

The Assassins of Arkansas

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Fayetteville, in Washington County, Arkansas, is beautifully situated on an immense plateau of the Ozark mountains. With its purling streams, delicious climate, pure air and brilliant sky, one would suppose it a village fitted to inspire feelings of devotion, visions of poetry, and dreams of innocence and Eden. Alas! that the horrible facts of its past history should prove the pleasing inference from its topography an utter and glaring non sequitur -- for there is not a street, or corner, or dark alley within its limits, which has not been the theatre of murder. There is scarcely a pebble of old grey limestone in its public square, that has not been more than once reddened with human blood.

Let me daguerreotype the clique of legalized banditti! Let me paint them to life, not in rest, but in action, as I saw them on that dreadful Sabbath in July, 1839 -- a day that will long be remembered by the people of Arkansas, under the awful name of the 'Sabbath of Murders'.

It is eleven o'clock; the sky is cloudless, the sunlight looks divine, and a gentle breeze from the northern prairies fans the warm bosom of the atmosphere, bringing balm on its wings and delicious coolness. Almost the entire population of the country seems to have turned out to-day, for yonder vast court-house in the centre of the public square is crowded from floor to the gallery. Hark! hear you not the ringing chorus of half a thousand voices sending up on high the solemn chaunted hymn -- a tribute to the Universal Father? Hence you may know it is the Christian's Sabbath; and they use the forum as a church to-day. But they are not all at church. See the door of the great log grocery to the west, and only fifty yards from the place of prayer and praise, stands wide open, as if in defiance of the law and scorn of God. Go, enter, and take notes of the scene within.

That portly mass of flesh and bones, he of the small grey eyes, lit with a cunning twinkle, like two coals of fire on the oily ground of his face, is William M. Ball, Cashier of the Fayetteville Bank. In a sharp, sinister voice, he is directing the others how to do 'the work well and quickly'. He carries no weapons himself; for, although a man of amazing strength, he never fights, being a deacon of the Church. And yet he is the soul of the Fayetteville clique -- he does all their thinking. As a politician, his influence is unbounded, and hence the current proverb in Arkansas -- 'As goes Ball, so goes Washington county, as goes Washington county, so goes the State.'

His name was affixed as a signer of the Constitution, and prefixed as compiler to the first code of laws, for digesting which he received five thousand dollars. He has grown rich within three years, and his farm lies a mile west of the village.

Behold that tall, slender man, dressed in the extreme foppishness of the fashion. You see the ivory hilt of his bowie knife gleaming through the snowy ruffles of his shirt-bosom; he is busily engaged ramming home a double charge into the barrel of a superb Derringer pistol; his fingers, glittering with gold rings, tremble nervously -- it may be with fear, or perhaps it is from pain -- for, as you observe, his face is considerably lacerated. Big Tom Wagnon cowhided him yesterday for insulting a female, and his companions of the clique will avenge the affront to-day. He is Matthew Leeper, receiver of public monies in the land office, a colonel of militia, a lawyer and a duelist. He too has acquired a large farm and many slaves, some of whom it is whispered are his near relations.

That handsome gentleman leaning against the counter, with such a sleepy look, is the district Judge, the Hon. Joseph Hoge. He remarks lazily, in a thick, half

drunken voice -- 'Boys, I don't think it will do for me to be seen among you. You know I'll have to preside on your trial.'

'Very true,' said Ball. 'You had better go into the back room and take a comfortable nap. The sound of pistols will wake you in time for dinner.'

You notice the small, hook-nosed youth in the corner, with that hang-dog countenance. He is fixing fresh caps on the tubes of his revolver. That is Mr. Sheriff Pleasants -- a mere boy in years, but a thousand years old in perjury and murder. Hark! he speaks in tones of piping treble.

'Gentlemen, as I am a sworn peace officer, I'll hang back at the outset, but help you if you get in a hard pinch.'

'That is right,' said Ball.

Behold another of those twelve apostles and missionaries of murder, a perfect mountain of horse-like muscles, his brow stamped with the impress of drunkenness and desperation, as with a die. He reels and staggers across the floor with a brandy bottle in one hand and a double-barreled shot-gun in the other, swearing through a storm of hiccups and favorite oath -- 'H---- and forty Injuns, I'll make their tails fly up!'

This is Sam Sanders, Major General of all the Arkansas militia, a very dangerous man when drunk -- that is to say, always.

'But, who is that tall, hungry-looking personification of famine, with the corpse-like face, and all his nerves quaking with the imagination of the peril about to be incurred?'

That is the clerk of the district court, B.H. Smithton, an arrant coward, but a very supple tool, notwithstanding.

Let us turn next to the three brothers -- the Shelleys, Bill, Alf and Ripley. These are owners of the grocery, and the most famous fighters of the clique. Bill, the eldest, has already slain his three victims; Alf, the second brother, has killed two; and Ripley, the youngest, though scarcely eighteen, has earthed one. They are all choice specimens of mere physical organization, and one may read the word 'homicide' in the lurid light of their eyes. They literally bristle with weapons of death. See how silent and stern they stand, banqueting, as it were, on visions of blood.

The last of the dozen need but a brief description. They are also three brothers, the Coulters, sheer tools, ruffians, and common stabbers -- the bullies of the grocery.

Suddenly, a new face appeared in the circle, and Bill hastily asked - 'Well, Tuttle, did you find Wagnon, and ask him in Leeper's name to come and drink friends?'

'Hush! he's coming,' said the emissary, in a whisper.

Immediately, a thumping footstep was heard approaching, and a young man of gigantic form entered the door and saluted the company with a bold yet frank courtesy. A genuine model of the backwoods, as generous, as brave, he turned to Leeper and said,

'Matthew, Sol Tuttle tells me you want to drink friends. I'm willing, provided you own you treated the girl shabbily; but may be you didn't know she was my sweetheart?'

And the big buffalo hunter, as he was generally called, held out his hairy hand.

'Come to the counter,' said Leeper, in a hollow voice, 'come to the counter and we'll all drink.'

They advance to the bar, and Ripley Shelley filled their glasses. Tom Wagon, unsuspecting, did not observe that Ball and the Coulters took their stations directly behind him.

Leeper raised his glass, and fairly hissed through his teeth -- 'Here's a funeral toast to those that deserve it.'

At the same instant, the wagoner found his arms pinioned in the hug of Ball and the three Coulters, while Alf Shelley, stooping down, grasped him by the legs, Leeper pushed the muzzle of his pistol against his victim's head and pulled the trigger; but for the first time it failed to fire.

'Ho! for another cap!' shouted the baffled assassin furiously.

And Mr. Sheriff Pleasants coolly felt in his pocket and presented the murderer with a fresh one.

In the meantime, Wagnon, seeing a thousand chances against him, put his immense strength into one mighty effort, and shaking off his foes, sprang out of the door, and truly ran for his life.

He was the fleetest foot-racer in the valley of the Mississippi; but he outdid himself that day. It was more like flying than running, while the dozen enemies gave mad chase in the rear. Twenty pistols were fired at his back. The sheriff emptied a six-barreled revolver, and General Sanders let off his double-barreled shot-gun. For seconds it was one continuous roar. Bullets and leaden slugs flew like hail. One shot killed a colored woman drawing water at the public well; another pierced the glass window of the court-house, and broke a man's arm within three feet of the minister, just reading his text; and a third put out the eye of a babe on the bosom of its mother, at the distance of two hundred yards. But Tom Wagnon still escaped unhurt, and left his pursuers far behind.

'Never mind, I'll catch him,' cried Bill Shelley, as pistol in hand he un-hitched a horse that happened to be in the way, and thrust his foot in the stirrup to mount.

But that moment, John Curry, a brother-in-law of Wagnon's, rushed from the court-house, and seizing the horse's bridle, he said 'For God's sake, Shelley, spare Tom's life.'

Shelley thrust his pistol against Curry's side, and discharged its load of lead and fire into his heart.

The latter, without a groan, dropped to the earth a corpse.

'You have killed him,' cried Lorenzo D. Pollack, one of Curry's friends, in a voice of despair.

'Yes, and I will kill you,' exclaimed Shelley, with the distorted countenance of a demon as he unsheathed his bowie knife, and assaulted the un-armed man, whom he instantly hewed down in his tracks.

Wagnon, also, in his flight, had recognized the imploring voice of Curry, and turned in time to see him fall. Then, either distracted by the horrors of his situation, or supposing that the tiger men were already sufficiently gorged with blood, he ventured to come back and throw himself on his knees by the dead body of his sister's husband.

Fatal to him was the act. Ripley Shelley knocked him down with a fragment of stone, and the human-devil, Bill, deliberately lifted up his arm, as he lay unconscious on the ground, and plunged the long, glittering knife up to the hilt in the seat of life.

Then suddenly broke on the Sabbath air two shrieks -- two wild, wailing cries of unutterable anguish -- as the young wife of Curry and the beautiful betrothed of

Wagnon hurried from the court-house, where they had been tending divine service, and fell swooning on the corpses of husband and lover.

The sorrow and frenzied despair of the bereaved females heightened to madness the horror of the drama. The dark-eyed girl of the raven tresses, and the oriental style of beauty, clung, as it were, in dying convulsions, to the bosom of her lover, kissed his cold lips, and strove to staunch the red current that was issuing from his side. She spoke not, she uttered not even a low moan, but gazed on with stony eyes, like one oppressed with a special dream. Alas! tonight she was to have been his bride! Poor Irene Mills.

Far different was the action of the other -- that queenly woman with the magnificent bust, the cheek of radiant roses, and those large-orbed eyes, blue as the tints of the Southern Summer -- Margaret Curry. Recovering from her sudden swoon, she knelt for a moment with one hand on the breast of her husband, and the other on the neck of her brother, then raised her streaming face with a look of unutterable despair and shrieked the wild cry of the atheist into the vault of Heaven: 'Hope is a delusion, and Faith a lie.'

Then she bounded to her feet, gave a frantic leap towards the triple murderer, fell prostrate before him, and exclaimed in tones of terrible entreaty, inexpressibly mournful, like the wail of a lost soul -- 'O, man of blood! Shelley, Shelley, give me back my husband and brother; give me faith and hope once more, and I will believe that there is a God!'

Then I said mentally, 'I would not be that assassin for the dominion of all the planets -- the diadem of the stars.'

But he, the unfeeling friend, laughed a low, sneering chuckle in her face, and wiping his gory knife on his sleeves, shouted: 'Come boys, let's go to the grocery and drink! Three rascals are dead and our counter shall be free for a week!'

And the clique and their satellites all joined in a mad spree that lasted till the next morning.

In the meantime the people appeared absolutely stupefied. They collected in groups, looking sadly into each other's faces, yet scarcely daring to whisper their disapprobation of the damning deed, and taking no steps to arrest the assassins, whose drunken shouts reverberated throughout the village. If the truth must be told, the citizens were concerned for their own personal safety. They knew that within that grocery were twenty-five thorough desperadoes, and more than a hundred loaded muskets.

The clique had friends, too, in the southern division of the country, where the Cane Hill Lynchers, under Captain Mark Bead, had only five days previously hung six men on the same gallows tree. The consciousness of these facts hung like a mountain of iron on the hearts of the bewildered people, paralyzing all their energies, and fettering their lips to silence.

There was an exception, however, to this singular state of terror -- an exception that manifested itself in a strange way. There had recently settled in Fayetteville, a young attorney by the name of Albert Willis, as might be read on the small signboard hung before the door of his humble office; and no one then knew or cared to know more about the un-pretending stranger, who, with his wife and one little babe, lived in poor style, and in utter seclusion. His face never darkened the entrance of the grocery; his voice never sounded in the broils of the gaming table; he never attended the balls or parties of the village.

But he might often be seen wandering at the evening hour, with an open volume in his hand, his gaze alternately glancing from its leaves to the western sky, as if dividing his attention betwixt the thought of the immortal dead and the works of ever-living nature. It was reported, also, that the bacchanals, as they reeled home near the morning hour, always saw the rays of a candle twinkling from the window of his study. Indeed, Ball had oracularly pronounced him 'a crazy student,' though few could divine what a student was.

During the forenoon of that Sabbath of murders, the young lawyer had been out gathering specimens of botany, and was returning across the public square at the instant the affray commenced. He stopped as if thunder-struck, the flowers falling from his hand, and stood fixed as a statue till the denouement of the tragedy; and then, as he beheld the assassins hurry away to the grocery, and witnessed the unaccountable fear and stupefaction of the multitude, his thin lips writhed into a strange smile. He approached the largest group knotted around the corpses, and began to lecture them in a sort of conversational speech, and more extraordinary still, the burden of his remarks was a justification of the murderers.

'I am astonished, my friends' -- such was the substance of his address -- 'I am truly astonished at your silence on an occasion so glorious as the present. Your leaders, the excellent chiefs and political fathers of your country -- men elevated to high office by your votes, and enriched by your taxes, have mercifully seen fit to kill only three men, when they had the power and right to kill you all. And yet you do not thank them! You peal no loud huzzas; you do not even follow them to the grocery, although the rum is to run free for a whole week! Are you lost to gratitude and all sense of shame, or do you dare to think they have done wrong? Can you be such idiots as to deem it a crime to slay poor men? Did they not have sufficient reason to do it? A common hunter, dressed in leather, had the presumption to chastise one of those rich-robed gentlemen for insulting his

affirmed bride! What right had a hunter to such a beautiful girl? All beautiful women ought to be mistresses for your officers and politicians! And then you forget the honor accruing to your country, by the perpetration of such brave deeds! The public papers will circulate the story over the civilized world, and thus it will read: GREAT ACHIEVEMENT AT FAYETTEVILLE!

One lovely Sabbath in July, while they were worshipping God in their church, their bank officers, their peace officers, and their district Judge, shot down with pistols, and hewed to pieces with knives, three of their brethren; and they, the aforesaid citizens, viewed the act in silence -- they did not move to arrest their gallant leaders -- they were too grateful for the exemption of their own precious lives.'

The voice of the speaker was inimitable -- low, but musical, and piercing as a trumpet; and had he exhausted imagination for means to arouse the deep indignation of the popular soul and heart, he could not have conceived any better fitted to the end than that feigned justification. At its close there swelled up a hoarse, half-suppressed murmur, like the commingled growl from the menagerie of wild beasts. Let it burn on in smothered secrecy, the conflagration will blaze another day! As for the student, he picked up his botanical specimens, turned coolly on his heel, and pursued his course homewards.

Early next morning, the coroner's inquest sat over the dead bodies, and the rumor having flown on the wings of the wind, a thousand were in attendance of the examination. By a practice prevalent in Arkansas, attorneys were allowed to appear on either side. An even dozen were engaged for the assassins. The gold of the clique had already bought up all but one, and that one was too insignificant for a thought.

In the pride of their wealth and power, they forgot the small office, the signboard and the lustreless name of the student, Albert Willis; and yet he was present. He sat near the head of the corpse that had been John Curry, with a face as pallid as the clay beside him, while a peculiar smile writhed like a serpent on his marble lips.

He did not speak or move once during the examination of witnesses; but when Gen. Sanders arose, but with boisterous appeals to the jury, Willis fixed his piercing glance on the countenance of the ruffian lawyer, as if he would look him through. Four others in succession thundered their anathemas over the victims, while Bill Shelley stood near, nodding his approbation of their bitter eloquence.

The coroner was then in the act of submitting the case to the sworn inquest when a clear, ringing voice thrilled like a summons to judgement, through every ear and heart -- 'May it please the honorable court of inquest, I have a word to say against these dealers in wholesale murder!'

The effect was electrical, agitating, awful. Men leaped to their feet by dozens; others started and trembled in mortal terror; bravos clutched convulsively their daggers, and wild hunters sprung the triggers of their trusty rifles. Had the trump of the archangel sounded its last peal, the astonishment could not have been greater. It was the stranger, the pale student, the forgotten lawyer, Albert Willis, who had uttered the daring sentence, and he followed it up with a splendor of diction, a force of unanswerable logic, and a burning vehemence of invective, such as never before or since were heard in the backwoods.

In his word-pictures the very dead seemed to live again, causing the living to shudder as if the very air itself were peopled with sheeted ghosts. At one point he realized the summit of the sublime. It was when he mustered all his energies for a

final burst of thunder into the souls of the assassins. The appeal was as the shock of an earthquake. Even Bill Shelley shrunk from it, covering his face with his hands like one blasted by a flash of lightning. And the great multitude, totally frenzied with rage, uttered a wild shout -- 'Tear the murderers in pieces! Blood for blood! Down with the clique of tyrants!'

'To the grocery!', cried Ball, and the assassins fled for life.

They entered their fortress, barred their doors and windows, and protruded twenty-five muskets, before the crowd were all aware of their escape. Bill Shelley, being keeper of the public arsenal at Fayetteville, had previously stocked his grocery with arms, ammunition, and provided each wall with portholes.

The people showed a disposition to assault and carry the place by storm, but were dissuaded by Albert Willis, who had in one brief hour become the general idol and oracle. He advised the observance of order, and a scrupulous regard for the authority of the law. Shall it prove well or ill for him that the counsel was followed?

In the meantime, a scene was occurring within the grocery fort, destined to secure the guilty from the grasp of violated justice. The assassins were giving themselves up to the mercy of Judge Hoge, then in a state of partial intoxication, who admitted them to bail in the penalty of ten thousand dollars.

The fact becoming known, again excited the multitude of masses. They broke open the United States arsenal, took out and loaded two cannons, and placed them within two hundred yards of Shelley's grocery. It needed but the touch of a

spark to have blown the frail fortress into atoms, and hurled its murderous garrison into the dark grave of their numerous victims.

But once more young Willis interposed, and prevailed on the good people to await patiently the results of a final trial before the bar of the next district court. Undeniably the homicides that day owed their lives to him. But will they thank him for the undeserved boon? We shall soon see.

At sunset the same evening, a husband and father might have been seen parting with his wife and child -- 'I go, dearest,' said he, 'to be absent for a week. Were I to remain home now, my enemies, in the first fury of their passion, might provoke me to a personal difficulty, which I am anxious for many reasons to avoid. Before I return, they will have time for reflection, and cannot fail to perceive the folly of further resort to violence.'

'But, my Albert,' remonstrated a proud-faced, magnificent woman, with intensely black eyes, 'will they not say you are a coward for leaving at this crisis?'

'I would rather be called a coward than actually be a homicide,' replied the husband, mournfully.

'But,' persisted the wife, 'may not the ruffians avenge themselves on me and your innocent babe?'

'Nonsense, Mary,' replied young Willis, with a smile. 'That would be an act beneath the meanest of devils.'

'Well,' rejoined Mary, seeing all her arguments unavailing, 'kiss us, good bye, and be sure you come back in a week.'

Then there were tears and tender embraces, and the little child's lip mingled with these of its parents; and then the father suddenly vaulted into the saddle, and shot away over the prairie with the speed of an arrow, as if he were endeavoring to escape from the spectre of some gloomy thought.

He took the road to the Cherokee country, intending to visit Fort Gibson, and prefer charges against Bill Shelley, as keeper of the arsenal at Fayetteville, in order to procure his removal; and he made the utmost haste, fearing the emissary of the clique would anticipate him, and prejudice the ear of Gen. Arbuckle. But his mind was ill at ease. The parting words of his beautiful Mary, 'May they not avenge themselves on me and your innocent babe!,' rung like a knell from eternity through his feverish brain. At midnight he paused to drink of a crystal spring on the Indian line, thirty miles beyond Fayetteville.

He stooped down and imbibed a copious draught, and laved his burning brow; but when he raised his head, he stood transfixed with horror. A low, hurtling murmur, as of busy wings, sounded in the air above him. He looked, and a fiery luminous vapor, the size and figure of a coffin, was floating along in the air.

Did imagination paint the rest, or was a mere optical illusion, engendered by the wild heat of the brain; or have the spirits of the dead at times truly the power to flash their pale faces before the living eyes?

These are problems which every one will solve for themselves. But the young attorney saw, or thought he saw, an awful group gathered around that coffin of fire, as it floated away into eternity. There was Wagnon, with his gigantic features all distorted by the death agony; and Pollock, with that pale smile which commonly characterizes corpses perishing by gun shots.

But who were those in the very centre of the ghostly circle -- those with their faces baptized in clotted blood? Could he credit his eyes that witnessed the appalling terror? His Mary and her babe were parcels of the vanishing panorama.

He saw no more. Uttering a wild cry of mingled rage and anguish that startled the very wolves from their covert, he leaped into his saddle, and turned his horse's head homewards.

All night, with a whip and spur amain, he rode like a madman; and the first gray twinkle of daylight gleamed in the east when he bounded to the earth on his own threshold. He paused to listen; all was silent within, save the song of the cricket chirping on the hearth. The tranquil stillness seemed to soothe him and restore the reign of reason, as he murmured, 'She sleeps well. I was weak indeed to credit the feverish hallucination.'

He knocked at the door, but there was no answer.

'Mary dearest, awake. It is I -- open the door to your husband.'

Yet there was no sound -- only the cricket sung on. He tried the knob of the door with his hand. It was safely locked, and he said to himself, 'All is right; but she sleeps very profoundly.'

He struck again, fiercer and louder -- once, twice, thrice, and then with both hands, fairly shouting -- 'Mary, dear, awake -- open! I am returned!'

But the cricket alone replied with its morning music.

The cold sweat began to roll from his forehead as he trembled in every limb; and then, making one desperate effort with all his strength, he dashed the shutter from its hinges. It was perfectly dark within -- dark and silent as the centre of a grave.

He groped his way to the bed-side and threw his arms around the beloved ones. O, joy! They were there! He could feel their figures beneath the sheet -- the full-rose of queenly beauty, and the bud folded in her bosom. He stooped for a kiss of tenderness. Avaunt! The lips were of ice!

'Ho! for a candle.' It was kindled in a moment, and the light revealed it all.

The woman and child were literally torn into pieces by a volley of ball and buckshot that had been fired through a crevice behind the bed.

But the bereaved uttered no lamentation; not so much as a tear bedewed his glassy eye.

All that day and with the following night Albert Willis hurried to and fro over the country, detailing the horrible tragedy, and arousing the people to vengeance; and the next morning, full eight hundred men, thoroughly armed, mustered at the camp ground, two miles south of Fayetteville, whence they immediately marched to storm the stronghold of the legalized out-laws.

As they entered the village, they met Gov. Yell, who happened to be passing through, and he instantly advised them not to venture on an attack, as the grocery fort was garrisoned by fifty men, with loaded muskets, besides four or five cannons taken from the public arsenal; and the news tended very much to cool the ardor of the citizens, although they still proceeded.

They moved forward in solemn columns till within thirty yards of the grocery, which previously had not shown a sign of human life, and where, in fact, nothing was to be seen but the old wooden walls yawning with empty port holes, and the four black cannon peering through their rude embrasures.

Suddenly, the door was thrown partially open for one brief instant, and the fearless face of Bill Shelley appeared, as he shouted in tones of thunder -- 'If you come one foot nearer, we'll blow you to h-ll!'

Quick as lightning the door was shut, and fifty guns protruded through the port holes. An unaccountable panic seized the multitude; every man but one, fled in utter confusion and dismay, and many did not pause till they were miles away in the country. Very different was the conduct of the one single exception. Albert

Willis displayed the daring of a demon. He stood firm as a rock; he tore open his shirt bosom and dared his foes to fire; he bantered them to come out, and he would engage them all at once. His courage awoke one sentiment of honorable feeling in the hearts dead to every other.

'Fire upon him!' exclaimed Ball.

'No, you shall not,' said Bill Shelley, 'he is too brave to be shot down like a dog.'

For three months afterwards an extraordinary state of things prevailed in the county of Washington, and especially about Fayetteville. Albert Willis rode continually over the country, sometimes, with one, but generally with a half dozen wild looking ruffians by his side, all armed to the teeth with double-barreled shot-guns and revolving pistols.

Occasionally he was seen near the Indian line, at the head of a hundred Cherokee warriors. A thousand different rumors were circulated. Now it was said that he lay in wait on the roads to assassinate his enemies. Again, the news came that he was marching with a thousand savages to lay the county seat in ashes. Often, at the hour of midnight, the guilty citizens of the villages were startled from their slumbers by the shrill blast of a solitary trumpet from the centre of the public square. It seemed as if their foe took a malicious pleasure in putting them to the agonies of a slow torture; and all the while the companions of that odious clique never left their grocery fort.

At length Willis entirely disappeared, and was not heard of for a year. Ball, Sanders and company then issued from their fastness, and ventured out to breathe the fresh air.

Twelve months rolled away, when the community was agitated by the occurrence of a new catastrophe -- Alf Shelley was slain, when traveling alone on Cane Hill; and, from every sign, the deed had not been done till after a desperate contest.

Both his pistols were found discharged, and his knife was broken in two. The next week John Coulter was killed near the same spot, and his rifle, too, lay empty with the stock annihilated beside him.

A fortnight followed, and Matthew Leeper was discovered dead in his own office, which stood in the suburbs of the village, some two hundred yards from any other house. This appears the most singular of all. The door was locked; but a window stood open, through which the homicide had evidently made his escape, as the prints of two bloody hands had been left on the blinds. There were also two words traced in blood on the floor -- 'The Avenger'.

There had obviously been a violent combat. A strange looking knife, with the point snapped off, lay on the table, while the stiff fingers of the corpse grasped a dagger purple with gore.

It is impossible to paint the terrors of the clique at this swift succession of disasters. Ball and the two surviving Shelleys ran away to Texas, never halting till they reached the Trinity. An agent sold their farms and grocery, and followed with their numerous slaves. Soon afterwards the fact transpired that Ball had robbed the bank of which he was cashier, to the amount of a hundred thousand dollars.

Gen. Sanders set out on a trip to Washington, and was heard of no more.

A long period elapsed without any further incident resulting from the Fayetteville war, and men had almost forgotten its horrors. Ball and the Shelleys had become popular chiefs in Texas, with immense cotton farms and vast influence. On the 5th of July, 1849, about ten years after the Sabbath of murders, they were returning home with a friend from a barbecue given to Gen. Houston, at the town of Crockett, the day before. It was sunset when they reached the right bank of the Trinity, and they waited a few minutes for the ferryman to row across from the opposite side.

Suddenly, an extraordinary apparition emerged from the tangled cane, and confronted them at the water's edge.

It was a half-naked figure, with long beard and hair, that did not seem to have been shorn for a dozen years; the face bronzed; the haggard, blood-shot eyes blazing with wild delirious light, and the whole appearance denoting the madness of immeasurable despair. And yet the strange being was thoroughly armed; his hand grasped a shot-gun, double-barreled and of huge calibre, while his large leather belt held Derringers and revolvers to the extent of thirty rounds.

He spoke, and his tones were shrill and piercing as the cry of some bird of prey.

'Villains, I see that you wear your old weapons! It is well!'

He said the truth; the comrades were amply provided with pistols and knives.

'What do you want with us?' exclaimed Ball, supposing the intruder to be some wandering maniac.

'I want to fight, and I mean to fight you all three,' replied the stranger.

'In the devil's name, who are you?' cried Bill Shelley, as an appalling memory flashed across his soul.

'I am the wild man of the woods, who was Albert Willis!' shrieked the stranger; and the three guilty comrades started as if they had been struck by a thunderbolt.

Bill recovered first.

'You have every advantage,' glancing at the other's shotgun, with both its hammers at full cock.

Willis rejoined mournfully -- 'I killed your brother, Alf, and Coulter, and Leeper, and Sanders, in a fair fight, and so I will kill you all?' he shouted with a hoarse chuckle, as he tossed his gun into the river and drew Colt's patent murderer.

There followed a deafening roar, and Ball dropped to the earth a corpse. Then came another, like a double explosion of lightning, and the younger Shelley went to his long home. Then two awful detonations burst at once -- Willis and Shelley both fired at once, and both falling at the same instant, but still not dead. Bleeding, almost expiring, their hatred, nevertheless, seems immortal. Mustering

all their dying energies, with glaring eyeballs and gnashing teeth, they crawled like two mangled snakes till they met, and each buried his bowie knife up to the hilt in the other's bosom.

Such was the final consequences of the 'Sabbath of Murders', the last battle of the 'Fayetteville war'.