

## Howard M. DeAtley

( - 22 Nov 1897)

---

*The Evening Star, November 23, 1897*

### **Takes His Own Life**

### **Suicide of Howard M. DeAtley, a Saloon Keeper**

### **Fear of Financial Ruin The Cause**

### **Brooded Over Troubles and Drank Liquor to Excess**

### **The Deed Premeditated**

Howard M. DeAtley, who kept a saloon at No. 802 8th street southwest, committed suicide about 8 o'clock last night by shooting himself through the head. The report of the pistol shot was heard about the hour mentioned, but his body was not found until about 6:30 o'clock this morning. Fear of financial ruin and over-indulgence in liquor are the causes assigned for the deed.

According to the statements of friends of the unfortunate man, he was in the liquor business only because he had a large family and had failed of success in the grocery business. His wife was anxious for him to give it up, and he had concluded to sell out in the event of his license being renewed this year.

During recent months, it is said, DeAtley has been a steady drinker, and it was believed by the police that he had frequently violated the Sunday law, although they had been unable to get the evidence against him. When the time came for him to renew his application for a license he did not have the funds necessary, and one of the brewing companies had to put up the money for him. This allowed him to continue in business until the excise board passed upon his application. He had heard that the police had reported against him, which proved to be true. He realized that, in consequence of the adverse report, he would probably be refused a renewal of his license. He discussed his business affairs with his wife, and only a few days ago he remarked:

"If my license is turned down I'll kill myself."

Mrs. DeAtley reasoned with him. To kill himself, she told him, would only make matters worse. There were seven small children to support, to whom he owed a duty. The wife advised him to go in the grocery business again or any other business in which she could help him.

### *Became Despondent*

DeAtley became despondent. Yesterday he was about his home on H street, just around the corner from the saloon, until about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, when he went out for a stroll. Mrs. DeAtley says he was sober when he left her. He was later seen hanging about the door of his saloon, and it is stated that he was also observed to enter the place. Notice of this violation of law was made to the police by several men employed at the stable near the river front, and Policeman Vermillion and Smith went to make an investigation.

There had been a crowd of men on the corner drinking, and the police learned that De Atley had furnished them the liquor. About 7 o'clock the officers went in a yard opposite his place and remained on watch. It was but a few minutes until the saloonkeeper entered the place. Then the policemen moved across the street and met him as he came out the door. He had a pint bottle of whisky in his pocket and was placed under arrest.

On the way to the station DeAtley conversed with the officers about his license saying his arrest was made for the purpose of influencing the excise board against his application. When the station was reached a charge of violating the Sunday law was preferred against him, and he was told that he would have to leave \$50 collateral for his appearance in court.

### *Released on His Promise*

"I haven't got but five or eight dollars to my name," he said to Sergt. Daley, who was in charge of the station.

"Then I suppose I'll have to let you go upon your promise to appear," said the sergeant.

Lieut. Hollinberger entered the station just about that time, and, as DeAtley was a business man, he directed his release upon his pledge to appear in court that morning.

DeAtley's only conversation in the station was about the license and his poverty. Upon the lieutenant assuring him he would not lock him up, the accused man was extremely grateful, and when he left he started in the direction of his house. Instead of stopping to see his wife and children, however, he went to the saloon and entered by way of the south door. Persons standing on the street saw him enter, but no light was seen afterward and the incident was forgotten. All was quiet in the place when the men on the corner moved away, but a few minutes afterward a watchman in the neighborhood named Blake heard what he thought was the report of a pistol shot. As such noises are frequently heard about the river front he paid no attention to it.

The morning brought to DeAtley's family the news of the death of the father and husband. When he did not return home at midnight, Mrs. DeAtley became very uneasy, but she decided to make no inquiry until morning. Policeman Bruce, who was on the beat near the saloon and house, suspected something wrong when the saloon remained closed until after the usual hour, and made inquiries. Soon after 6 o'clock he met Mrs. DeAtley at the front door of the saloon. A sign that had been put up against the door to hide his body was pushed aside and the arm of the man fell to the floor.

### *The Discovery*

Mrs. DeAtley screamed and the officer took her to her home, going immediately thereafter to his own home and directing his wife to call at the DeAtley house. Bruce then returned to the saloon, broke open the door and went inside. There on the floor was the dead body of DeAtley. The pistol was on the floor near his head, and there was a big pool of blood between the body and the door. DeAtley had gone behind a partition at one end of the bar, and after removing his coat had stretched himself out on an oyster sign, using an old shirt for a pillow. He was in this position when the fatal shot was fired.

The deceased was 38 years old, and was born in Westmoreland county, Va. His father, J.C. DeAtley, keeps a grocery store on 7th street southwest, while a brother is in the saloon business on Pennsylvania avenue.

Coroner Carr viewed the body and gave a certificate of death. The remains were then turned over to an undertaker and prepared for burial.