

FOR THE ATHENIAN.

GEORGIA. DE KALB COUNTY.

De Kalb Superior Court, April Term, 1831.

THE STATE,
vs.
WILLIAM CROWDER. } *Indictment for Murder.*

THE CASE.

At the last Superior Court of De Kalb Co. a man by the name of *William Crowder* was indicted for the murder of his wife and child, and among a number of facts that appeared in evidence, and which satisfied the jury of his guilt, the following seemed to be the most prominent.

The prisoner had been employed in the capacity of an overseer, and lived near the house of his employer. About ten o'clock at night in May last, his employer awoke and heard the roaring of fire. He sprung from his bed, and upon reaching the door, discovered the prisoner's house in flames. He called up two or three of his negroes and hurried to the place; when arrived there, hearing no noise and finding every thing perfectly still, except the noise of the burning, the negroes became alarmed and begged their master to return, intimating that there was some bad design in the appearances. He however remained, and after walking round the house, the roof of which was just falling in, he heard a whistle at some short distance. Listening for a moment, it was repeated. This greatly increased the alarm of the negroes, and they again urged their master to return; but being a resolute and firm man, he immediately started in the direction of the noise, which was again repeated. The ground, towards the place of the sound, was a long slope, and he had fancied it proceeded from the opposite hill. Fixing his eye and ear upon that point, he was moving thither, when all at once he came suddenly upon the object from which it issued. It was the prisoner lying on the ground, who with much difficulty raised himself upon his left arm and hand.— He found his throat cut and bleeding, and was very bloody from the neck downwards. He asked the prisoner who had served him so? He could not or did not speak, but held up his right hand, giving it at the same time a sudden turn or two upon the wrist. He then asked him where his family was? He waved his hand towards the house. "Are they burnt up?" He nodded assent with his head. The witness then sent his negroes, and went himself to summon the surrounding neighbors.— When they returned they took the prisoner back to the house, and upon examining him, they found the windpipe cut about half in two, but the prisoner, by pressing up the orifice with his hand, could speak so as to be understood. There being use for an axe, he was asked where his was? He replied that in the evening he had used it in splitting lightwood, and placed it under the corner of the house. Search was made for it at that place, but it was not found. He was then asked where his razor was? He said it was in his trunk, which stood by the foot of the bed. The bodies of the wife and child were now perceived in two separate bundles, through the intervals of the burning logs of the house. After the flames had somewhat subsided, an attempt was made to get them out. The bed upon which they had laid was nearly consumed to ashes, but from the clothing, feathers and straw about it, they were plainly distinguishable from the surrounding ashes; and it had fallen, together with the bodies, to the ground, with its outlines distinctly marked. The child was lying on the edge near the wall, the mother in the middle. A razor blade lay near the head of the child, and an axe near their feet, all within the print of the bed as before described. The hinges and lock of the trunk were found near the foot, where he stated it was standing. His knife, shut, was found near the head, but outside of the print, as though his clothing had been hung on one of the bedstead posts, and after burning, dropt their contents immediately by that corner. The prisoner was found with a different waistcoat and pantaloons from those he had on the evening before, and they were quite clean. In accounting for his situation, he stated he was asleep, and the first thing he knew, some person had placed their hand over his eyes and suddenly cut his throat, and then emptied a straw bed over him, to which fire was instantly communicated, and amidst the flames he jumped up, snatched the waistcoat and pantaloons hanging near him, which he threw over and around his head, and fled to the place where he was found. There was the appearance of straw about his hair, and he was smartly burnt in one or two places. Upon getting out the bodies, the child was found wrapped up very carefully, first in cotton bats about its body, and then three sets of clothing. The skin was not burnt, or but very little, and its throat was cut. The mother was also wrapped up in certain clothing, but was much burnt and disfigured, particularly about the head, breast and arms. The bones of her head separated, and a large clot of blood was discovered among her brains, into which they appeared to be sticking, in a cooked state.

It seemed that he lived a miserable life with his wife, on account of the passion of jealousy, for the existence of which there appeared, unfortunately, too much reason. They had parted frequently, and on one occasion, he had attempted her life with a razor. He had strongly intimated that he could not and would not live in such a state of torment, and that he would kill his child rather than it should be raised by his wife's father, to whom, in the countenance and protection of his daughter in her misconduct, he had attributed much of his misfortunes. For about three weeks before the murder, they had lived in an unusual state of turmoil and confusion, and in that time he had been beaten by the man whom he suspected and believed to be the cause of his injury. It was further in testimony that he was pas-