

# THE JOURNAL.

"ONE COUNTRY, ONE CONSTITUTION, ONE DESTINY."

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## TERMS

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From the Public Ledger.

NEW BRUNSWICK, April 12th, 1841.

### Robinson, the Murderer.

This unfortunate man, now confined in the jail of this place, under sentence of death for the murder of Mr. Snyder in December last, will expiate the horrid crime for which he has been doomed to die, on Friday next, the 15th instant. Of this individual much has been said and written since his arrest, but particularly during the progress of his trial, which, if true, portrays one of the most callous and unfeeling hearts imaginable. Conversations have been detailed in which his remarks have exhibited the most marked perversion of the human mind, and evinced an entire disregard of his own awful condition. How far these stories may accord with truth, I cannot certainly determine; but whether they are all well founded or not, I have seen enough of the man to satisfy me that he possesses many most singular and deplorable characteristics. It is true that during his trial, when all the particulars of the bloody deed were detailed, he never quailed, and that on more than one occasion he laughed, and generally throughout the whole trial manifested the most cool and heartless indifference to the scene immediately involving the issue of life and death to him.

Robinson is an ignorant man, devoid of any mental cultivation, whose feelings and passions are easily wrought upon and burst forth without any restraint in the most foolish and wicked declarations and acts. Since his sentence his conduct has not materially changed, although on one or two occasions he expressed a desire to see religious persons. On one of their visits he seemed in a measure subdued, and after being strongly and urgently exhorted "not to die with a lie resting upon his soul, but to confess his crimes and seek forgiveness of God," he manifested a desire to disclose to the jailer, Mr. Cowenhowen, all the facts and circumstances attending the death of Mr. Snyder. He subsequently made a confession to Mr. C., in the presence of two or three citizens, one of them a Clergyman—none of the details of which have been made public. Several contradictory stories have been put in circulation, as parts of his confession, but I feel assured that nothing as given by him in his statement has transpired.

One day last week he allowed a Mr. Patterson, an artist of this place, to execute his likeness in miniature, during which time he sat with the utmost composure, and when it was finished expressed his satisfaction at its striking resemblance to him. It is said to be a perfect delineation of the features of this wretched man.

His wife has visited him almost daily since his sentence, and although she does not openly manifest her grief, it is apparent that her mental agony and sorrow is of the most intense and burning character, and preys heavily upon her system.

Robinson has thus far indicated no fears of death, and on one occasion declared his preference for death to imprisonment. During his confinement he has been treated in the most feeling and humane manner by all the officers having him in charge, and the jailer, Mr. Cowenhowen, who resides with his family in the jail, has been unremitting in his attentions to him.

In consequence of the smallness of the yard attached to the jail, being altogether inconvenient for the execution, that solemn act will take place in front of the jail, immediately on the street, under cover however, so that the law providing for executions in private will be strictly conformed to. A strong fence will be erected, extending from the front of the jail to within ten or twelve feet of the opposite side, which will be guarded, for which purpose the military have been ordered out. Numerous personal and written applications have been made to the Sheriff for permission to witness the execution, but every one has been peremptorily refused.

There is very little excitement upon the subject now, and it is believed there will be but little on Friday, the citizens being satisfied that the laws have and will be faithfully executed, and justice to an outraged community fully obtained. Our citizens generally believe that Robinson has been guilty of other murders—many of which, it is thought, when death stares him in the face, he will confess to.

From the New York Herald.

### PETER ROBINSON—HIS APPROACHING EXECUTION—HIS CONFESSIONS.

NEW BRUNSWICK, April 12.

I have just left Peter Robinson's cell. His father was with him, and cried bitterly. Peter said, "It's no use to show so much sorrow, father; I don't deserve it; can't feel it; and it's all thrown away on me." After his father left, he said, "What an old fool my father makes of himself; he comes here and cries; he goes home and drinks; and if he had brought me up properly I should not have been here now." I observed to him that he ought to show less levity, and be thinking of more serious matters, if ever he meant to.

He laughed, and said, "Oh, you know I've got four days to live yet, and the parsons tell me that the thief on the cross didn't begin to repent till an hour before he died, and yet he went to heaven they say; so I've got plenty of time. But old Judge Hornblower ought to have given me a little more time; I ought to have had a couple of months; however, I've settled all my worldly affairs now; I was a bit worried about them tools; but that's off my mind, and I shall be serious now, and prepare for death."

Here he paused, and mused for a few moments, and then burst out laughing. "What are you laughing at, Peter?" said I.

"Why, sir," he replied rather sorrowfully, "I made up my mind to kill that man entirely for that \$75 on that note, and nothing else. It was the first note I ever gave in my life, and I didn't know how to meet it, and I was worried to death about it, and I so resolved to get it by killing him. The fact is, I've been in hell's kitchen ever since I began building that house; I sunk all my money then that I'd saved; I knew I could never get enough to finish it; every body kept seizing and selling my furniture for debts I owed 'em; and at last I got the horrors. But I'd known that things were going to turn out so, I'd have played the rogue on a big scale. Why I'd have laid a man dead at the corner of every street in New Brunswick."

As he said this, his eyes flashed fire. I then said to him, "Peter, didn't you intend to lay a trap for old Mr. Edmonds, and murder him too, if possible?"

He smiled bitterly, and hissed out between his hard set teeth, "I'd know he was going to have me arrested, I'd have made him show his manual strength," and here he burst out laughing, and rejoined, "I wouldn't mind selling my body to the doctors, only I shouldn't like my boy to know it. I wonder what they'd give for it. There isn't much flesh on the bones."

At this moment the jailer and one of the judges came into his cell; they said a few words to Peter, and as they were both very bad, Peter laughingly said, "Judge, as you and Conover are both pretty bad, and I have a good head of hair, I'll give you my scalp after next Friday; you can divide it between you; here's enough for both."

"Peter, said the Judge, 'you ought to have more anxiety about next Friday than you have.'"

"Well," said Peter, with provoking sang froid, "I do think about it with a good deal of anxiety; I'm to be hung that day, and if the Sheriff don't fix the rope right, I shall have more anxiety; I hope he won't tickle me with that rope; if he does, I shall be sure to laugh. I hope he'll grease the ropes so that it'll come well under my ear, and then put a 56 under my feet, and so pull my head off at one jerk. But it's a shame to coop me up and hang me in this little place, where nobody could see me. I expected, at least, to have 10,000 people to see me hung!"

I then asked him if he didn't feel sorry that he had killed Mr. Snyder.

"Yes," said he carelessly, "but not on my own account, nor on his, but I feel sorry for his wife and children."

"But, Peter," said I, "they charge you with other murders."

"Oh, yes," said he sharply, "but I didn't kill the pedlar. And though I might go and tell a whole lot of crimes that I never did, I ain't going to make myself out a greater rogue than I am. I've been bad enough."

"Did you never think of escaping?" said I.

"Oh, yes," said he brightening up, "and if I was to get loose you'd see the prettiest fox chase you ever saw in your life; but they haven't got bounds enough in New Jersey to catch me though."

Here the jailer, who had gone out, again returned. Peter cried out, "Here, Conover, this snow storm makes it dreary and I feel cold; pile on the coals, and make the stove fire red hot; I'm going to a warm place in the next world, and I want to get used to it."

"Peter, Peter," said the jailer.

"Oh, well," said Peter, "I know I must put on a sober face, because we're going to have a sober meeting here presently, and they'll ask me if I've thought seriously about my latter end, and I shall say, Oh, yes; deeply I deeply!"

Here I left him, as a Quaker lady entered the cell to pray with him. It is a little singular that the bunk on which he slept in his cell he made last April, being hired as a carpenter to do the job. One prisoner has since hung himself on this bunk, in this cell, and Peter has attempted to do so, he has made three different ropes of his blankets, tore up and twisted hard, and hid them away; but the jailer has detected him and found them. He once hid the towel to make a rope of, and begs for a cravat or handkerchief, but they allow him none, and have taken away his bunk, so that he sleeps on the floor. He seems afraid to hang himself at night, and always hides his head under the blankets the whole night long!

NEW BRUNSWICK, April 13.

As I promised you yesterday, I here-with send you the confession of Peter Robinson, who is to be hung on Friday next. On entering his cell this morning I found him lying on his face on his pallet, reading the Bible. After some conversation on other subjects, I asked him what kind of curtains he had up in the windows of the first floor at the time of the murder. He replied in these words: "I had long curtains all the way down the front windows. But the reason we put on long curtains in front was not because I thought of murdering Snyder, but because we were so bad off. You see, I had sunk all my money in that house; and for every little debt that I owed of a few dollars, people kept all the time a suing on me, and seizing my furniture, until I had little or nothing left. And at last I was so worried about it, that it nearly drove me crazy. Every body who came by the house would stop to look at it, and how it was going on; and then they would be a gaping in to see what furniture we had; and I was ashamed to let them see how poor we were, and how bad off we'd become for furniture—most all our things being sold—and so I put up them long curtains to prevent their seeing, and for no other reason."

As Peter said this a tear trembled in his eye, but he rallied and went on:—"Why, sir," said he, "I had all the little money I'd made sunk in that little house; and I'd been a very hard working man all my life; and I felt that rather than have that house taken away from me, as I expected it would be, I'd as soon lose my life along with it."

He then went on to tell me the story of his past life, which I took down from his own lips in his own language, thus:

### Peter Robinson's Life and confessions.

I was born in Chambers street, New York, on the 25th of November, 1808. My parents were in limited circumstances, and neither of them had but a very imperfect education, consequently I was not taught much by either of them. My father, who is still living, was any thing but a steady man; he used to drink too much liquor; he did not live with my mother, so there was no one to control me; and like most of the boys of New York I grew wild and unmanageable; not going but very little to school, and learning very little but mischief. When I got to be about 12 years of age my mother sent me away from home to live with Mr. Quinn, in Parcipanny, on the Parcipanny river, Morris county. Here I was to learn the chair-making business. This was a very pretty place, but the situation was a very unpleasant one, as Mr. Quinn was a hard master. He was a man of what I call very little moral character, because he was often used to going on Sundays to the woods to get trees for his work; and he never went to church himself, nor yet sent me.

As I understand that Mr. Quinn has

charged me with burning his barn, I will now state all the facts in relation to that circumstance. Mr. Quinn was in the habit of sending me before daylight in the morning to his barn to feed the horses, for them to be ready to go to the woods. One morning I went out of the house with a lighted candle or lantern for this purpose, and when I went into the barn I took the candle out of the lantern and stuck it on the top of it. I was busy, then, cutting either some hay or some straw for the horses when Mr. Quinn came into the barn and instead of saying anything concerning how I had put the light, he attempted to flog me. Now, I was a boy that never would submit to a blow from any body, not even from my own parents. So we had a pretty sharp scuffle; and in the struggle the lantern and candle was knocked over and the hay caught fire; and in this way the barn was burnt without any fault of mine; for though I was wild and obstinate about them days I don't know that I felt any thing vicious about me; though I have since.

Well, I was taken up and examined the same day by the owner of the barn, and I was acquitted entirely of that charge, in the presence of Mr. Quinn some six or nine months after this, but he used me very badly indeed. He gave me no schooling, taught me nothing about his business, and so before the year was up I left him, with hardly any clothes to my back, and went back to my mother's in New York. I remained with my mother about six months, and, as I didn't like to be idle, and she couldn't afford to keep me without doing something, I went to live with Mr. Barnes, a cabinet maker, in the city of New York, to learn me the business. I lived with Mr. Barnes about four years, but he failed entirely to learn me that part of the business which I had intended to learn, so I left him at the end of four years.

During the time that I lived with him, I used to run a good deal with the fire engines, and mix up with rowdy young men, till I learnt pretty much all about all kinds of wickedness among young men and young women that was going on in New York, but yet I'd never committed any crime against the laws, nor I wasn't half as bad as the rest of my associates and companions. All this time I hadn't had any schooling of any kind, and, though I had sometimes been at the Methodist Churches of a night, yet though I went there more for a kind of frolic with young girls than anything else, and so that didn't do much good any how. I've had a little to do with women too in my time, but I'll tell you more about that by and by.

Well, whilst I was working with Mr. Barnes, I used to hear the young fellows talk about going to sea and seeing other countries—Europe, and the West Indies, and Florida, where all the pirates used to be; and they described Florida as a beautiful place, and I'd just learned to read so as to be able to read all the books about pirates that I could come across; and so I took a notion that I'd go to the South, to Florida, to the West Indies, or somewhere to sea, so that I might see a little of all kinds of life, for I was tired of what I had been doing. And I've wished that I had gone to sea and learned navigation, for then I'd been sure to have turned pirate, I'd been one of the bravest and most brave men, and killed as many men as any of them.

Just about this time that I was turning all these things in my mind, I went down round the docks in the East River in N. York, pretty low spirited and not caring much what became of me, as I hadn't had anything that was of use to me to do in New York, and I see a board put up on a very handsome built schooner, saying that she was going to sail in a few days for East Florida. I went on board and asked the captain if he'd ship me as one of his crew; he asked me what I could work at, and I told him. He then told me I should be of no use as a sailor, but as I was young and strong, and understood working on timber a little, I might be shipped as a workman to go to Florida, and there be employed to cut down live oak timber, for which I was to receive \$16 a month and be found in our board and so on. Well, in consequence of this offer, I shipped on board the schooner with some others, and sailed down the bay of New York around Sandy Hook, with a light heart and an empty purse, to try my fortune in Florida.

I was about eighteen years old at the time. There was about one hundred of us altogether that went out to Florida in that vessel; but when we got out there we was used so badly, that I and two more left the party and went to a place called St. Augustine; here I made arrangements to work for a gentleman named George W. Woodruff; we went one hundred miles back into the country towards Pensacola, on to a plantation he had; here I worked principally at making cotton gins; for this I received \$40 a month, and was

found. I remained here from the time I left New York till the time I left Florida in all about nine months. I then took a vessel and went straight back to New York, with rising about \$300 with me.

After I got back to New York I went to see an old sweetheart that I had, a pretty young girl, named Margaret—who lived in Reade street, where her mother and my mother lived; and who used to make dresses for the theatre; she had played me a trick or two before I went off to Florida. We used to go regularly to the Duane Methodist Church; but because I would join as a volunteer to engine No. 23 that stood in Broadway near the hospital, she refused to go out with me two or three Sundays and pretended that she had to go to her aunt's, when all the time she was at home. In revenge I tried hard to seduce her for it, and meant to have left her then; I come pretty near but I didn't quite succeed. But I did with one or two others though in New York that I'll tell you of by and by.

Well, I staid in New York that time only about three or four weeks; I carried on pretty extensively though round among the young girls, for I was always fond of 'em, and the young men of my acquaintance. I then left New York for good, as it were, and came over to Piscataway where my brother-in-law had bought a house, and got me to help him to repair it. I did so, and worked for him about two weeks. And it was during this two weeks that I came to New Brunswick for the first time in my life; and I wish from my heart that I'd never seen the place, for I have had hardly a happy day in it since I first come here, and I've worked harder than any galley slave ever did in the world. And I hope you won't stay long in it, for if you do, and they should happen to get a mortgage on to you, you're gone! (as he said that he burst out into a loud laugh.)

It was about the year 1828, I think, when I first came over to see New Brunswick, and I first went to the store of Mr. Vanderhoof, to buy some tools to work with. I was just leaving the store, when I happened to see some looking-glass frames; I told him that I understood making them kind of articles; he asked me my name and where I lived. He then gave me some of that kind of work to do and I took it with me over to Piscataway. And this was the cause of my making up my mind to stay for good in New Brunswick. I worked on so for Mr. Vanderhoof for about nine months, and then I moved over into New Brunswick. Here I continued to work for some time for Mr. Vanderhoof, until at last I saw my wife Ann, who lived cook at the City Hotel, I fell in love with her, and we were married in 1829. We began to have a family soon afterwards, and I could turn my hand to pretty much every thing in the way of carpentering; and at last, about the year 1834, I commenced to work regularly at carpenter work, and worked on at that down to the year 1839, when, unfortunately, I thought that lot of ground of Mr. Snyder, 30 feet, for \$850. But before I get into the history of that transaction, and the manner in which I settled it by murdering Mr. Snyder, I must tell you two or three other little things which escaped my memory just now. I don't want you to suppose that I had no education, because I went to school for two quarters in New York, with Mr. Barnes' son; he agreed to send me to school when I was bound to him to learn the business. Mr. Barnes lived in Greenwich street, between Robinson and Barclay streets. I was bound to him till I was 21; but one of his sons was tyrannical and domineered over me, and I couldn't get my money from him regularly; so one Saturday night I went to him and begged very hard for some money to buy clothes; at last I got about \$16 or \$18 out of him, and he says, 'now, Peter you'll be sure to be here bright and early on Monday morning;' says I, 'oh, yes, I'll be sure and be here bright and early.' And that's the last that he saw of me for three or four weeks. He went to my mother's to get her to coax me back; but I wasn't a boy to be coaxed; no how they could fix it; for I went all the time pretty much on my own hook; and so I cleared out for Florida.

I don't think I should have ever left N. York though if Margaret hadn't played a trick or two on me—and as I thought, kept company with another young fellow, at the same time that she was pretending a great deal of love for me. However, I always made up my mind never to be deceived twice by a girl or a man either; so off I set for Florida. In Florida we hadn't no church to go to, or else I certainly should have gone; for before I left New York I'd got into a habit of going to the Methodist Church in Duane st., pretty much regularly twice every Sunday; for as my mother lived in Reade st. it was close by. So we used to spend our Sundays by hunting deer and game, gunning and fishing, and sometimes by catching moccasin snakes and rattle snakes, which

I could catch as fast as any body. No used to have a good deal of sport of this kind on a Sunday, and I was considered about one of the very best marksmen there were about there. I should have stayed a good deal longer in Florida if I hadn't got into a scrape about a very handsome young Indian girl, which our boss kind a wanted, but who I happened to get hold of. She took a fancy to me, and the consequence was, that she soon got into the family way; and I had to clear out, or have my brains cleared out, so chose to do the first, and left Florida for the first and last time. That's all the travels, I ever made of any consequence; and a woman was the cause of my leaving both places.

I forgot to tell that I had two sisters, both older than me; one is dead, and the other disappeared some years ago; we believed that she went to the south, and died there. None of us have ever heard anything of her from some years. There were three of us boys. I am the oldest and am 32 years of age; William is the next, he is about 26 or 27; and James is the next, he is about 22 years old. My father was a tobacco spinner by trade, but didn't live with my mother for 18 years. My father was a good deal given to drinking, and didn't take no care of his family—but my mother was an uncommonly hard working, industrious woman; she used to take in washing and to go out to day's work. Both my parents were born in New York county; my father was born in the city, and my mother was born at Kingsbridge. I lived altogether nearly two years with Mr. Quinn, at Parcipanny, and never learned any good of him the whole of the time that I was there. The reason, I thought, that made that son of Barnes' so domineering was, that he used to go out a good deal of frolicking at nights, spend or lose a good deal of money; and then come home, and vent his spite upon the poor apprentices next morning.

### PETER'S CONDUCT ON TUESDAY.

During the afternoon of this day, Peter behaved most curiously. He first gave audience to the Rev. Mr. Pilch, of Newark, prayed with him, and appeared very penitent. Soon after, a painter came to take his portrait. He kept laughing while the man was painting. "Why do you laugh, Peter?" said the painter. "Because you look so much like old Chief Justice Hornblower with them spectacles on!" and I stared him right out of countenance when he delivered the sentence to me. Besides, I cannot help laughing when one rogue looks at another." After a pause, he said, "Oh, if I could only get a chance to speak the day that sentence was given, I'd a pumped right up on that table, and I wouldn't a got off of it for one hour, at least." When the painter told him that he had a curious mark and smile near his mouth, he said, "Oh, yes, you know I've got an eye like a snake in the grass; and I can smile and murder all the while. But if my father had dropped in the room before me here, I must have had to laugh, to think how he let me go to ruin while he drank, and now he comes to rebuke me. Why, it's like Satan reproving sin."

Some clergymen went in to see him this afternoon; and after he had told one of them how he had been doing and how he had felt, the parson told him that if that was all, he would go to hell for all that. Peter became very indignant and exclaimed, "Then what am I to do? I've read that book (pointing to the Bible) I've tried to understand it as far as my humble abilities will let me; I believe what it says; I've confessed my crime; I've confessed that I've done wrong; and I've prayed to God to forgive me for it; and I know nobody else can forgive me if he does not; I've forgiven every body that ever did me wrong, as I hope to be forgiven; I owe no body any ill will in the world—I have no hard feeling against a human being; I know I must die on Friday next; I know that the sentence is just; I've suffered too much poverty and misery in this life to care very much about leaving it; I know I'm not properly prepared to die, and I pray to God to prepare me before I die; I believe in the Bible and I believe in God; and I believe that he's more merciful than men are. And if I alter all this, I am to be sent to hell, why I think it's very hard, and I should like to know what I am to do or what you want me to do. At any rate I don't want any of your prayers, and I don't want you to come near me again. And if Heaven be such a place as the Bible tells me it is, why I'm very sure that you won't go there and that there'll be very few like you to be found in any part of it."

NEW BRUNSWICK, April 14th.

As this unfortunate man will be hung in about forty eight hours, I think that his statements and confessions in relation to the murder, may be relied upon. I, therefore, without any further ceremony, send you the following confession in regard to the murder which I took down