

PUBLIC EXECUTION.

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

OF WM. SHACKLEFORD, ALIAS J. P. DAVIS.

He Records His Life—And Gives an Account of His Crimes—A Thrilling Warning and Appeal—By the Man Whose Last Day on Earth is To-day

Raleigh Daily Chronicle, March 28th.
Wm. Shackelford, alias J. P. Davis, a sketch of his life, and a full confession of some of his crimes, written by his own hand. This autobiography was secured at the expense of pains and money.

PREFACE.
This autobiography appears as it came directly from the hand of Davis, except that a great deal has been left out that would have been of little or no interest to any one; and his description of the part he played in the seduction of two innocent women has also been omitted, as well as much that was said of divers ministers and others, on the ground of its personality.

He wrote the following pages while I was acting as night-watch and hunted them to me for publication.

JAMES E. BURKE.
THE AUTOBIOGRAPHER.

Having decided to write out a brief sketch of my life, I do so with no hope of realizing any benefit therefrom, but that it may serve as a gratification to all who feel an interest in me; and that it may be a satisfaction to those who at any time have endeavored to promote my happiness here.

Feeling, as I do, that I am wholly inadequate to the task, I undertake it with fear, lest I should fall short of the object in view; but hoping that, notwithstanding its imperfections, it may in the order of Providence prove a benefit to some who may be saved from like errors by its warnings. I will endeavor to bring forth a short history of my life, in the few days that now remain to me, I may be able to consummate the work before me.

My father was of Irish descent, born of wealthy parents twenty-one miles from Marion Court-house, South Carolina, on the road leading to Georgetown, at a place known as the Red-house, in Britton's Neck. My grandfather, who was a rice planter, died about three weeks before the birth of my father, and my father was left motherless at the age of five days. He was taken and raised by uncle John Baker, who turned over to him his father's estate at the age of nineteen years. At the age of twenty my father married Mary S. Davis, I am their oldest child, having been born in the year 1848. I have one sister, seven years younger than myself.

I received a moderate education, not that my father was not able to have given me a collegiate education, but I had to stop school to go to the army in 1864, at the time when all men from sixteen to sixty were called into service. I was mustered in under Col. Cash, at Florence, and was turned over to Col. Dukin and received arms at Atlanta, Georgia.

I was in the army but a short time, having been discharged, after an examination by Drs. Culpepper and Doggett, as unfit for service on account of protracted sickness.

After the war I resumed my studies at school, but did not go long before I met a young lady, Miss Eliza Potter, for whom I formed a very strong attachment, and we were married in December, 1866. We have had eight children born to us, seven of whom are living.

I was licensed to preach at Soule Chapel, S. C., by W. C. Powell (P. E.) Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in the year 1870, after which I continued to labor by aiding the preacher in charge, and the local brethren within the bounds of the work until the fall of 1880, when I was appointed by the Rev. Dr. Rosen to take charge of the Conwayboro circuit, but did not do so because of a supply having been sent to them after conference. But in view of this appointment, I disposed of my farm in Marion and bought a farm on the Lake Swamp, in Horry county, to which I moved in 1887.

Owing to bad crops, I was unable to pay for this farm, and lost it. I then rented a farm within half a mile of my father, who had also moved to Horry county. While living here I made my oldest daughter submit to me by threats of killing her if she did not, and when she was about seventeen years of age she gave birth to a child.

This child was supposed to have been born dead, but that was not so. It was a well developed child, but in order to cover, as far as possible, the shame and disgrace that I knew would rest upon us, I took it, without saying to any one what I was going to do, and placed it in a bag in which I put two heavy bricks, and carried it just at dawn of day to the lake, about a quarter of a mile from the house, where I got into my boat and paddled out into the middle of the lake, and let the bag and its contents sink to the bottom of the deep.

None, of course, knew that this thing had really happened to my family, but they believed it so strongly

that they spoke of taking action in the matter, and to avoid any further trouble from that source, I moved, in the winter of 1884, to Marion Court-house, South Carolina, where I worked in a coach shop, and afterwards at the cabinet business.

I afterwards moved to Darlington, S. C., to put my children in the cotton factory, and subsequently taught school for some months in Williamsburg county. While residing here I was licensed to preach by the Free-Will Baptist Church. But those who had induced me to join the Free-Will Baptist Church did not have the pleasure of my company, nor the benefit of my help long, as I soon after moved to the Six-mile Place on the road from Georgetown to Charleston.

This was in December, 1885. This was a lonesome place, but afforded opportunity for sport, of which I was very fond. I doubtless would have remained here for a length of time had it not been for two circumstances. The first was that in May, 1886, just as I was about to realize something from my turpentine trees, I lost all by fire. The second was that a few weeks after this my eldest daughter gave birth to a second child, which I also killed. This created a stir in this section, and as the people threatened to push the law to its fullest extent, I saw no way of escape but to leave the country.

I then came to North Carolina, and after traveling through a number of counties in the eastern part of the State, I found work with a missionary Baptist preacher, and during my stay with him he talked me out of my Free-Will Baptist notions, and I joined the Missionary Baptist Church and was baptized and licensed to preach in the summer of 1886.

I remained here only a short time; for hearing that threats were being made against me in South Carolina, I left my friend the next night without letting him know anything about it, from the fact that I had no excuse to render; but afterward wrote him, giving him to understand that I had gone home. Up to this time I had retained my true name, William S. Shackelford, but afterwards I gave my name as J. P. Davis.

I then went to Fay's Mill, Greensboro, New Garden and Winston, remaining in the country near the last named place until in January, 1887, when I went to High Point, where I met Mr. ———, a citizen of Davidson county, with whom I remained about ten months on the farm. In the fall of the year I was constantly engaged in protracted meetings among the Baptists and Methodists, at the close of which I attended a conference held by the Methodist Protestants at the town of Henderson, N. C.

After this I remained only a short time in Davidson, and then came to Durham, where I met J. D. Horton, with whom I contracted for the year 1888. I reached his house on Saturday night before Christmas, 1887.

Here I spent a very pleasant summer. Horton was especially kind to me, and even offered me indulgences that I refused to take for fear that I should not be able, if they were enjoyed, to meet my obligations with him—such as stopping the plow to visit with him through the week; and oftentimes when I had been off with him all night till a late hour, he would insist upon my sleeping and not going to work. But this I did not do, though sometimes it was all I could do to go, having travelled nearly all night without sleep. This I did for his gratification, not that I was profited by it at all, but, to the contrary, was taxing my physical strength almost beyond my power of endurance. He seemed to take pleasure in my company, and desired me to go. For this reason I went, not that I even wished to visit such places, from the fact that my wishes in that respect were fully met without having to leave the plantation.

Horton knew that I preferred to stay at home, and appreciated my seeming willingness to attend him on his visits. He would say to me sometimes when he wished me to go with him, and I showed some little indifference to it: "I know you would rather stay, but you have HER with you all the time; so come and go with me to-night."

And thus we lived in the enjoyment of whatever presented itself, whether to be ate, drank, or participated in, in any other way, until fall, when that sad and, to me, fatal occurrence took place.

I did not expect it so soon, though I had determined to have revenge for some abuse I received from him respecting the railroad work, and in reference to the way the tobacco hills were laid off in his absence. He cursed me for all that was low and mean until I trembled with pure rage. I then determined to have revenge, but did not think it would come that way. I had not decided as to how it should come. But was determined that it should come; and when this conversation about the railroad work came up, I rose up with a determination to put an end to it or to him. For this purpose I gathered the boot-jack with which to strike him down, but seeing my intention he dodged me by going around the bed. I thought he intended to go out of the room until I cooled down; but to my surprise he stepped to where the gun was standing, and with this prepared

to defend himself. I saw no danger, for I was too mad, and rushed upon him with the boot-jack, and as I came he tried to shoot, but the gun failed to fire, and as he turned to the wall for another shell I dealt the fatal blow.

I then left the room a few moments, not that I feared him, for I knew that the work was done, but that I might see that the way was clear. When I came back he was not dead, but in a dying condition. I then took the pillow, about which so much has been said, and placed it under his head, together with some guano sacks—not so much to render him comfortable, but to absorb the blood that was flowing freely upon the floor, and which I knew I would have trouble to get off so as not to leave any sign. His struggles were very loud, and as I knew that it was impossible for him to recover, and, in order to stop the fearful noise lest some one might hear it, I closed my fingers upon his throat. When he was dead, I placed the pillow case over his head and tied the bags over it to prevent the flow of blood. I then dragged the body to the window, and, standing astraddle of it, lifted his head out of the window, then reaching my hands under his thighs I pushed him out upon the piazza roof. I then rolled the body down to the edge of the roof and let it drop upon the ground. I then took the body to the barn, as I stated upon the trial, and, after taking the clothing off from it, laid it in the closet somewhere near twelve o'clock that night. On the next Tuesday night I dug the grave in the tobacco barn and laid his body in it. I carried the body on a wheel-barrow, as stated on the trial. His shoes, hat and the pillow I hid in the shuck pen until Wednesday night when I left, and after I had gotten off some distance, I thought of them and came back and took them out and carried them with me. I stepped about two hundred yards from the field gate and made a fire in which I burned the pillow, but nothing else. The hat I burned at a bridge not far from Chapel Hill. The shoes I carried with me knowing they would be brought back with me when I had been captured. I then went to Danville, Va., where I sought only the company of prostitutes, in whose company I spent every night, as well as part of every day, during my stay at that place.

My capture and trial are well known to the public. I am sensible that I have had a fair trial, and do not desire to live beyond the day fixed for my execution; for I regard that as the means by which the pain and torture inflicted upon my heart and mind, from a sense of shame and degradation that now rest upon me, will forever be at an end.

It is clear to the mind of any one, that, from the statements I have made, I am my own destroyer. Had I obeyed the kind and loving advice of an affectionate father and mother, or had I followed the precepts and example laid before me while under parental protection, I would not have been here. Nor would a loving wife so soon have been left to mourn the absence of her companion, around whom the strongest tendrils of her heart's affections cling with all their strength; nor would my children so soon learn the pain of shame and disgrace resulting from the crimes and the public execution of their poor, misguided father.

May God help any who may be tempted to indulge in similar crime to realize in time what must be the fearful result, and may they be saved from the shame and disgrace that must inevitably follow, and from an untimely and horrible death.

JAMES P. DAVIS

HIS ADDRESS ON THE GALLOWES.
Davis said: "My dear Friends: I had intended to speak at length on this occasion. Not that I would prolong my stay in this unfriendly world, but that I might by this means afford some gratification to those who have assembled to see and to hear. But as I have endeavored to write a brief, yet correct and truthful history of my life, with which I hope the public will be satisfied, and, owing to the solemnity of the occasion, and to the very unpleasant, yes, painful, circumstances with which I am now surrounded, I will endeavor to be brief, and deal only with the present. It affords me pleasure, even in this sad and trying hour, to be able to say that I attach no blame to any who may have been either directly or indirectly instrumental in bringing about this righteous administration of justice to one who, through his own free will, has become a violator of the laws of his country. Now, to my dear counsellors would I extend the gratitude of my heart for the manner in which they have vindicated my cause and labored to exonerate me from the accusation with which I was charged. I am unworthy of such a manly and heroic effort. To those who have labored to alleviate the pains of mental depression, or have in any way contributed to my temporal or spiritual interest, I extend the earnest and sincere gratitude of my heart; and this my latest hour would I invoke the blessings of Almighty God

to descend in rich profusion upon them and theirs. And now I would speak PRO BONO PUBLICO for the good of any who may be tempted by the seducing influences of the wicked one. Yield not to temptation, neither indulge in the gratification of carnal propensities, for this will not only result in filling up the cup of man's iniquities but will banish the last, lingering hope from his breast and expose him to the wrath of a sin-avenging God; and as the result of willful violation of the laws of God and man he will be brought through the righteous administration of justice by the law, to a painful and untimely death. The Lord bless this dispensation of His providence to the good of all that are dear to me, and may it be a timely warning to any who may be tempted to indulge in similar crime. I now commit my spirit into the hands of the Lord and all that is dear to me on earth into His gracious keeping. Amen.

Davis was asked if he still said that he used the bootjack. He replied "I certainly used the bootjack." Then turning to the Sheriff he said: "Take off the shackles." The shackles were removed and his arms and legs were pinioned. Davis then took some water for the second time after ascending the scaffold, and politely asked the Sheriff to excuse him for not first offering it to him. The black cap was drawn down and the drop fell at 12:46. The neck was dislocated and death resulted in a short time, without any contortions. The crowd was estimated at about three thousand five hundred.

May there never be another public execution in North Carolina.

WALTER BINGHAM FOUND.

He is Supposed to be Across the Water.

Three years ago the country was shocked with the particulars of a terrible murder near Raleigh. Walter Bingham, a deaf mute, killed his cousin, a Miss Tarlington, and at once left the country. The story was bloodcurdling, and if the perpetrator had been caught at the time he would no doubt have been hung. But he successfully eluded the officers and although traced to Cuba and South America was never captured. At the time a \$400 reward was offered for his arrest.

A Pinon detective man thinks he has finally located Bingham in Antwerp, Germany, and is so certain that he is on the right track that he has offered to go across the water at his own expense, if the government will reimburse him if the man is found to be the one wanted.

A letter to that effect was written to the attorney general, but he replied that he had no authority in the matter. The reward has been withdrawn, and unless the State cares to take some steps in the matter it will rest as it is.—Asheville Citizen

Why Men Marry.

Farmer's Voice.
A true man wants a wife to cheerish and love all the days of his life; but the true men who marry wives for those reasons are few and far between. The reasons for marrying are many and diverse. A woman is a good cook and the man who marries her feels sure he will always have a good table, and that he will never be ashamed to bring a friend home to dinner or supper with him.

Some men marry their wives because they are fine-looking and stylish, and will make a good appearance in society or preside nicely at their table.

Others are tired of boarding, and long for a home, and, knowing that a housekeeper and hired girl are expensive luxuries, they marry a woman who is thoroughly domestic, regardless of everything else.

Old men marry young wives to take care of them in their old age, and often pay dear for their old age.

Some marry wives for their fine voices, because they are passionately fond of music; others marry girls who are fine dancers, and still others are careful to find out that the girls are fine seamstresses that they marry, so that they will be able to do their own sewing—for sewing in this day and age is an expensive luxury if you hire it done.

OLD GABRIEL.

Death of a Good Indian at the Age of One Hundred and Fifty

At San Francisco, on the 16th ult., the Indian known as "Old Gabriel" died at the County Hospital at Salina. There is no record of his birth, but when the Franciscan missionaries came to California more than a century ago, Old Gabriel was then a grandfather, and as far as can be learned by tradition it is believed he was born about the year 1740, and had reached the age of 150 years at the time of his death. Gabriel never used liquor or tobacco and led a peaceful life. He had children and grand children by the score, but outlived them all, and no direct descendants survive him.

W. C. T. U. COLUMN

MOTTO.
For God, Home and Native Land.

PLEDGE

I hereby solemnly promise, God helping me, to abstain from all Alcoholic Liquors, including Wine, Beer and Cider, as a Beverage, and to employ all proper means to discourage the use and traffic in the same.

Reaping The Harvest.

By Ku Glover.

We were married in the early spring. Len Howard and I, and on our way to his western home we made a stop to visit his relatives. The mapes were fringed in pink mistiness and draped in sunshine, and all day from their fragrant top came the drone of happy honey gatherers. Out in the silent woods, pale hepaticas turned their faces upward, and golden adonises gazed steadily at the banks of moss at their feet. We brushed aside the rustling brown leaves and gathered great clusters of fragrant arbutus, waxen, and pink, and white.

Like a dream of loveliness were those spring days, and I little wonder that the new relatives-in-law were seen through a colour de rose. Especially so was Aunt Emily Howard, with her fair, rounded face, soft, gray eyes and tender mouth. Aunt Emily was a poet born, and loved all things fragrant and delicate and sweet; and would stand a moment with head bent and face lighted up with a happy smile, every time she went down to the well to draw a pail of water, and she would listen to catch a few familiar notes of the happy little brook running away down in the meadow beyond. She was a poet born, though she did not know it herself, and followed the lines in which she had been bred, the patient, plodding prose of every-day living.

It was as was our visit, there was one thing that marred it, and that weighed heavily on my mind. I noticed that great pitchers of hard cider were brought from the cellar several times a day, and that Hallie, the little ten-year-old son and only child, was allowed to drink as much and as often as he chose.

"Leonard," I said to my husband, "Please don't touch that hard cider again. I'm not afraid for your sake, but I want your influence against it on little Hallie's account. He is a bright, nervous child, and I dread to think what his future will be if allowed to go on as he is doing."

"O, every body here has cider. You know the apple crop is immense, and there are none too poor to have cider."

"Is any other crop immense?" I queried, but Len only pinched my ear and laughed.

I found that my husband's words were true. At every place we stopped, flaming pitchers of cider made their appearance, and before the visit was concluded I had become so conscious of the general favor in which cider was held, that my heart turned toward and I said my good-byes and turned my face westward without having once opened my lips to remonstrate with the parents of the many bright-eyed, ruddy-cheeked boys, although I had talked to some of the little fellows, advising them to leave sour cider untouched.

The engine bell rang and the crunching wheels were in motion. Clank! clank! clankety-clank! went the wheels; now lower, as we whirled over some level stretch, and again louder as we rushed between neighboring banks, rising to a deafening roar as the breakers opened the door to shout some undistinguishable name. In all the confusion and noise, ever close in my ear repeated the still, small voice, "You have been a coward, you did not do your duty." And the ponderous wheels cried, "Drank! drunk! drinkety-drunk!" like the voices of some mighty, avenging Fate. I tried to convince myself that it was no affair of mine; that the same thing had been going on for years, probably without disastrous consequences; that possibly, children so familiarized with such abominable tasting stuff, for abominable it certainly was to me, would not form a taste for liquor; in short, I tried all known sophistries to ease my conscience, and drive the haunting remembrance from my mind.

That bridal journey will always be memorable as a silent war with the subject of intemperance in general, and parental heedlessness to the evils of hard cider-drinking in particular. In the new home-making the subject was forgotten, or nearly so, or possibly buried under the bear-drinking-as-you-please atmosphere of the west.

As Len would not touch beer, or in fact, any liquor, and as the babies carefully avoided all things that "pap" did not do, I had in a measure forgotten that there was sin and misery and want in the drink-urged slums, and had an unconscious sense that such things were only for that low order of humanity that might almost have served as proof of Darwin's theory of evolution. That such things could touch people of sane minds and other than animal bodies, seemed hardly probable.

Twenty years went by before Len and I went back to visit the old friends. Ah, what changes twenty years will bring! Here was an old lady gone;

there was a grand-father's vacant chair, while the young fathers and mothers of that former time were now gray haired grand-parents.

There were very few changes among the Howards, further than that wrought by gray hairs and crow-tracks, and the absence of sons that were then boys, and the marriage of the girls. Very soon we found it convenient to visit Aunt Emily, for Len and I both remembered the pleasant days spent there. Uncle Leonard was in the yard splitting wood as we drove up, and straightening somewhat his bent back, he pushed back his straw hat and recognized us with, "Wal, Len Howard, of 'tain't you! I'd know you anywhere. When did you get back?"

I looked across the sunny porch, almost expecting to see the plump form and smiling face of Aunt Emily, but she was not in sight.

"Git right out," Uncle Leonard called, for your name know that Len was his uncle's namesake, "and I'll put up your boss. Guess you been hira' one at the livery, eh? Go right in. Yer Aunt Emily's somewheres about, and raising his voice to a high nasal pitch, he shouted, "Em'ly! ho Em'ly, come out here, some one's come!"

I ran quickly up to the kitchen door, and peeped smiling in. Away at the opposite side by a window, a thin, bent old woman sat, or rather, rose slowly, as I looked in.

"Is Aunt Emily here?" I asked, burrowing toward her; but before she answered me, Len passed me with long strides, and took the old lady in his arms.

"Why, Aunt Emily, have you been sick?" he cried, standing back, and gazing at her from head to foot.

"Sick?" she questioned, absently, "No."

"Don't you know Marion?" he cried, drawing me to them.

"Marion? I ought to remember her. I heard her tell Hallie to never, never taste another drop of cider. That was years ago."

"But don't you know her now? This is Marion, Aunt Emily?"

"Oh," Aunt Emily said, seeming to rouse herself to some interest, why, yes; she has not grown old yet. Sit down dear," taking my hand, "and let me put away your bonnet."

For a while Aunt Emily sat with us, and with a visible effort, took part in the conversation, but when her husband came in, bent and shriveled, but still keen and talkative, Aunt Emily took her knitting and seated herself by a distant window. I noticed that she knit but little, but sat with hands lying idle in her lap while she gazed away at the distant hills. Her hair was snow white, her face wrinkled and drawn, and her hands were shriveled like the hands of an old, old invalid.

Presently she went out to prepare supper, and I followed her. I noticed as I went back and forth trying to make conversation, that she watched the dusty road as it wound away under the shading birches.

"Is Hallie married, Aunt Emily?" I asked, as she took the snowy biscuits from the oven.

"Hallie? my Hallie? she cried, straightening up, while a deep flush surged slowly over face and neck. "Why, I had Hallie when you were here before, didn't I? I don't know," she added, as though bewildered. "I don't know. The other folks lived here then, you know. Harold lives with us. We are old."

I stood still in perfect amazement. Could it be possible that Aunt Emily was really insane? It must be; and yet she went about her work as methodically as the sanest person in the world. I crept out on the porch and crouched down in the low, slant sunlight, shivering from some intangible dread. Presently Len called me and we sat down to supper. I noticed that Aunt Emily ate nothing, but sipped continually from her cup of strong tea, refilling the cup again and again. After the table was cleared away Aunt Emily took her chair to the window overlooking the road and sat there, silent and motionless. As the night closed down we heard a strange shout, and Aunt Emily sprang instantly to her feet and rushed out, closing the door behind her.

CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK.
MRS. W. H. ROGERS,
Supt. Press department,
W. C. T. U.

A Woman's Discovery.

"Another wonderful discovery has been made and that by a lady in this county. Disease fastened its clutches upon her and for seven years she withstood its severest tests, but her vital organs were undermined and death seemed eminent. For three months she coughed incessantly and could not sleep. She bought of us a bottle of Dr. King's New Discovery for Consumption and was so much relieved on taking first dose that she slept all night and with one bottle has been miraculously cured. Her name is Mrs. Luther Lutz." Thus write W. C. Hamrick & Co., of Shelby, N. C.—Get a free trial bottle at Blacknalls & Sons.

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