

An account of the Trial and Execution of John Smith, and Elizabeth his Wife, who were hanged at Ipswich, on Monday the 23d of March, 1812, for starving, beating, and torturing three unfortunate Children he had by a former Wife, the eldest of whom died in consequence of its barbarous treatment, which is too horrible to describe, being one of the most inhuman transactions ever heard of. Also, an account of the behaviour of this unnatural Father and his Wife at the place of execution.

AT the Suffolk Assizes, which were opened on Saturday, March 21, 1812, John Smith, aged 39, and Elizabeth, his wife, aged 27, were indicted for the wilful murder of Mary Anne Smith, daughter of the male prisoner, at Cookley, in the county of Suffolk, by starvation, beating, and exposing her three successive nights in a shed, in the month of December last, by which her feet became mortified, &c.

It appeared in evidence that the male prisoner had three children by a former wife, who died about three years ago, and he married the female prisoner on the 8th of last November; and from the 10th of December until the 11th of February, 1812, when the eldest of the three children, the subject of this indictment, died, the tortures administered to them were too horrible even for description.

Previous to his marriage with the female prisoner, the three children were admired by every one for their cleanliness and ruddy cheeks, and the male prisoner was marked for his parental kindness and affection towards his offspring.

The children's health, it would be proved, became gradually on the decline after the marriage of the prisoners, and they were at length reduced to skeletons; and the child which died would be represented in evidence as the most deplorable object ever witnessed. The case, however, will be best detailed by an abstract of the evidence.

Lucy Smith, sister of the male prisoner, proved, that on the 4th of February, the male prisoner called on her, in tears, and said his eldest child was dying.

Witness found two of the once healthy children sitting by the fire, in a state so completely emaciated, that they appeared indifferent to any objects.

On going up stairs, a shocking object presented itself in the person of the eldest child, in bed, who was unable to stir from her emaciated state, and was the picture of death. The poor child called out, "Aunt, aunt, don't leave me."

Witness challenged them with starving the children, and they agreed that they had not much drink.

It also appeared afterwards that the child's feet were in a state of mortification, from having been exposed three nights in an out-house, by the unnatural father.

She was also much bruised about the neck and body by beatings; and her father confessed having hung her up to a beam, by the middle, without cause!

The other two children were in a shocking emaciated state, and the witness took them under her roof.

Mrs. Clark proved completely that the children were all in a state of starvation. She often carried them cake and a little wine, which they all ravenously devoured.

Three surgeons gave it as their opinion that the child died from the effects of barbarous treatment and want of food.

No disclosure of the mortified feet was made until it was found the child could not be saved; and one witness stated that the female prisoner had said they could live better without the children.

To enter into a minute detail of the barbarities towards the children would fill a volume. They were of the ages of four, seven, and nine years.

The male prisoner was universally allowed to have been a kind tender father and husband, until his second marriage—and to such extent, that he was particularly noted by many country gentlemen, some of whom spoke on this occasion.

The prisoners were found Guilty, and ordered for execution at Ipswich on Monday next, whither they were immediately conveyed.

Ipswich, Monday, March 23.—This day, at twelve o'clock, John Smith, and Elizabeth, his wife, were executed here, pursuant to their sentence. They behaved with becoming fortitude, seemed very penitent, both confessed their guilt, and acknowledged that they intended to destroy all the children! A vast concourse of spectators witnessed their melancholy exit.