

TOOK CYANIDE

Returned Man's Death

STORY AT INQUEST

While a group of his friends were enjoying a game of cards in the house, Robert Alexander Ernst, 42, quietly stepped out into the backyard on the night of October 27, and ended his life by drinking a solution of cyanide. Ernst was a war pensioner, and suffered greatly from war disabilities, including an injury to his spine. After holding an inquiry yesterday, the Deputy Coroner (Mr. W. R. Pickett) found that Ernst died from cyanide poisoning, wilfully self-administered.

Frederick Holmes said that, with several others, he was playing cards at 71 Darby-street on the night of October 27. Ernst was sitting close by, saying very little. After they had been playing for some time, Ernst went out of the room, and when he did not return a search was made. Witness found him in a sitting position near the back gate. He was unconscious, and seemed very cold. The ambulance was called, and Ernst was taken to Newcastle Hospital, where life was pronounced extinct.

Holmes said that he had known Ernst for some years. About a month ago Ernst told witness that he had tried to take poison in Sydney, but some people had found him just in time. Ernst was a native of Russia, and suffered severely from war disabilities, including an injured spine. He had been receiving a military pension.

Ernst obtained the cyanide by saying that he was a jeweller, and required it for cleaning and polishing watches, according to the evidence of Roy Ernest Maunder, a chemist, employed by Washington H. Soul Ltd., Hunter-street, New-

Maunder, a chemist, employed by Washington H. Soul, Ltd., Hunter-street, Newcastle. Maunder said he told Ernst that it would be necessary to obtain a witness, and Ernst returned with a Mr. Rogers, a jeweller. After Ernst had signed the poison register, and Rogers had witnessed the signature, witness sold the deceased an ounce of cyanide.

Susan Ellen Watt, a widow, of 71 Darby-street, said that Ernst had been one of her lodgers. On the evening of October 27, while the others were playing cards, Ernst sat near the stairs in the same room. He did not say anything, but appeared to be thinking. Ernst went out into the back yard. Later he was found unconscious near the gate. There had been no poison in the house, so far as she was aware, but next day she found a package marked "poison" in the kitchen. Where Ernst had been lying she found a spoon and a tin containing some fluid. She did not give these articles to Sergeant Moore at first, because she thought she would wait for the result of the post-mortem examination. Afterwards, however, she handed them over to Sergeant Moore.

Sergeant Moore, stationed at Newcastle West, said that when he called for Ernst's personal effects Mrs. Watt did not say anything about the package of poison or the spoon and tin. After receiving certain information, witness again went to the house, and when he questioned Mrs. Watt she took him into the kitchen and showed him a cardboard package lying on the stove. This was marked "Cyanide—poison." Mrs. Watt also produced a tin and a spoon, both of them bearing stains.
