

THE FEARFUL ACCIDENT AT CLAY CROSS.

The a-journed inquest on the body of John Finney, was held at the Shakespeare Inn, Clay Cross, before the coroner, (C. S. B. Busby, Esq.), on Monday last. The facts of the case have been described. We have enquired fully into the facts of which we give a summary. It appears that previous to the accident, the deceased John Finney, Simon and Thomas Holmes had been intimate friends, and the latter promised that they would lend Finney a coal-pick. Finney got some work at a pit, and on Tuesday, the 7th of June he went to the house of Simon and John Holmes, who had been to Ashover Pass, and who were going to do about half an hour's work at the pit, and they agreed that Finney should go with them to the pit and go down the pit and have the pick. They went with that intention. One of the brothers named Holmes went to the machine house and asked if the coal was cleared out for him to work, and the manager told him it was not, as that day was a general holiday. The man said no more and left and the manager thought that he had left the works. They however went on to the pit top about a quarter to ten o'clock, and asked the engine-man to let them down the pit, and he replied "Nay, you must not go down there to-day, as there is no one at work in the pit or anything to do." A man in the next pit signalled by shouting that he wanted to come up, and then Simon Holmes and John Holmes got in, and as Finney had got one foot on, the rope broke, and they went to the bottom of the pit, a distance of 34 yards. They were got out and Finney was dead; the others were removed to the Clay Cross Hospital and were attended to by Dr. Wilson. John Holmes has since been removed to the Chesham Hospital and Simon Holmes still remains in the Clay Cross Colliery Hospital, and receives every requisite aid and attention. The deceased and the sufferers are deeply pitied, especially John Holmes, who was a favourite with all, through his good and amiable manner, quiet sayings, and his excellent character. All of them we understand have families. The affair has caused much excitement and thrown a gloom over most colliers. There is no blame attached to any one that we are aware of. Mr. Evans, Government Inspector, will attend at the adjournment and a thorough investigation of the matter will be made. The proprietors of the colliery, Messrs. Smith and Sheppard have stopped the pit since the accident occurred and do not intend working it again till they have got rules.

The following is a report of the evidence adduced:— Joseph Marsden said: I am an engine-tenter, and live in Bannister's-yard, Clay Cross. I am engine-tenter at Messrs. Smith and Sheppard's colliery, Denamoor-lane, Clay Cross, in the parish of North Wingfield. About a quarter to ten o'clock, on Tuesday morning, July 7th, I was in the engine house. I draw men up and down the pit. There are no signals but the men's shouting. There were not any that day at that pit. Simon and John Holmes came to me in the engine house, and asked me to let them down the pit, and I said "Nay." Simon and John Holmes were colliers, and worked in the pit. I said to them "Nay, you must not come down there, as there is no one at work in the pit to-day, and there is nothing to do." That was the reason I gave them, which was a truthful one. There was a man at the bottom of the pit where the accident happened. There are two pits. There were three men down the pit bottom. The men shouted they wanted to come up, and I let the rope down for them to come up. The man got on and signalled to

me, and I went into the engine house, and while there John Finney and Simon and John Holmes got on the other pit. They stepped on to the skip. The skip rope does not work two pits, but the same engine and drum does. There is one up and one down. As I started the man out of the bottom of the other pit, the defendant and Simon and John Holmes got on the chair and fell. The reason they fell was the spinn yarn which is attached to the hook, and which we had tied on to prevent anything happening when the engine man was letting water down the pit. The chair fell to the bottom of the pit, which is as near as I can guess, about 33 or 34 yards deep. I cannot say whether the men were sober or not. There was no one in charge on the pit. There are no printed rules at the colliery. The proprietors are John Smith and Joseph Sheppard. The two Holmes were hurt when they were brought up the pit and Finney was dead, that is as far as I can say about it. John Smith, the manager, was close to the engine house. The engine house is about 50 or 60 yards from the pit top. When the pit is not engaged drawing, we generally tie a piece of spinn yarn and connect it with the hook and chain. Should the hook come off, we tie spinn yarn to it to hold it on. I do not mean to say that the spinn yarn is stronger than the hook. There is a round ring attached to the rope, which the hook goes in, and when the rope gets stuck in the bottom of the pit it comes off.

The Coroner at this juncture said: Suppose I again adjourn the case for a fortnight, as it is a matter that ought to be fully enquired into. I want the case to be fully enquired into. There is no one who was near at the time except the engine-man and the manager.

Inspector Fern: That is all I can learn.

The Coroner: The men are not expected to recover. Inspector Fern said they did not expect one of the men would, but perhaps the other would.

The Coroner: It is a serious case, there being no one in management at the pit top, nor no printed rules in the colliery. I will adjourn the case so that we can get more evidence, and the evidence of the men who were hurt if they recover. I should like Mr. Evans the Government Inspector also to be present.

The inquest was adjourned to the 29th July.

SHOCKING ACCIDENT AT STONE-BROOM.

On Thursday last a sad accident occurred at Stone-broom by which a child was seriously injured. It happened at the house of Mr. G. Turner, of the Clay