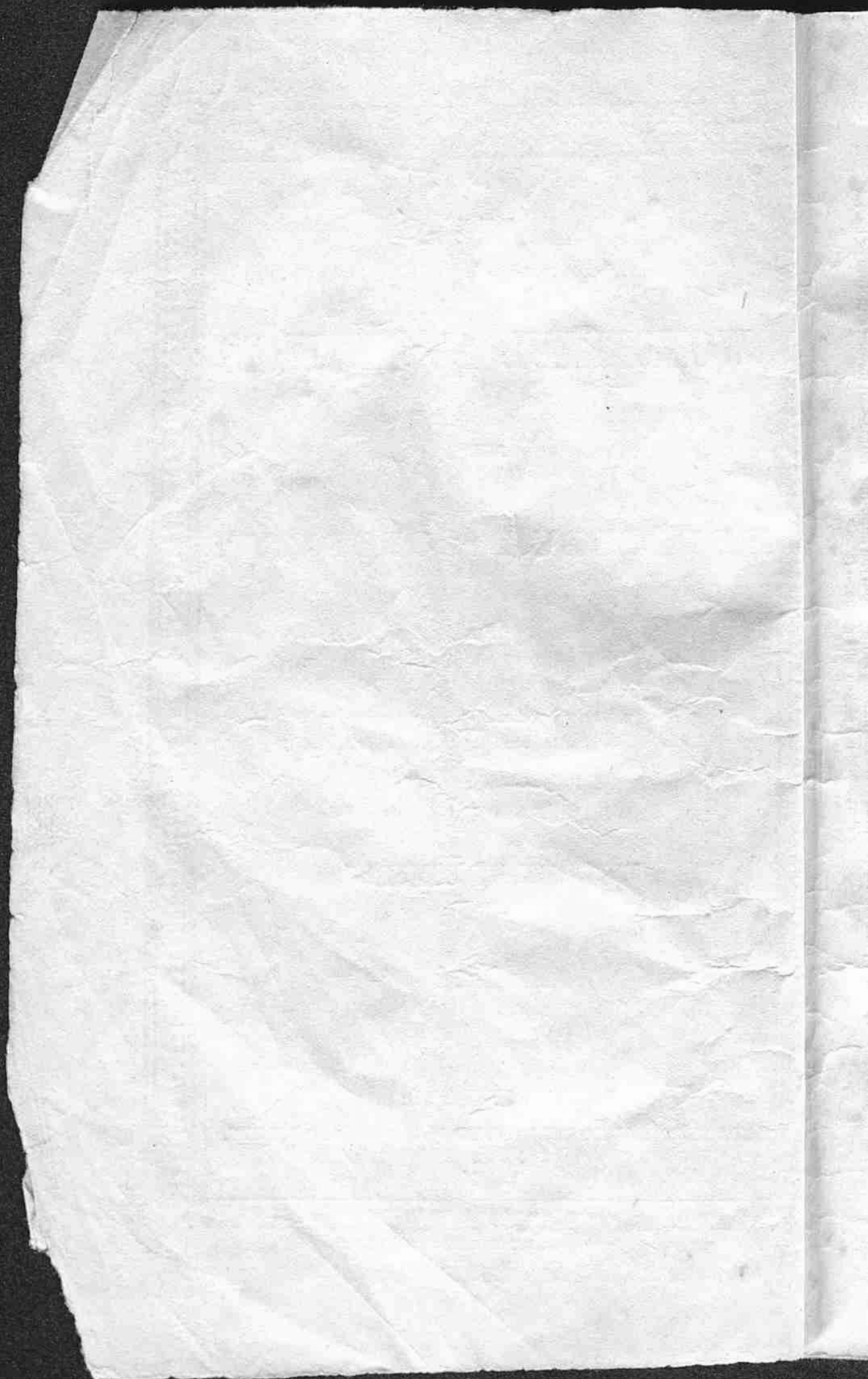


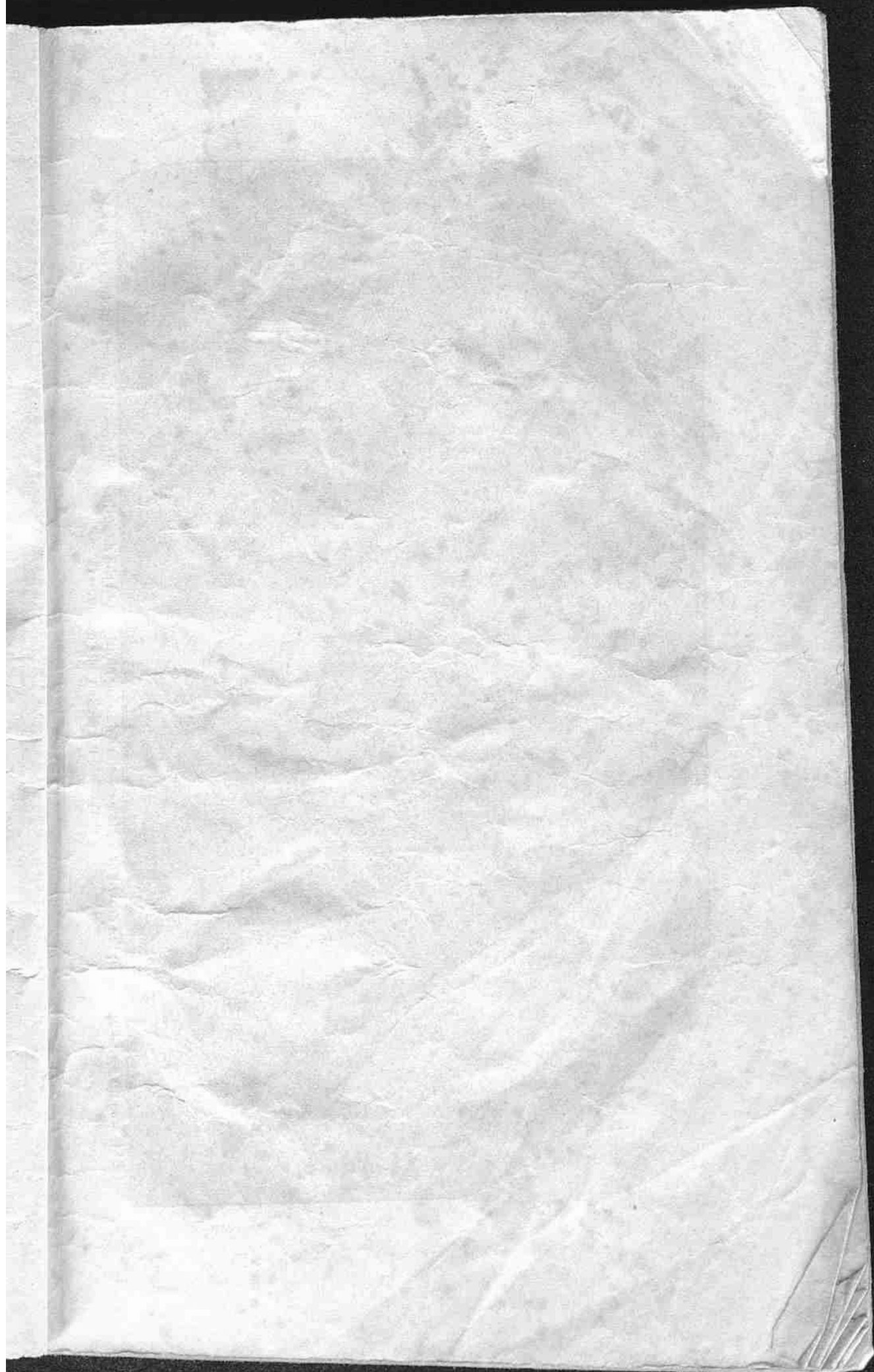
THE
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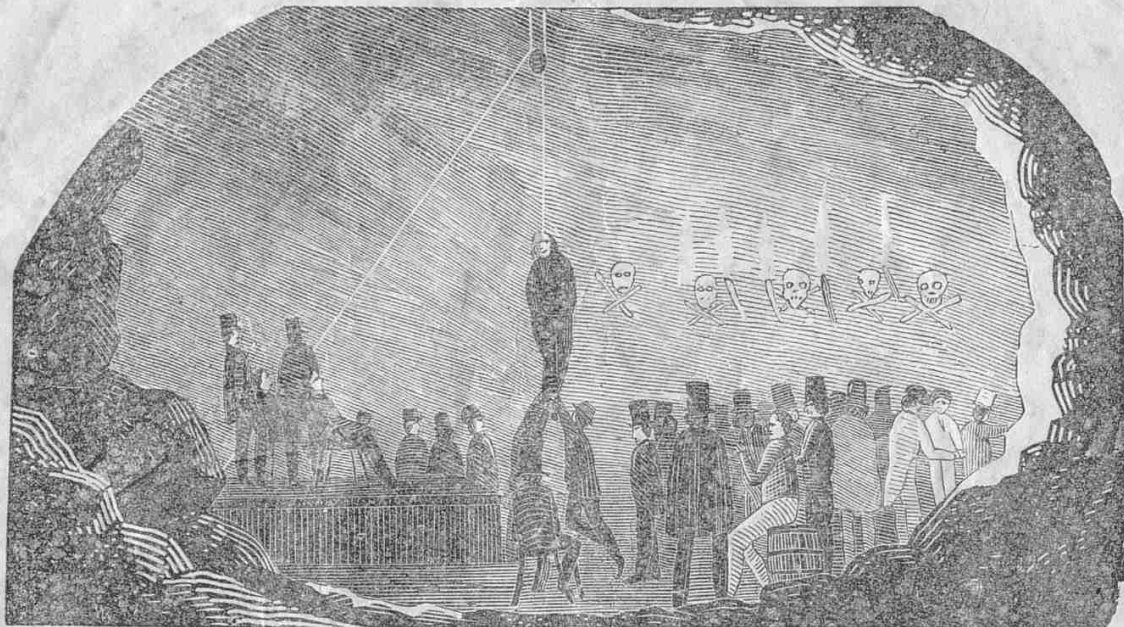
WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

CINCINNATI:
PUBLISHED BY H. M. RULISON, NO. 34, EAST THIRD STREET.
1852.

Price 15 Cents.







Oh! it was an awful spectacle; the crowd of outlaws,—the grinning skulls—and the dangling traitor—all formed a picture of horror that made me sicken as I gazed.—f.

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"Quick as thought he produced a small pocket-pistol, and ere I had time to restrain him, he leveled it and fired."—Page 30.



Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1852, by
H. M. RULISON,
In the Clerk's Office of the District Court for the District of Ohio.

HORRIBLE DISCLOSURES

OF A

P O L I C E M A N .

I WAS sitting one day in my office, in Louisville, Kentucky, when a pale, fair, good-looking youth, apparently about eighteen or twenty years of age, entered, and after closing the door and glancing around the apartment, said:

"I wish to speak with Mr. Isaac Baldwin."

"My name, Sir," I replied.

"Are we alone?" inquired the stranger.

"We are," I answered; "you see there is no one present but ourselves."

"You are sure we cannot be overheard? for I have a great secret to communicate, which must be private and confidential."

"Take a seat," I answered, "speak low, and I will guarantee that no one hears you but myself."

The youth sat down, and for a few moments seemed to be laboring under great excitement, united with embarrassment. I watched him closely, for there was something so singular in his manner, that I felt great curiosity to learn what matter of importance he had to communicate, requiring so much secrecy. I noticed that his bosom rose and fell like one panting from exertion, and that large beads of perspiration stood on his forehead; all indicating a mind ill at ease.

"Mr. Baldwin," he said, at length, in a tone that quavered in spite of his efforts to appear calm and composed: "Mr. Baldwin, personally we are strangers, but I have more than once heard of you as a brave, daring, and noble-minded man."

I bowed to the compliment, and after a slight pause, he proceeded.

"I, Sir, am about to trust you with a secret that will place my life at your disposal; and, after this avowal, you will not, of course, be surprised at my hesitation."

"Whatever you may see proper to communicate," I replied, "I assure you it shall be strictly confidential."

My words and manner seemed to reassure him, and he continued:

"You, Sir, as I have reason to know, have been for many years a constable in this city; and, during that time, have been a great terror to evil doers. I am about to make a revelation that will startle you, and then ask your assistance to rid the country of a terrible gang of freebooters."

"Go on," said I, becoming greatly interested in the young stranger, and anxious to be master of his secret.

"I will begin," he pursued, "by telling you what you already know; that horses are every day stolen, and the thieves are never detected; houses are set on fire, and consumed, and no one suspects the incendiaries; men are knocked down in your streets, and on the highways, robbed, and sometimes murdered, and the robbers and murderers escape; and lastly, that the country is flooded with counterfeits and spurious coin, while the counterfeiters are suffered to run at large: all this, Sir, you know."

"I do," was my reply, "and I know it to my sorrow."

"Well, Sir, what say you, if I put you in possession of facts that will lead to the detection of all these villains, these pests of society?"

"I will say," I answered, "that you will be doing society a great service, and that you will entitle yourself to a liberal reward."

"I seek no other reward than *revenge*, dark, bloody, and terrible;" a fearful expression sweeping over his pale, handsome features. "Yes sir, you shall know all, and then I will have that vengeance on these miscreants, which they little think me capable of obtaining. Know then, Sir, that I myself am one of this gang, or rather *was*, for I have renounced, and am now about to denounce and betray them."

"You!" I cried, in perfect astonishment; "you, a mere youth,

a beardless boy, are you so steeped in crime as to belong to a band of cut-throats, thieves, incendiaries, and highway robbers?"

"Yes," replied my strange companion, a dark, scornful smile curling his thin lips, while his black eyes, as he fixed them upon me, assumed a singular expression: "yes, Mr. Baldwin, I *did* belong to them, but I do not any longer; you forget, Sir, that my business here is to betray them into the hands of justice."

"True, true; pray proceed."

"Neither am I so young as you suspect," replied the other, "and as to my being a beardless boy, perhaps I shall astonish you by saying, I am no boy at all."

"How!" cried I, fairly starting from my seat in surprise; "you are then——"

"Yes Sir," interrupted the other, "I am a *woman* in male disguise."

"Madam," said I, "I am all amazement—I did not even suspect your sex—pray go on."

My singular guest proceeded with her story, and it was more than an hour before she concluded. I shall not here repeat her communication, for the reader will be made acquainted with all the details, in the narrative of my own perilous adventures, resulting therefrom. I will merely state, for convenience, that she gave her name as Elvira Wilston; but said, moreover, that while she remained in male attire, I must remember to address her as Clarence Wilburton.

To carry out her plan of breaking up this formidable banditti, it was necessary for me to so disguise myself, that even my most intimate friend would not recognize me in broad daylight, and thus proceed to the grand rendezvous of the robbers, and join their fraternity. I am not a coward by nature, but I must confess this proposition startled me, and made me hesitate. By doing as this young stranger advised, I would place my life entirely at her disposal, and have no assurance, beside the unsupported word of one who acknowledged herself connected with cut-throats and robbers, that the whole plan was not a well laid scheme to put me out of the way. I knew, too, that all the characters belonging to that class of which she professed to be a member, hated me, and that

nothing would give them greater pleasure than to get me in their power, where I could be silenced without danger to themselves. And, even if she were really in earnest, as I believed, she might at any moment change her mind, and betray me; beside, a thousand events might happen to lead to my detection, which would certainly be followed by instant death.

But notwithstanding all the danger I pictured to myself, I soon decided on making the trial, be the consequences what they might; for imminent peril always possessed a charm for me, which, through my long, eventful life, I have never found myself able to resist. I informed Elvira of my decision, and she seemed wild with delight. Her face flushed, her eyes flashed, and her bosom heaved, as she exclaimed, through her set teeth, with hissing passion:

“Now will I have my revenge! now shall they feel the consequences of insulting me! The very worm that is trod on will turn; the meekest lamb may be goaded into a fiery, relentless tigress!”

During the day I called on some half a dozen officers, made them acquainted with my design, requested their co-operation, and then prepared to set out on my perilous mission. I took leave of my family about dark, telling them I might be absent several days, but thought best to conceal from them whither I was going, and for what purpose. I controlled my feelings, and parted from them in a cheerful manner, though, at heart, I suffered the most intense anguish; for I thought that in all probability, I should never behold them again. I then repaired to my office, put on my disguise, and awaited the arrival of Elvira, who had agreed to meet me there at eight o'clock in the evening. She came, punctual to the hour. I was seated when she came in, and purposely stared at her, as if she were a stranger, in order to see if she would penetrate my disguise. She looked at me hard, for a moment or two, and then, without any show of recognition, inquired for Mr. Baldwin.

“He'll be in directly,” I replied, gruffly.

She took a seat, to await his return.

“What's your business with Mr. Baldwin?” I inquired, in the same gruff tone, looking fixedly at her.

“That, I suppose, I am at liberty to communicate to the gentleman himself,” she replied, tartly, her face flushing with anger.

"Then why don't you speak, boy? I rejoined; "my name's Baldwin."

She looked at me closely, and scrutinizingly, for a few moments, as if she thought it possible it might be myself in disguise; but her reply satisfied me I had nothing to fear in this respect.

"It is Mr. *Isaac* Baldwin I wish to see," she said, with a scornful smile.

I laughed outright. "Well, Elvira," I rejoined, "if you play your part as well as I shall mine, and do not betray me, I think our plan will succeed."

She was thunderstruck; and it was some time, even then, ere I could convince her of my identity; but when I at last succeeded, she was delighted beyond measure, and assured me that even my wife and mother would pass me in broad daylight, without the remotest idea they had ever seen me before.

There was a boat to leave at nine, bound for the south, and to this we now repaired. I shall not touch on the incidents of our river voyage, as these have nothing to do with my story. Suffice it to say, therefore, that on the evening of the second day, we were landed, on the Kentucky side of the river, a few miles below Paducah, and something less than fifty above the mouth of the Ohio.

"We are now," said my strange guide, "in the territory of the freebooters, and it behooves us both to play our parts well. Remember all the signs and passwords I have communicated, and follow my instructions to the letter."

There were no signs of habitation where we landed, except a solitary house; an old, dilapidated, gloomy-looking structure, which stood on a steep, rocky bluff, whose base was washed by the Ohio.

"That is one of the haunts of these desperadoes," said Elvira, in a whisper, as she pointed toward it; "many a benighted traveler has found that old structure the end of his earthly journey."

"Murdered," whispered I, with a cold shudder.

"Ay, Sir, murdered is the word; and his body sunk deep in the waters that roll below. But come, let us hasten forward!"

"Surely, not there," I said, shrinking back with a feeling of horror.

“We must pass the night there,” was the calm reply. “You are not afraid?”

“Oh no, not in the least,” I replied, forcing a laugh, and quickening my pace, though my hair seemed to stand on end, and cold, clammy sweat, stood in beads on my forehead. “Is the house inhabited?” I inquired.

“Yes, or I would not go there; but you have nothing to fear if you follow my instructions. Remember, your name is Tom Hurdie, and that you have been to the north and east, for a year or so, *sowing the rhino*, or, in other words, *passing counterfeit money*. You will probably meet some of the gang there, and you must swagger and blow with the best of them.”

“But will they not suspect I do not belong to them?”

“No, for the signs and passwords will deceive them. Beside, those you will meet there are the *under-workers*: none except the Captain, Lieutenant, and one or two others, know the faces and number of those belonging to the band; these you will not be likely to see, as it is a very rare thing they stop here. And should anything chance to occur of a horrible nature, you must act with the indifference of one accustomed to scenes of violence and bloodshed.”

“Heavens! you do not mean that I shall look tamely on, and see a fellow-being murdered?”

“Yes, if necessary; for it is only by being calm, and noting close, that we shall be able to succeed in our design. It is not on these mere tools I wish to take revenge, but on their principals; and as the latter are men moving in the first circles of society, rich, highly-respected, and even members of the church, we can only convict them through their tools, and must necessarily understand all the ramifications of their diabolical league.”

“But a word—Will there be any here that know you?”

“I think not—I hope not. None at least ever saw me in this disguise; and, as Clarence Wilburton, I hope to pass as one of your sex.”

Arrived at the door, my companion knocked, and a gruff voice said, “Come in.”

We entered a low, dingy, ill-lighted apartment, and beheld two

persons; a swarthy, low-browed, villanous-looking man, of about forty, and a female about the same age, who in every respect seemed a fit companion. These were the host and hostess. We both walked up to the man, took his hand, pressed his knuckles with our thumbs, drew our hands across our throats, and said:

"Life is dear, and money scarce."

"Ha! you belong to us!" he replied, with a show of cordiality. "We've more friends here."

He gave a peculiar whistle as he spoke; and from an adjoining room, entered six stout, villanous cut-throats, whose hands I likewise had the *pleasure* of shaking, as the host introduced each by name, he having first learned ours.

"We then entered into general conversation, which was kept up for more than an hour, during which, I told such stories of myself and exploits, as I thought proper, and got from them many important secrets concerning themselves, the band, their leaders, etc.

Among other things of importance, I learned that the second night following, there was to be a meeting of the band, at their cave, or rendezvous, and that it was expected the leaders would be present. This intelligence so delighted Elvira, that she found it difficult to restrain her joy within proper bounds. It was in the hope of some such meeting, that she had brought me hither at this time; though the precise time of the meeting, she did not before know.

"You must set out for this rendezvous to-morrow," she said to me, in a whisper, as soon as we could manage to have a little conversation aside. "Yes, you must start for this rendezvous, and I will be your guide most of the way. You must be present at that meeting, for *they* will be there, and it is important that you see them. And now," she added, with a look that expressed more than her words, "you must not sleep too soundly to-night, but have an eye to what is taking place. If I err not, you'll see enough to hang every villain here."

"Good heavens! what do you mean?"

"Hush! wait and watch!" and as if to prevent my questioning her further, Elvira rose and crossed the room, apparently to chat with the hostess.

An hour later I was lighted up stairs, by the host, and conducted to a miserable apartment, containing a very decent bed, considering the place.

"I trust you'll sleep sound, Tom," he said—"but if you do happen to be disturbed, I s'pose you won't mind it?"

"O! no, I don't mind trifles," replied I, with a knowing look; "but what is about to happen?"

"Well, may-be nothing—but we kind-o' expect a lodger—who, if he comes, will sleep in the next room—that's all—you take, eh?—ha, ha, ha,!" and with a wink and a nod, the host set down the light and went out.

I shall not attempt to portray my feelings, when I found myself alone; but let the reader fancy himself in my situation, with the belief that the foul murder of some innocent party was coolly premeditated, and he may be able to conjecture, in some slight degree, what they were. It is enough to say, that I carefully examined my pistols, put out my light, and turned into bed, without undressing, further than to remove my coat and boots.

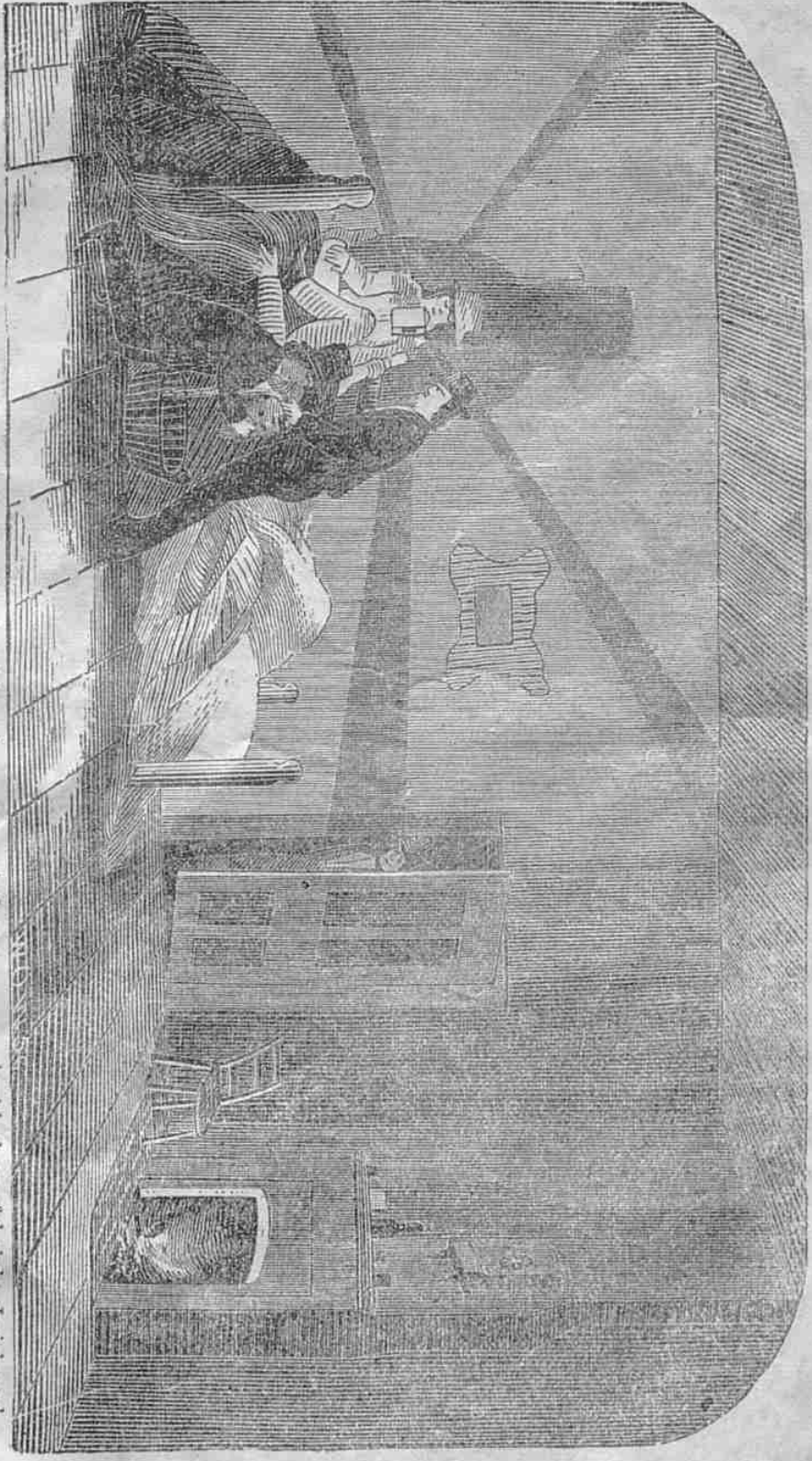
For some time I lay and listened to every sound, determined not to give way to sleep for a single moment; but at last everything seemed to become still, and gradually a heavy drowsiness stole over my senses, and in spite of my efforts to the contrary, I went off into a state of unconsciousness.

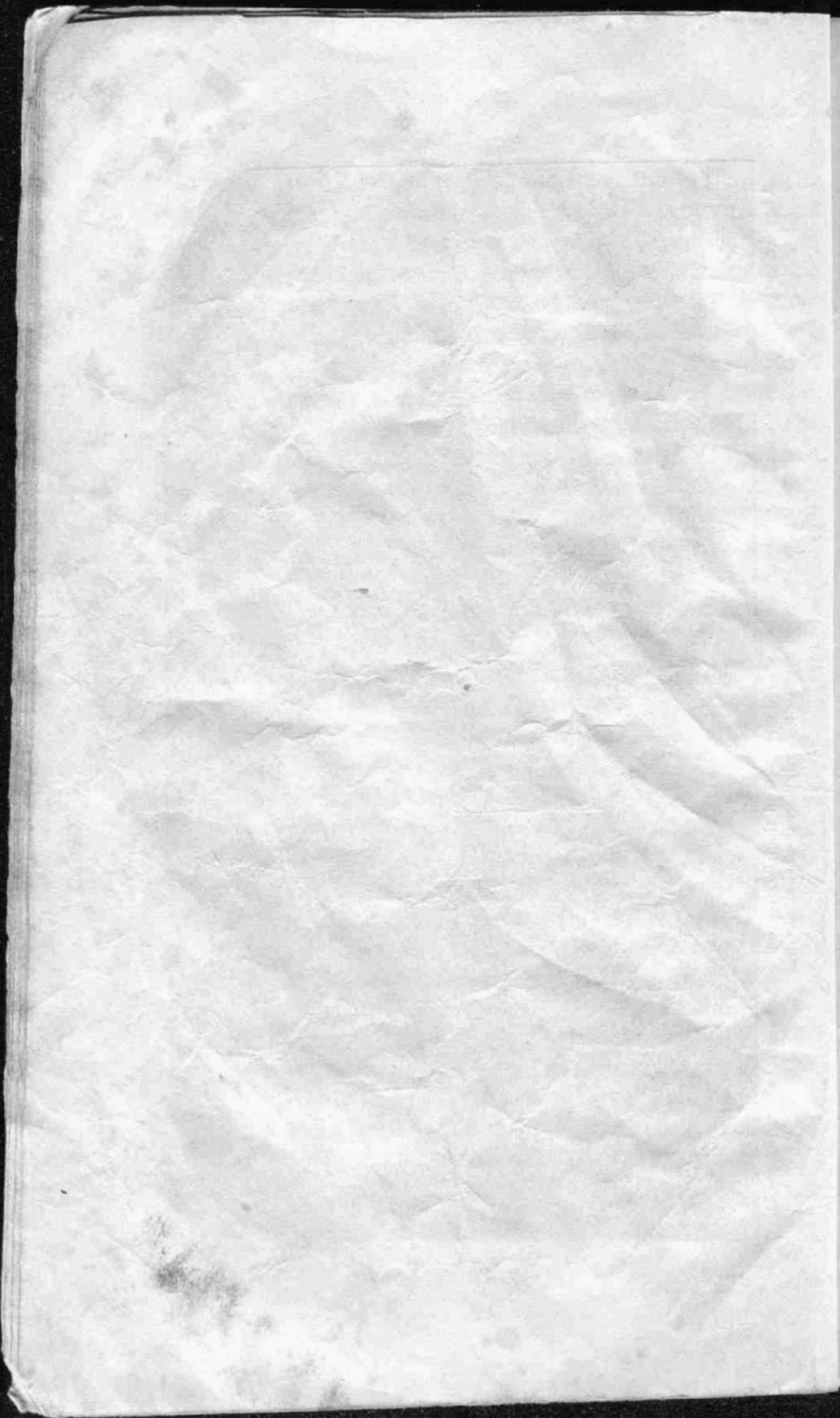
How long I slept, I do not know; but I was suddenly awakened by a cry of "Murder! murder! help! help!"

Mechanically I sprang from my bed, and then perceived, through the crevices of a thin, board partition, there was a light in the adjoining room. Softly, on tip-toe, I stole up to one of these crevices, and peering through, I beheld a sight so horrible that my blood curdled, my hair stood on end, and my tongue and limbs became paralyzed.

There were three of my villanous companions in the next apartment, two of whom had a struggling stranger in their grasp, whom they were in the act of gagging, while the third was holding the light and looking calmly on. As soon as the stranger was gagged, they placed him on the bed, with his head over the side, underneath which was a large tub. Then one of them drew a knife,

I heard a gurgling gasp—saw the warm blood flowing in a big red stream—and then, overpowered with the awful sight, I sickened. My senses reeled, and I staggered back to my bed, more dead than alive.





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and while I was yet looking, too horror-struck to move or speak, he deliberately placed it upon his outstretched neck, and cut his throat from ear to ear. I heard a gurgling gasp, saw the warm blood flowing in a big, red stream, and then, overpowered with the awful sight, I sickened, my senses reeled, and I staggered back to my bed more dead than alive.

How I passed the rest of that awful night, I leave the reader to imagine. I saw no more—but I had seen enough. I had been an eye-witness to a diabolical murder, and I secretly swore to have vengeance on the damnable perpetrators.

The next morning I met the host and his cut-throat associates with a smile.

“You had a busy night of it,” I said.

“Ah! did you hear us? I was afraid the scoundrel would disturb you with his yells,” he replied; “but we fixed him at last;” and he rubbed his hands with glee. “Yes, we fixed him, and well we got paid for our trouble. Fifteen hundred dollars will cover a multitude of sins.”

“So much!” I rejoined; “well, that was worth having, certain. But who was he, and how came he here? for I did not see him last night.”

“No, he hadn’t come when you went to bed, but we were waiting for him. The fact is, you see, he’d been up above, to Paducah, with a small drove of cattle; and we knew he was going to return this way on horseback; so, instead of killing him on the road, as we might have done, and left the blood there to tell on us; the hostler where he put up, who is one of us, put a nail in the horse’s foot, in such a way, that, after he’d gone a few miles, it would lame him, and by the time he got here, he’d be compelled to put up for the night. It takes us—ha, ha, ha!”

“But are you not afraid the authorities will trace you out?” I said.

“The authorities be——!” he rejoined; “how are they going to prove it on us, eh? No, no,—just let ’em come around here, and they’ll git sarved the same way.”

The reader scarcely needs to be told, that after this, I had no appetite for breakfast; and I pretended to be a little sick at my

stomach, as an excuse for not eating. Elvira, however, exhibited no squeamishness, but ate very heartily; though, as she afterward informed me, it cost her a great effort to force it down; but she was fearful, if she imitated my example, the cut-throats would begin to regard us with an eye of suspicion.

The meal over, we took leave of this hellish haunt of blood and horror; and it was not until several miles lay between it and us, that I could breathe with any freedom; and even then, my mental vision saw nothing but the murdered man, with his throat cut from ear to ear, and the red blood running! Ugh! it was heart-sickening—revolting—the very quintessence of horror! and my flesh crawls as I write.

We journeyed on foot the whole of that day, over a wild, gloomy, sparsely populated country; and at night, very much fatigued and foot-sore, we put up at a miserable inn in a small village of some half-a-dozen houses.

“I wonder if any here belong to the gang?” I said to Elvira.

“Yes, the landlord for one,” she answered; “for I made a private sign, and he returned it.”

“Heavens!” I exclaimed—“what a country! I did not think there was, at the present day, a spot in all the mighty West where such a system of organized crime prevailed.”

“Sir, you have seen nothing,” she replied. “This is only one of many such, which lie within a day’s journey of here. You know the geography of the country where we are, and therefore need not be told, that three States—Kentucky, Illinois, and Missouri—all point together here, and are only divided by the Ohio and Mississippi rivers; and what more convenient than to pass from one State to the other, should the officers of justice chance to get on the trail of one of these criminals, and thus set the laws at naught? The full extent of this association it is not to be supposed you will ever know; I do not even know it myself; and as to apprehending even one-half of the criminals, that is impossible. However, you may get hold of the leaders, and break up the gang for the present; then I shall get my revenge, and you will be doing the State good service.”

Elvira and I passed the night at the inn, occupying separate

apartments; and the next day we loitered about the village, until toward night, as the rendezvous was only a few miles distant, and we did not care to approach it during the day.

As soon as it was dark we set out again, and crossing a bleak, barren country, in a short time arrived at the foot of a steep mountain. Up this Elvira led the way, as one accustomed to the place, while I followed. At length we reached a low, tabular rock, surrounded by bushes, and at a sufficient elevation to command a view of the country over which we had passed.

"Here," said Elvira, "I shall await your return—for you must now proceed alone. I need not tell you that you are about to encounter dangers of a very alarming nature—but if you follow my instructions to the letter, I think you will escape unharmed. Proceed to the grand rendezvous of the banditti, and join the fraternity as a member. There is no danger of your being questioned by any but the leaders; and if you take care to keep well in the back-ground, I trust you will be able to observe them closely, and remain unobserved yourself. Return to the foot of this mountain, pass around to the opposite side until you come to two large elm trees, which stand out by themselves distinct on the plain. Take a central line between these trees to the foot of the hill, and you will find a small and rather obscure path; follow this, and it will lead you direct to the cave; then bear in mind all I have told you, and trust the rest to Providence. Now go, and if possible, meet me here before midnight—but if you come not within one hour of daylight, I shall give you up for lost, and depart alone. Farewell!"

I shook her hand warmly, and we parted. I followed her advice, and about an hour after found myself at the mouth of the cave, high up on the mountain. A sentry stood at the entrance, who, on my approach, exclaimed:

"Who comes here?"

"One of the Invisibles," was my reply.

"What wouldst thou?"

"To enter the place of covenant."

"In whose name?"

"Our master's—Barronni."

"Pass on, brother."

I entered the mouth of the cave, which was about the size of an ordinary doorway, and descended a long flight of stone steps, lighted at the bottom by a small lamp, whose feeble rays just made the darkness visible, and emerged into a large, subterranean apartment, which I should judge was about a hundred feet square, with a high, rocky ceiling, and which was lighted by torches stuck in the ground all along the walls. What made it more gloomy or frightful was a row of highly polished human skulls, just behind the torches, on which the lurid light shone with a ghostly effect. About fifty men were present, seated on benches near the entrance, with their attention fixed upon the officers, who occupied a raised platform at the opposite extreme of the cave. Of these latter there were four—the captain, lieutenant, secretary, and treasurer—who sat around a table on which were a bottle, a lamp, and two human skulls, one white and the other red, perhaps stained with the blood of some victim. I took a seat among the larger party without speaking and without being questioned, or hardly noticed; and I need scarcely add, that I became a deeply interested spectator of all that followed.

For something like half an hour, the officers chatted and laughed among themselves, during which several new comers silently took their places among the larger party, who occasionally conversed with one another in whispers or very low tones. At length the chief arose; and as the light flashed full upon his pale, intellectual features, the reader may judge of my surprise when, in this captain of banditti—this self-styled Barronni—I recognized a gentleman who, not long since, had called at my office in Louisville on private business—no less than that of putting me on the scent of a well known thief—and who had then given his name as William Barnwell, and represented himself as a New Orleans merchant. At first I was disposed to doubt his identity; but I soon had reason to know I was not mistaken.

"Gentlemen," he said, taking up the red skull and pouring into it wine from the bottle, "I drink your very good healths with our usual toast—*Long life and freedom to the gentlemen of the forest, the city, the road, and the river; and death to their ene-*

mies!" and he quaffed the wine amid universal applause. "I now pronounce this meeting organized for business," he said in conclusion, and sat down.

The treasurer then arose and said:

"Gentlemen, all of you, who have been so fortunate as to collect money, will now please pay it over to me to be safely kept until the day of division, when each will get his share."

Several now stepped forward, one after another, and handed him different sums, which he placed in a large iron box; while the secretary made a minute of how each had been obtained, and the names of the parties that paid them in. To my horror and dismay, I saw the host of the haunt of murder step forward, and heard the treasurer exclaim in a tone of surprise:

"Fifteen hundred dollars! Jack, you have done well and shall not long go unrewarded."

"No," thought I, "not if Isaac Baldwin escapes alive."

It now occurred to me that, if I could get hold of the books of this hellish association, I could at the same time get hold of secrets that would hang them all; and this I determined to effect as soon as possible; though of course I had no hopes of succeeding in my design immediately. I now noted the officers closely, so that I would be sure to know them again, let me see them where I might.

When the money had all been paid in, and some other trifling matters had been attended to, the secretary handed a paper to the captain, who arose and said:

"Gentlemen, here are some matters I wish attended to before our next meeting. Between Smithland and Dover, on the Cumberland river, lives a farmer by the name of Mason, from whom a paltry horse was taken not long ago, and who is moving heaven and earth to ferret out the thief or thieves. I wish his house and barns burned to the ground; and if this does not serve as a sufficient warning for him to hold his tongue, the next time he must be silenced himself.

"Also, the — bank, at Cincinnati, I have ascertained can be robbed without much difficulty or risk, and a splendid haul be made.

“Also, the jewelry store of — & Co., Louisville, can be entered in the rear by boring the ground-floor shutter, and slipping back the bolt. Only one clerk sleeps there, and he so soundly that very little danger is to be apprehended. I scarcely need tell you I learned all this in my capacity of a New Orleans merchant.

“Also, near the mouth of the Wabash river, in Indiana, one Patrick Kernes, an Irishman, deals largely in horses, and next week will have no less than fifty on hand, which we must manage to dispose of for him.

“Also, there are ten thousand dollars, bogus, at the mint now ready for circulation, beside twenty thousand dollars of newly-signed paper currency, for such as like to speculate in this way.

“Also, there is an Englishman now sojourning in St. Louis, who carries with him no less than ten thousand dollars sowed up in the lining of his coat. He is making the tour of the country, and is anxious to find material for a book of thrilling adventure. I think we ought to help him to some, whether he lives to write them out or not. Everything is planned, and at the proper time he will be decoyed into visiting this region of country, in order to be an eye-witness to the habits and customs of half-civilized Yankees.

“Also, that scoundrel of a police officer, Isaac Baldwin, of Louisville, who has succeeded in nabbing so many of our friends, must be put out of the way. There is a plan in progress by which it will be effected. I have once called on him already, and shall soon do so again, when everything is ripe for the accomplishment of my purpose. I will only add, he suspects not our design, and will readily fall into the trap set for him.

“Also, Jim Herring, who is about to be tried in — for the murder of a traveler, must be got off with false witnesses.

“These, and many others of like nature, will be matters sufficient to occupy our time, gentlemen, until we meet again, when there will be a regular division of the spoils, of which due notice will be given to each and all. To-morrow I shall be in Paducah, where I shall remain a couple of days; and such of you as wish to engage in the affairs presented, will meet me there at the usual place, and receive private instructions. Thence I shall take a

boat for Louisville, and shall stop with Martin, 72 — street, where I expect to remain a couple of weeks, and where I shall be happy to see or hear from you. Address your letters to, or make inquiries for, William Barnwell—for this is the name I am known by at present—and you will be duly notified of any change.

“And now, as everything seems arranged to the satisfaction of all, we will proceed to the trial of the traitor. Bring in the prisoner!”

Two men, headed by the lieutenant, instantly proceeded to a distant part of the cave, and rolling aside a large stone, soon reappeared leading in a poor wretch, heavily ironed, whose teeth chattered and whose knees fairly smote together with terror. He was greeted with hisses and curses, and led up in front of the stand, so as to face the captain, who addressed him in a stern tone.

“It has seldom been our lot,” he said, “to try any for the crime of which you, John Dennis, stand accused. A year ago you joined our fraternity, and I myself administered to you the dreadful oath of our order. That oath you have broken. You were arrested for a paltry theft, and became so alarmed, for fear of a few months imprisonment that, in the event of being liberated, you promised the most awful disclosures. Well, sir, you told your tale—but fortunately, no one would believe it—and you were tried, convicted, and sentenced to six months’ imprisonment. Think of that, you white-livered scoundrel! think of that, and hide your dastardly face! To avoid six months’ imprisonment you would have hung us all. Well, you served your time out; and the moment you were liberated, you were decoyed to a certain house, where you were kidnapped, and afterward brought hither, where you will soon suffer the punishment due to your crime. Let me console you with the fact, that if you had remained true to us, you would doubtless have been liberated by some means or other, long ere your term of sentence expired, and some mark of honor would have been conferred upon you for your fidelity to the band. As it is, you will suffer at the hands of those who can both reward and punish. Have you anything to say in your defense?”

“Mercy! mercy!” gasped the poor wretch. “Only pardon me this time, good captain, and gentlemen, and I pledge you my soul’s

salvation, I will be the truest of the true to you all ever more!"

"You pledged your soul's salvation before, sir, to the same thing; and that oath, I repeat, you have broken. As to *mercy*, we know not the word; and the *pardon* of a traitor, is against both our constitution and the conscience of every member of our band. No, sir, you must be made a warning example to the rest; and I hereby doom you to be hung by the neck until dead. Prepare, men, to execute the sentence!"

A rope that I had not before noticed, drawn up to the ceiling over a pulley, was instantly lowered, to one end of which the lieutenant, who officiated as hangman, made a noose, which he adjusted to the neck of the doomed, who was held by the two men who had him in charge, and whose shrieks and screams for mercy were the most piercing and heart-rending I ever heard. The moment all was ready—

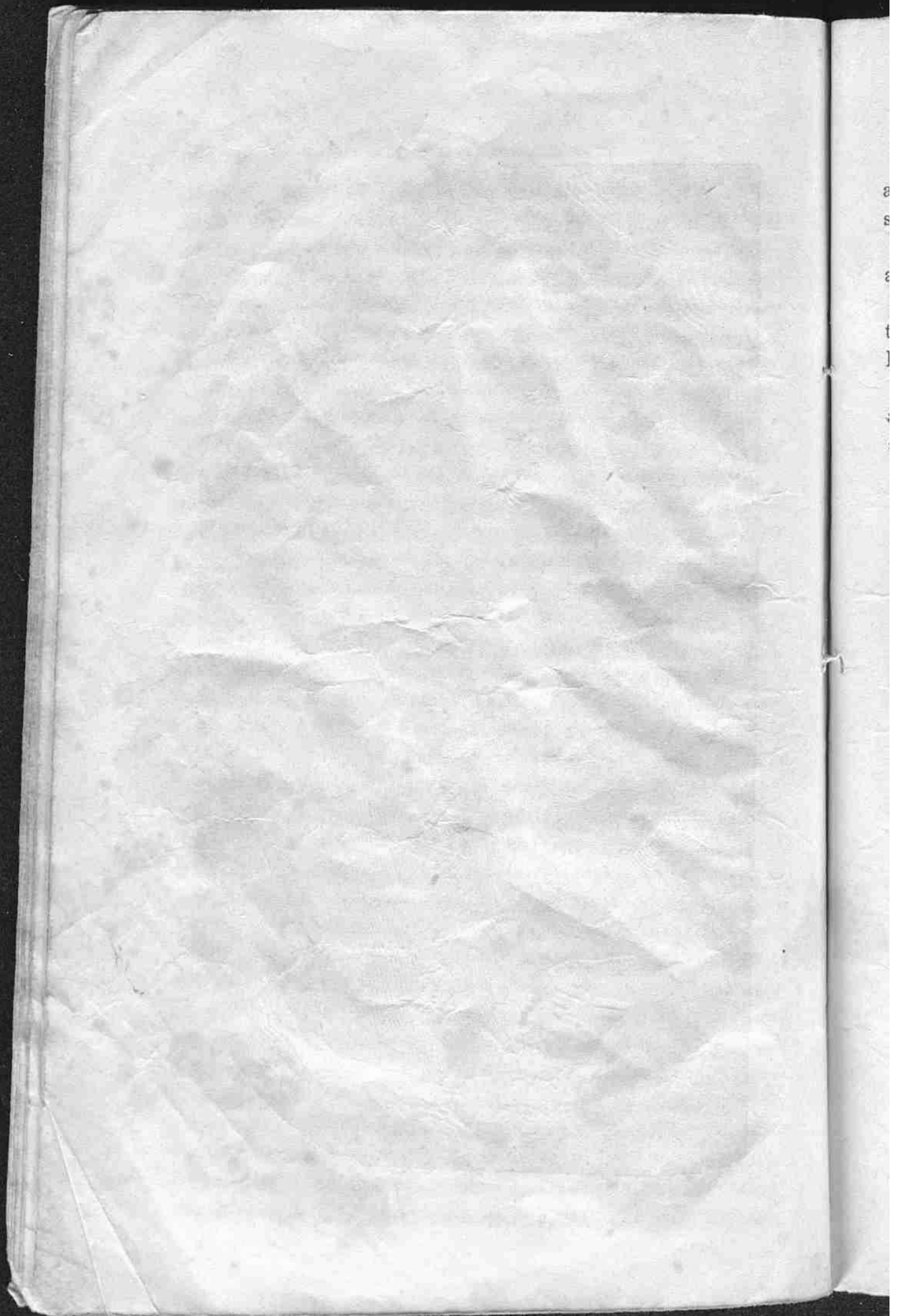
"Up with him!" said the captain; and the lieutenant and the others seizing the rope, drew the poor wretch up by the neck, and fastening the end around a timber at the foot of the platform, left him dangling in mid air.

Oh! it was an awful spectacle; and the crowd of outlaws—the grinning skulls—the gloomy glare of the torches—and the dangling traitor—all formed a picture of horror that curdled my blood, and made me sicken as I gazed.

As soon as the man was thought to be dead, he was lowered, and his body given to six of the party, selected by lots, to bury. Of these lots, I had to draw one, and I trembled lest it should fall to my share to be one of the six—but fortunately I escaped. Soon after this, the meeting broke up; and never did I rejoice more than when I again found myself at liberty. In the darkness without, I soon managed to become separated from all of the cut-throat band; and I made the best of my way to where I had left Elvira.

"Oh! I am so glad you have come!" she said in a whisper, as I joined her; and she seized my hand and shook it warmly. "You do not know, Mr. Baldwin, how alarmed I have been lest something might befall you; and now that I find you safe, I could





almost weep for very joy. Well, did you get into the cave, and see Barronni and his associates?"

"I saw enough," I replied; and proceeded to narrate what is already known to the reader.

"And so your own life was menaced!" she exclaimed, as I mentioned the captain's remarks concerning myself, "Ah! I did not know of this—it is fortunate for you you went, it seems."

"The villain!" I returned; "Oh, that I had him in my power! and that, I trust, will be ere long;" and I proceeded to finish my story.

"And so the traitor was hung?" she replied. "Well, I knew this was to take place, and that made me so anxious for you to be there. You now have proof enough to hang Barronni and his officers; and that is all I ask; then will my revenge be complete."

"But you have never told me, Elvira," I said, "how you came to be connected with these banditti."

"Well, sir, I can tell you in a few words. I was a young, inexperienced, honest maiden, when I accidentally became acquainted with Henry Parker, alias Maurice Graham, alias William Barnwell, alias Barronni. He paid his addresses to me, but was opposed by my parents, who are wealthy, and live in Memphis, Tennessee. He persuaded me to elope with him, and we were subsequently married, as I supposed legally, though I have since found out it was a sham ceremony, performed by one of his own men, dressed as an episcopal clergyman. Well, strange as it may seem, I loved this man; and even after I found out the deception he had practiced, I forgave him and continued to live with him the same as before. By accident, unknown to himself, I discovered who and what he was, and still I clung to him—though, determined to have him in my power, in case he might play me false, I managed, by one means and another, to find out the secrets I have revealed to you, and you only. Well, awful as they are, I do not deny that had he proved true to me I should never have betrayed him. But at last, as I feared he would, he grew tired of me, and put me aside for a rival. After this, he no longer came to see me; and when I heard where he was, and called on him, I was denied admittance. Determined, however, that I would con-

front him, I went one night in disguise to a place where he and his three officers were assembled. I saw him face to face; but he spurned me from his presence, and the others jeered, derided, and cursed, calling me names that I will not pollute your ears by repeating. I left their presence; and the moment I was alone, I swore to have that vengeance which I am now, I hope, about to obtain."

"But if they knew you possessed their secret, it is a wonder they allowed you to run at large—that they did not secretly murder you."

"Ah, sir, but they do not suspect that I possess their secret—for I was always careful to conceal all such knowledge from them, well aware what would be the result to me if they found it out. No, they think they have completely triumphed over me; but it is said 'those laugh best who laugh last,' and I bide my time."

We now held a consultation as to what was best to be done, and finally decided on returning to Louisville. As it was not yet eleven o'clock at night, we calculated on being able to reach the Ohio before daylight. To be brief, we succeeded, and were so fortunate as to hail an up-river boat soon after, on which we took passage.

On arriving at Louisville, my first care was to prepare for arresting Barnwell, alias Barronni, whenever he returned to the city. I called together the same officers, to whom I had imparted Elvira's story before leaving, and acquainted them with my adventures. They were astonished and horror-struck at my narrative, and were almost disposed to doubt the truth of my story. We took counsel together, and everything was arranged to bring the guilty to justice.

On informing Elvira of our plan, she was delighted, and could scarcely restrain her joy, which truth compels me to say, however, was fiendish. She declared she must be present when we arrested Barnwell, and all I could say to the contrary had no effect. She begged and pleaded so earnestly to be allowed this favor, that at last I yielded a reluctant consent—though I had a kind of presentiment that something terrible would happen.

Some two or three days after my return, word was brought me, by one of the spies I had on the look-out, that a person answering

the description I had given of Barnwell had arrived, and been driven to Martin's, 72—— street. As I knew it was his intention to spend a couple of weeks in town, I felt in no hurry to seize him. It was about the middle of the afternoon when I received the welcome news, and I determined to do nothing until after dark. At the proper time I sallied forth, accompanied by Elvira, who had resumed the habiliments belonging to her sex. Some half a square from Martin's, I left her in charge of another police officer, with instructions, that when I should come to the door and cough, she was to be ready to enter; while he, and some half a dozen others, were to keep guard around the house to prevent the possibility of escape, and be ready to come at my call. I had a curiosity to confront Barnwell alone, and have some conversation with him before I made the arrest.

Martin's house was a three story brick, of a very genteel exterior, and the last place one would think of looking for the chief of a band of outlaws and murderers. I rang the bell, and on the servant offering, I inquired for Mr. Martin. The reply was that he had gone out, but would return in the course of an hour, perhaps less time. I then asked if a Mr. Barnwell was stopping with him, and the reply was in the affirmative; and to my question if he were at home, the answer, to my great delight, was the same. I then said I desired to speak with the latter gentleman for a few moments if he was disengaged, and was immediately shown into the parlor by the servant, who disappeared to call the man I sought.

In a few minutes Barnwell entered, dressed in splendid style and with so gentlemanly a bearing that I could hardly realize he was the same person who had presided over the banditti at the cave. On perceiving me he at first turned a little pale; but quickly recovering himself, advanced to me with a smile of recognition, and friendly extending his hand, said:

“Mr. Baldwin, if I mistake not. I think we had the pleasure of meeting before.”

“Yes,” I replied, in the same cordial manner, “you once called upon me, at my office. I accidentally learned you were in town and stopping with Mr. Martin, and having some little business

with him, I thought I would just see you also in regard to the information you gave me concerning that thief, whom, I regret to say, we have not been able to get hold of as yet."

"Indeed, the rascal! I am very sorry for it," he replied, eyeing me, as I fancied, a little suspicious.

"Perhaps," I said, "you could give me some additional information?"

"No, I know of nothing beyond what I told you before. I have been out of town ever since, and just returned to-day."

"Ah, yes—been to New Orleans, I suppose?"

"Yes, and when I left here, I expected to remain there—but a private speculation induced me to return to this city. I am glad, however, you have called on me about that matter, and I will put myself to some little trouble to gain more information. Should I succeed, I suppose, I can find you at your office, almost any day?"

"Yes, I am generally there, and shall be happy to see you at any time."

"Now I think of it," he said, appearing suddenly to recollect something, "I think I know of a little affair that will not only surprise you, when I make it known, but, if you follow my advice, will put money in your pocket. It is a great secret, however, and I shall tell it to you in strict confidence." I bowed my acknowledgments, and he added: "But not to-night, Mr. Baldwin—not to-night. To-morrow, perhaps, or soon, at all events, I will do myself the honor to call upon you, where we can be certain of not being interrupted."

Here I was suddenly seized with a violent fit of coughing; and muttering something about the room being close, proceeded to the door. The moment I opened it Elvira and two of the officers entered; and I stepped quickly back to the parlor, where I met Barnwell just coming out to see what was the matter. The moment his gaze fell upon Elvira and those with her, he seemed to comprehend all at a glance; his features grew deadly pale, and he staggered back fairly gasping:

"What is the meaning of this?"

"It means that you, William Barnwell, alias Captain Barronni,



And was there hanging dead, cold, and stiff, his face black, and his tongue protruding and his features awfully distorted with the last mortal struggle.—P

are my prisoner," I said, approaching and placing my hand on his shoulder.

"It means that I triumph in your shame, you monster!" fairly screamed Elvira—"I, who once loved you, whom you by the basest arts seduced and then cast off for another. It means that the hour of my sworn vengeance has come, and that I shall live to see you hung, and afterward have the pleasure of dancing over your grave!"

"No by ——! that shall never be!" cried Barnwell, with a horrid oath, gnashing his teeth with fury; and quick as thought he produced a small pocket pistol, and ere I had time to restrain him, he leveled it and fired.

Elvira uttered a single piercing shriek, and fell back into the arms of a police officer, a bloody corpse. The ball had penetrated her heart, and her sinful soul had fled to give an account of its deeds at the bar of the Most High.

"Now, gentlemen, I am your prisoner," said Barnwell calmly. "Take me away to prison—I know my fate."

As we were about removing him, Martin returned and was immediately taken into custody; both were conveyed to prison together, but placed in separate cells.

It was terrible to witness the heart-rending grief of the family of Martin when they learned what had taken place. He had a beautiful wife and daughter, both of whom shrieked and tore their hair, and exhibited such hysterical emotions as I hope never to witness again. I tried to console them—but I found it impossible to say anything that would soften their grief.

The Coroner was sent for, an inquest held on the body of Elvira, and a verdict returned in accordance with the facts. The next day she was decently interred, and I was one of the few who followed her remains to the grave; and as I saw her body lowered to its last resting-place, and reflected on what a bright career might have opened to this poor child of sin and sorrow, had she followed the advice of her parents, I do not shame to say I shed a manly tear of pity and regret for her untimely fate.

The trunk of Barnwell was broken open that night, and all his letters and papers taken possession of. These I found, on perusal,

would be of great service in aiding me in the detection of his accomplices in crime. In order that the latter might not get wind of what had transpired, and so elude us, we hushed up the murder of Elvira as much as possible; and the press so far generously aided us, that only one paper, and that an insignificant one, contained any notice of the horrible transaction the next day.

All that night I sat up reading the papers and letters found in the trunk of Barnwell; and early in the morning, accompanied by a magistrate, I repaired to the prison, hoping we might induce him to make a private confession.

The jailer conducted us to his cell, and as he opened the door another horrible spectacle was presented to my view. Barnwell had taken off his shirt, torn it into strips, and with these had made a halter, which he had fastened around his neck and the grates of his cell window, and was there hanging dead, cold, and stiff, his face black, his tongue protruding, and his features awfully distorted with the last mortal struggle.

"Oh, heaven! spare me any more sights like this!" I cried, rushing away, like one fleeing from the plague.

There is but little more to be told that strictly belongs to my narrative—for the breaking up of the banditti is a matter already known to the public through the press.

Acting upon the knowledge we had already obtained, we went secretly to work making arrests. We traced out the officers of the banditti, and two more of them were taken into custody and lodged in prison—the other escaped, and is yet at large. We made a descent upon that vile haunt of crime, where I witnessed the murder of the drover; and I am happy to say, succeeded in arresting the host and hostess, and all the others who had any concern in that diabolical transaction. They are all now in prison awaiting their trials. None as yet have made any confession—though I have hopes that one or more may be induced to do so, before the dreadful penalty of the law for murder is carried into effect. A large number have been apprehended already—but the greater portion of these cut-throats, I fear, are still at large—though the den of their infamy is for the present broken up; and being scattered,

and without leaders, they have not the same power to inflict their damning crimes upon society as before. While I live, it shall be my care to prevent, so far as lies in my power, their reorganization.

I have said I have hopes that some one or more of the prisoners will make a confession of their crimes; for by this means, and this only, shall we ever be able to get at the secret and mysterious history of this band of outlaws. I make it a point to visit the prisoners occasionally, and never fail to urge upon them, each and all, a confession of their guilty deeds. As yet I have received no positive assurance from any that he will make the desired revelation; but the host of the house where the drover was murdered, who gives his name as Jack Wilder, has led me to believe that I shall yet prevail upon him to give me a true narrative of his bold, daring, and bloody adventures. Should he do so, and the public have a desire to peruse his criminal story, I shall feel it incumbent upon me to lay it before the world in a form similar to this of mine.

A word or two more and I have done. I do not know, reader, what you may think of my own adventures; I hope you have found them interesting—I *know* you have found them horrible. My friends persuaded me to publish them; and whether or no I have acted wisely, in taking their advice, I leave you to determine; at all events, you have them. I will only say, in conclusion, that the names of every person mentioned in all the foregoing pages, are fictitious—even my own is a *nom de plume*.

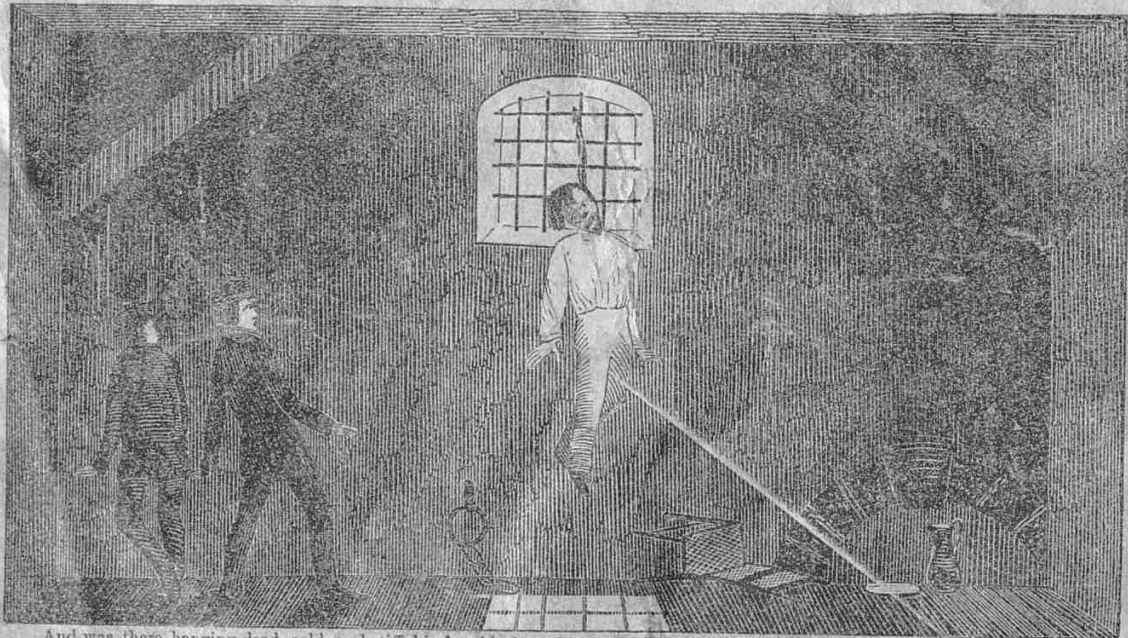
But if the events are *real* mere names are of little consequence; and that the startling incidents I have recorded, *are true in every particular*, I need only refer to the statements published in the daily and weekly prints a few months since.

Reader, unless as the chronicler of the adventures of *Jack Wilder*—or, as he was termed by his companions, *Bloody Jack*—I shall probably not appear before you again. Adieu.

ISAAC BALDWIN.

THE END

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And was there hanging dead, cold, and stiff, his face black, and his tongue protruding and his features awfully distorted with the last mortal struggle.—P