

# COLONIAL PEARL.

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## THE GUITAR.

BY THE COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON.

Sing me the air he used to love so well;

But, softly, sister,—let its tunes come stealing.

That echo wake not—gently weave the spell.

To mournful memories of the past appearing.

Nay, that's too lively—sing in sadder strain.

Like the lone bird, that 'neath night's planet holy

(Methinks there's human passion in her pain)

Pours forth her soul in richest melancholy.

Oh! didst thou love—and he was far away—

Thy heart's one thought, one life, one hope, one sorrow—

Thy voice had sweeter been, but far less gay,

For music pensive tones from love doth borrow.

Genius of Beauty for 1839.

From Mrs. Jameson's Winter Studies, etc.

## NOTES ON CANADA.

These studies and rambles were made in the course of the years 1836 and 1837, in Canada—a country which now in a peculiar manner occupies the attention of the public. It seems to be quite certain that the questions there at issue, as also the real condition of the country, have been misunderstood by all parties in England, not excepting those statesmen who have legislated for the important colony, or rather conquest and colonies. At this moment anything tending to throw light on the great question will be received with avidity. Although Mrs. Jameson does not profess to take up the pen of a politician, her keen faculty of discernment, her good sense, and the opportunity she enjoyed (more particularly in Upper Canada) of collecting information from the best authorities, and of seeing the true bearing of things with her own eyes, have all led to the writing of many pages, which may be considered as valuable contributions to political knowledge. We cannot too much commend her candour and impartiality. She is of no party, but anxious for the good of all. We should, however, do an injustice to this graceful book, by suggesting the notion that its prominent merit was of this temporary kind. Nor should we be much more correct or fair, if we induced the reader to fancy that it is a mere book of travels, devoted to the description of the country, manners, and peculiarities, and nothing else; for though these are descriptions of these kinds in abundance—all hit off with a most lively and happy pencil—they comprise but a part of the work, being mixed and varied with numerous sketches and essays of a totally different kind. In some of these essays the fair and tasteful author exhibits powers of criticism of the highest order—imaginative and essentially poetical. The fine arts, poetry, the drama,—chiefly German poetry and the German drama, are favourite subjects, upon which she discourses not only feelingly and originally, but wisely. There are several things worthy of the author of the "Characteristics of Women," and of that author as improved by earnest and devout study. We believe there is scarcely a living hand, except that hand which drew the delicious analyses of Shakspeare's female characters, that could have written the criticisms upon the "Correggio" of Oehlenschläger and "Die Schuld" of Mullner, which occur at an early part of the first volume of "Winter Studies and Summer Rambles." Mrs. Jameson suggests that Coleridge must have had Mullner's tragedy in his mind when he wrote his "Remorse." There can be no doubt of it, though probably Coleridge was hardly aware of it himself.

At present we have to introduce our author as a traveller. Few ladies, and not many gentlemen, have had so much enterprise and courage. In the heart of the severe winter of 1836-7 she set off in a sleigh to visit the Falls of Niagara, Toronto being her starting-place. The whole of this journey is most admirably described, but we have only room for portions of it. The following adventure occurred between Stony Creek (a village celebrated as the scene of the bloodiest battle fought between the English and Americans during the last blundering and deplorable war) and the town of Beamsville.

## AN ADVENTURE.

"It was now dark and the snow falling thick, it soon became impossible to distinguish the sleigh-track. Mr. Campbell loosened the reins and left the horses to their own instinct, assuring me it was the safest way of proceeding. After this I remember no more distinctly, except that I ceased to hear the ever-jingling sleigh-bells. I awoke, as if from the influence of nightmare, to find the sleigh overturned, myself lying in the bottom of it half-smothered, and my companions nowhere to be seen;—they were floundering in the snow behind.

"Luckily, when we had stretched ourselves and shaken off the snow, we were found unhurt in life and limb. We had fallen down a bank into the bed of a rivulet, or a mill-race, I believe, which, being filled up with snow, was quite as soft, only a little colder, than a down-bed. Frightened I was, bewildered rather, but, 'effective' in a moment. It was impossible for the gentlemen to leave the horses, which were plunging furiously up to the shoulders in the snow, and had already broken the sleigh; so I set off to seek assistance, having received proper directions. Fortunately we were not far from Beamsville. My beacon-light was to be the chimney of a forge, from which the bright sparks were streaming up into the dark wintry air, visible from a great distance. After scrambling through many a snow-drift, up hill and down hill, I at last reached the forge, where a man was hammering armain at a ploughshare; such was the din, that I called for some time unheard; at last, as I advanced into the red light of the fire, the man's eyes fell upon me, and I shall never forget his look as he stood poised his hammer, with the most comical expression, of bewildered amazement. I could not get an answer from him; he opened his mouth and repeated *aw!* staring at me, but without speaking or moving. I turned away in despair, yet half laughing, and after some more scrambling up and down, I found myself in the village, and was directed to the inn. Assistance was immediately sent off to my friends, and in a few minutes the supper-table was spread, a pile of logs higher than myself blazing away in the chimney; venison-steaks, and fried fish, coffee, hot cakes, cheese, and whisky-punch, (the traveller's fare in Canada,) were soon smoking on the table; our landlady presided, and the evening passed merrily away.

"The old landlady of this inn amused me exceedingly; she had passed all her life among her equals in station and education, and had no idea of any distinction between guests and customers; and while caressing and attending on me, like an old mother or an old nurse, gave me her history, and that of all her kith and kin. Forty years before, her husband had emigrated, and built an hovel, and made a little clearing on the edge of the lake. At that time there was no other habitation within many miles of them, and they passed several years in absolute solitude. They have now three farms, some hundred acres of land, and have brought up nine sons and daughters, most of whom are married, and settled on lands of their own. She gave me a horrid picture of the prevalence of drunkenness, the vice and the curse of this country."

Mrs. Jameson thinks that the *dearness* of books and the *cheapness* of whisky are the great curses of all the Canadas. The scenes of inebriety she continually meets are shocking. *There*, she says,

"Men learn to drink, who never drank before;  
And those who always drank, now drink the more."

Government has done its best to encourage the fatal propensity. There is a duty of thirty per cent. on books imported from the United States, and the expense on books imported from England adds at least one-third to their price; but there is no duty on whisky. But worse than this—*there are hardly any schools!* Hear this, ye self-complacent legislators and perfectibilians, who boast so loudly that the schoolmaster is abroad! But we are now within hearing of the roar of the mighty cataract.

## CATARACTS OF NIAGARA.

"Well! I have seen these Cataracts of Niagara, which have thundered in my mind's ear ever since I can remember—which have been my childhood's thought, my youth's desire, since first my imagination was awakened to wonder and to wish. I have beheld them, and shall I whisper to you?—but, O tell it not among the Philistines!—I wish I had not! I wish they were still a thing unbeheld—a thing to be imagined, hoped, and anticipated—something to live for;—the reality has displaced from my mind an illusion far more magnificent than itself—I have no words for my utter disappointment: yet I have not the presumption to suppose that all I have heard and read of Niagara is false or exaggerated—that every expression of astonishment, enthusiasm, rapture, is affectation of hyperbole. No! it must be my own fault. Termini, and some of the Swiss cataracts leaping from their mountains, have affected me a thousand times more than all the immensity of Niagara. O I could beat myself! and now there is no help!—the first moment, the first impression is over—is lost; though I should live a thousand years, long as Niagara itself shall roll, I can never see it again for the first time. Something is gone that cannot be restored. What has come over my soul and senses?—I am no longer Anna—I am metamorphosed—I am translated—I am an ass's head, a clod, a wooden spoon, a fat weed growing on Lethe's bank, a stock, a stone, a petrification,—for have I not

seen Niagara, the wonder of wonders; and felt—no words can tell *what* disappointment!

"But, to take things in order: we set off for the falls yesterday morning, with the intention of spending the day there, sleeping, and returning the next day to Niagara. The distance is fourteen miles, by a road winding along the banks of the Niagara river, and over the Queenston heights;—and beautiful must this land be in summer, since even now it is beautiful. The flower garden, the trim shrubbery, the lawn, the meadow with its hedgerows, when frozen up and wrapt in snow, always give me the idea of something not only desolate but dead: Nature is the ghost of herself, and trails a spectral pall; I always feel a kind of pity—a touch of melancholy—when at this season I have wandered among withered shrubs and buried flower-beds; but here, in the wilderness, where Nature is wholly independent of Art, she does not die, nor yet mourn; she lies down to rest on the bosom of Winter, and the aged one folds her in his robe of ermine and jewels, and rocks her with his hurricanes, and hushes her to sleep. How still it was! how calm, how vast the glittering white waste and the dark purple forests! The sun shone out and the sky was without a cloud; yet we saw few people, and for many miles the hissing of our sleigh, as we flew along upon our dazzling path, and the tinkling of the sleigh-bells, were the only sounds we heard. When we were within four or five miles of the Falls, I stopped the sleigh from time to time to listen for the roar of the cataracts, but the state of the atmosphere was not favourable for the transmission of sound, and the silence was unbroken.

"Such was the deep, monotonous tranquillity which prevailed on every side—so exquisitely pure and vestal-like the robe in which all Nature lay slumbering around us, I could scarce believe that this whole frontier district is not only remarkable for the prevalence of vice—but of dark and desperate crime."

"My imagination had been so impressed by the vast height of the Falls, that I was constantly looking in an upward direction, when, as we came to the brow of a hill, my companion suddenly checked the horses and exclaimed 'The Falls!'

"I was not, for an instant, aware of their presence; we were yet at a distance, looking down upon them; and I saw at one glance a *flat extensive plain*; the sun having withdrawn its beams for a moment there was neither light, nor shade, nor colour. In the midst were seen the two great cataracts, but merely as a feature in the wide landscape. The sound was by no means overpowering, and the clouds of spray, which Fanny Butler called so beautifully the 'everlasting incense of the waters,' now condensed ere they rose by the excessive cold, fell round the base of the cataracts in fleecy folds, just concealing that furious embrace of the waters above and the waters below. All the associations which in imagination I had gathered round the scene, its appalling terror, its soul-subduing beauty, power and height, and velocity and immensity, were all diminished in effect, or wholly lost."

"I was quite silent—my very soul sank within me. On seeing my disappointment (written, I suppose, most legibly in my countenance) my companion began to comfort me, by telling me of all those who had been disappointed on the first view of Niagara, and had confessed it. I *did* confess; but I was not to be comforted. We held on our way to the Clifton hotel, at the foot of the hill; most desolate it looked with its summer verandahs and open balconies cumbered up with snow, and hung round with icicles—its forlorn, empty rooms, broken windows, and dusty dinner tables. The poor people who kept the house in winter had gathered themselves for warmth and comfort into a little kitchen, and when we made our appearance, stared at us with a blank amazement, which showed what a rare thing was the sight of a visiter at this season."

"We now prepared to walk to the Crescent fall, and I bound some crampons to my feet, like those they use among the Alps, without which I could not for a moment have kept my footing on the frozen surface of the snow. As we approached the Table Rock, the whole scene assumed a wild and wonderful magnificence; down came the dark-green waters, hurrying with them over the edge of the precipice enormous blocks of ice brought down from Lake Erie. On each side of the Falls, from the ledges and overhanging cliffs, were suspended huge icicles, some twenty, some thirty feet in length, thicker than the body of a man, and in colour of a paly green, like the glaciers of the Alps; and all the crags below, which projected from the boiling eddying waters, were encrusted, and in a manner built round with ice, which had formed into immense crystals, like basaltic columns such as I have seen in the pictures of Staffa and the Giant's Causeway; and every tree, and leaf, and branch, fringing the rocks and ravines,