

# ROB CORPSE ON CROWDED STREET

## Ghouls, Not Thugs, Responsible for Theft of Money From the Victim of an Accident.

### STRUCK BY ENGINE AS HE RAN ACROSS TRACKS

#### Saloon-Keeper Killed by Los Angeles Express—Slinking Thieves Rife: His Clothes on Pretense of Examining Body

Ghouls robbed the dead body of Chris Christensen, the saloon-keeper killed by a train at the Southern Pacific crossing on Mission street, between Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth streets, at 10:30 o'clock on Wednesday night. Slinking thieves of the night, under pretense of finding life yet struggling in the bleeding form, stole from the pockets of the dead man's clothing \$100 in gold and a silver watch that was torn from its chain. Evidence in plenty has been discovered by Detectives Taylor, Graham and Harrison to totally disprove an early theory that Christensen had first been slugged or murdered and then robbed, and his body later cast across the rails.

At 10:30 o'clock Wednesday night the Los Angeles express came rumbling into San Francisco from the south. The gates at Mission street went down as the train flashed by. In that moment something went whirling through the air, and even before the last car passed the corpse of a man was seen lying limply across the iron gates. Later the body was identified as that of Chris Christensen, a saloon-keeper, whose place of business was located only a few yards from the track, at 2822 Mission street.

At the moment of the killing two Mission-street cars going in opposite directions were standing waiting for the train to pass. The conductors of these cars were C. B. Day of 540 San Jose avenue and N. Elder of 215 Thirtieth street. Both men were standing beside their cars waiting to give the signal to move on when the train had passed, yet neither saw Christensen hit.

#### NONE WITNESSED ACCIDENT.

A watchman in the watch tower ten feet from where the body landed saw nothing until the body hung across his gates and then sank limply to the ground.

At a window directly opposite the scene Mrs. W. Wynne of 2816 Mission street looked out to see the passing of the train. She glanced along the track, saw nothing strange, then heard a crash, and, to her horror, saw the body of a man hanging across the gates.

With all these eyes trained on the scene, with those of the engineer and fireman, no person saw the actual happenings which brought Christensen to his death. Yet their testimony has aided the police in running down the case, for all of these witnesses swear positively that within a period of thirty seconds before the train passed by they had looked up and down the track and no man's figure was lying on the rails.

This was all-important when, two hours later at the Morgue, it was discovered that Christensen had been robbed of about \$100 and that his silver watch had been torn from its chain. Mrs. Christensen, the widow, reported that at nightfall her husband had had \$100 in a change pocket of his trousers. Investigation showed that he had gotten this amount of money at 4 o'clock in the afternoon from John Peters of the California Brewery with which to buy fixtures for his saloon. He also was seen to have about \$35 which he had saved. At 5:30 o'clock on that night he paid to James O'Brien, at Twenty-fourth and Capp streets, \$25 for a back bar. At the time he flashed a handful of gold pieces. Between 7 and 8 o'clock the same night he showed A. H. Teichert of 3282 Twenty-fourth street over \$100 in \$20 gold pieces.

#### DISPLAYED MONEY FREELY.

Then he returned to his saloon and engaged in a game of cards for drinks with Teichert and Dan Mancuso of 3270 Mission street, to both of whom he displayed his money.

At about 10:30 o'clock he got up from the card game and requested Teichert and Mancuso to look out for the place while he hurried to his home at 3268 Twenty-fourth street, less than a block away. He ran out of the saloon, but never returned.

Five minutes later men rushed into the saloon and asked to phone to the coroner that a man had been killed by a train which had passed recently. From what these men said the man had been killed some minutes before. Evidently Christensen ran from his saloon, crawled beneath the gates in his efforts to cross over and return in haste, and was struck by the train. This accounts for no one seeing him on the track just prior to the accident as he could have run from the door of his saloon to the place where he was hit within five seconds.

Immediately following the accident the two conductors, Day and Elder, picked up the body and carried it to a sidewalk. A large crowd gathered and several persons handled the remains to see, they said, if Christensen was dead. Five minutes following the accident Corporal Shanahan and Policemen Skelly and Mahony had arrived and took charge of the body. It was during its unguarded moments that the corpse is supposed to have been robbed.

#### GHOULS LEFT SILVER ON BODY.

Deputy Coroner Charles Meehan and Messenger James Murphy came from the Coroner's office on the case. Both men assert that they put the body immediately in a receiver and that they did not search it until one hour later at the Morgue, when the pockets were gone over before a group of witnesses.

All of the money found on the deceased was \$9.50 in silver in his left hip pocket where he kept his change. His watch was gone and a broken chain showed where it had been torn loose. The presence of his silver money and some keys is accounted for by the fact that the dead man was on his back while lying on the sidewalk and it was safer and more lucrative to take his gold and watch from his front pockets than attempt to get the silver. The pocket which contained the gold was found turned inside out by detectives who worked on the case yesterday. Deputy Meehan says, however, that he fixed the pocket this way in searching the body at the morgue.

The facts brought out by the investigation have caused the detectives

to become so positive that Christensen's death was due to accident that Engineer W. H. Bigley, of the Los Angeles express was arrested on a charge of manslaughter as is usual in accidents of this sort. He was released under \$50 bail. No crew has been found to the ghouls that did the thieving from the corpse.

An autopsy at the Morgue last night showed that the deceased came to his death as the result of shock and hemorrhage from a fractured rib, rupture of the liver and kidneys and fractured jaw. Christensen leaves a widow and four children.