

**THE HARPE'S HEAD:  
A LEGEND OF  
KENTUCKY**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649599349

The Harpe's Head: A Legend of Kentucky by James Hall

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**JAMES HALL**

**THE HARPE'S HEAD:  
A LEGEND OF  
KENTUCKY**



THE  
HARPE'S HEAD;

LEGEND OF KENTUCKY.

---

BY JAMES HALL,  
AUTHOR OF "THE SOLDIER'S BRIDE," "LEGENDS  
OF THE WEST," &c.

---

Philadelphia:

KEY & BIDDLE—23 MINOR STREET.

1833.



Entered according to act of congress, in the year 1833, by Kay & Bump in the clerk's office of the district court for the eastern district of Pennsylvania.

# HARPE'S HEAD.

---

## CHAPTER I.

AT the close of a pleasant day, in the spring of the year 17—, a solitary horseman might have been seen slowly winding his way along a narrow road, in that part of Virginia which is now called the Valley. It was nearly forty years ago, and the district lying between the Blue Ridge and the Allegheny mountains was but thinly populated, while the country lying to the west, embracing an immense Alpine region, was a savage wilderness, which extended to the new and distant settlements of Kentucky. Our traveller's route led along the foot of the mountains, sometimes crossing the *spurs*, or lateral ridges, which push out their huge promontories from the great chain; and at others winding through deep ravines, or skirting along broad valleys. The Ancient Dominion was never celebrated for the goodness of its highways, and the one whose mazes he was now endeavoring to unravel, was among the worst, being a mere path, worn by the feet of horses, and marked by faint traces of wheels, which showed that the experiment of driving a carriage over its uneven surface had been successfully tried, but not generally practised. The country was fertile, though wild and broken. The season was that in which the

foliage is most luxuriant and splendid to the eye, the leaves being fully expanded, while the rich blossoms decked the scene with a variety of brilliant hues; and our traveller, as he passed ridge after ridge, paused in delight on their elevated summits, to gaze at the beautiful glens that lay between them, and the gorgeous vegetation that climbed even to the tops of the steepest acclivities. The day, however, which had been unusually sultry for the season, was drawing to a close, and both horse and rider began to feel the effects of hunger and fatigue; the former, though strong and spirited, drooped his head, and the latter became wearied with these lonesome though picturesque scenes. During the whole day he had not seen the dwelling of a human being; the clattering of his horse's hoofs upon the rock, the singing of the birds, so numerous in this region, the roaring of the mountain stream, or the crash of timber occasioned by the fall of some great tree, were the only sounds that had met his ear. He was glad, therefore, to find his path descending, at last, into a broad valley, interspersed with farms. He seemed to have surmounted the last hill, and before him was a rich continuous forest, resembling, as he overlooked it from the high ground, a solid plane of verdure. The transition from rocky steeps and precipices, to the smooth soil and sloping surface of the valley, was refreshing; and not less so were the coolness and fragrance of the air, and the deep and varied hues of the forest, occasioned by the rank luxuriance of its vegetation.

It might be proper, as it certainly is customary, before proceeding to narrate the adventures of our hero,



to introduce him to the particular acquaintance of the reader, by a full description of his person, character, and lineage; but this manner of narration, supported as it is by respectable precedent, we must be permitted to decline. As we have no record before us showing that the gentleman in question ever passed under a regimental standard, we are not aware that his exact height could now be ascertained; and as he was neither a deserter from the service of his country, nor a fugitive from the protection of his guardian, we cannot think it necessary to set forth the color of his hair and eyes, or to describe what clothes "he had on when he went away." To enlist the sympathies of our fair readers, whose approbation we would fain propitiate, it is enough to say that he was a young and handsome bachelor, leaving each of them to fancy him the exact image of her favorite admirer; but as we do not admire the practice of peeping into gentlemen's hearts, or pocket-books, without any other warrant than the bare license of authorship, we cannot tell what precious billet-doux may have filled the one, or what treasured image might have occupied the other. These are questions which may be incidentally touched hereafter; and the curious reader will find ample materials in the following pages, for the gratification of a laudable thirst for knowledge on these interesting points.

The sun was about to set, and our traveller, having completely left all the mountain passes behind him, could have enjoyed the serenity of the calm hour, and the bland landscape, had not other thoughts harassed him. He needed rest and refreshment, and knew not where to find the one or the other. While considering this matter,

he reached a spot where two roads crossed, at the same instant when two other persons, advancing from a different direction, arrived at the same point. They were an elderly gentleman and a young lady, both of prepossessing appearance. The former was a portly man, hale and ruddy, with a gay eye and a profusion of gray locks, as if the frost of age had prematurely touched his head, without penetrating so deep as to chill the fountains of life. His dress was that of a country gentleman; it was not expensive, nor yet well assorted, but rather evinced the carelessness of one who, living secluded from the fashionable world, felt independent of its forms, or who adopted with reluctance the changes which seemed every year to depart further and further from certain standards of gracefulness to which he had been accustomed in his youth, as well as from the peculiar notions of comfort that fasten upon the mind with the approaches of old age. He was mounted upon a fine high-bred horse, rather oddly caparisoned; for the bridle, though silver mounted, was broken in several places, and the fractures had been remedied, at one part by a hard knot, at another by a coarse seam, and at a third by a thong of buckskin; while a Spanish saddle, which might once have done honor to the best cavalier at a bull-fight, having lost the stirrup-leather on the near side, was supplied with an accommodation-ladder of rope, and the girth was patched with leather and linsey, until the original material was hardly discoverable. The worthy gentleman wore one spur, either because he was too indolent to put on the other, or from a conviction, founded on a well-established philosophical principle, that the

effect produced on one side of his animal must be followed by a corresponding result on the other, and that consequently one armed heel is as effective as a pair. Indeed, that gentlemanly weapon seemed to be worn more from habit than necessity, for the free-spirited steed needed no prompter; and the rider, who sat with the ease and grace of an experienced horseman, would have esteemed it a breach of the dignity becoming his age and station to have proceeded at any pace faster than a walk. He was evidently a wealthy planter, accustomed to good living and good society, who had arrived at a standing in life which placed him above any merely outward forms that interfered with his comfort, and who felt privileged to think as he pleased, and do as he liked; while the frankness and benevolence of his countenance at once assured the stranger that his heart was alive to the best feelings of kindness and hospitality. His companion was a lovely girl of eighteen, richly and tastefully habited. Careless as were the apparel and furniture of the elder rider, that of the lady was studiously neat and appropriate. Her palfrey had the fine limbs, the delicate form, and the bright eye of the deer, with a gentleness that seemed to savor more of reason than of instinct. His hair was smooth and glossy as silk, his harness elegant and neatly fitted; and as the fair rider sat gracefully erect in her saddle, the proud animal arched his neck as if conscious of the beauty of his burthen.

As the parties met at the junction of the roads, each of the gentlemen reined up his horse to allow the other to pass; the elder bowed and touched his hat, and the other returned the salutation with equal courtesy. There