

AN EXECUTION IN ILLINOIS.

Extraordinary Scene—Execution of the Criminal—Violent Resistance in the Cell and on the Gallows.

A man named James White was executed at Salem, Ill., on Thursday, the 19th inst., for the murder of Andrew J. Applegate. The Advocate, giving an account of the preliminary arrangements for the execution, the assembling of a large throng of spectators, etc., says:

Soon after this time, the public was astounded by the report that the convict, White, had possessed himself of a chain and, armed with it, threatened instant death to any man who should dare to enter his prison. The report was found to be true. There had been a chain strongly fixed in the floor of the prison, to which it had become necessary on some occasions to secure the prisoners; this chain White, with almost superhuman strength, had wrenched from its fastenings. It was a common sized or chain, about three feet in length, and had upon one of its ends an iron ring nearly nine inches in circumference. White had armed himself with this chain, and by running the links through the ring had made a heavy knot of iron, which proved to be a formidable weapon. Standing thus armed inside the door of the cell, White declared with terrible oaths that no living man should enter. In this dilemma, a party arrived in the proceedings. Sheriff Black made an attempt to enter, assisted by four resolute and fearless men. Driven to desperation, the hardened criminal struck a tremendous blow, which happily was but a slight injury upon the left hand of the Sheriff.

It was now proposed to inject ammonia into the face of the convict and thus by its temporary suffocation, enable the officers to take possession of the cell. This was tried, but failed. The miserable murderer recoiled for an instant under the effect of the liquid, but speedily recovering himself, he stood again at the door armed with his terrible weapon and looking the impersonification of a fiend. It really seemed as though the arch fiend helped him. It now was resolved to drench the cell with chloroform and thus kill the turbulent spirit within until he could be safely captured. The sheriff was still advised to capture him by a pistol ball, but assured that he would not proceed to such harsh measures until all other less cruel means had failed. One or two bottles of chloroform were procured and the atmosphere of the cell was thoroughly impregnated with its fumes; blankets were suspended outside the grated windows of the cell, and every step taken to make this effort successful. At first, the furious wretch laughed at this attempt. It was clear that his wildness of mind had made him familiar with the use and effects of chloroform. Indeed, he said so, and told the officers that the article they were using was weak and poor. He evidently was acquainted with chemicals. In order to resist its effect he wound his bed quilt around his face, went occasionally to the window for air, and removed a portion of the blanket by reaching out and drawing it through the grating, so as to make an opening for the admission of the wind.

More than an hour had been consumed in these fruitless efforts to obtain possession of the prisoner and his weapon, and it began to be apparent that harsher means were necessary. At about twelve o'clock White was heard to say, "they have tried harshness and chloroform upon me, but one has neutralized the action of the other; they are now going to try something else." He is evidently aware that he must ultimately submit, and though at first prepared to sell his life as dearly as possible, his courage and strength now began to fail. He, therefore, proposed that if the sheriff would give him his dinner and a drink of whiskey, and let him live till one o'clock, he would yield his weapon and surrender himself. This proposition was accepted, and White gave up his knotted chain through the grating of his door, a dinner was prepared for him, and a glass of water, with a slight infusion of whisky, handed him to drink. It was the last office of apparent mercy, and the Sheriff willingly performed it.

At one o'clock the sheriff entered the cell; White came forward and surrendered himself. His arms were pinioned behind him, and he walked resolutely down the stairs of the jail, through the hall, and into the fearful place prepared for his terrible death. Here brief religious services were held. The services concluded, White, accompanied by the sheriff and his assistants, ascended the steps of the gallows without apparent trepidation. He never flinched a moment, but examined with a critical eye all the appliances prepared for his execution. And now occurred one of the most exciting and painful scenes in this terrible drama. When once upon the scaffold, and his ankles being bound together, the usual white cap was produced, and he was informed that it was necessary to put it upon his head. To this White objected, insisting that no change should be made in his apparel. He wore the little felt cap which he had covered his head from his first imprisonment. When the sheriff removed the felt cap, and was about substituting the usual white one, the prisoner again objected, and with fearful imprecations, declared that it should not be put on. Sheriff Black, in a decided tone, endeavored to persuade the prisoner, but in vain. For nearly an hour the officers were engaged in a struggle to enforce compliance. Here, indeed, was the dramatic character of the prisoner displayed. He made every effort to prevent the officers from putting on the white covering. Pinioned and bound as he was, he fought with desperation. He snatched and bit at their fingers, he leaped into the air, he crunched toward the ground, and for some time it seemed doubtful whether he could be compelled to submit. After a severe and protracted struggle the cap was thrown upon his head and securely adjusted about his face and the strings drawn around his neck. Nothing now remained of the dreadful preparations but to put the rope around his neck and adjust the fatal noose. With some difficulty this was at length accomplished, the united efforts of four men being required for this purpose. As the sheriff drew the fatal noose closer to its place and placed the most benighted of the one of the ushers man, he exclaimed with fearful imprecations, "What is he—how are you, for I can hardly speak." These were the last words of the wretched man; The sheriff gave the signal that all was ready to his deputy, Mr. Schultz; in a moment the trigger was drawn, the drop fell, and that unhappy man, so lately struggling with such desperate fury, so lately busy with his terrible efforts to resist the vengeance of the law, fell like lead through the draw and hung, slightly oscillating, a struggling, violent human being no longer.

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