

inquest been previously collated and brought under the attention of the medical officer, they might, and probably would have, led to the conclusion that the prisoner was suffering from the disease of which he afterwards died." On these conclusions I beg most respectfully to remark:—

1. That all the information which I had any reason to suppose could be obtained was obtained by me, and brought under the notice of the medical officer.

2. That had the medical officer, in order to assist him in his diagnosis, suggested any further inquiries, or had the prisoner expressed a wish for inquiries to be made of his fellow-prisoners, I would have felt it my duty at once to have instituted such inquiries.

3. That, in the absence of such suggestion or desire, and seeing the medical officer had, after careful examination, arrived at the conclusion that there was nothing the matter with the prisoner, it did not appear to me to be my duty to institute further inquiries, especially as such proceeding would, in the circumstances, appear to be an undue interference with the functions of the medical officer.

4. That, after giving all the circumstances of this unfortunate event my fullest reconsideration, I do not, with the utmost submission to your opinion, feel conscious of having neglected my duty; and I venture to hope that you will not take an unfavourable view of my conduct.

I have, &c.,

WILLIAM FRASER,

Gaoler.

The Hon. the Minister of Justice, Wellington.

No. 15.

Dr. BUTTON to the Hon. the MINISTER of JUSTICE.

SIR,—

Southland Gaol, Invercargill.

Having been handed by Mr. McCulloch, R.M., Invercargill, an extract from a letter received by him from you, *re* the death of prisoner John Wilson in the Invercargill Gaol, I beg to submit the following brief history of this case to you:—

The prisoner, who was a tall, upright, healthy-looking man, came to me complaining of pain in his chest. I examined his chest, but found nothing wrong with it. I, however, prescribed for him a blister. I saw him again in a day or two, when he said he was better, and I ordered him a tonic. Some days afterwards I saw him, as the warder informed me he did not do his fair share of work. I again examined his chest, but could find nothing wrong either in the size or sounds of the heart or character of the pulse. The respiration also was quite normal. I then made the entry in the visiting surgeon's book that he was fit to work.

At these examinations I questioned him with regard to his symptoms, but could arrive at nothing beyond the complaint of pain in the chest. I subsequently again saw him and re-examined his chest with a similar result. I then considered him a malingerer, and made an entry to that effect in the visiting surgeon's book.

I did not see him again alive, although I was in the gaol, he not having applied to see me. He died nine days afterwards, and on *post-mortem* examination he was found to have occlusion of the right coronary artery of the heart.

Mr. McCulloch informed me that you had taken medical advice on this matter. Your medical adviser would doubtless tell you that while some cases of *angina pectoris*, one of the causes of which is occlusion of the coronary arteries, are comparatively easy to diagnose, others present actually no symptoms, and it is only on the sudden death of a person necessitating a *post-mortem* examination that the cause of death is found. Wilson was seen by several persons on the morning of his death, and was then apparently in as good health as he had been for months.

I would submit that, while the *post mortem* goes to prove that the prisoner did suffer from the pain of which he complained, in the absence of all physical signs, his own statements and general condition, and of any other circumstances to corroborate his statement that he was unwell, I quite fail to see how I could have come to any other conclusion than that he was malingering; for I hold that it would be manifestly wrong, without some further proof, to jump to the conclusion that every prisoner who complained of pain in the chest was suffering from *angina pectoris*.

I have, &c.,

HORACE G. BUTTON,

Surgeon, H.M. Gaol, Invercargill.

The Hon. the Minister of Justice, Wellington.

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