

A Collection of David Lewis, The Robber Articles

Evening Post (New York, N.Y.), Friday, August 18, 1854; Albany Evening Journal (Albany, N. Y.), Saturday, August 19, 1854; North American (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), Thursday, August 31, 1854; Flag of Our Union (Boston, Mass.), Saturday, October 21, 1854

The Robber's Cave – Lewis, The Notorious Robber

Doubling Gap, Pa., August 2. A favorite and highly interesting feature among the amusements here is to ascend the mountain and obtain a view from Flat Rock. On Monday last a party consisting of several ladies and gentlemen, including myself, made the ascent. All equipped and prepared in suitable costume, we set out about eight in the morning as the sun had cast his golden beams across the towering surround, we soon penetrated thick woods, shrubbery and rocks, following a narrow pathway, excelsior like, upward and onward.

After journeying a half mile or more, following a leader who at intervals sound of his bugle, which answered back in echo from neighboring cliffs, we reached the celebrated "Robber's Cave," or lurking place of Lewis, the notorious robber and counterfeiter, who, with his companion Connelly, and another bandit, hid themselves and prowled in this region. The cave opens under a large rock, which projects several yards from its bed, and overhangs a yawning precipice.

In former times it was artificially embellished and suited to the purposes of its inmates, with a rough wall built by them thirty years ago; immediately in front is a beautiful spring of water gushing forth, pure as crystal and cold as ice, from its bed of rocks, murmuring down the wild ravine in limpid beauty. How long this streamlet has made music in solitude to the wildness of nature is not for man to know, but we tasted of its waters, they were sweet, refreshing and grateful to us wearied pilgrims. The place seems to be just such a one as bandits would select to hide from justice and plan deeds of darkness.

Lewis, the notorious robber, from whom this cave takes its name, was the master spirit of his confederates. At one time his name and fame spread far and wide, whilst he was a terror to the whole Cumberland valley and mountain region round about. Accomplished and successful in his profession, yet he possessed traits of character which, as they stood out isolated, were noble even in depravity. He was reputed to be the handsomest and most perfectly formed man that had been seen: tall, majestic, possessing strength and agility unequalled. In single combat none could withstand his physical powers.

Having been a small boy myself at the time of his career, a resident, too, of the neighborhood, I well remember the fearful stories of his exploits, and can attest to his handsome, manly appearance from once accidentally seeing him as he passed by the home of my boy hood. He measured full 24 inches across the shoulders, was over six feet in height, and altogether of full proportions, yet his hands and feet so small and delicate that the securest irons or shackles could be slipped over them. Owing to this peculiarity, he so often escaped from prison. It is said of him that he never committed murder, nor allowed it to be done by his companions.

On one occasion, after perpetrating robbery, his friend Connelly proposed to kill the victim, alleging that "dead men tell no tales." Lewis remonstrated, and Connelly persisted. Finally, when the bloody deed was about being consummated, Lewis seized his rifle, commanding Connelly to desist, or his life should instantly pay the forfeit. He did so cowering, and the man escaped with thankfulness, minus only filthy lucre. On another occasion he went to a country house for the purpose of plunder. Finding it inhabited by an elderly widow lady, he told her his business. She said she was poor, had no money, and expected soon to have her property sold for rent. Looking out he saw the officer then coming. Lewis asked the amount of indebtedness. She informed him, and he presented it to her, with an injunction to make no disclosures. He then went out and waited in a retired spot until the constable returned. Stepping up, he demanded the money or his life. The former was given, including the amount received from the old lady for rent, and fifty dollars additional.

Numerous similar incidents are told of him. When in prison at one time, a beautiful young lady, friend of the jailor's daughter, fell in love with him. He broke jail; they ran off together, and were married. So distinguished and varied has been the character of this man, that he was made the hero of a romance, written and published many years ago by a well known gentleman of your city. If his eyes chance to fall upon this letter, he will, no doubt, stir up the musty archive and bring it forth. The career of Lewis ended in his being shot in the wrist, and captured by a party who went in pursuit. He was put in prison, mortification ensued, and he died from the effects a fortnight after. Connelly and the other companions were shot at the same time, mortally wounded, and died in a few hours. The spot where they were captured in the mountains is still marked out as one of interest. The report that large earns of money had been buried near the cave has caused persons to displace rocks in the vicinity and dig for the treasure, but without success.



Bedford Inquirer and Chronicle, (Bedford, Pa.), May 23, 1856 and Raftsman's Journal., (Clearfield, PA), March 26, 1856,

**Lewis, The Robber.
A Reminiscence.**

From the Indiana (Pa.) Register. Lewis was the master-spirit of a gang of highway men, who lived by robbing travelers and committing depredations upon residents, chiefly between Chambersburg and Bedford, where they harbored in the forests of the mountains. They were a terror to the community, and western merchants who travelled on horseback generally armed themselves when going to the east, so as to be prepared to repel an attack, and for greater security sometimes went in companies. It was understood, or at least believed, that some of Lewis' band were stationed in Pittsburgh, where, by mixing in genteel society, and being unsuspected, they would inform themselves of the time when merchants of that city and from parts farther west intended making their semi-annual trips to Philadelphia, and would then find means to convey the intelligence to their accomplices along the road.

Lewis was a young man of handsome appearance and agreeable address, and it was said he

supported his mother and sisters upon the fruits of his unlawful pursuit. His more immediate Associates were Conner and Connelly, who, at the time of which we are speaking, kept among the gorges of Sideling Hill, where, at a distance of several miles, from the public road, they had erected a shanty, which was well supplied with provisions and other comforts with Lewis, after remaining about Bedford and Bloody Run as long as he could do so without exciting suspicion, or until he had received letters which he expected, would resort and remain for days and weeks, concerting measures for robbing some unsuspecting traveler or for obtaining booty in some other way.

Persons who have travelled the turnpike between McConnellsburgh and the Crossings of the Juniata will remember Reamer's tavern on the eastern slope of the mountain and Nycum's in the western, the intervening distance being about eight miles, which formerly presented little else to the eye than scrub-oak thickets, interspersed with rocks and fallen timber, with here and there a slight opening, through which the cattle feeding during the summer had trodden paths which served the hunter as a guide and passage when following the game along the mountain range in winter. It was, indeed, a gloomy road, with nothing to break the monotony, save, perhaps, occasionally the cawing of a crow as she hovered overhead, or the sudden bound of a deer aroused from his lair by the noise of approaching footsteps and the lonely traveler, as he wended his way slowly up the steep ascent, now urging his jaded steed to greater effort, and now relieving it by leaping from the saddle and walking by its side, would long to gain the summit, where he might proceed more speedily and with more comfort to himself and his animal.

On ascending the mountain from the west, one sees now on the south side of the turnpike a patch of cultivated ground, embracing several acres, which has been cleared for a number of years, but was a dense forest at the time to which our story has reference. It was here, immediately opposite the cleared field, that Lewis performed one of his most daring exploits, and which, led to his arrest and subsequently cost him his life.

It appeared from what transpired afterwards, that Lewis had received intelligence from some of his gang, of an individual carrying a large sum of money going eastward on horseback, and that Lewis and two of his associates were on the look-out for him, ready to make an attempt at securing the rich prize whenever it should come within reach. From some cause or other, however, that individual's departure was delayed; but about the time designated by Lewis' spy, a Mr. McClelland, a merchant in Pittsburg, started for Philadelphia to purchase goods, travelling on horseback and having in his saddlebags some two thousand dollars in silver. He had got to Nycum's on Saturday evening, where he remained until Sunday morning, and then early prosecuted his journey, thinking to breakfast at Reamer's. As he was walking his horse up the mountain and when he had proceeded several miles, he espied, some distance ahead, a man, who wore a sloshed hat and an ill-fitting, somewhat tattered coat, walking rather awkwardly, his body inclined forward, now shooting diagonally across the road, and then, taking up and balancing himself, moving on again in a straight line. As McClelland neared him, the man once or twice looked around, exhibiting a pair of blackened eyes, as if he had been recently engaged in a fight; and McClelland inferred from his whole conduct and appearance that he had been in company drinking and got himself handsomely pummeled, without having been sobered by the operation. As they approached the summit, McClelland gained upon the fellow, until at the point which we have been endeavoring to describe he was about passing him; but at that moment, and before he

suspected any danger, he found himself dragged from his horse, the drunken man, as he had taken him to be, having sprang upon him at a single bound, while in the same instant a man with a cocked pistol jumped up from either side of the road, the one seizing the horse's bridle and the other coming to the assistance of their leader, who was no other than Lewis himself and who had assumed this disguise to prevent suspicion. The two men who had been lying in wait were Conner and Connelly and there can be no doubt but some one of the gang had seen McClelland the day or evening before, and that they had prepared themselves during the night to attack him in the morning. Had he tarried at Nycum's until later in the day and perchance got some company, he would most likely have been permitted to pass unmolested, and the counterfeit drunkard, who, with painted eyes and tattered garments, had been seen staggering along the road, would scarcely have been thought of again.

The spot was well chosen by the robbers for the accomplishment of their purpose. On the north side of the road, for a distance of at least a quarter of a mile, the woods were more open here than at any other point on the mountain; and whilst McClelland was hurried off by two of the men among the thickets his horse was galloped at full speed through the open space, so as to be out of sight, should any person chance to come along the road. Having commanded M'Clelland to observe silence if he did not wish to have his brains blown out, they led him onward for several miles, the other man with the horse bringing up the rear, until they reached the robber's hut, which had been constructed of light logs and covered with bark, where they halted and forthwith entered upon an examination of their booty. After ascertaining the amount, Lewis turned to McClelland and smilingly said he was "not the bird they had been watching for, nevertheless these were pretty rich pickings" and he and his associates were amply compensated there by for their trouble. Conner and Connelly then proposed they should put McClelland to death alleging as a reason that if he were set at liberty he would inform on them and might cause their arrest; against which Lewis stoutly protested and at the same time handed to McClelland his watch and ten dollars, saying that would carry him back to his family and friends. This done preparations were made by the robbers to start with the money taken from McClelland to some place where they would deposit it for greater security, and he was told that if he offered to move from the spot before their return, his life should pay the forfeit of his temerity. That they intended to return has always been doubted, and it has been judged, and with very good reason, that their object was to induce him to remain there during part of the day, whereby they would have gained ample time to get out of harm's way before he could give the alarm and start anybody in pursuit. In order to make sure work, however, they produced a pint flask filled with whiskey and ordered him to drink freely, thinking no doubt that by so doing he, a man unaccustomed to strong drink, would soon fall asleep and might not awake for many hours. McClelland thought the liquor contained some deadly poison and the robbers were taking this method to get rid of him; and knowing he was in their power and that if his death had been resolved on all his pleading for life would be unavailing, he concluded to die with as little pain as possible, and therefore, to their great surprise, drank the entire contents of the flask. Fortunately, however, the liquor was not poisoned; but the robbers thinking their prisoner had taken enough to answer all their purposes, now left, after ordering him to lie down in a corner of the cabin.

M'Clelland was now alone. The incidents of the morning clustered around his mind, and his distress was indescribable. Within the space of a few hours all his earthly hopes had been blasted. He was not only beggared, but in all likelihood doomed to die, perhaps in a few

moments, away from his friends and kindred, where his body might become food for vultures and wild beasts and his requiem should be the winds as they passed howling over his bleaching bones! He pictured to himself the distress of his family consequent upon his sudden and mysterious disappearance, and their fruitless conjectures in regard to his fate, and then ran with his mind's eye over the pages of their future history, lamenting their desolate and forlorn condition as they should be drifting without an earthly protector on life's wide ocean, tossed by the waves and exposed to the tempest. But he felt admonished to dismiss these reflections and turn unto others. Every moment he expected to feel a deadly stupor coming over him, and ever and anon he cast his eyes upon surrounding objects to assure himself that all was not a dream and that he was still in possession of his reason. Such was the intensity of his feelings that it counteracted the effects of the spirits which he had swallowed, and impelled by that love of life which clings unto man to his last moments, he ventured to ascend to the roof of the shanty and then cast inquiring looks far into the forest, anxious to ascertain whether the robbers had actually taken their departure or whether they were still loitering about, awaiting his death. In a slight opening in the woods at the distance of half a mile he at length espied them, pressing on with all possible speed, and in a moment his resolution was taken to attempt his escape. Mounting his horse he entered a ravine nearby, which he judged must lead him in the direction of Reamer's and then urging the animal forward as fast as the nature of the country permitted, he kept in the ravine, leaping over rocks and fallen trees, and in an incredibly short time reached the point he was aiming for, where he gave the alarm and urged immediate pursuit.

We may here remark that among those back woods men who employ most of their time in hunting and fishing, Sunday is not generally revered as it should be, and it will therefore cause no surprise to learn that when M'Clelland arrived at the tavern just mentioned he found there some half a dozen or more of rugged mountaineers, who had called in for their "bitters" preparatory to starting into the woods in quest of game. No sooner were they made acquainted with the robbery that had been committed than they volunteered to go in search of the robbers, and in a few moments had all things in readiness and set out, resolved to do their best.

The hunters had a general knowledge of the topography of the mountains, directed their steps toward a point some distance beyond that designated by M'Clelland as the one where he had last seen the robbers; having reached which, they divided into two parties and moved some distance apart, and in this order had not proceeded very far when they espied the objects of their search, by whom they were seen likewise at the same instant. The robbers tried to escape by running, but before they could get beyond the reach of the hunters rifles Lewis was wounded by a ball, and one of the others killed, whilst the third escaped unharmed. Lewis was secured and carried to Bedford jail, there to await his trial, but afterwards made his escape and was pursued, and whilst rowing himself across the West-branch of the Susquehanna in a canoe, was shot dead by one of his pursuers.

While in prison, Lewis stated that he had concealed a large sum of money under a rock, the specie in a vessel and the bank bills in a bottle near a small stream on the west of the Allegheny mountain; and after his death diligent search was made for the treasure, by different persons and at different places but it is not known that it has ever been found, and the probability is that it had been removed by some of Lewis' associates.

Had Lewis' mind been directed into the right channel and subjected to a proper course of training, he might have lived an honor to himself and his family and been useful in his day and generation; but having a penchant for the romantic and lawless, where he could indulge his passions without restraint, he became alienated from society, an outcast and a by word, and in his death we have but another proof of the truthfulness of the proverb that "the way of the transgressor is hard."

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Raftsmen's Journal, (Clearfield, PA), June 06, 1866,

**Supposed Discovery of the Money  
Hidden by Lewis, the Robber.**

The Huntingdon Globe has the following sensation story: "Many years ago, as is known by some of our oldest citizens, a robber by the name of Lewis infested the mountains in this vicinity, whose object in thieving, as was alleged, was to take from the rich and give to the poor. Be this as it may, many victims carrying with them large amounts of money, were waylaid by his band, Lewis thereby amassing a large sum of the gold and treasure. Finally Lewis and a few of his comrades were captured, and taken to the jail at Bellefonte, his band of thieves was disorganized and Lewis expired in jail from the effects of a wound. Before his death he stated that he had buried a large sum of money somewhere near Jack's mountain, this county. One day this week, we are told a man was seen going in the direction of Mt. Union, near Mill Creek, having what appeared to be a heavy bundle under his arm, covered with a newspaper. It is supposed the bundle contained the money which Lewis had secreted. On the road near Mill Creek, a large stone might have been seen, beneath which it is supposed the treasure was buried, and there is where the man got it. Two men were seen at the stone, a short time previous, who were trying to remove it. How it was discovered, is not positively known, but it is surmised that the same individual who was seen carrying the bundle has the features of a man who, about thirty years ago, lived on the premises, but who left shortly after the murder of a peddler near the place. This is a strange development, but from all the evidence we are disposed to believe that the men have found a considerable amount of money under the stone. Nothing has been told us concerning the lucky man, since he was seen trudging along with his heavy burden."

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The Somerset Herald, Somerset, Pa.), November 04, 1874,

**THE BANDIT OF THE ALLEGHENIES
An Incident In the life of Lewis the Robber Chief of the Mountains**

The Robbers and Highwaymen of every country are the favorite heroes of romance of the masses. Even the educated and the thinking part of the community do not altogether escape the infection. The universality and depth of this feeling render it worthy the attention of philosophic minds. Something more than the glamour of romance and man's natural admiration for energy

and daring must be accounted for. The native instincts of the average civilized man, his general impulses, are right; and opposed to theft and violence.

We all take the moral side in books or plays. Even the wickedest applaud virtue on the stage and rejoice when the "poor but honest" young man defeats the machinations of the rich and heartless oppressor. An audience whose daily conversation would not look well in print, whose garments are soiled by the muck of our Vanity Fairs is a unit in rejoicing, and applaud to the echo, the Heroine, poor, proud and virtuous as she escapes from the castle of her ravisher by a leap from the battlements destructive to everything of mortal mould in real life. Or by the aid of a mysterious individual invariably wrapped in a voluminous mantle, his features shrouded under a slouched hat and holding a dark lantern, whose language inevitably hoarse and interjectional consists of "Hist!" "Ha!" "away!" etc, in a deep, nerve thrilling bass, even in the depths of the subterranean passage, where sunlight never penetrates and the human voice is only heard once or twice in a century, on occasions of startling adventure, or an escape like the one under consideration. As a rule people are law abiding. Man possesses an innate reverence for authority, and powerful must be the reason, almost irresistible the impulse that drives whole communities to resistance or induces them to side with the lawless or sympathize with the criminal, aiding him to evade punishment and cheat the administrators of justice. Robin Hood in England and many of the celebrated Robbers of Ireland were looked on by the masses of the people as champions, as the enemies of a dominant and oppressive race, alien in blood and interest to the natives. They cannot therefore be cited as examples for our present purpose.

Long years of injustice and oppression, in nearly every land among people of different faith, race and language, have broken down and worn away the natural reverence for authority which it was the duty and the effort of civilization to foster and increase. The very one who should have been most dreaded and avoided, the man of violence and crime, for many ages and in many lands has been and we are sorry to say still lie, the favorite hero of romance. This is specially to be regretted, and a remedy earnestly sought for in our own land where the great majority are in favor of our present form of government, and even the humblest take an active part in forming and sustaining it. At the time of which we write especially, there was not the slightest desire or intention of changing to destroying existing modes and forms. Some party animosity of course existed and was warmly cherished by the one idea'd people of the day. But the opposition was entirely directed against specific acts and individuals, not against the form of government, the law or administration, let the people of our good, old, law-abiding State sympathized with the boldest, most brilliant and successful Bandit of that age.

America, like the communities of the old world has furnished her full quota to the criminal calendar, despite her comparative poverty and consequent freedom from temptation, despite her scattered populations and entire freedom from - - many of the wrongs and reasons that in older and richer countries urged or forced men into a criminal career. Her Sea Rovers have been among the boldest and bloodiest, her heads of gangs, her captains of Bandit, have been as red-handed and ruthless as the bloodiest of Italy or Greece. Pennsylvania partly owing to the difference of her population, something perhaps to her central situation, but more to the native goodness and honesty of her people has not been as prolific in the production of rascally material as her sister states with smaller and more homogeneous populations. Among her heroes of the rascally romantic school the once celebrated and dreaded Lewis took high rank in Rascaldom and was

more widely known, more generally reared and personally popular than any of his day and generation. We might say indeed of any time, for never since has there been one fit to proclaim himself his rightful successor. The wide and varied field of his operations, the number and security of his strongholds and hiding places, the dash and brilliance of his exploits, his popularity and influence with the people of his entire district, (extending from the Delaware to the Ohio, but chiefly if not exclusively confined to the counties on the Southern border, occasionally raiding into Maryland and Virginia where he had many shrewd and active partisans) he bears the bell among them'. He became known to fame shortly after the close and the consequent unsettled condition of the country largely aided his schemes and protected him from punishment, though that was doubtless owing to the wonderful rapidity of his motions, which rendered him seemingly ubiquitous and gave the ignorant faith in his supernatural powers. The wide spread perfection of his arrangements for securing information and promptness of action made him a dreaded and dangerous foe to the business men and authorities. His wild and reckless daring, his many acts of kindness and generosity, purposely exaggerated by his partisans, speedily raised him to the summit of popularity among the poorer people of the mountains, who would have regarded his arrest as a calamity and his punishment as oppression.

Many of our old citizens can tell anecdotes of him and many of them when young searched for his buried treasure when supposed to be hunting for berries or chestnuts.

In those days men were compelled to travel in coaches or on horseback. Bills of exchange if known were not in use in the South and West, and it was no trifling undertaking to convey a large sum in gold or silver to the East, through a country where the inhabitants were all unjustly suspected of being robbers or in sympathy with them. It was the general practice to carry what was then considered very large sums, concealed about the person or in the old fashioned Saddle-Bags, an indispensable portion of a travelling outfit. Merchants and drovers especially were the objects of the lawless gangs, the merchants took money east with them but the drovers carried money to the west and were waited for on their return from the city.

Sometimes companies of them would unite and travel together giving confidence and protection, when this could not be done disguises was adopted. Many men from choice or necessity travelled alone and they were the special objects of the gangs who had timely notice of their departure, with a suggestion as to the amount carried. Lewis was himself expert in disguises and a sufficiently good actor to sustain any of the characters adopted in his search for information or opportunities to plunder. Having in his pay the Landlord, Hostler, Cook or someone at nearly all the principal stopping places on the different routes, he generally had correct and minute information that enabled him to lay his plans so carefully as to ensure success. The writer has been shown the place where he perpetrated one of his most noted robberies, on a man known to be brave, prompt and fully alive to the risks he was running in crossing the mountains. His coming with a considerable sum of money was known to Lewis, but how he would travel and by what particular route he had successfully concealed. His shrewdness, well-known courage and watchfulness made the robber especially anxious to rob him; his vanity and cupidity were equally excited. Having perfected his arrangements as far as possible and posted his men so that the traveler avoiding one would be almost sure to be caught by another party, Lewis started in search of information, anxious to meet this redoubtable hero and rob him unaided and alone. Leaving some of his gang near Stoystown he travelled leisurely along towards Greensburg;

hearing nothing of his man he crossed over to Connellsville, where he spent several days passing himself off for a farmer near Shippensburg, who had bought some and wished to buy more land in Fayette County. He even got a letter of introduction to one of the leading lawyers in Uniontown where he was well received and spent some days very pleasantly examining the historic spots and natural beauty of that region. Feeling assured his man would take that route he passed on down the National road not caring to stay too long about Uniontown for fear of being recognized. At Somerfield he passed for a contractor from Virginia who was engaged in building bridges and wished to examine the bridge across the Youghiogheny particularly, while there he made the acquaintance of all the leading men and was welcomed as a visitor to many houses. He also visited Petersburg on the invitation of one of the citizens and a party was raided to show the stranger Fort Hill and the Three Rivers where Confluence now stands. He was delighted with the country especially with the Ream farm and tried or pretended to try to buy it, saying it was equal to their best lands in the celebrated Shenandoah Valley, and he would move there and greatly improve it, (even if he had purchased it he would hardly have made as much of a change as did W. J. Baer.)

He afterwards said he was so much pleased with this trip and so heartily enjoyed being treated as an honest man, that he felt more real regret and sorrow for his past life and conduct than he ever had before. Would gladly have changed places with the poorest, most ignorant and overworked man in the country if he could have blotted out his past career of rapine and plunder and lived free from alarms. It was while these better thoughts had possession of him, that he received notice that his intended victim was travelling alone, on horseback, on the, turnpike between Greensburg and Bedford. He made a hasty adieu to his new friends and to all hopes of an honest peaceful life and hastened over to Berlin, from there to one of his hiding places, where he donned a new disguise and started to try conclusions with the redoubted traveler whose wealth he coveted and to rob whom he thought would be an additional feather in cap, if he could succeed without his aid from his band.

Our traveler staid at a tavern in the valley east of Stoystown and in the morning carefully examined his arms, found they had not been tampered with, and placed them ready to be instantly used. His horse was in good condition and travelled freely in the early morning. With every sense alert our traveler proceeded, and as he approached the place where he expected to be "interviewed," he kept the middle of the road, and cast a wary eye on either side, not to be unprepared and taken with one of Lewis's tremendous leaps, of which he had often heard and was ready for. His precautions were as yet entirely useless, nothing dangerous or even suspicious had been seen. But one person had been in sight and his motions indicated that he wished he wasn't. He seemed in haste and anxious to avoid being overtaken, or spoken to. As the horseman gradually overhauled him, a reason for not desiring to extend the circle of his acquaintance was apparent. The man was evidently very drunk and was hurrying home to sleep off the effects of a night of dissipation. Soon another and a greater reason was seen; he had been fighting and it required no second look to one long used to frontier life and rough and tumble fighting to tell that he had been worsted. His bruised and bloody head, and soiled clothing, something of weakness in the gait and general lassitude was evidence of great physical exhaustion and suffering. In apparent desperation at the imminence of being overtaken, spoken to, questioned about the fight and perhaps made fun of for his want of pluck, he pushed forward as rapidly as possible, in sporting language he "spirted" but the effort, as was soon apparent, had been too

much for him. He staggered, rallied a little, struggled on for a short distance and then with a despairing groan fell, limp, helpless and almost lifeless in the road. Our traveler was a humane man, of generous impulses and a ready sympathy, especially for fighting men, as was common at that day. He had been in many a fight himself, he had readily divined the state of mind of the man before him and heartily compassionating the condition of the sorely stricken one hurried to his relief, hastily dismounted from his well trained horse and was about to raise him and place him in a more comfortable position when Boom-which he fell stunned and nearly senseless in the ditch, and could barely hear and understand the taunting laugh and shout of the treacherous robber as he seized his well-filled saddle-bags, and in two or three buck-like leaps disappeared down the side of the mountain. The taunting shout told him he was a victim to the wiles of Lewis the Bandit Chief and that added an additional sting to his overwhelming misery. The robber soon found his gang and made them laugh heartily at his racy recital of the morning's adventure. But the victim ? That morning's work had ruined and made him desperate. He was defrauded of his sympathy and robbed of his money. There in solitude and sorrow he made a vow to deeply avenge his own and other's wrongs. He was the man to keep that vow to the bitter end. In our next we will tell of his visit to the Robbers Den and subsequent adventures.

(To be Continued.)

With this number of the Herald we commence the publication of the romance of the "Bandit of the Alleghenies or an incident in the Life of Lewis the Robber." Many of our older readers will recognize much that is here detailed; for a goodly number were old enough at the time the events transpired to have taken a lively interest in the bold schemes of Lewis and his coadjutors. We intend to publish several other local stories and if they meet with encouragement shall continue them through the year. These stories are not mere fiction 'but contain many historical truths.

The Somerset Herald, (Somerset Pa.). November 11, 1874

THE BANDIT OF THE ALLEGHENIES
The Cavern In the Rocks, the Home
of the Banditti.

The taunting and exultant shout of the departing robber, rung in the ears of the dazed and bewildered traveler like the mirthless mockery of a demon. Imperfectly recovered from the treacherous blow so suddenly and so skillfully dealt by the outlaw, he yet realized that he was a ruined man; in moments of emergency the mind works rapidly and while the physical still quivered with weakness, the mental was scheming to revenge the loss, the blow and more especially the treachery, that had in a few moments so entirely changed the destiny and the disposition of the victim. From a careless, genial-minded man, whose life though full of ups and downs, had as yet known no great sorrow or overwhelming, disappointment, he was almost instantaneously transformed into a moody, revengeful being who would stop at nothing to carry out the plans to which he from that moment devoted his life. There on the mountain's side, the most impressible of the visible forms of nature, which but a few moments before had been to him a scene of beauty, that all unconsciously to him, was an elevating and refining influence. In the early, cheerful morning which man's rapacity and guilt had as by a wizard's blasting touch

changed to the leaden cheerless hue of bleak December. The positive good and the better possibilities of his nature were by the subtle alchemy of evil changed to the worst phases of human passion, to which the Tiro's rage is quietude. He deeply swore to revenge himself upon Lewis and his whole gang, not merely to have them imprisoned or killed that, to his swelling rage would have been too tame, too commonplace. But to hunt, worry, harass, disappoint and totally destroy when he had made their lives a burden and a curse.

His horse seemed to realize that some great misfortune had befallen his rider. All the springiness was gone from his walk, and instead of the proudly arched neck and coquettish champing, it was with a bowed head and a funeral pace, with which he descended the mountain with his metamorphosed rider. Returning to the tavern where he passed the night before, he carelessly told them what had happened, speaking of it lightly as one of the ordinary incidents or adventures in a traveler's life, and merely necessitating a return to his western home and making another beginning. Nothing very unusual in that, in a Wastera man's experience. He offered his horse for sale saying he could no longer keep him and that he regretted being compelled to part with his horse more than the loss of his money. The people of course were both loud and profuse in expressions of sympathy which he received very coolly, having fully convinced himself that they were all more or less implicated, and for that reason he pretended to treat his loss lightly. While talking of his plans, how long it would take him to return home and what he would do when he got there, he was inwardly demoting them all to the infernal duties as being connected either actively or passively with the robbers.

The Landlord hospitably insisted on his stopping with him for a day or two, to recover from the shock and to give him a better chance to sell his horse. On pretence that the rest and care the animal would receive would enhance his value, but really in the hope of learning something of the robbers, he consented to stay and was most kindly treated by everyone. All were, or seemed anxious to atone in some degree by their kindness for the misfortune he had met with. Of course the news soon spread through the sparsely settled neighborhood and many called to condole with the stranger. The robbers and their Chief were the staple, which for purposes of his own, the traveler encouraged and the conversation confined to that channel. Whether he learned anything suitable to his purpose or not, the stranger gave no sign, but often reverted to the size of the robbers, their complexions, to, calling attention to his own and instituting comparisons with present and absent persons. That he was of a florid complexion and had light colored hair was particularly noted and often afterwards mentioned when this and other robberies were spoken of. On leaving, he bade all good bye and thanked them for their friendly interest in one never again likely to travel that way or be seen by them.

And so he passed away and his adventure was added to the store of local incidents that formed the topics of conversation around the cabin firesides, for the Newspaper for these people, was not. They were yet ignorant of that mighty, omnipresent power that now penetrates palace, hut, wilderness, that, banishes loneliness and ignorance, shortens journeys, lightens the gloom of prisons and lengthens human life or what is equivalent, condenses knowledge and experience and enables the men of the present to live through and realize cycles of a slower existence, in moments. Increases the enjoyments, lessens the labors, enlarges the hearts, sympathies and imaginations, it almost places man beyond the evils of mortality. And all without one single

draw-back and at a trifling cost. What the wealth and power of the Caesar's could not command or compass, is at the disposal of the poorest and humblest, Oh blessed age, Age of wonders.

When this incident had been discussed sufficiently to blunt the interest and people were getting anxious for something new, Lewis and his gang were gone to seek newer and fresher pastures. A ripple of interest was excited by the arrival of a stranger from east of the mountains, who announced his intention of "staying round for a while." He was silent, rather gruff and unsocial, very dark complexioned and many thought he had been a sailor. He was a handy sort of a fellow, fell into the way of doing odd-jobs about the tavern and was gradually installed as hostler, occasional bar-keeper etc. He talked but little himself and appeared inattentive to the talk around him; a close observer would have said the inattention was feigned. When strangers arrived, if the conversation did not turn upon robbers, he managed by almost imperceptible means to lead it into that channel. Against courts, judges, lawyers and all connected, he seemed greatly embittered and it was generally agreed he had at some time suffered great wrong from them. One night in particular when the house was full of travelers and numbers from the neighborhood had dropped in, some of whom were strongly suspected of being connected with the robbers. He asked the Landlord if "the man that rode the big iron gray was not a sheriff?" Saying that if he was he might curry his own horse for he would not touch him. This merely confirmed the general impression. On another occasion when many of these same neighbors were present, some one proposed forming themselves into a company to catch Lewis and his gang and get the rewards. After discussing the matter for some time, they asked him if he would not join them. He indignantly refused, and became greatly excited, said if he knew where to find Lewis he would warn him, and more to the same purpose. That Lawyers and Judges were worse than he was and robbed more people etc, etc.

Trout-fishing that favorite country sport, in which every boy was an expert, had great attractions for the sombre stranger. His ill success passed into a neighborhood proverb. But his interest in the sport and his demotion to it were unabated. That the robbers had returned to their mountain fastness was proved to the people in more ways than one. Our silent friend if he made any discoveries kept them to himself. That the Robber Chief was fully aware of this man's existence and peculiarities will not be doubted for a moment when his certain and speedy means of acquiring information, are recalled, he had even been urged to admit him in to the criminal circle, but refused, saying he could give no reason for it, but had a most unaccountable fear of this man whom he had never seen. For during his not infrequent visits to the neighborhood, Dolph, the only name he gave, was invariably absent. Of late, too his best laid schemes were thwarted when success seemed certain. The temper of the Bandit chief was becoming, irritable and soured; his popularity and influence with his band were waning, their finances usually flourishing, were running low; the thief as well as honest men found that evils came in troops and blessings singly.

The acute reader will readily have discerned that the silent and seemingly unobservant stranger was playing a part and will doubtless have identified him with the victim to the strategic and mimetic talent of the Robber Captain. Immediately upon his return to the locality, he had devoted himself to making discoveries, and by patient pertinacity had succeeded in identifying the different members of the band, in tracking them to their stronghold and familiarizing himself with minute and apparently trifling details that would have escaped the attention of a less patient

and determined investigator. By the aid of a small but powerful field-glass or a pocket telescope, he had at a distance watched their movements, studied their peculiarities so that he felt confident of being able to penetrate any ordinary disguise. After discovering the entrance of their Cavern he from a distance carefully noted their manner of entrance and exit, and flattered himself that long security and immunity and confidence in the inaccessibility of their natural fortress of rock had rendered them careless. On nearer approach and more careful scrutiny he found he was in error in that regard and did injustice to the generalship of Lewis. The nearer he approached the entrance, the more carefully he screened himself from observation in the branches of trees. 'T'was well for him that he used such great circumspection or his purpose would have been defeated and the ends of justice frustrated for years. The seeming carelessness of the robbers was discovered to be confident in their well-tryed and very effective arrangements for protecting themselves from assault or observation. No one could approach or leave without being exposed to the sight and aim of the robbers and when they were in the cave in any numbers, that "Coigne of vantage" used by them for a look-out was occupied in turn by all of them. This added to the difficulties, but did not lessen his ardor or abate his determination. His gradual and well guarded approaches and carefully persistent scrutiny satisfied him that there were fissures in the rock above the cave, accessible only from the top of the rock of which the robbers never seemed to think or care about. Where the smoke escaped, sound might escape and if he could only over hear them and thwart their plans, sow distrust, jealousy, hatred among them, their punishment would be begun, their misery and unhappiness assured. Cautiously, yet boldly he went to work, knowing full well that a misstep would defeat his plans and discovery be followed by a cruel death. Securing a long and good rope, and making himself some strong adjustable hooks he sought out a place of ascent to the top of the rock, after a long patient and dangerous search. The hideous, deadly rattlesnake seemed to be in league with the ruffians below and swarming in the clefts and crevices, made his task an arduous, and to a less determined man an impossible one. Nourished by the grateful heat ascending from the outlaw's fires, they were different and more dangerous than the usually, sluggish snakes in other places in the mountains. Other dangers and difficulties had to be overcome before he could begin to test the different places he had selected for listening to their ordinary brutal and blasphemous talk, and the clear commanding tones of the leader as he detailed the task and defined the duties of each one. He soon learned enough to enable him to defeat some well-laid and most promising schemes and thenceforward had little difficulty in hearing all he cared to hear. The captain gave his orders in a louder, fiercer tone. The men growled about him and quarreled with each other. Distrust hatred, malice and all uncharitableness were at work in their hearts. Every evil passion was at work, gnawing like a serpent's tooth, and each separate one had become a demon to lash, goad and scourge the wretches who formerly had prided in their possession. Their small but villainous community from a self satisfied, exultant, purse proud one was fast becoming, dissatisfied cowardly and utterly miserable. The self complacency of villainous success was succeeded by as near an approach to remorse as they were capable of feeling. Superstition, that imperfect resemblance to the conscience of the upright was lambing them with its shadowy terrors, fearful from their very indistinctness. Sleep instead of being a pleasant release and a sweet restorer became a constant and far from light punishment for their former crimes. If only honest men could realize ever so faintly, the constant and increasing torment of their lives dishonest gain would have no charms for them forever.

After numberless failures, to the thieves, utterly unaccountable, and which they were disposed to

credit some supernatural agency with, two of the gang unexpectedly encountered a man with several hundred dollars in specie, of which they robbed him and in hot haste made their way to the cavern, fearing pursuit, recapture, they scarce knew what, so timid were they becoming. This unexpected success cast a flood of sunshine over the den, and they boast fully asserted that their luck had changed, all would go right again. They sang, danced and shouted declaring that the "Mexicans," as they called the silver, would bring good luck "to the Minions of the Moon." Dolph from his crevice in the rock heard and inwardly raged at their rejoicings. He heard the captain's voice saying: "Let the sack lie there boys, until the others come, then we'll divide the swag, and have a roaring carouse to night. But well drink good luck and plenty of it, to these gay boys. So come on my hearties." Instinctively divining that they would leave that room or part of the cave to drink, and in all probability the successful ones would tell the whole story over their cups, be resolved to cheat them out of their "Swag" or perish in the attempt.

(To be Continued.)

The Somerset Herald, November 18, 1874

THE BANDIT OF THE ALLEGHENIES
The Cavern In the Rocks, the Home
of the Banditti.

Flinging his rope over the face of the cliff, he hastily descended, rushed into the cavern at the imminent risk of life, gazed round in the semi-darkness, until he saw the bag of silver lying on a rocky shelf; to seize it, place in its stead an old fashioned mitten, which he had worn to protect his hands, and had hastily filled with sand and pebbles from a hollow in the rock, intending to use it as a weapon, if discovered in his hastily conceived and daring attempt to rob the robbers in their place of strength and fancied security. The adage was again verified, "Fortune favored the brave." The race was an exceedingly close one. He had barely time to re-climb to his sheltering crevice, holding the sack in his teeth, and jerk his rope out of sight, ere the exulting thieves returned to where they had left their precious treasure. Their first looks were with true robbers' greed directed to the place. Amazement! Wonder! Horror! In place of their precious silver for which they had bartered honor, manhood, good name and mayhap their eternal starvation, there lay an old dirty country-made mitten filled with dirt. The old tales of devil's wages and fairy money changing to dross and slate stones seemed before their very eyes coming to pass. Fearful was the blasphemy. Each felt disposed to blame and accuse the other, yet a nameless expression of dread, horror and bewilderment, impossible to assume, sat on each countenance and without protestation convinced each of the others' innocence and ignorance of the marvelous change.

Lewis was the first to partially recover from the shock. "To the Look out! To the Lookout one of you!" he shouted, and the most active of the villains promptly obeyed. Useless! Utterly useless! and more bewildering still. No human being was in sight and no indication of one, save that horrible, that mysterious old mitten. They searched the cave, hopelessly, yet carefully. No clue, not even the semblance of a clue, save and except that old mitten, or as the German a call it "handshue" and these wonder-stricken villains were disposed to think it must be the "handshoe" of the devil. They thought no mortal could have access to their cave without being seen, or

leaving a sufficient trace. Like other worldly minded people they never thought of looking up for light and information, but like the sleuth-hound ran with their noses to the earth. The dark stranger in his place of safety over the heads of his foes, hugged himself (as the common saying is) and could with difficulty restrain his shouts of savage defiance and exultation. That one act, he often afterward declared fully had him for all he had lost and suffered.

In his frantic efforts to suppress any outward demonstrations, he bit, and tore, and worried at his coat sleeve and collar, uttering a low suppressed growling, something like a playful puppy. Only his intense desire to hear all they would say enabled him to suppress all outward manifestations of his vindictive joy. At another time or under less mysterious circumstances, they would have been disposed to blame each other and wreak their spite and disappointment; or singling one have made him the scapegoat and the sufferer, thro' the malice of the rest. But this was so strange, so utterly unaccountable, that a suppressed awe, a nameless dread and terror disposed them to draw together and seek comfort in their guilty fellowship. That the devil was at the bottom of this and all their recent failures they were inclined and yet afraid to think that the latent superstition of their natures and of that age was at work, their concealed foe learned with vicious exultation. That it was useless to remain any longer in that section all agreed. It only remained to settle where, when and how they would go. They would lay no plans there for fear they would be unlucky, but would wait until they were all together in some luckier and happier spot.

'Twas - strange, but these ruthless men, these heaven-defying scoundrel; whined like ill used schoolboys at their ill-success and actually seemed to think the pitying powers above should send them honest men to plunder.

Dolph greedily learned they were to all meet at the cave once more, at night, to arrange their plans of future action, settle affairs as far as possible and then start and travel together till daylight, when they would separate so as to avoid exciting any suspicion. He determined to attend their meeting and give them a fright to which the "devil handshue" would only serve as a prelude. As this meeting was the last the robbers held in Somerset County, it was fitting the occasion should be a marked one. In all their ruffian and adventurous lives, it is doubtful if any other was so deeply impressed upon their minds. We regret that we must condense a scene so full of thrilling interest, but the editor is an autocratic and inexorable being, especially in regard to space.

The robbers met at their usual place, early in the evening, but not in their usual manner. Well armed, as they all were, with deadly weapons, and intending to travel all night, they were liberally supplied with that foe to cowardice and low spirits, the pure whiskey' of the mountains, which at this day tears a value that would have seemed fabulous to them. Plenty of food that would have cheered the souls of hungry men in the face of "foes unnumbered." Lights were burning brightly, and fires of mountain wood were blazing and snapping cheerfully and making that rocky cavern seem a very palace of delight fit for the royal residence of Oberon and Titania, the joint monarchs of the fairy realm. All these substantial comforts and cheering influences were lost upon that scoundrel band. A heavy gloom' seemed to enshroud them. A pall-like gloom which all their boasting courage and bravado were powerless to resist.

The robber-chief made frequent and determined efforts to rouse and cheer them, he jested and tried to make them joke and be jolly. He sang and tried to make them sing and be happy. He drank but had no need to force them to drink, but for once the potent spirit failed and they found, not without awe, that they could not be merry. Some two or three hours were passed in these ghastly attempts to make it a merry meeting, when even the most sanguine saw that there was not the ghost of a hope of succeeding. All were inclined to close the melancholy symposium and try the effect of violent exercise in the open air as a relief to the moodiness that oppressed them in the cave. As it was some distance to the main road or pike, they gave that as a reason for wanting to get away not daring to acknowledge the reason, even to themselves.

You see my honest friends these would-be heroes, like nearly all their class, were arrant cowards; they lacked moral courage, which is the only reliable article. Having before provided themselves with torches if the night should prove to be a very dark one, they lighted a couple at the rapidly sinking fires. Sallying forth into the open air a last attempt was made to get up at least a show of spirit, bidding the old den good-bye and swearing that they would be all right when they returned. Their spirits seemed to sink and with wildly beating hearts they hurried on their way. They had not gone far till one said:

"What's that?"

"Nothing! A night bird."

A little further on another said:

"Hold on boys, I thought I saw a light."

"You're a fool," gruffly said another, "Come on men ! "

Every few yards some disquieting remark was made or act done until the nerves of the whole party were effectually shaken, as yet without any apparent cause. Uneasily expectant they passed on and had just crossed a tiny brook or runlet, when one of them with a yell of horror called:

"Look! look! there! behind you! Oh God! behind you!".

All quickly turned on hearing that fearful, that blood-curdling cry. For a moment they seemed rooted to the ground, only for a moment. The devilish apparition, a thousand times more appalling than that which froze the blood and blasted the eye sight of Tam O'Shanter at "Alloway's auld haunted kirk." This ghost, demon, devil, or all combined in one, was fifty feet high. One robber afterward, in dying, averred, it was a combination of all they could imagine of the ghastly, grim, frightful, dangerous.

"Great God have mercy! Have mercy, oh God. ' . ,

They had no good "mare Meg," to bar them from the fiends, and how they fled. Dashing against trees, plunging into ravines, falling over rocks! Where they run or to what they run, no matter! On! On! Away!

One poor devil was killed with fright or by the violence of his fall. All were sorely bruised, some were permanently crippled. But, on! On! Away! anywhere from this spot! Danger and darkness before! Hell and its horrors behind!

When the field was cleared, which was not long in doing, however tedious in the telling, a tall and really frightful figure, leaning against a tree not far from the well-worn path of the robbers, burst into peal after peal of laughter, more sardonic than mirthful. After a brief indulgence of his humor the figure unstrapped the stilts from its feet, threw down considerably more material than is generally devoted to male attire, and swinging down from one of the lower limbs onto the ground, appeared not altogether demon nor yet quite human. The head-piece was more tenderly dealt with and carefully placed upon a stump. There nothing elfin, on canny or demoniac, was discernible. Nothing, in fact, but part of, a good wholesome pumpkin as ever grew in cornfield. And our solitary, saturnine, and reticent. Dolph stood confessed.

It is wonderful how much depends on combination. There is nothing frightful in red clothes, pumpkins or candies, but when skillfully combined for effect, they are sufficient to rout armies and make even robbers honest, or wish to be. We must hasten a conclusion. Dolph followed the gang and harassed them until the capture and death of Lewis. Some grew honest from that night. None of them ever fully recovered from it. Lewis was shot in the leg and suffered fearfully in prison from that last attention from Dolph.

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Patriot (Harrisburg, Pa.), Monday, July 9, 1877

**A Reminiscence of Sixty Years Ago  
“I Am Lewis, The Robber! – Take Me If You Dare!”**

One of the most observant and intelligent of Harrisburg’s “oldest inhabitants” furnished the patriot with the following facts which occurred while the relater was serving an apprenticeship to the printing business in this city:

During the years 1816-17-18, the people of Dauphin, Cumberland, York, Adams, Franklin and Perry counties, were much alarmed at the numerous and outrageous robberies committed upon the persons and the property of the citizens residing in those counties.

Teamsters who drove the Conestoga wagons, stages and private conveyances were stopped; passengers intimidated and bound and at the point of the pistol were compelled to deliver up their money, watches, and other valuables; goods consigned to stores in various towns in the counties mentioned, and to such an extent were these outrages committed, as to alarm and excite the people wherever the marauders work. At last suspicion fell upon David Lewis and a bold accomplice named Connelly. They were arrested, tried and convicted of highway robbery in the quarter sessions of Cumberland county. On account of the insecurity of the jail at Carlisle, the bold outlaws were removed to Chambersburg, for “safe keeping.” In a few weeks after their imprisonment, Lewis broke jail and fled.

After his escape from Franklin county, he came to Harrisburg, crossing the bridge after night. Apprehending that he would be taken, if recognized, he secreted himself behind a pile of dry good boxes, barrels, etc., in front of the store of John O. Bucher & Co., corner of Front and Market streets, remaining in his hiding place from early in the morning till between nine and ten o'clock p.m.

Hon. Jacob Bucher, father of John O. Bucher and brother (then composing the firm of Bucher & Co.), John Shoch, father of Samuel Shoch, the venerable cashier of the Columbia bank; John Fager, (father of George C. Fager), who was then keeper of the toll gate on the Dauphin county side of the Harrisburg bridge; Henry Antes, Joseph Wallace, and a number of well remembered citizens were in the habit of assembling on the above corner nightly, discussing the topics of the time – among them the bold outrages committed by “Lewis the Robber.” Lewis listened to their conversation for some time with feelings better imagined than described; when at last, forbearance ceasing to be a virtue, the outlaw sprang to his feet, upsetting the pile of boxes, and straightening himself up to his full length, called out in a stentorian voice:

“I Am Lewis, The Robber! Take Me If You Dare!”

Had a thunderbolt fallen among the party, it would not have created greater consternation. Thinking discretion the better part of valor, they all took their heels, making tracks for their respective homes, by the shortest routes and in the quickest time possible.

Mr. Fager, in making a retreat, ran against a lamp post, skinning his nose severely. Mr. Shoch, who was the largest man of the crowd, struck and rolled over a tier of tar barrels, and Mr. Wallace, who then resided at the corner of Front and Pine in making tracks in that direction stumbled over a pyramid of grind stones displayed in front of Frederick Kelker’s hardware store, on the opposite corner, severely injuring himself to such an extent that he was obliged to use crutches for several weeks afterwards.

In the year 1848 our informant met Mr. Antes in the council chamber (both being members at the time) and asked him as to the truth of the above statements. Mr. Antes replied, “It is so,” and added: “I ran into the entry (adjoining the store) and never stopped till I reached my bed chamber, on the second floor, forgetting in my fright to fasten the front door.”

“After I had retired, I reflected that both the street door and the door leading into the store from the entry were left unlocked, and getting up walked the floor all night in a fearful state of excitement, imagining that if I went downstairs to secure the door Lewis would attack me, and that if the place were left insecure, the store would be robbed before morning. Even when day light at last appeared I was actually afraid to go down before I heard others astir in the lower part of the house, fearing that Lewis might be secreted somewhere in the store room.”

Henry Antes was a soldier of the war of 1812. He was as brave as he was honorable; and such was the reputation of Lewis and his confederate, Connelly, that braver men than Mr. Antes and his friends quailed at the mere mention of their names. Neither Lewis nor Connelly were ever convicted, but large rewards were offered for their capture. Eventually, however, they, in

company with a third man, were surprised while shooting mark at some point on Bald Eagle creek, now Centre county, and during a skirmish, Connelly was killed, Lewis receiving a gunshot wound in his arm, from the effects of which he afterwards died.

The poor, in that day, regarded Lewis as their friend, because he had for his motto: "Steal from the rich and give to the poor."

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The New Bloomfield Times, (New Bloomfield, Pa.), August 27, 1878

In Huntingdon County a few days ago a man wounded a squirrel, which ran into the trunk of a large oak. On reaching into the hollow of the trunk an old oven filled with Danish doubloons, Mexican dollars, English sovereigns and other coins, all dated previous to 1820, amounting to several thousand dollars, were found. It is supposed the money was secreted by " Lewis the robber," who relieved many a wagoner on the old Pittsburg and Philadelphia pike.

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Plain Dealer (Cleveland, Ohio), Monday, September 2, 1878; Marshall County Republican, (Plymouth, Ind.), September 12, 1878; The Sedalia Weekly Bazoo, (Sedalia, Mo.), September 17, 1878; The Abbeville Press and Banner, (Abbeville, S.C.), September 25, 1878; Green-Mountain freeman., (Montpelier, Vt.), September 25, 1878; Pomeroy's Democrat (Chicago, Ill.), Saturday, September 28, 1878; Public Ledger, (Memphis, Tenn.), September 30, 1878; The Weekly Clarion, (Jackson, Miss.), October 02, 1878; Daily Globe, (St. Paul, Minn.), October 27, 1878; The Princeton Union, (Princeton, Minn.), July 01, 1880, and The Cincinnati Daily Star, (Cincinnati, Ohio), March 06, 1879; Wisconsin State Journal (Madison, Wisc.), Tuesday, April 22, 1879; People's Advocate (Washington, DC), Saturday, January 19, 1884

### **Hidden Treasure.**

On the banks of the "blue Juniata." in Huntingdon county, stands the quiet little town of Alexandria. Years ago in and about the village was a man, the terror of the country, known as "Lewis, the robber." Many a night traveler lost his gold, and many a wagon on the old Philadelphia pike was bereft by force of its valuables. Last week two men went out hunting on Short Mountain, a mile or two west of town. They shot a squirrel, which, wounded, ran into the trunk of a large oak. What was their surprise when groping into the hollow trunk for their game to discover an old Dutch oven full of Spanish doubloons, Mexican dollars, English sovereigns and other coins, all dated previous to the year 1820. Several packages of paper were found, which crumbled to dust as soon as touched. Their glittering wealth, which they divided between them, amounted to several thousand dollars. It is supposed that all this wealth was deposited in the tree by "Lewis the robber."

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The Sun, (New York, N.Y.). March 10, 1889

AN OLD NEW YORK GANG

How A Member Robbed Mrs. John Jacob Astor Eighty Years Ago

The Curious Story of “Lewis the Robber” – Deserter, Counterfeiter, Thief, and Highwayman-His Career in New York – How His Confession Resulted in Electing Joseph Hiester Governor of Pennsylvania

Harrisburg, Pa., March 9. – It is probably not known to the Astor family of today that the wife of their ancestor was robbed one day in a store in Broadway eighty years ago of laces and jewels that might have been today among the rich heirlooms of the family; but such is the fact, and the story of how the theft committed is told in a quaint manner by the thief himself in a rare pamphlet I found today in the Pennsylvania State Library. The pamphlet details also the workings of a gang of crooks that had their headquarters in Pearl street at that time and gives some particulars of queer municipal and social customs prevalent in the city then. The pamphlet has the following title:

Confession and Narrative of David Lewis: An account of the life and adventures of this celebrated counterfeiter and robber, from the commencement of his career until he period of his death in the jail at Bellefonte, in consequence of a wound received in the attempt to retake him by the Posse Comitatus of Centre county. Carlisle: Printed and published by John McFarland. 1820.

There is not a man woman or child in the Susquehanna, Cumberland or Juniata valleys to whom the name of Lewis the Robber is not as familiar as their own and the stories that are told of him around the fireside and over the social glass at the tavern would furnish plots for many a blood curdling romance. But so shadowy is the reality in the existence of the man who was once the terror of all this country round that I had never been able to obtain any substantial information about him until I ran across the old pamphlet referred to. No one even knew his name. He was simply Lewis the Robber.

David Lewis, according to his confession, was the son of the Deputy Surveyor of Northumberland county, Pa., and he was born in Carlisle. He was wayward from a child, and at the age of 17, in 1807, ran away from home and enlisted in the army. He did not like army life and he deserted. He led a wild life for a year and the reenlisted at Carlisle, and tried to desert again. Being discovered, he was tried by court martial and sentenced to be shot. Through the pleadings of his mother and the efforts of influential civilians Gen. James Wilkinson, commandant at Carlisle Barracks (now the Indian school), commuted young Lewis' sentence to a term of imprisonment in the barrack's guard house. Lewis managed to escape, and hid himself in a cave near Carlisle, which is known as Lewis' Cave to this day. He subsequently ventured to go to his home in Northumberland county, where he met a tin peddler who hailed from Burlington, Vt. The two became boon companions and he peddler finally confided to Lewis that he was really an agent of a gang of counterfeiters whose headquarters were in Burlington, and he solicited the young man to return with him to Burlington and join the gang. Lewis did so. He learned there all the tricks and methods of counterfeiters, remaining in Vermont a year in

learning the business. He then started to return to Pennsylvania having on his person several thousand dollars in counterfeit money which he intended to utilize among “the innocent and confiding Pennsylvania Dutch.” At Troy N. Y. he accidentally made the acquaintance of Gen Root “who was campaigning for the election of Gov D. D. Thompson.” Before they parted they had cracked several bottles of wine and Lewis purchased from Gen. Root a horse for which he paid in counterfeit money.

That same night Gen. Root was arrested for offering to pay a bill with the bogus money and narrowly escaped being thrown in prison as his story was not believed. Then a search was made for the real culprit, and he was found in a house on the outskirts of Troy. Lewis was re-arrested and lodged in the Troy jail.

While Lewis was awaiting his trial a young woman, who lived with her widowed mother in a house opposite the jail, saw Lewis at his jail window, and fell in love with him. The jailer’s daughter was a friend of this young woman, and she one day conducted her to Lewis’ cell, and introduced her to him. Lewis, tradition says, was a remarkably handsome man, of splendid physique. In his confession he does not give the name of this girl, for reason that it “was one of the best in Troy.” He called her Malinda. He told her that his imprisonment was the result of a conspiracy, and, the jailer’s daughter agreeing to let him out of jail, he induced the girl to elope with him. They walked all the way to Albany, where they were married, “in a mean tavern at the end of State street.” He paid the minister in counterfeit money, a large amount of which he had managed to secrete in his clothing. From Albany the couple started on foot for New York, but got a ride most of the way from a teamster. They stopped at the New England Hotel, but, “the next day,” says Lewis, “I procured a room in a small house up an alley that leads into Pearl street, the great resort of merchants, and which, from its narrowness and extensive business, afforded, as I thought, better opportunities for my trade than any other.”

He soon fell in with a lot of men whom he found to be members of a gang of thieves and desperadoes, and he was not long in joining them. He says it is impossible to recount “the many adventures, thefts, and burglaries, the depredations, frauds, and robberies that were committed and practiced by him and the rest of the gang during my continuance in that place,” or the “many tricks and stratagems we adopted to deceive the city watch, and the various schemes we successfully made use of to over reach and elude the police and vigilance of that great metropolis. The success of our Pearl street establishment exceeded my most genuine expectations. The carelessness of domestic servants and shop boys in securing the doors and windows of dwelling houses and stores; the improper practice of keeping front doors unlocked during the nights of the performance at the theatre; the negligent manner in which watchmen perform their duties more of whom we found asleep than awake, and some of them not infrequently parading the streets in a state of inebriety, were propitious circumstances in affording facilities for our midnight operations.

“The theatre, the Battery, the auction rooms, hotels, taverns, boarding houses, and the wharves were the principal places which we haunted with most success, and we often waylaid youth and others to great advantage on their return from houses which, alas! Are but too common, and more frequented than a regard to their own health, the peace of families, and the police of a well-regulated city justify.

“The association which I had formed in New York was governed by certain rules and regulations, and, to make them more binding and appear more solemn, they were written on parchment in ink of blood drawn from our own veins, while we kneeled in a ring or circle with our hands mutually clasping each other, and one of the band standing in the centre with a basin to receive the red fluid of life. According to one of the articles, the fruits of our joint spoliations were to be divided among us at stated and fixed periods, and for the purpose we processed with all the formula of a bank direction, having a President, directors, cashier, teller and clerk. The depository of our plunder was denominated a “vault” and committee of examination were regularly appointed to inspect its contents and report to the company at a general meeting. A dividend was declared every Sunday night.

“On one occasion I attended the ‘ladies’ auction room in Broadway. I had taken my stand on the opposite side of the street and lounged about until 11 o’clock when a handsome equipage stopped, and I saw a lady descend and enter the room. I immediately recognized her to be the wife of John Jacob Astor, Esq., one of the richest merchants in the city, and who report said, was very liberal in his presents of money to supply Madame’s pin-money establishment. I soon crossed over, and, ‘dressed like a gentleman in true dandy style,’ the sure passport to admittance into ladies’ society, entered the auction room and saluted the ladies with all the graceful ease of an old acquaintance. The experienced salesman, knowing that the best plan for picking a lady’s purse was to dazzle her eyes, soon exhibited to the view of his fair customers the finest lace and the most elegant jewelry that the work ships of France ever produced. The sale commenced, and before many minutes had passed away I saw Mrs. Astor pack into her velvet bag several pieces of lace and as many ornaments of jewelry as might suffice to decorate at least half a dozen brides. After she had completed her purchase she carelessly threw her reticule on a bench in a remote corner of the room and immediately opened a brisk conversation with a surrounding group of male and female companions, who buzzed around her and viewed with one another for volubility and nonsense. The Babel of voices could not fail to attract the attention of the other spectators who crowded the place, and, while some were occupied in talking and the rest engaged in listening admiration, I laid hold of the bag with apparent carelessness and quickly left the room unobserved, taking a French leave of the company”

Lewis reported to the gang the result of the robbery of Mrs. Astor, but presented his wife with one piece of the lace. For this he was tried and found guilty of “concealing goods” from his associates, and was unmercifully beaten by them. He took his wife and went to New Brunswick, M. J., where he left his wife and went to Philadelphia. There he planned a most audacious scheme, which would now be called a badger game. This scheme was to decoy Stephen Girard out of town and keep him prisoner until he gave a check for \$25,000 on his own or some other bank. If that failed, Lewis had a plan to rob the Dock Street Bank by making his way up the sewer and gaining entrance to the vault. Before he completed his plans he received word that his wife and child were very ill, and he returned to New Brunswick. “That was all that saved Girard his \$25,000,” Lewis laconically remarks.

His wife got well and Lewis went to the Canadian border and joined the American Army, “for purpose of plunder.” He was made a teamster. He deserted, taking the team with him, and returned to Pennsylvania, where for five years he terrorized the whole of central Pennsylvania.

He broke repeatedly from the Bedford, Carlisle and Chambersburg jails, but was kept in the former long enough, in 1816, to be tried for a bank robbery, for which he was sentenced to ten years in the penitentiary. He served one year, when he was pardoned out by Gov. Findlay. He resumed his career of a crime, and in the summer of 1820 committed a highway robbery in Centre county. A Sheriff's posse ran him down in a swamp. He refused to surrender, and was shot, an accomplice of his being killed at the same time. Lewis was captured and placed in Bellefonte jail. His right arm and shoulder had been shattered by the gun shot, and he was told that nothing but amputation of the arm could save his life. He replied that he would die, hen, and refused to let the operation be performed.

James Duncan was at the time a famous lawyer and politician of Pennsylvania. He lived in Cumberland county. Gov. Findlay was a candidate in 1820 for reelection. His opponent was Joseph Heister. Duncan was opposed o Findlay, but the latter was very popular, and his election seemed a foregone conclusion. But Duncan believed he saw a way that Findlay might be defeated through Lewis the Robber. Duncan had been influential in saving Lewis' life at the time he was under sentence of death for desertion from the army, and he went to Bellefonte jail to see the notorious outlaw. Lewis knew that he would die of his wound, and Duncan had no difficulty in inducing him to make a confession of his life to him, with the understanding that it was to be published. Duncan obtained all the material, edited it, and so cunningly drew attention to Gov. Findlay's apparent friendship for Lewis in pardoning him, and succeeded in so shrewdly fixing the responsibility, by interference, for several years of Lewis' criminal career on the Governor, that the pamphlet, circulated as I was in the community where the outlaw had been the greatest terror to the people, turned public sentiment against Findlay and he was defeated. This old pamphlet, therefore, has much of historic value as well as being the curious story of a great outlaw's life. Gov. Hiester was not slow to recognize Duncan's service in so shrewdly turning Lewis' confession into a powerful political engine, and appointed him Auditor-General.

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The National Tribune, (Washington D.C.), May 10, 1894

**Lewis the Robber**  
**The First and Last Greenwood Outlaws in**  
**the Allegheny Mountains.**

By Kate Brownlee Sherwood.

In the beautiful valley of the Raystown branch of the Juniata, in Bedford County, Pa., high up on a spur of one the mountain ranges of the Alleghenies, there is a yawning cairn of stone, known as the cave of Lewis the Robber.

When I was a little girl, making hats out of red-maple leaves, and chasing for wild plums that grew large and red along the Juniata tributary, I was kept from wandering too far by the warning that if I went up the mountain range to the right side, known as Snake Hill, the rattlesnakes would bite me, and if I went up the mountain to the left of me, known as Kuiton's Knob, Lewis the Robber would get me.

So my playmates and I, for I was never alone, tried to content ourselves by going first as near as possible to the forbidden mountains without climbing them. But if truth must be told we once got pretty high up among the huckleberry bushes and were dodging in and out so as not to be seen by the watchful eyes of mother and grandmother in the farmhouse below, when a snake sprang past us down the mountain, and we were glad to beat a hasty retreat, and never went there any more.

Lewis the Robber, for he was gone long before that, was a sort of American Robin Hood; a forest outlaw, who, for some real or fancied wrong, had taken to the merry greenwood, and with a chosen band of men scoured the coves and valleys of the Alleghenies on their fleet horses, and then, when they heard the tramp of the vigilantes behind them, look to the almost inaccessible rocks and caves where they had safe hiding places.

Their prey was the old Government mail coaches rattling over the turnpike from Philadelphia to the West; the drovers returning from the Eastern markets with their pockets full of silver in exchange for the cattle and sheep they had driven to the market; the bands of movers going from homes of plenty to the far frontier; and not infrequently they paid their midnight visits to farmhouses and taverns, if the spies of their army had happened to trace the whereabouts of men known to have about them the fruits of barter and exchange. For many a year Lewis the Robber flourished and defied the laws of God and men. The vigilantes found it impossible to capture him, since the poor people of the mountains were his friends and never failed to inform him of the approach of his enemies.

When they were in abject poverty they had been befriended by Lewis the Robber, who never seemed to hoard anything, and used all his gains from the rich to befriend the poor. It was Lewis the Robber who gave them and their children bread when no bread was to be had elsewhere; who gave their children something warmer and better to wear than tow frocks and smocks pinned with thorns. How, then, could they know that he was the bold, bad man the vigilantes said he was? Or, knowing, how could they have the heart to hunt him down, when they owed all they had to him?

Then, Lewis the Robber was the widows' friend; and when he and his men were raiding the country for the money the harvested crops and salted cattle had brought into the buckskin wallet of the farmers, they never set foot upon their lands.

So it came to be said that Lewis the Robber was about the only true friend the widows had. And many is the time, tradition has it, when Lewis the Robber, fleeing from his pursuers, was hidden in the loft and fed on johnnycake and bacon by the widow, just as the cove dwellers hid him behind the hack logs in their cabins.

Lewis the Robber never took the life of any man, nor allowed his men to do it. His defense was in retreat, or in hand-to-hand encounter, and those who met him once had no desire ever again to feel his iron clutch upon them. He kept far from the habitations of men, and no English outlaw of Sherwood forest led a freer, a bolder, a merrier life than he and his gay fellows.

But the day came when Lewis felt a great home-sickness come over him to see once more the old

home of his boyhood, and take one more draft from the old well at the door, drawing up the water himself with the great stout oaken windlass.

His home was near Shippensburg, and there not long before his mother had died. Perhaps he longed to stand in the place where she had last stood, looking away to the mountains, sighing for her wandering boy. Perhaps he even hoped to give up the merry greenwood and live like an honest yeoman in the little log house in the valley.

Be that as it may, he rode boldly on one happy morning, his men, two and two, following after. All was quiet and peaceful; the mountains bathed in the mellow glow of an Autumn sunset, and in the crispy grass the partridges were piping.

The old chinked homestead nestled beside the dusty road, but behind it was a garden bright with hollyhocks and sunflowers, and between the house and the barn the old well stood with its swinging windlass. Lewis the Robber reached the house, stopped, took off his buck tail hat and wiped the perspiration from his forehead.

Tears were in his eyes, and when one of his men would have spoken he lifted his hand, and said sharply: "Silence; not another word." Just then a cracking shot was heard, and the uplifted arm of Lewis the Robber fell helpless by his side. There was no time to retreat; the vigilantes were upon them. Lewis's men, appalled by the injury to their chief, yielded readily, and Lewis himself was put in irons and carried off to prison.

So were the outlaws of the Alleghenies laid low, and never again was there another attempt to revive the spirit of outlawry in all that region. But Lewis the Robber, who took from the rich and gave to the poor and placed a guard around widows' houses, still rides on in the memories of the mountaineers and the mountaineers' children to the third generation. And the mountain cairn is his monument, and around it every night the mountain spooks dance in the moonlight, and little children cling more closely to their mothers, for fear Lewis the Robber will get them.

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Trenton Evening Times (Trenton, New Jersey), Tuesday, September 23, 1902, Akron Daily Democrat, (Akron, Ohio), September 23, 1902, and The Fulton County News, (McConnellsburg, Pa.), September 25, 1902

Farmer Plows Up Wealth Buried By Famous Robber

About fifty years ago, Lewis the robber and highwayman, of Fulton county, Pennsylvania, buried a whiskey bottle containing 100 \$50 bank notes and ten \$5 gold pieces in a field near Roy's Hill. He did not carefully mark the place and never recovered his buried treasure. On Saturday last H. F. Mellott ploughed up the bottle. He did not notice the bottle until about to cover it with a second furrow.

Lewis was one of the most desperate highwaymen and counterfeiters that ever operated in Fulton

county. He kept himself hidden in caves in the mountains when pursued by officers and in one almost inaccessible cave he operated a complete counterfeiting plant.

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The Fulton County News, October 16, 1902

George Finiff, Sr., of Tod township thinks he knows about as much as any of them as to where Lewis the Robber hid some money. A few years ago, Mr. Finiff says, he was out in a lonely part of the mountain, he didn't say just what mountain, and found sticking in a tree a butcher knife with an old fashioned horn handle. The knife had been stuck into the tree when it was a mere sapling by Lewis, maybe, to mark the spot where he had, buried money. So long ago had the knife been put there that the tree had grown out to the handle, embedding the entire blade. So good was the steel of which knives were made in those days, that when the blade was removed from the tree, although the handle was much decayed, the blade was bright as new.

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The Fairmont West Virginian, (Fairmont, W. Va.) August 27, 1904

David Louis, The Robber
The West Virginian's Saturday Story
An Old-Time Pennsylvania Dick Turpin - Wild Career Of Mountain
Highwayman - Robbed Pittsburg Merchant.

Popular admiration and sympathy for noted criminals has, strange to say, existed, at all times and in all communities, naturally being most pronounced among the ignorant, but by no means exclusively confined to that element. It exists today, as is too often evidenced by mawkish sentimentality manifested toward convicted murderers, even though their crimes were of the most brutal character and devoid of the excuse or palliation of hot blood in their commission. From the days of Robin Hood, in Merrie England; Fra Diavolo, in Italy, to the James brothers and the Youngers, in this country, and Massanello, the notorious brigand of Sicily, perhaps the latest type of those heroes of the highway, there have always been found those who sympathized with them and often aided in protecting them from the officers of the law. In the olden days, when the common people were too often grievously oppressed by the rich and powerful, this feeling doubtless arose largely from the fact that these freebooters levied tribute from the oppressors, and, with the generosity born of goods had for the taking, sometimes divided their ill gotten gains with the poor. "He robs the rich to help the poor" has been often said of such men, and has covered many misdeeds.

That there was in Western Pennsylvania, less than a century ago, a knight of the highway something after the type thus described is not generally known perhaps. Nevertheless David Lewis, the robber, once filled a large place in the public mind, and his deeds were on every tongue.

"His exploits were narrated by every fireside in the valleys of the Alleghenies and on the ridges of the Seven Mountains, and his name was used to frighten children into obedience. Tradition gives to him many of the characteristics of Robin Hood, the noted outlaw of English story. It is said of Lewis that he never robbed the poor, that he took from the rich to give to the poor, and that he never shed human blood, restraining his comrades from doing so when they urged it as the dictate of safety, or on the ground that dead men tell no tales."

The above extract is taken from the reminiscences of the late Judge, William M. Hall, of Bradford, Pa., a distinguished jurist, whose knowledge of Lewis' career was gained from the older residents who had known the outlaw personally, and supplemented by research among the files of the early newspapers and the old records of the Bradford county courts, before which tribunals Lewis frequently appeared. Lewis' history is rich in the romance of crime, and might furnish material for a dozen of the "blood and thunder" novels over which many like to pore.

David Lewis was born in Carlisle in 1790, and was the son of a land surveyor. His mother was of a Bradford county family. Both parents died when Lewis was a child, and he was left with a stepmother who seems to have had an affection for him not always found in such relationships. When he was but six years old the stepmother removed to near Bellefonte. In 1807 a recruiting officer of the United States army came to Bellefonte, and Lewis enlisted as a soldier, but deserted in a very short time. He was foolish enough to re-enlist shortly after under an assumed name, and while stationed at the old Carlisle barracks now used as an Indian school, applied for a discharge on the ground that he was a minor. At the hearing the fact of his former enlistment and desertion came out, and he was court-martialed, convicted and sentenced to be shot. Judge Jonathan H. Walker, of Bellefonte, father of Robert J. Walker, who became United States Senator from Mississippi, and was Secretary of the Treasury in President Polk's cabinet, loaned Lewis' step mother a horse on which she rode over the mountains to Carlisle, bearing with her the family Bible containing the record of the boy's birth, and there earnestly endeavored to save his life. She succeeded in getting the matter before President Jefferson, who commuted the sentence to imprisonment. Lewis later sawed the ball and chain from his ankle with an old knife, and hid himself in a cave near Carlisle until an opportunity came for him to get to his stepmother's home, near Bellefonte.

It was then, probably, that the turning point in his career arrived. Prior to that time he had been little more than a wild, rather reckless country boy, but now he took the step which led him into the paths of crime. While in concealment at his home he met a peddler who was traveling through the country circulating counterfeit money made at Burlington, Vt.. The prospect of easily won wealth, for counterfeiting was not difficult in those early days, made a powerful impression on the young man, and he went to Burlington, got in with the gang, and started out as a counterfeiter and gambler.

Detection followed, and he was arrested and lodged in jail at Troy, N. Y. He was then scarcely of age, strikingly handsome and of good address. A young woman who lived near the jail saw him through the barred windows, and by connivance with the jailer's daughter secured his escape.

They were married and went to live in New Jersey, where, concealing his real occupation from his wife, he continued his life as a counterfeiter and gambler in Philadelphia and other towns. Later - during the War of 1812 - he again enlisted and again deserted and came to Stoyestown, Somerset county, where ne organized a gang of counterfeiters. The spurious bills were circulated in Bedford, Somerset, Uniontown and Brownsville.

In 1815 he and several others got into the clutches of the law, and were tried at Bedford, Lewis being sentenced to six years in the penitentiary. He broke jail in some way, the old records merely recording the fact, but giving no information as to how it was done. Whether he was recaptured is not known, but it is certain that Gov. William Findlay pardoned him, a fact which later was most potent in defeating Findlay for re-election. It seems to have been shortly after his escape from jail that Lewis took to the high way, and emulated the exploits of Dick Turpin and other eminent knights of Hounslow Heath. His principal associate was named Connelly, a large, coarse-looking man, of a low grade of intellect, and completely under Lewis' influence. Another was named Jimmy Hanson.

In 1819 John McClelland, a merchant of Pittsburg, was traveling over the mountains on his way to Philadelphia to purchase goods. He was on horseback and had in his saddlebags about eighteen hundred dollars, most of it in Spanish silver and Portuguese gold. In a thick cluster of pines on the west side of Sideling Hill, a point well known to all who have ever traveled over the old pike between Pittsburg and Philadelphia, he was confronted by these three highwaymen, and at the point of the pistol compelled to give up his money. It is stated that both Connelly and Hanson urged Lewis to kill McClelland and thus prevent his ever being a witness against them: but Lewis, who was the controlling spirit of the gang, refused, and declared that he would have no man's blood on his hands. He even gave McClelland a few dollars with which to pay his expenses home.

Of course the hue and cry went out and the three robbers were arrested near Lewistown and taken to jail in Bradford. They were not there long until Lewis, the conformation of whose wrists and hands was such that he could divest himself of handcuffs, freed himself, locked the jailer in a cell and liberated all the prisoners. They fled across the mountains, closely pursued by the sheriff and his posse, but evaded them, and within a very few days appeared just across the bridge over the Susquehanna at Harrisburg, where in broad daylight they attempted to rob a farmhouse. The plucky farmer's wife seized a tin dinner horn, ran to the roof of the house, sat on the trap door to keep it down, and blew loudly and lustily for assistance. It came, and Lewis was arrested and taken to jail at Carlisle. That prison not being thought strong enough to hold so notorious a bandit, he was taken to Chambersburg for safe keeping, with the result that a month later the Harrisburg Republican published this startling announcement:

"Oh, fye! David Lewis, the notorious marauder, yesterday morning about 3 o'clock made his escape from the Chambersburg prison, taking with him every person in confinement except one. Particulars when we get them."

Gov. Findlay issued a proclamation offering \$100 reward for the capture of David Lewis, "charged with the robbery of John McClelland, merchant, of the city of Pittsburg," and described

him as being "about six feet high, round-shouldered, straight and well made, athletic and active, sandy hair and whiskers, and had on a half-worn blue suit."

Lewis and Connelly hid in their mountain retreats and made their way over into the Seven Mountains country between Lewistown and Bellefonte, where within a month after their escape from Chambersburg they robbed some merchants carrying goods to the interior. The sheriff of Center county organized a posse and went after them and found them shooting at a mark on the Shinnemahoning branch of the Susquehanna. They were surrounded and summoned to surrender, but refused and opened fire. Both were wounded and captured, Connelly dying the next day, but Lewis lived about three weeks, ending his career in the Bellefonte jail. He had been shot in the arm, and was told that amputation would save his life. He refused to have the operation performed, saying: "I will not lose my arm. I would rather die than live a one-armed man, marked to be known of all men and a cripple. I will take my chances." He was only thirty years old when death thus ended a remarkable career of crime.

Many stories are told of him. One night he stayed at the lonely cabin of a poor widow, whose only cow and few household effects had been levied upon for debt and were to be sold the next day. She told Lewis her troubles, and on leaving the next morning he gave her money sufficient to pay the debt and costs. When the constable arrived she paid him off, and was loud in her gratitude to the stranger who had so kindly helped her in her need. The constable took the money and started home, only to be stopped in a lonely place by the aforesaid philanthropist who, presenting a pistol, said: "Your money or your life." The constable immediately handed over the money and Lewis departed.

On another occasion he and his companions robbed a man in the mountains. Lewis engaged in conversation with his victim, and finding that he was a relation of a gentleman who had once aided him in time of trouble, returned his money and apologized for having molested him. Once, after his escape from Chambersburg, he encountered a party of farmers who were searching for him and joined them, making himself most agreeable and leaving with the polite hope that they would catch the notorious criminal. Horse racing was very popular in those days, and once a man from Cumberland, Md., attended one at Brownsville, where he not only won about all the money there was up with his own horse, but also ran it against another, horse for horse, and won. He started for home, riding one horse and leading the other. In a lonely wooded ravine a stranger came out on the road and without a word mounted the led horse and began a conversation. A pistol which protruded from his pocket did not help to allay the suspicions of the Marylander, and he hastened to invite the stranger to take a drink of some apple brandy which he had with him. The offer was accepted, and under the genial influences of the applejack the stranger grew very friendly. Finally he asked the Marylander if he had ever heard of Lewis, the robber, who had lately broken jail. The other, possibly with a shrewd suspicion as to the identity of his companion, said he had and would like to meet him, as he had heard that Lewis was a brave and generous fellow.

"Would you really like to see him?" asked Lewis.

"I would," replied the other, now quaking with fear. "I don't think he would kill or rob a man like me."

"Well." said Lewis, "you see him now. I am Lewis. I intended to rob you of your money and this horse, but you have treated me like a gentleman and we have had a pleasant ride together, and I will do you no harm."

He then got off the horse, handed the owner the halter, bade him good day and went into the woods.

During his career as a counterfeiter and highwayman Lewis always had influential friends, who used their efforts to get him out of trouble, and doubtless secured his pardon from Gov. Findlay. He also had a strong hold upon many of the country people, and this is said to have aided him greatly in escaping and avoiding capture. – Henry Hall in the Pittsburgh Times.

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The Fulton County News, (McConnellsburg, Pa.) July 12, 1906

### **What Were They After.**

#### **Grave on Top of Cove Mountain Opened by Some Unknown Ghoul. Has been There Many Years.**

To many of our older people who are familiar with the top of Cove Mountain, it is known that there is a grave on the east side of the road leading along the top of the mountain from the Chambersburg pike across to the Mercersburg pike. This grave is on the east side of the road, a short distance south of the old field lying to the right of the pike as one crosses the mountain to Loudon.

Just who was buried there is perhaps not known. The grave has been there since the early part of the last century, when the turnpike was the main thoroughfare for wagon trains between Philadelphia and Pittsburg. At the time the grave was made, the old stone hotel just east of the top on the Chambersburg pike was in the height of its glory, and a story that is remembered by the older people is, that a long time ago, a stranger on foot stopped at the hotel one evening, and begged for lodging, saying that he was sick and could go no further. He was kindly received by the proprietor, given a comfortable place to rest, but the next morning was found dead. The stranger had no money, nor was there anything about his person by which his name could be learned, or by which he could in any way be identified. After having kept the body a reasonable length of time, and not getting any clue, as this identity, he was buried in the grave already referred to.

Another story says that some man was staying at the hotel over night, and that in the morning he arose walked up to the top of the mountain to witness the grandeur of the scenery from that point, and did not return. A short time thereafter, someone discovered the man lying near the road, dead. The story says that this was the man that was buried in the old grave.

Who the occupant of the grave was, or by what circumstances he was placed there is not of much consequence now; but the thing that seems strange is, that after all these years, the grave should be opened. Why should anyone be led to disturb it?

A few Sundays ago, a reputable citizen of this town was on the top of the mountain and saw the grave, undisturbed as he had seen it dozens of times before. A week later, being along the road at that point, he noticed fresh earth, and upon examination found that the grave had been opened and closed again. From the fresh earth scattered around, and the half wilted leaves, he concluded that the grave had been opened to the bottom, and that the work had been done but a very short time before. Whether or not the remains (if any part of the remains existed) were removed, could not be ascertained. Fresh buggy, or light wagon, tracks were plainly seen, as was also the place where a horse had been hitched, presumably while the grave robbers were at work.

The theory advanced for the disturbing of the grave is, that possibly some friend of the occupant of the grave wished to remove the body, and place it in some distant burying ground by the side of relatives. Another is, that some people believe the mound to be a fake grave, and that the mound and markers were placed there by Lewis the robber, who may have hidden a large quantity of gold there, and by marking it as a grave, felt assured that it would never be disturbed, and that he would not have any difficulty in locating the spot when he again wanted the money. After placing the money there, Lewis ran up against the strong arm of the law, and was never permitted to return for the gold. It will probably never be known who opened the grave; but if any "common fellow" gets to spilling twenty-dollar gold pieces around recklessly, one might reasonably suspect that the "Lewis the Robber" theory is the correct one, and that the grave robber was well rewarded for his labor.

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The Fairmont West Virginian, (Fairmont, W. Va.) February 14, 1907

Petrified Human Head Found In An Oak Log Supposed To Be That of a Victim of Famous Robber on Shippensburg Road

Gettysburg, Pa., Feb. 14. While George Woodward was running a sawmill in the mountains of Adams county he discovered the petrified head and neck of a human being imbedded in a large oak log. Woodward removed the head and has shipped it to Dr. G. W. Tate of Altoona, for examination. The head was of perfect proportions, the features being preserved to the minutest details. ears, nose, mouth, eyes, eyebrows and even the line of the face were plainly visible. The unusual color of the face was the only thing which detracted from its life-like appearance.

The tree was cut near Lewis' (the robber) cave. It is supposed the head belonged to one of the victims of this noted outlaw.

Lewis, the robber, committed many murders along the old Shippensburg road. Numerous expeditions were set against him, but owing to his impregnable stronghold in South mountain he always successfully resisted attack.

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