

The Kent Tragedy;

GIVING AN ACCOUNT OF

THE TRIAL AND EXECUTION OF JOHN ANY BIRD BELL AT MAIDSTONE For the Murder of Richard Taylor.



ATTEND to me both great
And listen to this tale, (small,
For it will make you one and all,
A poor boy's life and death;
Who fell beneath a murderer's
Two brothers his way laid, (knife
One robbed him, and took his life,
The other watch'd the road.
It was alas! from Strood in Kent
Nine shillings to receive,
Richard Taylor for his father went
When John Bell did converse,
To murder him, a horrid plan,
By crossing on his way,
Which he, all with his brother
Put in effect that day. (James,
Young Bell he was but scarce 14,
His victim, twelve, no more,
When murder'd in the wood so
green,
Which hundreds now deplore
Young James Bell he kept a watch
While John on Taylor m'd,
And cut his throat, and bled
arounds,
The blood in torrents gush'd
Of agony then they robbed him,
Nine shillings and no more,
John dy'd for such a petty sum,
His hands in human gore,
In vain poor Taylor him besought
With tears to save his life,
His tears and moans he heeded
naught,
But slew him with his knife,
O save my life exclaimed the boy,
And fell upon his knees,
Take knife and cap and money too
And any thing you please,
I promise I shall never tell,
But have you all my life
Murder'd have said, but cruel Bell
His throat pierc'd with a knife.
A pond of water near him stood,
Where John without delay,
Wash'd clean the knife from Tay-
lor's blood,
And calmly walk'd away,
As if he made his brother swear
the murder to conceal,
But Providence no you shall hear,
The deed did soon reveal.

the mangled corpse nine weeks re-
main'd,
Before that it was found,
With blood and dirt besmear'd
and stain'd,
And many a ghastly woe'd,
Meanwhile the parents of the child
Expiring up and down,
Were driven to distraction wild,
For their beloved son.

Said John, "I shall be hang'd for
this,"
The youthful murderer knew,
That God's strict justice would not
miss,
To fall with vengeance due,
For murder is a crime so great,
In God's most blessed sight,
That, sure and certain, soon or late
Such deeds are brought to light.



Now when the body it was found,
Fill'd hundreds with affright,
And all the country gather'd round
to view the dreadful sight,
Strong suspicions quickly fell,
On him who did the deed,
And then the wretched murderer
Bell,
Was sent to goal with speed,

Who beneath the gallows tree,
Exclaim'd, I badly die,
Let youth a warning take by this,
For did it not, see I,
My parents fault it is mine,
That brings me here this day,
They never gave me good advice,
Lest I should go astray.



they never taught me what to do
Nor honesty person,
By vice and wickedness undone,
I have led to public view,
I am here to die a shameful death,
A warning unto all,
Who view'd me yielding guilty
breath,
Take heed by my downfall,
Oh, parents, make your children
fear,
The Lord in early youth,
And try to make their conscience
clear,
In innocence, and truth,
Neglect made me commit this
crime,
For which I now must die,
Cut off all in my blooming prime,
Oh! what a wretch am I.
May it a warning be to those,
Who stand around me,
My body hanging from this beam,
As it will shortly be,
In God alone to put their trust,
Who never will forsake,
Those who are virtuous and just
And in no crimes partake,
Oh in the house of midnight sleep,
When all is slumber'd in,
I've started from my troubled sleep
In fearful agony,
And fancy painted to my sight,
My murdered victim stand,
Blood streaming down upon the
ground,
His looks all pale and wan.
Hark! 'tis the bell, my hour is
come,
It calls me forth to die,
O cruel parents you alone,
I blame with my last sigh,
May God have mercy for his sake,
Who call'd me to the cruel tree,
Died and did stone me make,
For wretches such as me.



J. Catnach, Printer, 2,
Monmouth Court, 7 pials

JOHN ANY BIRD BELL, aged 14,
was placed at the bar, for having, on
the 4th of March, at Bridge wood, in this
county, with malice aforethought, killed
and murdered Richard Faulkner Taylor,
by cutting his throat. The prisoner man-
ifested not the slightest concern on ap-
pearing at the bar.

It appeared in evidence that on Friday
the 4th of March last, Robert Taylor,
who is a journeyman tallow-chandler, li-
ving at Strood, near Rochester, and who
having been ill some time, received 9s.
per week from the parish of Aylesford, to-
ward the support of his family. On the
day above-mentioned, he sent his son,
who was 13 years of age, at nine in the
morning to receive the money, when not

easy, and the following morning Taylor
went to Aylesford, to make enquiries af-
ter him, and found that his son had re-
ceived the money. Notice was given of
the loss of the child, bills were printed,
and a reward offered for his discovery.
The loss of the boy remained in mystery
till the 11th of May, when a man named
Izzard, in passing through a wood, a
short distance from the road, and two
miles from Rochester, found the body, it
was lying on the back with the right hand
across the breast. The body was taken to
the poor-house at Rochester, and exami-
ned by the Surgeon: it was in a very bad
state of decay, and the surgeon stated the
cause of his death was from a wound in-
flicted on the left side of the neck, with a
cutting instrument.

Charles Pattison, a constable, who took
the prisoner from Rochester to Maidstone
stated that as he brought the prisoner al-
ong, he (the prisoner) pointed to a pond
by the road side and said there's the pond
where I washed my hands and the knife
after I had done the crime. At this

time they were not in conversation. Af-
ter they had gone a short distance fur-
ther on, the prisoner pointed to an op-
ening in the wood,—"That leads to the
place where I murdered the poor boy,—
don't you think he's better off than me,
"Sir?" About 40 yards further on he
pointed out a gap in the hedge through
which he said he had come, with the knife
open in his hand, after he had done the
murder. He then described the transac-
tion very minutely. He said that when
he first met with Taylor, they went into
a turnip field together, and ate a turnip
each, that Taylor pared his turnip with
his own knife in the field, and then they
came out and walked along the road. He
said, when he first spoke to Taylor he
intended to murder him, and under pre-
text of leading him home, he took him
into the wood. When they came to the
spot where he was found, he told him
that he had lost his way, upon which Tay-
lor sat down upon the ground and cried
Then he (the prisoner) sprung upon him,
and cut his throat. He then took the mo-
ney out of a little bag which was in a
glove, but he had a good deal of trouble
in doing it. In the bag there were three
half crowns, a shilling, and a sixpence.
When he had got the money he became
very much alarmed, and rushed out of the
wood. On his way to the goal, he also
said that there would be no necessity for
putting irons on him, for he knew that he
should suffer, and did not mean to attempt
to get away. On another occasion he
told the witness that he was sore that if
the deceased was dug up, his knife would
be found wrapped up in his glove, in one
of his pockets, for that he saw him, after
he had pared his turnip, wipe it, and put
it up so. The body in consequence of
this, was dug up, and in his pocket a
knife and glove was found, as the prisoner

had described. He also told witness that
he sold the knife to a boy, named James
Perrin, and that, as he was going home
from the wood, he met George Ellis.

When the prisoner was called upon for
his defence, he made no reply, but made
no reply, but said he wished to have his
mother examined.

His mother was in Court, but his request
was not complied with.

Mr. Justice Gaselee then proceeded to
charge the Jury, who almost immediately
found the prisoner Guilty.

His Lordship then passed sentence of
Death upon the prisoner, intimating to
him that notwithstanding his youth, his
crime was so atrocious that no hope of
mercy could be held out to him.

Thousands of people from far and near
assembled to see the Execution of this
poor youth. When he was led to the fa-
tal drop, not a dry eye was to be seen.
The Clergyman and some other gentle-
men attended him, and he joined them in
prayer, with great fervor. The dreadful
preparations being completed, the fatal
drop fell, and the world closed upon him
for ever.

FURTHER PARTICULARS.

Ever since sentence was passed on this
unhappy young man, and when he was
assured that no hopes of mercy remained
to him, he has conducted himself with
great decorum. The Chaplain paid re-
peated visits to his cell, but the profligate
lessons he was taught by his depraved
parents, were too deeply rooted in his
mind to make Bell neatly sensible of the
dreadful situation in which his crime had
placed him. The hardihood which the
culprit had displayed himself at his trial,
and even when sentence was passed, de-
serted him as he entered his cell. He
wept bitterly, and when his mother visi-
ted him, on Sunday afternoon, he accused

her of being the cause of bringing him to
his "present scrape." On Sunday eve-
ning, after the condemned sermon had
been preached by the Rev. Chaplain,
Bell made a full confession of his guilt.
His statement did not materially differ
from that which was given on the trial,
but he added some particulars of the con-
duct of his victim before he murdered
him, which makes the blood run cold. He
said, that when he sprung upon Taylor,
with the knife in his hand, the poor boy,
aware of his murderous intention, fell up-
on his knees before him—offered him all
the money he had, his knife, his cap and
whatever else he liked. Said he would
love him during the whole of his life, and
never tell what had happened to any hu-
man being. This pathetic appeal was
lost on the murderer, and without making
any answer to it, he stuck the knife into
his throat.

At half past 11 o'clock, the solemn peals
of the prison bell announced the prepara-
tions for the execution. After the opera-
tion of pinioning, &c., had been comple-
ted, the culprit, attended by the Chap-
lain, &c. walked steadily to the platform.
When he appeared there, he gazed stea-
dily around him; but his eye did not
quail, nor was his cheek blanched. Af-
ter the rope was adjusted round his neck,
he exclaimed in a firm and loud tone of
voice, "Lord have mercy upon us. Pray
good Lord have mercy upon us. Lord
have mercy upon us. All the people be-
fore me take warning by me: "Having
been asked if he had any thing further to
say, he repeated the same words, and ad-
ded, "Lord have have mercy upon my
poor soul." At the appointed signal, the
bolt was withdrawn, and in a minute or
two the wretched malefactor ceased to
exist.

"Thus saith the Lord God, my right hand shall not spare the sinners, and my sword shall not
cease over them that shed innocent blood upon the earth.—Esdras.

