

A BROKEN ENGAGEMENT.

SUICIDE OF ALICE SMITH. NO WEDDING BELLS RANG OUT.

At the Coroner's Court, before Mr. H. S. Hawkins, on Friday last, an inquest was held concerning the death of Alice Smith, which occurred at her home, Victoria-parade, Lewisham, on 23rd August. Florence Smith, residing with her husband at 57 Victoria-parade, Lewisham, said deceased, who was 33 years of age, was her daughter. She was a single woman, of temperate habits, and possessed no property. For some time prior to her death she had been in ill-health, suffering from her heart, rheumatics, and rheumatic fever. Mr. Hawkins: I understand she had been engaged to a young man named Sone? — Yes. He called at your place, I understand, on the 15th of August? — He did. What for? — He wanted to break off the engagement, on account of her bad health, and it was broken off. The daughter had a letter on the 23rd? — Yes, I supposed it was from Mr. Sone. My daughter said it was a very unkind one, and burnt it. Did she seem upset by the letter? — Yes. Witness went on to say that on the 23rd inst. Alice left home in the morning, returned at lunch time, and had a cup of tea and some fish. She said, "I'll take this cup of tea to my room and drink it there. I want to have A GOOD REST, and to look well this afternoon." She had told witness she expected Mr. Sone would call that day. She then went to her room, and later she cried out, "Mother!" Witness at once ran upstairs, and found her daughter in great pain. She said, "Send for a doctor; it is my heart." Dr. Brown arrived shortly after, and asked her if she had taken anything, but she made no reply. The Coroner: And the tea, had she taken it? — She had not. Did you find any poison about the place? — No. Did she take sleeping draughts? — Yes, she was in the habit of doing so, but not of late. Dr. Sheldon: Was she ever convulsive before? — Yes, about four years ago. The Coroner: Was she in great pain before she died? — Yes, she kept on saying it was her heart. Did she ever express the intention of committing suicide? — No. Did you keep poison in the house? — No. Did Sone ever give your daughter any medicine, to your knowledge? — No. Dr. Sheldon, who made the post mortem examination of the body, stated that death was due to strychnine poisoning. The analysis resulted in strychnine being found in the stomach. It was a very painful poison, and caused its victims very great pain. They WRITHE IN AGONY, and become convulsive. From the last witness's evidence, the symptoms were compatible with strychnine poisoning. Her heart was very bad, and she was liable to death at very little provocation. Two prescriptions were handed in, together with one bottle, and both contained strychnine. If she took the two mixtures at once, there was sufficient strychnine to cause death. Her weak heart would cause the poison to prove more deadly in her case. Florence Kate Smith, sister of deceased, said Alice was in a bad state of health prior to her death. Witness took the letter which arrived on the 23rd instant, and handed it to her sister. Witness did not know the contents of the letter, but heard Alice crying, and on going to see what was the matter, she said, "It's my heart; send for the doctor." Charles Sone, pharmacist, living in Elisabeth-street. Redfern, said he had known Alice Smith for about 18 months, and about five weeks prior to her

death, they BECAME ENGAGED. On August 15th he went to Mrs. Smith's residence to break off the engagement. The Coroner; What were your reasons? —She was in bad health, and really not fit to marry, and, another thing, she was much older than I. What did her people say?— Her mother and sister seemed satisfied, but she herself said she would not break off the engagement. Did you again see her?— Yes; that night she walked into my house without being invited, and I told her I could not go on with the engagement. Did you see her any more?— Yes; on Wednesday she again walked in without being invited, and seemed so miserable and worried that I said I might renew the engagement at a future date. I said I wouldn't now, as I had relinquished my position. Did you receive a letter from her? — Yes, and I replied to it. Did you ever supply any medicine to her? — No, not at least for the past six months. Do you know of any other reason why she should take her life? — No. A finding of suicide was recorded.

**Sun (Sydney, NSW : 1910 - 1954), Thursday 31 August 1911, page 4**

A TRAGIC STORY.

THE CASE OF ALICE SMITH. "ITS MY HEART—IT'S MY HEART!"

The circumstances of the tragic death of Alice Smith, aged 33, a single woman, lately living with her parents at 57 Victoria-street, Lewisham. Were investigated at the Coroner's Court, Lower George-street, by Mr. Hawkins, the Coroner, this afternoon. Deceased died at her home on the 23rd inst. She been engaged to be married, but the engagement was broken off eight days prior to her death. The first witness, was Florence Smith, deceased's mother. She said her daughter Alice was single and of temperate habits. She was very ill some time ago. Deceased was engaged to a young man, who called at her home on August 15. The young man's name was Sone, and he was a chemist. On the 23rd her daughter Alice received a letter. She was upset after she got the letter. About 11 o'clock deceased went out to the butcher's. The distance was about a quarter of a mile. She was away about an hour and a half. When she came back she had some lunch. After lunch she took her tea upstairs, saying she wanted to have a long rest, because she wanted to look well and bright that afternoon. Witness some time after heard a noise upstairs. She went up and found deceased lying on the bed in great pain, writhing, and saying, "It's my heart, send for the doctor: It's my heart." Dr. Brown, of Summer Hill, was called, and deceased asked him to give her morphia. The doctor injected something which he said was not morphia, and asked Alice if she had taken anything, but deceased made no reply. There was no poison kept in the house. Witness's dead daughter never said she would take her life. Deceased was in the habit of taking sleeping draughts for some time, but had not taken any recently. Latterly the draughts did not seem to make her sleep. Dr. Sheldon: Did she ever have convulsions before. Witness: Yes about four years ago. The Doctor: Were her arms twitching?— Yes. I had to bend them down. The engagement was broken off, but, deceased told witness she did not consider the engagement broken off. When she received the letter on the 23rd she told witness it was from Mr. Sone, and afterwards said it was a very unkind letter. Mr. Sone

had never given Alice any medicine to witness's knowledge. Dr. Stratford Sheldon, who made a post mortem examination of the body, said death was due to strychnia poisoning. The analysis also showed that strychnia had been taken. Deceased's heart was in such a way that she would have been liable to die at any moment. The way the woman was shown to have died was not such as was seen in cases of heart failure. Half a grain of strychnia was sufficient to cause death in the cases of most persons. Florence Kate Smith, sister of Alice Smith, gave evidence similar to her mother's. Charles Sone, a pharmacist, of 239 Elizabeth-street Redfern, said he had known deceased for about five years, and 18 months ago became engaged to her. On the 15th inst, he saw deceased and her mother, and gave them to understand that the engagement was broken off. They parted good friends, but the younger woman said she would not agree to the engagement being broken off. On the same evening deceased called at his place. He again said he could not go on with the engagement. Later the young woman called again, and she seemed so heartbroken and morbid that although he could not go on with the engagement then, he would do so at some future time. On the 20th inst, he received a letter from the deceased, in which she asked what was the cause of it all. Tho Coroner: Have you ever supplied the deceased with any medicine at all?— Not within the last six months. Witness said he did not think it was an equal marriage, because she was so much older than himself. John Ralston Smith, deceased's father, gave evidence of identification. The Coroner delivered a verdict of suicide by strychnine poisoning.

**Daily Telegraph (Sydney, NSW : 1883 - 1930), Friday 1 September 1911, page 14**

A BROKEN ENGAGEMENT.

-----WOMAN TAKES STRYCHNINE.

An Inquiry was held, today at the Coroner's Court concerning the death of Alice Smith (33), lately residing with her parents at Victoria-street, Lewisham, who died at her house on August 24. She had been despondent over a broken engagement, and this troubled her to such an extent that she committed suicide. Dr. St. Starthford Sheldon, who conducted the autopsy, said that the organs of the body of deceased showed symptoms compatible with strychnine poisoning, which, from the analyst's report, was shown to have been taken. The heart was greatly diseased, the pericardium adhered to the walls of the heart and the left mitral valve was much narrowed. This latter feature was rather an unusual one. With the heart already in that state it would require very little provocation to kill her at any time. The two prescriptions produced contained about three drachms of tincture of nux vomica and if the contents of both were taken it would be fatal. In the present case a smaller dose would probably be fatal than in the case of a normal person. One quarter to one half of a grain of strychnine was an ordinarily fatal dose. Charles Sone said that he was engaged to deceased for some five weeks prior to her death. On August 15 he called at the house of the deceased, and, in the presence of her mother stated that he wished to break off the engagement for reasons which he gave. The mother was apparently satisfied, but the deceased refused to release him from his engagement. Later she called on him, and said

she wanted to talk the matter over. He told her that he was leaving his present position, and would renew the engagement at some future date. She seemed very depressed and morbid at the time. She wrote to him a couple of days later, again asking the "reason of it all." He replied that his people had nothing to do with the matter, and that he was acting on his own initiative. He could give no other reason than the broken engagement for her rash act. The mother said the deceased had suffered from rheumatism and heart trouble for some time past. The deceased was heartbroken when the engagement was broken. She was very up set over a letter received from Charles Sone. On August 24 deceased was in her usual health. She stated she would go upstairs to rest awhile, as she wanted to "look her best," as Sono was coming to see her. Later she was heard calling, and was found lying on the bed in great pain. She died half an hour later. A verdict of suicide by strychnine was recorded.