

# Democratic Banner.

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## THE AVENGER OF BLOOD. AN AMERICAN TALE OF THE ALLEGHENY MOUNTAINS.

Embracing a series of well authenticated Facts.

BY A CITIZEN OF TENNESSEE.

In the year 1812, when the western portions of the great State of Pennsylvania, embracing the mountainous region between Chambersburg & Pittsburg, presented little more than an unsubdued and unbroken wilderness, through which the great road from Philadelphia to the head waters of the Ohio passed—and at that period it was a lonely and dangerous pathway to all wayfarers between the eastern cities, and the great western wilderness of Ohio and Kentucky.

To the best of my recollection, this road passes over five distinct and lofty ridges of mountains, with here and there a sparse settlement of hardy mountaineers and hunters, and with occasionally, between these infant settlements, some solitary and remote booths of the wandering hunters, deserted, ruinous, and forlorn, except during the hunting seasons of the year. Of all the solitudes in the universe, those seem the most deserted, chilling, & awfully alone, which bear the marks of human habitation—and of having been deserted by their former inmates forever.—Of the five ridges of mountains, over which the road just mentioned, passed to the westward, the middle ridge was by far the highest; and was called by the wagoners the Backbone, by way of pre-eminence—and because the word "Allegheny," in the Indian language, means "the parent or father of mountains."—From the eastern brow of this lofty middle ridge—there resided at the period I speak of, an honest, wealthy Pennsylvania Dutchman, whose name was Stotler, who kept a public Inn—in viewing the rugged and precipitous landscape to the eastward, the eye was lost in a bed of interior bald and barren ridges, which seemed to extend to the very verge of the horizon, like the waves of some vast ocean, behind from a bold headland, or towering mountain peak. To fact to make use of a poetical figure, the whole surface of the eastern horizon, seen from the eastern brow of the main Allegheny ridge, seemed like the billows of a tumultuous ocean in a storm—suddenly arrested by the fiat of Omnipotence, and fixed forever in their various positions and attitudes! The whole scene was, indeed, sublime beyond any power of language I can command.

The house in which Stotler resided was emphatically a Dutch house, one story high, framed and painted; with a porch along the whole front and dormer windows in the roof. And here I am compelled to regret two circumstances—first, that Stotler is an unamplified, unpoetic, and un-novel writing cognomen; and second, that he had no beautiful and accomplished daughter, with a significant "curl of the upper lip," that might make the heroine of a surpassing love story episode, in the following tale of veritable robbery, murder, and public execution. But I must try to get along without these agreeable ingredients, on the principle that "truth is sometimes stranger than fiction."

During the winter of 1812—'13, on a journey between Philadelphia and Pittsburg, I stopped at this orderly and well regulated tavern, to remain all night.—There was much company there in addition to those who arrived at the time I did, but it was of an orderly travelling character, composed chiefly of western merchants, and we were not much in the way of each other. It is a characteristic of the western people, not only to congregate together, when in a land of strangers, but to be communicative with each other freely, in the hope of discovering any ancient friendships, or even distant relationships, that may exist among them—and to hear the news. And besides all this, your real western man, unlike the sullen English cockney, who refused to save a drowning man because he had not been introduced to him, is an inquisitive and intelligent animal, merely for the sake of imparting and receiving information on all subjects; in the words of counsellor Curran, who applied them to the character of the Irish people, the western man is proverbially bold and fearless, and he therefore confides in others without hesitation. Among the guests who surrounded the fire after supper, was a gentleman of apparently superior information, and who seemed to be much of a literary character; and the conversation happening to turn on the dangers encountered by travellers; he voluntarily related to the company the following narrative, with the assurance that it was substantially true and we all listened with attention.

"About a year ago," said he, "a gentleman well armed, from the direction of Pittsburg, and its adjacent rich stock country, stopped at this house, with a large drove of fattened bullocks destined for

the Philadelphia and Baltimore markets, who said it was his intention to bring back the proceeds in money, to pay up his contracts—and that he would probably return in such a length of time, naming the period. His name and dress, and also the place of his residence, I have now forgotten; but he rode a white horse of very superior spirit and power—and I mention the peculiar color of his horse, because it was that which afterwards saved his life. Some weeks after he had been gone, and about the time of his expected return, two Canadian Frenchmen, on foot, well dressed and well armed, one carrying a brace of pistols, and the other a rifle, came from the direction of Pittsburg and stopped at his house for breakfast. They told Stotler they had no money; that they were travelling to Philadelphia; and a variety of other matters—and that they had lost their horses. He immediately ordered breakfast for them, and they ate heartily—conversing at the same time in the French language, and in an under tone. One of them was a large, stout man, and the other was a person of less size; they both had much the air of gentlemen.

"After they had breakfasted, they started eastward in the direction of Philadelphia; there was a light, soft snow on the ground, and the walking was somewhat heavy and difficult. They had not proceeded more than two miles, when in the distance, from a rising piece of ground, they discovered a traveller advancing toward them mounted on a white horse.—"This wayfarer and his white steed, they imagined, were the objects of their long pursuit; and, no sooner was this fancied discovery made, than they suddenly turned their faces again to the westward, and appeared to be travelling in that direction. The solitary traveller on the white horse soon overtook and accosted them in the most friendly manner. On being questioned they told him they were on their way to Pittsburg, and were destitute of the means of defraying their expenses, and desired him to assist them on their way. His reply was what might have been expected—it was precisely what always may be expected, by any destitute wayfarer, travelling in the far west. He told them he was a poor man himself, and burthened with the heavy charge of a numerous and helpless family of children; that his name was Pollock, a laboring farmer by profession, and that he lived on rented land, not far from the residence of Gen. Arthur St. Clair, in Ligonier valley; that he had but a very small sum of money with him, but that he would share it with them, in bearing their expenses, to the last cent. Conversation on this and other themes, brought the two vagabond Frenchmen, and their generous and noble comrade, Pollock, back to Stotler's house of entertainment. Here poor Pollock ordered refreshments for his stranger companions and himself, and paid for them from a leather purse but very poorly and meagerly supplied, and the travellers started on their way westward, in company.

"During the two visits these strangers had made at Stotler's house, their appearance, conduct and characters, had been narrowly and closely scrutinized by a brother-in-law of Stotler's whose name was John Lambert; a blacksmith by trade, and with whom I afterwards took pains to become acquainted! He was a man of somewhat remarkable manners and appearance, clothed in homely garb, a little over common stature, mild and gentlemanly in his address, and of a taciturn and observant disposition. His complexion was smooth, dark and swarthy; his features regular, strong and formidable—and his hair, curly and very dark, would have reminded you of "Warwick's black locks," as described by Shakespeare. His eye, however, was the most remarkable and leading feature of his countenance—it was black, deep, firm, and resolute in its expression—and evidenced a mind of great moral power, and unconquerable resolution.—In fine, he appeared to me to be just such a man, as would, on an Indian frontier, where every kind of ambush and savage warfare were to be dreaded, have been an object of alarm, to the enemies of the white settler and his family. This man, obscure and almost unknown in his condition, an ordinary mechanic by trade, and one who had never perused a page of history, or even a novel or romance in his life, was, nevertheless, a man of high moral and mental endowments by nature, and one of God's nobility! There are thousands of such men in this Republic; men who would have done honor to the peerage of Charlemagne, or those of any of the other Courts of Europe, ancient or modern; and yet our novelists and romance writers, infatuated with the coarse, savage and barbarous characters of the feudal ages, must resort to them for their fictitious heroes & heroines of modern days! The stern realities of American biography and history, affords models of true greatness, equal, if not superior to those of any other country; and until our public writers can be induced to celebrate the lives and achievements of our own distinguished men, the public literary taste of the country shall be depraved and degraded, and we shall have neither national literature, biography, nor history. The renown of all nations depends on the elevation of their literature, and the recorded

achievements of their great men, of whatever rank in social life. And this man, John Lambert, whose person and character I have just essayed to delineate, might have been the rival of Washington, had he been placed in a similar condition in life. But I must return to my narrative. "After the departure of the two armed French foot-pads, with Mr. Pollock in company, Lambert remarked to his brother-in-law that he did not like the appearance of these two Frenchmen; that he distrusted their intentions respecting Pollock; that their countenances and characters seemed to him to be mysterious, dark and sinister, and that he had come to the determination to follow them for a few miles. Stotler dissuaded him from this resolution, as being futile and not well founded; told him that no harm would result to Pollock from travelling in their company, and desired him to dismiss his suspicions, as he was himself convinced they were innocent and worthy men.—"While Lambert and his brother-in-law were debating these points on the front porch, Pollock's horse suddenly turned a corner of the road, and advanced toward them at full speed, without his rider!—When the horse came up to the porch, the whole tragedy was fully explained—the horse's neck and shoulders, as well as the saddle and saddle-cloth, were covered with blood, and no doubt could exist as to Pollock's murder! The servants and young men of the house were immediately mounted on horseback, and sent to summon the neighbors to assist in recovering poor Pollock's body, and to assist, if possible, in capturing the offenders. Neighbors in such a country as this was at that time, included all who resided within ten or twelve miles of the place designated.

"A little after the middle of the day, ten or twelve of the hardy dwellers of the mountains had collected themselves on Stotler's porch. They were all as Lambert thought, men of no ordinary energies of character, though ignorant and illiterate. But Lambert was in error—mere roughness and uncouthness of exterior manners and deportment, never yet covered a soul of fire, or a mind of elevated and genuine courage, and hence your brutal, coarse and clownish boasters, are almost invariably poltroons and cowards, when placed in posts of known and imminent danger. True courage is never the companion of brutal feelings, coarse sensibilities, and inanity of mind & soul. There are two kinds of courage which we see everywhere exemplified; one is of Physical, and the other of Mental, or Moral origin. We see them manifested in all the departments of history. The former depends on health, strength and muscular energy alone; and the latter on the preponderance of mental power over the attributes of mere brute matter. The company which convened on Stotler's porch, for the purpose of capturing the murderers, were mere men of physical courage—some of Salmigundi's men—"chuck full of wrath and cabbage," who would fight or encounter danger no longer than their bellies were full; as will appear in the sequel of this narrative. With Lambert as their chosen leader, who had made a solemn vow to capture or destroy the murderers, the company started on foot and well armed, in pursuit of the blood-stained fugitives; horses however active and powerful, could be of no use to the pursuers among the rocks & precipices of the mountains, covered as they were with snow.

"When the company came to the scene of the murder, no doubt could exist as to the fact; the snow was so much trampled, and greatly discolored with blood, and disclosed traces of a deadly struggle of life and death; from all appearances, the struggle must have been long and dreadful, and evinced the obstinacy with which the poor victim of assassination must have contended hopelessly for life. But what must have been the reflections which rushed on the mind of this lonely and deserted victim of perfidy, when overcome and sinking under the hands and savage hearts of those monsters of iniquity and blood! His wife, his children, his poverty, the cold charities of a merciless world; must have filled his mind with horror and dismay; the physical agonies of death, with all their excruciating pangs, can be but as nothing to such mental sufferings: it is said, by persons who have been recovered from drowning, and apparent death, that at the moment of suffocation, immediately preceded utter unconsciousness and insensibility, the whole series of events of their lives, seemed actually present to their minds and memories. This may be, and probably is the fact, with those who die with all their faculties in full strength; but it can hardly be the case with those who die of ordinary diseases, and linger long on the confines of eternity.

"It was evident to Lambert and his company that the body of the deceased could not be far removed from the scene of death, and in a few minutes search, the corpse was discovered. It was wedged in between two large rotten logs, which had been rolled out of the road, and covered with the rubbish of leaves, brushwood, and rotten pieces of wood, and bore the marks of a most sanguinary butchery.—Two balls had passed through the body, and in the breast and side were found the marks of several vital stabs, given appar-

ently with a large hunter's knife. One of the hands of the deceased was thrillingly and horribly disfigured, it seemed as if in the conflict of blood, Pollock had grasped the blade of a large knife, which had been drawn forcibly through his hand, and nearly severed the joints of his fingers! His clothing was much rent and torn in the combat, and his countenance bore the indications of great agony in his last moments.

"A counsel was now held by the company, as to what was next to be done; and after having sent the dead body back to Stotler's house, Lambert proposed an instant and vigorous pursuit of the murderers, before their trail (foot-tracks) would be effaced from the soft snow. The proposition was assented to by the whole company and in a short time the trail of the murderers was discovered, bearing a little west of north: the snow was light and unpacked, and exhibiting their foot-prints with clearness and certainty.

"When the company started on the trail, it was late in the evening, the sun not more than two hours from the horizon, and the whole country over which the trail of the fugitives passed known only to hunters, was a wild and trackless wilderness, tangled with an undergrowth of laurel and brushwood. The pursuers, however, kept the track, with industry, perseverance and resolution, until sunset, and the approach of darkness. The mountains now began to assume a more wild, bleak and dreary aspect; the sound of winds through the leaves, boughs and branches of the trees, seemed to be fraught with the loud howl of the wolf, and the shrill scream of the panther, and the distant and sullen roar of the mountain torrents, seemed ominous of solitary and unknown dangers! To the ignorant and uncultivated mind, the sublime and inscrutable mysteries of nature, are always the causes of superstition and terror, and more particularly so during the hours of night and darkness.

"Lambert now discovered, as the night began to set in, that the courage and resolution of his companions were fast ebbing, and that they should soon be brought to a dead stand still, and he called a halt for further consultation. The result of this deliberation was that each individual found or framed an excuse for returning home, and Lambert was left alone to pursue his dangerous and lonely enterprise.

"He was, however, "doubly armed," first, with the justice of his cause, and his consciousness of rectitude; and, second, with a good rifle, tomahawk, and hunter's knife; and with these he pursued his precarious journey—not regardless of consequences, but prepared to meet all events that might occur. With the assistance of starlight, reflected from a bright surface of snow, he was enabled to trace the foot-steps of the murderers; and when the moon arose in full splendor, a little before midnight, he found no farther difficulty or uncertainty in pursuing his way.

"After travelling in a north-western direction twelve or fourteen miles, he came to an old road nearly parallel with the one he had left; this was called the "Old Pennsylvania trace," between Philadelphia and Red Stone Old Fort, situated on the waters of the Monongahela river; it was the first road ever opened between Eastern Pennsylvania and the head waters of the Ohio river, and the ancient land-marks, "three chops and a blaze," were still visible by daylight on the old trees. These ancient roads and land-marks, I have been informed, were adopted by the old surveyors and openers of roads in the West, to propitiate Heaven in favor of the first settlers of the great Western wilderness; and hence the first chop was for the Father—the second for the Son—and the third for the Holy Ghost; and the blaze was merely designed to attract the eye of the observer. When Lambert struck the old trace road, he discovered an ancient and ruinous hut, or log cabin, nearly opposite to him, on the north side of this dilapidated and solitary road. The moon had now nearly gained her meridian, and beamed with full and unclouded splendor on the snowy peaks of the distant mountains, and on the cold and solitary landscape just before him. There stood, in solemn silence and seeming derision, the hut which contained, probably, the objects of his long and laborious pursuit; and, to satisfy the anxiety of his mind, respecting the actual presence of the murderers, who would be on the alert, and prepared for defence of the most desperate character, he had to make a silent and cautious circuit round the hut, at some little distance from it, and as far as possible, out of distinct view. Pursuant to this plan, he found the foot-prints of the two villains up to the door of the house, and that there were no foot-prints from the cabin in any direction.—These circumstances put at rest all doubts and uncertainties, and Lambert had nothing now to do but to ACT, in the last scene of this sanguinary drama, to capture the murderers or lose his own life.

"He had just seen, through the shattered clap-boards of which the door was made, a feeble light in the only fire place the house could boast. The house consisted of but two apartments, which were without any partition between them—and only distinguished from each other by a step or two down from the west to the east room. The poor old woman, who had resided for years on this deserted road, and lived by

selling cakes and beer to casual way-farers, slept in the west room, into which the only door into the house opened from the road; and the east room, containing one bed, as it afterwards appeared, was occupied by the two villains of whom Lambert was in pursuit. After stepping a few paces back from the door, Lambert gave a loud cough or two, to awaken the old woman—and boldly advancing to the step, and stamping the snow from his feet, desired admittance in a feigned voice—and telling her at the same time that he was a stranger who had lost his way—that he was nearly frozen to death in wandering about—and that he wished her to re-light the fire to warm himself.

"She immediately obeyed, and soon replenished and relighted the fire, whilst he remained outside the door, under the pretence of drobbing his feet of the snow—his real object being to await the light of the fire, that he might fairly encounter the villains, whom he had just heard talking, in an alarmed and startled tone of voice, in the lower room. When he stepped over the door sill, into the bright light of the fire, his first salutation was the loud report of a musket from the lower room, the two balls from which struck the door post, an inch or two from his head! No time was now to be lost. Reserving his fire, he sprang down to the lower room, yet reeking with the smoke of the burned powder; and using his tomahawk with dexterity and effect, he knocked the villain senseless who had just fired on him and whom he had believed he had killed. In the interim, while these events were passing, the smaller villain of the two—for Lambert had felled the larger one on the floor with the heavy blow of his tomahawk—had crept through a small unglazed window, immediately above the side of the bed, and was running off in the bright moonlight, directly to the north. Lambert soon discovered him, and mounting on the bed, as the fellow was running directly from the window, in a straight line, clothing in hand, brought him down on his face, with two balls from his own rifle, planted precisely between the shoulders of the horrid miscreant!—Then, seizing with a giant grasp the sturdier villain, whom he had felled to the floor, and who seemed to be reviving for further combat, Lambert placed his knee on the fellow's breast, and asked the old woman for a rope. This she furnished by cutting a bedcord from one of the bedsteads. With this Lambert bound the fellow, and dragged him to the fire place in the upper room. Then, absenting himself for a few moments only, he brought in the dead man on his shoulder, and placed the corpse side by side with the living murderer!

"When the day dawned, the work of death being finished, Lambert prepared to return home, having accomplished in a few hours and with his single arm, what would have immortalized any hero of the ages of chivalry. When deserted by his faint-hearted companions among the mountains, this man of iron resolution and lofty moral energies, never faltered or betrayed the least hesitation of purpose. His were truly the virtuous and noble fixedness of unshakable resolution, in the cause of justice and humanity—the lion's heart and the eagle's eye! The orator in the forum, the statesman in his diplomacy, the law-giver in his legislation, and the hero in his battle fields—have each the stimulus of public admiration, urging him on to the achievement of renown;—but what was a man of obscure and lowly fortunes, like John Lambert—who knows that when he dies his name and memory will perish, to incite him to virtuous and noble deeds?—I answer, the strengthening consciousness of superior rectitude, the divine impulses of a pure and noble mind, and the exalted and imperishable sentiment of immortality."

Reader, John Lambert was a christian—a true believer in the divine mission and identity of Jesus Christ! This, at once, solves the whole problem of his heroic virtue, in the cause of justice and humanity, just detailed to you.

"Lambert now accepted the loan of a horse from his aged and venerable friend, the poor old woman of the mountains. He next placed his living captive on the animal, after having pinnioned his arms behind him, and secured his feet below the horse. And then, fastening the dead body of the miscreant he had killed, across the shoulders of the horse, and firmly lashed it to its companion in iniquity—he gravely led the horse with its burthen of murder and carnage, to the house of his brother-in-law. Here he found many persons assembled from all sections of the adjacent country, among them the chop-fallen deserters of his heroic and successful adventure—who met, in the contemptuous countenances of the assembly, the didactic reward of timidity and cowardice.

"The captive murderer was soon sent to jail, under a strong guard; and in due course of time expiated his crime under the gallows.

"This was the last robbery and murder ever perpetrated on this wild and lonely road. Instead of the rich plunder the murderers had expected from the widow of the white horse, they found but three or four dollars in the pockets of poor Pollock, whom they had mistaken for the veritable rich drover—who arrived at this place a few days after the tragedy, with his equip-