

THE
LIFE,
TRIAL, & EXECUTION,
 OF
MARY THOMPSON,

AGED NINETEEN, WHO WAS EXECUTED AT
YORK,

ON THE 22ND. MARCH,

FOR THE MURDER OF HER MASTER AND MISTRESS,
 WITH AN ACCOUNT OF HER INNOCENCE BEING PROVED
 AND THE REAL MURDERER DISCOVERED.



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The master and mistress of the above female were most inhumanly butchered, by having their throats cut from ear to ear. This young woman had lived as servant with these aged and unfortunate people for upwards of seven years, and was much esteemed by all who knew her; and by her general good conduct, had gained the confidence of these with whom she lived, who entrusted her with the management of their affairs, and placed the greatest confidence in her honesty. They had kept a large Inn in the vicinity of York for a number of years, but had, a short time since, retired to a small pot-house to pass the remainder of their days in greater quietude than the bustle of an Inn permitted. It was the practice of the old couple to retire to rest about nine o'clock at night, and rise about the same time in the morning, leaving everything in the charge of the servant. Not having any children of their own, it was generally believed that her master would behave handsomely to her, provided she married according to his wishes. This secured her a number of lovers, amongst whom was a young man named Jones, who was most assiduous in his attention towards her, and behaving with the greatest propriety, he soon became a favourite with the old couple.

On Monday Jones went as usual to the house, and when the company had left and the old pair retired to rest, the servant sat with him by the kitchen fire; she had occasion to leave the kitchen a short time, and on her return

she missed him. Hearing a noise, she ran up stairs to her master's room where, to her great terror, she found the drawers plundered, and her master and mistress lying with their throats cut, and the blood gushing in torrents from the wounds. She immediately threw up a front window and gave the alarm, and the neighbours entering, suspicion fell upon her, no one being in the house but her, and from constancy to her lover, she permitted herself to be fully committed for trial. At the late assizes she was arraigned, convicted, and sentenced to be hung.

At the place of execution she addressed the numerous by-standers as follows:—

Good People,—You are now come to see the latter end of a poor unfortunate young woman nineteen years of age, who is brought to an ignominious death for murder; but I say there is a just God that sitteth in the judgement seat of heaven, before whom I must shortly appear to answer for all my sins. I most solemnly declare before God and the world, that I am as innocent of the murder as the child unborn, and then she burst into tears.

After this she prayed with the minister, sung a penitential psalm, and kneeling down she prayed that the Almighty would convince the assembled multitude of her innocency or guilt by showing them the following miracles,—That if she was guilty it might be one of the finest days that could come from heaven; but if she was innocent, that darkness might overspread the town during the time she was suspended. Her supplication reached the throne of Grace; for immediately on her being turned off a dark thick cloud covered the country for many miles, attended with thunder, lightning, and rain. Jones, who was a spectator, stung with guilt and horror, rushed through the crowd exclaiming,

“I AM THE MURDERER!”

and delivered himself into the hands of justice. He fully confessed his guilt, and declared the murder was not premeditated, but he was struck with a desire to gain their riches, and he intended to have murdered his sweetheart also. He was fully committed for trial at the next assizes.

COPY OF VERSES WRITTEN IN JAIL.

You servant girls, both far and near,
 I pray you to attend,
 And be advis'd by these few lines
 Which I in jail have penn'd.

While you are in your master's house,
 If you'll be rul'd by me,
 Don't let your sweethearts come by night,
 A-courting unto thee.

He might have a dishonest heart,
 Likewise a murdering hand;
 The devil and his subtile ways
 Are hard to understand:

After you peruse this book,
 I hope that you will guard
 Against a similar overthrow,
 You see what's my reward.

To die upon the gallows tree
 For what I never did,
 May it not happen unto thee,
 I pray not; God forbid.

May God still give you grace to choose,
 While you're in single life,
 To fix upon a proper man,
 To whom you'll be a wife.

Oh! you that have not hearts of stone,
 Attend to what I say,
 For death has seal'd my earthly doom,
 And summon'd me away.

Alas! this dreadful fate of mine,
 That I should die in scorn,
 Although as guiltless of the crime
 As is the babe unborn.

To atone for blood I never shed,
 In midst of youth and bloom,
 I to the fatal scaffold led,
 Must meet the murderer's doom.

And while I stand exposed there,
 Before the knot is tied,
 My innocence I will declare
 To all the world beside.

Farewell my aged mother dear,
 Your tender heart is broke;
 Alas! you'll never live I fear,
 To bear this cruel stroke.

What would your tender bosom feel,
 To see your darling child,
 That you had nourish'd at your breast,
 Brought to an end so vile.

Before my eyes are clos'd I pray,
 And Heaven my prayers hear;
 My innocence may be reveal'd,
 And be as noon-day clear.

And bring the hand to light,
 Who did the horrid deed,
 That all may know poor Mary Thompson
 Was innocent indeed.

She met her ignominious death,
 Resign'd to her hard fate,
 But scarce had yielded up her breath,
 When awful to relate,

A man confess'd unto the crime,
 For which the maiden died,
 And now in irons he is confined,
 His trial to abide.

MELANCHOLY LOSS OF LIFE BY FIRE.

On the night of the 16th inst., one of those alarming and somewhat mysterious dispensations of Divine Providence, without whose permission, we are told, a sparrow cannot fall to the ground, took place in a flax mill, situate about ten minutes walk from Kilmarnock, belonging to Mr. Daniel M'Larrey. At the time the very calamitous event occurred to which I am about to refer, there were at work in the mill, the owner, four men, and two girls, in all seven persons. It would appear that about 8 or 9 o'clock one of the girls went out to enter the lantern, which in flax-mills is prudently so constructed as not to admit of any communication with the interior of the mill, and therefore must be entered from the outside, to snuff the candle, which she did with her fingers, and on casting the snuff from her it entered a small crevice or mouse-hole, communicating, it would appear, with the floor of the mill, and falling through, rested on the very ignitable material with which such floors are usually covered, which immediately took fire. The blaze was observed by the owner, who instantly made an effort to extinguish it by throwing a leathern apron over it, and thought he had succeeded, but in this alas! he was mistaken, as in a second or two, it burst forth with increased force, the motion of the wipers adding to the fury of the devouring element, and in a few minutes not only the flax but the poor creatures themselves, who were covered with the waste of the flax, were enveloped in the flames. At this time, as all hope of getting the fire under was past, a simultaneous rush was made to the door, which unfortunately had, contrary to custom, been locked by the girl on her return from snuffing the candle; but owing to the ex-

citement consequent on their situation, now that they were literally roasting alive, as one of the poor fellows expressed to me afterwards, joined to the sense of suffocation at this time experienced, it was sometime before any one of them could lay his hand on the key—but this done the poor fellow, in his maddened eagerness to get it turned, pulled it out of the lock, and it falling from his hand, protracted their sufferings, and made their situation still more perilous. But as God would have it (a few seconds or at most a very few minutes more, and all would have been over with them) the key was found, the door unlocked, and as many as could, rushed out, but some of them, I understand, had to return to drag out the remainder of the sufferers, who, having been overpowered by the flame and smoke, had fallen down. All got out, but so dreadfully burnt, chiefly about the head and limbs, as to present the most harrowing spectacle of human suffering that can be well conceived, the faces of most of them presenting one mass of broiled flesh, having a cinder like appearance. The owner, on getting out, cast himself on the ground, and rolled into a small stream of water which runs from the mill; and having thus extinguished the blaze in which he was, got out, and though fearfully burnt, struggled to reach that part of the dam where the water is let on to the mill, and contrived to turn off the wheel, which facilitated the efforts now made to stay the progress of the fire, in the mill, and which after some time, was completely subdued, but not before considerable damage had been done to the roof and the interior works of the mill. I should mention, that as the mill stands at some distance from any dwelling-house, the situation of the sufferers was quite unknown until after they had extricated themselves from the flames, when their cries being heard, assistance was promptly and speedily rendered by those drawn to the spot. They were conveyed as soon as possible to their respective homes, where immediate medical aid was rendered by Mr. R. N., the medical superintendent of our dispensary, Dr. Jones being engaged in some other quarter at the time, but who, on

learning the sad occurrence, was promptly on the spot and both have been unwearied in their endeavours to alleviate, as far as possible, the pain of the sufferers, who were, with the exception of Mr. M'Larrey, removed in a day or two to the hospital. One of the poor girls, aged 17, died the second day after, in great agony; the sufferings of her sister, who had just reached her 15th year the night of the burning, were prolonged till yesterday, when she also was released from them, by death. Both were daughters of one of the sufferers, who has, besides five children, all young. The remaining five are going on as well as can be expected, and it is hoped that the means resorted to will, under Providence, restore them to their families. I am glad to be able to add that the inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood have come forward promptly, as might be expected, to manifest their sympathy for the sufferers.

