

ROBERT MONTGOMERY BIRD



**SHEPPARD
LEE, WRITTEN
BY HIMSELF**

Robert Montgomery Bird

Sheppard Lee, Written by Himself

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CHAPTER I.

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THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE—WHICH THE READER, IF IN A GREAT HURRY, OR IF IT BE HIS PRACTICE TO READ AGAINST TIME, CAN SKIP.

I have often debated in my mind whether I should give to the world, or for ever lock up within the secrecy of my own breast, the history of the adventures which it has been my lot in life to experience. The importance of any single individual in society, especially one so isolated as myself, is so little, that it can scarcely be supposed that the community at large can be affected by his fortunes, either good or evil, or interested in any way in his fate. Yet it sometimes happens that circumstances conspire to elevate the humblest person from obscurity, and to give the whole world an interest in his affairs; and that man may safely consider himself of some value in his generation, whose history is of a character to instruct the ignorant and inexperienced. Such a man I consider myself to be; and the more I reflect upon my past life, the more I am convinced it contains a lesson which may be studied with profit; while, at the same time, if I am not greatly mistaken, the lesson will be found neither dry nor repulsive, but here and there, on the contrary, quite diverting. The psychologist (I hate big words, but one cannot do without them) and the metaphysician will discover in my relation some new subjects for reflection; and so perhaps will the doctor of

medicine and the physiologist: but while I leave these learned gentlemen to discuss what may appear most wonderful in my revealments, I am most anxious that the common reader may weigh the value of what is, at least in appearance, more natural, simple, and comprehensible.

It will be perceived that many of the following adventures are of a truly extraordinary character. There are some men—and to such my story will seem incredible enough—who pride themselves on believing nothing that they do not know, and who endeavour, very absurdly, to restrict the objects of belief to those that admit of personal cognizance. There are others again who boast the same maxim, but have a more liberal understanding of the subjects of knowledge, and permit themselves to believe many things which are susceptible of satisfactory proof, but not of direct cognition. Now I must declare beforehand, in order to avoid all trouble, that, from the very nature of the life I have led, consisting of the strangest transitions and vicissitudes, it is impossible I should have laid up proofs to satisfy any one of the truth of my relation who is disposed to be incredulous. If any one should say, "I doubt," all the answer I could make would be, "Doubt, and be hanged,"—not, however, meaning any offence to anybody; though it is natural one should be displeased at having his veracity questioned. I write for the world at large, which is neither philosophic nor skeptical; and the world will believe me: otherwise it is a less sensible world than I have all along supposed it to be.

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THE BIRTH AND FAMILY OF SHEPPARD LEE, WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF HIS TEMPER AND COMPLEXION OF MIND.

I was born somewhere towards the close of the last century—but, the register-leaf having been torn from the family Bible, and no one remaining who can give me information on the point, I am not certain as to the exact year—in the State of New-Jersey, in one of the oldest counties that border upon the Delaware river. My father was a farmer in very good circumstances, respectable in his degree, but perhaps more famous for the excellent sausages he used to manufacture for the Philadelphia market, than for any quality of mind or body that can distinguish one man from his fellows. Taking the hint from his success in this article of produce, he gradually converted his whole estate into a market-farm, raising fine fruits and vegetables, and such other articles as are most in demand in a city; in which enterprise he succeeded beyond his highest expectations, and bade fair to be, as in the end he became, a rich man. The only obstacle to a speedy accumulation of riches was a disproportionate increase in the agents of consumption—his children multiplying on his hands almost as fast as his acres, until he could count eleven in all; a number that filled him at one time with consternation. He used to declare no apple could be expected to ripen on a farm where there were eleven children; and as for watermelons and sugar-corn, it

was folly to think of raising them longer. But fate sent my father relief sooner and more effectually than he either expected or desired: nine of the eleven being removed by death in a space of time short of six years. Three (two of whom were twin sisters) were translated in the natural way, falling victims to an epidemic, and were buried in the same grave. A fourth was soon after killed by falling out of an apple-tree. My eldest brother, then a boy of fourteen years old, upon some freak, ran away from home (for he was of a wild, madcap turn), and, getting into an oyster-boat, made a voyage into the bay, where he was lost; for, having fallen overboard, and not being able to swim, a clumsy fellow, who thought to save him in that way, clutched him round the neck with a pair of oyster-tongs, and thereby strangled him. Two others were drowned in a millpond, where they were scraping for snapping-turtles. Another, who was the wag of the family, was killed by attempting to ride a pig, which, running in great alarm through a broken fence into the orchard, dashed his brains out against a white-oak rail; and the ninth died of a sort of hysterical affection, caused by this unlucky exploit of his brother; for he could not cease laughing at it, notwithstanding its melancholy termination, and he died of the fit within twenty-four hours.

Thus, in a few years, there remained but two of all the eleven children—to wit, my oldest sister Prudence and myself. My mother (from whom I had my Christian name Sheppard, that being her maiden name) died several years before this last catastrophe, her mind having been affected, and indeed distracted, by so many mournful losses occurring in such rapid succession. She fell into a deep melancholy, and died insane.

Being one of the youngest children, I grieved but little for the loss of my brothers and sisters; nor was I able to

appreciate the advantage which, in a worldly point of view, their death must prove to me. My father, however, perceived the difference; for, having now so few to look after and be chargeable to him, he could with great propriety consider himself a rich man. He immediately resolved, as I was now his only son, that I should have a good education; and it was not his fault if, in this particular, I fell short of his expectations. I was sent to good schools, and, in course of time, was removed to the college at Nassau Hall, in Princeton, where I remained during three years; that is, until my father's decease; when I yielded to the natural indolence of my temper, and left the college, or rather (for I had formed no resolution on the subject) procrastinated my return from day to day, until it was too late to return.

My natural disposition was placid and easy—I believe I may say sluggish. I was not wanting in parts, but had as little energy or activity of mind as ever fell to the share of a Jerseyman; and how my father ever came to believe I should make a figure in the world, I cannot conceive, unless it was because he knew he had a fortune to leave me, and saw me safely lodged in a college. It is very certain he encouraged a strong belief that I should one day be a great man; and, I fancy, it was for this reason he showed himself so favourable to me in his will. He left me the bulk of his property, bestowing upon my sister, who had recently married, little beyond a farm which he had purchased in a neighbouring county, but which was a valuable one, and quite satisfied her husband.

But my father was a better judge of sausages than of human character. Besides being deficient, as I humbly confess, in all those qualities that are necessary to the formation of a great man, I had not the slightest desire to be

one. Ambition was a passion that never afflicted my mind; and I was so indifferent to the game of greatness which was playing around me, that, I seriously declare, there was a President of the United States elected to office, and turned out again, after having served his regular term, without my knowing any thing about it. I had not even the desire, so common to young men who find themselves in possession of a fortune, to launch out into elegant expenses, to dash about the country with fine horses, servants, and clothes, and to play the spendthrift in cities. On the contrary, I no sooner found myself arrived at my majority, which was a few months after my father's death, than I sat down very quietly on the farm, resolved to take the world easily; which I supposed I might easily do. I had some idea of continuing to conduct the estate, as my father had done before me; but it was a very vague one; and having made one or two efforts to bear myself like a man of business, I soon found the effort was too tiresome for one of my disposition; and I accordingly hired an overseer to manage the property for me.

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THE PLEASURES OF HAVING NOTHING TO DO.—SOME THOUGHTS ON MATRIMONY.

Having thus shuffled the cares of business from my shoulders to another's, my time began to weigh a little heavily on my hands, and I cast about for some amusement that might enable me to get rid of it. As there was great abundance of small game, such as quails, partridges, and rabbits, in the neighbourhood, I resolved to turn sportman; and, in consequence, I bought me a dog and gun, and began to harry the country with some spirit. But having the misfortune to shoot my dog the first day, and, soon after, a very valuable imported cow, belonging to a neighbour, for which I was obliged to pay him enormous damages, and meeting besides with but little luck, I grew disgusted with the diversion. My last shot was soon fired; for, having forgotten the provisions of our game-laws, I killed a woodcock too early in the summer, for which, on the information of a fellow who owed me a grudge, I was prosecuted, although it was the only bird I ever killed in all my life, and soundly fined; and this incensed me so much, that I resolved to have nothing more to do with an amusement that cost so much money, and threw me into so many difficulties.

I was then at a loss how to pass my time, until a neighbour, who bred fine horses, persuaded me to buy a pair of blooded colts, and try my luck on the turf; and this

employment, though rather too full of cares and troubles to suit me exactly, I followed with no little spirit, and became more proud of my horses than I can well express, until I came to try them on the race-course, where it was my luck, what with stakes and betting together, to lose more money in a single day, than my father had ever made in two years together. I then saw very clearly that horse-racing was nothing better than gambling, and therefore both disreputable and demoralizing; for which reason I instantly gave it up, heartily sick of the losses it had occasioned me.

My overseer, or steward—for such he may be considered—whom I always esteemed a very sensible fellow, for he was shrewd and energetic, and at least ten years my senior, then advised me, as I was a young man, with money enough, to travel a little, and see the world: and accordingly I went to New-York, where I was robbed of my luggage and money by a villain whose acquaintance I made in the steamboat, and whom I thought a highly intelligent, gentlemanly personage; though, as it afterward appeared, he was a professor from Sing-Sing, where he had been sawing stone for two years, the governor of New-York having forgiven him, as is the custom, the five other years for which he was committed for, I believe, a fraud committed on his own father.

This loss drove me home again; but being re-encouraged by my overseer, I filled my purse and set out a second time, passing up the Hudson river, with which I was prodigiously pleased, though not with the Overslaugh, where we stuck fast during six hours. I then proceeded to Saratoga, where I remained for two weeks, on account of its being fashionable; but, I declare to Heaven, I was never so tired of any place in my life. I then went to Niagara, which, in spite of the great noise it made, I thought the finest place in the

world; and there, I think, I should have continued all summer, had it not been for the crowds of tiresome people that were eternally coming and going, and the great labour of climbing up and down the stairs. However, I was so greatly pleased with what I saw, both at Niagara and along the way, that I should have repeated my travels in after years, as the most agreeable way of passing time, had it not been for the dangers and miseries of such enterprises; for, first, the coaches were perpetually falling over, or sticking in the mud, or jolting over stones, so that one had no security of life or limb; and, secondly, the accommodations at the inns along the road were not to my liking, the food being cooked after the primitive systems of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and the beds stuck together in the rooms as if for boys at a boarding-school. It is possible that these things are better ordered now; but, from what I have since seen and heard, I am of opinion there is a fine field for cooks, carpenters, and chamber-maids, in the agricultural regions of America. In those days I loved ease and comfort too well to submit to such evils as could be avoided; and, accordingly, after a little experience in the matter, I ceased travelling altogether, the pleasures bearing no sort of proportion to the discomforts.

My time still weighing upon my hands, I was possessed with a sudden idea (which my steward, however, endeavoured to combat), namely, that the tedium of my existence might be dispelled by matrimony; and I resolved to look around me for a wife. After much casting about, I fixed my eyes upon a young lady of the village (for I must inform the reader that my farm was on the skirts of a village, and a very respectable one too, although there were many lazy people in it), who, I thought, was well fitted to make me comfortable; and as she did not seem averse to

my first advances, I began to be quite particular, until all the old women in the country declared it was a match, and all the young fellows of my own age, as well as all the girls I knew, became extremely witty at my expense. These things, however, rather encouraged me than otherwise; I believed I was advancing my happiness by the change I contemplated in my condition; and I was just on the point of making formal proposals to the young lady, when an accident set me to considering the enterprise entirely in a new light.

My charmer lived in the house of a married sister, who had a large family of children—a pack of the most ill-bred imps, I verily believe, that were ever gathered together in any one man's house; but, for politeness' sake, during the first weeks of my courtship, the young sinners were kept out of my way, and, what with cuffing and feeding with sugarplums, were preserved in some sort of order, so that I was not annoyed by them. After a while, however, and when matters had proceeded some length, it was thought unnecessary to treat me longer as a stranger; the children were suffered to take care of themselves; and the consequence was, that, in a short time, I found myself in a kind of Pandemonium whenever I entered the house, with such a whining, and squeaking, and tumbling, and bawling, and fighting among the young ones, as greatly discomposed my nerves; and, to make the matter worse, the mother made no difficulty at times, when the squabbling grew to a height, of taking a switch to one, and boxing the ears of another, and scolding roundly at a third, to reduce them to order; and all this in my presence, and under the nose of my charmer.

I began to fancy the married life could not be altogether so agreeable as I had pictured it to my imagination; and in this belief I was confirmed by a visit to my sister, who had

three children of her own, all of whom, as I now perceived (for I had not noticed it before, having no particular inducement to make me observant), were given to squabbling and bawling, just like other children, while my sister did her share of boxing and scolding. I thought to myself, "What should I do with a dozen children squeaking all day and night in my house, and a scolding wife dragooning them into submission?"

The thought disconcerted me, and the fear of such a consummation greatly chilled the ardour of my affection; so that the young lady, observing my backwardness, and taking offence at it, cast her eyes upon another wooer who had made her an offer, and, to my great satisfaction, married him on the spot.

I was never more relieved in my life, and I resolved to reflect longer upon the subject before making advances of that nature a second time. My overseer, who had from the first (for I made him my confidant) been opposed to the match, on the ground that I ought to enjoy my liberty, at least until I was thirty, was greatly rejoiced at the rupture, and swore that I had made a lucky escape; for he had always thought, in his own mind, that the lady was at bottom, though she concealed it from me, a Tartar and fire-eater. In this, however, he was mistaken; for, from all I have heard of her since, she has proved a most amiable and sweet-tempered woman, and her husband is said to be very happy with her.

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HOW TO CONDUCT A FARM TO THE BEST ADVANTAGE, AND STEER CLEAR OF THE LAWYERS.

It is not my intention to dwell longer upon the history of this period of my life, nor to recount in detail how my easy and indolent temper at last proved the ruin of me. I gave myself up to laziness, neglecting my affairs to such a degree that they soon became seriously entangled; and, to make a long story short, I found myself, before I had completed my twenty-eighth year, reduced from independence, and almost affluence, to a condition bordering upon actual poverty. My farm, under the management of Mr. Aikin Jones (for that was my steward's name), went gradually to ruin; my orchards rotted away, without being replanted; my meadows were converted into swamps; my corn-fields filled with gullies; my improvements fell into decay; and my receipts began to run short of my expenses. Then came borrowing and mortgaging, and, by-and-by, the sale of *this* piece of land to remove the encumbrance upon *that*; until I suddenly found myself in the condition of my father when he began the world; that is to say, the master of a little farm of forty acres—the centre and nucleus of the fifteen hundred which he had got possession of and bequeathed to me, but which had so soon slipped through my fingers. There was this difference, however, between us; the land, when my father obtained it, was in good condition; it was now (so well had it

prospered under Jones's hands) entirely worn out and impoverished, and not worth a fourth part of its original value.

To add to my chagrin, I discovered that Mr. Aikin Jones, whom I had treated rather as a friend than servant, had abused my confidence; in other words, that he was a rogue and villain, who had taken advantage of my disinclination to business, and my ignorance, as I believe I must call it, to swindle me out of my property, which he had the best opportunities to do. Whether he effected his purpose by employing my own funds or not, I cannot say; but, it is very certain, all the different mortgages in which I was entangled came, some how or other, by hook and by crook, into his hands, and he took care to make the best use of them. In a word, Mr. Jones became a rich man, and I a poor one; and I had the satisfaction, every day when I took a walk over my forty-acre farm, as the place was familiarly called, though the true name was Watermelon Hill, to find myself stopped, which way soever I directed my steps, by the possessions of Mr. Aikin Jones, my old friend and overseer, whom I often saw roll by in his carriage, while I was trudging along through the mud.

At the same time that I met with this heavy misfortune, I had to endure others that were vexatious enough. My brother-in-law and sister had their suspicions of Mr. Jones, and often cautioned me against him, though in vain—not that I had any very superstitious reliance on the gentleman's integrity, but because I could not endure the trouble of examining into his proceedings and accounts, and chose therefore to believe him honest. This, and my general indolence and indifference to my affairs, incensed them both to that degree, that my sister did not scruple to tell me to my face that I had lost all the little sense I ever

possessed; while my brother-in-law took the freedom of saying of me in public, "that I was *wrong* in the upper story,"—in other words, that I was mad; and he had the insolence to hint "that it ran in my blood—that I had inherited it from my mother," she, as I mentioned before, having lost her mind before her decease. I was so much irritated by these insults on their part, that I quarrelled with them both, though by no means of a testy or choleric disposition; and it was many years before we were reconciled. Having therefore neither friends nor family, I was left to bear my misfortunes alone; which was a great aggravation of them all.

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THE AUTHOR FINDS HIMSELF IN TROUBLE. —SOME ACCOUNT OF HIS SERVANT, HONEST JAMES JUMBLE.

I have always described myself as of an easy, contented disposition; and such I was born. But misfortune produces sad changes in our tempers, as it was soon my lot to experience. Before, however, I describe the change that took place in mine, it is fit I should let the reader understand to what condition I was reduced by the perfidy of Jones—or, as I should rather say, by my own culpable neglect of my affairs.

My whole landed possessions consisted of a farm of forty acres, which I had, after the fashion of some of my richer neighbours in other states, suffered to fall into the most wretched condition imaginable. My meadow-lands, being broken in upon by the river, and neglected, were converted into quagmires, reed-brakes, and cat-tail patches, the only use of which was to shelter wild-fowl and mire cattle. However, my live-stock was scanty enough, and the only sufferers were my neighbours, whose cows easily made their way through my fences, and stuck fast in the mud at their pleasure. My fields were overgrown here with mullein and St. John's-wort, and there with sand-burs and poke-berries. My orchards were in an equally miserable condition—the trees being old, rotten, or worm-eaten, half of them torn down by the winds, and the remainder fit for nothing

but fire-wood. My barn was almost roofless; and as for a stable, I had so little occasion for one, that my old negro-man Jim, of whom I shall have more to say hereafter, or his wife Dinah, or both together, thinking they could do nothing better with it, helped the winds to tear it to pieces, especially in the winter, when it formed a very convenient wood-pile. My dwelling-house was also suffering from decay. It was originally a small frame building; but my father had added to it one portion after another, until it became spacious; and the large porches in front and on the rear, gave it quite a genteel, janty air. But this it could not long keep; the sun and rain gradually drove the white paint from the exterior, and the damp getting inside, the fine paper-hangings, pined and spotted, peeled from the walls. The window-frames rotted, and the glasses left them one after another; and one day in a storm one half the front porch tumbled down, and the remainder, which I propped up as well as I could, had a mighty mean and poverty-stricken appearance. The same high wind carried away one of my chimneys, which, falling on a corner of the roof, crushed that into the garret, and left one whole gable-end in ruins.

It must not be supposed that my property presented altogether this wretched appearance at the moment of my losses. It was in truth bad enough then; but I am now describing it as it appeared some few years after, when my miseries were accumulated in the greatest number, and I was just as poor as I could be.

In all this period of trouble and vexation I had but one friend, if I dare call him such; though I should have been glad half the time to be rid of him. This was my negro-man Jim, or Jim Jumble, as he was called, of whom I spoke before—an old fellow that had been a slave of my father, and was left to me in his will. He was a crabbed, self-willed old fellow,

whom I could never manage, but who would have all things his own way, in spite of me. As I had some scruples of conscience about holding a slave, and thought him of no value whatever, but, on the contrary, a great trouble, I resolved to set him free, and accordingly mentioned my design to him; when, to my surprise, he burst into a passion, swore he would *not* be free, and told me flatly I was his master, and I should take care of him: and the absurd old fool ended by declaring, if I made him a free man he would have the law of me, "he would, by ge-hosh!"

I never could well understand the cause of his extreme aversion to being made free; but I suppose, having got the upper hand of me, and being wise enough to perceive the difference between living, on the one hand, a lazy life, without any care whatever, as my slave, and, on the other, labouring hard to obtain a precarious subsistence as a free man, he was determined to stick by me to the last, whether I would or not. Some little affection for me, as I had grown up from a boy, as it were, under his own eye, was perhaps at the bottom of his resolution; but if there were, it was of a strange quality, as he did nothing but scold and grumble at me all day long. I remember, in particular, that, when the match I spoke of before was broken off, and he had heard of it, he came to me in a great passion, and insolently asked "what I meant by courting a wife, who would be a good mistress to him, and not marrying her?" and, on my condescending to explain the reasons of my change of mind, he told me plumply, "I had no more sense than a nigger; for women was women, and children children; and he was tired living so long in a house with none but me and Massa Jones for company."

I suppose it was old Jim's despair of my ever marrying, that put him upon taking a wife himself; for one day, not

long after I was reduced to the forty-acre farm, he brought home a great ugly free negro-woman, named Dinah, whom he installed into the kitchen without the least ceremony, and without so much as even informing me of his intention. Having observed her two or three times, and seeing her at last come bouncing into the dinner-room to wait on me, I asked her who she was, and what she wanted; to which she answered, "she was Jim's wife, and Jim had sent her in to take care of me."

It was in this way the old rascal used me. It was in vain to complain; he gave me to understand in his own language, "He knew what was what, and there was no possuming an old nigger like him; and if I had made *him* overseer, instead of Massa Jones, it would have been all the better for me."

And, in truth, I believe it would; for Jim would never have cheated me, except on a small scale; and if he had done no work himself, it is very certain he would have made everybody else work; for he was a hard master when he had anybody under him.

I may here observe, and I will do the old fellow the justice to confess, that I found him exceedingly useful during all my difficulties. What labour was bestowed upon the farm, was bestowed almost altogether by him and his wife Dinah. It is true he did just what he liked, and without consulting me—planting and harvesting, and even selling what he raised, as if he were the master and owner of all things, and laying out what money he obtained by the sales, just as his own wisdom prompted; and finding I could do nothing better, I even let him have his own way; and it was perhaps to my advantage that I did.

But I grew poorer and poorer, notwithstanding: and at that period, which I shall ever be inclined to consider as the true beginning of my eventful life, I was reduced almost to

the point of despair; for my necessities had compelled me to mortgage the few miserable acres I had left, and I saw nothing but utter ruin staring me in the face.

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SHEPPARD LEE EXPERIENCES HIS SHARE OF THE RESPECT THAT IS ACCORDED TO "HONEST POVERTY."—HIS INGENIOUS AND HIGHLY ORIGINAL DEVICES TO AMEND HIS FORTUNE.

It may be asked, why I made no efforts to retrieve my fortunes? I answer to that, that I made many, but was so infatuated that I never once thought of resorting to the most obvious, rational, and only means; that is to say, of cultivating with industry my forty acres, as my father had done before me. This idea, so sluggish was my mind, or so confused by its distresses, never once occurred to me; or if it did, it presented so many dreary images, and so long a prospect of dull and disagreeable labour, that I had not the spirit to pursue it. The little toil I was forced to endure—for my necessities now compelled me at times to work with my own hands—appeared to me intolerably irksome; and I was glad to attempt any thing else that seemed to promise me good luck, and did not require positive labour.

The first plan of bettering my fortune that I conceived, was to buy some chances in a lottery, which I thought an easy way of making money; as indeed it is, when a man can make any. I had my trouble for my pains, with just as many blanks as I had bought tickets; upon which I began to see clearly that adventuring in a lottery was nothing short of gambling, as it really is; and so I quitted it.

I then resolved to imitate the example of a neighbour, who had made a great sum of money by buying and selling to advantage stock in a southern gold-mining company; and being very sanguine of success, I devoted all the money I could scrape together to the purpose, and that so wisely, that a second instalment being suddenly demanded, I had nothing left to discharge it with, and no means of raising any; the consequence of which was, that I was forced to sell at the worst time in the world, and retired from the concern with just one fifth the sum I had invested in it. I saw then that I had no talent for speculating, and I began to have my doubts whether stock-jobbing was not just as clear gambling as horse-racing and lottery speculation.

I tried some ten or a dozen other projects with a view to better my condition; but, as I came off with the same luck from all, I do not think it necessary to mention them. I will, however, state, as a proof how much my difficulties had changed my mind on that subject, that one of them was of a matrimonial character. My horror of squabbling children and scolding wives melted away before the prospect of sheriffs and executions; and there being a rich widow in the neighbourhood, I bought me a new coat, and made her a declaration. But it was too late in the day for me, as I soon discovered; for besides giving me a flat refusal, she made a point of revealing the matter to all her acquaintance, who did nothing but hold me up to ridicule.

I found that my affairs were falling into a desperate condition; and not knowing what else to do, I resolved to turn politician, with the hope of getting some office or other that might afford me a comfortable subsistence.

This was the maddest project that ever possessed my brain; but it was some time before I came to that conclusion. But, in truth, from having been the easiest and

calmest tempered man in the world, I was now become the most restless and discontented, and incapable of judging what was wise and what foolish. I reflected one day, that of my old school and college mates who were still alive, there was not one who had not made some advance in the world, while I had done nothing but slip backwards. It was the same thing with dozens of people whom I remembered as poor farmers' boys, with none of the advantages I had possessed, but who had outstripped me in the road to fortune, some being now rich cultivators, some wealthy manufacturers and merchants, while two or three had got into the legislature, and were made much of in the newspapers. One of my old companions had emigrated to the Mississippi, where he was now a cotton-planter, with a yearly revenue of twenty or thirty thousand dollars; another had become a great lawyer in an adjacent state; and a third, whom I always thought a very shallow, ignorant fellow, and who was as poor as a rat to boot, had turned doctor, settled down in the village, and, besides getting a great practice, had married the richest and finest girl in all the county. There was no end to the number of my old acquaintances who had grown wealthy and distinguished; and the more I thought of them, the more discontented I became.

My dissatisfaction was increased by discovering with what little respect I was held among these happy people. The doctor used to treat me with a jocular sort of familiarity, which I felt to be insulting; the lawyer, who had eaten many a dinner at my table, when I was able to invite him, began to make me low bows, instead of shaking hands with me; and the cotton-planter, who had been my intimate friend at college, coming to the village on a visit to his relations, stared me fiercely in the face when I approached him, and with a lordly "hum—ha!" asked me "Who the devil I might

be?" As for the others, they treated me with as little consideration; and I began to perceive very plainly that I had got into the criminal stage of poverty, for all men were resolved to punish me. It is no wonder that poverty is the father of crime, since the poor man sees himself treated on all hands as a culprit.

I had never before envied a man for enjoying more consideration in the world than myself: but the discovery that I was looked upon with contempt filled me with a new subject for discontent. I envied my richer neighbours not only for being rich, but for being what they considered themselves, my superiors in standing. I may truly say, I scarce ever saw, in those days, a man with a good coat on his back, without having a great desire to beat him. But as I was a peaceable man, my anger never betrayed me into violence.