver of the light engine referred to. He stopped at Christchurch for a minute to get the ticket to go on to Herne. On receiving the ticket he saw that the road was clear, and the signal off, and he proceeded. About 80 or 90 yards on the road, the goods driver sounded his whistle, and he stopped directly. He looked round and saw the deceased lying on the 4ft. way. He ran back to give what assistance he could.

Frederick William Severne, stationmaster, of Christ church, deposed that he had just given the train-staff ticket to the driver of the 8.45 light engine, and had returned into the booking office when he heard a tremendous whistling. He went on the platform and met Case, the signalman, who told him Toms had been run over. He then saw Toms lying in the 4ft. way. Both of his legs had been run over. He was placed into a goods van, and was immediately taken to the Boscombe infirmary. Dr. Hartford arrived at the station just as they were ready to start, and he went with them. Only about 28 minutes elapsed from the time he was knocked down till he was into the infirmary. In reply to questions, Mr. Severne said that he did not know that Toms was very deaf. He did not think he could have been, for he had twice passed the company's London doctor, both as regards his eyes and ears. The 6ft. way was for him to step in, but he stepped just too far over. Of course he could have got out on the other side, but then he would have to have done the coupling left-handed. If it had been near the platform there would not have been room on the other

side for him to get out. What Toms did was very simple, anyone else would have done the same. It was the usual way of getting out after coupling, and having done it so often, possibly he never thought of its being dangerous.

Francis Henry Potts, house surgeon, stated that Toms was brought to the infirmary at about 9.30 on January 20th. Witness examined him with Dr. Hartford, and found both legs crushed off, the right above the knee, and the left below the knee. He had lost a good deal of blood. The usual means were directly applied, and when Dr. Nunn came he amputated both legs, the operation being rendered necessary by the severity of the injuries received. He was conscious when he was brought in, and very quickly rallied after the operation. He seemed to be doing well, and hopes were entertained of his recovery. Later on, a large abscess, probably due to a blow from the engine, formed in his back. The abscess produced hectic fever, from which he died. He was deaf while at the infirmary.—In answer to questions, Dr. Potts said that the shock no doubt increased the deafness. He had heard from people who knew him that he had always been deaf, Mr. Mead had said that he had warned him to leave his railway work in consequence of his deafness. There was a second amputation of the left leg a week after the first.—In reply to the Coroner, who said that the widow seemed aggrieved on account of the doctors refusal to allow her the possession of the body, Dr. Potts said that he declined to grant the permission because he thought that in the case of an inquest it was a rule not to hand over the body until afterwards. He acted upon the advice of the senior officers of the infirmary.

The Coroner said that he would ask the wife the question whether the deceased had always been deaf, if the jury liked. It was scarcely worth while to trouble the woman to come into the room again, as nothing materially turned upon the point.

In summing up, the Coroner remarked that there could be no doubt about the death being the result of the accident, the only wonder was that the man had survived so long as he had.

A verdict of "Accidental death" was then returned by the jury.

Mr. Severne intimated that the company had paid the wife the wages week by week just as though Toms had been able to work, and he believed they would also pay his funeral expenses.—The Coroner said he was pleased to hear it, and observed that in this as in other instances, the company were known to behave liberally with their servants in case of misfortune. He (the Coroner) added that it was the wish of the jury that it should be represented to the railway company that the infirmary had proved a useful in-station in this case, as it might be able to do on any future occasion. It was at present in poor circumstances as regarded money, and no doubt the company would find that a donation to its funds would be not an altogether bad outlay of any surplus sum they had in their hands.

Inspector Hoskison of Southampton, and Mr. Morgan of the locomotive department of Bournemouth, were present at the inquiry.

The funeral took place at the Christchurch cemetery, this afternoon, being conducted by Mr. Bridgford, the deceased being a regular attendant at the Gospel hall. Mr. Goodall and Mr. Tarrant (one of his fellow workmen) also gave addresses.