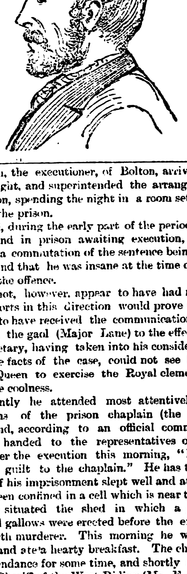
TO-DAYS LATE NEWS.

THE LINTHWAITE MURDER.

EXECUTION AT ARMLEY

THIS MORNING.

James Stockwell, who was sentenced to death at the recent Leeds Assizes for the wilful murder of Catherine Dennis, a young girl of sixteen, at Linthwaite, under circumstances detailed in the "Story of the Crime" given below, was hanged this morning within the precincts of Armley Gaol.



Billington, the executioner, of Bolton, arrived at the gaol over night, and superintended the arrangements for the execution, spending the night in a room set apart for him inside the prison.

Stockwell, during the early part of the period which he had to spend in prison awaiting execution, had some prospect of a commutation of the sentence being granted, on the ground that he was insane at the time of the commission of the offence.

He does not, however, appear to have had much faith that the efforts in this direction would prove successful, and is said to have received the communication from the governor of the gaol (Major Lane) to the effect that the Home Secretary, having taken into his consideration the whole of the facts of the case, could not see his way to advise the Queen to exercise the Royal clemency, with considerable coolness.

Subsequently he attended most attentively to the ministrations of the prison chaplain (the Rev. Dr. Bowlan), and, according to an official communication which was handed to the representatives of the press present, after the execution this morning, "he has admitted his guilt to the chaplain." He has throughout the whole of his imprisonment slept well and ate well.

He has been confined in a cell which is near to the yard in which is situated the shed in which a permanent scaffold and gallows were erected before the execution of the Horsforth murderer. This morning he woke about six o'clock and ate a hearty breakfast. The chaplain was then in attendance for some time, and shortly afterwards the Under-Sheriff of the West Riding (Mr. E. Gray), the prison surgeon (Dr. Hargreaves), one of the visiting magistrates of the prison, and other officials, arrived.

At about a quarter to eight o'clock the bell of the prison commenced to toll at intervals of a minute, and a few moments later the executioner and the other officials proceeded to Stockwell's cell. Billington quickly had the condemned man pinioned, and the mournful procession was formed and proceeded in the direction of the place of execution, the chaplain meanwhile reading aloud the service for the dead.

The officials named were all in attendance, along with Major Lane, the governor of the prison. Stockwell is said to have behaved with great coolness, and to have walked firmly to the scaffold, which, as already stated, is fixed in a shed in the yard adjoining the cell in which he had been confined, and only about a minute's walk distant from it.

He would not be able to see the scaffold until he was actually within the building. Then Billington adjusted the white cap and the rope, and pulled the lever, which set at liberty the floor on which Stockwell was standing.

Billington gave a drop of 8ft. 6in., Stockwell being said to have weighed about 10 stones. Death is described as being instantaneous, and it is said that there was not the slightest quiver of the rope.

One of the officials present stated that there could have been only the slightest movement of the body after the bolt was withdrawn.

Immediately the execution took place, which was on the stroke of eight o'clock, the black flag was hoisted on the central tower of the building, proclaiming to the few spectators who had gathered in the neighbourhood that the dread sentence of the law had been carried out.

The body was allowed to hang for an hour, after which it was taken down and laid in a wooden shed which is known as the mortuary, awaiting inspection by the coroner's jury.

OUTSIDE THE GAOL.

It was a dark, dull, and dreary morning. Strict accuracy forbids one to say that the sombre outlines of Armley Gaol stood out in bold relief against the sky, for the sky was almost as black as the stonework of the building. There had been some frost during the night, as the footpaths were slippery, and cautious pedestrians took to the roadway; but the hour of seven had scarcely passed when there came a fall, partly of snow and partly of rain, and the milder temperature indicated that, for the time being at any rate, the frost had gone. The sky was heavily overcast, and the morning broke slowly and sadly. The darkness was all but Cimmerian when, at about half-past seven o'clock, Mr. Edwin Gray, the Under-Sheriff of Yorkshire, drove up to the main entrance to the gaol. Parenthetically, it might be here remarked that Mr. Gray, who had slept overnight in Leeds, his place of residence being York, has imposed upon him on occasions of this character the duty of seeing that the sentence of the law is duly carried out. Luckily for sheriffs and their deputies, hangmen have always been plentiful in this country, or the performance of the shrieval functions might be attended, now and then, with some repulsive circumstances. Dr. Hargreaves, of Armley, who some time ago succeeded Dr. Edwards as surgeon to the gaol on the translation of that gentleman to Strangeways, Manchester, drove up in an open vehicle at twenty minutes to eight o'clock and quickly disappeared behind a succession of locks, bolts, bars, and iron doors. In the meantime a number of press representatives had been gathering together in front of the prison—some who had witnessed executions under the old arrangement, when the culprit had to walk some fifty or sixty yards in view of the scaffold and then to ascend a dozen or fifteen steps before arriving on the fatal drop, and others who have been spared that melancholy spectacle, and luckily for them, have only had the opportunity of inspecting the present and more humane method of despatching murderers after it has completed its dread task. Singularly little interest was manifested in Leeds in the fate of the Linthwaite murderer. When Turner was executed some hundreds of people gathered together in the neighbourhood of the gaol and discussed the possibilities of the man making a confession before he expiated his fiendish and revolting crime, or talked about the likelihood of his playing to the last the part of callous indifference which he had shown from the first. This morning the people who congregated in the vicinity of "Armley" could be counted on the fingers of both hands, if not indeed of one. The few who ventured to approach the gaol—a man, a couple of women, and some children—had evidently been attracted to the spot not for the purpose of seeing the black flag hoisted, but to welcome back to liberty some relative or friend who had finished his or her "time." Probably some of them were disappointed, for about the hour of eight two zealous and wary members of the Leeds detective force entered the prison for the purpose, as they stated, of re-arresting some wretched criminal who had hoped to be able to breathe a freer air. The Huddersfield people, who have naturally taken such a deep interest in Stockwell's terrible crime, were represented by a solitary reporter from that town. The minute bell commenced tolling at ten minutes to eight o'clock. Beyond the heavy thud of the steam hammers issuing from neighbouring ironworks, it was the only sound that fell upon the ear. It seemed to hush the little knot of people into silence, for they spoke only in whispers until on the stroke of eight the black flag was hoisted on the central tower, proclaiming to all and sundry that James Stockwell had paid the last penalty of atrocious crime.

THE INQUEST.

Shortly before 10 o'clock the Leeds Borough Coroner (Mr. J. C. Malcolm) arrived at the prison for the purpose of holding the inquest on the body of the deceased. The jurymen, who had been summoned also, gathered in the gatehouse at the prison, and were shortly afterwards conducted to the Committee Room, in the main corridor, where the inquest was held. There were also present Mr. E. Gray, the Under-Sheriff; Major Lane, the Governor of the Gaol; and Mr. J. B. Hargreaves, the Prison Surgeon.

In opening the proceedings the Coroner explained that the inquest was necessary under the provisions of the Capital Punishment Amendment Act (1868), and they had to satisfy themselves on two points. First, that the body which was lying in the Mortuary was that of James Stockwell; and, secondly, that the sentence had been properly carried out.

The jury then proceeded to view the body, which was, as usual, lying in the dead-house—a small wooden hut, with doors at each end—standing on an open piece of ground within the prison walls. Close at hand was the open grave, and all around are the graves of other criminals who have suffered a similar fate. The body was lying on the right hand side of the hut on a sort of table covered with a rug. The face bore a peaceful expression. On the neck was the mark which had been made by the rope. On the floor on the opposite side of the hut was the coffin in which the remains of Stockwell will be interred.

After inspecting the body, the jurymen were conducted back to the Committee Room, and witnesses were called. The first witness was the Governor of the Gaol (Major Lane). He said that the body which the jury had seen was that of James Stockwell, aged 32 years, farm labourer, who was received into his custody on December 8th, 1891, on a committal for wilful murder from Wakefield Prison. He was present at Stockwell's trial at the last Assizes held at Leeds, and heard him tried, convicted, and sentenced to be hanged. Stockwell had since that time remained in his custody until this morning, when he handed him over to the Under-Sheriff and saw the sentence carried out.

Mr. E. Gray, the Under-Sheriff, said he was present at the trial. The man who had been hanged was the same person who was found guilty of murder and sentenced to be hanged. Stockwell was handed over to him this morning at 8 o'clock, and he caused the sentence to be duly carried out.

Mr. J. Bourne Hargreaves, the prison surgeon, said that he was present and saw the execution duly carried out. Death by hanging was instantaneous, the causes of death being dislocation and fracture.

The Coroner: I understand this was a most instantaneous death, and the man did not appear to suffer any pain at all?

Mr. Hargreaves: It was.

The Coroner having read over to the jury the terms of the Capital Punishment Amendment Act (1868), the usual verdict in accordance with its provisions was agreed to.

THE STORY OF THE CRIME.

The history of the offence, for which Stockwell was this morning hanged, is a very painful one. The girl who was murdered was named Catherine Dennis, and she was engaged as a servant girl at the Ivy Hotel, Linthwaite, which stands on the side of the high road from Huddersfield to Manchester. On the afternoon of August 18 Mrs Margaret Brooke, who was at that time the landlady of the hotel, went to Huddersfield, leaving the girl in the house alone. Later in the afternoon a boy named David Beevers went to the house to deliver some meat, which had been ordered from the Jorral Branch of the Linthwaite Stores, where he was employed. He entered the house, and receiving no reply to his calls procured assistance. Edwin Hoyle, a drywaller, who was at work in the district, and some other neighbours went to the house, and finding no trace of the girl in the lower rooms went upstairs, where they found her lying dead on the landing with her throat cut and the clothing slightly disordered. Mr. Haigh, surgeon, of Golcar, was called in, but found that his services were of no avail. The connection of the prisoner with the murder arose from the fact that he had been in the hotel during the morning, and was there when Mrs. Brooke left the house. Some other men were in the house during the day, but suspicion fell on Stockwell very soon after the commission of the offence, owing to the fact that shortly before Beevers and the other neighbours found the dead body of the girl, Mrs. Carter, who lives a short distance further along the road, and on the opposite side of it, saw the prisoner come out by the front door of the Ivy Hotel and walk away in the direction of Huddersfield. A man named John Walker saw prisoner going in the same direction, but he afterwards turned up Yew Tree Lane, where he met a man named Peter Whiteley, to whom he said, "How do?"

From that time Stockwell entirely disappeared for some time, and although the police searched the neighbourhood in every direction, including the moors in the neighbourhood, he managed to elude their vigilance. On the morning of September 7th, however, Police-Constable Harry Taylor, of the Huddersfield Borough Police Force, received certain information, which caused him to go to the house of the prisoner's parents at 2, Lower Brow, Paddock.

In the bed-room he found the prisoner, dressed, and lying on the bed. On seeing the officer, he started to his feet, and was at once arrested, and charged with the murder. He replied, "I have not done it." On the way to Huddersfield the prisoner said, "I have had nothing to eat for six days. I must have been asleep all the time." On being searched there was found in his possession a knife, 6d. in silver, 6d. in copper, and some partly-eaten bean pods and some hay seeds. The clothes were covered with hay seeds, and he was very dirty. The prisoner had some coffee and bread and butter given to him at the police station, and at eleven o'clock he was brought before the magistrates and remanded to the custody of the West Riding magistrates, in whose jurisdiction the murder was committed. Prisoner made the following statement later in the day:—"It's no use going round about. I may as well get it over at once. It's all through drink. I was lying down on the seat, and she kept pulling my hair." Subsequently the Coroner's jury returned a verdict of "Wilful murder," and after examination before the West Riding magistrates, he was committed for trial at the Assizes. Whilst at Wakefield Prison he made a statement to a fellow prisoner named Arthur Thompson, in the course of which he said that he had committed a murder. He also complained about his legs, and said that he had to sleep in a hay stack or hay mow. He added that he had been 16 days without food, with the exception of a few beans, and that on the morning when he was arrested he ate fatty cakes at his mother's house until he burst. Continuing, he told Thompson he had never seen the girl in his life before the murder, but that he did it when he was drunk, and that he was like a madman when he was in drink. He was, he said, drinking in the public-house with another man, who then left, and after that the girl was tormenting him, knocking off his hat, and pulling his moustache and hair. In a moment of passion he ran to get hold of her, and she ran upstairs. Thompson said, "Did you run after the girl?" He said "Yes," and Thompson then asked, "Did you get hold of her?" and he said "Yes."

"Then," as Thompson said at the trial, "the curtain fell," and he asked no more questions. The conversation, it also transpired, lasted over a whole month, when the two were confined together.

The defence which was raised at the trial by Mr. Mellor, who appeared for the prisoner, was that Stockwell was insane at the time, and in support of this assertion said that the family history was a terrible history of a family tainted with the scourge of insanity. His grandmother died in an asylum. The taint broke out in the prisoner's mother at the age of 50, the same age the prisoner now was; at the same age his own sister showed the same symptoms; and such was the way in which the present dreadful affair had affected her that she had had to be removed to an asylum again.

The prisoner's uncle died in an asylum, and early in life the prisoner gave evidence to his parents of that same scourge having broken out. His head was cut open when in early manhood, and thus his failing was aggravated, and he also developed a craving for drink, which must have intensified the original disease. The night before the murder, at 12 o'clock at night, prisoner was found lying dead drunk. He was awakened, and then his conduct became that of a maniac, jumping wildly about.

When he got home his conduct was still more extraordinary. He said he had a delusion that two policemen were following him, and he accused his wife of taking money from him. Thus in his wild way he went on until they found him drinking as early as seven o'clock next morning, and continuing throughout the day, up to the time of the murder, his drinking career. Evidence was called in support of these statements, and Mr. James Robert Kaye, M.B., Glasgow University, who had had four years' experience at a Lunatic Asylum in Birmingham, and is now the Borough Medical Officer for Huddersfield, expressed the opinion, as a result of an examination which he had made, that the man's mind was not of the average. One of the signs might be a craving for drink, and that would aggravate the original taint. There was a kind of impulsive insanity which came on suddenly without apparent cause, and without any apparent aberration of intellect.

Mr. Peter Macgregor, a surgeon and physician at Huddersfield, who had had a good deal of experience in insanity during the last fifteen years, and who had attended both prisoner's mother and sister, was of opinion from what he had described to him, that the prisoner was suffering from epilepsy.

The counsel and his Lordship having addressed the jury, a verdict of guilty was returned after twenty minutes' deliberation, and prisoner was sentenced to death. Petitions were promoted in Huddersfield in favour of the commutation of the sentence, but to these the Home Secretary replied that he could not see any reason for advising the Queen to take such a step. One sad result of the shocking case has been that the mind of the mother of the deceased girl gave way under the strain, and she had to be removed to an asylum, where she died a few days ago.