

their companion, they divided their party for the purpose of exploring the neighbouring thickets. Their excursions were at length crowned with success, on a patch of dark green grass, surrounded on every side by thick trees, through which the last beams of the setting sun could scarcely penetrate, they discovered the body of the unfortunate young man stretched out, cold and lifeless, with a desperate gash on the right temple, and his throat cut from ear to ear. A broken ash staff, stained with clotted blood, lay on the ground, and from the trampled appearance of the grass around the body, it was evident that the deceased had offered to his assailants a vigorous and prolonged resistance.

The terror excited by the news of this inhuman murder can hardly be described. The body having been conveyed to an inn at Epping, a jury was summoned to investigate the matter. The evidence of the old woman seemed to confirm the general belief, that the gipseys had perpetrated the dreadful crime, and their sudden disappearance left scarcely a doubt upon the subject. The crowd collected around the inn was immense, and the body, in compliance with a popular superstition, was exposed to public inspection, in order, that those, against whom suspicion was entertained, should undergo the ordeal of touching it. As there was but one opinion, however, as to the authors of the murder, it was considered unnecessary that any of the spectators should try the experiment, but a number of the companions of the deceased voluntarily walked round the mangled corpse, and touched it as they passed. There was one among the number, however, who kept aloof from the assembled crowd, and seemed to shun the object, which all appeared so desirous to view. It was Walter Savage, a first cousin of the murdered young man, and the rival in his love. An enmity of long standing had existed between them. It arose out of a wrestling match, in which Dorkins threw Walter, whose pride was so sensibly touched by his defeat, that he never afterwards forgave him.

Walter had taken to bad courses, was addicted to drink and evil company, and had in other means of subsistence than what he derived from his dangerous pursuit as a deer stealer. Connecting these circumstances with the murder, it was surprising nobody suspected that he might have had some hand in it. His very look, as he stood a mute but not inattentive spectator of the scene, would have implied that he was labouring under the weight of some hidden guilt, yet so entirely had people's suspicions been excited by the gipseys, and so deeply were they impressed with the idea that they were the guilty persons, that suspicion had never once pointed at Walter Savage.

As yet we have made no mention of Jane Barnes, the unhappy young woman, who had exchanged her vows with the murdered Dorkins. She was present at the awful investigation, and as the jury, after viewing the mangled remains, were about to retire to consider of their verdict, she shrieked aloud, in a voice that appalled the heart of every bystander, "In the justice of Walter Savage has not touched the body!" All eyes were immediately turned upon Savage, at whom the half-crazed girl pointed as he stood in a corner of the room, his arms folded on his breast, and his eyes cast upon the ground. Hearing himself thus singled out he suddenly raised his head, and advancing slowly towards her, by whom he was thus publicly impeached, while his pale lips quivered with agitation and his limbs seemed to totter beneath his weight, said, in a voice scarcely audible, "It is true, Jane, I have not touched the body; but if it is right that I should I am quite willing that I should do so now." He accordingly advanced to the corpse and passed his fingers across the forehead while every one pressed forward to witness the result. It was most singular. He had scarcely withdrawn his hand, when the blood gushed from the dead man's temple at sight of which a general thrill of horror ran through the room.

The confusion and consternation which fol-

lowed may be better imagined than described. Poor Jane, whose feelings had been wound up to intensity by the scene before her, fell into strong hysterics, and in this state was obliged to be conveyed home. The coroner and jury were thunderstruck, and the rest of the spectators were speechless with surprise and horror. Savage, though deadly pale, had recovered his self-possession, and withstood firmly the many searching glances that were now turned upon him. The strong suspicion which had attached to the gipseys was even directed to another object, and so powerful was the effect produced by the blood of the murdered man, that the guilt of Walter Savage was considered as clear as the noon-day. He was seized upon the spot, and conveyed before the jury. His character weighed heavily against him, and his enmity to the unfortunate deceased, was thought to be a damning evidence of guilt. He was questioned as to where he was on the evening of the murder. He hesitated, and at length named a public-house in the neighbourhood, where he said he had passed the entire afternoon of the day in question, and did not return to his home until after ten at night. This statement, however, was distinctly and positively denied by the landlord of the inn he mentioned, who happened to be one of the persons present at the investigation. Some other questions were then asked him, to each of which he returned slyly and evasive answers. The jury consulted, and notwithstanding their former impression that the gipseys alone were guilty, Savage was forthwith committed to prison, charged by the coroner's warrant, with the wilful murder of Edward Dorkins!

The assizes came on the week following, and the day of trial having arrived, Savage was conveyed to Chesham for the purpose of answering, at the bar of Justice, for the heavy crime with which he was charged. Having been renounced by his family, in consequence of his evil doings, he had no friend to stand beside him on this awful occasion, and not a living soul came to whisper hope and consolation in his ear. The court was crowded to excess by persons of every description, who were all anxious to learn the result of a trial, occasioned by the commission of a crime, which had rarely been perpetrated in that part of the county, and the mysterious manner in which the accused had become implicated, gave an unusual interest to the scene.

The preliminary business of the court having been disposed of, the jury were sworn, and the trial commenced. Savage, when called upon in the usual way to plead to the indictment, answered, "Not guilty," in a firm collected manner. The counsel for the prosecution, having detailed the particulars of the murder, proceeded to show the grounds of suspicion against the prisoner at the bar. Witnesses were called to prove the misunderstanding which had existed between the cousins, and some hasty expressions of revenge, which were said to have been uttered by Savage, on the occasion of his defeat in the wrestling match, were also given in evidence. A knife, stained with clotted blood, (the appearance of which excited a powerful sensation in the court,) was likewise brought forward. It had been discovered under the prisoner's bed after his apprehension, and was thought to have been the weapon with which he had accomplished the fatal deed. These were the principal points of evidence against the unfortunate prisoner, and the prosecuting counsel admitted, that however strong and conclusive they might be, they were merely circumstantial. He adverted to the gipseys, and said it was true that circumstances of a suspicious nature might be advanced against them. The supposed object which Dorkins had in view when he entered the forest, on the evening of the murder, and the subsequent flight of the gang, whose route had not been traced, were points for the jury to consider, who would weigh them as opposed to the proofs advanced against the prisoner. In alluding to the singular fact of the blood of the deceased having followed the touch of the supposed murderer, he desired that the jury

should dismiss that occurrence entirely from their minds, as it might be accounted for in a natural manner, and he left them to shape their verdict according to the evidence produced, and the dictates of their own consciences. The case for the prosecution having been closed, the prisoner was called upon for his defence. He had no counsel to plead for him, and no friend to utter a kind word in his behalf. He stared vacantly around the court, but so convinced were the spectators, of his guilt, that amongst the many faces which his eye encountered on every side, he could not discover one in which hope or pity could be traced. He pressed his hands upon his forehead, closed his eyes, and dropped his head upon the bar. Being again asked if he had any thing to urge in his defence, he merely denied his guilt in general terms, admitting that he had taken to bad habits, had been a deer-stealer, and that the knife produced against him was that which he had used in the dissection of his plunder, concluding with a vehement denial of the crime with which he was charged, and his firm reliance on the justice of the judge and jury; although, having no friend in the world, he was quite careless as to what should become of him. His addresses seemed to have had no other effect upon the minds of the spectators, than to strengthen the conviction of his guilt. The judge recapitulated the evidence, dwelt at considerable length on every criminal circumstance, and left the wretched prisoner nothing to hope for. His addresses to the jury. There is one circumstance, (said he,) which the learned counsel for the prosecution has told you to dismiss from your minds when you come to decide your case; I allude to the appearance of blood, when the body of the deceased was touched by the prisoner. I am not given to superstition, gentlemen, yet I own that an occurrence so awful and supernatural has made a considerable impression on my mind; and coupled as it is with circumstantial evidence of the strongest and most convincing nature, I cannot but consider it as one of those wonderful interpositions of Divine Providence, which, in cases of this description, have not unfrequently occurred, for the purpose of fixing the crime on the head of the guilty person. Gentlemen, if you have taken a different view of the case; if you entertain any reasonable doubts as to the evidence produced this day before you, I need not tell you that the prisoner is entitled to the benefit of those doubts, and that your verdict must be found accordingly. But I entertain a strong impression of the prisoner's guilt. Indeed, I am as morally convinced of his having committed this murder, as if I myself had witnessed it."

Savage, who had never withdrawn his eyes from the judge during his long address, now fixed them on the jury, to try if in their looks he could find a spark of mercy. He saw them turn round to consult together, and hope for a moment took possession of his mind, but, when they withdrew for further consultation, his feelings, having already reached the summit of suspense, could bear no more. His head swam, and the bench, where sat his stern and inexorable judge, the dim lights in the court, and the thousand eyes that from every side seemed to glare upon him, went round and round. His knees smote each other, his throat seemed parched, and he breathed with difficulty. He would willingly have given his last slender chance of life for a drop of water and a breath of pure air; and he dropped down totally insensible. How long he had continued thus, he knew not; but the same deep and solemn voice which had asked him before, if he were "guilty or not guilty," recalled him to life and misery, by repeating "Walter Savage, what have you to say, why sentence of death and execution should not be passed upon you, according to the verdict?" He had nothing to say; he saw that he must die, not all the world could save him. He bowed his head in silent submission to his fate, and the awful sentence of the law was instantly passed upon him. One short day was all that he mercy of his earthly judge allowed him, to settle his affairs in this world, and prepare