

November 22 1864

Tunstall

ATTEMPTED SUICIDE At the Hanley Police Court, yesterday, before Messrs., J E Davis and W Brownfield, a tall thin poor looking man, between thirty and forty years of age, named Henry Osbourne, who said he was a domestic servant from London, was charged with attempting to commit suicide. **Samuel Mountford**, a boatman on the Trent and Mersey Canal, said he was on his boat, near Harecastle, on Sunday afternoon, when he heard that a man was in the canal, from his daughter, to whom the prisoner had said, "Go and tell your mother I am going to drown myself". Witness went to the side of his boat, and saw the prisoner in the water. He asked him why he had jumped into the water, and prisoner replied he was tired of life. Witness said that was nonsense, and persuaded him to get out of the water, when he offered him some food. Prisoner, however, said he did not want anything to eat, and made another attempt to jump into the canal, first giving witness his coat. Witness prevented him from carrying out his intention, and took him to the police-station, and gave him into custody. In reply to the Bench, prisoner said he had nothing to say to the charge, and he refused to promise not to repeat his attempt upon his life. Superintendent Cole partly identified him as a man who, some time ago, was concerned in a begging letter imposition, in Hanley, and the prisoner was remanded for a week, for enquiries to be made on the subject.

April 14 1865

Rowley

THE MAN FOUND DROWNED On Wednesday, Mr Hooper, Coroner, held an inquest, at the Two Furnaces Inn, upon the body of **Thomas Pugh**, aged 32 years. The circumstances detailed in evidence were as follows: - The deceased, who lived at the house where the inquest was held, was a boat unloader. The last time he was seen alive was on the night of Saturday, the 18th ult., at about ten or half past ten o'clock. He then went home and told his wife that he had not any money, and she said to him that he had better give up his job and get a better. He then went out, remarking that he would "make a hole in the water", and never returned. His wife sat up for him until about two o'clock on the following morning, and then information was given to the police. On the following Monday the canal, which runs at the back of the house in which he lived, was dragged, but the body was not found. On Monday last, however, a boatman named **William Southall** discovered the body in an upright position close to the back of deceased's residence. Assistance was at once rendered, the body was got out, and on a search being made of the clothes, a watch and chain, three keys, and five shillings and sixpence in money, and three pocket books were found in the pockets. There was not the slightest suspicion of any foul play having been practised on deceased, nor was any one at all to blame in the matter. It was stated that he was sometimes strange in his manner, and that some years ago he left his wife for a long time, and that she never could ascertain where he had been during the time. He was in a sick club, from which his wife would be entitled to £10, unless it could be shown that he had committed suicide. The Coroner having summed up, the Jury, without any hesitation, returned a verdict of "Found drowned in the canal, but how deceased got there there is no evidence to show". To account for the length of time the body remained under water, it may be stated that at that part of the canal where deceased was found there is a great deal of thick mud just below the surface, and for several feet down.

December 6 1886

ALLEGED ATTEMPTED MURDER AND SUICIDE At Wolverhampton, on Saturday, Margaret Howard (34), wife of Samuel Howard of Melbourne Street, was charged with attempting to commit suicide. On Friday evening the prisoner was in Mill Street, in the neighbourhood of the Wolverhampton and Birmingham Canal, when she was heard to say to a girl about three years of age who accompanied her, "Maggie, this is the place where you and I are to end our days. I am in deep trouble, and cannot bear it any longer". Taking up the child, who began to scream, the prisoner advanced towards the canal, but she was stopped by **Emma Baker** (wife of **Jacob Baker**, a boatman). The prisoner threatened to knock the woman's brains out if she would not let her go, as she was determined to jump into the canal and put an end to her trouble. To another woman, who took the child from her, the prisoner said, "She is my Maggie, and I will do what I like with her ;" and added "It is a fine thing for you to rob me of my baby." The prisoner was very excited, and admitted she had drunk two quarters of gin. She was remanded for a week.

July 11 1887

Walsall

THE ATTEMPTED SUICIDE At the Guildhall, on Friday, Jessie Andrews (31), Wisemore, an unfortunate, was charged with attempting to commit suicide on the night of the 6th inst. A boatman named **Joseph Till** saw her deliberately throw herself into the canal in Navigation Street, at a point where it was very deep, and he ran and sprang in after her, and with assistance got her out. Incidentally he mentioned that this was not the first, second, or third time that he had rescued people from the water ; and, in answer to a question, he said he did not possess the Humane Society's medal. The Magistrates Clerk said he ought to have it, and the magistrates complimented him on the admirable way in which he had acted for the preservation of the woman's life, and expressed a hope that in due course he would get the society's medal. The prisoner asked to be sent to a home, stating that she was sick of the life she was leading, and of being beaten and knocked about ; and the Bench remanded her for a week, with the object of finding an institution to which to send her.

July 14 1888

PAINFUL SUICIDE AT ASTON Last evening, Mr J Ansell (deputy coroner for Central Warwickshire) held an inquest at the Yew Tree Inn, Witton, on the body of Eliza Lee (38), wife of Thomas Lee, nailcutter, of 38 Denmark Street, Aston, whose body was found in the Tame Valley Canal on Tuesday evening last. In opening the proceedings, the

Coroner explained that the deceased on Tuesday last appeared as the prosecutrix in a charge of attempting to procure abortion which was preferred against a woman named Eliza Brown, of Dorchester Street, Birmingham, who was subsequently committed to take her trial at the Birmingham Assizes. It was his intention, in the course of the inquest, to exclude anything referring to the Police Court proceedings which was irrelevant to the enquiry inasmuch as the jury were not dealing with Mrs Brown, but had met to consider how, and under what circumstances deceased had met her death. The husband of the deceased was the first witness called, and identified the body as that of his wife, whom he last saw alive on Tuesday morning, about nine o'clock, prior to her departure to the Aston Police Court to give evidence against Brown. She had attended at the court on the same errand on the previous Friday, but the case was not gone into in consequence of the non-attendance of a medical witness. Last Tuesday Brown was brought before the court and committed for trial at the assizes. The Coroner : Did she say anything before she left the house? *She said she wished she had not to go. Why? Because of the way she was served on the Friday before. How was she served? Oh, the mob jeered at her; and she had to run into a place for protection in order to get out of them. She said she was afraid to go, but I told her she must go. Did she tell you whom she was seeking protection from? The mob and the people. Did she say a mob of people? Yes. Had anybody been threatening her? Yes, they said that if she went down to the Police Court again they would mob her to death. She also added, "What a thing it would be if they were to come and mob the house tonight". Has she sought the protection of the police? She told me the police were going to escort her to and from her home. Did they? No, sir. Did you believe in the threats yourself? I did not think much about it. You say that the reason why you did not accompany her was that you did not believe in the threats, and that the police had promised to escort her? I believed that the threats were made in the first instance, but certainly thought the police would escort her. Did she return on Tuesday night? No, sir, she did not. She never returned home again? Never. Had there been any demonstration against her in your sight or hearing? No, sir. Do you think that these threats weighed heavily on her mind? Yes, sir, I do very much. What was her mental condition? She was a very excitable woman, but not nervous. Did she say anything as to what she would do if the prosecution went on? She said two or three times that she would drown herself. Why did she say she would drown herself? She said, "Look at the disgrace it would bring upon yourself and your family". I replied, "Oh, don't think of that : you have done it and are bound to go through it". Is it your belief that the threats, with the possibility of the disgrace of exposure, so preyed upon her mind as to induce her to drown herself? Yes, and one or two things which the magistrates said to her. Has your wife's mind been peculiar since she organised these proceedings? Was she in fact a woman of weak mind? I have no reason to think she was. Having regard to the threats which were made towards your wife, have you claimed police protection for her? I asked her if I should, but she said, "Oh no, it will be all right". I went down to the police station on Monday night myself. By a jurymen : When you knew your wife had been threatened, why did you not accompany her to the police station? Why should I accompany her when she told me she would have police protection? Mary Lee, a little girl aged about ten years, daughter of the deceased, stated that when her mother was at the court on the previous Friday, a crowd of about a dozen persons who were waiting outside that station said very naughty words to her mother, and ran her down Victoria Road, along Clifton Street and Thomas Street, into Park Lane, where she took refuge in the house of a neighbour named Shaw. On Tuesday last witness accompanied her mother to the Police Court, and after the case was over they were let out of the station by the back way into Portland Street. They then went into Lichfield Road, where her mother, after giving her a halfpenny, kissed her, and told her to go home and take care of the baby. That was the last witness saw of the deceased. **John Higgins**, a boatman, stated that he was travelling with his boat along the canal about half past five on Tuesday afternoon, when the deceased accosted him, and asked if he would give her a drink of tea. He proffered her both food and drink, but she only accepted the tea, and asked him to give her a lift as far as the Ten Arches. She entered the boat, and left it at the bridge which carries the railway over the canal. While on the boat, she asked, "How deep is this water?" And on witness replying, "About seven feet", she enquired, "How long would a person be in sinking?" Witness answered, "Oh, they would go to the bottom at once : but I hope you are not going to do that kind of thing". Deceased replied, "Oh, no". During the time she was on the boat, deceased complained of her head, and said how poorly she felt. **Harry Haden**, toll clerk, said he recovered the body from the water near the top of Deakin's Avenue. Life was not extinct, but all efforts to restore animation were without avail. Inspector Hawkes, of the Aston constabulary, stated that the deceased came to the police station on Monday last, saying she had called to see if the case could not be withdrawn, as she was afraid it would get into the newspapers. Witness said all of it would probably not be in the papers. She said, "I shan't come", but witness informed her that Brown was in custody, and it was absolutely necessary that she should be present. She said, "Do you think they will put it in the papers? I will pay anything to keep it out". Witness was present in court on Tuesday and heard the deceased give her evidence. Coroner : How did she give her evidence? Witness : Very reluctantly. Proceeding, the officer denied that Lee claimed police protection, neither did she complain of having been threatened. In consequence of the crowd waiting outside to see Jones, the Sutherland Street murderer, deceased and her daughter left the police station by Portland Street. Witness heard of no hostile demonstration against the woman. Police-constable Harwell spoke to conveying the remains to the Yew Tree Inn. There was nothing on the body to lead to its identification. Mr E Buck, surgeon, of Aston Road, said he had made a *post mortem* examination of the remains and deceased was not *enceinte*. In summing up, the Coroner remarked that no doubt the poor woman, after having laid the information which resulted in the prosecution, wished to withdraw from the case, fearing the hostile demonstration of some persons and the probable publicity which the case would receive by means of the newspapers. This no doubt preyed upon her mind and caused her to commit the rash act which brought them there that day. The jury returned a verdict of "Suicide whilst temporarily insane".*