

A. S. Murphy

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## Domestic.

From the Washington City Gazette of Sept. 19. DYING CONFESSION OF JOSEPH HARE.

Mrs. Joseph Thompson Hare, one of the mail robbers, who was executed at Baltimore, on the 10th of September, 1818. Written by himself. Baltimore, published by Joseph Barling, 1818.

[The publisher states that he has the MS. in Hare's hand-writing. We have chosen such extracts as will give the reader a connected view of the principal robberies; the minor parts, with the reflections of the culprit, are omitted, on account of their length. No person in this country, before the publication of this pamphlet, could possibly have believed that the United States contained such an extraordinary and daring bandit as Joseph Hare is represented to be. If we are to give credit to the story, (and there is but too much reason to believe a great portion of it true) this hero of the highway equals, if not rivals, in perpetration of daring felonies and atrocious exploits, the most notorious robbers that ever provided the envious of Spain, Rinaldo Rissidini or Charles de Moor were nothing to him.—The only way to account for the possibility of Hare and his associates obtaining so much booty in gold and silver, is the custom that used to prevail of travellers from New-Orleans and elsewhere transporting through the wilderness (before bank notes were in such general circulation) the proceeds of their merchandise in specie. The total absence of dates, however, throughout the confession, throws a strong suspicion on many circumstances, though what is related as having taken place in this neighborhood carries with it some color of probability.]

I was born in Chester county, in the state of Pennsylvania, and when about 20 years of age, I went to Philadelphia, and sailed with an old friend of my father's, a sea captain, to New-Orleans, and worked my passage there.

In New Orleans I suffered a good deal of trouble, for I had no money but what I made by dangerous thieving and gambling. At last I enlisted in the Governor's guard, and at this time I associated myself with some desperate fellows who were in the habit of knocking people down in the streets, and robbing them. The first person we robbed in this manner was the captain of the ship Ocean, in company with a gentleman of the city of New-Orleans. I took the captain's watch for which he must have paid fifty guineas in France. As I was playing at cards some time after I having staked his watch against three others, in came a French gentleman dressed in uniform, and asked me if I was not an officer belonging to the Governor's guard, as he had seen me at the Governor's dressing in uniform; I told him I was; he said he had occasion for proper officers to get back some money he had been robbed of last night. It was I and my companions that had robbed him, and had got a great deal of money from him. What made us stop him was our hearing his money jingle in his pockets and seeing so much powder in his hair. This was good encouragement to us; and as for me, I should have been loth to change my place for a colonel's commission.

But now, as we feared we should get notorious in New-Orleans, and saw every few days a company start from New-Orleans on horse and were told they carried a great deal of money with them through the Choctaw and Chickasaw nations to get to Kentucky, Tennessee, and Pittsburg; we thought we should do better on the highway. But before we went, we made two other robberies. One of my men took 257 dollars from a countryman; he told me, when I came up, it was all that he had; I gave him up 10 dollars in silver. The same evening I went and stopped a Spaniard, and he gave me his watch and 17 dollars. He served poor, and I left his watch and part of the money where he got it again. Now I saw it was slow and dangerous work too, to make money in the city of New-Orleans. So we all agreed to get some good rifles, and three first rate horses, that were swift and genteel. We left the town and went as far as Nashville in the state of Tennessee, without meeting with any thing. We raked the wilderness from the Muscle Shoals to the Choctaw nation. One day when we were much fatigued with hunting, (we depended on this for our eating) we came across a company of four men. I had heard work to save their lives. We stopped them; we had hid all the horses from the sight of the

road; I stepped up to one that had holsters before him, and told him that I had twelve highway robbers under my command, and the first man that moved should be blown to hell.—The dry cane made a great cracking; it was so thick on that spot that a man could not be seen ten feet from the road. It was a cloudy day, and every thing looked very black and gloomy, and the sound of the cane, though it did not frighten me, made me feel very strange and out of the way; my two men said we had not painted our faces, which we ought to have done, and that we should be known, and it was better to murder rascals, than let them live and tell tales on us.—An oldish man spoke and said, "For God's sake spare my life." I told him it was well thought of; that if there should one man move till I gave leave, they would all be landed in eternity; and with this I called to one of my companions to come up and take the money. Up stepped one, with a pair of double-barrelled pistols hanging in a belt buckled round his body, and a dagger hanging on his breast in sight, and a good rifle in his hand. I told him not to fire on them, until they should make battle. We took all that they had, and after I had talked a little while longer with my men, we set them on their road.

A day or two before this, while we were hunting in the woods, we came across a spot that seemed a very good retreat from any danger of being overtaken by justice, and a very comfortable home too. It was on one side of a cane brake where the cane grew very thick and tall and would have concealed us from the best eyes, near the Chickasaw Bluffs.

Here we laid ourselves down to sleep, as we had slept but little for two or three nights back. As for me, I could not sleep, but lay looking sometimes in the fire we had kindled, and sometimes at the stars, and listening to the wind in among the cane brake, which made such a mournful, rustling noise, that I often thought something or somebody was coming through the cane after us. So I got up, and went to see if our horses were near, which we had let loose near the brake; and after I found them I employed myself counting the money, while my two companions slept on as if nothing had happened. I had not suffered the two men to open the mouths of all the bags, to see what amount was in them, there was one bag that they would not open, when it was got out of his saddle-bags, "Lord bless my soul," and give a very heavy sigh. I remember I thought he was frightened for his life, and told him I had never asked any man for his life and if we were not so strongly armed, he would take mine; but that he should not be hurt. A good deal of the money we took was in gold and specie, and in bags of buckskin. The one he sighed for, had 180 pieces in it, and a good deal of them gold. I made each man a belt, and put all the gold in three belts, made out of a deer's hide that I bought from an Indian that lived in the Cherokee nation when he was at home. The whole that I had to my share from that robbery came to 700 dollars.

We lay in the mountain a month, in which time we lived on wild meat, wild turkey and deer and racoon. I was in Nashville once in that time; I took my horse with me, and my money I hid where no man knew.

It was no great while after this, that we robbed another party in the Cherokee nation; two of them were from St. Augustine, and one from Charleston, S. C. three in company. I rode in company with them. One evening I told the men I was agent for the Cherokee nation, as they knew no better, and found out all their business. They spoke Spanish and broken English; they had a horse with a pack-saddle on him, with a large pair of saddle-bags lashed on the pack-saddle. One of the men had a watch that would run, he told me, seven days without winding up, and asked me if I would change my horse for it. I told him "no." My two men were in a horse five or six miles from the Chickasaw nation, with a man that called his name Hayfoot, a half breed Indian; they had taken their horses to his house, which stands between Bear Creek and Tennessee river. I rode on before my company to inform my men that we might likely get something from these men. One of my fellows would hardly hear me to the end, so greedy was he after the pack-saddle I mentioned. We left the neighborhood of Bear Creek, took to the great road again, and make as fast as possible after the company I had left, which I was much afraid we should miss. About twenty miles from the house of Thomson, who was known in those parts at that time, I overtook the company again. This Thomson is a white man, married to a squaw. We made off into the woods when we got the travellers in sight, made a bend, and in a cane brake just off the road, we painted our faces like the Indian when he is going to war. The party was pretty well armed; I rode up to them—they all started very much at seeing us, as we showed our arms and looked very threatening. I spoke

to them in the Creek tongue, of which I knew a few words, as if I had been an Indian. They did not understand me. One of my men asked if they could "parler Anglais." They stopped, and spoke broken English. I told them we were Indians, that did not think it any harm to take money from white people; and if they raised one of their arms to fire on us, we would send them to eternity, every man of them. One of them said, take every thing we have; we have more at home, and only wish you to be civil to our persons. The two men I had with me, stood still with their rifles cocked, and each had his pistols at his side and a dagger. I took away the arms from the travellers, who made no more resistance. On the pack horse we found 300 doubloons and 704 pieces of different sizes, and a large quantity of gold in bars, six inches in length and eight square—30 weight of it. With the owners I found 74 doubloons and 5 silver dollars, and 400 French guineas, and 67 pieces, the value of which I could not tell, till I weighed them. I got 12 or 13,000 dollars, altogether, from the company, all in gold.

On the fifth day after this we reached our cave again. Shortly after this I left the cave, and on my way met a man on horseback, with a rifle on his shoulder. I joined company with him, and he told me he had been at St. Louis to buy land. In a few moments we came to a beautiful spring, and dismounted to take a drink. He laid his rifle against a tree, asked me to take some brandy and water with him. Whilst he was stooping to get some water from the spring, I seized his rifle from the tree, and told him I was a high-way robber and would take a drink of water with him after I had counted what money he had; that I never drank brandy or any kind of spirits, as I always had spirits enough in me, without taking brandy, and that if he did not instantly deliver to me every cent he had, I would send him where he would get something hotter than brandy. He was very much alarmed and trembled worse than I do now under the gallows. He delivered up all his money to me. I got from him 2700 dollars in gold and a small bag of silver, but as I never wished to bring a man to poverty, I gave him back the bag of silver and his watch.

We went to Nashville, Tenn. I bought a black boy, and two horses and a gig, and after a few days we started to Knoxville together. From there we went to Lexington, Ky. and Here I swapped my two horses calls of Ohio, a gentleman from Georgia, for a black boy and a gold-repeater, and my first black boy I sold to one of my high-waymen for four hundred and fifty dollars.—My two robbers having sold their horses, we left this place in a flat topped boat, and went down the Ohio to Natchez, and from there to New Orleans.

One night we lost so much at the gaming table, that we saw something was to be done. I set my black boy free in New Orleans, which place we left, after purchasing three good horses, and started for Baton Rouge. Here I got a passport from Governor Grandpre, and intended to rob on the road between Baton Rouge and Pensacola.

We started from Baton Rouge, to find a fit place for our camp. About 80 miles from Pensacola, and near a track that led to the Gold Mines, we found a cleft of rocks that formed an admirable cave, which no man visited before, I expect since the flood. Game was plenty, &c.

We hunted here nine days; at the end of that time we began to want powder and shot, and thought that two of us should go to Pensacola to get it. I was the one to stay at home. They were away nine days. One who married there then began to tell me of all the news he had heard at the hotel in Pensacola, where he had put up at. He said that he had seen a Spanish gentleman there, from old Spain, that was going from Pensacola to Baton Rouge in ten days, and that he had seen that he had a good deal of gold about him. We immediately put our arms in order—I had a pair of pistols, a Turk, a cutlass and a rifle; my two robbers had each of them a rifle, a pair of pistols, and a dagger. On the eighth day, I saw a company pass, as I watched the road, and directly went back to our cave, had our horses caught and saddled and we mounted them, with our arms, in pursuit of them. On the next day we came up to them. My Spanish talking man, who had seen the old Spaniard in Pensacola, said that it was the right company, for he knew the old Spaniard by the "cut of his job." I rode past them to see what arms they had, and saw as I past them, there were five in company, and that they had two pair of pistols. I turned in the woods to let them pass, and waited until my two robbers came up. I had tied a handkerchief about my face, when I passed them, so that they could not know me; we all pointed our faces red, and having primed our pieces again started after them. We came up to them, and passed them, ten or fifteen paces, when we suddenly wheeled round, and presenting rifles told them we were highway robbers, and that if they made any resistance or offered

to run, until they had delivered up their money to us, we would stop them with powder and ball. I told them to dismount from their horses, or we would fire and bring them down. They hesitated at first, but seeing us resolute, with our rifles cocked, and presented to them, and ready to fire, they got down from their horses. I then stepped up to them with my dagger in my hand, and took from them two pair of pistols and three daggers; my two highwaymen stood off about 15 feet with their rifles cocked, a dagger in their hands, and each a pair of pistols belted around them. I would not suffer them to speak to each other whilst I was robbing them, as I did not understand their lingo, and was afraid of some scheme. We got 40 weight of gold from this company of five, and \$28 in silver. My share of this robbery amounted to 233 doubloons (3,728.)

We were forty miles from our cave, and 120 from Pensacola. It was 4 o'clock in the afternoon when we left them, and at 48 minutes past seven we reached our cave, and found a large grey wolf in it. He had been drawn there by some fresh meat we had left in the cave. He sprang 7 feet down from the rock, but we put two balls in him, as he jumped. We staid in our cave six weeks before we went on the road again.

One day as I was walking near the road, I saw a gentleman pass, with a waiter behind him, both armed. The waiter had a broad sword hung to his side, and a pair of pistols. This was a noted sign for money. We mounted our horses, and overtook them at 32 miles from our camp. The man in front asked us who gave us leave to carry arms and assault people on the highway? I told him I was an officer (I had a uniform on;) that war was declared between Spain and the United States, and that he must surrender all his money or we would put powder and ball into him. Seeing our pistols cocked in our hands, they dismounted and gave up their money, after taking their saddle bags and portmanteau. We found 774 pieces of gold in the portmanteau. I got for my share 534 pieces of gold, amounting to \$5,300. We had been in this cave altogether about two months, and had made during that time 26,700 dollars. In a few days we started for Pensacola, and put up at the boarding-house of Madame St. Valcy. Our time passed with great pleasure, and we staid 5 months. There never was a week without a ball being given by one of the French or Spanish gentlemen in town. One day one of them asked me if I had heard the news. I told him no. He thought he was going to it was only that I and my companions picked out to give the next ball, on that night week. I told one of my highwaymen to give a ball at my expense, as he could speak their language. We then left Pensacola, and when we arrived at Baton Rouge, the governor sent a priest to bring us into the garrison; this priest was his interpreter. Governor Grandpre asked me if I was from the United States. I told him "No, Sir," and taking out my pocket book, gave him the passport which he had given me 8 months before, to pass through the Spanish dominions. He looked very earnestly at us, and said we had been passing through the provinces to see the fortifications, and that he would send us to the mines, unless we could give a more satisfactory account of ourselves. He gave us in charge of an officer, until he got some word from Pensacola. We were put in the guard house, and our money from us. I hired a man to go to Pensacola, and to get a true account of us from the house where he had boarded, and to bring a letter from some Spanish and French officers, who boarded with us in the same house. On the fourteenth day my messenger returned, accompanied by the son of the lady at whose house we had boarded. He was known to the governor and had a number of letters from the French officers in favor of us, and he gave so good an account of us that the governor ordered us to be released, after it had cost us 2000 dollars.

We got on board of a barge and went to Nashville, Tennessee. Finding there was a man going from Nashville to Georgia, we left the town, and lay in wait for and robbed him. We had no horses, but as he came along the road I rushed from the woods, and seized his horse by the bridle. I told him he must alight and deliver up his money. Seeing that we were well armed, he dismounted very peaceably and gave up what he had. I got 970 dollars in bank notes and silver.—We determined now to get some cave between Knoxville and South West Point, as we thought it would be a good place to rob. I therefore left my two robbers at a tavern in Knoxville & went to Nashville, to make some previous arrangements. Upon my return, I fell in, and joined company with a driver, on his way to Virginia. As I supposed he was pretty flush of money, I determined to rob him. When we got into Franklin county, Va. a favorable spot pretented itself, about 15 miles from the court-house, when I robbed of his horse and 350 dollars, and rode off as fast as possible. The night after I was taken, I had retired to bed, at a house on the