

## POISONED IN POLICE CELL.

### Suicide of Suspect After Post Office Raid.

The raid on a Post Office in the West End of London, followed by the death in a police cell of the man arrested in connection with the raid, led to the holding of an inquest at St. Pancras yesterday on Cecil Branson (38), of Compton Shepperton, Middlesex. Branson should have appeared in the dock at Marlborough Street on Wednesday, but the gaoler announced that the man was reported dead.

Miss Kathleen Stubb, a counter clerk at the Post Office in Rathbone Place, said that about 10.30 on Tuesday a man came in and asked for a halfpenny stamp. He moved a little bit to the left and produced a large stick with a crook handle. Putting the crook under the counter grille he tried to snatch a batch of notes.

"I put out my hand," said the witness, "to get the notes, but I did not reach them. He moved the notes with the stick and drew them towards him. Then he rushed from the office and I chased him."

In going out the man fastened the door of the office by placing a stick through the handle. About twenty people were employed at the office at the time of the raid. The man was brought back by a policeman.

Police Constable John Audley gave evidence of the arrest in the street, and said he found the notes in Branson's right-hand overcoat pocket. When charged, Branson said: "All right. I was unsuccessful." On Branson the witness found some coins, two tins of pepper, one cloakroom ticket, a box containing crystals, an envelope containing crystals, and a cheque-book. The usual practice was to take away all the things from a man's pockets.

After being searched Branson was placed in a cell. Everything was taken away as usual. Afterwards a pair of gloves, a handkerchief, and an empty envelope were returned to the man. The witness looked inside the gloves but found nothing.

Dr. Thomas Rose, divisional surgeon, stated that when he saw him at the station he was quite normal. At 8.20 that evening he saw the man lying dead in the cell. There was a suspicious odour of cyanide about the cell. The witness found on looking at the metal pot in which Branson had been given tea that that contained cyanide.

The post-mortem examination showed that death was due to poisoning by cyanide of potassium.

The jury returned a verdict that Branson committed suicide by taking cyanide of potassium during temporary insanity. The foreman added: "We express the opinion that the police took every proper precaution." With this the Coroner agreed.