

LIFE,

Trial, and Particulars of the
Execution

OF

Governor Wall,

Who was Executed on Thursday Morning last,
fronting Newgate, for the

MURDER

OF

Benjamin Armstrong,

Nearly 20 Years ago,

AT GORÉE, IN AFRICA.

By causing him to receive, without Trial, 800
Lashes, which were inflicted by Black Slaves,
changed at every 25 Lashes.

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Life, &c. of Governor Wall.

JOSEPH WALL, Esq. the unfortunate criminal who suffered on Thursday morning, was descended from a worthy, ancient and respectable family in Ireland.

After going through his studies at Trinity College, Dublin, he went into the army, and had attained the rank of Lieutenant Colonel when he was, unhappily for himself and family, appointed governor of Goree, in Africa, in the year 1779. In his capacity of governor he was generally beloved by the army; but being of a violent temper, he was sometimes led into excesses, for one of which he unhappily, though justly, paid his forfeit life. The particulars of this melancholy transaction, as detailed on the trial, were as follows:

On Wednesday week he was tried at the Old Bailey, before the Chief Baron, Justice Rooke, Justice Lawrence, and a Special Jury, on an indictment, charging him with the wilful Murder of Benjamin Armstrong, on the 10th of July, 1782, (nearly 20 years ago) at Goree. On this indictment the prisoner had been arraigned on a former day, and had pleaded not guilty.

Mr. Abbot having opened the case, the Attorney-General was proceeding to state it, when the prisoner begged the indulgence of the Court — “he could not distinctly hear where he was, and wished to be admitted nearer the table.

The Chief Baron answered—"The place in which you are is that appointed for persons in your situation, and we can make no distinction; but we will afford you all possible facility, by making the witnesses and Counsel speak loud."

The Attorney-General stated the accusations against him at considerable length. He said the crime laid to the prisoner's charge was committed so long as since as 1782. The prisoner returned to England in 1782, and in 1784 he was apprehended under a warrant from the Privy Council. That was surely the most favourable time for him to establish his innocence, if innocent he were, when so many witnesses were living, within the reach of the process of the law, and some of them even in the kingdom. He then fled from justice, and left the kingdom. A proclamation was issued offering a reward of 200l. He wrote several letters to government, stating his readiness to abide his trial, but never did so. The deceased was a serjeant in the garrison of Goree, which consisted of 150 men, of which place the prisoner was governor at that time. The garrison had been for some time on short allowance, and it was used for a compensation in money to be given under such circumstances. The Governor and Commissary, in whose hands the money lay, were to leave the island in a few days. Some of the soldiers among whom was Armstrong, were proceeding to the Commissary's house, to demand their money. They were unarmed. Being perceived by the Governor, he sent to enquire what they wanted. On being informed, he said they were fools; and addressing himself to Arm-

strong, who held his hat in his hand all the time, desired him to retire, which was instantly complied with in the most submissive manner. About six the same evening the drum beat for parade; the men were formed in a circle, Governor Wall and some Officers being in the centre. After some conversation between the Governor and the Officers, Armstrong was called from the ranks, by the Governor—he was ordered to be stripped and tied to a gun. This was obeyed. He was then whipped, not with the ordinary instrument, but with ropes; not by the ordinary persons, but by black slaves, changed at every twenty-five lashes; till eight hundred were inflicted, while the prisoner looked on, commanding the executioners to exert themselves, crying out, “Cut him to the heart! cut him to the liver! This, and the sickly season will do for him!” The sickly season was then approaching. The prisoner languished for a few days and died, making a formal declaration that he was punished without trial or offence.

These facts being proved to the satisfaction of the Jury, they pronounced him Guilty. The Recorder then pronounced sentence in the usual terms.

Mr. Wall was six feet four inches high, and of a genteel appearance. He behaved with great steadiness and composure during his long and painful trial, which lasted from nine in the morning until eleven at night. He was 65 years of age, but does not look so old.

The Governor next day, after this fatal transaction, left the island, and returned to this country. Not long after, the Secretary of State sent

a messenger to Bath, with authority to bring him immediately to town; he accompanied his troublesome companion as far as Reading, at which place he made his escape; and instantly left this kingdom for Paris, where he mixed with the most fashionable circles of that gay city. After a stay of five years he went to the South of France, and from thence into Italy.

In 1797, he returned to this country, as if by a kind of fatality, without any apparent reason; and applied, through the medium of a friend, to obtain a safe retreat, which was procured him at a house in Lambeth Cut, where he remained several months, seldom going out, and that either very late or early. He was frequently advised, by the friend who had procured him the lodging, to leave the country again; and questioned as to motives for remaining; he never attempted, however to give any, but appeared, even at the time when he was so studiously concealing himself, to have a distant intention of making a surrender, in order to take his trial.—It is very evident that his mind was not at ease, and that he was incapable of taking any firm resolution either one way or another. And even the manner in which he did give himself up shewed a singular want of determination, leaving it to chance whether the Minister should send for him or not; for rather than go to deliver himself up, he wrote to say, “he was ready to do so,”—a less becoming, but not a less dangerous mode of countering danger.

He was sentenced to be executed on Friday, but received a respite till Monday. On Sunday his friends took leave of him, expecting the fatal

sentence to take place next morning : about 11 at night, however, a further respite arrived.

The Governor was on Thursday morning last, publickly executed at Newgate, pursuant to his sentence, after having been twice respited. Newgate and the Old Bailey have for several days been at intervals a scene of tumult and confusion, by the resort of people of all descriptions, anxious to learn the final result of the Privy Council, who had several deliberations on the conduct and case of the late unhappy prisoner.

Mrs. Wall, the wife of the Prisoner, accompanied by her sister, Mrs. H——, a near relative of a nobleman, went to the prison on Wednesday evening. The former only saw him ; and, about eleven o'clock, she took an affectionate adieu of her husband. They at last parted, never to meet more; and, in this trying and critical interview, when the mind is engaged in testimonies of the greatest endearments, they acquitted themselves with that interesting pathos and affection which defy the powers of language to represent.—In an agony of despair, his last words to his beloved partner were —“ God bless you, my dear! take care of my children; and endeavour to represent me to them in as favourable a way as possible !”

The Governor passed the remainder of his existence in much anxiety. About two o'clock in the morning, he said to the two men who had constantly attended him in the condemned cell ever since his sentence —“ 'Tis a very long night—I wish much for the particular period when I am doomed to settle my last accounts.”

The crowd began to collect at the early hour of

five o'clock; about six there appeared at least seven or eight thousand; at seven more than three times the number; and, in three quarters of an hour after, the whole streets adjoining, viz. Snow-hill, St. Sepulchre's, Newgate, the Old Bailey, and even Ludgate-hill, were filled with spectators from all parts of the town, to the number of at least fifty or sixty thousand—some say a hundred thousand.

When brought out in the yard, he bowed to all he saw, thanked his attendants, expressed his warmest obligations to the Sheriffs, for their politeness and attention; then raising his head and eyes towards Heaven, with uplifted hands, he fervently exclaimed, "I sincerely forgive my accusers, and most earnestly pray that God may also forgive me my sins!" He then shook hands with Mr. Kirby, the Keeper, saying, "Your humane attentions, my good friend, demand my very best acknowledgments!" The prisoner then uttered, "I am ready!"

Four minutes before eight he ascended the fatal platform, and was advancing with steadiness and composure, when his fortitude was shocked by the loud and indignant shout of the multitude, who, as if in contemptuous triumph, gave three distinct huzzas; pulling off their hats at the same time, accompanying their shouts and exclamations by groans and hisses, as if in detestation of the prisoner's conduct.

After repeating the first sentence of the creed with the Ordinary, the Governor was launched into eternity. As he had scarcely finished the sentence, it is believed that his abrupt exit was occasioned by some mistake or accident: he hung

two or three minutes without any other sign than the mere vibration of the body from one side to another, when the strongest convulsions were observable, which continued for 20 minutes; when an order was given to pull his legs, (he had previously requested that it might not be done) and relieve him at once from this dreadful state. This arose from the improper tying of the rope behind his head; instead of placing it under the right ear. After hanging the usual time, the body was delivered to the surgeons for dissection.

When cut down, the multitude gave another shout of approbation.

The conduct of the spectators, on this occasion, was highly improper, and was disgraceful to the character of Englishmen. However they must have loathed the crime and the criminal, they ought not to have outraged the rules of decency.

The fate of Governor Wall presents an awful example and warning to all those in whom power is invested: his melancholy and ignominious end shews, that in England, neither rank, wealth, or influence, will be suffered to operate as a shield for cruelty and oppression. The soldier and the sailor now feel, and that with confidence, that however low or abject his condition may be, or however great his distance from home, in the remotest regions of the globe, his country still protects him, and his life, while he continues faithful to his duty, shall not be at the mercy of any one.

THE END.

Davenport, Printer, Georges-court.