FATAL ACCIDENT TO MR. BENJOHN CORBETT.

As briefly announced in our second edition last week, a fatal accident befell Mr. Benjohn Corbett, the well known farmer and dealer of Knightcote, whilst driving home from Daventry on Wednesday evening. The news was brought into Banbury on Thursday morning and was the main subject of conversation during the day, the deceased being so well-known at the local markets. The circumstances are of a somewhat painful character, and no one seemed at all surprised on hearing of Mr. Corbett's sad end, inasmuch as he generally drove at a dangerously rapid pace, and, according to the evidence at the inquest, he was doing so at the time the accident occurred. He had been on business to Daventry and the last man who spoke to him was Mr. Thomas Ivens, cattle dealer, who had also been to Daventry. Mr. Corbett overtook Mr. Ivens on the road about a mile and half from that place and gave him a lift as far as Badby Bridge, where they parted company, Mr. Corbett driving on alone. He was next seen at Upper Boddington by two villagers, who asserted that the horse was going at a rapid pace and that deceased was leaning forward in the trap, having lost his hold of the reins. When approaching the Claydon turn leading towards Mr. Band's house, he appears to have suddenly grasped the reins again and the horse instead of keeping to the road turned round to the left, at an acute angle, into the lane, and about 150 yards down it the accident occurred. The deceased was found a few minutes later by one of the villagers referred to, a nurse girl, lying underneath the trap on the side of the road, and the horse was quietly grazing on the grass. The girl went at once to Mr. Band's house for assistance, and Mr. Band and Mr. J. H. Gardner and his son—the two latter happening to be in the house—were immediately on the spot, where they found Mr. Corbett quite dead. There was nothing on the road which might have caused him to be thrown out. His coat was very much torn on the *right side, and his hat crushed in.* The *nape of the* neck showed a slight discolouration, and it is highly probable that deceased (who was a heavy man) fell on his forehead and dislocated his neck, death to all appearances being instantaneous. The body was removed to the Plough Inn, Upper Boddington, where Dr. Bennett, assistant to Dr. Fowke, of Byfield, made a cursory examination of it, and at the inquest, which was held on Friday, a verdict was returned in accordance with the medical evidence, namely, that deceased met with his death as the result of an accident. Much sympathy is felt for the members of Mr. Corbett's family by his many friends and acquaintances. The deceased was 52 years of age.

The inquest, as stated above, took place at the Plough Inn on Friday, at half-past twelve, conducted by Mr. Whitton, deputy coroner for the district, and lasted nearly two hours. The jury was composed as follows:—Messrs. William Hammond (foreman), J. T. Malings, W. Baseley, Reuben Coleman, Wm. Amos, J. Andrews, J. Cherry, F. Kitteley, T. Heritage, J. C. Marriott, George Arins, *and Wm. Miller. Supt. Norman* was also present. The Coroner having briefly opened the proceedings, the jury viewed the body, after which the following evidence was taken:—

Septimus Proffitt White, farmer, of Steane, near Brackley, deposed—The deceased, Benjohn Corbett, cattle dealer and farmer, residing at Knightcote, in the county of Warwick, was 52 years of age. I am his brother-in-law. He had an epileptic fit some time ago and we think he had another when the accident occurred. He had recovered recently from the first, but was not in very good health.

Thomas Ivens, cattle dealer and farmer, Badby, said—On Wednesday I was at Daventry market with deceased. He caught me about a mile-and-a-half out of Daventry, near Badby House, as I was returning home. He asked me to get up and ride. I rode with him as far as Badby Bridge, about a mile and a quarter. We called at the public house and had a drink each—a nip of gin and a small lemonade. He left at ten minutes to seven, and I went towards my own home. He went along the road towards Boddington. He appeared in good health. I never saw *him looking better. He was quite capable of driving.* I know the spot where the accident occurred, and I should think it would be about seven miles from Badby.

By a juror—I have known Mr. Corbett for twenty years and he was quite capable of driving. When I rode with him he drove quite steadily.

Continuing witness said—He did not get out of his trap at Badby Bridge. He certainly was quite steady. He had a bad fall the previous Saturday at Northampton. He had had the horse for two years, and he *told me how quiet* it was, as we were coming along. He did not complain of being ill. He seemed in good spirits and I could not perceive that he was the worse for drink at all.

Clara Baseley, single woman, Upper Boddington, deposed—On Wednesday evening I saw Mr. Corbett about half-past seven driving along the Wormleighton Road. He passed me at a galloping pace. He was leaning forward, and the reins were loose in the trap. I followed along and saw the trap turn round into Claydon Road, at an acute angle to the left. I went on that way and when I had got about 150 yards, by by Mr. Band's orchard, I found the mare had stopped, and was grazing on the grass. Deceased was on the ground under the trap. I went straight to Mr. Band's house and told him, and he and Mr. Gardner came out with me at once. When I saw the trap a second time, the mare had moved on and continued grazing. I did not know the deceased at all. When I saw him leaning forward he made no attempt to get hold of the reins, but just as he got to the turn he picked up the reins. I could not see him for a minute or two on account of the bend of the road.

By a juror—I did not see him pick the reins up myself, but a man named Joe Lee told me he did. The deceased was lying lengthways underneath the trap.

Thomas Band, farmer, Upper Boddington, said—On Wednesday night the girl Baseley knocked at my door about a quarter to eight. She told me there had been an accident and I went out with Mr. Gardner and his son. I found the deceased, whom I knew very well, lying on the side of the road. We went to his assistance and found him quite unconscious. I was satisfied that he was dead and I went off for the constable, *who sent for* the doctor. The mare was *grazing* about five yards away. We could not see any marks on the road where the trap was, but there was a nasty grip close to, but I could not not see anything that would cause him to be thrown out of the trap. His coat was torn on the right side. I had the body removed to the public house. He had his pocket handkerchief and a glove loose in his hand.

Joseph Lee, labourer, of Upper Boddington, said—I saw the deceased in his trap close to the corner of the Claydon Road, as I was coming towards Boddington. Deceased was driving very fast. He was leaning down and the reins were loose, and about five yards from the turn he picked them up. He turned the horse down towards Mr. Band's house, along Claydon Road. I thought he would have pulled it into the hedge as he was taking the turn. I did not see him afterwards, but could hear the trap. He kept up at a big pace. His head swayed backwards and forwards as he was leaning forward in the trap. I heard of the man's death that evening, and I was not at all surprised, for before that I had made a remark that if he got home without an accident it would be a miracle. He did not seem to *be in a fit state to be driving alone. He* was going at the same pace as when he passed the girl.

Mr. Band was recalled and in answer to the coroner he said that deceased had not done business with him for some time, and he did not know of anything that would necessitate his calling upon him that evening.

John Henry Gardner, farmer, Upper Boddington, said—On Wednesday evening I was at Mr. Band's when the girl Baseley came to the door. I went out with Mr. Band and we found the deceased lying on his back on the grass with his head towards the road. *I knew him. I raised his head and was satis-*

fied that he was dead. Mr. Band went for the constable and my son for the doctor, whilst I remained with the body till Mr. Bloxham and Mr. Malings' son came by. I could see nothing which might account for the accident. There was no appearance of a struggle on the body. My idea is that he fell out of the left side of the trap. His left hand was on his breast and his other hand was stretched out and his handkerchief and a glove were close to. His hat was crushed in and had evidently just fallen off his head.

Arthur George Bennett, medical practitioner, Byfield, said:—I was called on Wednesday evening, about nine o'clock to go to Mr. Band's. I was told there had been an accident. I found the deceased being brought in a cart to the Plough Inn, and went with the body and examined it. He had not been dead I should say more than two hours. The body was that of a man about fifty years of age, well nourished. On the face there was an old scar, not quite healed. There was a slight extravasation of blood on the forehead, but there were no other marks of violence on the head. The nape of the neck showed a slight discolouration, but the rest of the body had no marks on it. I judge that the deceased had fallen from the trap on the fore part of his head and dislocated his neck. Death in such a case must have been instantaneous.

The Coroner said it was for the jury to return a verdict in this case as to what was the cause of death. He did not think it would be at all prudent to say the deceased was the worse for drink. After the evidence they had heard, he thought they might safely put it down to one of two things—either that it was a pure accident or a visitation of God. They had heard that he had had a fit some time ago and that he had a fall at Northampton quite recently. He should think the best verdict to give would be that his death was the result of an accident, although there was no evidence to show how the accident occurred.

Dr. Bennett said he did not think from the evidence that deceased had a fit, as he was plainly seen to pick up the reins.

After a brief consultation a verdict of accidental death was returned.

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