

When the threat was made he had a premonition of what was about to happen. He knew that the parties who had murdered the others would find a time and place to carry out their threats toward his father. Therefore he began the onslaught instead of assuming the defensive. The first act that compromised Tom Starr and outlined his desperate career was the killing of David Buffington. A number of people had assembled to witness a foot-race between a white man named Frank Marrs and a negro, the property of one of the Johnsons. Angry words were exchanged between Buffington and Starr relative to the political troubles of the time, which ended in a duel between them. The former used a pistol, the latter a long knife. Starr, being quick as lightning in his movements, succeeded in stabbing his opponent fatally before the other had time to use his pistol with effect, and David Buffington was slain. From that time forward Tom Starr became an outlaw, on the scout from place to place, and rarely sleeping beneath a roof for months at a time. His father was murdered soon afterward, and this fact only tended to render the young man more reckless, for he determined to slay every Ross man that he met with to whom he could attribute any enmity toward his father while alive, or any share in his subsequent death. Tom had, no doubt, many warm friends among the Ridge party, to whom he could occasionally look for shelter, but he rarely trespassed upon the privacy or exclusiveness of anybody; he was outlawed by the party in power, and he accepted the inevitable. He was not very long on the scout before he was joined by several white men who, like himself, were fugitives from justice. But a more daring outlaw than Tom Starr never existed since the days of Robin Hood. While the enemy was hot upon his trail he would occasionally stop at a house and eat a hurried meal, leaving instructions if anybody should inquire for him, to put the pursuers directly on his trail and furnish them with the correct time that he had taken his departure, adding, further,