

IN THE COUNTRY.

new hauling in the buckwheat from the field upon the hill the swollen stream is roaring the dam above the mill! The ripened nuts are falling And the hungry peacock's calling the breakfast that the gander grabbed away! While the squabblers gayly chatter As if nothing were the matter, And the gobbler's getting fatter Every day.

IS, THE ROBBER AND OUTLAW.

History and Romance.

Following paper was read before the Kitchestown Historical Society, Franklin county, by Joshua R. Ropes, Esq., during a session at the residence of Mr. James W. Chambersburg, and published in the Opinion. A romantic interest centre around the name of the Robber, and we feel confident that the republication of the following will gratify the many readers of the FULTON COUNTY NEWS: Lewis carried on his operations in much the same manner. He was not only a robber but a successful counterfeiter as well. While he pursued his advocacy for a short time in New York City and State and stopped a few days at Princeton College to breathe in that classical atmosphere and fill out his purse, the greater part of his operations were confined to the Cumberland Valley, and the territory lying between and including Somerset, Centre and Mifflin counties. This was a mountainous region, sparsely settled, wild and rugged and with its caves, rocks, dense thickets and underbrush abounded in hiding places. Lewis knew intimately this whole region, and his favorite hiding places in the mountain fastnesses and was on terms of intimacy with many of the simple-minded mountaineers, who looked upon him as their friend and entitled to their protection. They warned him when danger threatened and the officers of the law were hot upon his trail and fed him when in hiding. Lewis was of athletic build, muscular and possessed of great agility; was skilled in woodcraft, shrewd, quick-witted and resourceful; was inured to danger, hardship and exposure and, accustomed to being hunted, his faculties and senses were trained to baffle his pursuers. Possessing these traits, combined with a wonderful endurance, it was a difficult matter to run him down when he once entered the mountains to escape pursuit. His capture was effected several times but when he was entirely off his guard, except on the occasion of his last capture. The history of Lewis is fragmentary in character. It is composed of tradition and his own confession and both are unsatisfactory. Tradition lacks authenticity and his confession was made while lying in jail awaiting death, from a wound he had received a few days before, in the attempt to escape from being captured. Of necessity, the confession was made hurriedly and under the constraint and fear of death. Under these conditions his memory would forget many things and incidents and his confession therefore lacks fullness and completeness and omits much of his life. David Lewis was born in Carlisle, Cumberland county, Pennsylvania, on the 4th of March, 1790. His parents were poor but respectable and he came of good family connections. His father, soon after his birth, removed to Northumberland county, where he was appointed Deputy District Surveyor, but lived only a few years and died leaving a widow with a large family of children and no means for their support. Lewis states in his confessions that he grew up illiterate and worked among the farmers. Tradition says that before he started in his career of crime Lewis taught school in the lower end of Cumberland county and some very respectable citizens said they went to school to him

him they desisted from their diabolical purpose. It was also the boast of Lewis that he took only from the rich and gave to the poor—"that he was not a robber but an equalizer." There are instances related of his generosity to the needy; sympathy for the distressed and of his responding to the claims of friendship and of gratitude. Lewis has been compared to Rob Roy, the great Scottish outlaw, out of whose deeds and life Sir Walter Scott has woven such an interesting story. This comparison is not without force. Physically they possessed the same characteristic which lends color to the doctrine of predestination. As they were destined to be robbers a long reach would be an advantage and it is related that standing erect, the arms of each were so long that the hands reached to the knees. Rob Roy also avoided cruelty and unnecessary bloodshed. It is said of him that "he was a kind and gentle robber, and while he took from the rich was liberal in relieving the poor." This character gave him the sympathy and aid of many of the Highlanders. Knowing perfectly the region in which he operated, when pursued Roy would retreat into the inextricable passes, morasses and natural strengths of the Highlands, where he could not be followed. Lewis carried on his operations in much the same manner. He was not only a robber but a successful counterfeiter as well. While he pursued his advocacy for a short time in New York City and State and stopped a few days at Princeton College to breathe in that classical atmosphere and fill out his purse, the greater part of his operations were confined to the Cumberland Valley, and the territory lying between and including Somerset, Centre and Mifflin counties. This was a mountainous region, sparsely settled, wild and rugged and with its caves, rocks, dense thickets and underbrush abounded in hiding places. Lewis knew intimately this whole region, and his favorite hiding places in the mountain fastnesses and was on terms of intimacy with many of the simple-minded mountaineers, who looked upon him as their friend and entitled to their protection. They warned him when danger threatened and the officers of the law were hot upon his trail and fed him when in hiding. Lewis was of athletic build, muscular and possessed of great agility; was skilled in woodcraft, shrewd, quick-witted and resourceful; was inured to danger, hardship and exposure and, accustomed to being hunted, his faculties and senses were trained to baffle his pursuers. Possessing these traits, combined with a wonderful endurance, it was a difficult matter to run him down when he once entered the mountains to escape pursuit. His capture was effected several times but when he was entirely off his guard, except on the occasion of his last capture. The history of Lewis is fragmentary in character. It is composed of tradition and his own confession and both are unsatisfactory. Tradition lacks authenticity and his confession was made while lying in jail awaiting death, from a wound he had received a few days before, in the attempt to escape from being captured. Of necessity, the confession was made hurriedly and under the constraint and fear of death. Under these conditions his memory would forget many things and incidents and his confession therefore lacks fullness and completeness and omits much of his life. David Lewis was born in Carlisle, Cumberland county, Pennsylvania, on the 4th of March, 1790. His parents were poor but respectable and he came of good family connections. His father, soon after his birth, removed to Northumberland county, where he was appointed Deputy District Surveyor, but lived only a few years and died leaving a widow with a large family of children and no means for their support. Lewis states in his confessions that he grew up illiterate and worked among the farmers. Tradition says that before he started in his career of crime Lewis taught school in the lower end of Cumberland county and some very respectable citizens said they went to school to him

and that he was an excellent teacher and a gentleman in his manners. The various roles he assumed and his success in them would require a man of considerable ability, one who had knowledge of the usages of society, a certain air of refinement, self-poise and possession and a ready and pleasing address. His observations on political questions and criticism on the prevalent corruption and extortion of office holders, his advocacy of the free school system to prevent illiteracy, to which he attributed the source of much crime; and his opinions and views on many of the current questions of the day would indicate that he had some educational advantages before he started on his career of crime. At the age of seventeen Lewis states that he ceased to work for the neighboring farmers and trying several occupations finally enlisted in the United States Army. He committed some petty offence and as the sergeant wanted him "Cobbed for it" he decided to "Jump the service." Some months afterwards he enlisted in Capt. Wm. Irvine's Company of United States Light Artillery, at Carlisle, with the object in view of getting the bounty and again deserting. He had tasted of the pleasures of sin and dissipation and wanted the money to gratify his vicious appetite. This was his first step in crime and had he not stopped on the threshold—looked over the abyss and have seen the end the course of life he had entered upon would bring him to—ignominy and death in a felon's cell—he might have hesitated for "We are not worst at once; the course begins so slowly, and from such slight source An infant's hand might stem the breach with clay. But let the stream grow wider, and philosophy, Age, and religion too, may strive in vain To stem the headlong current." But Lewis was thwarted in his purposes and tiring of the service, he concluded to try the "quirks and quibbles of law," and gain his discharge by reason of his being a minor. The "quirks and quibbles of law" played him a sorry prank, however, for it not only refused to release him but discovered his identity and the fact that he was a deserter. A general court martial was ordered at the Carlisle Barracks to try him on the charges of desertion and double enlistment. He was found guilty and his first offense came near being his last for he was sentenced to be shot. Apparently he did not much relish the sentence or receive it with perfect equanimity for in his confession he says "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." His mother came on to Carlisle from Center county, Judge Walker having loaned her his horse and written letters to some of his friends in Carlisle to interest themselves in the case of Lewis. Eventually after much effort, he was relieved and his sentence committed to imprisonment. He was then thrown into the guard house, fettered and chained. After the end of a week the irons were all taken off save a heavy chain, which was fastened to his ankle and to which was attached a cannon ball weighing between thirty and forty pounds. By the aid of a barlow knife which he had hacked on the bars of his window, he sawed the chain and, eluding the guard by strategy, escaped. He fled to a large cave on the banks of the Conodoguinet, a mile and a half from Carlisle, and entering it about sundown remained until near midnight, when he began his journey across the mountains and safely reached the home of his mother in Center county after experiencing, as he expressed it, "many a hungry belly and sleepless night." He remained with his mother for some time and had inclinations towards a better life, but these never got so far as to bear

any fruit. He went occasionally to the taverns in Bellefonte for sport and amusement and finally concluded to embark in the career of crime, which ended only with his death. The reason that induced him to do this is stated by him in his confession as follows: "I here discovered through the medium of the newspapers and other sources of information, that the people of the interior had resolved to establish county 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 extensive schemes of fraud on the ignorant and weak part of the community. About this time he met one of those tin peddlers or Yankee Cart Men, running all over the country at that time to deceive and defraud the unwary, who showed him a quantity of counterfeit bank bills which he had obtained at Burlington, Vermont. He was persuaded to accompany the tin peddler to Burlington. He was introduced to this manufacturing association, initiated into all its mysteries and became skilled in making counterfeit bills—a knowledge that he made good use of in after years. He then made his first attempt to pass counterfeit money but found the Vermontese soil of credulity too difficult for him, a green hand, to cultivate and he shifted to a more promising soil and went to work New York and Pennsylvania. I will give his reason for this selection in his own words to avoid having my veracity impugned by Mr. Foltz or Mr. Maurer. "I knew that in the latter State (Pennsylvania) 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 State he met with success and became so confident and bold that he laid caution aside and found himself landed in the jail at Troy for passing counterfeit bills. It occurred in this way. He had met a Gen. Root who was on an electioneering campaign. He invited Lewis to drink a bottle of wine with him to the success of his candidate, Gov. Thompkins. Lewis fancied and then bought one of Root's horses and paid him principally in Burlington notes. Not expecting detection so soon Lewis retired for the night in snug quarters. Root attempting to pass one of these Burlington notes the same evening, was arrested and being a stranger would have been committed for trial had not a citizen witnessed the sale and gone his bail. Lewis was found after a diligent search and lodged in jail. His escape from the jail was unique. While in the jail he noticed a young woman from the house opposite, gazing frequently at him through the barred window and was apparently deeply interested in him. She was a friend of the jailer's daughter and, through her, an arrangement was made by which the young woman met him in his cell. He pretended to her that his arrest was an outrage, as he was entirely innocent of the charge and that it had been made by Root out of revenge, as he had refused to support his candidate. She believed his story, as a matter of course, and a feeling of pity for him first took possession of her, and as he was handsome and plausible, winning and pleasing, this feeling soon developed into a violent case of love. Quick to see an advantage and to seize it, he saw in this young woman's devoted affection for him an opportunity of escape. He became engaged to her, and together they worked on the feelings and sympathy of the jailer's daughter to such an extent that the young girl promised to aid him to escape. The opportunity presented itself. One Sunday evening the jailer and all of his family, save this daughter, and most of the town people went to church to hear a new minister. The daughter brought the usual evening meal into his cell and went out, forgetting inadvertently of course, (?) to lock the door. Lewis quickly left his cell and joined the young woman, to whom he had pledged his love, at a corner of a street and together they set out for Albany—he to win freedom and a bride-

she to gain her heart's choice but to lose mother, home, friends and become an outlaw's wife. They realized the gravity of the situation and the dangers that beset the successful carrying out of their plans. There were two incentives to a diligent search—an escaped prisoner to be re-captured and an erring daughter to be reclaimed. It tested all the resources and tact of this young criminal to land both prizes—his freedom and his bride. He was in a strange country and the young girl, but seventeen, at times was overcome by remorse at leaving home and, unused to travel, became footsore and weary. This scene, enacted that night in the darkness on some lonely by-road, shows some of the obstacles that he had to meet, and it is described by Lewis: "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 suddenly, burst into tears, threw off her bonnet, tore her hair, and uttered the most frantic expressions, exclaiming repeatedly, O my mother, my poor mother, what will become of my poor mother!" Finally she recovered in part her composure and they continued to travel for some hours further when, her feet becoming blistered and she utterly exhausted, they stopped in an outbuilding. She slept for four hours on a pallet of straw he had gathered from an adjoining stack, and awoke greatly refreshed. At daylight they resumed their journey and at a slow gait and, following circuitous roads and unfrequented paths, reached Albany safely in the evening. Lewis immediately went for a minister and they were married that evening. As a fee, for the service rendered, Lewis, by mistake handed the minister a ten dollar Burlington bill, but, fortunately for the minister's wife, he considered the fee too large for one in Lewis' apparent circumstances and declined to take it, when Lewis gave him two dollars in silver coin. The next day Lewis revealed to his wife, in part his true character, but kept concealed from her his most criminal deeds. The information imparted by him was a great shock and source of grief to her. Lewis entertained the greatest respect for his wife, Melinda by name, and often lamented the fact that she was wedded to one who was so unworthy of her. In his confession he says, "The fact is, I entertained for Melinda as pure a passion as ever warmed the breast of man, the lovely girl had not only 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." She died in Philadelphia, leaving two children, while her bandit husband was in the mountains of Pennsylvania, remaining faithful to him to the end. He subsequently re-married and the second wife survived him.

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