

Popular Literature in Sixteenth-Century England

PAMPHLETS OF MURDER AND MAYHEM

Sundry Strange and Inhuman Murders, Lately Committed

The following pamphlet exemplifies a common trope in early modern murder narratives: no matter how secretly a murder may be committed and no matter how diligently its evidence is concealed, it will always finally come to light, and the guilty parties will be punished. God, in short, will not allow murderers to escape retribution. Sometimes, murder is revealed through relatively naturalistic means, as in the account below of the murder of the illegitimate child by its mother and her accomplices (her mother, grandmother, and midwife): a dog digs up the shallowly-buried body, spurring an investigation that finally leads the conscience-stricken midwife to utter a confession which is overheard and reported. However, even these circumstances are attributed to the providence of God. More striking, perhaps, are the two occasions reported below where the murdered body gives supernatural testimony concerning the identity of the murderer. Hired by a father to murder three of his children, a labourer finds that when he is brought before the dead bodies they flush with life, and their wounds begin to bleed afresh, prompting the murderer's full confession and his implication of the children's father; likewise, the body of a young man regains the power of opening one eye, which he casts steadily upon his murderer whenever the man is brought into his presence, prompting yet another confession. The intervention of God in the punishment of these murders speaks to their particularly troubling nature, as many undermine and violate the deepest and most-trusting of familial bonds: between husband and wife, child and father, infant and mother. Moreover, the following narratives also imply that the weakness of authority figures helps make

murder possible: the midwife becomes an accomplice in infanticide, rather than doing her duty of reporting the birth of a living illegitimate child to the parish authorities; Master Glanfield encourages his daughter's attachment to George Strangwidge only to then marry her to another man, resulting in the murderous emotions that lead to her husband's murder.

EDITION: *Sundrye strange and inhumaine Murthers, lately committed*. London: [Printed] by Thomas Scarlett, 1591. STC 18286.5.

*Sundry Strange and Inhuman Murders, Lately Committed.*¹

A Declaration of the Monstrous Cruelty of a Father That Hired One to Murder Three of His Own Children.

The heavy sentence that almighty God pronounced upon the parricide Cain,² when he said, "Thou art cursed from the earth, that hath opened

¹ The title page continues: "The first of a father that hired a man to kill three of his children near to Ashford in Kent: The second of Master Page of Plymouth, murdered by the consent of his own wife: with the strange discovery of sundry other murders. Wherein is described the odiousness of murder, with the vengeance which God inflicteth on murderers."

² *Cain* The elder son of Adam and Eve, Cain became blind with jealousy when his younger brother Abel's offering found acceptance with God while his did not; he murdered him, and when God asked Cain where Abel was, Cain famously replied, "I know not, am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9); God subsequently curses Cain and sets him to wander over the face of the earth, but first sets a mark upon him to keep others from killing him when they learn of his crime, the first fratricide (murder of a brother by his brother), not the first parricide (murder of a father by his son).

her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy
 5 hand" (Gen. 4.), showeth how odious murder is in
 his sight. It therefore behoveth¹ everyone to have
 a special care what actions we commit, not seeking
 to murder those that have in some sort offended
 us, but to leave, as we ought, the revenge of all
 10 wrongs unto the Lord. For we may be assured we
 cannot deal colourably² with God as Pilate
 thought to have done when he pronounced sen-
 tence against his own conscience, for he, having at
 the importunate suit of the Jews pronounced
 15 death upon our Saviour Christ, thought to have
 washed away the fact³ with the washing of his
 hands and his protestation in saying, "I am inno-
 cent of the blood of this just person,"⁴ whereby
 indeed he could not clear himself, but according to
 20 the saying of Erasmus,⁵ "In murder the consenter
 is as evil as the deed doer." So Pilate's conscience
 made him guilty of Christ's death, for which the
 wrath of God still followed him; for after that
 time Pilate in executing his office did nothing but
 25 that which was injustice, and being thereof
 accused in Rome, he was by the Emperor Caligula
 banished, and went to Lyons, the place (as some
 say) of his birth, through grief of which disgrace,
 by the sufferance of God, he desperately slew
 30 himself, that he might die by the hand of the most
 wickedest person that lived.⁶ God said unto Cain,
 "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me
 out of the ground."⁷ And Plutarch doth describe
 many strange discoveries of murders, among
 35 which he sayeth that a monstrous son slew his
 own father, the act being so much against nature
 as no man suspected this graceless child for the
 same; and yet in his own conscience he saw mil-

lions of accusers standing before him, and ready
 40 (as he thought) to attach⁸ him for the same, inso-
 much as upon a day sitting in a tavern with a com-
 panion of his, he suddenly thrust his sword up
 into the chimney, and cried out, saying, "Ah, you
 villain swallows," quoth he, "leave your babbling
 45 and exclaiming that I slew my father, or I will do
 by you as I did by him." His companion hearing
 this his voluntary accusation secretly bewrayed⁹
 the matter to the magistrate, whereby the ungra-
 cious son was soon apprehended, and executed
 50 according to his demerits.¹⁰

Horror and fear always accompanieth the mur-
 derer: his own conscience is to him a thousand
 witnesses; he standeth in dread of every bush,
 beast, and bird; he imagineth that everything dis-
 covereth his evil, and many times it falleth out that
 the silly¹¹ creatures of the earth detecteth him.

Oh, what a strange and unlooked for discovery
 was this, yet nothing strange considering the
 horror of the filthy fact. God seldom or never
 leaveth murder unpunished, nor will the mark of
 murder go forth of the murderer's weapon,
 neither can murder be kept so close but that by
 one means or other the Lord will compel the mur-
 derer to discover and lay open the truth unto the
 60 world,¹² as by this lamentable accident following
 manifestly appeareth.

In the town or parish of Warborne, within four
 miles of Ashford market, being within the county
 of Kent, dwelled one Lincoln, the unnatural father
 of four unfortunate children. This man being
 about fifty years of age was a widower, and there-
 fore became a suitor to a widow not far from
 thence, who, being of some reasonable wealth,
 refused to marry with him in respect of his great
 70 charge of children.¹³ Whereat, as it seemeth, the

¹ *behoveth* is morally requisite for; is incumbent upon.

² *colourably* speciously; with a hypocritical show of reason or legal-
 ity.

³ *fact* crime.

⁴ For Pilate's role in the trial and execution of Jesus as recounted
 briefly here, see Matthew 27:24-25.

⁵ *Erasmus* Desiderius Erasmus (?1466-1536), famous humanist
 scholar.

⁶ *So Pilate's ... wickedest person that lived* This brief, apocryphal history
 of Pilate is from Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*, 2.7.1.

⁷ Genesis 4:10.

⁸ *attach* arrest.

⁹ *bewrayed* revealed, betrayed.

¹⁰ For this story see Plutarch's "On God's Slowness to Punish." See
Essays, ed. R. Waterfield (London, 1992), pp. 262-63.

¹¹ *silly* innocent.

¹² Proverb, "Murder will out" (*Tilley* M1315).

¹³ *charge of children* i.e., his children as constituting a heavy financial
 responsibility.

Devil entered so far into his mind that he cast many ways in his thought how to make them away,¹ and returning home sat down in great heaviness by the fireside. Whereupon he having a married man that wrought² with him in his house, demanded of him why he was so pensive, who, requiring him also to sit down by the fire, told him that he could not be merry.

“Why,” said he, “how comes it that you marry not some honest woman to comfort you, considering you have wherewithal to keep her?”

“Oh,” said he, fetching a great sigh, “there is none will have me in respect of my great charge of children, but (said he) if I could make them away by any means, I could marry with a rich widow.”

And thereupon (as it was since confessed), none being present but themselves, the said Lincoln persuaded this labouring man to perform his request and to take this matter in hand, so should he have forty shillings in money and a good cow for his pains. But the poor man, notwithstanding he seemed at the first unwilling, yet as he was poor, so he was covetous, and the hope of the money and the cow so wrought in his thought that, forgetting God and all godliness, in the end without any great delay he consented to the fact, and the rather he was induced thereunto, for that this unnatural father promised that when the murder was committed not to pursue or make after him for the same, and that if he were compelled thereunto, yet would he deal in such sort that he would let fall his suit³ rather than to take his oath to say he was the murderer.

Thus concluding between themselves, the day came wherein the wicked act was performed, which was upon a Saturday in November last, on which morning the father and all his children with the murderer broke their fast at home together. That done, old Lincoln prepared himself to go to Ashford market, which he did, taking his eldest son with him and the murderer. They departed towards Ashford, but in the way the murderer

returned home again to the three innocent children, whom he speedily murdered, knocking them on the heads with a hatchet and cutting all their throats. The father the better to colour⁴ his unnatural consenting to the death of his own children, bought three pairs of new shoes for them, whom he knew should be murdered before he came home, and sent his eldest son home before, being about fifteen years old. Who could not get in at the door which was barred on the inner side, and seeing he heard none of the children stirring, stayed there until his father came; who seeing no light, nor hearing of the children, contrary to his usual custom (yet might have gone in on the back side) came to his next neighbour’s house, and prayed that somebody would go home with him to see what had happened. In conclusion, he came home with company, who were eyewitnesses of this tragical spectacle, for having entered the house, they found murdered two pretty boys and a girl, which grievous and unexpected sight made the beholders to stand amazed. Nevertheless, the hard-hearted father made no sign of sorrow for them, neither would he seek means to pursue the murderer, which by the report of his neighbours seemed to be his man, who only was seen about the house after his departure and none else. But this wretched man commended him to be a very honest fellow, and therefore supposed his eldest son to be the author of this murder, and upon him would willingly have imposed the same.

The next day following the father would seek no means to bury the children, nor that the crowner⁵ should view them, but suffered them most unnaturally to lie above the ground for the space of three days, until a gentlewoman named Mistress West came and reproved him of his unnatural dealings towards them; which done, he digged a hole in the house about two foot deep, and laid them in it, but by reason of springs in the ground, the water issued into the pit, and thereby soaked the children’s wounds and body, and made

¹ *make them away* murder them.

² *wrought* worked.

³ *let fall his suit* cease his legal proceedings or actions.

⁴ *colour* cloak, disguise.

⁵ *crowner* coroner.

160 them very clear and white. Within five days after,
 the crowner came thither, being procured there-
 unto, and found the children covered with a little
 earth and a board over them, whom he caused to
 be taken up. This was the eighth day after the
 165 murder was committed, in which time the mur-
 derer was apprehended and accused thereof, but
 he utterly denied the fact. But being brought
 before the dead bodies of the children, the father
 being there also, the wounds began to bleed
 170 afresh, which when the crowner saw, he com-
 manded the party apprehended to look upon the
 children, which he did, and called them by their
 names, whereupon, behold the wonderful works
 of God: for the fact being still denied, the bodies
 175 of the children, which seemed white like unto
 soaked flesh laid in water, suddenly received their
 former colour of blood, and had such a lively
 countenance flushing in their faces as if they had
 been living creatures lying asleep, which indeed
 180 blushed on the murderers—when they wanted
 grace to blush and be ashamed of their own
 wickedness. Which wonderful miracle caused the
 murderer there present not only to confess and
 acknowledge himself guilty of that damnable
 185 deed, but also to accuse the father of the children
 as principal procurer of their untimely deaths.
 Whereupon they were both sent prisoners to
 Canterbury, where they remained until the last
 assizes¹ holden at Senocke in Kent 18 miles from
 190 London, where they were arraigned and con-
 demned to die for the same, so that upon the
 seven and twentieth day of February last past
 they were both executed near to Ashford, where
 the father of the children confessed himself
 195 guilty of the murder, having before denied it even
 till the hour of death. Whereby appeareth that his
 own conscience was overcharged with this foul
 and odious offence, and therefore would not
 suffer it to be concealed.

200 Thus may you see how murderers are over-
 taken, and their actions opened by themselves;
 yea, if there were nobody to accuse the murderer,

¹ *last assizes* legal sessions regularly held in English counties for the adjudication of civil and criminal cases.

205 the murdered coarse² would give evidence against
 him. It hath been a mean³ appointed by the Lord
 to discern the murderer, that when he approached,
 the dead carcass would at some issue⁴ or other
 bleed. Many have by this miraculous work of the
 Lord been discovered, when the proof hath been
 only bare suspicion. This example ensuing is much
 210 to that purpose.

There was not long since at Uppingham in Rut-
 landshire, a shoemaker that had murdered a young
 man, who was buried, and the murderer little sus-
 pected for the same: nevertheless upon bare sus-
 picion he was apprehended and the dead coarse
 215 digged up again, before whom this shoemaker was
 brought, upon whose approach the murdered
 coarse not only bled, but with one of his eyes
 standing wide open, he stared upon the shoe-
 maker that murdered him. The standers-by, won-
 derfully amazed thereat, removed the shoemaker,
 and presently the eye closed up, and being brought
 again, the coarse with his eye wide open, stared
 upon him as before, as who would say, “This is the
 220 murderer; stay him, my blood asketh for
 vengeance.” I have here published this matter
 upon such due proof as cannot be reproved. It is
 not yet long since the murderer was executed at
 Dukam in the foresaid county, an example of
 great terror to such as delight in blood. But what
 may examples prevail where grace and the fear of
 God is wanting, as appeareth by the sequel.

Of late there was dwelling in Salisbury a young
 damsel named Alice Shepheard, who being with
 child, and yet never married, would swear when
 she was charged therewith that it was most untrue.
 But the time coming on when she should be deliv-
 ered, she was constrained to reveal the truth to her
 mother and grandmother, who presently fetched a
 midwife, making none other acquainted therewith,
 neither did she after her coming stay very long
 before this maid was delivered of a man child,
 240 whose neck they presently broke, and secretly

² *coarse* corpse.

³ *mean* method, way.

⁴ *issue* opening, incision; here, “wound.”

245 buried it in the churchyard, thinking thereby to
 escape worldly punishment: not fearing the wrath
 of God for their wilful murder, nor considering
 that he saw the secrets of their hearts, nor that he
 would not suffer innocent bloodshed to go
 unpunished.

250 But now see the will and wonderful work of
 almighty God to reveal this most wicked act. It
 happened a dog came over the place where the
 child lay buried, and having found the scent of the
 flesh, he never rested until he had with his feet
 255 scraped it up out of the ground, leaving it bare
 above the earth, whereby it seemeth that they
 buried it but very shallow, and was fearful to be
 espied, lest the fact should thereby be discovered.
 Now when the dog had laid it open to the eye of
 260 each passenger, it happened that one Hugh
 Mawdes of Salisbury coming by chanced to spy
 the same, and was greatly amazed to see so grievous
 a sight, who presently went and told the
 masters of the parish what he had seen; where-
 265 upon they came to behold this grievous sight,
 which they perceived was but new born, and
 therefore concluded that it was the child of some
 strumpet, and that she had murdered it, and then
 buried it in that shallow place, which done it was
 270 conveyed into Our Lady Church in Salisbury,
 where all the chief of the town came in and gave
 their censures¹ for finding out the unnatural
 mother and murderer thereof.

275 Among whom Mistress Shephard's daughter
 was nominated and greatly suspected for the same:
 notwithstanding, upon this bare suspicion, the
 suspected person with her mother, grandmother,
 and midwife was sent for who being examined
 before a justice, confessed that the said child was
 280 stillborn, and that therefore they privily buried it
 in that sort; whereupon the justice caused them to
 be sworn upon a book that they had said nothing
 but the truth, which they severally did. But here
 God showed a miracle before them all, for they
 285 having taken their oaths before the justice, they
 were discharged and sent away, not meaning to
 deal any further therein.

¹ *censures* judgements, opinions.

290 But the midwife being touched in conscience
 with her oath which she had then new-taken, going
 forth of the justice's doors, suddenly fetched a great
 sigh and said, "Oh, what a wicked woman am I to
 swear that the child was stillborn, wherein troth it
 was born alive"; which words being overheard by
 one of the justice's servants, they were all called in
 295 again: where they were charged with the murdering
 of the said child, which after a faint denial, they
 generally confessed. Then were they committed to
 prison until the last assizes, where they received the
 doom of judgement by death, which of duty they
 had deserved for so wicked a deed. Thus we see
 that although God suffer the murderer to escape
 for a time, yet doth he follow them with so sharp
 revenge, as either they desperately slay themselves,
 or reap such shame as the world may be satisfied,
 305 that God hath dealt justly with them.

A True Discourse of a Cruel and Inhuman
 Murder, Committed upon Master Padge of
 Plymouth, the 11th Day of February Last,
 1591, by the Consent of His Own Wife, and
 Sundry Other[s].

In the town of Testock 10 miles or thereabouts
 from Plymouth, there dwelled one Master Glan-
 field, a man of as good wealth and account, as any
 occupier² in that country. This Master Glanfield
 5 favoured a young man named George Strang-
 widge, who was of such great credit with him, that
 he turned over all his wares, shop, and dealings
 into his hands: and took so good liking of him
 being a proper young man, that it was supposed he
 10 should have had his daughter in marriage, and the
 rather for that he had learned the full perfection
 and knowledge of his trade in London, in the
 service of a worshipful citizen called Master
 Powell in Bread Street, and grew so painful,³ and
 15 seemed so good a husband⁴ as the said Master

² *occupier* trader, merchant, dealer.

³ *painful* diligent, painstaking, careful.

⁴ *husband* a man who managed his domestic and/or business affairs
 skilfully and prudently.

Glanfield's daughter did wholly resolve that the said Strangwidge should be her husband and no other: whereto in troth¹ her parents never did condescend. But Satan who is the author of evil, crept so far into the dealings of these persons, that he procured the parents to mislike of Strangwidge, and to persuade their daughter to refrain his company, showing her that they had found out a more meeter² match for her, and motioned unto her that it was their pleasures she should marry one Master Padge of Plymouth, who was a widower, and one of the chiefest inhabitants of that town, and by reason that the said Master Glanfield did mean to abide at Plymouth, he thought it a more sufficient match to marry her in Plymouth, where she might be hard³ by him, than to marry her to Strangwidge who dwelt far from him. In the end such was the success, that although she had settled her affection altogether upon Strangwidge, yet through the persuasion of her friends though sore against her will, she was married to Master Padge of Plymouth, notwithstanding that she had protested never to love the man with her heart, nor never to remove her affection settled upon the said Strangwidge, which she performed as the sequel maketh manifest: for this Mistress Padge had access to Strangwidge, and he to her at his coming to Plymouth; whereby the Devil so wrought in the hearts of them both, that they practiced day and night how to bring her husband to his end. And thereupon the said mistress Padge as appeareth since by her own confession, did within the space of one year and less, attempt sundry times to poison her husband, for it was not full a year but that she had procured him to be murdered, as you shall hear immediately.

But God, who preserveth many persons from such perils and dangers, defended still the said Master Padge from the secret snares and practices of present death, which his wife had laid for him, yet not without great hurt unto his body, for still the poison wanted force to kill him, so wonder-

¹ *troth* truth.

² *meeter* more appropriate, fitting.

³ *hard* close.

fully did almighty God work for him, yet was he compelled to vomit blood and much corruption, which doubtless in the end would have killed him, and that shortly. But to prosecute and that with great speed to perform this wicked and inhuman act, the said Mistress Padge and Strangwidge omitted no opportunity. They wanted no means nor friends to perform it for their money, whereof they had good store, and more than they knew how to employ, except it had been to better uses: for she on the one side practiced with one of her servants named Robert Priddis, whom as she thought nothing would more sooner make him pretend the murdering of his master than silver and gold, wherewith she so corrupted him, with promise of seven score⁴ pounds more, that he solemnly undertook and vowed to perform the task to her contentment.

On the other side Strangwidge hired one Tom Stone to be an actor in this tragical action, and promised him a great sum of money for performing the same, who by a solemn vow had granted the effecting thereof, though to the hazard of his own life.

These two instruments wickedly prepared themselves to effect this desperate and villainous deed upon the 11th of February being Wednesday, on which night following the act was committed, but it is to be remembered that this Mistress Padge lay not then with her husband, by reason of the untimely birth of a child whereof she was newly delivered, the same being dead born; upon which cause, she then kept her chamber, having before sworn that she would never bear child of his getting that should prosper, which argued a most ungodly mind in the woman, for in that sort she had been the death of two of her own children.

About ten of the clock at night Master Padge being in his bed slumbering, could not happen upon a sound sleep, and lying musing to himself, Tom Stone came softly and knocked at the door, whereupon Priddis his companion did let him, in who was made privy to⁵ this deed, and by reason

⁴ *seven score* 140.

⁵ *made privy to* informed of; let in on the secret.

that Mistress Padge gave them straight charge¹ to
 dispatch it that night whatsoever came of it, they
 drew towards the bed, intending immediately to
 go about it, Master Padge being not asleep as is
 105 foresaid, asked who came in, whereat Priddis leapt
 upon his master being in his bed, who roused
 himself and got out upon his feet, and had been
 hard enough for his man, but that Stone flew
 110 upon him being naked, and suddenly tripped him,
 so that he fell to the ground: whereupon both of
 them fell upon him and took the kercher from his
 head, and knitting the same about his neck, they
 immediately stifled him: and as it appeareth even
 115 in that anguish of death, the said Master Padge
 greatly laboured to pull the kercher from about his
 neck, by reason of the marks and scratches which
 he had made with his nails upon his throat, but
 therewith he could not prevail, for they would not
 120 slip their hold until he was full dead. This done,
 they laid him overthwart the bed, and against the
 bedside broke his neck, and when they saw he was
 surely dead, they stretched him and laid him in his
 bed again, spreading the clothes in ordinary sort,
 as though no such act had been attempted, but
 125 that he had died on God's hand.

Whereupon Priddis immediately went to Mis-
 tress Padge's chamber and told her that all was dis-
 patched; and about one hour after he came again
 to his mistress's chamber door and called aloud:

130 "Mistress," quoth he, "let somebody look into
 my master's chamber, methinks I hear him groan."

With that she called her maid, who was not
 privy to anything, and bad her light a candle,
 whereupon she slipped on her petticoat and went
 135 thither likewise, sending her maid first into the
 chamber, where she herself stood at the door, as
 one whose conscience would not permit her to
 come and behold the detestable deed which she
 had procured.

140 The maid simply felt on her master's face, and
 found him cold and stiff and so told her mistress,
 whereat she bad the maid to warm a cloth and

wrap it about his feet, which she did, and when
 she felt his legs, they were as cold as clay, whereat
 she cried out saying, her master was dead.

Whereupon her mistress got her to bed, and
 caused her man Priddis to go call her father
 Master Glanfield, then dwelling at Plymouth, and
 sent for one of her husband's sisters likewise,
 150 willing her to make haste if ever she would see her
 brother alive, for he was taken with the disease
 called the Pull² as they term it in that country.
 These persons being sent for they came immedi-
 ately, whereat Mistress Padge arose, and in coun-
 155 terfeit manner sounded,³ whereby there was no
 suspicion a long time concerning any murder per-
 formed upon him, until Mistress Harris, his sister,
 spied blood about his bosom, which he had with
 his nails procured by scratching for the kercher
 when it was about his throat. Then they moved his
 160 head and found his neck broken, and on both his
 knees the skin was beaten off, by striving with
 them to save his life.

Mistress Harris hereupon perceiving how he
 was made away, went to the Mayor and the wor-
 shipful⁴ of the town, desiring them of justice, and
 entreated them to come and behold this lamenta-
 ble spectacle, which they immediately performed,
 and by searching him, found that he was murdered
 170 the same night.

Upon this, the Mayor committed Priddis to
 prison, who being examined, did impeach Tom
 Stone, showing that he was the chief actor in the
 same: this Thomas Stone was married upon the
 next day after the murder was committed, and
 being in the midst of his jollity, suddenly he was
 175 attached⁵ and committed to prison, to bear his
 fellow company.

Thus did the Lord unfold this wretched deed,
 180 whereby immediately the said Mistress Padge was
 attached upon the murder, and examined before

¹ *straight charge* immediate command.

² *Pull* unidentified.

³ *sounded* swooned, fainted.

⁴ *the worshipful* the city aldermen.

⁵ *attached* arrested.

Sir Francis Drake, knight,¹ with the Mayor and other magistrates of Plymouth, who denied not the same, but said she had rather die with Strang-
 185 widge, than to live with Padge.

At the same time also the said George Strang-
 widge was newly come to Plymouth, being very
 heavy and doubtful, by reason he had given
 consent to the said murder: who being then in
 190 company with some of London, was appre-
 hended, and called before the Justices for the
 same, whereupon at his coming before them, he
 confessed the truth of all: and offered to prove
 that he had written a letter to Plymouth before his
 195 coming thither, that at any hand they should not
 perform the act: nevertheless Master Padge was
 murdered before the coming of this letter, and
 therefore he was sent to prison with the rest unto
 Exeter: and at the assizes² holden this last Lent,
 200 the said George Strangwidge, Mistress Padge,
 Priddis, and Tom Stone, were condemned and
 adjudged to die for the said fact,³ and were all exe-
 cuted accordingly upon the Saturday being the
 twentieth day of February last, 1591.

Other Strange Things Seen at That Time.

205 Upon the same night and three days after, there
 was seen an ugly thing formed like a bear, whose
 eyes were as it had been fire, bearing about him a
 linen cloth representing the instrument wherewith
 240 the said Master Padge was murdered.

210 Also in Plymouth the same week in the presence
 of sundry honest persons was visibly seen a raven,

which did light upon the head of a ship's mast,
 sunk at the end of the town. This raven, standing
 upon the top of the main mast, did with her talons
 215 pluck up certain rope yarns that hung down from
 the head of the mast, and fastened them about her
 neck, and often turned them about her neck with
 all her force, which done, she plunged herself right
 down, clapping her wings close to her body, and
 never left until she had hanged herself.

220 Now the ship was all this while aground, lying
 with her stern to the shore, and suddenly the said
 ship turned herself around, and brought her stem
 where erst⁴ her stern did lie, all which are strange,
 yet is the same so true as it cannot be disproved,
 being justified by those that saw the same.

The Lord bless us, and give all other grace to be
 warned by these examples and inhuman actions
 before recited: that we may avoid the danger of
 shedding of innocent blood, and fear the judge-
 230 ment of God which continually followeth wilful
 murderers. Eternal God preserve this little island,
 bless the Queen's Majesty, and her honourable
 Council,⁵ turn thy wrath away from us O Lord,
 235 and pour down thy blessings upon her Highness,
 that she our Moses, may long live to hold up the
 Tables of the Law⁶ in her gracious hands, and that
 we may seek continually to please her in such due
 sort, as she may have no just cause to throw them
 240 down, which God grant for his mercy sake. Amen.

FINIS.

—1591

¹ Sir Francis Drake (?1549-96), explorer and naval commander, most famous for his circumnavigation of the world in his ship the *Golden Hind* (between 1577 and 1581). Drake's interest in the case may have been spurred by the fact that from 1589 to 1595 he was in retirement at his estate (Buckland Abbey, Yelverston, West Devonshire) near Plymouth.

² *assizes*. See p. 4, note 1.

³ *fact* crime.

⁴ *erst* earlier, just previously.

⁵ *Council* i.e., the Privy Council, consisting of Elizabeth's ministers of state.

⁶ *she our Moses ... Tables of the Law* Elizabeth I is compared to the patriarch Moses who led the Israelites out of slavery; at Mount Sinai, God gave Moses the tablets containing the ten commandments.