

The Waltham Blacks

**RICHARD PARVIN, EDWARD ELLIOT, ROBERT KINGSHELL,
HENRY MARSHALL, EDWARD PINK, JOHN PINK AND JAMES
ANSELL**

*The "Waltham Blacks," who were executed at Tyburn, 4th of
December, 1723, for Murder and Deer-Stealing*

THESE men belonged to a gang of daring plunderers, who carried on their depredations with such effrontery that it was found necessary to enact the law hereafter recited, in order to bring them to condign punishment; and it was not long after it was in force before it took due effect upon them. Having blackened their faces, they went in the daytime to the parks of the nobility and gentry, whence they repeatedly stole deer, and at length murdered the Bishop of Winchester's keeper on Waltham Chase; and from the name of the place, and their blacking their faces, they obtained the name of the "Waltham Blacks."

The following is the substance of the Act of Parliament on which they were convicted: "After the first day of June, 1723, any person appearing in any forest, chase, park, etc., or in any highroad, open heath, common or down, with offensive weapons, and having his face blacked, or otherwise disguised, or unlawfully and wilfully hunting, wounding, killing or stealing any red or fallow deer, or unlawfully robbing any warren, etc., or stealing any fish out of any river or pond, or (whether armed or disguised or not) breaking down the head or mound of any fishpond, whereby the fish may be lost or destroyed; or unlawfully and maliciously killing, maiming or wounding any cattle, or cutting down or otherwise destroying any trees planted in any avenue, or growing in any garden, orchard or plantation, for ornament, shelter or profit; or setting fire to any house, barn or outhouse, hovel, cock-mow or stack of corn, straw, hay or wood; or maliciously shooting at any person in any dwelling-house or other place; or knowingly sending any letter without any name, or signed with a fictitious name, demanding money, venison or other valuable thing, or forcibly rescuing any person being in custody for any of the offences before mentioned, or procuring any person by gift, or promise of money, or other

reward, to join in any such unlawful act, or concealing or succouring such offenders when, by Order of Council, etc., required to surrender, shall suffer death."

The offence of deer-stealing was formerly only a misdemeanour at common law; but the act of parliament above-mentioned has been rendered perpetual by a subsequent statute: it therefore behoves people to be cautious that they do not endanger their lives, while they think they are committing what they may deem an inferior offence. We will now give such particulars as we have been able to obtain respecting the malefactors in question.

RICHARD PARVIN was heretofore the master of a public-house in Portsmouth, which he had kept with reputation for a considerable time, till he was imprudent enough to engage with the gang of ruffians who practised the robbing noblemen's and gentlemen's parks through the country. The reader is already apprized that it was the custom of these fellows to go disguised. Now a servant-maid of Parvin's having left his house during his absence, had repaired to an alehouse in the country; and Parvin calling there on his return from one of his dishonest expeditions, the girl discovered him; in consequence of which he was committed to Winchester Gaol, by the mayor of Portsmouth, till his removal to London for trial.

EDWARD ELLIOT was an apprentice to a tailor at Guildford, and was very young when he engaged with the gang, whose orders he implicitly obeyed, till the following circumstance occasioned his leaving them. Having met with two countrymen who refused to enter into the society, they dug holes in the ground, and placed the unhappy men in them, up to their chins, and had they not been relieved by persons who accidentally saw them, they must have perished. Shocked by this deed, Elliot left them, and for some time served a lady as a footman; but on the day the keeper was murdered he casually met them in the fields, and, on their promise that no harm should attend him, he unhappily consented to bear them company.

Having provided themselves with pistols, and blacked their faces with gunpowder, they proceeded to their lawless depredations; and while the rest

of the gang were killing of deer, Elliot went in search of a fawn; but while he was looking for it, the keeper and his assistants came up, and took him into custody. His associates were near enough to see what happened; and immediately coming to his assistance, a violent affray ensued, in which the keeper was shot by Henry Marshall, so that he died on the spot, and Elliot made his escape; but he was soon afterwards taken into custody, and lodged in the gaol of Guildford.

ROBERT KINGSHELL, who was a native of Farnham in Surrey, was placed by his parents with a shoemaker; but being too idle to follow his profession, he was guilty of many acts of irregularity, before he associated himself with the Waltham Blacks, with whom he afterwards suffered. While he was in bed on the night preceding the fatal murder, one of the gang awaked him, by knocking at his window; on which he arose, and went with him to join the rest of the deer-stealers.

HENRY MARSHALL was a man distinguished for his strength and agility: we have no account of the place of his birth, or the manner of his education; but it is reasonable to think that the latter was of the inferior kind, since he appears to have been chiefly distinguished by his skill in the vulgar science of bruising. He was once the occasion of apprehending a highwayman, who had robbed a coach, by giving him a single blow which broke his arm. He seems to have been one of the most daring of the Waltham Blacks, and was the man who shot the chase-keeper, as above-mentioned.

EDWARD PINK and JOHN PINK were brothers, who spent the former part of their lives as carters, at Portsmouth, and had maintained the character of honest men till they became weak enough to join the desperate gang of deer stealers.

It now remains to speak only of JAMES ANSEL, who likewise lived at Portsmouth. We are not informed in what way he had originally supported himself; but for some years before he joined the desperate gang above-mentioned he was a highwayman; and had been concerned with the Waltham

Blacks about two years before the commission of the murder which cost them their lives.

By a vigilant exertion of the civil power, all the above-mentioned offenders were taken into custody, and it being thought prudent to bring them to trial in London, they were removed thither under a strong guard, and lodged in Newgate.

On the 13th of November, 1723, they were brought to their trial in the court of King's Bench, and being convicted on the clearest evidence, were found guilty, and sentenced to die; and it was immediately ordered that they should suffer on the fourth of the next month. One circumstance was very remarkable on this occasion: — the judge had no sooner pronounced the sentence, than Henry Marshall, the man who had shot the keeper, was immediately deprived of the use of his tongue; nor did he recover his speech till the day before his death.

After passing the solemn sentence the convicts behaved in a manner equally devout and resigned, were regular in their devotions, and prepared themselves for eternity with every mark of unfeigned contrition. They received the sacrament before they left Newgate, acknowledged the justice of the sentence against them, and said they had been guilty of many crimes besides that for which they were to suffer.

At the place of execution they were so dejected as to be unable to address the populace; but they again confessed their sins, and recommended their souls to God, beseeching his mercy, through the merits of Christ, with the utmost fervency of devotion.

These malefactors were hanged at Tyburn, on the 4th of December, 1723.

A very short, though important lesson, may be learnt from the fate of these unhappy men. Idleness must have been the great source of their lawless depredations, which at length ended in murder. No man, however successful in the profession, can expect to get as much profit by deer-stealing, as by following his lawful business. The truth is, that, in almost every instance, it

costs a man more pains to be a rogue than to be honest. Exclusive of the duties of religion, young persons cannot learn a more important maxim than that in the scripture; 'the hand of the diligent maketh rich.'

In this place it may not be improper to make a single remark on the game laws. These are supposed to be, possibly not without reason, severe: it is contended that those animals which are wild by nature are equally the property of every man. Perhaps this is the truth: but persons in the lower ranks of life should remember, that when laws are once enacted, **THEY MUST BE OBEYED**. Safety lies in acquiescence with, not in opposition to, legal institutions.