

A WHOLESALE EXECUTION

Mrs. Norgaard Hangs Her Four Innocent Children and Takes Her Own Life.

The Five Found Dangling in a Cellar Having Been Dead Since Last Thursday.

News was received here yesterday of a terrible tragedy which was just discovered at the home of Mrs. Christiana Norgaard, about three miles northeast of Harlan, in Shelby county.

Mrs. Norgaard lived on a farm just outside the city with her family, consisting of two boys and two girls. The father was some time ago adjudged insane by the county board and was sent to the asylum. Since then little attention has been attracted to the family until yesterday a neighbor, who had noticed the absence of anybody about the place for three or four days, determined to investigate. The upper rooms were searched without any trace being found of the missing people, but as all evidences were contrary to the belief that they had gone away on a visit, the search was prosecuted further, and finally the cellar was visited.

There a sight was encountered which was terrible enough in its solution of the mystery of the disappearance to cause the searcher to hurry away for assistance. The party which was summoned and which returned to the dark and gloomy cellar, found Mrs. Norgaard and her four children hanging by ropes from one of the beams of the house. A little girl, aged about 4, stood with her toes just touching the ground, near her was her sister, a 10-year-old child hanging from the timber; a boy of 9, with one knee touching a wash tub on which he had stood, was near by and his brother, a year older, hung so low that his feet almost touched the earth. Near him, the mother, half kneeling, was seen. All were quite dead. The children and mother were all neatly dressed, but none wore shoes. Their feet were covered only with stockings.

The work had been done most deliberately. The smaller children were strung up to a rope which was fastened only by heavy spikes driven into the beam, but for herself and the elder children the woman had bored holes through the timber so that there might be no question as to the rope holding. Evidently she had stood the children on washtubs and had then pulled the tubs from beneath their feet and as they choked and gasped in agony she rigged up her own gallows and leaping from the washtub which she used, choked to death. Her determination was witnessed in the fact that the body was found in a kneeling position and had she so desired she could have saved herself by standing erect. All of the quintet were choked to death, and the younger children's appearance betokened a violent struggle for life after their executioner had begun her work. All indications were that the bodies had been hanging for days, and when the coroner was summoned and examined into the matter he gave as his opinion that the deaths had occurred as far away as Thursday morning.

No trouble other than the confinement of her husband in the insane asylum is known as having been entertained by Mrs. Norgaard. It was believed by some of her neighbors that she too was mentally unbalanced. A letter which was found in the house, however, hardly bears out this theory, as it indicates a well composed and determined mind.

The letter tells only of her financial affairs, speaking of \$150 in the bank, held by her, and \$13 in silver in the house. This money is to be used in burial. Other sections relate to farm matters, she stating that the place is paid for, and that nothing can be held against it.

The coroner cut the bodies down and held an inquest, the result of which was a verdict by the jury which was in effect that the mother had murdered her children in the manner stated above, and then suicided.

There is great excitement in Harlan and vicinity over the tragedy. The bodies will be buried to-day.

Daily News
Tue May 26, 1891
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