

## A Pair of Parricides

By Francis Watt

THERE is a new series of *State Trials* continuing the old and edited with a skill and completeness altogether lacking in its predecessor; yet its formal correctness gives an impression of dulness. You think with regret of Howell's thirty-three huge volumes, that vast magazine of curiosities and horrors, of all that is best and worst in English history. How exciting life was long ago, to be sure, and how persistently it grows duller! What a price we pay for the smug comfort of our time! People shuddered of yore; did they yawn quite so often? Howell and the folk he edits knew how to tell a story. Judges, too, were not wont to exclude interesting detail for that it wasn't evidence, and the compilers did not end with a man's condemnation. They had too keen a sense of what was relished of the general; the last confession and dying speech, the exit on the scaffold or from the cart, are told with infinite gusto. What a terrible test Earth's great unfortunates underwent! Sir Thomas More's delicate fencing with his judges, the exquisite courtesy wherewith he bade them farewell, make but half the record; you must hear the strange gaiety which flashed in the condemned cell and by the block ere you learn the man's true nature. And to know Raleigh you must see him at Winchester under the brutal insults

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