

and hypocrites, who, while they profess an adherence, actually rebel against *thirty-two* of its injunctions? Further refutation of this point is unnecessary, and the fact, that our opponents never fail to bring it forward—although it has been repeatedly and successfully combatted—only shows the weakness of their position, and the stratagems they feel themselves compelled to resort to.

Let us now turn to the history of the past year, and see if it tells a tale favorable or unfavorable to Capital Punishment. We propose to ascertain this, by copying two or three extracts from the newspapers, descriptive of three executions which then took place, two of which were in England, and the other in Upper Canada:—

PICKPOCKETING AT DEVIZES ON THE DAY OF THE EXECUTION.—On Friday week two decently-dressed men, who gave their names as Kitchener and Richards, were brought before the Mayor and J. R. Bramble, Esq., at the magistrates' office in this town, charged with having been concerned on the previous day in casing a Mrs. Taylor of £15. Mrs. Taylor, who is the wife of a sub-contractor of that name, Westbury, had, like thousands of others of her sex, come to Devizes to witness the execution of the wretched woman, Rebecca Smith; and, by way of combining a little business with "*pleasure*," she had undertaken a commission for her husband to discharge a debt owing by him to a party in the town. Unluckily, however, the commission was not the first thing thought of; for it would seem that Mrs. Taylor, having gratified herself with the exhibition on the gallows, repaired with three other friends to the Odd-Fellows Arms in Sidmouth-street, for the purpose of obtaining some refreshments. *The house was full—cramped full—as was every inn in the town that day*, and among the company were the prisoners, who were playing their part in the passage—pretending to be in a dreadful passion with each other—in order, of course, to gather around them a crowd. Finding what company she had got into, Mrs. Taylor wished to get out, but in order to do so she had to pass the two prisoners; and it would seem that whilst one of them engaged her attention by accusing her of pushing against him, the other slipped his hand into her pocket, and took her purse, containing in gold and silver, £15. * * * * * In short, like a great many more of their caste, the whole party had no doubt come to Devizes, calculating upon a good day's booty out of the pockets of the thousands whose morbid curiosity brought them to the dreadful scene at the New Prison. * * * * * *One or two lads connected with the prisoners, and having articles in their possession of which they can give no straightforward account, have been detained by the police; and another boy, who came to Devizes with the same parties, has been committed for trial on a charge of picking pockets on the day of the execution.*—*London Morning Herald.*

The next is an extract from a letter written by Charles Dickens, and addressed to the *Times*. It

gives a faithful and a graphic description of the crowds who witnessed the execution of the Mannings. We hope the reader, if he has not previously read this letter, will not fail to do so now:—

I believe that a sight so inconceivably awful as the wickedness and levity of the immense crowd collected at this execution this morning, could be imagined by no man, and could be presented in no heathen land under the sun. The horrors of the gibbet, and of the crime which brought the wretched murderers to it, faded in my mind before the atrocious bearing, looks, and language of the assembled spectators. When I came upon the scene at midnight, the shrillness of the cries and howls that were raised from time to time, denoting that they came from the concourse of boys and girls already assembled in the best places, made my blood run cold. As the night went on, *screeching, and laughing, and yelling in strong choruses of parodies on Negro melodies*, with the substitution of "*Mrs. Manning*" for "*Susannah*," and the like, were added to these. When the day dawned, *thieves, of both sexes, ruffians and vagabonds of every kind, flocked on to the ground, with every variety of offensive and foul behaviour. Fightings, faintings, whistlings, imitations of Punch, brutal jokes, tumultuous demonstrations of indecent delight, when swooning women were dragged out of the crowd by the police with their dresses disordered, gave a new zest to the general entertainment.* When the sun rose brightly—as it did—it gilded thousands upon thousands of upturned faces, so inexpressibly odious in their *brutal mirth or callousness* that a man had cause to feel ashamed of the shape he wore, and to shrink from himself, as fashioned in the image of the devil. When the two miserable creatures who attracted all this ghastly sight about them were turned quivering into the air, there was *no more emotion, no more pity, no more thought, that two mortal souls had gone to judgment, no more restraint in any of the previous obscenities, than if the name of Christ had never been heard in this world, and that there was no belief among men but that they perished like the beasts.*

I have seen habitually, some of the worst sources of general contamination and corruption in this country, and I think there are not many phases of London life that could surprise me. I am solemnly convinced that *nothing* that ingenuity could devise to be done in this city, in the same compass of time, *could work such ruin as one public execution*, and I stand astounded and appalled by the wickedness it exhibits. I do not believe that any community can prosper where such a scene of horror and demoralization as was enacted this morning outside Horseonger-lane Gaol is presented at the very doors of good citizens, and is passed by unknown or forgotten. And when in our prayers and thanks-givings for the season, we are humbly expressing before God our desire to remove the moral evils of the land, I would ask your readers to consider whether it is not a time to think of this one, and to root it out.

I am, sir, your obedient servant,

CHARLES DICKENS.

Devonshire Terrace, Tuesday, Nov. 13.