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TLS

*The Horrid Cruelties Inflicted by
M^{rs} Brownrigge upon her Apprentices.*

God's Revenge against Murder!

OR, THE

Tragical Histories

AND

HORRID CRUELTIES

OF

ELIZABETH

BROWNRIGG,

Midwife,

TO

Mary Mitchell, Mary Jones, & Mary Clifford,

HER THREE APPRENTICES.

ALSO

A Circumstantial and

CORRECT ACCOUNT

OF

JOHN WILLIAMSON,

Shoemaker,

FOR

Starving and Beating his Wife to Death,

SHEWING

The Wisdom and Power of God in bringing such Monsters
to Justice and Punishment.

Both taken from the Office Copy in the Clerk of the Arraigns Chambers

London :

PRINTED FOR AND SOLD BY R. MACDONALD, CROWN-COURT, SOHO;
T BROOM, NO. 54, DRURY-LANE, OPPOSITE LONG ACRE ;
J. LLÉWELLEN, NO. 5, BOW-STREET, BLOOMSBURY ;
AND J. HERBERT, NO. 4, MERLIN'S-PLACE, SPA-FIELDS.

Price Sixpence.

TRUE AND
AUTHENTIC NARRATIVE
OF THE
VARIOUS AND HORRID CRUELTIES
INFLECTED BY
Elizabeth Brownrigg,
HER HUSBAND, AND ELDEST SON,
ON THE BODIES OF THEIR THREE APPRENTICES.

MMURDER is, of all crimes, the most detestable, as no adequate restitution can be made for a life taken away, and has always been severely punished among civilized nations; and among christians, it should seem incredible, that such deliberate atrocity should exist, and the perpetrator be the mother of sixteen children, and a midwife. Yet such is the depravity of human nature, that none of the civil or religious obligations, or the fear of eternal punishment, could deter this woman from her brutal purpose, and involving herself, her husband, and eldest son into the greatest possible misery; yet such was the case of Mrs. Brownrigg; a case so extraordinary, that it is scarcely to be paralleled in any age or nation. The cautions and instructions herewith delivered, are intended to be of utility to all degrees of people, but more especially to women who have the care of children from parish workhouses, or hospital institutions, that such should consider themselves at once as mistresses, and as mothers; nor ever permit the strictness of the former character to preponderate over or diminish the humanity of the latter.

The following pages contain a faithful and succinct narrative of every material transaction of this unfortunate culprit, from her birth to her final exit; compiled from a manuscript account left in the Clerk of the Arraigns' office, never published, and Mr. Wingrave's pamphlet, who was one of the constables of the ward of Faringdon Without, and the officer that apprehended her.

In the year 1745, James Brownrigg, a house-painter, married Elizabeth his Wife, then a servant in the family of Mr. R——, in Prescott-street, Goodman's-fields; Brownrigg, at the same time, served his apprenticeship with a plaisterer and painter in that neighbourhood.

Their first Settlement, after marriage, was at Greenwich, where he carried on his business for five years. Then they came to London, where they lived a considerable time, and at last took a house in Fleur-de-luce-court, where they continued to live.

Mrs. Brownrigg, it seems, was very fertile, and brought her husband sixteen children, three of whom only survived.

After she had done bearing children, she undertook the business of a midwife, and was so well versed in the practice of her office, that she executed it to the general approbation of the patients that came under her hands; and at length became so well known for her skill and tenderness, that the officers of the parish of St. Dunstan's in the West, were induced to appoint her midwife to their workhouse, wherein she acquitted herself with judgement and humanity; and her business here lying amongst the poorest sort of objects, destitute of every necessary, but what such a miserable place afforded, she was even said to have relieved them by her charitable benevolence.

But Mrs. Brownrigg, besides her general practice abroad, had fitted up conveniencies in her house for the accommodation of pregnant women, who wanted to lye-

in privately. And it having been reported, and generally believed, that she made a very bad use of these private doings; that she took money to provide for the children that were born there; that for reward, she had destroyed divers of these children, and prevented many from coming alive into the world: being interrogated hereupon, while she lay under sentence of death in Newgate, she solemnly protested, that there was not the least ground for such stories; that though she often entertained pregnant women to lye-in at her house, yet the children born there were taken away, and provided for by their friends, but where, and by whom, she knew not; that no such child ever died in her house, and but only one was still-born; and that of all the women she had delivered since she had begun her practice, only two had died, whose deaths were not occasioned through any neglect or want of care in her.

While she was thus carrying on the business of a midwife, she bethought herself of another way of getting money, which was by taking girls apprentices from the parish workhouse, it being the usual custom in the parish of St. Dunstan, to give 5l. with every girl so apprenticed. One of these unfortunate creatures she took from the workhouse of that parish, namely, Mary Mitchell; Mary Jones from the Foundling Hospital; and Mary Clifford from the Precinct of White Friars. Notwithstanding the many reports that were spread at that time to blacken her character, it must be here declared, that she never had any other parish apprentices but the above three, the first of whom, Mary Mitchell, was bound to J. Brownrigg, in February, 1765, with whom he received 5l. besides apparel sufficient for her wear for two years, though her neighbours could not conceive what occasion she had for any apprentices at all, or what trade she could learn them, as she herself followed only the business of midwifery, and her husband that of house-painting.

Besides this poor girl, she took another from the Foundling Hospital, whose name was Mary Jones. She

was received into that hospital April 6, 1751, and was bound to James Brownrigg, May 13, 1765. But her stay here could be but very short; for July 24, following, we found an entry in the books of the Hospital as follows :—

“ Ordered, that Mr. Plumbtree, the Hospital Solicitor, do write to James Brownrigg, a painter in Fetter-lane, who had the child, Mary Jones, apprenticed to him by this corporation, and acquaint him, that if he doth not forthwith make satisfaction for the abuse to the said child, that this corporation will prosecute him with the utmost severity.”

Accordingly, Brownrigg had notice given him of this order; but he not paying that respect to it which the governors thought the nature of the affair required, he was summoned before the Chamberlain of London, where the matter was finally adjusted, and the satisfaction demanded given.

The reasons that induced this girl to quit her master's service so abruptly, were the frequent and cruel whippings given her by Mrs. Brownrigg, in which (as the girl affirmed) she was often assisted by her husband.

The manner in which she exercised her cruelties upon this poor girl, Mary Jones, being somewhat extraordinary, it deserves a more particular relation.

Her mistress used to lay two chairs on the floor, in such a form that one supported the other; then she and her husband fastened the girl upon the back of those chairs, sometimes naked; but if she had her cloaths on, her mistress pulled them over her head, and whipped her till she had tired herself.

Sometimes, when the girl had been washing any of the rooms or stairs, her mistress has taken occasion to find fault with her work, and, by way of punishment, has snatched her up in her arms, and soused her over

head and ears in a pail of dirty water that was standing by, repeating it several times, and often threatened to drown her in a tub of water, which she once ordered Mary Mitchell to fill for that purpose. By which cruel usage the girl received several contusions in many parts of her body, particularly in her neck and shoulders, from the edges and bale of the pail.

And indeed so great were the sufferings of this poor girl, and still under apprehensions of yet worse to come, that she resolved, on the first opportunity, to release herself from this terrible situation; which she effected in the following manner:

Her bed, it seems, was in a hole under a dresser, in the same room where Brownrigg and his wife lay, and facing the feet of their bed. Here, as one Sunday morning she lay ruminating on, and lamenting her miserable condition, smarting with the bruises she had already received, and dreading what she was yet likely to suffer, she espied the key of the outer door hanging on a nail against a post, then turning her eyes towards her master's bed, and perceiving they were both fast asleep, she immediately shuffled on her clothes, crept softly to the door, unlocked it, and bid adieu to that inhospitable mansion.

The poor creature having thus obtained her liberty, hastened away as fast as she could to her only home, the Hospital, but not knowing the way, she enquired of every body she met, and at last found it, to her inexpressible joy, and was instantly admitted.

The above relation is the substance of this poor girl's deposition before the gentlemen of the Hospital, who did not think it proper to put any question to Mary Jones, that could either confirm or invalidate it. The fact was that her appearance was enough to declare the shocking discipline she had undergone among these miscreants.

Let us now return to the other two poor girls, whose situation was no less dismal than that of this poor unhappy foundling.

Mary Clifford, who was the third apprentice, and the chief object of her mistress's infernal rage, was the daughter of J. Clifford, a shoe-maker in White Friars, whose Wife dying, left this, and several other children, to his charge; but he not being in a capacity to take proper care of them, and likewise marrying again, the poor children were thrown upon the parish, the officers of which bound her to James Brownrigg, on the 18th of February, 1766. The only friend she had was her mother-in-law, who happened to be then in the country. On her return to town, being informed of what was done, she immediately went to see the girl, but was told by a neighbour, that no such person was there; for it seems Mrs. Brownrigg imagining such an enquiry might be made, had taken the precaution to desire an opposite neighbour, if any one should ask after the girl, to say she (Mrs. Brownrigg) had no apprentice at all.

Upon which she applied herself to the Overseers of White Friars, to be informed what they had done with her daughter, who assured her that they had bound her out to Brownrigg as aforesaid. Upon this she went again, and seeing James Brownrigg, desired to see Mary Clifford their girl; he said no such person lived there; and threatened, if she made any disturbance, he would take her before the Lord Mayor, and she thereupon went away. Soon after this, a baker's apprentice and journeyman, who lived just by Brownrigg, came out and told her that her daughter was there, and very barbarously used. She acquainted the parish officers with what she had heard. They went with her to Brownrigg's house, and the officers demanding to see the girl, were told that the girl they enquired for was not at home, but was gone into the country. Mrs. Brownrigg, seeing the officers in the shop, went out of doors immediately,

and made her escape. The officers still insisted on seeing the girl, and Brownrigg as peremptorily denied her being there, and said she was in Hertfordshire. At last he produced Mary Mitchell. The officers being persuaded that the other girl was in the house, searched all over the house from top to bottom, and could not find her. But on the officers threatening, that if he did not produce her, they would take him before a magistrate, and accordingly ordering a coach to be ready to carry him, Brownrigg promised to produce the girl, and his son John brought her in, but in a most miserable condition; her head was cut, with many terrible gashes upon it; her back, legs, and thighs, were in the same sad condition, and a very bad wound appeared upon one of her hips; her head and throat were prodigiously swelled, and her mouth extended in such a manner, that she could not shut her lips, nor even speak but with a sort of inarticulate sound in the throat. Upon which the officers took both the girls away, and conveyed them to the workhouse, and put Clifford under the care of a surgeon, who on examining her case, said she was in a very dangerous way.

Being carried to the workhouse, they were ordered to be undressed and put to bed. When they came to pull off Mitchell's leathern boddice, the poor wretch screamed out most terribly; for the leather sticking fast to the wounds, put her to intolerable pain in taking it off. But being promised she should never return to her mistress again, she began to take heart, and assured Mr. Grundy, the overseer, that the moment before she herself had been introduced to him at Brownrigg's house, she had parted with Mary Clifford, on the garrat stairs. And it appeared afterwards, that Brownrigg took this opportunity to convey the girl into a cupboard under the beaufet in the dining-room, and shut her in; which the officers having no suspicion of, never searched, as they did every other part of the house.

The apothecary, who attended the girls, finding them, especially Clifford, in a very bad way, he acquainted

the officers of the parish, that he being no surgeon, it would be proper to send them to the hospital; which was accordingly done.

It is no wonder that a consciousness to these horrid cruelties, and occasional reflection upon the consequences of their coming to be known, should induce these people to use all their art to keep her hid from the neighbours sight. Upon one occasion, however, it was thought proper, after instructing the girl, at the hazard of the severest punishment what answer to make, and what behavior to follow, to let her see her mother-in-law who had called for that purpose. Her mother asked her how she did? she answered, very well. Are you well used? replied, very well. Do you like your master and mistress? answered to all the questions, very well. And then to put an end to all further questions and prevent, if possible, all further visits, the girl told her, she need not trouble herself to call again, as her mistress required her to do her work, and not mind such silly bad people as thought they had a right to come and ask impertinent questions, and that she did not wish to have any followers. This set the mother-in-law off for that time, but still suspecting all was not right determined upon sifting the mystery to the bottom, which she did at last as before related.

Meanwhile Brownrigg was carried to Wood Street Compter, in order to be taken before a Magistrate the next day; and his wife (as before observed) having made her escape, was soon followed by her eldest son, who took with him some cloaths, her gold watch, and some money.

It may here be proper to relate in what manner this dark scene of iniquity was discovered, and brought to light; thus it was: an apprentice of Mr. Deacon, a baker in Fleur-de-luce Court, next door to Mr. Brownrigg, on the 3d of August, going up to a two pair of stairs window, and looking down on the skylight, the window of which was taken off, he saw Mary Clifford,

her back and shoulders cut in a very shocking manner, without a cap, and her head wounded and bloody. Then he went down two pair of stairs, and getting through a window, crept to the sky-light, where he had a full view of her; he called to her several times, but had no answer; he then tossed down some bits of mortar, one of which fell on her head; upon which she looked up, and he saw her eyes black, and her face extremely swelled, and made a noise something like a long — O! and then withdrew backwards. He then went down and told his mistress, what a miserable condition the girl was in. Upon which Mrs. Deacon sent for a watchmaker's wife (a neighbour) and telling her what her apprentice had seen, desired her to go and find out the girl's mother-in-law, and tell her how cruelly her daughter had been used; she came, and what followed has already been related.

It should also be known, that Brownrigg, being concerned in a sale at Hampstead, bought a hog, and brought it home to his house in Fleur-de-luce Court. This hog he put into a covered yard, over which was a sky-light; after a while, it was thought necessary to open the sky-light, to give vent to the stench, occasioned by keeping the hog in so close a place; and it was through this sky-light that Mr. Deacon's apprentice had a view of this miserable object

Another thing to be observed is, that when the parish officers came to demand a sight of the girls, Brownrigg, thinking to intimidate them with high words, and a threatening tone of voice, sent for a lawyer, who came, and to assist his client in terrifying the overseers, and to make them desist from their purpose, drew up a writing in form, demanding by what authority they entered the house, and threatening them with a prosecution unless they immediately quitted it. Mr. Grundy however was not to be frightened, but resolutely pursued his search till the girl was produced, which was not without much opposition on Brownrigg's side, who insisted to keep her to the last, on the ground of her being

his apprentice, and it should be at his peril if he attempted to remove her. However, Mr. Grundy sent for John Wingrave, one of the ward constables, who took him to Wood Street Compter, whence he was carried before Alderman Crosby, at Guildhall, before whom likewise the two girls were brought from the Hospital to be examined. Mary Clifford being in a very weak condition, was carried in a chair, and first examined, but was not able to answer more than yes or no, to whatever was asked her.

Mary Mitchell was then questioned by the Alderman, and she deposed, that her mistress had often tied them both up, naked, with their arms across, to an iron staple that was fixed to a beam in the cellar for that purpose and whipped them in a most cruel and barbarous manner for the most trifling offences; that on the Friday before, Mary Clifford, in particular, was thus tied up, and whipped six times, and herself twice; that on the Sunday before, they were locked up in the coal-hole under the cellar stairs, where they had often been confined before, without any thing given them to eat, except a piece of bread, and without so much as a drop of water, or any other kind of liquid. Having given this information, they were returned to the hospital, where all possible care was taken of them, and Brownrigg was sent back to the compter for farther examination, and a warrant granted to apprehend Elizabeth Brownrigg, and her son John.

No words can so powerfully describe the shocking appearance of those miserable objects, as the silent woe with which every person present was struck with at such a sight, and the execrations which followed against those who had caused so much undeserved suffering. The most diligent search was made after her, and not a house among her acquaintance was left unvisited, where it was supposed she might be concealed. Two persons went down to Stanstead, in Hertfordshire, where she had a child of six years of age, but found her not there all enquiries proving unsuccessful, it was determined to

insert an advertisement in the newspapers, and on Saturday, August 8, the following appeared :

“ Whereas Elizabeth, the wife of James Brownrigg, painter, of Fleur-de-luce Court, Fleet Street, stands charged on oath, with cruelly treating two apprentice girls, so that their lives are in great danger: whoever will apprehend her, so that she may be brought to justice, shall have Ten Guineas Reward, of the overseers of the parish of St. Dunstan's in the West. She is middle sized, slim, of a swarthy complexion, near 50 years of age; had on a yellow gown striped, and followed the practice of midwifery.

“ And whoever will apprehend John Brownrigg her son, a youth of a pale complexion, dark hair, very slim, about 19 years of age, by trade a painter, who also stands charged on oath, with being accessory to the said cruel treatment, shall have Two Guineas Reward, to be paid by the overseers aforesaid.”

The next day, Sunday, August 9, Mary Clifford died in St. Bartholomew's Hospital. A little before her death, the swelling in her head and neck subsided, and she was able to swallow, but soon afterwards fell into a high fever and delirium, in which she died. After her swelling was abated, she spoke, but with great difficulty and pain, and very inarticulately. It was the opinion of the surgeon who attended, that the wounds she had received were the occasion of her death.

On Monday the 10th, the above advertisement was again inserted in the papers, but with this additional note, which the death of the poor girl rendered necessary.

“ As Mary Clifford, one of the aforesaid apprentice girls, died this morning, it is necessary to caution all persons from harbouring, or in any wise concealing the above mentioned Elizabeth and John Brownrigg; as whoever harbours or conceals them, shall be prosecuted with the utmost severity of the law.

“ W. OWEN, Church Warden.”

On Tuesday the 11th of August, the Coroner's inquest sat on the body of Mary Clifford, at the Red Cow in Smithfield. The chief witness produced to prove the facts, and charge the criminal, was Mary Mitchell; but as her evidence will be given more at large hereafter, we must refer the particulars to the account we shall then give.

The Surgeon also, who attended her in the Hospital, was clearly of opinion, that the wounds and bruises the girl had received by the whippings, for want of proper dressings, was the occasion of her death. He further declared, that he found six wounds on her head, three of which were large, and three smaller; that she had a large wound on each shoulder, besides a vast number of cuts all over her body, particularly on the hips; all which said wounds appeared to him in a state of mortification; that her head and throat were so prodigiously swelled, that she could neither speak nor swallow.

The Jury having considered of their verdict, brought it in Willful Murder against Elizabeth and James Brownrigg. But nothing appearing on this inquisition to charge their youngest son William with having any concern in this tragical affair, he was ordered to be discharged from the Poultry Compter, whereto he had been committed on suspicion.

Mr. Owen being informed of what was determined on by the inquisition, summoned a vestry, in order to take their sense in what manner to proceed, in regard to the apprehending Elizabeth Brownrigg; and it was resolved to repeat the advertisement, and to offer a Reward of Twenty Guineas for apprehending her, and Five Guineas for her other son; because it had appeared on the evidence, that he had been several times very active in the cruel usage of the girls.

It was not long before intelligence was brought, that Mrs. Brownrigg and her son had taken places in the Dover stage coach. But on second thoughts, believ-

ing their journey thither might be attended with some danger, they judged it better to lose their earnest than to proceed in it. They then went to East Smithfield, and took a lodging in Nightingale Lane, where they remained till Tuesday the 11th. But before they quitted that quarter of the town, they bought some second-hand apparel, to prevent them being known by their own cloaths from the description given of them in the advertisement.

Taking coach, from hence they proceeded to the water side, and passed over to Wandsworth, where they took a lodging at a chandler's shop kept by Mr. Dunbar, and on Sunday the 16th were there taken. Here they passed for man and wife, and lay in the same room, where was but one bed, and kept themselves very close.

Mr. *Dunbar*, their landlord, happening to read the advertisement in the papers, describing their persons, and offering a reward for apprehending them, imagined he could perceive a very great similitude between the persons described in the advertisement, and his lodgers; and acquainting his wife of his suspicions, he resolved to go to town the next day, and make the discovery. Accordingly he went, but Mr. *Owen* being at church, he went thither, and sending for him into the vestry, he gave him such a description of his lodgers, as convinced Mr. *Owen*, that they must be the same they wanted.

Mr. *Owen*, to proceed with the greater caution and secrecy in an affair of such importance, sent to Mr. *Deacon*, who had been next door neighbour to the *Brownriggs* for two years past, and therefore was perfectly acquainted with their persons, and begged the favour of him to go along with *John Wingrave* the constable to *Wandsworth*.

Mr. *Deacon* complied with his request, immediately set out, and on their arrival at *Dunbar's* house, the constable went up directly into their room, but not

knowing their persons, and seeing them dressed in a manner very different from the description given of them in the advertisement, began to think he was under a mistake, and was about to withdraw; but Mr. Deacon coming in at that instant, assured him that they were the people he wanted.

Just at this juncture Dunbar entered, asking, seemingly in surprize, what was the matter? and received for answer, nothing, but that his lodgers had been suddenly sent for to town, upon which he abruptly asked who was to pay him for his rent? Mrs. Brownrigg hearing this, gave him one shilling which with that he received as earnest when they first entered, made up the two shillings a weeks rent they had agreed to pay; adding that they should leave things enough besides behind them, such as bread, meat, coals, &c. which she severally pointed to.

At the sight of their well known neighbour, Mr. Deacon, the mother and son were not a little surprised, but soon composing their spirits to more calmness, they quietly submitted to their fate, only desiring they might not be ill-used or exposed. The constable searched their pockets to prevent any mischief in their way to town. Mr. Deacon having, with some difficulty, procured a coach, they were conveyed into the Borough. In their conversation by the way, Mrs. Brownrigg earnestly requested Mr. Deacon to employ his interest with the landlord, not to let the house, but to keep it in reserve for her son; a very odd subject to employ her thoughts, considering the very critical situation she was in, and death almost within her view; unless we charitably suppose, that her affectionate concern for the welfare of her family bore down all other consideration whatsoever.

This affair was managed with so much expedition and dexterity, that, excepting the lodgers in Dunbar's house, the people of the village were not apprised till all was over of what was transacted. Being arrived in the Borough, they took a hackney coach, and proceeded to

the Poultry Compter, where the constable delivered up his prisoners to the keeper, about four in the afternoon.

Mrs. Brownrigg no sooner entered the gate, but she fell into fits, and was frequently afterwards attacked with strong convulsions, which, together with her refusing to take any nourishment, but what was forced upon her, made it doubtful whether she would live to take her trial. But the Lord Mayor being informed of these circumstances, ordered that she should be carefully watched, and all possible care taken of her till she was well enough to be removed to Newgate.

The son was in little better condition than his mother; for his mind being filled with all the horrors of guilt; and terrified at the thought of the dreadful punishment which he imagined awaited it, he was seized with a fever; from which being somewhat recovered, he was, on Friday, August 21, taken before the Lord Mayor at the Mansion House, where he passed under a long examination; in the course of which it appeared, that he had very cruelly treated Mary Clifford, deceased; and once, when his mother had whipped her till she was tired, he, by her orders, took the whip, and gave her about twenty lashes more, notwithstanding he then saw her body bleeding with many wounds.

On the Monday following, he was again brought before his lordship, and examined, when Mary Mitchell deposed, that he had several times beat her also very cruelly, particularly once, when he stripped her naked, and tied her up to the staple which his mother made use of for the same purpose, and there whipped her in a most violent manner with a horse whip, and for no other fault or offence than that of eating some chesnuts, which he pretended were not his own.

The witness likewise deposed, that about six months ago, the said John Brownrigg beat the deceased with the buckle end of a thick leather belt, till the blood ran from her head, neck, and shoulders, (several wounds she had

before, being just skinned over) because she did not turn up a bed, though (as it appeared) she had not strength to do it: but added, that the son had not, to her knowledge, beat the deceased after the last mentioned time; and it being the opinion of the surgeons, that the wounds which occasioned her death were those which she received on the 31st. of July, 1765, and the whippings given by the son being before that time, he was not judged accessory to the murder; but was remanded back to the Compter, till it could be known whether the parish officers had any other charge against him.

Mrs. Brownrigg being informed of what had passed at the Mansion House on her son's examination, grew better, and her convulsions were less frequent, till the 24th, when they returned with greater violence than ever; for on that day, her son was again carried before the Lord Mayor, charged with a misdemeaner, in beating the surviving girl, apprentice to his father; when it appeared, on the oath of the girl, that he had whipped her naked three days successively with a horse-whip, twice by his mother's order, and the third time of his own accord, because she had eat two or three chesnuts that lay in her way. Upon which he was re-committed to the Compter; and his mother being informed of it, again fell into fits, and so continued till Friday the 28th, when his Lordship being informed she was better, sent his apothecary to enquire what condition she was in; who reported, that she might, with safety, be carried to Newgate. Upon which a coach was ordered, and placed as near the Compter gate as possible, to prevent any interruption from the mob, who had, from a rumour that she was to be examined before his Lordship at the Mansion House, assembled in great numbers for several days in the Poultry, in order to have sight of her. Being helped into the coach, and the blinds drawn up, she was carried to Newgate, without the least noise or disturbance whatever; where her convulsive fits returned, and continued, by intervals, till her trial came on.

In order to be regular in our narrative, it is not improper to mention in this place, that, on Wednesday, the second of September, the Church Wardens of St. Dunstan's in the West paid Mr. Dunbar twenty five guineas for his information, by which Mrs. Brownrigg and her son John were taken.

Wingrave the constable says he called on her in Newgate on Saturday the 5th, and found her very dejected. She then implored him to procure her a bible and to apply for little sums of money due to her up and down the town, he complied with her request and called again on Wednesday the ninth, when she seemed a little calmer, and wished to impart something material to him, but was prevented by the attendance of two turnkeys, whose presence in this case could not be dispensed with, for when spoken to on this occasion, they replied, it was by special orders they were always to be present whenever she had any one with her; nevertheless she might freely say any thing before them, as it was a rule they strictly observed, never to reveal any thing they heard in the private conversations between prisoners and their friends. She then declared her mind which related to the posthumous part of her punishment, how far the surgeons would proceed in dissecting of her, shewing a great abhorrence and horror at being made a skeleton of, and when informed that this part of the punishment was according to an old standing act of parliament, she fell into violent fits, so great was the shock it gave her.

On the 4th of September, James Brownrigg was removed from Wood Street Compter to Newgate, in order to take his trial at the ensuing sessions at the Old Bailey.

September 9, Bills of indictment were preferred to the Grand Jury, against James and Elizabeth Brownrigg, and John their son, for the Wilful Murder of Mary Clifford; all which were found, and the son, thereupon, was removed from the Poultry Counter to Newgate, to take his trial with his father and mother. The next day, Thursday the 10th, bills of indictment were also preferred

and found against the father and son, for an assault on Mary Mitchel.

On Saturday September 12, their trials came on. The substance of the evidence given by Mary Mitchell was as follows: that she was in the sixteenth year of her age; that about two years before, she was bound apprentice to James Brown in Fleur-de-luce Court; that Mary Clifford had been apprentice there about a year and a half, and was a month upon liking. During the first month of her liking, she was used well, lay on a good bed, and eat and drank as the family did; but about a week after she was bound, her ill treatment began, and for any trifling offence, her Mistress beat her over the head and shoulders with a walking cane and a hearth brush. After she was bound, she was made to lie on the parlour boards, or in the passage, and often in the cellar; and the reason alledged by her mistress for using her thus, was her wetting the bed. Sometimes she lay in her own cloths, or else had a bit of a blanket to cover her. At other times they were both locked up in the coal hole under the cellar stairs. There she had a sack stuffed with straw to lie upon, with a bit of blanket to cover her; but sometimes she was quite naked. The reason why her mistress confined her in that dark hole was, because, being very hungry, the girl got up one night, and broke open the cupboard where the victuals used to be put, but found none. Her mistress having discovered this, made her strip herself naked to wash, where she stood all that day naked, her mistress whipping her, at intervals, all the time. Mary Clifford was then about fifteen years of age. The instrument her mistress made use of in beating her, was the stump of a riding whip. After that day her mistress obliged her to lie under the cellar stairs, the coals being taken out to make room for her. Sometimes they were both locked in together, that is, from Saturday night till Sunday night, when their master and mistress went into the country; during which time they had nothing to eat but a piece of bread, and nothing to drink; and were let out of this dismal prison on

Sunday night by the apprentice boy. At such times they were generally locked up by John the son, but never by their master, except once. All the bed they had to lie upon was sometimes some old rags they got out of the garret, and sometimes had only a boy's waistcoat to cover them, it being their mistress's order, that they should not lie in their cloaths. About a year and a half ago, John the son beat Mary Clifford with a leather strap, for not turning up the parlour bed, as hard as he could strike, though it was beyond her strength to do it. The wounds in her head and shoulders, which she had but a little before received from her mistress, and but just scabbed over, were now made to bleed a fresh. The blood dropt on the ground, so as to make a small puddle. Once her master beat her with a hearth brush, though never but that once.

The manner in which she used to beat her, was, to tie her up by the hands to a water pipe in the kitchen, and then to lash her naked body with a horse-whip, and seldom left off till she had fetched blood. About three months ago, her master, by her mistress's desire, fastened a hook into the beam in the kitchen. The use that was made of this hook, was to tie Mary Clifford and herself up to be beat, When Mary Clifford was tied up, she was always naked, and always beat till she bled. Sometime before the hook was put up, her mistress had been beating the girl a considerable time with the horse whip, and she was fastened to the water pipe naked; just as she had unloosed her, John coming down, she bid him take the whip and beat her, which he did, and gave her several severe strokes. Another punishment inflicted by her merciless mistress on Mary Clifford, was, by putting a jack chain round her neck, and fastening the other end of it to the yard door. It was drawn very tight round her neck, as hard as it could be without choking her. The fault she was thus punished for was, that being a-dry in the night, she broke down some boards to get a little water. She was chained to the door all day, but loosed at night, and then sent into a cellar, with her hands tied behind her, the chain being still on

her neck, and locked under the cellar stairs all night. Her mistress having been abroad for some days, came home on Friday the 31st. of July. Mary Clifford was then pretty well in health, and her wounds were scabbed over, but very sore about her head and shoulders. About 10 o'clock that morning, her mistress went down into the kitchen and tied the girl up to the hook, pretending she had done no work whilst she was abroad; then she horse-whipped her all over the body, so that drops of blood trickled down to the ground. Having let her down, and put her to the washing-tub, she lashed her again, and with the but end of the whip struck her two or three times on the head as she was stooping over the tub, bidding her work faster. Five times she was tied up that day, and whipped by her mistress, neither had she any cloaths on the whole day, which she was charged not to put on. After the last severe whipping on Friday, her head and shoulders were quite raw, and her whole body all over gashed with wounds in a frightful manner; her head, neck, and throat, were prodigiously swelled, insomuch that her chin, cheeks, and all, were quite even. Her mistress then began to think she had gone a little too far, and, to assuage the swelling, laid a poultice of bread and milk to her throat. If any thing could add to the barbarity of this woman, it was, that she would not suffer them to cry out, however cruelly tortured; for if they did, she never left whipping them till they held their tongues. By the evidence it likewise appeared, that Mary Clifford had a fall down stairs with a sauce-pan in her hand, the handle of which hurt one side of her face very much; which, her mistress said, had occasioned her swelled neck and face. The surgeon, under whose care she was at the Hospital, being asked what he thought was the cause of the swelling in her neck, and whether, if a Jack-chain had been fastened about it, might not occasion such a swelling? answered, it might, and there was on her neck a sort of a ring, as if something had been tied about it, which could not be caused by the sauce-pan.

This was the substance of Mitchell's evidence on this.

memorable occasion, as well as of the other witnesses, on whose testimonies the Jury were enabled to form their verdict, only remarking, that in the defence made by the prisoner, Elizabeth Brownrigg, she partly owned the charge against her; with reserve saying, that in beating the girl, she had no design against her life.

James Brownrigg, in his defence, called several persons to his character, who gave him that of a sober, industrious, good-natured man. And indeed it appeared from the confession of the deceased girl, on her examination before the Alderman at Guildhall, on her being asked, whether her master ever beat her? replied, no. And Mary Mitchell acknowledged, that her master never beat her, except only that he might hit her a tap on the head or so. Nor was it probable that Mr. Brownrigg knew the cruelties practised on the poor girls by his wife, if what she solemnly declared, while under sentence in Newgate, be true, namely, that all her acts of barbarity exercised on the children were done with the utmost privacy, to prevent a discovery by the neighbours; that her husband never knew that she ever beat or whipped, or practised any other cruelties upon them, nor did he know for what purpose she desired him to drive a hook into the beam. She likewise owned, that her son John had beat them three different times very severely, but not without her orders: That once in particular, when Mary Clifford was emaciated with hunger, and weakened by her cruel treatment, she ordered her to turn up a bed, which wanting strength so do, she bid him beat her till she did; upon which he beat her with a belt, which had a buckle at the end of it, till the blood ran down from several parts of her body, and fell in puddles on the floor. Upon the whole, she acquitted her husband of being concerned in, or having any knowledge of those barbarities she had exercised on the poor girls; which she might do unknown to him, as he was very much abroad about his business.

The Judge having summed up the evidence, the Jury after a short consultation among themselves, brought in

their verdict, by which James Brownrigg was acquitted, Elizabeth, his wife, found guilty, and John, the son, acquitted.

Elizabeth received sentence of Death immediately, and to be executed on the Monday following. But James and John were detained, on an indictment preferred against them for assaulting and abusing Mary Mitchell.

This trial which occasioned the strongest interest, lasted from eight o'clock in the morning till after six at night. The father and son going out of Court, after taking leave of the convict, wife and mother, seemed very much affected, and the whole scene of the Recorder's solemn address, with the dreadful sentence, had such an effect on many present that they wept; nevertheless the verdict seemed to give general satisfaction, which was expressed by the multitude in the yard, outside of the Sessions House, in a manner ill-adapted to the awfulness of the event, and which as on similar occasions, conveys no favourable idea of the humanity of the common people of this kingdom.

After her commitment to Newgate, and before her trial, a friend of her's went to visit her, to whom she declared how unhappy she was in being the miserable instrument of bringing such terrible distress on herself and family, whom she endeavoured to exculpate, by taking all the guilt on herself. At his going away, she desired him to repeat his visits as often as he could, for there was no body she could open her mind to so freely as to him. He complied with her request, and promised he would come as often as he conveniently could. September the 3d he visited her again, when he found her at prayers, but her spirits were much dejected.

The next time he called upon her was September the 8th, when she appeared much more dejected than at any time he had seen her before. She desired him to bring her a good book, and that she would take it as a favour, if he would go to the Mistress of the Workhouse, and ask her for five shillings, due to her for the delivery of a woman there. He complied with both her requests.—

He immediately sent her a good book, and in a day or two brought her the five shillings, for both which she was extremely thankful, protesting her necessity was so great, that she had been forced to borrow some half-pence of a woman who was with her in the same room ; which may serve to refute those idle reports that were spread, of her having a great deal of money about her.

While this great criminal lay under sentence of death in Newgate, she seemed to be impressed with a deep sense of her deplorable condition, and of the heinous nature of her crimes, crying out, in the agony of her soul, *“ O Lord, cleanse me from this horrid fact, and let the blood of Christ speak better things for me, than the blood of that innocent child I have so cruelly and barbarously murdered ! ”*

She confessed that the most material part of the evidence against her was true, acknowledged the justice of her sentence, and that her punishment was no more than what she had merited for her inhuman treatment of those poor girls. *“ O ! said she, that I had but had half the mercy towards the poor girls that I experienced from the Judge who tried me, or the Council who pleaded against me ; in that case I should never have come to an untimely end. But thanks be to God, that my husband and child are acquitted, for they knew nothing of my last cruelty till after it was committed ; and when it came to my husband’s knowledge, he resolved to send the girl into the country, that a surgeon should attend her, and to use all possible means to recover her ; but all his good intentions were frustrated, by the discovery made by Mr. Deacon’s servants : adding, that her husband did not deny the girl to the Parish Officers from any consciousness of guilt in himself, but to screen her, who, he feared, would appear in a very unfavourable light, should the girl be produced. ”*

In her confessions, she acknowledged she had for many years served God, and walked in his ways; and had not only the form of Godliness, but experienced much delight in the service of God, and found the ways of wisdom to be pleasant, and all her paths peace; that she attended public worship every opportunity, and when she had a large family of small children, was constantly, for several years, at the early Sacrament of Bow Church, and constantly read prayers in her family; but that she had lately neglected the same, by which means, and frequently breaking the Sabbath, she believed to be the first inlet to the wickedness she had unhappily fallen into; and having left her God, he had hardened her heart, and suffered her to commit those acts of cruelty, for which she justly merited the punishment, to which, by the righteous sentence of the Court, she was adjudged.

The time between her condemnation and execution being very short, she was very careful to employ it in pious exercises, and in preparing for that immortal state which she had so near a prospect of. Sleep was now banished from her eyes, and she spent the first night in fervent prayer, and imploring God for mercy and forgiveness of her great and enormous offences; wishing the time was come when she should pay the debt due to her crime. She said, she did not think her sufferings were a sufficient atonement for her sins, and was sensible she could only be saved by the merits and sufferings of Christ, or perish eternally. She attended Chapel on Sunday morning, and behaved with the utmost seriousness and devotion, where her husband and son, at her request, were permitted to be present. After service was over, very affecting was the scene between these unhappy people. Their mutual caresses, their tears, which flowed in abundance, and their affectionate concern for each other, is more easy to imagine, than to be described by all the powers of language.

In the morning of execution, she was called down early into the press-yard, where she joined in prayer

with the Ordinary. After which she went up to Chapel, where she seemed very devout during the service; and then received the Sacrament in company with her husband and son, who were permitted once more to see her, and to take the last farewell of each other. She seemed quite composed and resigned to her fate, fervently praying to God, that he would deliver her from blood-guiltiness; expressing herself in such terms as these:—“*I have nothing to plead or recommend me to thee but my misery; but thy beloved Son died for sinners, therefore on his merits I rely and depend for pardon.*” She continued in prayer, in which she was joined by her husband and son for upwards of two hours, and then took leave of them. Their parting produced a scene which it is impossible to describe by words, and so moving, that none present could refrain from tears. Her husband assured her, that whenever he should obtain his liberty, of which he had not the least doubt on the proof of his innocence, he did not question but he should be able, by the blessing of God, to provide for his two younger children, and therefore begged her not to be troubled on that account. She, in answer, entreated him to release himself from the prison of sin; and as for her children, she committed them to the care of God’s providence, who, she hoped, would not suffer them to be used as she had treated the unhappy girls. Her son fell on his knees, and begged her blessing; upon which she tenderly embraced and kissed him, while her husband was kneeling on the other side, praying that God would have mercy on her soul. She replied, “*Dear James, I beg of God, for Christ’s sake, that he would be reconciled, and that he will not leave me nor forsake me in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment.*” Having taken their last adieu of each other, she went down into the press-yard; where having prayed for some time, she was put into the cart, and conveyed to Tyburn, September 14, 1767.

At the place of execution she seemed quite composed, and joined in prayer; acknowledged her guilt, and the

justice of her sentence. Her last words were, *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.*

[*The foregoing Narrative is taken principally from the Office Copy of the Clerk of Arraignment, containing all the depositions at fuller length than the Short Hand Writer's Account, and confirmed by the Judge's Notes affixed thereto.*]

On Monday, October 19, James and John Brownrigg were tried at Guildhall, for assaulting and ill-using Mary Mitchell. They were tried on separate indictments. It was deposed that James Brownrigg had twice dipp't her head in a water-tub, once broke the gristle of her ear with a walking-stick, and once horse-whipped her, but not naked. In his defence he owned the dipping her head in water, but denied striking her over the ear; urged several instances of her misbehaviour; pleaded the good character given him by five apprentices, and added, that some of his boarders must have known something of the alledged ill-treatment; but, on account of their circumstances, he did not choose to call them.—The son was indicted for whipping Mary Mitchell three days successively naked; the two first times were by his mother's order, the last of his own accord, for taking some chesnuts. He said, in his defence, that the girl never lay ill of his beating, and that he had taught her to read. The Jury found both the prisoners guilty, but the father was recommended to mercy. They were both confined three months, and fined 6s. 8d.

Of James Brownrigg, the father, his catastrophe followed soon after, for he fell from the machine, painting a sash three pair of stairs high; and John, the subject implicated herein with his mother, is yet living, as a house-painter, but calls himself *Browning*.

What is it possible to say on this subject, that will not have occurred to every reader of feeling and humanity? These more than common murders, murders by inches, have something so shocking in their nature, something so

infernal in their progress, that there is no language in which to express our abhorrence of them. That Mrs. Brownrigg, a Midwife by profession, and herself a mother of many children, should wantonly murder, by slow cruelties the children of other unfortunate women, is truly astonishing, and can only be accounted for by that depravity of human nature, which philosophers have always disputed, but which Christianity alone is ready to allow, while it administers the balm of salvation in the true worship of God, and dependence on his infinite mercies.

That a husband, bound by every tie that human nature can unite the sexes by, should so far lose sight of his first duty as to cause a premature extinction of a life he had engaged at the Altar of his Maker to protect and cherish, is a subject to be deplored, and exhibits, an extraordinary instance of the depravity and corruption of human nature, in subjects from which expectation promised better conduct.

A SUCCINCT
AND
TRUE ACCOUNT
OF
JOHN WILLIAMSON,
WHO WAS
EXECUTED IN MOORFIELDS
FOR THE
Murder of his Wife,

By inflicting upon her such extreme and complicated Cruelties as are shocking to human Nature.



VERY slender information of this cruel villain's family was known. He had lived a very recluse life many years in London, as a shoe-maker, most of which time had been spent in a place called Rope Maker's-alley, near the Catholic Meeting in Little Moorfields; in which place he conducted himself in such a manner as not in the least to attract the notice of his neighbours, otherwise than by his breaking out now and then on Saint Mondays, and coming home with a gang of boys at his heels. These riotous proceedings caused his first wife much uneasiness, but death removed her from him in the summer of 1766, and he only remained a widower six months, when he contracted an acquaintance with his second wife, the present subject of his subsequent cruelty. This poor woman was so deficient in her intellects, that it might be said

she bordered upon idiotism. Her relations had bequeathed her some money but not sufficient for her maintenance; and this circumstance induced Williamson to make proposals of marriage, which she accepted. Being asked in church, the banns were forbid by Mr. Stevens, the gentleman appointed guardian to the unhappy woman.

Williamson, however, having afterwards procured a licence, the marriage was solemnized; and in consequence thereof he received the money that was in the hands of her guardian.

About three weeks after the marriage he cruelly beat his wife, threw water over her, and otherwise treated her with great severity: and this kind of brutality he frequently repeated.

A family of the name of Farren lived in the same house, No. 4, Rope-maker's-alley, nearly opposite the Golden Key public-house. Their reproaches to Williamson for his barbarity used always to end in further ill-usage of the poor woman, even his own daughter, by his first wife, a young girl about 13 years old, joined in this unparalleled cruelty, vindicating her father in this unjust and inhuman behaviour. The different stages of cruelty he reduced her by, were even too shocking to be believed, had they not been related by the girl his daughter, who was at last the principal evidence against him.

Mrs. Cole, a lodger resident in the same house, deposed also against him, that having gained admission into his apartment, during his absence, was shocked to such a degree as to speak of it to several persons to go with her to the parish officers, and lay a complaint against him and his daughter for their barbarity, which had it seems proceeded from

a regular system of cruelty, and was then hastening on the poor creature's destruction. On her cross-examination she accurately described the situation of the room as to the door, windows, and closet, but could not account for what prevented her from going forward herself to a Magistrate, and relating those abominable transactions. For it is certain that had an information been lodged against this wicked offender in time, two lives might have been saved in all probability, and his daughter's character preserved, who soon after died an unfortunate death in the streets.

The following instances of unheard of barbarity appeared before the Coroner's Jury, previous to his apprehension, for he ran away, and secreted himself about the skirts of the town as soon as he found his wife near her latter end. On his trial the same evidence was repeated against him, the substance of which is here related exactly as it was spoken.

His intention to destroy the poor wretch cannot be doubted from the description of the witnesses against him in what manner he had treated her from the time of her marriage to him to her death, and latterly his barbarity increased with her weakness, for after making her suffer hunger, cold, and want of cloathing, very often beating her and tying her hands behind her, and her legs to the chairs, he bethought himself of a new and more singular mode of punishment than he had before practised, which was to fasten the poor wretches hands behind her with chords, and by means of a rope passed through a staple, drew them so tight above her head, that only the tips of her toes touched the ground.— On one side of the closet wherein she was confined was now and then put a small piece of bread and butter, so that she could just touch it with her

mouth; and she was daily allowed a small portion of water. She once remained a whole month without being released from this miserable condition; but, during that time, she occasionally received assistance from a female lodger in the house, and a little girl, another of Williamson's daughter's by his former wife.

The girl having once released the poor sufferer, the inhuman villain beat her with great severity.— When the father was abroad, this child frequently gave the unhappy woman a stool to stand upon, by which means her pain was in some degree abated. This circumstance being discovered by Williamson, he beat the girl in a most barbarous manner, and threatened that, if she again offended in the same way, he would punish her with still greater severity.

Williamson released his wife on the Sunday preceding the day on which she died, and at dinner-time cut her some meat, of which however she ate only a very small quantity. This partial indulgence he supposed would prove a favourable circumstance for him in case of being accused of murder. Her hands being greatly swelled, through the coldness of the weather, and the pain occasioned by the handcuffs, she begged to be permitted to go near the fire; and the daughter joining in her request, Williamson complied. When she had sat a few minutes, Williamson, observing her throwing the vermin that swarmed upon her cloaths into the fire, ordered her to “return to her kennel.” Hereupon she returned to the closet, the door of which was then locked till next day, when she was found to be in a delirious state, in which she continued till the time of her death, which happened about two o'clock on Tuesday morning, the 6th of January.

The Coroner's Jury being summoned to sit on the body, Mr. Barton, a Surgeon, of Redcross-street, who had opened the body, declared that he was of opinion the deceased had perished through want of the common necessaries of life; and other evidence being adduced to criminate Williamson, he was committed to Newgate.

At the ensuing Sessions at the Old Bailey he was brought to trial before Lord Chief Baron Parker; and the principal witnesses against him were his daughter, Mrs. Cole, and Mr. Barton, the Surgeon who opened the body of the deceased. The prisoner's defence was exceedingly frivolous: he said his wife had provoked him by treading upon a kitten and killing it, and turning up the whites of her eyes.

It appeared that, from the sense of excruciating pain, the eyes of the deceased were frequently turned upwards, and her features violently distorted. He had the effrontery to declare to the Court, that he had not abridged his wife of any of the necessaries of life; and, after sentence of death was pronounced, reflected upon his daughter as being the cause of his destruction. While the child was giving her evidence she wept bitterly, and shewed every sign of being greatly affected.

Being put into the cells, he sent for a Clergyman, and acknowledged that he had treated his wife in the cruel manner represented upon his trial, adding, however, that he had no design of depriving her of life. From the time of his commitment till the time of his execution, he is reported by the then Ordinary, to have behaved in a decent manner, shewing much contrition and penitence for his past mis-spent life, and what at that time seemed

to affect him most was the fate of his children by his first wife, the eldest of which had by her evidence gone a great way in criminating him. However he was a little tranquilized when he was assured by the parish officers of Cripplegate they should be all properly taken care of in the Workhouse. The eldest was soon after sent out apprentice to a Clear Starcher, in Mary-le-bone, from whence she ran away and following evil courses literally died in the streets a few years after.

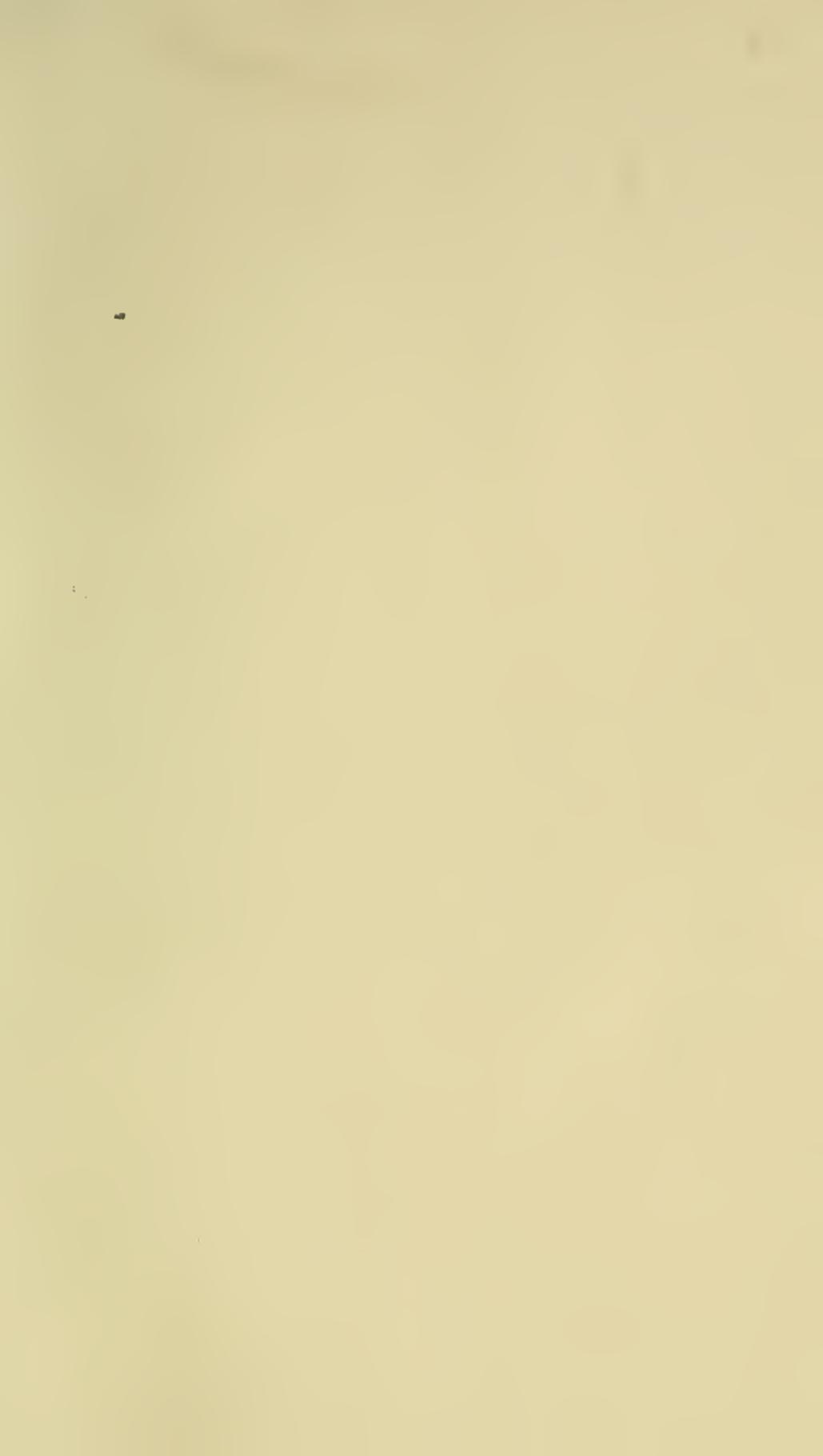
John Williamson was hanged in the middle of Moorfields, January 19, 1767; it was a very frosty morning, and when arrived at the place of execution he complained to the executioner of the cold as affecting his head, when they took off the wig and placed the cap. He shewed no other signs of fear in his last moments which were spent in muttering to himself. He was however assisted at this awful period by two Clergymen and a Methodist Preacher who at last prevailed upon him to join in a prayer, after which they sung a psalm, when he seemed to join fervently in their devotion. A few minutes were allowed him after this, when he was launched into eternity, amidst an amazing concourse of people. His body was afterwards conveyed to Surgeons Hall for dissection, when after it had lain three days for public inspection it was removed for anatomical studies to Guy's Hospital, that institution not being a royal one, have not the privilege of forfeited corpses, but can only obtain them by favour of the Corporation of Surgeons.

Mrs. Williamson was but a poor weak woman, she could not carry her complaint in time to her guardian, Mr. Stevens, a very respectable character, who lived in Hoxton-square, where she had lived

for some time in the capacity of a servant, and where Williamson became acquainted with her.

Dr. De Valangin, late of Fore-street, had treated her when ill at her guardian's house; and in his book on Diet and Health mentions her case; therefore her husband's barbarity in using her with such cruelty is the more astonishing, considering her friends were so near.

The money he had with her was 140*l.* stock in the 3 per cents, then worth about 100 guineas.—When taken he was inebriated, and during his confinement he never shewed the least signs of terror for his perilous situation.



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