

From the Louisville Literary Messenger.

## A TALE OF INDIANA.

The incidents which I am about to relate, are not drawn from imagination, but facts. They form an act of the never-ending drama of human villainy.

'This is indeed a wild night,' said Charles Gray to his wife, as they sat before the blazing hearth of an Indian log cabin—while the winds wailed around the roof, and went sounding through the forest.

'Wildier than I ever knew,' observed the wife, 'and, Charles, how thankful we should be to our Maker that he has given us this close cabin and warm fire to protect us from the rude elements.'

'Thankful!' and Charles Gray's brow assumed a scowl, which of itself spoke the demon in his heart. 'Thankful, wife! you mock me! What is this cabin to the luxurious comforts of the town folks whom we used to see in New York, rolling through the streets in their cushioned carriages, or reclining on silk sofas, and laughing at the ragged beggars that claimed their charity!—Thankful!'

Mary did not reply. She feared him when in these moods, and was too judicious to irritate him even by words which she intended to be soothing. For what are words, though breathed from a seraph's lute, or syllabled by angel's lip, to one whose soul has become absorbed in the love of unacquired wealth.

Charles was a native of New York, and had been left a handsome fortune—but prompted by avarice and too impatient to continue in the safe business in which he began, joined with others of an equally avaricious disposition in a speculation, which at first proved promising, but entirely failed, and left many an ardent dreamer a ruined man. Charles in this mad affair had embarked his all. He was left without house or friends, for friends are often bound by golden chains alone. He determined, with his wife, to emigrate to Indiana, of whose fertile soil, broad streams, genial climate, and noble forests, so much was said.

With a bitter spirit he bade farewell to home, and with a small amount of money, raised by the sale of his wife's jewels, sought the almost untrodden wilds of the west. With this small amount of cash, he purchased a few acres of ground on the Ohio river, where the beautiful and splendid town of — is now standing. For a short period he laboured assiduously on his small farm, and cheered by the smiles of a lovely and devoted wife, seemed to forget his misfortunes. A short time before our narrative opened, Charles had visited L—, as a hand in a flat boat, the only species of water craft then used to convey goods and produce down the river. Whilst he was there he met several of those who had failed in the speculation which had ruined himself.

But whilst he had remained poor, they by some means had revived their fortunes and settled on the Ohio, where they were carrying on a brisk business. Charles returned home an altered man. For whole days he would sit idle and discontented. His sleep was disturbed by dreams of gold, in vain did that beautiful uncomplaining wife endeavour to frighten the fiend from his bosom. It was like one solitary star trying to dissipate the darkness of the storm-tossed ocean.

Wildier yet roared the storm through the crashing woods, and Charles was still brooding over his imaginary wrongs, when a 'halloo' was heard outside the little enclosure which surrounded the cabin.

Mary sprang to the door, and after scrutinizing the traveller, for such the intruder was, by the light of a bark torch which she held over her head, invited him into her rustic room.

In a moment a gentleman of rather a slight stature, bearing a portmanteau in his hand, entered and gave the usual salutation. Mary called her husband to attend to the traveller, but neither by words nor gesture did he exhibit signs of having heard her until the stranger's portmanteau, upon touching the floor, spoke to his sordid soul of gold. The demon was aroused, but he wore a smiling face.

'Welcome, stranger, welcome!' exclaimed Gray, in so hurried and strange a manner, that the traveller started back a few paces in surprise; but quickly recovering himself, exchanged salutations, and seated himself on a rude chair already placed for his convenience before the fire.

Conversation soon commenced, nor was it interrupted until the night had far advanced towards the dawn. George Somers was also, he said, a native of New York, and from the neighbourhood in which Charles Gray had lived. He informed Gray that he had sold his property in the East, and emigrated to the 'El Dorado,' to speculate in lands, having with him a large sum of money for that purpose.

At last they all retired to rest. The traveller to sleep—Gray to brood over the wealth of his guest. What fearful thoughts passed through the brain of the wretch that night! How often did his eyes wander to the hunting knife! Once he was about leaving the bed, when a slight motion of his wife in her slumbers deterred him from his murderous intent. Whose but the pencil of a demon could paint the fears—the hopes—the dark resolves of the wretched Gray, while the wearied guest slept but a few paces from him, in that peace which virtue and weariness alone can give?

The morning came, and glowing from his ocean couch arose the sun, gilding the distant bluffs and surrounding forests with colours drawn alone from the pallet of heaven. His beams shone down

upon the cottage, yet unstained with blood, and aroused the sleepers. Did the evil spirit slumber in Gray's bosom?

The simple breakfast was soon over, and Somers asked Gray to set him on the first road to M—. With a blandness worthy the days when he stood a respectable merchant behind a city desk, he informed Mr. Somers that he would accompany him a part of his journey, and under pretence of killing some game, shouldered his rifle and led the way. For some time they walked together, whilst renewing boyhood remembrances—remembrances which called to mind many a spot hallowed by childhood sports and parental affection.

They had thus proceeded about three miles, and arriving among those beautiful bluffs on the Ohio, since rendered celebrated by a deed which has given a name to a small crystal stream which dashes over a precipice some hundred feet deep. A bird swept over their heads, and wheeling on its light wings, lit on the bough of a majestic oak—which bears the name of many an ardent lover of nature. Gray asked the traveller to move onward, while he attempted to bring down his game. Somers complied, and, unsuspecting, left Gray behind.

A sharp rifle crack rung through the woods, and a shriek mingled in its echoes. The host was a murderer for money. Blood may be shed for revenge, and our sympathy may be excited for the assassin—but who can find a chord in his heart from which pity may draw a note of feeling from him, who, with blood-stained fingers, holds the glittering coin before his eager eyes.

Gray soon disposed of the body by hurling it over the precipice. As it went lumbering through the scrubs and jagged rocks that lined the chasin, he perhaps felt remorse, but it was but for a moment. With eager hand he opened the portmanteau, and rolling out the shining coin upon the leaves, for some minutes he gloated over his wealth, for the country was almost uninhabited, and his demon spirit could rejoice in its riches undisturbed.

On returning home he deposited his ill-gotten gold in the chest. His wife heard the ringing of the coin, and her quick mind told her that Charles Gray, her husband, to whom her heart had confided, was a murderer. She fainted. The wretch heeded her not, but gloomily seated himself before the fire. From the floor on which she had fallen, Mary rose an altered woman. The rose fled from her cheek, and a grave in the forest, marked by a simple stone, tells where lies the broken-hearted wife. Peace to her memory! She has gone where the blue streams were never crimsoned with blood—where the dagger never flashes over the head of the devoted wayfarer.

Charles Gray became a rich man. His lands, broad and fertile, bore luxuriant harvests. A tall mansion arose among those old woods to shelter the murderer's head. Strange to tell, he lived unsuspected. No one cared for the emigrant in the country from which he came.

Years rolled away. Villages arose on the ruin of that mighty forest. The steamer was heard with its perpetual thunder and lightning ascending and descending the beautiful Ohio, and lovely residences, like gems, summoned up by the enchanter's wand from the earth's bosom, studded the surface of the silver river. The suspicious mind of Gray, for the wicked are always suspicious, rendered him fearful of discovery, as emigrants were crowding into the State, and entering the land in the most unfrequented spots. The bones of Somers were still exposed; if they were found by any one rambling through the bluffs, the dark affair might be investigated, and he meet with his just deserts. Sallying forth one evening, he sought the wild precipice, and descended by the aid of ropes to the spot where laid his victim. The moon burned in the midnight sky with the lustre she only wears on a winter night, when the snow reflects her brightness, and earth seems to wear the pearly robe of angels. One by one the stars had appeared through the rich arch above, and around the hills swept the glorious river; for nature is still lovely; though for a few moments her beautiful form may bear the record of crime there placed by man. A young gentleman named Charles Wilson, who was returning from a visit to his "lady love," passed by the precipice; and observing the ropes attached to the tree which stood by his path, endeavoured to trace the spot where they ended. After a narrow search, he saw them hanging against a rock that formed the base of a chasm round which the waters swept their crystal current.

In a few moments the young man perceived the form of one whom he immediately recognised as that of Gray, by his tall and muscular figure. He was gathering up some white substance in a bag. At last he seemed to have concluded his task, and throwing the bag over his neck and shoulders, attached the strings to his neck and body, and commenced his ascent. By grasping the rocks with his hands whenever they afforded a sufficient protruding surface—and planting his foot firmly in the fissures—Gray had succeeded in climbing half way up the chasm, when stopping to rest, the shaly rock crumbled under his feet. The murderer made violent struggles to sustain his position, but losing his balance, he plunged headlong into the gulf. One wild shriek told that the soul of the wretch had gone to judgment. And there lay the bleached skeleton of his victim! "Retribution" had pealed forth from the throne of the avenging God, and the spirit of Gray stood before his Maker.

A wise man's kingdom is his own breast: or, if he ever look farther, it will only be to the judgement of a select few, who are free from prejudices, and capable of giving solid and substantial advice.

From an English Periodical.

## A SUNDAY MORNING AT CHELSEA HOSPITAL.

As a boy, first I went to New York, then a quiet small town compared to what it is now; then to India, China, Japan; then back again home. Again and again to America, walked up and down Chestnut-street in Philadelphia, and farmed for a moment on a little estate (which I was eventually cheated out of) at German Town—the Turnham Green or rather the Brentford, of Philadelphia. Once more across the Atlantic, home; next, a good long spell (a couple of lustres) in France—which were idled, lost, thrown away, in Paris; as the green episode to this unprofitable desert in time, I trudged over the Alps and Pyrenees, and, having walked a thousand leagues in *la Belle Italia*, seen all her towns, her animated men, women, and children, and her inanimate and glorious old marbles, I began to think I had played the fool long enough. I say the fool, for what was all this to the serious purpose or business of life? I had neither planted a tree, nor built a house, nor been of the smallest use to a citizen of my own country. I absolutely dare not look a good sturdy greengrocer or milkman steadily in the face in my own parish (if I may presume to claim any parish) not a hundred miles from Walham Green, so much is my mere utility below theirs.

Thus, from rambling about the world, I have now (bringing myself to a small helm by gentle turns) reduced myself to rambling about our suburban roads. I walk to Fulham, pay my halfpenny, and have a good satisfactory look at the river up and down: if there is a steamboat going along, to or from Richmond, so much the better. Then I see what o'clock it is by Putney church, which out of deference I confirm by the Fulham one, which seems to me to look the greater of the two, though it is not so high in the world; perhaps because it has a bishop so near it. Besides that Fulham contains a clever fellow or two, and has the advantage of its airy rival over the water of being so much nearer town, and possessing its own self all the omnibusses! and is besides independent of the most merciless bridge (in making us lieges fork out) on the whole Thames! Sometimes I foot it through Old Brompton to Kensington, and lounge for an hour in those beauteous gardens, where you and I, with all our gravity, cannot help admiring the divinities of the green sward—particularly on Tuesdays and Fridays, when the wood-notes wild are replaced by sweet harmonies extracted from the Knightsbridge barracks.

On other days I take the King's Road line, cross Battersea's obliging bridge; or, not imposing on its good nature (for it charges nothing,) wander down Cheyne Walk, and sit on a bench right opposite the Don Saltero coffee-house, while I am regarded perchance by the juvenile band of the Chelsea Royal Military Schoolboys, as they march along to or from their extensive play-ground in Battersea fields. These boys bring me home to my subject (after having taken you a good round) to their fathers and grandfathers at Chelsea, where, too, I extend my walk down Paradise Row, led as much by the influence of genius as my own inclination, and the interest one must now and then brighten up, which points to those venerable old soldiers. Thanks to such men as Mr. Gleig, our clay is infused by the Promethean spark—awakened, if not fired. I read a little, and I read his last excellent work, his "Traditions of Chelsea Hospital," which with stern truth he has still invested with poetic interest. How much has he obliged the College and the Court! How much should all the English world be obliged to him!

I should have thought myself a very lout if I had not walked to church, at his chapel, the very first bright Sunday, as I did, taking care to be there in good time, that is, a quarter before eleven; when these respectable veterans, after forming in the quadrangular court, march quietly into chapel to their devotions.

I got a very good seat beside the men, who sat on cross-benches in the body of the chapel, exclusively theirs; and, as there are no pews for the public, and only narrow ones round the sides, as far as near the altar, filled, I conclude, by the various officers of the establishment, in plain clothes, with their wives and families, together with some occupied by the Captains and Sergeants of the men, there was no further room except a bench running round outside the pews, filled by strangers like myself, and servants, perhaps of the College. If I felt any awkwardness, thus side by side with these old soldiers, it was alone that of the fear of encroaching on their comfort. There were about two hundred present, with evidently not much room to spare; and I conclude, when in great numbers, they must occupy the side bench where I sat on sufferance, rather than any right strangers have to intrude. One of the Sergeants officiated at the door as pew-opener, but it was not in his power to open any one for me; nor do I mention it as a disappointment that he did not on my application. Heaven knows in asking I did not consult my own, but the opinion among us in general, from which, if a man, not evidently of the lower class, sits on one side, or on the nave benches, he is remarked. In this distinction, I think, we are behind the grand, the awful, the solemn dignity and earnestness of the continent, which cannot at such a time, praying to the Almighty—cannot stoop to our small temporary distinctions, nor to the home comforts of velvets and soft cushions. Hence the churches are a vast whole; nobody is anybody, and somebody is nobody—after the constituted authorities occupy their stalls, *pro forma*, and out of respect to the law and government abstractedly—not to persons.