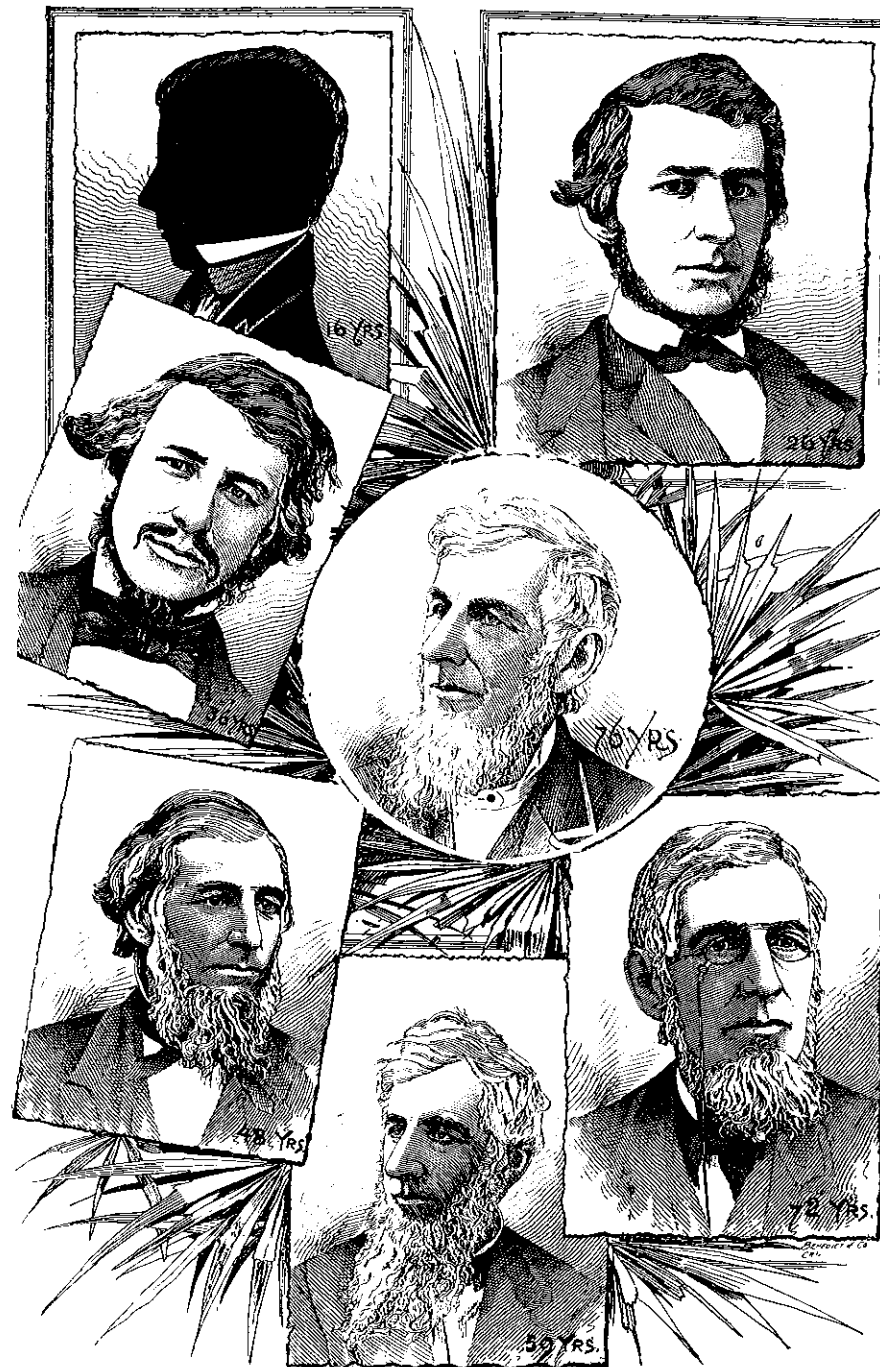


FRONTISPIECE.



THE CHANGES OF A LIFETIME—SIXTY YEARS—16 TO 76, OF

Yours Truly,
S. A. Lane

FIFTY YEARS AND OVER

OF

AKRON

AND

SUMMIT COUNTY,

BY

EX-SHERIFF SAMUEL A. LANE.

EMBELLISHED BY NEARLY SIX HUNDRED ENGRAVINGS—PORTRAITS OF
PIONEER SETTLERS, PROMINENT CITIZENS, BUSINESS,
OFFICIAL AND PROFESSIONAL—ANCIENT
AND MODERN VIEWS, ETC.

NINE-TENTH'S OF A CENTURY OF SOLID LOCAL HISTORY—PIONEER INCIDENTS,
INTERESTING EVENTS—INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL, FINANCIAL
AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS, BIOGRAPHIES, ETC.

AKRON, OHIO:
BEACON JOB DEPARTMENT.
1892.

CHAPTER XLI.

NORTHFIELD TOWNSHIP EARLY SETTLEMENT—MILITARY AND CIVIL STATUS—MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE OF RUPERT CHARLESWORTH—RUMORS OF FOUL PLAY—ARREST OF DORSEY W. VIERS, AFTER NEARLY FIVE YEARS, FOR THE CRIME OF MURDER—PROTRACTED TRIAL AND NARROW ESCAPE FROM CONVICTION—LONG AND TIRELESS SEARCH FOR THE MISSING MAN—SUCCESS AT LAST—RETURN OF CHARLESWORTH AFTER NEARLY FIFTEEN YEARS—LARGE PUBLIC MEETING—CHARLESWORTH FULLY IDENTIFIED—VIERS TRIUMPHANTLY VINDICATED—A GENUINE "ROMANCE IN REAL LIFE."

NORTHFIELD'S BEGINNING.

IT is not the province of this work to enter into a full detail of the origin and early settlement of the several townships of the county, or to give full personal descriptions of all the pioneer residents thereof, or of all their battlings with privations, hardships, Indians and wild beasts. This has already been quite thoroughly done by others, and its reproduction, here, would not only make the work undertaken by the writer too voluminous, but also involve an unwarrantable appropriation of the researches and labors of others.

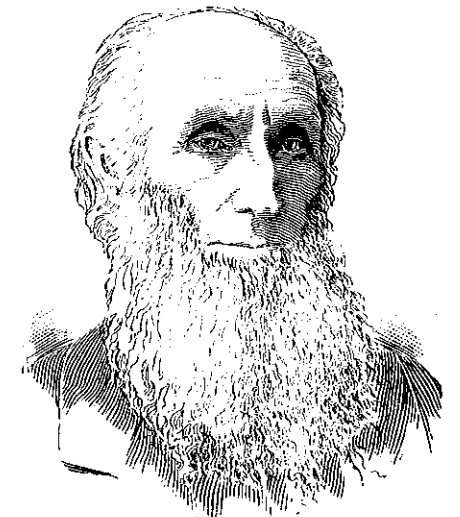
Though regarded, by its original Connecticut proprietors, as one of the very best townships upon the Western Reserve, Northfield, for reasons not necessary to enumerate here, was not fully opened to settlement as early as some of the contiguous townships now embraced within the limits of Summit county. For the purposes of this work, it is sufficient to note the fact that Northfield's first settler was Mr. Isaac Bacon, from Massachusetts, who with his family located on lot 63, about a mile and a half northwest of the Center, in April, 1807; the next accession being the family of his brother-in-law, Jeremiah Cranmer, in June, 1810.

NAME, ORGANIZATION, ETC.—At an informal meeting of all the male inhabitants of the township, assembled for the purpose of aiding a new-comer to erect a cabin, the question of naming the township was raised, and various names were suggested, but none seemed to meet with general favor until Jeremiah Cranmer mentioned that of Northfield (probably from a town of that name in his native State), which was finally adopted by the company and Northfield it has been to the present day, and appropriately so, as being on the extreme north side of Portage county, then, and of Summit county, now.

THE FIRST ELECTION.—Though perhaps one or more justices of the peace had previously been appointed for the township by the governor, the first actual organization, as far as can now be ascertained, was on the 24th day of May, 1819. On that day an election seems to have been held at the cabin of William Cranny, John Britt acting as *Moderator*, Jeremiah Cranmer and John Duncan as *Judges*, and Orrin Wilcox as *Clerk*. The officers elected were: *Trustees*, George Wallace, Jeremiah Cranmer and

John Duncan; *Clerk*, Henry Wood; *Overseers of the Poor*, William Cranny and William T. Mather; *Fence Viewers*, Robert Wallace and Maurice Cranmer; *Constables*, Edward Coyne and Abraham Cranmer; *Treasurer*, Watrous Mather; *Road Supervisors*, John Duncan, Abel Havens, Daniel Robertson and Abner Hunt.

JAMES W. WALLACE, — son of George and Harriet (Menough) Wallace, born at Youngstown, Ohio, November 27, 1803, soon removed with parents to Geauga county, thence, in 1810, to Cleveland, and engaged in hotel-keeping. In 1814, the father built saw, grist and woolen mills at the Falls of Brandywine Creek, in Northfield, also placing quite a large stock of goods there in charge of the 13-year-old boy, James, these and other operations engaged in by the family, giving to Brandywine more than a local repute as a business center for many years. In 1825, James, with his brother George Y. (ten years later sheriff of Portage county, and in 1842, treasurer of Summit county, by appointment, for nearly a year), besides taking entire charge of the business at Brandywine, built several miles of canal and aqueduct near Massillon and Roscoe; when canal opened, boated two years; was then five years with Giddings, Baldwin, Pease & Co., afterwards Andrews, Baldwin & Co., as purchasing agent in Winter, and in charge of boats in Summer; then two years agent for Boston Land Company; then, in 1838, returned to Brandywine, in addition to manufacturing, largely engaging in farming. In 1871, Mr. Wallace removed to "Maple Mound," near Macedonia, where he resided until his death, September 24, 1887, at the age of 83 years, 9 months and 27



JAMES W. WALLACE.

days, Mrs. Wallace having died March 15, 1885, aged 67 years. The children are—George, who died in Pomeroy, Iowa, August 26, 1880; Hiram Hanchett and Mary Emeline (Mrs. Lorin Bliss), Northfield Center; Warner W., Danville, Kentucky; Joseph, died young; Leonard Case, near Macedonia, and Marjorie Stanhope, now wife of Henry P. R. Hamilton, of St. Paul, Minnesota.

RAPID SETTLEMENT.—For the next ten or twelve years new accessions to the population were almost continuous, so that by 1830 the township was pretty well settled and improved, including quite a hamlet at the center, a brisk manufacturing village at the Falls of Brandywine Creek, in the south part of the township, and quite extensive lumbering operations a mile or so further up that stream, at Little York. By 1840 the township had almost reached its maximum of population, the census of that year showing the number of inhabitants in the township to be 1,031, while the census of 1880 accorded to it a population of 1,076, and that of 1890 a population of 940 souls, only; a falling off of 91 in fifty years, though this is even better than some of the townships of the county have done during that period.

The causes for this seeming declension may largely be found in the changed and improved methods of doing business—the introduction of labor-saving machinery requiring a less number of hands upon the farm and a correspondingly greater number in

mechanical operations—and in the absorption of the minor mechanical and mercantile operations of town centers, villages and hamlets, by the cities and general railroad centers of the country.

NORTHFIELD IN PUBLIC SPIRIT.—Though bounded by the Cuyahoga river, upon the west, and though more or less adversely affected, morally, by the location of the Ohio canal through its entire western border, the township of Northfield was originally peopled with, and is still inhabited by, as intelligent and honorable a population as any other community upon the proverbially intelligent and orderly Western Reserve. It has also contributed its full share in behalf of the freedom and unity of the Nation and in support of the local institutions of the county. As young as she was, Northfield was well represented in the War of 1812, (though only the names of Henry Wood and Jonathan Hesser are now remembered as soldiers in that war) and in War of the Rebellion she furnished more than her full quota of patriotic and faithful soldiers, as will be seen from the following roster kindly compiled for us by Ambrose W. Bliss, Esq., supplemented by the assessors' enumeration for 1865:

NORTHFIELD'S ROLL OF HONOR.

Jacob C. Armstrong, Levi Burroughs, George Brower, Augustus A. Belden, Lucian Bliss, Daniel Boyle (died in service), Alonzo Bain, Francis W. Bliss, Harmon H. Bliss, Theodore Bordeman, E. A. Butterfield, George L. Bishop, Horace P. Bliss (died at home of lung fever, Feb. 20, 1863), O. A. Bishop, Albert L. Bliss, Philip Brandt, Adam Bowles, Frederick Belden, Robert Brown, John Brown, Cornelius Boyle, David Boam, Augustus Curtiss, B. C. Carpenter, J. C. Chamberlain, Frank R. Clements, Lester J. Crittenden, Edward Connor, James Clark (died in service), J. C. Cranmer (died in service), Marcus D. Cross, Joseph Clifford, Edward Cromax, George Cross (lost on Sultana), Andrew J. Cross, Jeremiah H. Cranmer, John Christian, Albert Case, Emery Case, Jonathan Criss, Dwight Case, Lafayette Cranmer, George Cooley, Thomas Drennen (died in service), W. H. H. Deisman, Nathan W. Doty (lost on Sultana), George Dusenbury, John Dusenbury, Simon Dallas, James A. Emmons, Henry Eggleston, Alexander Forbes, Asa H. Fitch, John Fitzwater (died in rebel prison), Alfred Fell, W. W. France, William Fields, John Goetz, Philander Hewitt (died at Cincinnati, Oct. 1862), Sylvester Honey, Albert Herriman, — Hine, Willis Honey, Hiram H. Johnson (died of heart disease at Camp Chase, Oct. 1862), John H. Johnson (died in service), Henry Large, James Large, Albert Lawrence, James Miller, Milton B. Miller (died in service), James McElroy, Peter Murphy, John A. Means, John Montona, James H. Miller, Marion McKisson, Samuel D. McElroy, Urvan Murphy, F. D. Murphy, Daniel Martin, C. M. Myers, O. McClintock, James Nesbit, D. G. Nesbit, T. B. Nichols, Henry Pile, Geo. W. Pile, A. M. Palmer, Geo. W. Palmer, H. H. Palmer, L. L. Palmer, E. A. Palmer, Thomas Pacy (died in service), Wm. H. H. Polhamus, Samuel Perry, Thomas Parkhurst, Matthew Phaff, Edward G. Ranney (killed at Gettysburg), Jacob Rusher (killed at Shiloh), Otto Runge, John Rose, John Ririe, Nelson Stebbins, William E. Smith, John C. Seidel, Conrad Schoch, Cyrus Singletary (died in service),

Charles Skinner, Edwin Soden, George Soden, L. C. Spafford, John Sharp, Charles Scott, Lucian Stanley, Wilbur Stanley, John Sproutberry, Smith Tryon, Lucas Tryon (died in service), Alfred G. Thompson, Hiram Turner, Myron Tupper (died in service), M. L. Trotter, Willard Trotter, Abraham Truby, George Thomas, Walter Thompson, Frederick Ungerer (died in service), C. A. Vail, J. J. White, J. C. Wilkinson, Robert F. Watson, Charles W. Way (lost on Sultana), John Wilkins, Josiah Wood.

AMBROSE W. BLISS,—born in Jericho, Chittenden county, Vermont, December 6, 1806; common school education; reared on farm; at 18 learned carpenter and millwright's trade; in 1833, came to Ohio, working on public works at Cleveland and Black river; May 9, 1839, was married to Miss Emeline Palmer, a native of Windsor, Connecticut, born April 5, 1815, and has since been a continuous resident of Northfield. While extensively engaged in farming, at the same time Mr. Bliss for many years diligently plied his trade, building aqueducts, and lock-gates on canal, bridges, etc. Politically, Mr. Bliss was originally a Whig, and since its organization has been an earnest supporter of the Republican party; has held several important township offices, and for two full terms of three years each—from 1854 to 1860—ably filled the responsible office of county commissioner. Four children have been born to Mr. and Mrs. Bliss—Ellen, living at home; Lorin, farmer in Northfield; George, living at home; and Horace, the latter enlisting in Company C, 115th O. V. I., in August, 1862, and dying, from disease contracted in the army, February 20, 1863. Mr. Bliss is a brother of Hon.



AMBROSE W. BLISS.

George Bliss, formerly president judge of third judicial district of Ohio, and later, from 1852 to 1854, representative in Congress of the 18th district, of which Summit county then formed a part, and whose portrait appears on page 551 of this volume.

NORTHFIELD IN OFFICE.

In county affairs, also, the township has borne a highly honorable part. **GEORGE Y. WALLACE** (brother of the late James W. Wallace, Esq., of Macedonia,) was sheriff of Portage county for four years, immediately preceding the erection of Summit, and, on the death of Summit county's first treasurer, William O'Brien, Esq., of Hudson, in February, 1842, Mr. Wallace was appointed by the Commissioners to fill the vacancy, which he did with great acceptance for nearly a year.

THOMAS WILSON, of Northfield (a brother-in-law of Mr. Wallace), was Summit county's first sheriff, holding that office four years and seven months, and it is safe to say that the office was never more ably and faithfully filled than during his incumbency; Mr. John C. Wallace, of Northfield, acting as Mr. Wilson's chief deputy. A fine portrait and biography of Mr. Wilson will be found on page 99 of this volume.

COL. MILTON ARTHUR, of Northfield, was Summit's second regularly elected treasurer, holding the position for three consecutive terms, from 1842 to 1848. Though Mr. Arthur was as upright and honest a man as ever breathed, yet his administration of the office was sadly unfortunate—a shortage of several thousand dollars appearing against him on his transferring the office to his successor. It was believed by those best informed upon the subject, that he was victimized by parties in whom he had confided, and whom he had permitted to manipulate the books and funds, which were not then under the efficient system of checks that at present obtains in that office. Every dollar of his property was turned over to his bondsmen, who, under a special act of the Legislature, made a satisfactory settlement of the matter with the Commissioners; but, though Mr. Arthur was believed to be entirely guiltless of any intentional wrong, by the entire community, he was greatly humiliated by the affair, and doubtless carried down to a premature death thereby.

AMBROSE W. BLISS, ESQ., a native of Chittenden county, Vermont, still living, hale and hearty, where he located fifty-two years ago, at the Center of Northfield, has not only been one of the most intelligent and enterprising citizens of that township, but has also, in various ways, rendered valuable service to both the County, State and Nation; filling, most acceptably, the important position of county commissioner for two consecutive terms, of three years each, from 1854 to 1860. Mr. Bliss was born December 6, 1806, and is consequently, at this writing, nearly 85 years of age.

CAPTAIN JOHN A. MEANS, a native of Allegheny county, Pa., in 1833, then 22 years of age, settled on an uncultivated farm, a mile or so south of the center of Northfield, not only proving an industrious and model farmer, but also devoting much time to the profession of a surveyor, receiving the appointment of deputy surveyor for Portage county in 1836. In 1860, Mr. Means was elected clerk of the Court of Common Pleas for Summit county for three years. On the breaking out of the War of the Rebellion, in 1861, leaving the office in charge of his son and deputy, Nathan A. Means, he organized Company C, 115th Regiment, O. V. I., of which he was elected Captain, serving three years. In 1869, Capt. Means was again elected Clerk of Courts for three years, serving his full term with marked fidelity and acceptance. See portrait and biography on page 373.

AUGUSTUS CURTISS, one of Northfield's volunteer soldiery, but after the War, settled in Portage township, was elected sheriff of Summit county in October, 1868, re-elected in 1870, and on the expiration of his own second term, continued in the management of the office during the regulation two terms of his successor, Lieut. Levi J. McMurray, who was in poor health during a good portion of his incumbency. Portrait and biography on page 665.

ABOUNDING IN THRILLING INCIDENT.—Yet, notwithstanding the generally peaceable and order-loving character of its inhabitants, Northfield has furnished a larger share of exciting and thrilling incident than the average of her sister townships of either Portage or Summit counties, not counting the many perilous encounters of her early pioneers with Indians, wild beasts, etc.

One of the earliest events, after the departure of the Indians

public mind of Northfield and vicinity, and which, though heretofore pretty fully narrated by the writer and others, it is highly proper should be here reproduced, occurred substantially as follows:

NORTHFIELD'S FIRST SENSATION.

Dorsey W. Viers was born on the territory now covered by the city of Steubenville, May 19, 1790, and is said to have been the first white male child born in what is now Jefferson county, over seven years before that county was organized, and some twelve years before Ohio became a state. Mr. Viers was enrolled as a soldier in the War of 1812, at the close of which he lived a short time in Pittsburgh, working at the tanner's trade. Sometime previous to 1820, he removed to Northfield, the town records of that year (1820), showing that he was then elected one of the supervisors of the township.

On coming to Northfield, Viers purchased, and settled upon, a quarter section of land in the northwest portion of the township, in handy proximity to the Cuyahoga river and the contemplated Ohio canal, building for himself and family the regulation log cabin of the period and other farm buildings to match. In addition to his farming operations, young Viers—stalwart, active and enterprising—figured quite extensively as a contractor and speculator; being at the time this chapter opens (1826) a sub-contractor upon quite a large section of the canal.

Upon the completion of his job on the canal, he built a large number of bridges over the canal and other water courses of the vicinity, erected school houses, private residences, stores, etc., one of his contracts, a few years later, being the erection in Akron, for Messrs. May and Brown—Thomas P. May, of Cleveland, and Jacob Brown, Esq., of Akron—of the large brick block at the corner of South Main and Exchange streets, known for many years, as May's Block, but now known as the Clarendon Hotel, and owned by Mr. Ferd. Schumacher.

This diversified employment naturally brought Mr. Viers into companionship with much of the rougher element of the communities in which he operated, and while not especially dissipated or profligate himself, his genial good nature, and his open-handed liberality and zealous hilarity, in all private and public social gatherings, caused him to be regarded as a "hail-fellow well-met," by the jolly bloods by whom he was surrounded.

RUPERT CHARLESWORTH.—A year or two previous to this, there had come into the vicinity, a rollicking young Englishman, by the name of Rupert Charlesworth, who soon became a great favorite in the social circles of the neighborhood. With no visible employment, he yet appeared always to have plenty of money, and was lavishly liberal in its distribution, whenever "treats" were to be paid for, or other expenses of fun and frolic were to be provided; his givings-out, as well as his general bearing, conveying the impression that he was a scion of English nobility, in disgrace at home, and temporarily exiled until his offense should be condoned by his aristocratic father.

Between this wild but agreeable young Englishman and Viers, a mutual friendship immediately sprung up, and in a short time he became a regular boarder in Viers' family, though often

absenting himself from the house, and the neighborhood, for days, and sometimes weeks at a time. But suddenly, in the month of July, 1826, Charlesworth entirely disappeared. His absence from his accustomed haunts soon began to be noticed and commented on. Inquiries were made of Viers and his wife, the answers to which, it was alleged, were contradictory and improbable. In addition to exaggerated repetitions of these questions and answers, one of the constables of the township asserted that, having a warrant for the arrest of Charlesworth, and going to Viers' house early in the morning, he not only did *not* find his man, but *did* find Mrs. Viers vigorously engaged in scrubbing the floor; a very unusual proceeding at so early an hour.

RUMOR ON RUMOR PILED.—As time passed on rumors of the most damaging character against Viers multiplied. One person had distinctly heard the report of a gun from the direction of Viers' house on the alleged night of Charlesworth's disappearance. Another reported that, having occasion to visit the premises soon afterwards, he had noticed blood upon the bars of the fence, between the house and the woods. The girl, who was employed as a domestic in the family at the time, asserted that simultaneously with Charlesworth's disappearance, a blanket was missing from the bed he had occupied, which was afterwards found under a pile of rubbish, covered with spots of what appeared to be clots of dried blood, but which was immediately burned up by the family; while another party had discovered, under a pile of logs and brush in the woods, a short distance back of the house, what was supposed to be a human skeleton, but which, on afterwards returning with a companion, to examine it, was found to have been removed.

These and a hundred other similar stories were rehearsed and reiterated with such persistence, and such apparent truthfulness, that they finally came to be accepted as facts, and the excitement and suspicion against Viers and family increased with each passing month, being greatly augmented by the alleged fact that Charlesworth was known to be in possession of quite large sums of money while boarding with Viers, and that whereas, Viers, previous to the disappearance of Charlesworth, was very short of money, immediately thereafter he was very flush, and was making lavish expenditures in building himself a nice large brick house, and making other improvements upon his farm that his legitimate earnings did not warrant.

VIERS ARRESTED FOR MURDER.—Finally these rumors and reports, like the mountain avalanche, increasing in volume as they onward rolled, and gaining in velocity, as they increased in size, culminated, in January, 1831, four years and a half after the disappearance of Charlesworth, in the apprehension and arraignment of Viers, on the charge of murder.

The affidavit was filed before, and the warrant issued by, George Y. Wallace, Esq., of Brandywine, then one of the justices of the peace for Northfield township, afterwards sheriff of Portage county for two terms, and subsequently treasurer of Summit county for nearly a year, as above stated.

The trial proper, before the examining magistrate, lasted over a week, though some 17 or 18 days elapsed between the arrest and the trial. The investigation was conducted by the examining magistrate, and the jury consisted of the following gentlemen: All of the above alleged

"facts" were duly and solemnly sworn to, and many other extremely damaging "circumstances" adduced during the trial, and it was supposed by the large crowd of people in attendance, that a clear case of homicide had been established, when two witnesses from the western part of the State were brought forward by the defense, who swore positively that they knew Charlesworth well, minutely describing his personal appearance and characteristics, and most emphatically asseverating that they had seen him alive and well, subsequent to his disappearance from Northfield. This testimony turned the scale in Viers' favor, and he was accordingly discharged by Justice Wallace.

REMARKABLE SEARCH FOR THE MISSING MAN.—The greater number of those in attendance were greatly dissatisfied with the result, believing that the two witnesses alluded to had been bribed by Viers, or his friends, to testify in his behalf. True, there were many good men who did not believe Viers guilty of so heinous a crime; but the rumor-mongers of the neighborhood thought otherwise, and were so clamorous for blood that, had Lynch Law been in vogue in those days, it would undoubtedly have fared hard with him. It was, indeed, a terrible ordeal for both Viers and his family to pass through; the arrest and trial being even more endurable than the continued suspicion and obloquy which followed.

But though comparatively unlearned, Dorsey W. Viers possessed, in those days, the pluck and perseverance of a blood-hound, and immediately inaugurated a vigorous and comprehensive scheme for the restoration of his good name; while his devoted wife—greatly his superior in education and culture—rendered the most valuable aid towards lifting from the family the dark cloud of disgrace that had come upon them.

HOW THE SEARCH WAS MADE.—To this end Mrs. Viers, with the pen of a ready writer, wrote hundreds of letters, to public officers and others, in all parts of the country, from whence it was supposed any tidings of the missing man could be obtained, while Mr. Viers, himself, commenced a most diligent personal search for him. Following up the clue obtained from the two witnesses who had come to his relief upon the trial, he tracked him from point to point, in the West, where he finally learned that Charlesworth had returned to England. To England he went, only to find that Charlesworth had again sailed for the United States, destined to New Orleans. Returning home, after a brief sojourn with his family, he went to New Orleans, and after a protracted search, not finding his man, he visited and thoroughly explored all the principal river towns between that city and Cincinnati.

THE "MURDERED" MAN FOUND ALIVE.—Thus was the search persistently kept up by Mr. and Mrs. Viers, both by correspondence and personal excursions, between nine and ten years, when, nearly fifteen years after his disappearance, Viers accidentally stumbled upon his man in Detroit. They were both so changed by time that they did not at first recognize each other; but Charlesworth, hearing Viers inquiring for him of others, at a hotel where they were both stopping, and thus learning who he was, took him aside and disclosed his own identity to him. His story was, substantially, that having passed a counterfeit bill upon a prominent

indeed true) that proceedings were being instituted for his arrest, he had secretly left the house of his friend, and gone West, under an assumed name; still another name having been taken on his return from England, and under which, having married, he was then living in one of the interior towns of Michigan.

CHARLESWORTH REVISITS SUMMIT COUNTY.—On learning of the dire trouble and disgrace which his clandestine departure from Northfield had brought upon his old friend and family, he volunteered to come with him to Ohio, and exhibit himself to his old cronies and acquaintances, on condition that his then place of residence, and his assumed cognomen should be kept secret.

Thus, in about the year 1840 or 1841, Rupert Charlesworth and his alleged murderer, together visited Northfield, Boston, Akron, and other points in this vicinity, where the former conversed freely with, and was fully recognized by, a large number of persons, who had known him well before his disappearance, and the mystery was fondly supposed, by its victims, to have been wholly cleared up. After a few days' sojourn in the neighborhood, Charlesworth again took his departure, and returned to Michigan.

GOSSIP TO THE FRONT AGAIN.—No sooner had Charlesworth left the vicinity than vile rumor, and virulent gossip, again asserted themselves in the intimation that the Rupert Charlesworth that Viers had exhibited, was not the missing Rupert Charlesworth, at all, but a cousin, bearing a strong resemblance to him, that Viers had hired to personate him, which it was held could readily be done, by a little posting up from Viers. This theory was industriously promulgated by the enemies of Viers, and within a few months the alleged imposture was pretty generally believed in, and the guilt of Viers thus doubly confirmed in the minds of quite a large portion of the community. Under these circumstances, some two or three years later, about 1843 or 1844, Viers again hunted up his man, and again brought him to Ohio, determined, this time, to settle the matter at once and forever.

CHARLESWORTH AGAIN EXHIBITED.—Hand-bills were posted in Northfield and adjoining townships, announcing that on a given day, Rupert Charlesworth, the man that Dorsey W. Viers was supposed to have murdered, in 1826, would exhibit himself at the Methodist Church, at the Center of Northfield, and that all persons who had known him, while a resident of that neighborhood, were invited to be present and make a thorough examination as to his identity.

The meeting was largely attended by a curious and deeply interested audience. A regular organization was effected, with George Y. Wallace, Esq., before whom Viers had formerly been tried, as chairman of the meeting, and the entire day was consumed in the investigation. Not only were Charlesworth's physical features and peculiarities closely scrutinized, his voice and manner of expression carefully noted, but questions and cross-questions were plied by those who had formerly been intimate with him, in such a manner that no attempted imposture could possibly have escaped detection. Not only did he recognize and readily name persons that he had not seen for seventeen or eighteen years, but, in reply to their various interrogatories, incidents and circumstances known only to himself and each individual questioner, were promptly and truthfully related.

COMPLETE VINDICATION.—At the close of the examination, late in the afternoon, a vote was taken as to whether the man then and there present, was, or was not, the Rupert Charlesworth, whom Dorsey W. Viers was accused of murdering? The affirmative vote was overwhelmingly and enthusiastically unanimous, only a single negative vote being given, and that from the brother of a man who several years before had been executed for the murder of another brother's wife, and in whose behalf secret and persistent efforts had been made to cast suspicion upon Viers, because of the cloud of obloquy that had so long rested upon him. From the date of that meeting that cloud was raised, and the reputation of Dorsey W. Viers was fully vindicated.

REMOVAL FROM NORTHFIELD TO COVENTRY.—In the meantime the three sons of Mr. Viers—James McClintock, Elisha J. and Edward H.—had grown to manhood and had become settled as prosperous farmers in the township of Norton, whither the father, having disposed of his possessions in Northfield, followed them, a few years later, occupying a small farm in the township of Coventry, opposite to that of his son Elisha J., in Norton, where he continued to reside until his death, on the night of March 10, 1884, at the ripe old age of 94; his youngest son, Edward H. Viers, a highly respected resident of Norton, only, surviving him.

The principal items of the foregoing account of the very remarkable experiences of this remarkable man, were furnished the writer, by Mr. Viers and his wife nearly fifty years ago, soon after his final vindication, with a view to their publication then; but before getting them into shape the notes were mislaid, and are now reproduced mainly from memory, aided, as to one or two of the earlier dates, in the brief mention thereof, by General L. V. Bierce, in his historical reminiscences published in 1854.



CHAPTER XLII.

NORTHFIELD'S SECOND GREAT SENSATION—MURDER OF CATHARINE M'KISSON—DEADLY ASSAULT UPON HER DAUGHTER, LUCINDA CRONINGER—ARREST OF SAMUEL M'KISSON, FATHER-IN-LAW TO THE MURDERED WOMAN—SUBSEQUENT ARREST OF DAVID M'KISSON, THE BROTHER-IN-LAW OF CATHARINE AND LOVER OF LUCINDA—THE FATHER TRIED AND ACQUITTED—THE SON TRIED, CONVICTED AND EXECUTED—CIRCUMSTANTIAL STRONGER THAN POSITIVE EVIDENCE—FULL HISTORY OF THE CRIME, TRIAL, SENTENCE AND EXECUTION—DYING SPEECH UPON THE GALLOWS—BITTER COLD DAY, ETC.

THE GREAT NORTHFIELD TRAGEDY.

ON the night of July 24, 1837, one of the most shocking tragedies of the time was perpetrated in the township of Northfield, then the extreme northwestern township of Portage county, and now a portion of Summit county. Several years previously, there had settled in the western portion of that township, and about midway between the center and the Cuyahoga river, one Samuel McKisson, who had quite a large family of grown up sons and daughters.

The eldest son, Robert, having married a widow, Mrs. Catharine Croninger, with a grown up daughter, Lucinda, had settled upon a farm adjoining that of his father upon the west, on which he had erected the regulation log cabin of the period, with but a single room upon the ground floor; and a low sleeping apartment in the loft overhead. Having been bred a mechanic, Robert was frequently absent from home, for considerable periods of time, employing a young man named Johnson to do his farm work. The younger brother of Robert, David McKisson, was a tailor by trade, working, for longer or shorter periods in Hudson, Akron, Middlebury, Canton and other towns and villages in North-eastern Ohio, but, by reason of his reckless and dissipated habits, being unable to hold a situation for any considerable length of time.

THE BEGINNING OF THE TROUBLE.—Notwithstanding his tramping propensities, and because of his inability to retain a situation for any great length of time, David was in the habit of bringing up at his father's every few months, during which visits he was thrown much into the society of his brother Robert's step-daughter, Lucinda Croninger, between whom and himself a mutual attachment was soon formed, and mutual tokens of affection exchanged. In this case, however, as in many others of like character, the "course of true love" did not run entirely "smooth," for his sister-in-law, the mother of Lucinda, vigorously opposed the match. Warm words between the mother and the suitor were frequently indulged in, which at length engendered virulent ill-feeling, and in which crimination and recrimination were freely bandied; the husband and brother, Robert, in his occasional visits home, on being informed of the status of affairs, taking sides with

his wife, and severely reprimanding and chastising his brother for the course he was pursuing, and virtually, if not in positive terms, forbidding him to come upon the premises. In these discussions other members of the McKisson family had also become seriously involved, and the ill-feeling was particularly bitter between Samuel McKisson, the father, and his daughter-in-law, Catharine McKisson.

MEDITATING VENGEANCE.—In this condition of affairs, with the old gentleman at bitter enmity with his daughter-in-law, and David in a state of ferocious wrath, at the interference of his sister-in-law and her husband in his love affairs, the latter, early in the Spring of 1837, left the neighborhood, and engaged to go to Turtle Island, at the mouth of Maumee Bay, to chop cord-wood. On his way thither, he called upon a married sister, then living in Cleveland, to whom, in rehearsing his troubles, he was alleged to have said that he would some day go back to Northfield and kill Robert's wife, and then if Lucinda would not have him she might "go to hell." This threat, however, was thought by his sister, and other friends cognizant thereof, to be a mere ebullition of anger at his disappointment, which absence would soon abate, and as several weeks elapsed without any recurrence of the troubles, all fears of personal injury to Robert, or his family, had been entirely dismissed from their minds.

THE BLOW SUDDENLY FALLS.—The single-room log house, occupied by the family of Robert, fronted east, the large stone fireplace being upon the south end, and two beds occupying the north end of the room; that occupied by Robert and his wife on the west, and that occupied by Lucinda upon the east side of the room. Robert being absent from home working at his trade in Cleveland, on the night of July 24th, 1837, the beds thus situated, were occupied by the mother and her two little boys, and by the daughter, respectively, so that a person, passing from the front and only door of the house, would have to pass the bed of the daughter to reach that of the mother.

The family retired about 9 o'clock, the hired man, Johnson, in the loft, as before described, reached by means of a ladder in the southeast corner. As was customary, in those early days, before friction matches had come into general use, the embers of the fire, which had cooked the evening meal, had been carefully "raked up," on the capacious hearth, and from them some slight glimmers from the charring coal produced a sort of dim illumination of the apartment, after the "tallow dip" had been extinguished for the night. The entire household had fallen asleep, with no thought of impending danger, nor dream of fear, the door being left unfastened because of the momentarily expected arrival home of the husband and father from Cleveland.

Suddenly the daughter was awakened by the opening of the door. Rising up in bed, she saw a man, in his shirt sleeves, and dressed in dark pantaloons, enter the room with an axe in his hand. As she raised up she received a blow from the axe, upon the side of her head, which rendered her momentarily insensible. On recovering consciousness, she saw her mother lying upon the floor and the man standing over her with the axe, which he struck into her right shoulder. The daughter immediately screamed "murder," which awoke Johnson, who sprang out of bed, upon hearing

which, the assassin fled from the house, giving the daughter another blow with the axe, as he passed, but which, fortunately, produced a flesh wound only.

THE FATHER-IN-LAW DENOUNCED AS THE ASSASSIN.—Johnson, on comprehending the situation, immediately started for assistance, and on reaching the house of a neighbor, Col. Pardon A. Brooks, found that it was just 11 o'clock. On the return of Johnson with help, Mrs. McKisson was found to be still alive, and in possession of her faculties. On being inquired of, by Col. Brooks, if she knew who committed the deed, she replied, "Old Sammy McKisson." Being again asked if she was sure it was Samuel McKisson, she replied, "Oh, yes, Oh, yes," and then almost immediately became unconscious, and a few hours later expired. The daughter, also, asseverated that the man she had seen enter the room, and strike the fatal blows, was Samuel McKisson.

The old gentleman was accordingly taken into custody, and held for trial, and as the news of the tragedy spread rapidly from house to house, and from mouth to mouth, almost the entire township was upon the ground, and the wildest excitement prevailed by daylight the next morning. It was found, by the examining physicians, that the deceased had received three blows from the axe; one on the right side of the head, the whole width of the blade penetrating the brain to the depth of one inch, and from which the brains were oozing; one on the back of the head which had cleaved off a large part of the scalp and a piece of the skull the size of a silver dollar, leaving the brain bare, but without wounding it; and the third, the blow which the daughter had witnessed, in the right shoulder, and passing through the shoulder bones and ribs into the chest. It was supposed that, being awakened by the blow upon the back of the head, Mrs. McKisson sprang out of bed when she was felled to the floor by the burying of the blade of the axe in her brain, as stated, the blow upon the shoulder, penetrating the chest, immediately following her fall upon the floor.

A NEW PHASE IN THE TERRIBLE AFFAIR.—Though still believing the old man, Samuel McKisson, to be a party to the murder, if not the actual perpetrator thereof, the investigations by the neighbors and officers, the next day, put an entirely new aspect upon the tragic affair. The axe with which the deed had been perpetrated, belonged to the family, and had been taken from the cleat, on which it hung, upon the outside of the house, between the door and the southeast corner. This axe, covered with blood, was found some distance from the house, on a foot path running northwesterly from the house to the canal, and in an opposite direction from where Samuel McKisson lived. It was soon afterwards learned that a man was seen or heard running on that path, from the direction of the murder towards the canal, at about 11 o'clock that night, and also that about an hour before sunset, on the evening of the murder, David McKisson was seen to leave Kittlewell's grocery, at 18 mile Lock, on the canal, without a coat, and dressed in dark pantaloons, and go in a northeasterly direction towards the scene of the murder. The path on which the bloody axe was found, let it be remembered, was a mile or more in length, through dense woods, and over quite a precipitous hill, descending from the house of the murder to the canal. It was also shown that about 1 o'clock in the morning, David McKisson, in the same dress,

had boarded a packet boat bound for Cleveland, at Tinker's Creek, seven miles distant from the scene of the murder.

These facts, coupled with the circumstance that he had left his work at Turtle Island, and had come into the neighborhood of his home, and after going in the direction thereof, without calling upon any of his relatives or friends, had started back to his place of employment, was proof conclusive, in the minds of the most sagacious people of the neighborhood, that David, instead of his father, was the actual perpetrator of the horrible crime, though owing to the bitter enmity known to exist between the old gentleman and his daughter-in-law, it was still generally believed that he was, somehow or other, mixed up with the affair.

PURSUIT AND ARREST OF DAVID MCKISSON.—A warrant was accordingly issued by Justice George Lillie, and a constable, with two assistants, started for Turtle Island to secure David's arrest. There being no railroads in those days, and no communication by telegraph then as now, all operations of this kind were extremely slow. It afterwards transpired that, on reaching Cleveland, David had, by mistake, taken a boat bound down the Lake, instead of up, and had gone east as far as Fairport, some 30 miles, at which point he had to wait several hours for an up bound boat, on which to return to Cleveland *en route* to the Island. In the meantime his pursuers had passed through Cleveland, taking a boat bound for Maumee.

On reaching Cleveland, on his return from Fairport, David, still without a coat, accidentally met an old acquaintance upon the wharf, who informed him of the murder, the arrest of his father, and that three men had gone to the Island to arrest him, advising him to return home to see about it. To this he indifferently replied that if that was so, he should probably see the men when he got to the Island. Continuing on the same boat on which he had come from Fairport, he went to Detroit, and from thence to the Island, *via* Manhattan, and yet arriving there several hours before his pursuers did.

BLOODY SHIRT FOUND IN HIS TRUNK.—When the pursuing party reached the Island, and took him into custody, he appeared to know the cause of his arrest, and, without asking what the charge against him was, or to be shown the warrant, bid his employers and his comrades good-by, saying that he should never see them again, etc. In his trunk was found a soiled shirt with blood upon the shoulder and several spatters of blood upon the bosom, which he could not rationally account for, and in his attempt to do so, seriously contradicted himself. He remarked to his captors, though not informed by them of the crime for which he was arrested, that he was willing to die except for the disgrace it would bring upon his brothers and sisters, and afterwards, on being told of the death of his sister-in-law and the arrest of his father, as her murderer, said his father was innocent of the crime.

At another time he said that he had committed so many crimes without detection he thought he could do anything without being found out, but that it was "all over with him now." On reaching Northfield, when brought into the presence of his brother Robert, he manifested great agony of mind, and said: "Robert, I little thought what was said when we parted in the lane would bring me to this," and when Robert asked, "Has it?" he replied,

after a moment's reflection, "I don't know"—and then, seeming to realize the situation he was in, added: "These hands never did the deed."

FATHER AND SON JOINTLY INDICTED.—Justice Lillie, before whom the preliminary examinations were had, held both of the accused to answer to the crime of murder, before the Court of Common Pleas of Portage county, and both were committed to jail. At the September term of court (1837), a "true bill" was found against both, by the Grand Jury. Though jointly indicted, separate trials were granted by the court, Hon. Van R. Humphrey presiding, and special venire for jurors were issued in each case. Samuel McKisson was tried first, a full history of the family troubles, as well as of the circumstances attending the murder, being gone into, the case being conducted with his usual vigor, by Prosecuting Attorney, Lucius V. Bierce, assisted by Eben Newton, Esq., and a most able defense was made by David K. Cartter, and Wyllys Silliman, Esqs. Under the clear-cut charge of the court, so characteristic of Judge Humphrey in his prime, the jury, after a very brief consideration of the case, pronounced Samuel McKisson not guilty. Immediately following the acquittal of the father, the son was put upon his trial to a jury impaneled from the special venire issued in the case. Much of the testimony that was given on the first trial was rehearsed, and a large array of additional witnesses were sworn and examined, touching David's actions and utterances prior and subsequent to the commission of the crime of which he was accused. Special emphasis was given, by counsel for the defense, to the dying declarations of the murdered woman, while in full possession of her faculties, that Samuel McKisson had struck the fatal blows, and the full corroboration of that dying declaration, by the surviving daughter, who witnessed the infliction of at least one of those blows, and who had herself nearly shared the same fate; while, by unreliable circumstances, only, could the defendant then on trial, be connected with the horrible affair. Inch by inch was the legal battle fought, not only in the examination and cross-examination of witnesses, and the rules of law governing the case, but in the arguments of both Prosecuting Attorney L. V. Bierce and Eben Newton, Esq., for the State, and Messrs. Rufus P. Spalding, David Tod and Noah M. Humphrey on behalf of the defense. After a repetition of the principal points contained in his former charge, with the addition of such matters as more particularly applied to the case in hand, Judge Humphrey gave the case to the jury, who, after several hours deliberation, returned their verdict, finding David McKisson guilty of murder in the first degree.

A motion was made by defendant's counsel for a new trial, which was promptly overruled by the court. After giving counsel a few days to prepare and file a bill of exceptions, should they desire to do so, Judge Humphrey ordered the sheriff to bring the condemned man before the court for sentence.

JUDGE HUMPHREY'S ELOQUENT SENTENCE.

Commanding the prisoner to stand up, Judge Humphrey, in the presence of a dense crowd of interested spectators, proceeded to pronounce sentence upon him as follows:

"DAVID MCKISSON:—The Grand Jury of this county have returned a Bill of Indictment against you, charging you with the crime of murder. To that Indictment you have pleaded 'Not guilty.' Counsel of your choice, able and learned in the law, have been assigned, to advise and aid you to meet the accusation, and make your defense. Plenary process, the resources of the State, have been at your command to compel the attendance of witnesses, in order to manifest your innocence. A traverse jury, almost of your own selection, and against whom you had nothing to urge, has been impaneled to pass, under a solemn appeal to heaven, between you and the State. Before that jury you have met your accusers, and the witnesses against you, 'face to face'; you have listened to their testimony, and also introduced such proof as was in your power, to exculpate you from the charge. You have heard the arguments of counsel for the State, and also sat under the powerful appeal of counsel in your own behalf; and after a patient, full and impartial hearing, that jury, under the tremendous convictions of duty, in view of their responsibility to God and their country, have found you 'Guilty of Murder in the First Degree,' and, I regret to say, that the evidence is such as to compel the court to fully concur in the finding of the jury. Upon that verdict arises the melancholy duty of announcing the dreadful sentence of the law; and have you anything to say why that sentence should not now be pronounced?"

PRISONER—"I have nothing to say."

JUDGE HUMPHREY.—"The crime of which you stand convicted is second to none in enormity—the highest known to our laws—and in this instance perpetrated under circumstances awfully barbarous and shocking. Yet your present afflictions excite our sympathy. As individuals we commiserate your situation. We have all the feeling for you consistent with our relation. But a solemn duty has devolved upon us. No choice of alternatives is presented. The laws of God and man attach the penalty of death to the crime of murder. The divine maxim, 'whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed'—quoted and appreciated by your counsel—as well as the violated laws of the land, declare that you must die. Your life is forfeited. Unworthy to live with your fellow-man, whose rights you have trodden down with unparalleled cruelty, justice demands a separation between you and your species, and calls loudly for your extermination."

"In the dead hour of night, with a bosom rankling with revenge; at that hour when nature was hushed in silence, and sleep had sealed the eyes of your victim, you approached, not the dwelling of a stranger; not the dwelling of an enemy; not a dwelling protected by the arm of man; but the undefended home of a brother, and there, with the deadly axe you bore along, coolly, barbarously, cruelly murdered your unoffending sister. A more bloody butchery stains not the annals of man; a more heartless assassination lives not in the history of crimes. I make not these remarks to harrow your feelings, or to disturb the equanimity of your bosom, if, possibly, it remains quiet at this withering crisis; but to apprise you that your time is fixed; that your days are numbered; that before another year shall have passed away, you must sleep beneath the 'clods of the valley,' and that it behooves you to make preparation for that dreadful event."

"Think not any interposition of the Executive will relieve you. Indulge not the hope of commutation or pardon from any temporal source, but appeal to the Power which is able and willing to exercise clemency indeed; to show mercy worth asking; to extend pardon to the 'chief of sinners.'"

"From your declaration and confessions is clearly shown the fatal error into which you have fallen, in supposing that offenses might be committed with impunity; that detection would not overtake crime. Too late you learn that

"There is a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough hew them how we will."

"A period co-extensive with the power of the Court will be allotted you to settle your temporal affairs, and to prepare for another world. Your friends will be permitted to visit you in prison, and such spiritual advisers as you may need, will attend you to point the way to future happiness. Improve, then, the few remaining days you have to live, in preparing to die. You know your fate. You know your time. Not so with Catharine McKisson. No precursor kindly whispered her dissolution; no messenger of mercy warned the devoted wretch of woe and death. But in the vigor of

accessories in a murder, by executing an innocent man; but may God forgive you, for you know not what you do. I have nothing more to say."

Then, turning partly around, he repeated some poetry, composed by himself, which was inaudible to the writer. The attending clergyman then offered a short prayer, and, with the doubly bereaved brother, Robert, shook hands with him and descended from the scaffold. Sheriff Wallace then pinioned his arms and legs, adjusted the rope around his neck, placed him in position, drew the black cap over his face, bid him good-by, descended the stairs, touched the fatal spring, the drop fell, and David McKisson, whether guilty or innocent, was in eternity—a few spasmodic movements of the shoulders and legs, only, being observable after the drop fell.

DISPOSITION OF THE BODY.—When the attending physicians had pronounced life extinct, Sheriff Wallace delivered his body to his brother Robert, and his aged, grief-stricken father, to be taken to Northfield for interment; his age, on the day of the execution being 21 years, 2 months and 21 days.

The funeral services were held at the house of the father, a day or two afterwards, and quite largely attended by sympathetic neighbors, the burial being made upon the home farm, where, also, the father was buried a few years later. The remains of the dead malefactor were not exhibited to those in attendance at the funeral, and it was several years after alleged that, while the party employed to transport the body from Ravenna to Northfield, having driven his team under a shed, was warming himself by a hotel fire in Hudson, certain physicians of that town, extracted the body from the coffin, substituting therefor a log of wood, and that the carefully articulated skeleton, so often seen in the cabinet of a prominent physician of Hudson, for many years thereafter, was none other than that of David McKisson.

THE CONCLUSION.—It was believed that the father, having himself been acquitted of the crime, and therefore not liable, under the law, to be again put in jeopardy for the offense, would, upon the trial of the son, swear that he (the father) had alone committed the deed. But this the old gentleman peremptorily declined to do, declaring that he could not add the crime of perjury to the mountain of sorrow then resting upon him. This, and the expression he used, on first meeting David, after their arrest: "David, you dog! See what you have brought us all to!" together with his apparently sincere manifestations of grief over the terrible event, was conclusive to the family, and their best informed neighbors, that the old gentleman was entirely guiltless of any complicity in the affair; though there are people to this day who fully believe that Samuel McKisson was the real murderer, and that David was a victim of untoward circumstances, and used simply as a scapegoat to suffer the penalty due to his aged father. But though convicted upon circumstantial evidence, and in spite of the declaration of the murdered woman, and the positive testimony of the daughter, the only eye-witness of the tragedy, to the contrary, and notwithstanding his asseverations of his innocence to the very last moment of his life, there was no doubt in the minds of the court and jury, or the general public, in regard to the guilt of the doomed young man, the righteousness of the verdict, or the

It was afterwards learned that his bold and persistent denial of his guilt, in the very face of death, instead of making a full confession thereof, was probably inspired by the expectation of a reprieve at the very last moment, as he had been made to believe, by "Col." William Ashley, then in jail awaiting trial for counterfeiting, as elsewhere related, that a commutation of his sentence to imprisonment for life was already in the hands of the sheriff, and that if he asserted his innocence to the last the execution would be stayed. Thus ended one of the most fearful and thrilling, of the many thrilling tragedies that have been enacted within the present limits of Summit county; not only producing the greatest excitement throughout the entire vicinity, but the denouement of which, from the intense coldness of the day, created a permanent data for comparison of the weather, for many years, and with some, even to the present time, a very common expression being: "This is the coldest day I have experienced since McKisson was hung."

