

The Fulton County News, September 18, 1902

Lewis the Robber.

Nearly everyone has heard of Lewis the Robber, one of the most noted counterfeiters and highwaymen that ever operated in this section. There are several caves in this county and in Bedford county, known as Lewis's where it is said that he concealed himself when pursued by officers, or which he used as places of abode while he manufactured counterfeit money.

One time he buried in the mountain a large whiskey bottle filled with bank notes, and was not careful enough in marking the place; and, although he often hunted for the place afterwards, he never found it.

He bought a horse one time from a man at Burnt Cabins and paid for it with counterfeit money.

Mrs. Buzzard, who, a few years ago lived on the turnpike at the top of Rays Hill, told the Editor several years ago that she had often seen Lewis when a little girl, Mrs. Buzzard's parents lived near the foot of the mountain on the west side of Rays Hill, and Lewis would come down to the edge of the woods near the house and, if he saw her, he would call her attention and have her bring him something to eat. She said he always had plenty of money, and paid her liberally.

Mrs. Buzzard said that on one occasion, Lewis stopped at the home of a poor widow, who lived near her father's home. The widow had a large family of small children, and was crying. When Lewis inquired the cause of her distress, the widow told him that a merciless creditor was coming that day to sell her cow and all the rest of the little bit of property she had, and she would be turned out of a home. Lewis asked about the man's appearance, what time the sale was to be, where the man lived, and the road he would travel to go home.

After getting a morsel of food, Lewis disappeared into the woods. The next morning Lewis reappeared at the widow's home, and gave her all the money that her property had sold for and much more. Lewis had concealed himself along a lonely part of the road, and when the man came along going home from the sale with the widow's money in his pocket, Lewis seized his horse by the bridle and with revolver drawn compelled the man to give up all the money he had. It was this money that Lewis took back and gave to the widow.

While in the jail at Bellefonte near the close of his career he made a confession which covers his life, and while some of the older people have read it, they will be glad to have the opportunity to read it again, and it will be new and interesting to the younger people.

The Fulton County News will begin the publication of this Confession next week, and continue from week to week until the entire story is told.

Tell your friends about it and if you are not a subscriber, send us a dollar at once and get all the story of Lewis the Robber, and Fulton county's big newspaper a whole year. Do it to-day.

The Fulton County News, September 23, 1902

The Confession of David Lewis The Noted Highwayman And Counterfeiter.

I was born in Carlisle, in the county of Cumberland, on the 4th day of March, Anno Domini 1790, of poor parents, of respectable connection, but whose precarious means of subsistence and consequent devotion of their time to satisfy the more urgent necessities of life, left them little leisure to pay that attention to a numerous family of children which is at all times necessary to their welfare in this world and salvation in the world to come. Of course I grew up, as most boys in such situations do, without regard for men and little fear of God.

In 1793, my father removed with his family to Northumberland county, and was appointed a Deputy District Surveyor, in which situation he continued several years, but was unfortunate in the many collisions arising out of his official conduct, and his affairs were but little mended for the better, when he died, leaving the family illy provided for and my education was, of course, very limited.

I continued to live with my mother, and occasionally job for the neighboring farmers, until the year 1807, when I left her and after being employed in several occupations enlisted with a recruiting party at Bellefonte, but shortly afterwards, the sergeant undertaking to have me "cobbed" for a petty offence, I ran away and left them. Some months afterwards, I enlisted as a private in Capt. Wm. N. Irvine's company of Light Artillery, in the service of the United States, under a feigned name, using that of Armstrong Lewis, and was accordingly so called, mustered and enrolled. I had before this tasted of the bitter sweets of pleasure and dissipation and intending to decamp the first opportunity, determined upon supplying my pocket with the bounty money, to enable me to indulge in my old excesses, for which I had imbibed a strong relish and was naturally very fond of. But many obstacles happening to frustrate my plan, a scheme came into my head of trying to avail myself of the "quirks and quibbles" of the law, and with this view I applied to a little lawyer in Carlisle, where I was now stationed, whose name I cannot distinctly recollect, but think he was called Metzgut, who giving me every encouragement to proceed, I sued out a writ and after a tedious hearing before Judge Creigh, found the hopes which my lawyers had raised, disappointed; the Judge decided against me and I was again remanded into the service. This affair leading to an inquiry into my life and conduct, it was discovered that I had enlisted once before under my proper name and had deserted. At that period the rumor of war with England which had prevailed for some time, began to increase and grow louder and the officers of the army becoming more rigorous in their discipline, and strict in the execution of the rules and articles of war, it was considered a duty which they owed their country, to have me arrested on the serious charges of desertion and double enlistment.

A General Court-Martial was accordingly organized, under the direction of Gen. James Wilkinson, who at that time was stationed at the Carlisle Barracks, and the result was such as my foreboding fears and consciousness of guilt had anticipated. The evidence was positive I was found guilty of the charge and ordered to undergo the ignominious punishment which the law inflicts. Young in years and young in crime, the sentence of death was not communicated to me without producing the most agonizing sensations, arising out of a fear of an awful hereafter and the love of life. Besides I had an aged mother, to whom I was fondly attached by the ties of natural affection and it pained me to the soul to think that the ignominious death of a beloved son

must embitter the evening of her life and bring down her gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. Through the intercession of a friend I was permitted to the use of pen, ink and paper, to write to my poor mother who lived in Center county. I informed her of my distressed and perilous situation, and besought her to use her influence in my behalf. I waited for some time in dreadful suspense and counted the lingering days with great anxiety, until my ears were at length greeted with the cheering intelligence "your mother is come." Gen. Wilkinson whose character for humanity is already well known, freely granted us a private interview and the afflicted mother embraced her unhappy son, in solemn silence, without either of us being able to speak a word for some time. She reproached me not, but the silent rebuke of her heart searching eye, spoke daggers to my soul. After some time she informed me that Judge Walker, of whose goodness and humanity, she spoke in the highest terms, had lent her his horse and written letters in her behalf to some friends he had in Carlisle, to interest themselves for me.

My mother had brought with her the family record, to prove my age, and which she delivered to Andrew Carothers and James Duncan, Esqrs., my attorneys, who made every exertion to procure my release under the minor act. But Judge Hamilton decided that the civil power had no jurisdiction to interfere with the sentence of a Court Martial, and I was again remanded to the military authority. Eventually, owing to the humane exertions of many worthy individuals, and the generous sentiments which filled the noble breast of Gen. Wilkinson, I was reprieved, and my sentence commuted to imprisonment. I was thrown into the Guard House, fettered and chained, and the time for which I was confined being indefinite, I was very uneasy and very unhappy. After a week's painful trial of miseries the irons were all taken off me save a heavy chain, which was fastened to my ankle and to one end of which was affixed a cannon ball weighing between 30 and 40 pounds. By the aid of a Barlow knife which I hacked on the bars of my prison window, I succeeded in sawing the chain in such a manner, that I could, when a favorable opportunity occurred, break it off and make my escape. By lifting a plank in the floor I had contrived to get into the cellar of the building but not being able to get out of the cellar without much trouble and digging, I returned and replaced the plank. Sometimes for the exercise and to amuse myself, I would lay the chain and clog aside and throw somersets on the floor, &c., which I was nowise careful to conceal from the soldier who stood sentry over me. And he gave himself little trouble about whether the chain was on or off, so that I passed examination in the morning with the sergeant. I had also taken much pains to ingratiate myself in his good opinion, that he appeared to place great confidence in me, and one day having occasion to go out he did not accompany me as usual, when I embraced the opportunity to bid farewell to him and the camp. Having succeeded by this stratagem in eluding the vigilance of the sentinel, my whole mind and thoughts were occupied in making my escape. In my occasional rambles from the Barracks, I had been to visit the remarkable cave near Carlisle, and considering that this place would afford a safe retreat, according steered my course for it.

(To be continued)

The Fulton County News, October 02, 1902

*David Lewis, The Noted Highwayman and Counterfeiter.
(Continued from last week.)*

My mind being much agitated by alternate hopes and fears, I was unable at the time to fix upon any ultimate course of conduct.

The prospects of my escape engrossed my whole attention, and my greatest anxiety was to reach the destined place of my retreat by the nearest way. In doing this I was under the necessity to cross the race, which supplies with water the mill below.

Running at full speed and endeavoring to clear the stream at one leap, my foot slipped and I fell against a rock which projected from the opposite bank. As soon as I recovered myself from this mishap, which was attended with no other consequence than a slight sprain of one my ankles, I proceeded in my flight as speedily as I could and arrived at the mouth of the cave just as the setting sun was shedding its last beam upon the waters of the winding Conodoguinet. I lost no time in entering, and without the aid of candle or torch, made my way as well as I could to the farthest corner of this dark and dismal place, the abode and habitation of the bat. I crept on my hands and knees through a small crevice, until I found myself in a place called the "Devil's Dining Room," and there I remained in great trepidation and anxiety until, as near as I can recollect, about the hour of ten o'clock at night, when the cravings of a hungry stomach demanded that I should make some exertions to supply the wants of nature.

The danger of immediate apprehension having subsided, owing to the late hour and a supposition that if any person had been sent in pursuit they would not care to travel after night, I determined on leaving the cave, and accordingly crossed the fording below; and pursuing a direction for the gap in the mountain, it was not long before the barking of an angry dog convinced me that I was near a house.

As soon as I came opposite, I resolved upon making an experiment on the hospitality of the owner, and accordingly knocked with a loud rap at the door. All being quiet and still, it appeared that the family had retired for the night, and it was not until I had made repeated attempts that I succeeded in making myself heard. The first noise that saluted my ears was the raising of a small window above, when I observed the head of some person surrounded with a red flannel night cap, and from the shrillness of the voice that demanded "who's there?" I immediately perceived that it was a female. After some parley she at length agreed to descend and let me in. I found that I was not disappointed in my expectation of procuring a supper, and my kind hostess on being made acquainted with my wants immediately went on to prepare it. I assisted her in kindling the fire, and before the lapse of twenty minutes partook of the repast with a better appetite and as much joy, as ever a conquering General, or member of Congress or a Judge sat down to a public banquet. My fare consisted of fried sausages, bread and butter, a cup of milk, and the biggest end of a Yankee cheese. I did great justice to the kindness of this good woman, and having indulged myself in eating with a freedom that I afterwards repented of, I was invited to ascend the ladder into the loft, where I was furnished with a bed and lodgings for the remainder of the night.

Whether it was owing to the effects of the cheese or the sausages, I have ever since been unable to determine, but certain it is, that never was a night spent in so disagreeable a manner, with retchings, sickness of the stomach and vomiting.

Being afraid to expose myself in a place so public in open day, I

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The Confession of David Lewis The Noted Highwayman and Counterfeiter

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took my departure about four o'clock in the morning, without bidding adieu or returning thanks to my landlady, of whom I began to entertain suspicious thoughts and recall to my mind the many stories I had heard of "poisoned cheese" and "colt sausages." After winding my way for some distance through the woods, I ascended the top of the Blue Mountain, about sunrise, and avoiding the great roads as much as possible, I pursued my journey towards the residence of my mother in Centre county, after experiencing many a hungry belly and sleepless night. I arrived at my mother's much fatigued, and entering the house just as the family were preparing to rake up the embers of a dying fire and retire to rest, accosted the old lady before I was recognized by any of my brothers or sisters; I could easily perceive that whilst the beam of joy played in her eye at seeing me again, it was evident the thorn of sorrow was planted in her heart, lest it might involve me in fresh difficulties and troubles. I remained with my mother's family some time, and was almost persuaded to settle and become industrious and sober, but my rambling disposition predominated and for the sake of company and amusement I paid occasional visits to this town (Bellefonte). I frequented the taverns for the sake of sport and to drown, in the society of loungers which are always to be found in the bar-rooms of a country inn, the compunctions of conscience with which I was at that time occasionally visited, and although I was, previous to this, guilty of many juvenile indiscretions and petty offences, I never contemplated embarking in those dangerous and unlawful enterprises which unhappily distinguish the remainder of my career. I here discovered, through the medium of the newspapers and other sources of information, that the people of the interior had resolved to establish country banks, and from the number which then existed, young and ignorant as I was, I foresaw that while such a measure would terminate in the ruin of society, it would tend to facilitate the views of counterfeiters, and open a door for carrying on extensive schemes of fraud on the ignorant and weak part of the community. Unluckily for me, I one day happened to fall in company with one of those tin peddlers or Yankee cart men, who at that time were very numerous all over the country, and who showed me a large quantity of bank bills, purporting to be issued from sundry banks at Philadelphia and elsewhere, and which he said he obtained at Burlington, in the State of Vermont, at a very low rate, and that he could make an independent fortune in a very short time, provided he had any person upon whom he could depend, to aid and assist him in their circulation. Being induced by' the flattering prospect thus held out, I accompanied him to Burlington, where I was introduced to this manufacturing association, and soon became initiated into all the mysteries of the fraternity. With a mind bent on unholy gain I soon became an adept at the business, and received from them for distribution and circulation a considerable amount of spurious notes.

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The Fulton County News, October 09, 1902

The Confession of David Lewis The Noted Highwayman and Counterfeiter

(Continued from last week)

After leaving Burlington with my part of the common stock, and finding that the Vermontese were too much like their ancestors, the Yankees, to permit a "green hand" like me to impose upon their credulity, I considered my wisest plan was to make my way into New York and Pennsylvania; as I knew that in the latter State a great portion of the population consisted of Germans, who, while they are upright and honest themselves, are unsuspecting of the villainies of others. In New York, I met with considerable success in passing and exchanging my counterfeit money, but crime not always prospering or escaping detection, I was discovered in an unlucky bargain which I had concluded with a certain Gen. Root, who was then on an electioneering campaign, and who had invited me to crack a bottle of wine with him to the health and success of Gov. Daniel D. Tompkins. Having taken a fancy to one of the General's horses, and finding him rather soft in the head we soon struck a bargain, and I paid him principally in my Burlington notes. In attempting to repass some of these bills the General was taken up, and being in a place where he was entirely unknown was on the eve of being committed for trial, when a citizen who had seen him receive the notes, went bail for his appearance, and accompanied the General in his pursuit of me. Not expecting an immediate detection, I had retired in the evening to enjoy myself in one of those houses which are generally to be found in the outskirts of towns, and kept by frail fair ones as "decent establishments," for the accommodation of strangers and others. The General and his companion found me after a diligent search comfortably laid up in snug quarters for the night, and instantly' hurried me off to a magistrate, who made out my commitment, and I soon found myself lodged in the jail of Troy. I lay here some weeks and had very gloomy prospects, when reflecting on the result of my trial, which was to come on in about a month, but soon began to flatter myself with a prospect of escape, through the agency of the daughter of the jailer, who in her father's absence introduced to my room a young woman who was an intimate friend of hers, and who I had often remarked gazing through the bars of my window from the house opposite, and who was apparently much interested in my fate. The sentiments of pity which at first warmed the bosom of this tender hearted young woman, soon ripened into love, and after a short courtship, I prevailed upon her to assist me in escaping under a promise of marriage.

To affect this desirable object, every necessary preparation was made, and agreeably to previous arrangements, my kind friend, the jailer's daughter, forgot to lock the door of the prison apartment, in which I was confined. After she had brought in my usual allowance, one Sunday evening, when the rest of the family and most of the town had gone to church, to hear a new preacher whose name I do not recollect, I seized the favorable opportunity and without hindrance left the prison. I found the young woman who had consented to accompany me, waiting with great anxiety at the extremity of the street that leads to Albany. Neither of us were in a mood for much conversation, and we immediately hurried towards that city, after agreeing that both should change our names, she to assume the name of "Melinda," while I was to use that of Van Buren, the patronymic of an ancient Dutch family, who had emigrated from Holland, and settled at an early period in the province of New York. My female companion experienced all the terrors which usually accompany the most timid of the sex, when placed in a similar situation. The constant dread of being pursued by her friends and overtaken; the regret at forsaking the house

and protection of a widowed mother; the circumstance of her elopement with a stranger, of whose character she was perfectly ignorant, and whose face she never had seen, until she saw him through the bars of a prison window, all tended to alarm her fears for the present, and excite her apprehensions for the future. We had not proceeded in our flight more than five miles before I discovered from her agitated manner, her stifled sighs, and suffocated breathing, that she repented of the rash step she had taken. A dead silence prevailed, and neither of us spoke one word for at least half an hour, when all at once she stopped suddenly, burst into tears, threw off her bonnet, tore her hair, and uttered the most frantic expressions, exclaiming repeatedly, "Oh! my mother! My poor mother! What will become of my mother!" My heart was not callous to the distresses of others, and the sight of a woman in tears, more especially one who had so strong an attachment to me, could not fail to soften my own feelings, and produce a shower of tears nearly as plenteous as her own. As soon as I subdued this violent expression of sensibility, I used every argument in my power to assuage her grief and moderate her passion, and at length succeeded in pacifying her by renewing my promise of marriage, which I supported by repeated oaths of sincerity and many horrid imprecations and curses on my own head, if I did not fulfill it in the most honorable manner, the first opportunity that offered. Having in a measure composed Melinda's perturbed mind, and painted in glowing colors the paradisiacal enjoyments of "married" life, which possesses such powerful attractions in the romantic imagination of a young girl of sixteen, we recommenced our journey, and proceeded without interruption, until we had walked nearly ten miles further, when my "way-worn traveler" began to complain of blistered feet, fatigue and weariness; expressing her wish that we should put up for the remainder of the night. I could not resist her earnest entreaties, and notwithstanding the dangers of a successful pursuit, the next farm we came to furnished us, in one of its out-houses, with a safe retreat, and the means of repose on some buckwheat straw, which I had gathered for the purpose in an adjacent barn yard. My companion in flight (for so I then considered her, having as yet no legal right to use the appellation "wife"), soon threw herself on these hard lodgings, and so much was she overpowered with the exercise of travel, that notwithstanding her agitation of spirit, she instantly sunk into the embrace of sleep.

She continued to enjoy "heaven's sweet restorer, balmy sleep," for about four hours, and did not awake until the loud and shrill notes of a noisy, troublesome rooster, who had perched on a neighboring tree, proclaimed the near approach of morning by his repeated crowing — the sure, unerring harbinger of day.

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The Fulton County News, October 16, 1902

The Confession of David Lewis The Noted Highwayman and Counterfeiter

(Continued from last week)

Shortly after she awoke from this refreshing slumber, we prepared to commence our journey anew, and continued with a slow, but constant gait, through circuitous by-roads and unfrequented paths, until we reached Albany in the evening, just as the city clock had struck seven. Not forgetting the promise of marriage, which I had contracted in the most solemn manner, and made

under circumstances that required more hardihood of villainy to break, than I possessed at the worst period of my life, I immediately bespoke of the landlord of the house at which we put up, a private apartment, and went in search of a minister, who soon made his appearance, and performed the ceremony in a mean and shabby tavern at the extremity of State street. As soon as the service was over, I prepared to pay the minister his fee, and having mixed my good and bad money together, I unfortunately presented him, through mistake, with one of my ten dollar counterfeit Burlingtons, but the generous man, much to my surprise, objecting to the largeness of the proffered gratuity, returned the note and refused in the most positive terms to accept of more than two dollars, which I instantly handed him in silver, which at that time had began to grow somewhat scarce. Melinda now appeared for the first time to wear a more cheerful countenance than she had done since her elopement. The performance of my marriage promise had satisfied her scrupulous delicacy and removed a heavy weight of anxiety and distress, which seemed to press upon her spirits.

It was evident, until this took place, that her chaste mind filled with fears and doubts of my sincerity, and suspected me of base design of taking advantage of her unprotected situation.

Improper and guilty as my general conduct had been; vicious and profligate as my course of life in other respects; and impure and sensual as might have been my depraved propensities, I always had the highest respect for female virtue. The fact is, I entertained for Melinda as pure a passion as ever warmed the breast of man; the lovely girl not only had won my affections, but she had completely secured my gratitude and gained my confidence. Although vicious myself, I respected and admired virtue in her, and had I only followed her excellent advice, and profited by the instruction which repeatedly fell from her lips, I would not be languishing in jail upon the bed of death, as I now am, ashamed to live, and yet afraid to die. Melinda possessed every mental endowment and personal charm to attract the virtuous; and had she not been so unfortunate as to meet with me, before years and experience had matured her judgment, she would, no doubt, have made a happier marriage with a more worthy man, and become the mother of children proud to acknowledge their father, instead of being ashamed to own the author of their being. Her pleasing person, her light and flowing hair, the brightness of a complexion that equaled in whiteness the new fallen snow, the rose of beauty and the bloom of youth that mantled her cheek, and, above all, the expression of a blue eye, vying for mildness with an April sky, moistened as it was with the dew of heavenly charity, and shaded with the longest eye-lash I ever beheld, were sufficient to captivate a man whose heart was less warm than mine. But destiny had wedded her to ruin when she became my wife. Alas! She merited a better fate, and what aggravates my present agony of feeling, is the distressing thought, that an uncharitable world may visit the iniquities of the husband and of the father upon his desolate offspring.

But that I may not digress too far, let me now resume my narrative of the more important incidents.

We remained at Albany the night on which we were married, and in the morning I imparted to my wife a short history of my past life, taking care to conceal from her knowledge the most criminal of my adventures, while I only communicated such facts as I considered necessary for her information, that the course of life in which I was engaged demanded on her part the utmost

secrecy, as well as good management and ingenuity, to prevent a disclosure of my guilty conduct, which inevitably would bring down disgrace and ruin on my head, and blast the future prospects of us both. The explanation I gave could not fail to shock her sensibility, wound her pride, and alarm her fears. Until this disclosure was made, I succeeded in making her believe that my commitment for the horse affair at Troy was a conspiracy between Root and his accomplices, and that the combination thus formed and carried on between them, to charge me with this offence, was called a prosecution under color of law, but was, in reality, nothing short of a persecution against all law, or rather justice, originating in political revenge for my refusing to support the election of Governor Tompkins.

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The Fulton County News, October 23, 1902

The Confession of David Lewis The Noted Highwayman and Counterfeiter

(Continued from last week)

The love of imitation, the force of example, and the influence of association, possess a great and wonderful agency in fixing the principles, forming the character, and determining the views, the prospects and the destinies of men. Societies, whether large or small, are necessarily composed of individuals, and these individuals depend on one another in a greater or less degree, not only for the means of subsistence and mutual support, but also for moral and religious instruction, for political information, and for all the tender offices of charity, benevolence and friendship. Although I had been deprived of the advantages of a good education in my youth, nature had been more kind and bountiful than I deserved, and favored me with more abilities and talents than I ever made good use of. Hence I had not long mingled in society before I had attained manhood and began to make my observations upon "men and things," before I perceived how useful were a few good men in a neighborhood or even in the same town, and what a wonderful effect their precept and example, and more particularly the latter, had upon the morals, manners, sentiments, and characters of their neighbors, and indeed all whose happy lot was cast within the sphere of their knowledge or action, while at the same time I was equally struck with the injurious effects produced upon society by "bad men," whose vicious examples had a pernicious tendency to wound public virtue, and destroy private integrity, corrupting like the "poison tree of Java" every moral principle, that came within the reach of contact, or imbibed the influence of its deleterious effluvia. I also remarked that the danger of bad examples increased or diminished in proportion to the conspicuous situations in life in which the persons might happen to move, from whom they proceeded, and that the ratio of influence derived an additional accession from the circumstance of their holding a high or exalted public station or office, and more especially one in the "gift" of the people. Crime begets crime, and one crime furnishes an apology for another, and must continue to do so as long as public opinion continues to whitewash guilt, and guilt rides triumphantly into office and power upon the shoulders of popular favor or political prejudice.

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The Fulton County News, October 30, 1902

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The Confession of David Lewis The Noted Highwayman and Counterfeiter

The poor, unhappy, ignorant and wicked highwayman, who is viewed as an "outcast" from society, and an outlaw from justice, never hears of a man in office plundering the people, robbing the treasury, or swindling the stockholders of a bank, without having his mind more and more familiarized with vice, and feeling a new encouragement from the force of example to persist in his career. While I speak of myself, I judge of the feelings of others from my own; and can truly, most truly declare, that such were my sentiments at the time, and that I never read in the public newspapers or heard of a breach of public trust, without making a comparison favorable to the life and calling of the highway robber.

But to return to my story. Shortly after an early breakfast, I set out again on foot, accompanied by my wife, for the city of New York, which, from its crowded population, and extensive mercantile enterprise, I expected would afford me a more secure hiding place from pursuit, and be a more profitable theatre for my schemes and plots. After walking about five miles through fields and cow-paths in the woods, I consulted with Melinda, and we both concluded upon returning to the high road, with the expectation of meeting some Yankee wagon, with which every part of the country at that time abounded, and to procure from its owner a conveyance for my wife, who was not able to travel far on foot, or undergo the fatigues of such a journey in the distressing state in which her feet were, on account of blisters.

Besides, I discovered that in coming from Troy to Albany, we had traveled three times the real distance, owing to our pursuing a winding and circuitous route to avoid pursuit and apprehension. Luckily we had not gone more than a mile before we overtook a cart loaded with New England wares, bending its way straight for New York. Finding the owner to be a very pleasant man and very accommodating, I soon struck a bargain with him, and, providing Melinda with as comfortable a seat as the vehicle afforded, I joined my new companion on foot, and endeavored to beguile the tedious time in familiar conversation, and customary inquiries about various uninteresting matters. I found "brother Jonathan" shrewd, intelligent and full of anecdote. During my short residence in Vermont, I had acquired a number of cant expressions peculiar to the Yankees, and affecting as much as possible the New England dialect, succeeded without much difficulty in making him believe I was a native of Vermont, and was born at the foot of the Green Mountains.

I endeavored to sift him as much as possible, and as he was full of schemes and notions, as are most of his countrymen, tried to obtain from him all the information he possessed. After gaining his confidence, I was very near exchanging with him some of my Burlington notes, when all at once he suddenly declined the bargain; but what occasioned this unexpected change of mind, whether he began to entertain suspicions of me or had some other reason, I could not learn. During our conversation, I recollect he dissuaded me from going into any part of the New England States, alleging that the Yankees had sharpers enough of their own, and but few instances occurred of a Scotchman, a Jew, or any person south of Connecticut, who ever made

out to thrive or do well by removing to any part of that country. He then advised me strongly to remove into Pennsylvania, where a great portion of the population were credulous, ignorant, unsuspecting, and easy to be imposed upon. He laughed quite immoderately

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The Confession of David Lewis The Noted Highwayman and Counterfeiter

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when he told me, that his traveling brethren made out better in that State than any other in the Union, and diverted me exceedingly by repeating the many tricks and various modes of cunning practiced by them upon the unwary, adding, that among themselves they called it lifting Germany when their plans succeeded and their tricks escaped detection.

After journeying some days we at length arrived at New York about dusk, and took up our lodgings for the night at the New England hotel, the usual stopping place for Yankee cart-men. The next day 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. I had not long remained in New York, before, in my midnight rambles through the city, I formed an acquaintance with several persons of the same principles, habits, and characters as my own. Our views coinciding, the acquaintance soon grew into intimacy, and after a few interviews, a week had not elapsed before we exchanged the "oath of fidelity and secrecy," and entered into firm articles of a predatory partnership. The names of my associates I think it unnecessary and improper to divulge. Some have paid the debt of nature, others are now suffering for their crimes in the penitentiary; and two of them have lately discovered such evidence of reformation by abandoning their former practices, and pursuing an honest and industrious course of life, that I am of opinion the disclosure might do society no good and them much harm.

While my mind is suffering all the torments of despair, and my body languishes with pain on the bed of sickness, perhaps of death, it is impossible for me to recollect at this time, much less to recount the many adventures, thefts and burglaries, the depredations, frauds and robberies that were committed and practiced by me and the rest of the "gang" during my continuance in this place.

I look back upon these scenes with horror, and when I reflect on the many tricks and stratagems we adopted to deceive the "City Watch," and the various schemes we successfully made use of to overreach and elude the police and vigilance of that great metropolis, I detest myself and abhor my own conduct as much as my greatest enemy can do.

The success of our Pearl street establishment exceeded my most sanguine 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 performance at the theatre, the negligent manner in which the 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 to 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 youths and others to great advantage on their return home at late hours of the night.

When after a night thus spent I have returned to my room, before daylight had made its appearance, and found Melinda enjoying that undisturbed repose in sweet sleep, which tranquility of mind and innocence of conduct can only procure, I have again and again repented of my misdeeds and resolved to myself that "I would henceforth cease to do evil and learn to do well." But all my resolutions were short lived and fallacious; fallacious however as they were, the delusion was pleasing; for as long as they lasted, they operated for a time like a weak opiate on my bewildered senses, and throwing myself on the same bed, by the side of my sleeping wife, exhausted nature was somewhat restored by an uneasy sleep, disturbed with terrific dreams, which represented to my disordered and feverish imagination the scenes of plunder and danger in which I had lately been engaged.

(To be continued)

The Fulton County News, November 06, 1902

The Confession of David Lewis The Noted Highwayman and Counterfeiter

(Continued from last week)

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 amongst us at stated and fixed periods — and for this purpose we proceeded with all the formula of a bank direction, having a president, directors, cashier, teller and clerk, and so particular were we in providing against deception that one of the rules prohibited, under the penalty of expulsion, any member of the company from being concerned in burning any of the books, or altering any of the entries. The depository of our plunder was denominated a "vault," and committees 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, just as the cock gave his midnight crow. On one of these periodical settlements a disturbance of a singular nature took place that disgusted me a good deal with the fraternity, and occasioned my abrupt separation from them; it was this:

During the previous week I attended the "ladies' auction room," in Broadway, and had been very successful in picking up and concealing the velvet reticule of a lady, who had made considerable purchases of some rare and expensive articles of female ornaments and dress, principally of French manufacture, such as Brussels lace and jewelry. I had taken my stand on the opposite side of the street, and lounged about until eleven 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, Esquire, 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 of admittance into female 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 workshops 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 of brides. After she had completed her purchases 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 vied 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 in listening admiration, I laid hold of the bag with apparent carelessness, and thrusting it quickly into my bosom, left the room unnoticed, taking a French leave of the company.

I honestly showed to my companions the whole amount of my valuable prize, and finding Melinda on my return home in low spirits and much disheartened, I presented her with a piece of lace, which she refused to accept for a long time, and not until I succeeded in making her believe that I drew it as a prize in a lottery recently established to befriend a poor widow, whom misfortune in trade had obliged to decline business. The company met the third day after this transaction, to settle up doings of the preceding week, and omitting to render an account of the lace I had given to my wife, I was accused of a fraudulent concealment. The opinion of the majority coinciding with my accuser, high words ensued, and blows succeeding words I was severely beaten; and my ungenerous companions threatening to lodge an information against me at the mayor's office, I suddenly determined upon quitting them, and made arrangements accordingly for leaving New York the next day.

(To be continued)

The Fulton County News, November 13, 1902

The Confession of David Lewis The Noted Highwayman and Counterfeiter

(Continued from last week)

I immediately communicated my determination to Melinda, and she received the intelligence with evident marks of regret and disappointment. She was pleased with her situation in Pearl street, and having formed an intimacy with a few females in the neighborhood whose society she liked, she was unwilling to leave New York. She was affected on the occasion even to tears, but her tears were like an April shower, through which the cheerful sun soon broke, and dissipated every cloud of discontent that hung upon her brow. Our household affairs did not require much time to prepare the necessary arrangements previous to a removal. In less than twelve hours our little stock of furniture was either packed up ready for transportation, or disposed of at private

sale, or given away as presents or keepsakes to our kind neighbors. In the evening we crossed the river and proceeded for New Brunswick, in the State of New Jersey, which I had selected as the place of our temporary residence. I could not help remarking the contrast between the feelings of Melinda on this occasion and my conduct — she was so seriously distressed on leaving the place that contained companions, who were equally worthy of one another, that she was afraid to trust herself with taking a formal leave, and came off without exchanging the parting kiss or farewell salutation, whilst I was all anxiety to remove from the same town that contained companions with whom I had associated from selfish views of interest and gain, but whose society I hated, and whose conduct in many instances I secretly abhorred and openly disapproved of the whole number of banditti to which I belonged consisted of twenty-one, including myself, and for the designation of our persons, when we held our secret meetings, it was agreed that each should assume some fictitious name or appellation. The name appropriated to my accuser was "Bob Brimstone," while that applied to me was "Harry Hurricane," and every one of us had some strange appellation affixed to him, just as fancy, blasphemy, or some leading trait of character suggested. Bob was one of the most bold, daring, and blood-thirsty villains I ever met with. Although I cannot say I was one of those who look upon human nature as so very depraved as to admit, at all times and under all circumstances, every species of vice, cruelty, and crime in its most deformed shape, and exclude from the same bosom, or extinguish in it every spark of humanity or generous feeling, yet truth obliges me to declare, that this unhappy individual had less of the man and more of the monster than any of the human family I ever knew. Villainy had marked him as its own, and it is to be feared there is not a vice or a crime that he had not perpetrated at some period of his life. I was particularly shocked at his brutal conduct on one occasion, which came within my own knowledge, and for which, on account of my agency in preventing his horrible purpose, he swore one of the most terrible oaths of revenge that ever fell from the impious lips of blasphemy. It had been customary with the "band" to give their attendance at the theatre every night of performance, to embrace every opportunity that afforded for plunder, robbery, and pocket-picking.

We knew it was not usual for the merchants and other inhabitants of the city to carry about their persons any large sums of money, especially to the theatre and other places of public amusement. Our chief dependence was on country merchants and strangers, who might happen to go there the first night of their arrival in town, when, owing to the fatigues of travel, and a desire to indulge a gawkish curiosity, natural to persons who had few or no opportunities at home to gratify the love of novelty and pleasure, they were surprised into sleep, or lost in amazement at the "new wonders" that presented themselves to their astonished senses in a fantastic variety of shapes, so as to become easy objects of prey, and innocent subjects for plunder. It happened, during a night of performance, on which we counted on great success, in consequence of a crowded house on the first appearance of Cook, the celebrated English actor, in some new and interesting character, the whole "band" attended to a man. Our hopes were not disappointed, and Bob Brimstone, being more successful than the rest, and maddened with joy at his good luck, having become intoxicated with liquor towards the close of the entertainment.

On leaving the theatre, he observed a young lady walking alone to and fro, in search of her little brother, who had accompanied her, and whom she had missed in the crowd as they descended the steps of the vestibule. Having offered his assistance to find the lost boy, he succeeded in enticing her into an unfrequented dark alley, until he came to a place where an opening was

formed by two large warehouses, which had been erected within three feet of each other, he seized her person with ruffian violence, and dragged her almost half way through this gloomy passage, when he proceeded to stop her mouth by thrusting a handkerchief down her throat. The poor affrighted female uttered the most piercing shrieks that ever proceeded from the voice of despair, but all her cries would have been in vain, had not chance or rather an ever watchful providence interposed, by directing my steps and those of another of the "gang" to return home through this darksome passage. Hearing the cry of distress, we immediately ran to the spot from whence it came, and just arrived in time to rescue the young lady.

Having extracted the unfortunate female from the grasp of the monster, we immediately took her under our protection, and prepared to accompany her to Greenwich street, in which her parents resided. She continued in a state of terror and distrust until we delivered her into the hands of her father, who invited us into the house, and overwhelming us with the strongest expressions of gratitude, insisted upon our partaking of some refreshments before we parted. I instantly took my departure home, and full of the most pleasing reflections at being the instrument of saving this beautiful and interesting girl from violence and defilement, I enjoyed a more sound and composed sleep that night than I had done for many months before.

We did not reach New Brunswick until the third day.

We continued to lodge at the stage house for about a week, when I rented a small tenement in the outskirts of the town, and having procured a few articles necessary for housekeeping, we moved in.

In two weeks a daughter was added to our family, whom to please her, I agreed should be called Jemima. This place being limited in population, and not affording many fruitful sources either of speculation or depredation, I was obliged to make various predatory excursions into the surrounding country for plunder and opportunities to pass away my counterfeit money. Experience had taught me the necessity of prudence and caution, and I was determined upon proceeding with the utmost vigilance. Having learned that there was a college at Princeton, and that most of the students were from the southward, I concluded that in a seminary so extensive and conspicuous, there must be many "empty heads and full purses," especially during the approaching Christmas holidays, when most of the students were in the habit of receiving large supplies of cash to enable them to indulge in the various festivities of the season. As soon as Melinda was able to leave her room, and attend to her domestic concerns, I set out in the first stage that offered for Princeton, and having assumed the character, the airs, and consequence of a Georgia planter, I soon succeeded in introducing myself to the professors, and in order to further my schemes, I gave out that my object was to procure a berth in the college for my brother, whose arrival I expected immediately after the expiration of the holidays. I sought every opportunity to court the society and gain the good opinion of the young men with whom I had contracted an acquaintance — passing for a man of fortune, singing a good song, and being able to "crack a bottle " with the best of them, I was invited to most of their convivial parties, at which cards being introduced, I was a voluntary loser at first, and apparently played with so much carelessness and ignorance, that the poor youths began to boast of their plucking the "Georgia pigeon," but alas! in less than three nights, during which our sittings were from five in the afternoon until five o'clock in the morning, I not only recovered all I had lost, but won at

least three hundred dollars of the money which their foolish parents had remitted them. Our place of rendezvous was a back chamber in the most retired part of the tavern, and the obliging landlord usually watched the door like a faithful "Cerberus" to prevent intrusion, and hinder us from the observation of the citizens of the village, and the detection of the masters in the college. In the forepart of the night I always managed to lose more than any other, but after supper, when the heads of these silly youths were heated with the fumes of liquor, which they generally drank to great excess, and in which I encouraged them as much as possible, they became elevated by their former success and good luck, played unguardedly and bet high, of which I did not neglect to take advantage, and frequently left the table with my pockets well stored with the fruits of my victory. I cannot reflect on my Princeton adventures without remarking the very improper conduct of parents and guardians in furnishing youth at colleges with such liberal supplies of money, as is generally done.

(To be continued)

The Fulton County News, November 20, 1902

The Confession of David Lewis The Noted Highwayman and Counterfeiter

(Continued from last week)

No seminary can flourish where such a practice is persisted in; no system of discipline can reach the evil; and while the exertions of the master are defeated by the acts of the parent, the hopes of the parent are disappointed; and when he embraces his son on return from college, he finds him often not only unimproved in his education, but ruined in his health and corrupted in his morals.

As soon as the college recess was over, I left Princeton and went to Philadelphia, with my pockets full of money and my head full of schemes. I did not remain long in so populous a place, before I discovered many persons of the same stamp as myself. Whilst my money remained I did not think of any new enterprise, but my associates taking advantage of my generous disposition, practiced every art that ingenuity suggested to trick me out of the greater part of it. I continued in Philadelphia two weeks, rioting in every scene of dissipation that my own vicious inclinations and the free use of money could procure. Necessity at length compelled me to resort to my old plans, and the same system of midnight depredations, robberies and pocket-picking was pursued here as in New York. I was very near embarking in a plan, which if it had succeeded would have enabled me to renounce my present course of life forever. It was to decoy the rich French banker, Mr. Girard, out of the city into the country, and keep him in confinement until he gave checks on his own and other banks to a large amount. If this failed, we intended to enter the Dock street sewer and contrive to open a communication underground with the banking house, and thus rob the vaults. But luckily for Mr. Girard, before the time ripened for action, I received a letter from Melinda, advising me of the dangerous illness of my little daughter, and entreating me to return to New Brunswick without delay. I was therefore obliged to give up the enterprise for the time, and leaving my companions in great wrath at my abandoning them at so critical a period, returned home with scarcely fifty dollars of good money at my command. After remaining with Melinda about four weeks, during which my purse became lighter every day, I determined upon

going to the lines, to procure some situation in the army, under the command of Gen. Alexander Smyth.

Having prepared Melinda's mind for leaving her, I took my departure for the north, in better spirits than I expected I should have done, when my mind dwelt upon the forlorn condition in which I should leave a beloved wife and an engaging infant.

Hope still buoyed me up with visionary schemes, and the expectation of plunder and booty, which I promised myself when the army should make its entry into Canada, tended much to drive away present melancholy reflections. On my way to the lines I met with companions as vicious and fond of pleasure as myself, and stopping at a wretched inn on the road, kept on purpose for the entertainment of gamblers and black-legs, I spent several days and nights in uninterrupted scenes of carousal, gaming and drinking. My companions being old acquaintances, had formed a league, and entered into a conspiracy to cheat me at cards of all my money. They succeeded in tricking me out of the remains of my ill-gotten cash, and on the morning of the fourth day I decamped at daybreak, leaving them to pay the landlord my share of the bill. After traveling about fifty miles more, with an empty purse and a hungry stomach, I applied to a wealthy farmer for employment, who agreed to hire me for a teamster. I did not remain long at the occupation, before my employer's team was pressed into the service of the United States army, I accordingly drove the wagon to the lines with a detachment of troops, on the way to join the army under the command of General Alexander Smyth.

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The Fulton County News, November 27, 1902

The Confession of David Lewis The Noted Highwayman and Counterfeiter

(Continued from last week)

On our arrival at the place of destination, I had many opportunities of indulging all my vicious propensities, and frequently plundered both officers and men of their money and property. The bustle of a camp amused me for some time, but the delay in crossing the lines, occasioned by General Smyth's strange conduct, created so much dissatisfaction, that I was not sorry, eager as I was to plunder the enemy, when the campaign ended. The war at this time was nothing here but a war of "Proclamations," and the failure of the expedition produced nothing but expense to the government, and laughter among the officers and soldiers of the army at the crazy behavior and "bombastic style" of the commanding General. Having received from the commanding officer, or wagon-master, a certificate of the number of days employed in the public service, I prepared to return, but a sudden thought entering my head of going off with my employer's wagon and horses, I yielded to the temptation, and changing the direction of my route, steered for the Allegheny Mountains, in Pennsylvania, whose scattered population and numerous caverns and breaks afforded various coverts and hiding places for criminals and fugitives. I parted with my wagon and team as soon as I could procure a purchaser, but the money I never returned to my employer. Whenever I thought of this unsuspecting, honest man, who had misplaced in me so much confidence, the recollection of my ungrateful conduct for a long time occasioned me many

a pang. "I was a stranger and he took me in, hungry and he fed me, naked and he clothed me," but guilt has no memory for kindness, and I forgot them all in my wretched pursuit of means to gratify my sensual desires. I need not mention the name of this benevolent man, but should he be living and these pages ever fall into his hands, he will certainly discover that the unfortunate David Lewis, and the person who betrayed his trust, under the fictitious name of Peter Vanbeuren, are one and the same person.

As soon as I thought it safe to exchange the solitude of the dark cavern for the more busy haunts of man, I repaired to Stoystown, where I met with an old acquaintance who had fled from justice. Being acquainted with my wife, he very abruptly communicated to me the first intelligence of the death of this amiable and unfortunate woman, who had died leaving an infant daughter, who survived her unhappy mother, and bore the name of Keziah, agreeably to the last request she ever made. The unexpectedness of the news, and the unfeeling manner in which the intelligence was conveyed, brought tears to my eyes and sorrow to my heart. Had I now obeyed the dictates of conscience, I would have quit the thorny path of guilt forever, and traveled the remainder of my life in the road of virtue. The violence of my distress continued for some time, and my heart being softened with sorrow, I had nearly gained a victory over myself, when my companion succeeded, by ridiculing my grief, in getting me to connect myself again with a gang of counterfeiters, who had secreted themselves in a retired part of the mountain, not far from town.

(To be Continued)

The Fulton County News, December 4, 1902

David Lewis The Noted Highwayman and Counterfeiter

(Continued from last week)

After joining the band, I was prevailed on to go to Chambersburg to procure paper suitable for the purpose from Mr. John Shryock, who is concerned in a paper mill near that place. Owing to my suspicious appearance, or some regulation among cautious and honest paper makers, Shryock refused to sell me any, and in consequence of his refusal, I was obliged to go to a paper mill in Virginia, carrying with me a "sample" of Shryock's manufacture, which I picked off the table while he had turned round to speak to some person who had entered the apartment. Having procured a stock of paper, made agreeably to the sample furnished, I returned to my comrades in the mountain, where we went to work and struck a number of impressions of different denominations. As is usually done among counterfeiters, we made an equal divide of the false notes, and then separated to pass them off in the exchange of horses and other property. Some of my companions went into the neighboring States of Virginia and Ohio, while I preferred Bedford, Somerset, Uniontown and Brownsville.

In these towns, and the counties in which they are situated, I was very successful in passing away and exchanging my bad money, and escaped detection in such a wonderful manner that made me bolder as I became more guilty and criminal. There is such a chain and connection among counterfeiters and robbers in Pennsylvania, and other States, and so numerous are their accomplices and secret friends, that it is not easy to discover or apprehend them. In traversing

Fayette county, I became acquainted with a young woman who bore so striking a resemblance to my deceased wife, that I determined upon paying my addresses to her, and her alone, if ever I changed my condition; but my thoughts were chiefly occupied then about returning to my comrades in the mountains, all having agreed to meet at the cave at a time previously fixed upon. At the expiration of the stipulated period, I prepared for my return, and joined my companions as soon as I could, without meeting with any serious accident or interruption. In order to guard against intrusion, and protect us from the unwelcome visits of the officers of justice, of whom we were in constant dread, there was a door in the cave, which we called "Susanna," and on the approach of any of the gang, the signal for entry was, "open, Susanna, open" as soon as these words were uttered, any of the party who happened to be within acknowledged the signal by crying out, "Susanna is at home." Unfortunately I happened to be detained by sickness on the road, and did not arrive at the appointed time. As soon as I gained admittance, I found all of my comrades in the cave, and the first salutation which greeted my ears, convinced me that something was wrong. I was accused of loitering away my time with the view of spending the money of the company, or concealing it. I denied the charge, which brought on a quarrel, that nearly came to blows; and while my companions were in a deep sleep, I quietly and silently left them about midnight, carrying with me not only the spoils, which I had made myself, out of my various exchanges, but I rifled the pockets of my partners of all their ill-gotten contents, thinking it a light punishment, and one which they deserved, for their unjust suspicions of my honesty.

In this manner I became possessed of a very considerable sum in bank notes, which I determined upon securing to enable me to abandon forever the villains with whom I had connected myself, quit the present course of

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The Confession of David Lewis The Noted Highwayman and Counterfeiter

(Continued from First Page)

life, in which I had been so long engaged, make a provision for myself and family, and follow some industrious mode of livelihood. But my scheme was frustrated by my own folly. Having taken with me a black bottle filled with whiskey to refresh me in my flight, as soon as it was emptied I put in it nearly all my notes, which filled it up to the neck, and about twenty miles from the cave I dug a hole in the most retired part of the mountain, and buried my bottle; but bottle or notes I was never able to find again, though I made frequent unsuccessful searches for them. In my hurry I was not careful to mark the spot with sufficient precision to enable me to discover it again; and thus was my ill acquired wealth lost to me, to my family, and to society, unless some person may have the good luck to come across it, an object worthy of search, and the contents sufficiently large and valuable to reward the fortunate finder.

I pursued my journey, or rather flight, through Fayette, and chance, or destiny throwing me again into the society of the young woman whom I had met before, and with whom I was so much pleased, I resolved upon remaining a few days with her, and if I found her possessed of a good disposition, I determined upon uniting my fate with hers in the connubial state. Her countenance was an index of her heart; she was as amiable as she was lovely, and perceiving that she received

my visits with an encouraging familiarity, I soon declared my intentions of matrimony, and we were joined in wedlock. After staying with her three days, I concluded upon returning to my mother in Centre county, to procure a home for her there, until I could go to Philadelphia for my little children, whose uncertain fate and desolate condition wrung my heart with all the anguish and anxiety which a tender parent cannot but feel on such an occasion. To prevent apprehension and avoid suspicion, I crossed over into Virginia, and proceeded to Emmitsburgh in the State of Maryland. Being fatigued with walking so far, I stole a small mare out of a field in the neighborhood of this town, and rode to Shippensburg with the expectation of meeting an old acquaintance and accomplice, whom I had known in Berlin, and who, I understood, had gone to reside there. Being misinformed, I continued my journey through Cumberland, and on my way happened to call at a little store kept by a man of the name of Martin, on the Walnut Bottom Road.

Drunkenness was by no means my destroying sin, or prevailing vice, but though I was seldom intoxicated to excess, I would occasionally indulge in drink more than I wished to do, when I happened to mix in company with persons of jovial dispositions, and I would sometimes find myself under the necessity of drowning the clamors of remorse and the stings of conscience in the flowing bowl and sparkling glass. The morning on which I left Shippensburg, I fell in with company at a tavern on the road, and drank freely; by the time I arrived at Martin's my ideas were in a state of confusion, and my usual caution and cunning being stupefied with liquor, I offered him in payment for some article I proposed buying some of my counterfeit notes, and acted with such imprudence in the negotiation, as was sufficient to create suspicion in the mind of a man even more stupid than Martin. On being charged with passing bad money I denied the charge, and confirmed the denial with the strongest assertions of innocence, and in the heat of argument foolishly proposed accompanying him to town, to submit the notes to the inspection and decision of the officers of the Carlisle Bank. Martin consented, and we rode together to town, and went in company to the Bank. "When the notes were laid before the cashier and clerk, they both agreed, after a minute inspection, in pronouncing them counterfeits, and on refusing to give them up, I began to think that the affair might end more seriously than I expected. Some one proposed our going to M'Ginnis' tavern, to examine further into the matter, whither we went, accompanied by the bank officers. After undergoing a strict examination, and discovering from the winks that passed between the Colonel and Martin that they intended to arrest me, I concluded that my only chance of escape was to get off by means of some trick, which I thought I could practice upon them with success, as they all appeared to be "green hands" at catching a rogue. After making many protestations of innocence, and offering to confirm my declarations by the testimony of a respectable gentleman, an acquaintance of mine, then in town, I was permitted to go in search of him, alone, and unattended by a constable, or any one. I made the best use of the liberty they imprudently gave me, and after turning Reitzel's corner in Hanover street, walked off with a quick step until I came to Blain's cave, where I remained that night, and the next morning as soon as it was day, proceeded on foot for Centre county, having left the mare, which I had stolen near Emmitsburg, in the possession of Martin.

I can have no motive or inducement in my present situation, when I expect so shortly to leave a wicked world, and appear before the "great judge of all the earth" to answer for the deeds done in the body, to close my life with a lie upon my lip. Alas! I have already sinned so much against heaven and earth, against God and my country, that the only reparation I can make to society is

to give a full disclosure or confession of all my manifold crimes and offences; nor do I think the atonement would be complete unless I strip the veil from my heart, expose every secret intention, and declare with truth and candor, not only all my wicked criminal acts, but all the plans, purposes, and schemes which were from time to time contemplated and agitated, and which I and the rest of the different bands with whom I associated were prevented from executing by the special interference of a kind Providence, who stayed our uplifted hands from committing many crimes, interposing various unexpected obstacles, which either I could not account for at the time, or attributed to chance or accident. If no other advantage will be derived from this disclosure, I trust it will have the effect of deterring youth and others from adopting or persevering in the same course of life in which I embarked; and if by exhibiting myself as a beacon, I can warn others from the dangerous shoals on which I have shipwrecked my own happiness and peace of mind, I shall consider myself fully repaid for the painful exertion I now make.

When I look back upon my ill-spent life, and endeavor to discover the cause or source from which all my misfortunes and crimes have sprung and proceeded, I am inclined to trace their origin to the want of early instruction.

Had my widowed mother been possessed of the means of sending me to school, and afforded me the opportunity of profiting by an education, the early part of my youth, instead of being engaged in idle sports and vicious pursuits, might have been employed in the studies of useful knowledge, and my mind by this means have received an early tendency to virtue and honesty, from which it would not afterwards have been diverted: but alas! she was poor, and the Legislature of Pennsylvania — I blush with indignation when I say it — had made no provision, nor has she yet made any adequate one, for the gratuitous education of the children of the poor. Until this is done, and schools are established at the public expense for teaching those who are without the means of paying for instruction, ignorance will cover the land with darkness, and vice and crime run down our streets as a mighty torrent.

(To be Continued)

The Fulton County News, December 11, 1902

David Lewis The Noted Highwayman and Counterfeiter

(Continued from last week)

After my expedition on the lines, I became disgusted with military life, and gave up every view of enlisting again; the disappointments, vexations, and terrors I experienced in my associations with the counterfeiting gang, who had fixed their establishment near "Stoystown," and the risk I ran in being apprehended by the officers of the Carlisle Bank for my attempt to pass the counterfeit money with Martin, increased my anxiety to visit my mother and brothers. After leaving Carlisle I acted with caution, and refrained from committing any depredation on the road to my mother's. My relations received me with a better welcome than I had any reason to expect, and while they expressed their satisfaction at seeing me, they renewed all their arguments in the most friendly and persuasive style to impress my mind with the wickedness and dangers of the

course of life I was following. They almost persuaded me to settle and become industrious and sober; but the bad habits I had contracted in the army, together with my natural disposition for rambling, predominated over their good advice, and renewing my acquaintance with some of my late companions in arms, who had been to Canada, I readily entered into their service, and having procured the necessary material for counterfeiting, I became a partner in this tempting species of fraud. The period was extremely propitious for the success of the project. The Legislature of Pennsylvania had recently established by law a great number of new banks in every part of the State, which we and many others considered little better than a legalized system of fraud, robbery and swindling. Determined upon seizing the golden opportunity of making our fortunes, we returned to Cumberland and erected a small hut in the South Mountain, near Mr. Brewster's tavern, and boarding at a gentleman's house in the vicinity, we proceeded to manufacture all sorts and sizes of counterfeit bank bills, but principally notes on the "Philadelphia Bank," of the denomination of \$100. Having struck off what we supposed to be a sufficient number, we separated for the purpose of passing them off. I proceeded to Landisburg, where I passed off a \$100 note to Mr. Anderson, a merchant in that place; from thence I went to Newville, where I succeeded in putting off another note of the same description on a Mr. Geese, a store-keeper in that town. I was extremely fortunate in both cases, not only in procuring change in good money, but in walking off with the booty without detection, or even suspicion. At that time city money was scarce and in great demand, and the country merchants being anxious to make their remittances in city notes, seized with avidity the opportunity of making the favorable exchange, and never took time to examine whether the notes were genuine or not. Passing through Roxbury, Strasburg and Fannettsburg, I exchanged about \$1000 in notes of various denominations, purchased a horse at the Burnt Cabins — traded him off for a better one, paying the difference in counterfeit notes, and in this manner proceeded to Bedford, where after several lucky trades, and passing off a number of spurious bills, I found myself in possession of a handsome sum of money, fifteen hundred dollars of which I deposited in the Bedford bank, and sported for some time on the residue, when wishing to make a bold push, and get rid of all my counterfeit stock, my imprudent anxiety occasioned suspicion, and I was arrested and

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imprisoned on the charge of passing counterfeit money. I could easily have made my escape from the jail of Bedford, but Samuel Riddle and Charles Huston, Esqs., the lawyers to whom I gave the balance of money to clear me, flattered me with such encouraging assurances of acquittal that I was induced to see it out. After remaining in jail for a considerable time, and experiencing all the painful feelings of suspense, my trial was ordered on, and notwithstanding the zeal and exertions of my counsel, I was found guilty, and sentenced to ten years imprisonment in the penitentiary.

I remained here about a year, during which time I began to have serious thoughts of reformation, when the powerful intercessions of my friends, and the knowledge I had of the weak side of Governor Findlay in favoring applications of this nature suggested a pardon as the best means of

restoring me to liberty. As I expected, his excellency received my petition for a pardon in a manner that gave my friends no doubt of the success of the application; and they did not remain many hours in suspense before the Secretary delivered them a paper under the great seal of the State, granting me full forgiveness for all my crimes, and a complete remission of all the penalties of the law. After I left Harrisburg, I went to Bedford to endeavor to get back some of my money which I had deposited in the bank, but the bank officers refusing my checks I was again reduced to great distress, and in a moment of despair, was very near putting an end to my life, when I fell in with one Rumbaugh, who had assumed the name of Connelly, and a man who called himself James Hanson. I did not keep their company many days before they persuaded me to join them in waylaying and robbing a Mr. M'Clelland, whom they had traced from Pittsburg to Bedford, and who they found out was to pursue his journey to Philadelphia the following morning. We accordingly armed ourselves and proceeded to a tavern within a few miles of Bedford, in a lonely place in the woods, where we drank a pint of brandy; starting on a few rods ahead we at length stopped, and waited in the woods near the roadside for about half an hour with great impatience, until Mr. M'Clelland came in view. He rode along at a slow pace and in a careless manner, until he had got nearly past us, when Connelly, jumping out of the thicket, seized his horse by the bridle, and presenting a pistol, told him if he made any noise he would shoot him. Hanson and myself then came up and held his legs while Connelly led his horse into the woods, where we took from him his money in the manner which has been already stated in the public prints. To escape detection Connelly and Hanson proposed to make away with him, alleging that "dead men told no lies," but I peremptorily refused, and told them if they did they must first murder me, and so deterred them from the bloody act. Having secured the money we then bent our course towards Lewistown, in Mifflin County, intending to proceed into the State of New York, but we were overtaken two miles from the former place, and brought back to Bedford. It may not be improper here to state, that I had always determined never to stain my hands with blood, or kill anyone except in self defense, but I would certainly have shot Ephraim Enser, the man who caught me after I had thrown down William Price, if my pistol had gone off. My natural disposition was by no means cruel; and hearing my mother read out of the Bible the story of Cain killing his brother Abel, when I was yet a child, it made an impression on my young and tender heart which never was effaced.

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The Fulton County News, December 18, 1902

David Lewis The Noted Highwayman and Counterfeiter

(Continued from last week)

After remaining in the Bedford jail for some time, and finding the usage not such as should be given to prisoners in our condition, I determined on an escape, and accordingly put the convicts and prisoners who were confined with me on a plan to get off, which succeeded to my full expectation. We let out all the prisoners that would go, excepting an ordinary fellow that had robbed a poor widow, and who I was determined should be left behind to take care of the jailer and his family whom we had looked up in the same apartment lately occupied by us.

Connelly and myself proceeded along the mountains to Doubling Gap, in Cumberland county, where we came across an old acquaintance, and remained there a few days, and then went to Petersburg, in Adams county, where we procured some clothing and other necessaries, having left Bedford in a very destitute condition. After we had refreshed ourselves, and recovered from our fatigue, we crossed over to the Conewago hills in York county, and having committed several petty robberies and depredations, we directed our course into East Pennsboro, one of the most wealthy and populous German settlements in Cumberland county, with the view of robbing some of the rich farmers in that neighborhood. Hearing that Jonas Roop was about building a new mill, and had gathered a good deal of money for that purpose, we lurked about in the vicinity for some time, but could not meet with a favorable opportunity to accomplish our ends.

We next visited Krietzer's tavern, and judging from the largeness of his barn of the size of his purse, we expected to be more fortunate with him than we had been at Roop's, but we were again disappointed. While in his bar room we heard some of his neighbors talk, in the absence of Mr. Krietzer, of his not having one cent for every dollar in the possession of Mr. Beshore, who was represented as having more ready money than all the rest of his neighbors put together. We immediately laid our plans for an attack on his house, and would certainly have succeeded, but for the presence of mind and bravery displayed by his wife, who blew a horn to alarm the neighborhood, discovering as much courage on the occasion as some men, and more resolution than any other woman I ever met with.

It was not long before a number of the neighbors came to her assistance, and Connelly, snatching up a rifle which stood convenient in the house, made off, while I, who for the first time in the last five years became intoxicated to excess, was taken prisoner, and after being secured and fastened, some cowardly fellow came up and struck me in my defenseless condition. I was then taken to the Carlisle jail, and put in a very strong room, out of which I saw but very little chance of escape; but to my great joy and satisfaction I soon heard that the Sheriff of Bedford county had come down to demand me. I was the more pleased with the prospect of an exchange of prisons from the dislike I took to the jailer, who seemed to be a very surly fellow, and always looked as if he begrudged the prisoners the common jail allowance. The Sheriff was not successful in his application, but upon Alexander Mahon and William Ramsay, Esquires, swearing that the Carlisle jail was not sufficiently strong to hold me, I was ordered to be taken to Chambersburg by Sheriff Ritner, whom I had remembered to have seen before, while following an occupation for which he was much better fitted than the one he was then engaged in. In conducting me to Chambersburg,

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Ritner was accompanied by a young man, who I think was called Hendricks, very unlike another of the deputies who assisted in bringing me from Mechanicsburg to Carlisle; his name I cannot remember, though I shall not forget him if I was to live a thousand years, as I was very forcibly

struck with the contrast of character between the two young men, for while the former was modest and reserved, and never plagued me with impertinent questions, the other was continually teasing me with various inquiries which it did not become him to use to a person in my situation. I soon discovered that his silly conduct proceeded from vanity, and that he had a great desire to make a display of his learning to me, for he was constantly pulling out of his pocket a little book, which I took for a pocket dictionary, to find out the meaning of the high flowing words he made use of. During our travel I informed the Sheriff that I had met him before, at Millerstown, on the Juniata, when Connelly proposed our robbing him, but as I knew he made no profitable sales abroad, nor received any collections, I concluded he could have no money about him. The fact is, nothing would have pleased me better at the time than to have robbed him, as I had long heard the office holders of Carlisle represented to be a hungry, avaricious set of extortioners, whom no sense of justice, or feeling of humanity could restrain from grinding the poor.

If there was any class or description of people in society whom I would sooner have robbed than any other, it was those who held public offices, and under color of law had been guilty of extortion; who had plundered the poor, and cheated the widow and the orphan. Against such workers of iniquity my mind had taken a set, and I was determined never to spare them on any occasion that offered. The groans of the distressed, the cries of the widow, and the complainings of the oppressed rang in my ears, and called aloud for vengeance. There was perhaps no place in the State in which I heard more complaints of this sort than in the county of Cumberland, and as Carlisle was my native place, for which I felt a strong attachment, instead of committing a wrong I conceived that I would be rendering society a service by punishing those official marauders who infest the town, in visiting upon them the same degree of severity which they had visited upon others, and thus, "make the cruel feel the pains they gave." With this view, I at one time proposed to my companions that we should abandon the highways, make our peace with offended justice, satisfy the penalties of the law, reimburse those whom we had robbed and wronged, move into town, and adopt the most effectual mode of bringing extortioners, bank swindlers, and public defaulters to justice, and make as much money out of them as we could. Having heard great complaints in every place of a certain act of Assembly called the Fee Bill, which had passed in the session of 1813-14, I procured a copy of the law, and found that it contained a provision, that if any officer shall take greater or other fees than was expressed and limited for the service, or shall charge, or demand and take any fees where the business was not actually done, shall charge or demand any fee for any service or services, other than those provided for, such officer shall forfeit and pay to the party injured fifty dollars, to be recovered as other debts. I thought it remarkable that this provision (which was the only part of the law that had an eye to the interest and security of the people), should, remain a dead letter, and that few instances occurred of the parties injured resorting to it for redress. I knew that in the long catalogue of public officers, there were but few exceptions where this part of the act had not been infringed upon, and where sheriffs, prothonotaries, clerks of the sessions, justices and constables had not incurred the penalty. My plan was to proceed regularly through the town and country, procure a copy of the multitudinous suits spread upon their dockets, obtain copies of their respective bills of fees, call upon the parties interested, particularly defendants, make a bargain with them for permission to bring suits in their names for the penalties, and that I should receive one-half of the forfeitures for my trouble and expense. But Connelly opposed the scheme, alleging that the number of public officers was so great — that they formed such a powerful

phalanx in society, and possessed so much influence, that they had grown so cunning from the long time they had been in office, they would be able to defeat all the humane intentions of the act. The project was in this way abandoned, very much against my will.

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The Fulton County News, December 25, 1902

David Lewis The Noted Highwayman and Counterfeiter

(Continued from last week)

It is but justice to Sheriff Bitner, and Mr. Hendrick, to say, that in conducting me from Carlisle to Chambersburg, they treated me as well as I could expect, particularly the latter. In the afternoon of the same day that I was lodged in the jail at Chambersburg, where O was shortly after my confinement gratified with a visit from his Excellency Gov. Findley, who opportunely had arrived at Chambersburg nearly about the same time. He condoled with me on my present misadventure, and after the jailer and spectators had left the room, we had a private interview, during which we conversed freely on different subjects, not necessary now to mention, but any person will wrong His Excellency, if he supposes the conversation related to an office. He never promised me any such thing, nor did I ask one of him. His Excellency did not remain with me longer than half an hour, and on leaving the room, he gave me an affectionate squeeze of the hand.

I did not remain long in confinement before I tricked Mr. Leader, who was confident I would not leave him. My escape was owing to the negligence of the jailer, who in his hurry to see a fight that was going on in the street, forgot to lock the door of the last room of the convicts, contenting himself with bolting it; and fastening the little wicket door, or rather window, with the key that unlocked the other rooms, he omitted to return and secure the door in the usual way. During the day the prisoners had fixed a soaped string over the top of the door, and concealed it in a crack on the outside, and by means of a loop or slip knot they succeeded in pulling out the key. The plan succeeding they unlocked the door through the window; having thus got to the entry, and having the necessary key to open the door of the room in which I was confined, I was in this manner liberated, and, springing the lock of the door leading into the women's apartment, and the door leading from thence into the yard, as well as that of the gate opening into the street, luckily I and four other criminals effected our escape, undiscovered by anybody, about two o'clock in the morning. We proceeded about half a mile, and finding my hobbles troublesome we entered a pine thicket, where by means of an axe and cold chisel I extricated myself from the irons. While thus employed we heard distinctly the noise of the town bells, which were ringing on the occasion to alarm the inhabitants and rouse them to pursuit, and could not help laughing very heartily, notwithstanding the terror we were in, at the confusion and mortification our escape must produce among the wise citizens of Chambersburg. There is no truth in the supposition that I had bribed the jailer, or gave him any directions about his getting fifteen hundred dollars, which it was said I had concealed in the Pines, south of the Walnut Bottom Road. I never hid any money there, nor promised Mr. Leader any bribe whatever. He always treated me with humanity as long as I was his prisoner, and is wrongfully accused, if anybody suspects my escape was

owing to his criminality. We remained all that day in a rye field, and at night pursued our course to Doubling Gap. Near this place is a cave in the cleft of the mountain, formed by a projecting rock, and here we remained for several days. After refreshing ourselves, and I had succeeded in procuring a change of clothes, I disguised myself as well as I could, and passing for a well digger, paid frequent visits to Newville, especially in the night. I generally took a round through all the taverns to learn

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what was going on, and discover, if I could, which of the inhabitants had the most ready money. According to the talk of those I met with in the tavern, I was led to believe that the three richest men in that part of the country were Mr. Sharpe, David Sterrett, and an old gentleman of the name of Kehan, or McKeehan. From information I received, I rather concluded that the former had more land than money, as I understood he was in the habit of making a purchase of property every year, adding house to house, and field to field; not believing Mr. Sharp to have by him as much cash as the others, I concluded upon robbing Mr. Sterrett; but hearing that he had a short time before deposited all his money in the new bank at Carlisle, and in consequence of its stoppage had little or no prospect of getting it out again, and learning also that he was a bond buyer, and had disposed of all his ready money in this way, I despaired of succeeding with him, and finally fixed upon old Mr. Kehan as the surest mark. I immediately set my ingenuity to work to devise the best plan for accomplishing my purpose, and accordingly intended to waylay him on Sunday evening as he returned from church. I meant to carry him into the woods, tie him and threaten him with violence, until he told me where his treasure was lodged; on obtaining this information, my plan was to go to the house and alarm the family, by making them believe that I had just left the old man dying in the road about a mile off, and that he had begged me to send every one of them to him directly; I concluded that the intelligence would occasion great distress and confusion, and that in their absence I might have time enough to rifle his chests, and break open all his drawers.

In pursuance of this premeditated scheme, I did meet the old man one Sunday afternoon as he was returning home from church, but my heart failed me. I was so struck with his venerable form, his benevolent countenance, his republican simplicity of manners, and his patriarchal appearance, that I became confounded; my feet became riveted to the ground, my tongue motionless, my heart appalled, and my eyes fixed in amazement, so that I could not find courage to proceed or touch him with the finger of violence. On meeting him in the highway', he rode on after bidding me good day; when he had passed by I looked back at him, and said, what is the meaning of this? Oh, honesty! there is sometimes a charm even in thy external appearance sufficient to stay the hands of the robber himself! there is a majesty in virtue which often appalls vice itself, and strikes the guilty conscience with terror and dismay. I returned to the cave that evening without committing any depredation, and slept better than I had done for several nights before.

Living in a state of constant dread and apprehension of being retaken, I became tired of the cavern and determined to return to my old haunts in East Pennsboro, to seek revenge of the fellow who had struck and abused me after I was tied, when I was taken before. I took my departure from the cave rather abruptly, leaving behind several articles of value, particularly a pair of pantaloons and some blankets. If they have fallen into the hands of any honest people on the Big Spring, I hope they will not claim or use them, but return them to my poor wife in Philadelphia the first opportunity that offers.

On my return I again met with my evil genius, Connelly, who renewed the proposition of robbing old Jonas Roop. We made several attempts, but were always baffled. Jonas was in the habit of going to Harrisburg, and staying late in the company of Judge Bucher, who lived near the bridge. I was to cross over to the Harrisburg side, and Connelly to remain concealed in a thick covert of woods on the other side, near the road leading to Mr. Roop's house. I dogged him one Saturday evening in particular, and would have robbed him or perished in the attempt, if I had not discovered from his conversation with Mr. Bucher that he kept no cash or ready money in his house. I had crept slyly up the bank to the engine house near the bridge, and getting into one of the empty boxes that lie there, I could distinctly hear all that passed without danger of discovery.

Mr. Bucher used to be very importunate with the old gentleman on the subject of politics, and always extolled Governor Findley to the skies, suggesting various plans for entrapping the Germans, and getting them to vote for Findley at the election. I also heard him converse with his son John and say something about the Governor's bank book, which he confessed he did not like, but if Musgrove only continued mum until after the election, he thought the matter could be smothered and kept secret from the people.

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The Fulton County News, January 01, 1903

David Lewis The Noted Highwayman and Counterfeiter

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If it had appeared that Jonas was possessed of a sufficient sum of money to justify the risk, our plan was to seize him after he had crossed the bridge on his return home, in some suitable part of the road the most remote from any house, carry him into some thicket of wood, tie him and his horse to a tree, and procure from him the key of his chest, or gain intelligence where his money was hid, and get some token from him to his family, enabling us to deceive them and carry off the spoil without difficulty or danger, but the intelligence I gathered from the conversation between him and Bucher convincing me that Jonas neither carried money about his person nor had any at home, compelled me to abandon the scheme altogether as fruitless and vain.

Being thus baffled in my expectation of robbing Mr. Roop, I returned to our rendezvous a good deal disheartened in spirits, and disturbed in mind as to my future prospects; — reflections on the past produced only disagreeable and painful sensations, and anticipation of the future afforded

but a gloomy prospective. Possessing, however, a restlessness of disposition, my mind could not remain long unoccupied, without engaging in some new scheme. Necessity, too, furnished a new motive for action, and though I generally despised petty thefts and spring-house depredations, and wished to pursue the nobler game of highway robberies, which while they were more profitable were better calculated to make a great noise in the world, and produced a temporary éclat flattering to the pride of one who had gained a reputation for generosity even in his crimes, I was reduced to the alternative of starving in the midst of plenty, or descending to the expedient of committing petty larcenies, for the purpose of supplying the wants of nature. I did not hesitate long before I chose the latter, and in one of my predatory excursions, I discovered on the farm of Mr. Conrad Reininger, a wealthy and respectable German, a web of home-made cloth lying in an exposed situation. The temptation was too powerful for one in my distressed case to occasion hesitation or delay in seizing the valuable prize the first favorable moment that offered. I made the attempt accordingly, as soon as the stillness and darkness of night rendered it safe; but darkness and night do not always afford a cover for crime or a mantle for iniquity; I was surprised in the attempt to carry it off, was pursued in my flight, and finally overtaken. My pursuers were accompanied by a large dog, whose fierceness and speed exceeded anything of the kind I ever witnessed before, for just as I was in the act of clearing the fence, the dog came up, seized me by the shoulders, drew me back, and held me fast until Mr. Reininger arrived, who immediately belabored me with blows, from the effects of which I did not recover for some time. I had frequently seen Mr. Reininger before, and though I perceived he was a robust, broad-shouldered, stout built man for his size, I did not think there was so much strength in the arm of flesh, until I felt the force of his on this disastrous occasion.

I was now completely in the power of my pursuer, and expected every moment to be dragged to a magistrate and committed once more to jail, but Mr. Reininger not knowing me in the dark, and thinking no doubt that he had already punished me sufficiently for the unsuccessful attempt, discharged me from his grip, when I lost no time in making off as fast as I could. I returned to our usual hiding place about

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midnight, and suffering the most excruciating pain from a lacerated shoulder and bruised body, lay on the damp earth until daybreak, without any mitigation of pain or relief from sleep. Apprehensive that the dog was mad, I endured the utmost anxiety, terror and suspense for nine days; after the termination of this period, my fears arising from the dreaded effects of canine madness subsided, and I recovered gradually both my health and spirits.

Forming suddenly a determination of going to my mother's, I resolved upon its execution as soon as I could disengage myself from Connelly, of whose company I began to grow tired, but Providence that overrules the actions and destinies of men had otherwise ordained. As we had been so long connected together in a criminal intercourse, it was to be our fate to continue in the same career of wickedness until both should expiate their crimes by the justly merited sacrifice

of their lives, on the same occasion and in the same manner. My wretched companion suspecting my intention to leave him, procured from me in an unguarded moment a rash oath that we should never separate from one another without the consent of each. A false pride and a mistaken sense of honor operating upon a mind whose moral sense was weakened by vice, and whose conscience was hardened by crime, I determined to fulfill with fidelity what I had promised with rashness. Many days had not elapsed after this before I became affected with a strange presentiment, which I could not resist, that my "glass was nearly run," and I should soon be called to answer for my conduct here in another world. Notwithstanding the errors of my education, and the wicked and criminal manner in which I had spent my life, I never disbelieved the existence of a God, or the truths of Revelation; but my convictions of conscience (if such they can be called) were of so transitory a nature that they never produced any fruit, except an occasional fearful apprehension of Divine wrath and punishment, which I endeavored to remove as speedily as possible by embarking in some new adventure, or engaging in fresh scenes of dissipation and debauchery. Not being able to overcome this feeling, and acting under its influence, I concluded upon paying a visit to Carlisle, the place of my nativity, once more, before I should quit this part of the country forever; as my intention was to retire to Canada and settle there, after I should see my mother and make preparations for removing my wife and children. Previous to my departure I was engaged in several enterprises of a criminal nature, in some of which we were fortunate, and in others unsuccessful. In the attempt to plunder the house of old Mr. Eberly, and rob him of a large sum of money which we were told he had in his possession, chiefly in old gold and Spanish dollars, we were surprised in the act by an alarm made by the family, and I, in particular, was very near being apprehended. After the failure of this attempt I started to Carlisle early the next morning, having first disguised my person as well as I could, by altering my clothing, blackening my whiskers and eyebrows, covering one of my eyes with a piece of green silk, and sticking a large black patch on my left cheek; in this manner I arrived in Carlisle about twilight in the evening, carrying a bundle of old clothing under my arm, and affecting the infirmity of an old cripple.

Afraid to expose myself by remaining too long in the same place, and anxious to avoid the risk of detection, I changed my situation frequently, and mixed with different companies at different times. I occasionally became a party to the conversations carried on, and thus became acquainted with the characters of some of the inhabitants, and the passing transactions of the times, which made me think the inhabitants of the place were really a very queer people. In one of my rambles through the streets, I happened to meet with and immediately recognized the man with whom I attempted to pass some of my counterfeit notes, and through whose agency I was very near being arrested; on inquiry I found his real name to be Henry C. Marthens, and learnt that he had removed from the Walnut Bottom and settled in Carlisle. I likewise gained some information about the mare which I left in his possession, when I took French leave of him and Colonel M'Ginnis, and was told the mare was sold for one hundred dollars, and the money pocketed by Marthens. As Marthens has no right either to the mare or the money, he will do an act of justice only if he returns the latter to my poor and distressed wife and family, whom he will easily find either in Philadelphia or New York. At all events he can have no just claim to the money, and if he is unwilling to restore it to my family, he ought at least, as an honest man, appropriate it for some charitable or benevolent use, either in my name, or in our joint names. I understood that this man, Marthens, intended to make the tour of Europe, whether in the character of Missionary or Wandering Jew, I did not hear; his object appeared to be to impose on the credulous, by

tendering his services to collect legacies and debts in the old countries, and for this purpose had procured a curious kind of certificate from Governor Findley, under the great seal of the Commonwealth, and ribbons and wax attached, which he was as fond of displaying as a new made justice was of his commission.

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The Fulton County News, January 08, 1903

David Lewis The Noted Highwayman and Counterfeiter

(Continued from last week)

In the evening I repaired to the house in which I was born, situate in Hanover street, nearly opposite Dr. Foulk, and so strong was my affection for the "natal spot," that I stooped down and kissed the sill of the door, on which I had frequently sat by the side of my mother, and enjoyed the innocent sports of boys older and bigger than myself who played around us in the street. I was also anxious to see again the draw-well which stood in the street a short distance from the house, and expected to find the same bucket hanging in the well, from which I had often, unknown to my mother, allayed my thirst; but finding a pump in its stead I drew up as much water as cooled my parched and burning mouth, which I drank out of the hollow of my hand; but alas! it could not quench the consuming fire that razed in my bosom. The scene brought to my recollection the happy days of infancy and innocence, which had gone by never to return, and the comparison between what I had been and what I now was filled my heart with anguish, and my conscience with compunction I felt as one possessed of two distinct souls, and two opposite natures, one inclining him to virtue, and the other drawing him to vice and crime; the strength of the latter prevailed over the weakness of the former, and had plunged me in that deep and black abyss of guilt from which I found it impossible to rise. My heart was torn to pieces by the violence of feelings which now agitated me, and I shed a profuse shower of tears; but tears afford relief only to those who are at peace with themselves; alas! they brought none to a miserable wretch so guilty as I had been. This gentle fluid of humanity, while it ran from my inflamed eyes, only scalded my cheeks without relieving my bursting heart. I remained for some time in this agony of feeling, transfixed to the spot like a statue of despair, and might have continued to remain much longer, except for some "soft sounds of music" which broke upon my ear. I immediately turned round and found the sound proceeded from a house up an adjacent alley, where I followed until I came to the stone dwelling from which the sound issued. I stopped and listened with breathless attention. Finding it resembled the melody of sacred music, I opened the gate, and proceeded to the window, when, peeping through one of the broken shutters, I observed the delightful spectacle of an aged couple closing the labors and duties of the day in exercises of devotion and worship. It was a sight to which I had not been accustomed, and when the venerable "man of God," in the concluding prayer, pronounced with the voice and countenance of an angel the solemn expression, amen! I voluntarily repeated the word in so loud a tone, that it made them both start with surprise and astonishment; but lest my appearance, by remaining longer, should add to the terror of this worthy pair, I instantly escaped without being perceived.

Retiring from the interesting spot with more composure than I came to it, my meditations recalled to my memory the religious impressions with which I had once before been affected, in New York, on hearing the Reverend Bishop Habard preach in that city, and I lamented how easily they had been effaced by the guilty pleasures and criminal scenes in which I indulged on that occasion, to dissipate their effects. After walking the streets for some time in search of a resting place for the night, I happened to pass by the public offices, and finding the door open, I preferred the hard bed and miserable shelter which they might afford my

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The Confession of David Lewis The Noted Highwayman and Counterfeiter

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wearied body, to the damp and unwholesome air to which I must expose myself from lying on one side of the stalls in the open market-place. After placing my bundle on the bricks for a pillow, I laid down and soon fell into a sound and undisturbed sleep, from which I did not awake until my ears were assailed by loud crys of "Gliddy Glough, Gliddy Glough." I was not long in discovering that the sound came from a poor unfortunate maniac, of the name of Baggs, whom I had often seen in Carlisle and other places. I accosted him without apology, and saying, "George, be still," the inoffensive idiot immediately replied, "Oh yes, Bill," and without more ado retired to a corner of the entry, where he laid down and remained quiet until he fell asleep, much happier than hundreds who lie on beds of down under canopies of velvet. Notwithstanding my poor accommodations for rest, I rose at day-break much refreshed, and returned to the old haunt at East Pennsboro, where I rejoined Connelly, my companion in iniquity. We tarried here two days, and on the morning of the third commenced our journey to my mother's. The conversation that passed between us on the road chiefly related to matters connected with the course of life in which we had so long been engaged, and the impressions made on my mind by recent circumstances favoring a change of conduct growing weaker and weaker, I soon yielded with a willing mind to every suggestion and proposition that came from my dangerous companion. We now agreed to renew our old trade of robbery and plunder, and as guilt becomes bolder by repetition, we possessed a kind of factitious courage, bordering on despair, increased greatly by' the very circumstances of dangers we were in; conscious that having offended against the peace of society and the laws of our country, no prospect appeared of receiving another pardon unless Gov. Findley should be re-elected, of which even his former friends were no very doubtful.

On crossing the Juniata, an incident was brought to my recollection which I considered as a very unfortunate circumstance at the time it happened. It was as follows: Having got possession of a very large sum of money in notes of the Carlisle Bank, which I had procured in exchange for counterfeits. I carefully placed them in a curious envelope, made of an alligator's skin, tanned at Havana, which the unfortunate Joseph Hare, lately executed at Baltimore, had purchased at Pensacola, and gave me for a keepsake. On being pursued through the Tuscarora Mountains, I hid the skin with its contents under a large rock that projected over the river. During the spring freshet the rain had fallen in torrents, and the flood overflowing the bank, washed away the earth, and carried off the rock into the Juniata at least ten feet from its natural bed. Returning to the spot about three months after the freshet, I discovered the ravages of the flood, and though I searched the bank of the river and the water below with the greatest care, I was unable to find

either money or purse, an accident at which I grieved much at the time, not only for the loss of the notes as regarded myself, but it distressed me not a little to think any of the Governor's "litter" should profit so much by the disaster; unless, perchance, some fortunate waterman may have the good luck to discover it as he descends the river.

We moved on in this mood for some time, and determined not to risk much by petty thefts on the road, reserving all our skill and courage for greater exploits, more productive of gain, and at the same time as free from danger as enterprises of so daring a nature permitted. No opportunity for plunder happened for some time, and our hopes began to languish, when calling at a miserable grog shop, we overheard a conversation between the landlady and a stranger, the latter informing her that a wagon loaded with store goods belonging to Hamilton & Page, of Bellefonte, was expected shortly to pass. This animating intelligence raised our drooping spirits, and to increase our ardor for plunder, M'Guire, another of the gang, made his appearance at the door just as we were preparing to leave the house. Affecting to treat one another as strangers, and dissembling our knowledge of him and he of us, we took our departure, after giving a secret signal known only to the fraternity. We had proceeded but a short distance before we were overtaken by our old companion, and having communicated to him the information we got at the tavern, we concluded upon making another bold push to retrieve our fallen fortunes. To accomplish our views with more security we concerted the plan of robbing the wagon in the Seven Mountains, and accordingly proceeded to execute our purposes. The attempt was crowned with success, and the spoil divided between us. Elevated with our good luck and inflamed with liquor, we made another attempt to rob the store of Mr. James Potter, of Penn's Valley, the next morning; but though we commenced the operation before the break of day, and had the advantage of being armed with rifles, we were unexpectedly discovered, and dreading to encounter Mr. Potter and his family, whom I knew to be a brave and resolute man, we decamped on the first notice of a surprise without making any resistance.

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The Fulton County News, January 15, 1903

David Lewis The Noted Highwayman and Counterfeiter

(Continued from last week)

After this McGuire was dispatched to Bellefonte to reconnoiter and seek out safe and suitable objects of plunder. Assuming the appearance of a gentleman, he was dressed out in the best suit we could furnish, and in this character entered one of the shops with the pretended view of purchasing store goods, while his chief intention was to gain information and make his observation of the premises, particularly as to the manner of securing the store at night, and the vigilance or carelessness of the owner. Abandoning the project of a robbery by force, we now resolved to attain by stratagem what we dreaded to effect by violence. A new scheme was adopted: M'Guire was to return in the garb and character of a laborer, to procure employment, and after gaining admittance into the family as a domestic, he was to carry on a secret correspondence with us, and as soon as the plot was ripe for action, introduce us into the store

the first night the storekeeper might happen to be absent. But owing either to his imprudence or the sagacity of the storekeeper, he was suspected to be an impostor and refused employment.

On the return of M'Guire the news of his failure filled us with new terror, when we agreed to separate for a time, the better to avoid detection and elude the officers of justice. For several days I concealed myself in the most lonely places I could find in the vicinity of Bellefonte, and at night slept, or rather lay in the woods, under the most distressing feelings of fear and alarm. The least noise was sufficient to disturb me, and the dismal scream of the screech owl terrified my imagination with awful forebodings. One night, while I lay under a large oak, my thoughts were much engaged in meditating upon the forlorn condition to which I had brought myself by my imprudent and criminal conduct — sleep had forsaken my eyelids, and my waking attention was alive to every noise around me. The shaking of a tree, or the fall of a leaf produced agitation and trembling; thus I spent the night, anxious for the return of morning, and vainly expecting that the light of day, while it would dissipate the darkness that overspread the earth, might also remove the deep gloom that pervaded my mind. Alas! the sun shines only for the innocent and happy; and those who are not innocent and free from guilt can no more expect to find happiness either in this world or that to come, than they can look for sunshine in the midst of night, without disappointment. During the night I had heard a strange noise, not unlike the cracking of a horsewhip, and my mind dwelling on the recent circumstance of the robbery in the Seven Mountains, the alarm of conscience induced me to imagine that the noise proceeded from the whip of the plundered wagoner, who had come in pursuit of me. I jumped up and stood upon my feet, expecting every moment to see the wagoner in person, and feel the lash of his whip. The moon shed but a dim light through the thick foliage of the wood, obscuring my vision, and preventing me from seeing

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with distinctness even the nearest objects. I saw no human figure, heard no human voice, and concluded that the noise was nothing but the unreal creation of a disturbed imagination. After walking about for a few minutes, I returned to my resting place under the oak, and lay under its branches until the day dawned, when I awoke from a broken sleep of not more than half an hour's duration. The first noise that saluted my ears was a repetition of the same sound I had heard during the night; and again the poor wagoner appeared in full view to the eye of my affrighted fancy; but the terror of fancy can never equal the horror of reality. Instead of the wagoner and his whip, I perceived one of the most terrific objects that ever appalled the human sight. A tremendous snake with two heads lay within five feet of where I was, alternately jumping up from the ground, twisting and coiling itself and at intervals dashing its tail against the trunk of a hickory sapling. It ceased to move for an instant and darted at me the angry look of a swollen and distended eye. Horror transfixed me to the spot as fast as the oak near which I stood. Superstition, like fear, generally accompanies guilt, and I now believed the serpentine monster before me was nothing less than the devil, who had left the infernal abyss, and reappeared in the same form he had assumed when he tempted and deceived our first frail

parents in the garden of Eden. The design of his visit I considered to be for no other purpose than to carry me off with him to the lower regions, body and soul, as a just punishment for my manifold transgressions; and every other fear was swallowed up in the dreadful apprehension of being instantly devoured by the two-headed monster.

Notwithstanding the violence of terror which I now suffered, the impulse of self-preservation and the love of life restored me to a degree of recollection and composure sufficient to enable me to fly from the impending danger. I immediately assumed a desperate courage, and snatching up my rifle, fled with the utmost velocity the feet of man are capable of, just as this wonder of nature had resumed its occupation of striking its tail against the tree. I continued my flight for several miles, and did not cease running until exhausted nature called for rest. Having reached a safe hiding place, I concealed myself in the retreat until nightfall, when I expected the cloud of guilt-concealing darkness might afford greater security to my attempt to procure some food to relieve the pressing calls of hunger. Wandering about from farm to farm, I happened to espy a smoking oven, and seizing a favorable opportunity, when a negro wench, who had been ordered to watch the oven, had fallen asleep, I opened the mouth and stole a loaf of half-baked bread, the sweetest morsel I had eaten in my life, as long fasting and want of sleep had given a keen appetite to my empty stomach. After securing in my handkerchief the remains of the loaf, I ascended to the top of a large hay barrack, and lay there till morning, enjoying as composed a sleep as it was possible for one to do, suffering the same effects from an affrighted imagination, which I experienced from recent scenes of terror and horror. I know my relation of this incident may be considered by many too wonderful for belief, but I assure the reader on the word of a dying man, that I am within the bounds of truth when I say that the snake of which I have just spoken would have measured at least twenty feet in length, and had two heads and two tails, one of the tails appearing to come out of the mouth of the other, with two large frightful eyes in each head.

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The Fulton County News, January 22, 1903

David Lewis The Noted Highwayman and Counterfeiter

(Continued from last week)

Before the separation of my companions, we had previously agreed upon meeting together at the Bald Eagle. I found them there waiting for me with impatient anxiety, and after accounting for my detention we stole a canoe, and proceeded in it until within a short distance of the Big Island. Here we put to shore, and wearied with carrying our stolen burdens, we burned a part of the goods of Messrs. Hammond & Page. The smell drawing some persons to the spot, a discovery took place, which ended in the arrest of M'Guire. Connelly and I now separated to wander in the adjacent hills, each taking his rifle, and fixing on the plan of firing and whistling as the signal for finding one another. The next morning we crossed the river, got our breakfast, and run some bullets at a house close by; we now started for the Sinnemahoning, and reached the junction of Bennet's and the Driftwood Branch; proceeding thence up the Driftwood Branch, we arrived in the afternoon at the house of Samuel Smith, and stopped to shoot at a mark with some persons who happened to be there. While engaged in this sport, a number of persons hove in sight, and

recognizing Connelly and me, they demanded our immediate surrender, observing that if we surrendered peaceably we should be well used. Connelly swore a terrible oath, that sooner than do so he would "blow them all to hell." Having determined never to deprive a fellow being of life, except in necessary defense, I was reduced to the painful alternative of being overpowered by numbers, or shoot at them to save myself. Seizing a gun I snapped it twice, firing at random, but luckily it did not go off. At the same moment Connelly fired his, aiming point blank at one of the party in pursuit. Having procured another gun, I fired it also, without aiming at any one in particular. The fire was quickly returned by the party, when another request was made for our surrender. We now perceived that all hopes of escape were cut off, and actuated by a false spirit of revenge, we uttered the most improper threats of defiance, and called aloud for them to fire away, discharging our guns at the same time. The fire was immediately answered with a volley from the assailants; Connelly escaped the shots, but I was wounded in the right arm, a little above the wrist, and fell. Connelly started and run, but as he retreated through a grain field over the creek, he was fired at, and afterwards was found hid in a tree top, with a severe wound in his groin, immediately below the belly, the bullet penetrating the left side and descending had come out at the outside of the right thigh.

Having dressed our wounds with all the skill and care they were capable of, the party who took us purchased a canoe, and prepared to move us down the river, and on Sunday, the 3d of July, landed near the Big Island, in Lycoming county. We were then taken to Carskadden's tavern, and attended by three physicians and a minister of the gospel. My unhappy companion, receiving no assistance from medical aid, and no comfort from the ministerial offices of religion, died that night in gloomy sullenness. Peace to his ashes. Though the period allowed for repentance was short, may the mercy of God be greater than his repentance, and forgive all his sins and all his crimes.

I was removed to this place as soon as my wound permitted, and with as much tenderness and humanity as the nature of the case allowed of.

I have now brought the history of my adventures to a close, having given as faithful a relation of the more important incidents of my life as my memory enables

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me to recollect in my present distracted state of mind, and suffering condition of bodily pain. I have been thus particular to gratify the wish of a near and dear friend, who has always taken the greatest interest in my fate, attended me frequently in my illness, and who has promised to remain the friend of my wife, whom a few days more will make a widow, and the father of my children, soon to become the orphans of charity without his protecting care. In addition to my anxiety to oblige one who was my friend in adversity, I have been induced to undergo the painful task of making this confession, with the hope and belief that the publication of my unhappy case may be useful, not only to my surviving companions, and to society in general, but more

especially to youth of the rising generation; operating as a solemn warning to old and young against indulging in the same wicked practices which have distinguished my unhappy life, and brought ruin on myself, and disgrace upon my family and connections.

The ways of sin can have no pleasure in them. If every robber and criminal found as little satisfaction in following the pursuits of vice as I have done, he must confess their insufficiency to obtain happiness, or even a common share of tranquility. During the day I have felt as if the eyes of all men were upon me, and at night was under a constant dread of secret apprehension.

Alas ! the only little happiness I ever tasted was in the bosom of my family, and in the society of my wife. When, after a guilty round of crime and dissipation, I have returned to the little room that contained my beloved Melinda, "the calm abode of humble virtue," and found her engaged in the concerns of domestic industry — when I have entered by surprise and perceived her, unseen, sitting at the wheel, and heard her singing the old song of " Bess and her Spinning Wheel," I have been overpowered with feelings of delight, and shed tears of joy.

Although I deeply lament my second marriage, and blame myself for involving an amiable stranger in distress and misfortune, I pray for her forgiveness, and hope she will continue the mother and guardian of my little girls, whose tender years will require all her care and all her instruction to raise them up in virtue and industry. When I last saw them they promised to be as beautiful as the daughters of Job; should they be as virtuous as their lovely namesakes, I shall not have lived altogether in vain, but may be honored after my death in the honors paid to them, and have the disgraceful end of an ignominious life washed away by the virtuous offspring of my Jemima and Keziah.

Philadelphia, in my opinion, is by no means a good place to bring up a family. There are fewer snares and less temptations in the country than in the city; under this impression, I recommend it to my wife to return to Fayette, as soon as she can make the necessary arrangements for a removal of herself and children.

While I have been in jail, I have received every attention due to one in rare situation, not only from the physicians of the town, but the ladies and gentlemen generally; and to Sheriff Mitchell and his excellent lady I should be most ungrateful indeed if I did not express my thanks for the many kind offices of humanity and benevolence they continued to bestow on me from the first day of my lodgment in jail. The jailer and his family have been equally kind and good; and I die at peace with all men.

The party who pursued and took me I sincerely forgive for being the instrument of my death. Acting under the authority of the law, they performed only their duty as good citizens, and have set an example worthy of imitation, in risking their own lives to save society and liberate the country from the depredations and terrors of a desperate band of robbers, counterfeiters and outlaws.

To the amiable minister who visited me in jail, and prayed for me and with me, when I lay on my miserable pallet, looking with fear and trembling in awful suspense for the approach of death, I return the unfeigned thanks of an oppressed sinner, for his frequent intercessions at the throne of

grace in my behalf. And you, my kind friend, who have promised to remain with me and close my eyes, accept my grateful acknowledgments for all you have done for me, and when you have seen me laid with decency in the grave, bear to my mother the last token of remembrance she will ever receive from her dying son — a small lock of hair, cut with his own hand from the head of the unfortunate, but repentant . - Bellefonte Jail, 12th July, 1820. David Lewis.