

A Horrid MURDER,

Giving an Account how a Young Woman was benighted while travelling—how she applied at the Cottage of THOMAS JOHNSON for Lodgings for the Night—how the Inhuman Monster and his Wife entered the apartment where she slept, with the intention of Murdering her, and by mistake Murdered their own Daughter.



THOMAS JOHNSON, left his wife and daughter, the latter of whom was about 17 years old, to go in search of employment. A young woman was left in the house as a lodger, the daughter of Johnson had for some time been ailing, and had a desire to get something for the support of this child, more than any thing else, urged his wretched man to seek work abroad. At the end of fortnight Johnson returned, without any money, and found his daughter much worse, while his wife was very pale and languid. He enquired the cause of his wife, and was told, that neither herself nor her daughter had ten any thing for the last two days, for that every trifling sum they could procure had been devoted to obtain medicine for their child. Her countenance darkened as she spoke, and with a ghastly grin of the most diabolical tendency she drew her husband in silence from the room, and whispered in his ear, that the young woman who at that time lodged in their cottage, had saved up a guinea while at service, and proposed that it should be appropriated to themselves. After a long struggle between the idea of murder and their affection for their child, they resolved to dispatch the young woman, and devote the spoils to the subsistence of themselves and daughter. At the dead hour of midnight, they entered the room where the two females reposed on the same miserable bed, and in order to insure the destruction of their victim, remarked that she was stationed nearest to the door, while their daughter slept next to the wall. Having carefully ascertained this point they entered an adjoining apartment, and conversed in an audible tone upon the way in which the murderous scheme should be done.

In the mean time the young woman roused by the conversation, and overhearing the frequent repetition of her name, listened in breathless silence, and but too soon became acquainted with the whole plan of the murder. Not a moment was to be lost; she hastily changed places with her sleeping companion, and crept gently over by the cottage wall, which the parents imagined was the corner that their child occupied. All was now silent, but in a few minutes, the door of the room was lifted gently on its latch, and a head thrust forward. The form advanced, and was succeeded by another bearing a dark lanthorn in its hand. They

approached the bed in quiet, but in the agitation of their movements, the lights was extinguished. The young woman continued in the most fearful suspense, and could distinctly hear the sharpening of the murderous weapon, and see its blade glittering in the darkness of the room, in an instant it was drawn across the throat of the sleeping girl, and separated the arteries, and the blood swelled in a purple tide from the wound. The hollow death rattle followed, the sinews of the body became contracted with convulsions, and a long deep sigh announced that the midnight murder was effected. The wretches removed the apparel of their victim into the next apartment, and then returned to commit the corpse to the earth. Followed at a short distance by the young woman, who boldly resolved to track their footsteps, they bore it swiftly from the house, and hastened to the grave that had been dug for its reception. The night was wild and tempestuous, and thunder reverberated in ten thousand echoes along the murky arch of Heaven. The wind howled across the moors, and every succeeding gust spoke of unrelieved horror. Not a star was visible in the firmament, but all grew black and dismal, save the lightning flash irradiated the landscape, and betrayed its utter desolation. The guilty couple felt the silent awe of the moment, and as they stole softly with their lifeless burden hanging on their arm listened with roused affright to each passing whisper of the breeze, they had now reached the extremity of the garden, and with paralyzed hearts cast the corpse into the burial place. It sunk with a heavy sound into the grave, the face was turned upwards, and a sudden flash of lightning as it shone full on the dead body, revealed the features of their daughter, of that child, for whose sake, murder had been committed.

They were roused from their traces of agony by a deep drawn sigh, and the sound of approaching footsteps, and by the blue flashes of lightning, and the dim light of their lantern, beheld a form clad in white approaching the spot where they were stationed, it proceeded with slow and solemn steps, and when nearly opposite the grave beckoned them with its hand to follow. The conscience of the murderers instantly took the alarm, and instantly suggested to their disordered imagination that they saw the ghost of their slaughtered victim. Struck to the soul with the sight, her past guilt rushing full on her mind, the feelings of the mother were unequal to the struggle, she gave one deep heart-rending groan, and dropt dead on her daughter. The Father returned in a state of frenzy to his cottage, was impeached on the evidence of the young woman, who had encountered them at the grave, and was shortly after, executed for the murder.

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NEAR Exminster, in Devonshire,
A couple lived as you shall hear,
In humble cot of lowly fame,
And Johnson was the Peasant's name.

One daughter it was their lot to have,
And she on a sick bed did lay,
But poverty so hard did press,
They could not aid her in distress.

And having got no work to do,
Away from home this man did go,
To seek for work, but finding none,
In a fortnight he did return.

When he came home, his wife she said,
Our Lodger was a servant Maid,
And has a guinea in her chest,
She saved that while she was in place.

Then Johnson to his wife did say,
She shall not live till break of day,
But God above ordained it so,
She overheard what they would do.

Her thoughts were on those wretches so
depraved,
Which way her precious life could save,
She changed sides with their daughter dear,
And by that means she saved were.

At dead of night they did proceed
To perpetrate this horrid deed,
Then to her bed in haste he flew,
And in a mistake his daughter slew.

Then to the garden they conveyed,
The body of this murdered maid,
Not thinking that it was their own,
Or that it ever would be known.

This girl impeached him for the deed,
And when that he to justice came,
Was sentenced for this wicked deed
To die upon a fatal tree.