

H I S T O R Y

O F

John Gregg, and his Family,

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R O B B E R S and M U R D E R E R S.

Who took up their abode in a cave near to the sea-side, in Clovaley in Devonshire, where they liv'd twenty-five years without so much as once going to visit any city, or town. How they robbed above one thousand persons, and murdered and ate, all whom they robbed. How at last they were happily discover'd by a pack of bloodhounds; and how John Gregg, his wife, eight sons, six daughters, eighteen grand-sons, and fourteen grand-daughters, were all seized and executed, by being cast alive into three fires, and burnt.

G L A S G O W,

P R I N T E D I N T H E Y E A R.

The HISTORY of JOHN GREGG.

THE following account, tho' as well attested as any historical fact can be, is almost incredible, for monstrous and unparalleled barbarities; that in novels there is nothing that we ever heard of with the same degree of certainty that may be compared with it; or that shews how far a brutish temper, untamed by education and knowledge of the world, may carry a man in such glaring and horrible actions.

John Gregg, was born in the county of Devon, about eight or nine miles eastward of the city of Exeter. His parents worked at hedging and ditching for their livelihood, and brought their son up to the same occupation. He got his daily bread in his youth, by these means; but being very much addicted to idleness, and not chusing to be confined to any honest employment, he left his father and mother, and ran away into the desert part of the country, taking with him a woman, as viciously inclined as himself, these two took their habitation in a Rock by the Sea-side on the shore of the county of Devon, where they lived upwards of twenty-five

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years without going into any city,
town or village.

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In this time they had a great number of children and grand-children whom they brought up after their own manner, without the least notion of humanity or civil society. They never kept any company but among themselves, and supported themselves by robbing, being moreover so very cruel, that they never robbed any one but what they murdered.

By this bloody method and their living so retired from the world, they continued a long time undiscovered, there being nobody able to guess how the people were lost who went by the place where they lived. As soon as they had robbed and murdered any man, woman or child they used to carry off their carcases to their den, where cutting them into quarters, they would pickle their mangled limbs, and afterwards eat them, it being their subsistence.

All the people in the adjacent parts were alarmed at so uncommon a loss of their neighbours ; for there was no travelling near the den of these wretches. This occasioned spies to be sent into these parts, many of whom never returned again, and those who did, after

the strictest search and enquiry could not find out how these melancholy matters happened. There were several honest travellers taken up upon suspicion, and wrongfully hanged; several innocent innkeepers were executed for no other reasons than that the persons who had been lost were known to have lain at their houses, which occasioned suspicion of their being murdered by them, and their bodies privately buried in obscure places to prevent discovery. Thus an ill-placed Justice was executed with the greatest severity imaginable, in order to prevent these frequent atrocious deeds, that the innkeepers, who lived on the western road, left off their business for fear of being made examples of, and followed other employments; this on the other hand occasioned many great inconveniences to passengers, who were now in very great distress for want of accommodation for themselves and their horses, when they were disposed to bait or to put up for lodging at night. In a word, the whole country was depopulated.

John's family was at last grown very large, and every branch, as soon as able, assisted in perpetrating their wicked deeds, which they followed with im-

punity: sometimes they would attack four, five, or six footmen together, but never more than two if on horseback. They were also very careful that none should escape, an ambuscade being laid on every side to secure them every way, how then was it possible they should be detected, when not one that saw them ever perceived any body afterwards? The place they inhabited was solitary and lonesome, and when the tide came up, it reached a mile under ground, so that when some had been sent armed, they passed by the mouth of the cave without any notice, not supposing any thing human would live in such a place of horror.

The number of people they destroyed was never known, but it was computed in twenty-five years they had murdered one thousand men, women, and children, and the manner they were discovered was as follows.

A man and his wife behind him on the same horse coming home from a fair, and falling into an ambuscade of these wretches, they attacked him in a furious manner: The man to save himself fought bravely, riding some of them down by main force, but in the conflict, the poor woman fell from behind

him and was instantly murdered before his face, the female cannibals cutting her throat, and sucking her blood with as great gult, as tho' it had been wine. This done, they ripp'd her up, and pull'd out her entrails ; which dismal spectacle caused the man to make the more resistance. It pleased Providence, while he was engag'd, thirty people came in a body together from the fair ; on which John Gregg and his crew withdrew, and made the best of their way thro'-a wood to their den.

This was the first man that ever fell in their way and came off alive : He told the company what had happened, and shew'd the mangled body of his wife, which the murderers had not time to carry off. They were struck with amazement, and went and made it known to the Mayor of Exeter, who immediately sent to the king. In a few days his Majesty in person with a body of about four hundred men, set out for the place where these tragedies were acted, in order to find out this hellish crew, which so long had been a nuisance to that part of the Kingdom. The man who had been attacked was the guide, and care was taken to have a large number of blood hounds, that no human means

might be wanting to put an end to those barbarous cruelties. No sign of habitation was found for a long time? and even when they came to the cave of these wretches, they took no notice of it, but were going to pursue their search along the shore, the tide being then out; but some of the blood hounds luckily entered the cave, and set up such a hideous barking and yewling, that the king and his attendants went back and looked into it, but could not think that any thing human was there. Nevertheless, as the hounds went further in, they increased their noise and refused to come back; torches were immediately had, and a great many men entered thro' the most intricate windings, 'till they came to the private recess of the murderers: then the whole body of them went in, and saw the dismal sight, and were ready to sink into the earth to see such a multitude of arms, legs, thighs, hands, and feet of men, women, and children, hung up in rows, like dry'd beef, and a great many lying in pickle. They also found a quantity of money, watches, rings, swords, pistols, and a large quantity of cloathes and other things, which they had taken from those they had murdered.

John's family at this time consisted of

himself, his wife, eight sons, six daughters, eighteen grand-sons, and fourteen grand-daughters, begotten in incest: they then were all seized and pinioned; they took what human flesh they found, and buried it in the sands, then taking all the spoil, they returned to Exeter with the prisoners, the country people flocking round to see the cursed tribe. When they came to the town, they were committed to the goal, and next day conducted under a strong guard to Plymouth, where they were all executed without any process, it being needless to try any creatures who were such professors'd enemies to mankind.

The men had first their privy members cut off and thrown into the fire before their faces; and then their hands and legs were cut off, by which amputation they bled to death some hours afterwards.

The wife, daughters, and grand children having been made spectators of this just punishment inflicted on the men, were burnt to death in three several fires. They all dy'd without the least sign of repentance, and continued cursing and swearing the most horrid Imprecations to the last gasp of breath.

F I N I S.