

The Hanging Tree: Execution and the English People 1770-1868

V. A. C. [Vic] Gatrell

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Hanging people for petty crimes as well as grave, the Bloody Penal Code was at its most active between 1770 and 1830. Some 7,000 men and women were executed on public scaffolds, watched by crowds of thousands. This acclaimed study is the first to explore what a wide range of people felt about these ceremonies. Gatrell draws on letters, diaries, ballads, broadsides, and images, as well as on poignant appeals for mercy which, until now, have been largely neglected by historians. Panoramic in range, scholarly in method, and compelling in style and in argument, this is one of those rare histories which both shift our sense of the past and speak powerfully to the present.



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