

#### EXPLOSION OF GUN COTTON.

A severe explosion of gun cotton took place at Braybrook this morning, shortly after midnight. Four lads, named James Kampf, aged 15 years, Charles Kampf, 15 years, James Flynn, 16, and John Flynn were fishing for eels, when they observed a small wooden building near them on fire. They ran to extinguish the flame, when an explosion of gun cotton took place in the building, and the four boys were all severely burned. James Kampf was burned on the back, thighs, arms, and face; Charles Kampf on the face, arms, hands, and legs; James Flynn, on the face, head, and hands; and John Flynn on the face and hands. The four were taken to the Melbourne Hospital, and the three first-named, being the more severely injured, were admitted to that institution, but John Flynn, after having been attended to, was dismissed. It has not transpired what the building which took fire was used as, and what brought the gun cotton there. The boys bearing the same name are brothers. It is not thought that any of the injured lads is in a dangerous condition.

The building of a bridge across the Tiber at Rome and its public opening without the presence of Pope, cardinal or priest, is a striking incident in the secularisation of the old city. It is said that for a thousand years no new bridge has been built in Rome, but in the new order of things which is bringing the modern spirit into that eternal atmosphere five new bridges are projected and it is proposed to bring Rome into conformity with the new industrial life which is springing up in Italy. In the olden time the Pontifex Maximus would, as the name implies, have been the very first figure in such a celebration. To-day he is not even invited to be present.

**BURNT TO DEATH.**

Dr Youl, city coroner, held an inquest to day at the Melbourne Hospital, on the body of Charles Kampf, who was burnt by gun-cotton at Braybrook, on Tuesday last.

The jury having been sworn, then inspected the body.

William Kampf, butcher, Braybrook, deposed: The deceased was my son. His name was Charles Kampf, and he was aged 15 years. The place where he came by his death is a wooden building 8 feet by 10 feet, with an iron roof. It is on the Saltwater River at Braybrook, and was formerly occupied by a Mr Gardner. About two years ago he made gun-cotton for mining, and other purposes in it. Two years ago the Government, I believe, prohibited him from continuing to make it, as being dangerous in the locality. On Tuesday night last the deceased called me from bed, and told me that his brother had been burnt. I got up and lit a candle, and saw that both of the boys were burnt. I undressed them and rolled them in sheets and blankets, and took them to this hospital.

John Flynn, a boy, deposed: I live at Braybrook. On last Tuesday night I was fishing in the Saltwater River at Braybrook. The deceased, his brother, and my own brother were with us. We saw a fire in a shanty not far off, and went to quench it. We had not a fire where we were fishing. We did not set the grass on fire. We tried to put out the fire at the shanty, but soon after we got there an explosion took place with a great noise, and the burning wood was blown all over us. I was not knocked down, but I do not know whether any of the others were or not. We were outside when the explosion occurred. We saw nobody about the place but ourselves. We did not set the place on fire. We went into the river to put our clothes out, which were on fire, and then went home.

Mary Anne Irvine, wife of Thomas Irvine, a laborer living at Mylestone, stated: We kept our cows in the paddock where the shanty was situated. There were notices up warning persons not to trespass. The ground belongs to a Mr Gardner. I did not know there was anything dangerous or explosive in the place.

Henry Gardner, iron mger, Emerald Hill, deposed: The paddock in which the building stood belongs to my father. It is a magazine constructed for the storage of gun-cotton. It was constructed for the purpose. No gun-cotton was made there; it was imported. I knew there was a remnant of a parcel of gun-cotton, which had been sold to the Government, in the magazine. Irvine had the privilege of grazing his cattle in the paddock on condition that he looked after the magazine. I believe there were 20 lbs or 30 lbs of gun-cotton in the building. It must not have exploded. That quantity of gun-cotton would be equal to about 120 lbs of gunpowder, and had it exploded it would have blown the boys to atoms. Gun-cotton, when ignited, burns violently, and that was, no doubt, what occurred in this instance. The paddock was enclosed by a wall surmounted with wire, except on the river side.

Mr Kampf: The stone wall is only 3 feet 6 inches high, and there are at times as many as thirty children in the paddock bathing.

The Coroner: It seems to me to have been a very risky proceeding to leave dangerous matter like gun-cotton in a paddock unprotected.

Witness: It is private property, and no one had any right to go into the paddock except Irvine.

The Coroner: You know very well what children are. Where is your father?

Witness: In Gippsland.

The Coroner: Has he a license?

Witness: I think not. We did not manufacture gun-cotton. There is some system of

Government inspection.

The Coroner: The Government would not think of inspecting a place where no manufacture was going on. You cannot take a house and fill it with gun-cotton. Any man fishing at the river might have taken shelter in that shanty, lighted his pipe, and caused an explosion.

Witness: He could not do so without breaking open the door.

The Coroner: It is said that the door has been lying open.

Witness: Then somebody forced it open.

The Coroner: Precisely, because there was no one in charge.

Thomas Cassidy, constable of police, stated: The shanty has been open to my own knowledge for the last nine months. I never knew there was anything dangerous in it. It is now demolished as if there had been an explosion. I produce a piece of a notice warning persons not to trespass in the paddock. The notice does not say anything about anything dangerous or explosive in the building. Children go to bathe and play in the paddock, which is only 200 or 300 yards from a State school. The place has been open for anybody to go into.

At this stage of the proceeding one of the jurors was seized with fainting fits, and had to be removed. A gentleman who was present was sworn in his stead, and the proceedings were continued.

Henry Simpson Wood, resident surgeon at the hospital, stated. The deceased was admitted to this institution on the 14th inst, suffering from severe burns of the hand, face, arms and legs. He never recovered from the shock, and died the next day. The cause of death was the burns described.

Cosmo Newberry, analytical chemist, and Government inspector of explosives, and of places where they are stored, said: Parties having manufactories for explosives, or magazines where they are stored, are required to be licensed. They must give notices of their businesses to me, and to the Minister of Mines. Gardner's place was not licensed. Gardner formerly used the building for making gun-cotton cartridges, but I understood that he had given up the business and that the property was for sale. I have frequently seen the gate of the paddock open, but never went down to the building. I visited the place yesterday. I doubt that any explosion took place in the shed itself. The corner posts and other pieces of light wood are still attached, and standing. The iron roof shows no sign of an explosion, but is bent, as if by heat. There is a fire track from close to the river to the building. It runs from S.W. to N.E., the direction of the wind the night the accident took place. It is from 1ft to 1 1/2 in breadth. The fire in the grass might be kicked out, the grass was so short. I found gun-cotton in the paddock. There was a large cake apparently ignited in the paddock which spread to the building and towards the river. I am disposed to think that the boys found the shed open, got some gun-cotton from it, and made experiments in the paddock. I think the premises should be seized and destroyed. We have power to do so. I produce a sample of gun-cotton, which I found in the paddock. It is like lime in appearance, and a child would not know what it was. There is plenty of gun-cotton in the paddock still. There is a penalty of £100 for not being licensed. Mr Gardner seems to have taken no care of the place. The shanty would make a comfortable camping place.

The boy Flynn was recalled by the coroner, but he strongly denied that he or any of the other lads lit a fire or went near the magazine till they saw it on fire.

The Coroner's constable also went to the deceased's brother in the ward where he lay,

The Coroner's constable also went to the deceased's brother in the ward where he lay, and questioned him respecting the occurrence, but his version of the accident coincided with Flynn's.

The Coroner then summed up. He said it was evident that the owner of the paddock and the building upon it was guilty of gross carelessness in leaving them unsecured for as he had done. He had no license to store explosives in his paddock, and if a person did anything which was illegal and a death thereby took place, he was guilty of that death. Of course Mr Gardner had no guilty motive in placing the gun-cotton in that shed, but he should not have done so without having obtained a license, and then he should have placed some responsible person in charge. The Irvin's duty seemed to have been only to keep trespassers off, but we all knew what boys were, and when they found explosives they could hardly resist the temptation to ignite them. If a fishing party had taken shelter in that shed, and one of them, lighting his pipe, had let a spark fall, the whole might have been blown up. It was expected that another of those four boys would die from the effects of the burns which he had received.

The jury found the following verdict:—"In the Melbourne Hospital, on the 15th January current, the deceased, Charles Kampf, died from the effects of burns received at Braybrook on the 13th inst. The jury are of opinion that Mark Gardner was guilty of gross carelessness in leaving dangerous and explosive material in and upon an unguarded shed."

When a French lady walks out she always takes at one side her cane by a string, and at the other sometimes a beau without a string.

### FATAL EXPLOSION.

An extraordinary explosion occurred at Braybrook early on Wednesday morning, occasioning rather severe injuries to some boys who were in the neighbourhood. It appears that about midnight on Tuesday four lads, named James and Charles Kampf, and James and John Flynn, were out fishing on the Saltwater River, near an untenanted hut, when they saw they observed the place to be in flames. They endeavoured to extinguish the fire, when an explosion of gun-cotton or some other combustible occurred, blowing the hut to pieces, and severely injuring the boys. The hut belonged to a man named Gardiner, who some years back used it for the manufacture of gun-cotton cartridges. He went away to Gippsland some two or three years ago, leaving the place in charge of a Mr. Irvine, who lived in the neighbourhood. It had not since been occupied, and contained nothing but some refuse. Among this was a small box in which it is conjectured there must have been some combustible which occasioned the explosion. The boys were removed to the Melbourne Hospital, but the younger Flynn being very slightly injured was shortly afterwards discharged. The others were more seriously burnt. Charles Kampf, one of the lads who was so severely burnt in the explosion, died at the Melbourne Hospital on Thursday morning from the effects of his injuries. The other lads are somewhat better, but are still in a critical condition.

At an inquest held at the Melbourne Hospital yesterday on the body of Charles Kampf, the unfortunate lad who died from injuries received through the explosion, the full particulars were elicited. Mr. Gardner, ironmonger at Emerald Hill, whose father owns the property on which the explosion took place, stated that his father had formerly used the place in the manufacture of gun-cotton cartridges. After his father left there were some remnants of gun-cotton, about 25lbs. left in the hut.

After hearing several witnesses, the coroner summed up. He said it was evident that the owner of the paddock and the building upon it was guilty of gross carelessness in leaving them unwarded for as he had done. He had no license to store explosives in his paddock, and if a person did anything which was illegal and a death thereby took place, he was guilty of that death. Of course Mr. Gardner had no guilty motive in placing the gun-cotton in that shed, but he should not have done so without having obtained a license, and then he should have placed some responsible person in charge. The Irvine's duty seemed to have been only to keep trespassers off, but we all know what boys were, and when they found explosives they could hardly resist the temptation to ignite them. If a fishing party had taken shelter in that shed, and one of them, lighting his pipe, had let a spark fall, the whole might have been blown up. It was expected that another of those four boys would die from the effects of the burns which he had received.

The jury found the following verdict :—  
" In the Melbourne Hospital, on the 15th January current, the deceased, Charles Kampf, died from the effects of burns received at Braybrook on the 13th inst. The jury are of opinion that Mark Gardner was guilty of gross carelessness in leaving dangerous and explosive materials in and upon an unwarded shed."

## THE RECENT GUN-COTTON EXPLOSION.

Yesterday the city coroner, Dr. Youl, held an inquest on the body of Charles Kampf, who died in the Melbourne Hospital on the previous day, from the effects of burns sustained by an explosion of gun-cotton, on Tuesday night last, at Braybrook.

William Kampf, a butcher, residing at Braybrook, stated that deceased, who was his son, was fifteen years of age. The place in which the explosion took place was a wooden building, 8ft. x 10ft., having an iron roof. It had formerly been used by a Mr. Gardiner, who manufactured gun-cotton in it, but the work had been discontinued for two years, by order of the authorities. After the accident, witness took deceased and his brother to the hospital.

John Flynn, one of the four lads who were injured, deposed that while fishing they observed the shanty referred to was on fire, and he, assisted by his own brother and the two Kamps, endeavoured to extinguish the flames, when an explosion took place, and the burning *debris* fell upon them when they were outside. They had no fire when fishing, neither did they set the grass on fire.

Henry Gardiner, ironmonger, of Emerald Hill, gave evidence that the paddock and the shanty belonged to his father, and had been used formerly for the storage of im-

---

ported gun-cotton. Was aware that a small parcel which had been sold to the Government was stowed in the place. The parcel was equal in strength to about 120lb. of gunpowder, there being about 20lb. or 30lb. of gun-cotton in the magazine. A man named Irvine had permission to graze his cows in the paddock on condition that he looked after the place. Had the gun-cotton exploded it must have blown the boys to atoms. It, no doubt, burnt when it ignited. The paddock is enclosed by a stone wall.

The paddock is enclosed by a stone wall 3ft. 6in. high, which is surmounted by wire, except on the river side. The paddock was private property. Witness said that his father was in Gippsland.

Constable Cawsey deposed that, to his own knowledge, the shanty had been open for the last nine months. Witness did not know that there was anything dangerous in the place, which had been demolished as if there had been an explosion. There was a notice posted up warning persons not to trespass in the paddock, but the notice said nothing about the building containing any explosive. Children were in the habit of bathing and playing in the paddock from a neighbouring State-school.

Henry Simpson Wood, resident surgeon of the hospital, gave evidence as to the injuries sustained by deceased, who never recovered from the shock. The cause of death was burns to the head, face, arms, and legs.

Cosmo Newbery, analytical chemist and Government inspector of explosives, deposed that persons manufacturing or storing explosives were required to be licensed. Gardiner's place was not licensed. He had formerly used the shanty for making gun-cotton cartridges, but the business, witness believed, had been abandoned, the property being for sale. Had never visited the building till Thursday last. Was of opinion, from what he saw, that no explosion took place in the building itself, as the corner posts are still standing, and the iron roof showed no signs of an explosion having occurred. There is a fire track from close to the river to the building, and the wind on the night of the accident blew from the river in the direction of the shanty. He was disposed to think that the boys obtained some guncotton from the place, and made some experiments with it in the paddock, as he found guncotton in the paddock. It was like lime, and a child would not know what it was. There was plenty of guncotton in the paddock still, and witness thought that the Government, who possessed

thought that the Government, who possessed the power, should seize the place, and destroy the explosive.

In summing up the coroner remarked on the carelessness of Gardiner, who appeared to be unlicensed, in leaving the place uncared for and open to any trespasser.

The jury found that deceased died from the effect of burns received at Braybrook on the 13th inst., and expressed their opinion that Mark Gardiner was guilty of gross carelessness in leaving dangerous and explosive material in and about an unguarded shed.

---