

**THE LAST DAYS OF A
CONDEMNED, FROM THE FRENCH
OF M. VICTOR HUGO. WITH
OBSERVATIONS ON CAPITAL
PUNISHMENT**

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The Last Days of a Condemned, from the French of M. Victor Hugo. With Observations on Capital Punishment by Sir P. Hesketh Fleetwood

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SIR P. HESKETH FLEETWOOD

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FROM THE FRENCH OF

M. VICTOR HUGO.

WITH OBSERVATIONS

ON CAPITAL PUNISHMENT,

BY

SIR P. HESKETH FLEETWOOD,
BART, M.P.

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1840.

566.



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DEDICATION.

TO

THE QUEEN'S MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY.

MADAM,

THE personal favour which your Majesty has been so graciously pleased to confer on me, in allowing the present dedication,—thus implying a confidence in the probable nature of the work—will not, I trust, be found to have been misused by me, should your Majesty hereafter honour the volume by perusal. In thus being the medium through which the pleadings of a class of society, so far removed from the sympathy of mankind, approach the throne of your Majesty, may I be permitted to take this

opportunity of expressing, what is responded to by every feeling heart in your Majesty's dominions, a respectful appreciation of the mildness and clemency which have pervaded the administration of the laws during the present merciful reign.

With sincere prayers for the happiness of your Majesty,

I have the honour to be,

MADAM,

Your Majesty's

Most humble and faithful

Servant and subject,

P. HESKETH FLEETWOOD.

Rosall Hall, Lancashire.

P R E F A C E.

"To be, or not to be—that is the question."

THAT is indeed the question we are about to consider—*BEING* or *DEATH*—a short sentence, but of unequalled importance. Yet how little does the demise of a fellow man dwell on the human mind, unless the ties of kindred, or any peculiarity of circumstance by which the event may happen to be encircled, impart to it adventitious interest.

A newspaper paragraph entitled "Awful and sudden death," may for a moment arrest

our attention, but it is the "awful and sudden," not the actual transit which attracts the fancy. Perchance, also, it may be printed in rather a larger type than the adjoining paragraph; or we may expect to find some exciting detail of the facts of the case; but the awful Reality, the earthly ending of the being, immortal though it is to be, elicits little sympathy, and the wearied eye turns to some other news.

The dying *speech* of the malefactor arrests our attention; the dead *speaker* of it is unregarded as a lump of clay. Who that amidst the excitement of a crowded court of justice has turned his thoughts within himself, and divesting the scene of all the panoply of pomp which surrounds him, has reflected on the moral effect to be the result of the sentence of death *if executed*,—but has felt his sympathy rather awakened in favour of the culprit, and confessed to himself how inefficient the gibbet is when