

3.12.37
horne Pierce
York.

MATILDA MONTGOMERIE;

OR,

THE PROPHECY FULFILLED

CHAPTER I.

At the northern extremity of the small town which bears its name, situated at the head of Lake Erie, stands, or rather stood—for the fortifications then existing were subsequently destroyed—the small fortress of Malden. Few places in America, or in the world, could, at the period embraced by our narrative, have offered more delightful associations than that which we have selected for an opening scene. Amherstburg was at that time one of the loveliest spots that ever issued from the will of a beneficent and gorgeous nature, and were the world-disgusted wanderer to have selected a home in which to lose all memory of conventional and artificial forms, his choice would assuredly have fallen here. And insensible, indeed, to the beautiful realities of the sweet wild solitude that reigned around, must that man have been, who could have gazed unmoved from the banks of the Erie, on the placid lake beneath his feet, mirroring the bright starred heavens! on its unbroken surface, or throwing into full relief the snow-white sail and dark hull of some stately war-ship, becalmed in the offing, and only waiting the rising of the capricious breeze, to waft her onward on her *then* peaceful mission of dispatch. Lost indeed to all perception of the natural must he have been, who could have listened, without a feeling of voluptuous melancholy, to the plaintive notes of the whip-poor-will, breaking on the silence of night, and harmonising with the general stillness of the scene. How often have we ourselves, in joyous boyhood, lingered amid the beautiful haunts, drinking in the fascinating song of this strange night-bird, and revelling in a feeling we were too young to analyze, yet cherished deeply—yes, frequently, up to this hour, do we in our dreams revisit scenes no parallel to which has met our view, even in the course of a life passed in many climes; and on awaking, our first emotion is regret that the illusion is no more.

Such was Amherstburg, and its immediate vicinity, during the early years of the present century, and up to the period at which our story commences. Not, be it understood that even *then* the scenery itself had lost one particle of its loveliness, or failed in aught to awaken and fix the same tender interest. The same placidity of earth and sky and lake remained, but the poor whip-poor-will, driven from his customary abode by the noisy hum of warlike preparation, was no longer heard, and the minds of the inhabitants, hitherto disposed, by the quiet pursuits of their uneventful lives, to feel pleasure in its song, had eye or ear for naught beyond what tended to the preservation of their threatened homes. It was the commencement of the war of 1812.

Let us, however introduce the reader more immediately to the scene. Close