

# HUNTINGDON JOURNAL.

"ONE COUNTRY, ONE CONSTITUTION, ONE DESTINY."

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## TERMS OF THE HUNTINGDON JOURNAL.

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## THE GARLAND.



"With sweetest flowers enrich'd  
From various gardens cull'd with care."

## THE SAILOR'S SICK CHILD.

"Mother, when will morning come?"  
A weeping creature said;  
On a woe-worn, wither'd breast  
It laid its little head,  
And when it does, I hope 'twill be  
All pleasant, warm and bright,  
And pay me for the many pangs  
I've felt this weary night."

"Mother, would you not, if rich,  
Like the rector, or the squire,  
Be a bright candle all the night,  
And make a nice warm fire?  
I should be so glad to see  
Their kind and cheerful glow!  
Then I should not feel the night  
So very long I know."

"Is true you fold me to your heart,  
And kiss me when I cry—  
And lift the cup unto my lip  
When I complain I'm dry.  
Across my shoulder your dear arm  
All tenderly is press'd,  
And often I am lull'd to sleep  
By the throbbing of your breast."

"But 'twould be comfort, would it not,  
For you as well as me,  
To have a light—to have a fire—  
Perhaps—a cup of tea?  
Often think I should be well  
If these things were but so—  
'Tis mother, I remember, once  
We had them—long ago."

"But you were not a widow then,  
I not an orphan boy;  
When father, (long ago) came home  
I us'd to jump with joy,  
Tus'd to climb upon his knee,  
And cling about his neck,  
And listen while he told us tales  
Of battle and of wreck."

"O had we not a bright fire then!  
And such a many friends!  
Where are they all gone, mother dear,  
For no one of us sends?  
I think if some of them would come  
We might know comfort now  
Though of them all, not one could be  
Like him I will allow."

"But he was sick, and then his wounds  
Would often give him pain,  
So that I cannot bear to wish  
Him with us once again,  
You say that we shall go to him  
In such a happy place—  
I wish it was this very night,  
That I might see his face!"

"The little murmurer's wish was heard,  
Before the morning broke,  
He slept the long and silent sleep,  
From which he never woke;  
Above the little pain-worn thing  
The sailor's widow wept,  
And wonder'd how her lonely heart  
In vital pulses kept!"

"But she liv'd on, though all bereft,  
A toil-worn, heart-rung slave;  
And oft she came to weep upon  
Her young boy's little grave;  
A corner of the poor-house ground  
Contains his mould'ring clay,  
And there the mourning mother wept  
A sabbath's hour away."

"And as she felt the dull decay  
Through all her pulses creep,  
She cry'd, 'By his unconscious dust  
I'll soon be laid to sleep:  
How! valour, patience, innocence,  
Like visions will have passed,  
And the sailor, and his wife and child,  
Will have found relief at last.'"

## SELECT TALE.

### THE SNAKE EATER.

"Some strange commotion  
Is in his brain; he bites his lip, and starts;  
Stops on the sudden, and looks upon the  
ground;  
Then lays his finger on his temple; straight  
Springs out into fast gate; then stops again,  
Strikes his breast hard; then anon he casts  
His eye against the moon; in most strange  
posture  
We have seen him set himself."  
SHAKS. HENRY VIII.

A few years ago, near the sunset of an autumnal day, I reached a populous town on the banks of the Mississippi. An accident to the steam-boat, wherein I had embarked, and by which many lives lost through the carelessness of an ignorant and drunken engineer, had compelled the directors of the boat to stop with the remaining company, and repair the damages that had occurred.

Alas! there were damages and evils on board that unpretending craft, which were beyond the reach of mechanic or surgeon. The dead were strewing the deck; fragments of the boiler, and broken wheels were lying around; and masses of soot and cinders from the uncleaned pipes blackened the deck. On every side were corpses, and wailing friends, and tearful eyes. A few settlers had been brought up from the cabin, and on the mattresses with which they were covered, the dead were laid. It was an awful scene. Two hours before, all was well; and every heart seemed bounding with the rapid impulse of life and hope. I myself escaped by a miracle. I was seated at the stern of the boat, near the end window of the cabin, over the rudder, watching, as is my wont, to see the turbulent waters boil around the keel, and mark the landscape flit by and recede. A noise like an earthquake, which made the shuddering boat recoil many yards,—a rush of hot steam through the broken windows,—the hissing of the pieces from the boilers, as they dropped into the river, and after one sad pause of an instant, the shrieks of the dead and dying, and the surviving mourners,—these were the signs which betokened the appalling disaster, and convinced me visibly, for the first time, what a amount of pain and misery can be crowded into a passing moment.

It is a sight of horror to behold the strong man smitten down in his might; to see the pride of womanhood defaced and blighted by sudden death; to hear the lamentations of grief and despair, where but a little time before were heard the light laugh of pleasure, and the tones of delight. How distant was the thought of harm, from each and all! Truly it is said by the great bard of nature,—"We know what we are but not what we shall be." We weave the garlands of joy, even by the precipice of death; we disport in the sunbeam, unmindful of the storm that is blooming afar, and will soon be at hand.

The sun descended as we entered the town, which was situated on ascending grounds near the river. A swell of upland, overlooking near at hand a few patches of green, which I took to be cotton fields, and which apparently commanding an extended view of the shores and course of the great Father of Rivers stretched rearward for the place. Overcome with excitement and gratitude for my deliverance, and seeing also there had thronged to the wharf, a large number of citizens, sufficient for every purpose of charitable assistance toward the sufferers, and the dead on board of the steam-boat, I selected that portion of my luggage which had not been destroyed, and after seeking a hotel, made the best of my way to the upland of which I have spoken. I felt like one snatched from the grave; and deeply impressed with the sense of the danger from which I had escaped through the watchfulness of a benignant Providence, I determined to seek some haunt of retirement, and quiet my agitated spirits with thankful meditation.

When I gained the eminence, I found that the view was calculated to heighten and expand all the feelings with which

my heart was surcharged, to the overflow. A few gorgeous clouds, bedight in crimson and purple, were sailing in glory along the melancholy west; dark cypresses hung to their tops with trailing clusters of wild vine, colored with mingled violet, amber, and emerald, stood in relief before the horizon; while afar, on either hand, the great Mississippi was seen rolling along with a kind of quivering radiance, and exhibiting, even at that distance, the turbulent might, which makes it seem like prostrate Niagara. At a distance, in each extremity of the view, it was lost in dark woods and misty head-lands; an emblem, most striking at the moment, of that obscurity which, like the shadow curtain in the vision of Mirza, overhung the stream of life and time, making to the Past a dream; and of the Future a vast unknown.

It is impossible to describe the sensations which animate the bosom of an American, as he looks at this running ocean, and the long vale through which it rolls. He gazes onward with the eye of anticipation to the not distant period, when that almost interminable stretch of landscape shall become bright with towns, and vocal with the sounds of human industry; when the busy hum of scholars at their tasks, of artists at their labors, of the husbandman folding his flocks, or garnering the rich treasures of the harvest, shall succeed the moanings of the cypress, and the mingled howlings of roaming beasts of prey, and yet wilder Indians; when the light of civilization and religion shall extend over forests and savannahs, until the progress of our people through the dominions of the receding Aborigines, shall be, in the expressive words of Scripture, "as the morning spread upon the mountains; a great people, and a strong; of whom there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, to the years of many generations."

As I turned to survey the prospect, I saw at no great distance from the spot where I stood, a white tent, or pavilion surmounted with a parti-colored flag, which was waving to the evening breeze, and on which I read the words,—"THE SNAKE EATER." The tent was open on one side like a door, before which there was a curtain. Benches were placed in an amphitheatrical form before the tent, which were then filling with people. The faint glimmer of an early lamp was perceivable behind the dark curtains; and moved with curiosity, I bent my steps toward the assemblage. I paid the requisite sum to the person who kept the gate of a picket fence which surrounded the amphitheatre, and took my seat among the crowd, in the open air.

Twilight had now set in, and the twinkling of the stars could be seen on the broad bosom of the Mississippi, as it moved in voiceless solemnity toward the ocean. The cypresses assumed the semblance of weird and ghastly forms against the sky; and an occasional sweep of a belated hawk from the far off prairies, with his dismal scream, gave token that the day had died, and its dirge was sounding.

Presently, at the tinkle of a little bell, the curtain of the tent was lifted. A young man was seated at a table, with a box before him, covered with glass, and apparently subdivided into two or more drawers. He seemed eight and twenty years of age; his face was thin, and a leaden wanness overspread his features; but his sunken eye had that supernatural brightness so often seen in his eyes of the consumptive; and as he removed his cravat, and as he removed his cravat, and turned his wristbands over the cuffs of the coat, he said:

"The company has assembled to see the Snake Eater. If any one wishes to satisfy himself with regard to the reptile which I am now about to devour, in the presence of you all, and to restore again from my throat alive, he will please to draw nigh."

He turned the closed cover of the box over toward the audience, as he made this observation, and disclosed to the sight a hideous rattlesnake. It was coiled, and when disturbed, elevated its spiny head

from its circle, and while its forked tongue played with a rapid motion, it darted against the glass in vain attempts to escape, while its rattles continued to quiver with a violent and whizzing sound, accompanied by that apparent flatness of the head, which denotes the highest pitch of resentment. Its dilated eye shot fire; and the coarse scales on its contorted form grew rugged in its anger.

After this *expose*, the Snake Eater placed the box in its original position. A chilly shudder ran through the assembly, when after turning his back to the beholder, he bent his face for a moment at the edge of the horrid reptile with his hand. The snake now seemed languid and passive, though the rattles continued to sound. He placed the head of the venomous serpent to his lips—he opened his mouth, and the long spire began to descend. It was an appalling sight to see that huge *monstrum horrendum* making its way into the throat of a human being. The cheeks of the young man began to dilate, and his complexion became a livid purple. His eyes seemed bursting from their sockets—masses of foam gathered about his lips—and he looked as if in the severest struggles of the last mortal agony—as if tasting of death. Several of the audience shrieked with affright.

After apparently mumbling and crouching his fearful meal, the Snake Eater again partially opened his lips, and the forked tongue of the reptile was seen playing, like threads of bright red fire, between them. Presently it began to emerge. It moved very slowly, as if held back by other serpents that had preceded it, in the awful deglutition of its master. As the long, loathsome folds hung from the lips and continued to extend, the features of the Snake Eater assumed their wonted aspect; and in a moment, the reptile had emerged, was replaced in the box, and the feat was accomplished.

After seating himself for a few seconds, to recover from the perilous execution of his task, the Snake Eater arose and addressed the audience. He desired them to believe that he had wished, not to appear, but to surprise them. There was, he acknowledged, an art in what he had done—but it was a mysterious and undiscoverable one. "They call me mad," he added bitterly, "and a conjurer; but a conjurer I am none, and though I have been mad, I am not now; yet often do I wish I were. You will dominate my calling and of foolish hazzard, and perhaps of disgust; but did you know all, you would judge of me better. I thank you for your attendance; and I have succeeded in surprising you, my aim has been won."

The audience, in the enthusiasm of western feeling, gave the performer three hearty cheers, and retired with wonder-stricken faces. I lingered behind until the last had departed, and stepped into the tent, where the Snake Eater had drawn a few eatables from his knapsack, which he was discussing with considerable relish. I found him sociable, but sad. By degrees my observations excited a sympathy in his mind; and as we sat, toward midnight, in his solitary house of canvass, the dark Mississippi rolling below, the pale stars fretting the vault above—and the far West stretching in dimness around, he thus began:—

### THE SNAKE EATER'S STORY.

"I am not, my friend, what you see me. Though regarded hereabouts as one who has dealings with familiar spirits and wizards, I am only a heart-broken man, the child of sorrow, and almost without hope. I do not thus speak for your sympathy; for your sympathy can at best but awaken afresh the wells of mournful tenderness in my breast, without pouring one ray of sunshine upon the troubled fountains; they must flow on in darkness, without a prospect of day. Listen to me.

"Eight short years ago, with the spirit of adventure stirring within me, I came as it were directly from the walls of a university, in one of the Atlantic states, to this 'far country.' I came with prodigious endowments from my father; and seeking the then frontiers of civilization, embarked in trade with settlers and Indians.

I bought furs and sold all kinds of mercantile riches. I prospered; my capital re-doubled itself, and in all respects I was prosperous. You may perhaps desire to know my motive for thus leaving the charms of society, and seeking the seclusion of the wilderness. It was the strongest of motives—*human affection*.—An uncle had preceded me. He had a ward, to whom I had been deeply and devotedly attached from my childhood.—She was the paragon of her sex.

I speak not as a rhapsodist, or with enthusiasm; for the loveliest being that ever came from the hands of God into this lower world, could not excel her for beauty. She made that beauty perfect, by the graces of a mind, pure and clear as the foaming diamond. Her voice was melody; her smile a burst of living and pearly light; and her calm blue eyes were the sweet expositors of a sinless affection. The young peach, when the airs and beams of summer have awakened its ripening blushes, or the pomegranate, as it glows among the leaves that tremble to the rich chant of the nightingale, surpassed not her cheeks, for bloom or loveliness, when her fair hair was divided on her brow, and fell in masses of waving and silken gold around them. Truly, I loved her with my whole soul. She was my idol—my cynosure—the centre of every desire, and the object of every aspiration.

"We were married. Time went on, and brought me a bud from the rose that I had established in my green bower of home. We were blest indeed. Aloof from society, though we missed a few of its luxuries, we suffered none of its vexations and demoralizing corruptions. On Sabbath days, we rode many miles through the wilderness, to worship our Maker in his sanctuary, and hear the word of life from the lips of those who journeyed through the forest on missionary enterprises,—ambassadors of a court, of which the most noble court of earth affords not the faintest emblem.

"On the day that our dear little Sarah attained her second year, she was seated by my counter, and her mother was standing by, when three fierce looking Indians entered the store. They had evidently travelled a long way, for their leggins were torn and dirty, and their feet were almost bare. I recognized one of them instantly, as 'The Crouching Wolf,' a desperate being, who hung alternately around the skirts of settlements, begging for rum, or getting it in barter for small poultry, which he obtained in the chase. Just one year before, he has visited me for the purpose of procuring the fire-water, or ardent spirit. I refused him, and he left me with a vow of future vengeance.

"'Hoogh!' said he, as he reeled up, with his grufflooking companions, towards the counter, where my child was playing, and my wife stood: 'The Crouching Wolf said he would come back. He wants the talking water,—he wants that or revenge. He will have one!'

"I tried to reason with him,—but he was deaf to reason. He had already tasted from the flagon of one of his red comrades, and the fumes were in his brain.

"Come, medicine-man, the Wolf wants the fire milk. Where is it? He cannot wait. His spirits is up, and his forehead is warm."

"I saw that he grew desperate,—but my resolution was fixed: I sternly denied him.—It was a fatal denial.

"He stepped back a few paces, growled some guttural sentences to his companions and the three then advanced toward my child. I was motionless, and paralyzed with terror. As the Wolf approached my daughter, he drew a tomahawk from his belt, and flourished it on high. I sprang toward him, but was pushed back by his companions. The dear innocent, unafraid, smiled in the face of the Crouching Wolf, and it seemed as if the cheerful purity of her look stayed his vengeful aim. He paused, until a scream from the mother aroused the terror of her first-born. She shrunk back from the relentless savage, while her mother was kept,

like myself, at bay, and while her sweet red lip, chiselled like her mother's, was quivering with dismay, she said, in childish simplicity—

"'Naughty Indian,—if he hurts Sarah, ma will be angry, and punish him.' As she said this, she burst into tears,—her last forever.

"In one instant, the trenchant weapon of the infuriated Indian cleve in sunder the head of my babe: in the next, his excited comrades had murdered the wife of my bosom. I have an indistinct and horrid remembrance of my burning store, the red fiends yelling over the consuming roof and walls,—my escape to the forest; the rest was but silence and oblivion. I was a madman!

"Ten months after, I found myself in New-Orleans. I had reached the city, no one knew how,—had been conveyed to a hospital, kindly treated, and discharged as cured,—but an outcast and a beggar. Misfortunes seldom come single. My father had died,—and as I had already received my share of his estate, the residue melted away among a host of brothers. My inheritance had been destroyed by the Indians. I was without a home or a friend.

"How I subsisted, I scarcely know. At last, as I was one day walking on the levee, I saw a group collected around an Indian, who was performing certain tricks from a box, with a rattlesnake. It was the Crouching Wolf.

"The murderer of my wife and child!" I exclaimed, as I penetrated through the ring, and one huge blow felled the vile monster to the earth. I seized him by the throat.—I placed my knees upon his breast. In a few moments, he was a distorted and ghastly corpse beneath my feet.

"My award of retribution was considered just, and no effort was made to arrest me. Availing myself of the box belonging to the Crouching Wolf, which I contended was mine as a debt, I soon learnt the mystery of his art, as it were by intuition. The upper drawer of the box contained the real rattlesnake; the other merely the skin of one, which could be inflated by the breath, at will. The motion of the tongue, which was dried, and had wires within, was produced by loadstone; the movement of the rattles by the same cause."

"Filled from the lungs, it could readily be taken into the mouth, and compressed into a very small compass,—and while re-passing outward, inflated again. I bought a new skin from a museum, which I killed, and prepared according to the model before me. I could not endure the thought of even using the same instruments formerly employed by the destroyer of all that I most loved on earth, and I turned from his trickery with a feeling of almost positive loathing. A little practice made me an adept in the mystery of snake-eating,—and I have since wandered in loneliness from town to town; attempting this curious enterprise. My pecuniary success has been sufficient for my comfort and convenience,—and the feat is only in appearance. With a slight exertion, I can resolve my face into the colors and contortions you witnessed this evening, and which heighten the interest of the spectacle. But these things can only temporarily divert my thoughts,—for I carry within my heart an aching fever, which no prosperity can allay or remove. The objects that have cheered me can cheer me no more. I stand alone in this wilderness world,—a mourner and a pilgrim. My visions are of my wife and child; my day dreams are of the night; but I must suffer as you see, until I meet them in that better country, where the sun descends not, and darkness is unknown, where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest. I can forget my child,—for her existence seems to me like a misty trance,—in the fond assurance that the sparkling dew-drop has exhaled to heaven; but for the cherished rose that sustained me, I cease not to grieve. Alas, for the wife of my bosom! Well can I say, with one who, perhaps, has loved and mourned like me;