

Death in 1911 of student recounted

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room was also filled with deadly gas fumes and the gas jet was found turned completely on, though not lighted. The instantaneous gas heater was also still burning."

Although Minneman was already quite dead, Dr. C.E. Harris was called to the Munson home to make sure. Shortly afterward, Dr. J.V. Kentling, county coroner, was summoned from Smithville. Although the coroner was inclined to believe that the death was accidental, he reserved his judgment until he had gathered more information.

That involved asking questions. The *Courier* reporter was also doing just that. Minneman, it seems, was a freshman, who planned to return to his home town of Logansport the following Wednesday for his high school graduation. (It is likely that he had finished his preparatory courses in January and enrolled in IU right away, rather than wait until the fall of 1911.)

On the very morning of his death, Minneman had received from his father a letter containing a check for \$40 and had already written a reply. That letter was opened and read in the effort to find out if the young man had given any thought to committing suicide.

President Bryan may not have been the one who informed Theodore Minneman, a railroad conductor, of his son's death, but the father responded by coming to Bloomington on the following day. Irvin was his only son.

Coroner Kentling decided that the death was accidental. He had learned several factors that pointed in that direction: (1) there was no suicide note or indeed anything in Minneman's papers indicating he was despondent; (2) Minneman was a Catholic, and believed that suicide was a grave sin; and (3) Minneman had the habit of turning the gas jet up high in order to light the instantaneous water heater. In this instance, he had neglected to turn it off.

President Bryan and Minneman's fellow students were sorry, of course. Concluded the *Courier*, "A committee composed of the president of each of the classes of the university has been appointed to draft suitable memorials and resolutions which will be sent to the family of the deceased."