

Richard E. Dudley

(- 22 Jan 1901)

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Death of "Sergeant Dick"

Richard E. Dudley, Late of the Marines, Passes Away Coroner Decides That Demise Resulted From Accident-- Interment to Take Place at Arlington

Richard E. Dudley, a retired sergeant of the United States Marine Corps, was found dead in his room at No. 804 L street southeast, shortly after 10 o'clock last night. A single gas jet in his room was turned on and the door and window were closed. Death had no doubt resulted from inhaling the gas, but whether it was the result of an accident or was done with suicidal intent will probably never be known.

The deceased was about sixty years old, and was an Englishman by birth, although he came to this country when he was quite young and spent the best years of his life in the army and Marine Corps of his adopted country. Since his retirement in 1885 he has lived in this city, and for a long time he occupied the room in which he was found dead. "Sergeant Dick," as he was familiarly known, was fond of the marines and sailors, and for this reason he had always lived in the vicinity of the navy yard and marine barracks. Frequently he spent hours in the company of the men who were still in the service, telling them of his experience when there was hard fighting to do.

The old man knew a good story when he heard it, and was also able to tell a good one. He was a staunch admirer of Queen Victoria and the Prince of Wales, and in his room the police found many pictures of them, clipped from newspapers during the past twenty-five years. The old sergeant had accumulated many books and magazines, and they were found scattered about his room last night.

Yesterday afternoon "Sergeant Dick" mourned the death of Queen Victoria, and friends with whom he talked saw that he was visibly affected. He had been drinking heavily, and his intoxicated condition probably made him feel all the more sorrowful.

Item in His Diary

He kept a diary during several years of his service. It contained an interesting entry made during his third enlistment concerning the arrest of William M. Tweed, who was better known as "Boss Tweed." The entry was made while Dudley was on the U.S.S. Franklin, reads as follows:

"We left Villefranche September 14, 1876, homeward bound. Arrived at Gibraltar September 19, coaled, and received a telegram from the department to delay departure. On the 21st received a dispatch from the minister at Madrid to proceed to Vigo for the purpose of taking on board William M. Tweed of Tammany notoriety. Tweed had escaped from prison in New York and reached Santiago, in Cuba. The police got a clew to his whereabouts and communicated with the captain general, who was took late in making an attempt to secure him. He, however, found that Tweed had taken passage on a Spanish ship called the Carmen, and communicated with the government at Madrid, which gave orders to look out for the Carmen. There being over twelve ships of that name on the Spanish shipping list, this was a matter of some difficulty.

"The Spanish police requested a photograph of Tweed, but there being none at hand they were furnished with copies of a caricature representing Tweed beating a child. This was taken from Harper's Weekly. The Spanish translated the picture in the wrong sense, as they construed Tweed to be a kidnaper, which is considered in Spain to be a most infamous crime. The police kept a bright lookout for William M., and gobbled him when the Carmen got into Vigo. He was confined for security on an island called St. Simons, on which stands the fort in which he was placed. We left Gibraltar for Vigo on

September 22, arriving there on September 26. The Carmen was in port. The guard acosta told me that Tweed was in his bare feet washing down decks, dressed in a coarse suit of sailor clothes. He was confined in the large fort overlooking the city. His cell floor was sanded, and he was kept in his bare feet to prevent him attempting to escape. Shortly after our arrival a Spanish government boat came along with Tweed's baggage. At 10 o'clock at night Tweed came on board with Hunter, his nephew. He was confined in the admiral's cabin, with a sentry inside. During his stay on board he occupied his time playing cards, and wrote a good deal. He is temperate and does not smoke. A bottle of wine lasted him a couple of days. He took great interest in the newspapers, and used to send round for all the papers that were to be had in the ships."

Coroner's Conclusion

Coroner Nevitt viewed the body this morning and made an investigation. He was told that Dudley had lived on L street southeast for about seven years, during which time he frequently went on sprees. He was also informed that he was very much under the influence of liquor yesterday. Dr. Nevitt concluded that death was the result of an accident, and gave a certificate accordingly. The body of the unfortunate man was turned over to the military authorities to be buried at Arlington.