PASSAGES FROM THE LIFE OF LAFITTE

By James Rees

Note: The following are direct excerpts from some 1841 issues of the New World newspaper. They are from articles on Passages from the Life of Lafitte by James Rees. According to The History of Southern Drama by Charles S. Watson (University Press of Kentucky, 1997), Rees spent most of the 1830s in New Orleans, where he gave plays about Washington and the legendary Mike Fink as well as a very successful play "Lafitte" about Jean Lafitte, which ran April 3-14, 1837, at the Camp Street Theatre in New Orleans. The first performance was billed as the "Nautical Drama of Lafitte" and had exciting stage effects in boats. On the fourth night of the production, Mr. Abbott, who played the lead, was wounded by a musket shot in the wrist. Watson says a competing play about Lafitte by Charlotte Barnes Conner was performed at Caldwell's St. Charles Theatre on April 15 and 17, 1837. It was a more sedate production, with chaste language according to a reviewer, and only ran two nights. Neither Lafitte play has survived in print, but Rees' fictional Passages from the Life of Lafitte may have been derived from his play. The following Gothic tale has Lafitte converted into a land pirate hiding in a cavern in the Cumberland valley, trading dark stories with his followers. The spelling and grammar are left unchanged. These stories were collected and transposed for the Laffite Society Chronicles by Pam Keyes.

Chapter VIII...The Bandit's Mountain Home---Social Habits of the Gang---Singfried's Story---Father Nicholas, a legend of the olden times---Bobby's idea of legends, and the Story Telling expressed by his actions.

In a former passage we introduced the notorious Mason to our readers. It is not generally known that this respectable personage acted as Lafitte's lieutenant, and occasionally took command of his men on land service, when other and more important matters called the attention of their Chief to the ocean. The broad mountains of the Far West were their abiding place; and one of those numerous caves so celebrated in traditionary love, and subject of wonderment and mystery in history, their home. Immediately after the incidents related in our last Passage, Lafitte sought his "horde", and, with Rebecca, soon forgot the world--but was not by the world forgotten.

Rebecca seemed the priestess of the cave. There was none of that delicacy about her which would have tended to mar their festivities. She even sat at the table and drank the Brigand's toast--"A wide sea, a good ship, clear ground, and a swift horse."

It was on one of those social occasions, that Rebecca rallied Lafitte on his wild and peculiar doctrine, "that there was in nature the means of prolonging life." Nay, he even contended that the "elixir" spoken of as fabulous, actually existed.

"Well Captain," observed one of the men, "tell us that story which you have written in your journal, entitled "Father Nicholas;" it carries out your favorite theory."

"How do you know there is such a tale in my journal?"

"That's a question to ask a gentleman and a scholar! Why, doesn't it lay open on the desk in your room?"

"True, Singfried, now I remember, you once told me that in your youth your education was not, like mine, neglected. Your life, no doubt, would furnish a strange mixture of the serious and ludicrous, crime, and a few virtues. You
must tell us your history, for our amusement."

"As regards the matter, Captain, there is that in it which is serious enough, and some things which I would rather keep locked up here," laying his hand impressively on his heart.

"Old Barbeaux's death, for instance," whispered Bob.

"Silence, hell-hound, or I'll throttle you! Imp of Satan, you are my bane--my curse! Beware of my vengeance!"

"Yes, old one, but see, the Captain waits."

"As I was saying, Captain, when the bright-headed youth interrupted me, my life is a dark catalogue of crimes, some of which still disturb my rest--but no matter. Do you know, Captain, I once denied the existence of a Supreme Being. It was a battle between myself and Reason. The former conquered, but not until my soul was loaded to the brim with heavy crimes. No man should deny the Deity, Captain, though he be a murderer."

"Is there blood upon your conscience, Singfried?" asked the Captain.

"Aye, Captain, and innocent blood! In the dark hours of the night, when all around is calm and still--when Nature's self is asleep--these crimes are made manifest: the figures of those I have wronged rise up before me, and mock me with hideous gestures. I writhe upon my bed, still are they before me: I arise and approach them--they move, I follow, they vanish! Oh, Captain, such sights are dreadful!"

"Rebecca, can you listen to such things unmoved?" asked Lafitte.

"I could listen to his story with more interest."

"I do not want to hear old Singfried's story of ghosts," cried a robber, "give us the Captain's story."

"Presently, my men; but I should like to hear a portion of Singfried's--that part of it which led him to adopt a robber's life. What caused you to quit the gay world and all its pleasures for these broad hills, and this barren cave?"

Singfried hesitated a moment, cast his eyes around the table, took a full glass of brandy, and in a low voice began:

"Captain, I will tell you that, but no more. Remember, 'only' that."

SINGFRIED'S STORY

My life has been one of crime, the retrospection of which drives me to madness. The thought has frequently struck me that a recapitulation of a few scenes would tend to withdraw my mind from the contemplation of them, and relieve me of a heavy load of crime which presses with a giant's strength upon my soul. I question, however, if this will avail much. Nothing but the annihilation of thought--the destruction of memory--can give me relief. The mind, that undefined and intuitive seat of reason, that embryo of eternity, with all its fearful imaginings, can call up at a moment's warning the dark, deep deeds of guilt and hold them up to the mirrored soul, as messengers from the grave. The recital of one event in my life may teach some of you a lesson, and probably draw from some sympathetic eye the tear of pity for my woes. I shall pass over the earlier years of my life, as they contain nothing that would interest you. They were of an infantine nature compared to the ones in which the event occurred. I am now about relating. I was in my twenty-second year when I became acquainted with two sisters of the name of Clifford; they were beautiful and highly accomplished--the pride of their parents, the admiration of their friends.

{Some portion purposely omitted}

I was the monster who crushed all their bright hopes, and sent them to an untimely grave, victims of my hellish arts. Each one bore me a child--a daughter and a son. They separated; one left the city and went no one knew whither, the other died a prostitute in a
common brothel in Shippen street in Philadelphia. Her child, my son, was brought up in the poor-house, and turned loose upon the world. At the age of eighteen he was committed to prison for theft. Captain he is one of your gang! Start not; he is not here now, nor does he know me as his father.

"Where is he?" asked Lafitte.

"On duty--absent on duty. On my return home to my native land, after an absence of eighteen years, (during which time I suffered several years' imprisonment for petty crimes,) I learned the fate of my son. I made inquiry at the Cliffords. They were both dead. My daughter--I never heard of her until--but I will not anticipate you in the interest of my story, if it has any. I pressed my feet once more on my native soil; it was not the pressure of innocence and virtue; it was the heavy tread of guilt."

{Here follows several pages taken up with reflections; and vain attempts at philosophy, Which result in his forming an acquaintance with a man of some character, whose name was Gilbert}

"I married the daughter of my friend Gilbert. She was just twenty-one years of age, handsome and accomplished. I was forty-three; the disparity of our ages seemed not to lessen the power of love. I was now comparatively happy. We lived on the borders of a sweet, romantic lake. Our time was spent in rural and rational enjoyment; my wife was fond of reading, and I of hearing her read. I thought then there was music in it. For hours we have sat together under a spreading oak, and read alternately to each other some interesting book."

"One afternoon, eight months after our marriage, my wife's delicate situation rendered it impracticable to take our accustomed walk. We were seated in our little parlor, looking over some old papers, trinkets, and such matters. Some of these papers belonged to my wife's mother, and she was intent upon them. To me they were of no value; a miniature fell to the floor, and exposed the features of a most beautiful woman. I snatched it up, and uttered an exclamation of surprise, as I recognized the likeness of Mary Clifford! "Gracious God, what is this? My wife, alarmed at the exclamation, turned suddenly around, and seeing the miniature in my hand--"Tis my mother," she exclaimed, "and is a good likeness." "Your mother! speak, for the sake of my soul's salvation--speak! Helen, who are thou? Quick, your name ere I go mad! Was not Gilbert your father? In mercy say that he was! and I called upon heaven to save me from the damning--the worse of crimes. "Be calm, dear husband, you look wild; Gilbert was not my father!"--And your mother--who was your mother?"--Her name was Clifford--Mary Clifford." "Go on--go on--let me hear all. Name him she called her husband--your father." My wife held down her head and hesitated. "Be calm, my dear husband. Hear me confess a mother's frailty: I was not born in wedlock! I am the offspring of guilt. My father's name was ..." "Hold!" I exclaimed, 'one moment! my brain is on fire! reason is deserting me--now go on--his name! "Was Collins!" "Miserable girl, you have wedded your own father!"

I remember nothing. Beyond this was all chaos. Years rolled away, and I was the inmate of a mad-house. Reason, however, once more resumed her seat. I learnt that my daughter died in giving birth to a male child--both lay in one grave! Captain, this is an awful confession. Pity me, comrades, for I am miserable."

The wretched man leaned his head upon the table and groaned audibly. The silence was broken by a voice from the lower end of the table, requesting the Captain to read the story of "Father Nicholas."

"I am afraid the story of Singfried has taken away the desire of listening to mine. His is an "ower true one," Father Nicholas but the phantom of the mind--a playful fancy of the imagination."

"Let us have it--let us have it!" was the cry. A look of unusual kindness from Rebecca decided him, and in a clear, distinct manner he read from his
journal the following strange tale, the production of his idle hours, and intended to carry out the idea of his new theory.

**FATHER NICHOLAS**

*A Tale of the Fourteenth Century.*

"I do remember an apothecary--
And hereabouts he dwells,--whom late I noted
In tattered weeds, with overwhelming brows,
Culling of herbs; meagre were his looks,
Sharp misery had worn him to the bones." Shakspere (sic)

In a retired lane in the city of London, lived in the year 1330, a man whose outward appearance denoted the extremes of poverty. His beard hung down to his waist, and the abject wretchedness of his person threw around it a wild and unnatural character which gave rise to dark rumours and deep suspicion of his being a necromancer--a name which allied the individual possessing it, to Satan himself. This man kept a small shop for the sale of herbs, and chemical preparations, the effect of which, upon those who had the courage to take them, was so extraordinary, that it obtained for him the title of the learned doctor. Business, however, came in very slow, and seemingly added nothing to his worldly gear, or limited household.

Of an evening, this singular man was frequently seen gathering herb and plants from churchyards, and it is said that he was once seen to pluck a flower of a peculiar color from the grave of a murderer; and he was known to have given the executioner a large sum of money for the toe nails of a noted malefactor; these, and sundry other unspeakable things, he was known to place in a crucible made of the scull (sic) of a child murderer! The neighbors said, that on this occasion he invoked the devil and his angels. Be that as it may, Father Nicholas, for such he was called, pursued the even tenor of his way until the evening when we beg leave to introduce another character to our readers.

It was one of those dark nights peculiar to the city of London, that a little man, dress in black, presented himself at the dirty counter of Father Nicholas. "Good evening, learned sir," was the stranger's salutation. The doctor raised his eyes, fixed them upon the speaker, and inquired his business.

"You purchase herbs and scarce plants, I understand?"

"Yes; have you any for sale?"

"I have a few handfuls of "--placing his mouth to the ear of the doctor, he whispered the name.

Had a thunderbolt landed at his feet, the consternation of the poor doctor could not have been greater. He started back, his eyes rolled in his head, his hands relaxed their hold of some glasses which fell with a crash to the floor--The stranger in black stood unmoved, and repeated in a careless manner, the former question, "Do you purchase?"

"Purchase!" exclaimed Nicholas, "aye, with my soul's salvation, I'll buy them, sir, but speak--were--who--gathered them?"

"Myself," was the answer.

"And there--did you gather them there yourself?--from that spot where mortal footsteps have never trod!"

"Here they are, old man, view them; aye, smell them, prepare them, try them upon your whiskered form, hal hal," and his wild laugh rang fearful through the house.

"Name your price young man; name it--take it and begone."

"Tis easily told, and to be paid this day two hundred years hence on this spot."

"What is the price?"

"Yourself, living or dead."

"And my reward--I mean my gain?"

"The indulgence of life to the fullest extent of your ambition and desires; unbounded wealth and renewed
A wonderful alteration appeared in the heretofore wretched hovel of Father Nicholas; a splendid new building arose upon the ruins of the old one. It was remarked at the time, that the workmen were forbidden to alter, or injure in any manner, the little room where the extraordinary scene above described, had occurred. The personal appearance of Father Nicholas was also changed; he seemed to be much younger. Riches poured in upon him. At last a dark story was circulated, that the means of its accumulation was dangerous to the monied institutions of Great Britain. Matters of this kind occurring in the age of which we speak, carried on their front an air of probable witchcraft; then, as well as in after ages, it was looked upon with the utmost horror and detestation. The accumulation of money by any other means than labor, or honest traffic, was at that period considered as alone the work of magic; hence Father Nicholas's sudden rise from the extreme of poverty to the extreme of wealth, became the subject of much conversation among his less fortunate neighbors. It finally reached the ears of England's avaricious king, who summoned the victim of superstition before him: a veil is drawn over this conference. Astonishment, it is said, was depicted on the king's countenance as he was seen suddenly quitting the chamber, and hid himself in his private library for the rest of the day. Father Nicholas was cleared from all imputation heretofore attached to him; he was countenanced by majesty, and taken, as history informs us, into his especial favor!

A short time after this, Father Nicholas decamped in a very mysterious manner, leaving his house under the especial charge of the king, who, to the astonishment of his subjects, gave especial orders that the house of Father Nicholas should stand until it fell of its own accord to the ground!

Strange as this order was, other circumstances of a mysterious nature, led people to believe that Father Nicholas was, or had been leagued with old Nick. The house was looked upon as a doomed one, and one hundred years after the disappearance of the owner, the same old-fashioned uninhabited dwelling stood, the terror of the whole neighborhood and the fruitful subject of many a long winter evening's tale. The grass had grown over the steps, and the running vine completely enveloped its somber stone in its serpentine folds; it was pointed out by one generation to another as the place of demons; and posterity did full justice to the old story, by additions rendered ten times more awful by the contrast drawn between the then enlightened age, and the dark one in which such infernal rites were supposed to have been performed. The advancement of knowledge never has, and perhaps, never will clear away the rubbish of superstition from our minds which former ages have been gathering, as it were, for our especial inconvenience; nor does it seem probable that those wild notions of sorcery, magic & c., will ever be obliterated while the subject forms the theme of some of our ablest writers.

About one hundred years after the sudden and mysterious disappearance of Father Nicholas from England, a similar character appeared in France, whose immense riches attracted the attention of King Charles, who commissioned his master of requests to enquire into the means by which he became so opulent. The account given by this man differed widely, it is presumed, from the one given by the other. He said that having purchased an old thick book, gilt upon the edges, and written on the bark of a peculiar tree in Latin characters, with a thin cover of copper, on which were sculptured many strange figures and devices--he studied it for twenty-one years without being able to discover more than it was a treatise on the Philosopher's Stone. The book, however, was translated by a converted Jew named Sanchez, who taught him to decipher the characters. It was the art of turning quicksilver into gold and silver at his pleasure; and he stated that at two different times in the month of April, he had converted a half a pound of quicksilver into pure silver, and the same quantity into pure gold. This account, we are told, satisfied the
"Twas on the evening of the 15th March, 1530, that a little boy, living in an obscure lane in London, ran to his mother in the utmost alarm, and in a hurried manner told her that he saw a man whose description answered exactly to the likeness of Father Nicholas, which hung in the aisle of an old church close by. He was pushing away the stones and rubbish from the door of the old deserted house, and applied a key, which opened it, and went in. The mother dropped some work which she held in her hand, and ran hastily to the spot, and to her astonishment discovered the most evident signs of some one having forced his way into the house. The reader no doubt remembers it as well as we do. The woman, as in duty bound, reported the fact to the next magistrate, who as also in duty bound, convened his officers, and concluded to march "seratim" to the house of terror. By this time the whole neighborhood was informed of the daring stranger, who had entered the house, and resembled the original owner who had been gone two hundred years that very day. They reached the place, and as numbers make cowards brave, they rushed in a body through the long entry. Not a sound but the hollow echo of their own footsteps were heard; everything was falling to decay; the tapestry was dropping piecemeal from the damp walls; pictures had by their weight loosened the nails, and they hung in a falling posture; many of them had fallen and were shattered to pieces on the floor. In the middle of the room, a table was set, with a number of dishes completely filled with dust; one or two bottles of wine stood upright, and uncorked, but no one dared to touch them, thinking that a devil had taken up his quarters in them. A dreadful gloom hung over the scene, and a chilly air rushed through the decayed apartments. In another room stood several tables covered with cards and dice; upon a sideboard stood the remains of a supper, which had been prepared two hundred years ago, for those who had long since become food for worms. Strange as it would seem, every thing had lost its original nature but the bread--it had not even moulded, but was as hard as the marble upon which it had stood; a bit of curious form fell to pieces at the touch. The company who had thus unceremoniously entered the rooms looked upon one another in silence--not a word was spoken; they passed through the various rooms, every thing had withered beneath the hand of time; the beds had been eaten up by the few living inhabitants of this gloomy mansion, a host of whom attempted to escape, which gave additional fears to the already terrified officers of justice. Another door was pushed open. A cry of horror escaped them. Upon a chair beside the table sat the apparent living Father Nicholas, his head resting upon his hands his eyes were closed. In one hand he held a small phial twas empty; before him lay a sheet of paper, upon which was written, "my fate is sealed--the tempter claims his price--the price of the infernal drug--I have drunk it--I await the issue--it fails--hell claims its victim!"

He was dead! Life had not been long extinct for a gentle warmth was felt in the vicinity of the heart. The officers returned, locked up the house, reported the extraordinary circumstance to those more particularly concerned. The succeeding week the house, in despite of the King's prohibition, was pulled down and not a trace remains of this once beautiful, yet dreaded mansion.

That the reader may not conceive this to be altogether an imaginary sketch on my part, I need only refer to the writings of Godwin and others, who not only wrote upon the subject of the Philosopher's Stone, but actually believed in the wild tale of the "Wandering Jew," who, as one grave writer asserts, is still in existence, and doomed to wander upon the earth without a local habitation or name."

There was a long pause among the stern followers of the writer of this wild tale, which was broken by the sudden entrance of red-headed Bob, who not being over-fond of story-telling had watched his opportunity and sneaked quietly out. "Well Bob, what's in the
"There are four men well mounted, and well-armed, too, even now crossing the bridge."

"Ah! Say you so? To arms—to arms! Rebecca to your chamber."

"Why should I to my chamber? Think you there are no charms in a mountain skirmish for me?"

"It is not fitting, Rebecca, nor would I have it so."

"If it is fit for me to go, I will."

"Ha! say you so, proud one? Then let me tell you that Lafitte has no master, or mistress here. I say again, get to your chamber nor dare dispute my orders."

There was that in the flashing eye of Lafitte, and the curling of his haughty lip, which silenced the proud beauty at once, but it laid the foundation of a new passion, opposed in all its ramifications to the one she heretofore felt for Lafitte, and of which he was soon to feel the effects.

CONCLUSION

Some Account of Bridges—Legends attached thereto—Appearance of the four Travelers spoken of by Bobby—The Attack—The Result

All bridges—we make no exceptions—are more or less the resort of fairies, elfins, witches, hobgoblins, sprites, spirits & c & c. They are better calculated for these phantom ladies and gentlemen to play their freaks in and about, than the more gloomy recesses of a forest, or the ruins of some old antiquated castle where, in "by-gone days," some horrid deed was committed. On a moonlight night, when stars are struggling through the silver mist, and vainly trying to eclipse the queen of half the world, a rustic bridge bending its solid form over a rivulet or meandering stream, winding its way through a rich and fertile country, presents to the eye a scene more grand and picturesque, more poetic—or at least, more romantic—than the high turreted castle, in the most superstitious country in the world; and when we ask why is it so? the answer is to be found in the thousand and one legends which are treasured up by the old, and narrated by the young. Beneath the arches of some lone, out of the way bridge, fairies, it is said, hold their nightly revels, witches and sprites their midnight orgies, and robbers select the bridge for their deeds of blood and plunder. Even the plain simply constructed bridge (I don't mean the new one) over a little stream of water which empties itself into the Cumberland river, a short distance below Nashville, Tenn., is not exempt from this popular superstition.

Cumberland river, one of the largest in Kentucky, takes its rise from the Cumberland mountains, and interlocks with the head waters of Clinch and Kentucky rivers, and thence flowing through the State, westardly, more than two hundred miles, it enters the State of Tennessee, and, after meandering one hundred and twenty miles, reaches Nashville nearly in latitude 35 N. From thence, flowing NW one hundred and twenty miles, it joins the Ohio, nearly opposite Dog Island, once the hiding place of the celebrated Meason. As I observed, the bridge is not, or rather was not, exempt from the wild legends of robbers, and ghosts, and of strange sights which were seen there at divers times. These stories, however, go further back than the present generation can well remember, or they can remember only such portions as were gleaned from the nursery that school wherein superstition builds its power, so that the combined efforts of Common Sense and Religion cannot pull it down. It may be said that these relations of the Wild and wonderful, originated from a morbid state of feeling, actuated by fear. It may be: but their frequent repetition established the belief in the minds of people beyond the possibility of a doubt. Old Ben Wilson, well known to the settlers of the "Far West" swears to this day, that he saw numerous black and white dogs emerging from the eastern side of this bridge. Wild, and as he says, "unearthly music" announced their departure, and
hideous screams welcomed their return! He also swears--Ben will swear--that on one occasion he saw a beautiful young lady sitting on a large stone immediately in the centre of the bridge, who, at his approach, suddenly disappeared. The huge stone next morning was not to be seen! Horses in passing over the sandy hill at a late hour of night, stopped suddenly in their career; and when the alarmed traveler looked down to ascertain the cause, a huge snake was discovered twining itself around the animal's feet, and holding him immovable. Many have remained standing in this position, with the monster hissing up his venom in their very faces, until day-break when the snake unwound himself, and left the traveler to pursue his journey unmolested. Ben, the chronicler of these, the "wild and wonderful," further swears, that whole troops of headless men, women, and children, were frequently seen dancing in the green meadows, and, if molested, would seek shelter under the bridge! I myself remember a young man, who in after years lived near the lime-kilns in the upper country, and who having drunk very freely at old Sam Walker's tavern, was, as he stated, tempted to join this unnatural band of dancers. He was never known to smile or drink a drop afterwards. His wife says to this day it was a spiritual blessing...We might write a volume upon this subject, but here we stop for the present.

Over this bridge, on a beautiful evening in the month of August, four horsemen were seen to pass. On the opposite side they stopped for a moment to gaze upon the beauty of the scenery. It was truly a pleasing sight. The rays of the setting sun yet lingered on the water, and tinted with golden hues the mountain tops. The murmur of insects became louder as the day-wind went down with the sun. All nature looked as pure as the limpid stream that gurgled from a rock, and mingled its chrystal waters with those of the dark Cumberland.

"Look yonder, Smith," exclaimed one of the company, "is not that a fitting subject for the pencil of an artist?"

"Indeed it is and one that I will not pass without taking a sketch." In an instant the artist, for such indeed he was, was at work.

"It lacks but a company of brigands to render it an Italian scene," observed a third.

"It is said," remarked the fourth, "that the wildest and most beautiful parts of Italy are the haunts of banditti; and yet is it not strange that we should associate that with the Italian brigands deeds of heroism and romance? The robbers of all other countries have no interest for us, unless it be those of Germany, and they only exist in the many old legends which have been translated, as it were, for our special wonder."

"True," observed the painter--"novelists have done much for the Italian brigands, and one of our own writers has thrown around them a degree of interest which is only excelled by the beauty and elegance of his style of narration: I allude to Washington Irving--his, indeed, is a gifted pen. But look yonder! what can be more beautiful? That form lacks but the human form to render it second only to the Para--Hal what do I see?"

"What do you see, Smith" was the general exclamation.

"By heavens, gentlemen, I saw glaring at me through the under-brush a pair of as rascally-looking eyes as the most fastidious Lavater would wish to study from."

"It must be a panther; they abound hereabout."

"No, gentlemen--they were those of a boy that I saw."

"Nonsense."

"There, I see his head: it is like a bunch of carrots."

"It is a fox, Smith. Stand back--I'll fire."

"Hold, for heaven's sake! There, I see a man--we are among banditti!"
And so they were. In a moment the spot where the boy was first seen was covered with armed men.

"Silence, men—not a word—not a motion—leave this business to me. Stand close."

They obeyed, while their Captain walked leisurely down the hill. When he came within hearing distance, the eldest of the four travellers commanded him to stop. There was in the sound of his voice a something that carried awe along with it. To Lafitte it was not fearful but it emanated from one his equal in courage and daring.

"Stop, I say, or by the Eternal! you die," and the pistol was on a dead level with the robber's breast.

Lafitte spoke—"With me, gentlemen, it is needless to contend: I am surrounded by men who know not what danger is, men of the most reckless daring—men, if you please, of crime. So yield sirs, without hesitation."

"Trifler!" exclaimed he who had now assumed a degree of command over his companions, "do you think that I am to be intimidated by Lafitte—the successful pirate and robber? out of my path, or I'll crush you," and he dashed his horse toward the spot where Lafitte stood for the purpose of taking a route leading around the base of the mountain, and in a direction from the spot where stood the giant figures of the robbers. His three companions followed. Lafitte darted to the centre of the road, gave a shrill whistle and—the next moment lay bleeding on the ground. The unerring aim of the stranger took him, as the sailors say, between "wind and water." A dozen rifles blazed forth their fiery contents, but without effect, and the four travellers were seen in the far distance leaning over the necks of their horses, which were going at a rate that defied pursuit.

The band gathered around their fallen leader: he was wounded severely. "Stop the pursuit, Brown: had I known the man at first I would have acted differently."

"Who are they? to whom do you allude?"

"His name is—raise me up gently, gently boys—his name is—easy boys, I am badly hurt—his aim is deadly—that man—the one I mean who fired at me, was General Andrew Jackson."

There was a dead pause—every eye fell to the ground, and Lafitte was carried on the shoulders of four of his men into an inner room of the cave.

CHAPTER IX
Sick bed—Love and treason—Hatching mischief—Bobby's usefulness—the last scene—the drop curtain to these passages.

Lafitte lay on a bed in a chamber of the cave, suffering almost the agonies of death. The wound was a severe one, and added to mental suffering, it rendered his situation truly distressing. Where was Rebecca, the Jewess? Did her presence cheer the sick man's spirits? Did her smile lull his pain, or her delicate fingers dress and solace his wounds? No! there is a mystery about her—a change had come over her reality of life; her actions appeared to Lafitte of the most extraordinary nature. She seldom visited him and when she did, it was with a sullen air, and reluctant step. Still, was Lafitte kind to her, and for this kindness she became still more mysterious in her conduct toward him. The business of robbing went on as usual; a man by the name of Brown acted as Captain. Brown was a much younger man than Lafitte, tall and athletic; and in his youth had received a liberal education. Brown committed a forgery to show his knack in the free use of the pen—before he was one-and-twenty, killed his particular friend in a duel—before he was twenty-two, assassinated a man in Girod street, New Orleans, and performed numerous other acts, which, if he had lived in any other country except this, would have raised him to a considerable eminence in the eyes of the law. Brown was a base villain; he had not a redeeming trait. Lafitte knew this, but such were the men to suit his purposes, while he was able to command them, but not when he lay on
a sick bed. It is said that honor exists among thieves; so it does, but it is that kind of honor which lives only in the atmosphere of fear and dread; for now that the chief was unable to govern, there was not a man but would have slit his windpipe for the sake of his gold, and the prospect his death would hold out of getting command.

Brown and Rebecca were seen together frequently; their conferences were long, and seemingly interesting; there was also mysterious whisperings among the crew. All this did not escape the lynx eye of Lafitte; he looked upon Rebecca as one, to use the words of old Solomon, already "doomed." If he was apparently asleep to this evident infidelity on her part—or careless as regarded the subject upon which they seem to dwell in earnest and sometimes loud conversation—there was one who watched them with more interest and exercised a cunning in his vocation which would have done honor to the wiliest politician of the age. This spy on the actions of Rebecca and her paramour was "Red headed Bob."

Night had drawn its curtains close around the earth—the lamps of heaven had gone out one by one, and the great chandelier of creation had been quietly lowered down, its pale rays lingering in the west. The wind swept over the hills, and murmured mournfully in the valleys. The waters of the Cumberland rolled away toward the Ohio, while the wolf howled through the west, sole monarch of the American woods. Jonas lay thinking—such nights as these were calculated to harass his wounds and render him fitfully unhappy.

"Who's there? Close the door quick, Bob—is it you is it?"

"Yes sir," and Bob carefully secured the door. "Sir does not this secret door lead through the rock to the top of the mountain?"

"It does, why do you ask?"

"Is the passage known to any of the men—is it known to Rebecca?"

"No, not even to her—and how you became acquainted with it, is to be explained."

"That will I—but not now—you are in danger, sir."

"I know it."

"Know it, and lay here so calm and contented?"

"I have warm friends in the band."

"No sir—no one but him who stands before you."

"Hal say you so? Place that iron bar over the door hinges—that way, now keep me up—there, gently boy—where are my pistols—fix a pair—that's right—boy, your fortune is made, whether I die or live. Hand me pen, ink and paper—see, I sign these checks—if I fall, fill them up to the amount I have in bank—it is yours—if I live, we will enjoy it together. Sol there is nothing like business."

"But sir—why think of such things now?"

"Business, boy, before pleasure—I am glad the treachery of Brown is made manifest—equally so, that my men are ungrateful. Now tell me how you found it out: hand me that flint—there—now the powder horn. See that your pistols are in order—if they come, boy, we will be prepared. Now proceed—tell me about it, eh, go on."

It was evident that the mind of Lafitte was wandering. So thought Bob, who, during the time Jonas was talking and fixing his pistols was gazing upon him with lack lustre eyes, scarcely knowing what to say or do. Being called upon, however, to account for his knowledge—he spoke as follows:

"I need not tell you, Captain, how Miss Rebecca and Brown have been kissing each other all about the cave 'afore the men and behind their backs—I need not tell you this, nor need I tell you much more of what I see'd. But this kissing I considers as nothing, for it is an innocent amusement—but when it smacks of treason and murder"—
"Murder--murder, Bob--eh?"

"Yes sir, murder. I overheard Brown say to the men at table, that your lungs were all shot away—that you would never rise from this 'ere bed. But you are risin' ain't you? And then he said as how you must be stabbed to the heart to put you out of pain, and make him Captain."

"The h--Il, I must!"

"And who do you suppose was to do it?"

"Brown himself!"

"No!"

"Smith?"

"No!"

"Jenkins?"

"No--none of 'em--why, Miss Rebecca!"

"It cannot be!"

"True."

"Did she consent?"

"Not then, because as how she was not there; but I followed Brown out—he sought her—they had a long conversation. I could not hear it all; but this I heard—'A cup of poison, administered by your hand.'"

"Umpf!—Bob, I wish you to mix among the men; give then to understand that I cannot live;--to-morrow we will quit this place and mode of life forever. I will seek a city and try to live honestly, if I can. I would leave my men as they are—willing to serve under another, and that other, Brown. I will not see one of them, no not one; now leave me—but go out of the secret door, and be cautious. The horses you can have ready by early dawn."

"And Rebecca?"

"Can go to the devil."

Before the sun was up on the morning after the above conversation, Lafitte, the Pirate of the Gulf, the terror of the west, with his friend, red-headed Bob, were far away from the Robber's Cave.

In a lonely mansion, (bearing evidence of wealth about it), situated on a little rising ground, a few minutes walk from Baton Rouge, Louisiana, lay the body of a man, resembling more the picture of death, than the stern reality of expiring life. His eyes were fixed, and his once stern features relaxed, although bearing strong evidence of much mental and physical suffering. The time was December 19, 1819.

"I say, Bob, it is all up with me now."

"I am afraid so, sir. I cannot flatter you as I have for the last ten days."

"So Brown, you say, was hanged in New Orleans last week?"

"Yes, sir, as I told you—for the murder of Rebecca."

"Hush, Bob, do not mention her name; it is associated with many a dark deed committed on the high seas. Bob listen! I know her history; know how and when old Solomon became her guardian; it is a long story; let it pass. She is gone, where—if preachers tell truth—I too must render up a fearful account. Talking of accounts, has the lawyer finished the papers?"

"All finished and recorded."

"Then Bob, you are a wealthy man."

"Thanks to your kindness, and our industry, I am."

"Ha, ha! Bob—I cannot help laughing when I think of our pardon. We fought, though, fought like men, didn't we? We are honest now in the eyes of the law. Government has pardoned us. ha! ha! But Bob, do you know that for years after the Battle of New Orleans, I felt as if I would much rather have been at the head of a few bold spirits, and sailing under the bloody flag on the high sea. It was my element, Bob, and damn me, if I don't think I ought to be buried there. Ha! what a pang that was! Bob, I am
dying. Death is doing its work here---here, Bob, hand me that glass. I cannot drink; my throat is choked up---there's another broadside from Death's battery. My eyes grow weak---Bob, your hand, I'm cold---chilly; shut that window. Hark! I hear the cry of Pirates!---up with the black flag! Ha! they prepare. No quarter, men, let no one escape to tell the tale! Clear the deck! hoist the

Death's head! no quarter! Be in at the death. Hal hal! Here the wretched man fell back, completely exhausted; the man he called Bob raised him up---then laid him gently down.

"He is dead," were the words he uttered; and red-haired Bob gazed for the last time on the features of Lafitte, the Pirate of the Gulf.