

REVIEWS.

LEAVES FROM THE BACKWOODS.—Montreal: John Lovell; Hamilton: Wm. Brown & Co.

Not dead and sear, but green and bright, are these poetic leaves from the Backwoods. We welcome them, with befitting honor, as a valuable contribution to our Canadian Literature, yet only in its infancy, but yearly evincing signs of growth. Though there is no name on the title page, it needs but little critical acumen to discern, that the minstrel who so sweetly sings these forest lays, belongs to what we are wont to call the gentler sex. Shy and modest in her muse—she does not strive to soar into the higher regions of Poetry, but seeks rather to emulate those humbler bards, whose

—Songs have power to quiet
The restless pulse of care,
And come like the benediction
That follows after prayer.

Sometimes her hand touches a harp of tender strings, and evokes a loftier music, but simple and heartfelt beauty, feminine delicacy of thought, true and tender pathos, and

"A sweet attractive kind of grace"

are the prevailing characteristics of her melodies.

There is nothing morbid or unhealthy in her verse, for unlike many modern aspirants for poetic honors, she has left untasted that spring of bitterness, "that Marah that was never dry," whose foul waters mingled with the pure stream of song that gushed from the heart of Byron; neither has the glittering mysticism of that wrong-headed, but vigorous genius Postus Bailey, sent her wandering into the empyrean to warble metaphysics with the angels. She does not imitate the spasmodic school, who violently endeavor to take us by storm with frantic epithets, wild, incoherent, isolated thoughts, and wilder imagery. She strives not to

—"fling a poem, like a comet out,
Far splendoring the sleepy realms of night,"
but hopes rather to win her way into our hearts, and make them glad with soft strains of soothing music—

"Music that gentler on the spirit lies
Than tired eyelids on tired eyes."

But without further preface, we will cull a few of the most beautifully formed and brightest colored of the "Leaves" which our Backwoods poetess sends us, and we are certain that our readers will not think that we have said ought that is extravagant in praise of them.

Here is the opening passage of "Ianthé":

"Ianthé, golden haired I
Bright Hebe, in the glory and the bloom
Of her immortal youth, was not more fair
Than thou, O loveliest! when the slender
boughs

Bent o'er thee, with their light leaves to caress
Thy long bright tresses—when upon the hill
Thy song resounded, and the joyous birds
Stopped their sweet warblings, but to learn of
thee.

The river, when thy white and glancing feet,
Pressed its smooth pebbles, played around thy
form

In brightest eddies, with a murmuring song,
Such as young mothers sing above their babes,
But now, we miss thee on the mountain slopes,
And in the hamlets, and beside the stream;
Fairest and best beloved! return, return!
So sang they in the valleys where they dwelt,
The white-browed daughters of that sunny
isle—

And Echo sadly gave the burden back,
Echo alone—and sighed, "Return, return!"
But never more, beside the forest shade,
Of rocky bench, at evening's calmest hour,
They railed thy form, Ianthe, brightest maid!
Or caught the silvery murmurs of thy song."

The poem is a story of the antique time. The people dwelling on a Grecian isle have incurred the wrath of the Gods. "Costliest sacrifices and choicest gifts" fail to appease the offended Deities, but suddenly out of the dark cloud that overshadows the sacred grove, the priest hears a voice, commanding him to cast from the rocks into the hungry sea a

stainless offering, for only such will "win the Gods to mercy."

Ianthé, the only daughter of the aged priest, beautiful and innocent, willingly offers herself for sacrifice. The description of her death, (we speak advisedly) is worthy of the hand that wrote "The Idyls of the King."

"At last the hour was come. Upon the rock,
White robed and crowned with flowers Ianthé
stood;

Pale, with a glowing lustre in her eyes
Undimmed by fear or weeping. By her side,
Her father, wholly calm, except that still
His longing, loving gaze would follow her,
And tell the sickening anguish of his soul;
But yet he faltered not, and, as the sun
Went slowly downward to the glittering sea,
Glittering at rest far distant, slowly dropped
His eyes one moment on the billows near,
Then bade the maidens clustered round com-
mence

Their dedicating hymn. The strain arose
Softly and tremulous, and then sunk again,
And rose once more, and would have quickly
ceased

In tears and bursting sobs, but that one voice
Rose clear, and full, and sweet, and led them
on;

Thine, bright Ianthé! Then the prayer was
said,

And, mid an instant's pause of breathless pain,
She sprang, as springs the sea bird, from the
height,

And the dark waters hid her evermore."

Reader—no mere writer of *vers de société*, no poetaster could have penned these lines, for they gleam all over with

"The light that never was on sea or land."

Few educated men and women, it is to be hoped, are as insensible to the poetry of nature as Wordsworth's Peter Bell.

"A yellow primrose by the river's brim,
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more."

The various aspects which the universe presents to our vision, are suggestive to most minds of thoughts both grave and gay—the darker scenes filling the heart with sadness, and the brighter and lovelier ones making it glow with pleasure unalloyed, but only the poets finer eye can detect the hidden and lurking charms of earth, and sea, and sky, and his pen picture them anew in colors light and sombre—he alone can catch the delicate and evanescent tones of the manifold music of this "bright and breathing world," and crystalize them in words of befitting beauty.

The following extracts will show that the authoress of "The Leaves" does not lack this exquisite gift of genius.

"Look at these flowers; our English flowers
are fair,
And their familiar faces stir our hearts,
But these are different;—See, this one has
leaves

Like the white water-lily, fragile, pure
And shattered by a touch;—a crimson stain
Is on each petal, as some wounded heart
Had shed its lifeblood o'er the snowy cup,
And dyed it thus forever."

The memory of a joyous Spring time
that has passed away, recalls to her mind
how its glowing life

"Brightened the sunlight and more fair
Painted each blossom, filled the air
With many a varying strain;

Woodsongs the quivering leaves that thrill,
Chords that the hush of midnight fill,
Tones from the falling of the rill,
The dropping of the rain."

Here is a picture of a cottage home:

"There's a tree by the garden gate,
Where the birds sing all day long.
And a seat, where they often wait
When the tranquil eve grows late
For the nightingales' lovelier song,
And beyond, a meadow slopes gently away,
Where they hear the laugh of the children at
play."

We will conclude our excerpts by
quoting a Ballad, which that sweet singer,
for whom Germany now mourns, would
not have disdained to own, so simple is
its beauty, so touching its pathos.

A BALLAD

"Mother open the door,
The wind blows chilly and bleak;
Mother I open the door,
For I'm growing faint and weak."
Up she rose from the fire,
Rose up from her lonely watch,
Quickly she went to the door,
And quickly lifted the latch.

Out she looked on the night,
The wind blew bitter and shrill,
But nothing there could she see,
And the voice she had heard was still;
Back, with a heavy sigh,
She went to her fireside seat;
But the voice was there once more,
And the sound of childish feet.

She leaned her over the bed,
Her lips were parched and blue,
The eyes of the dying were open wide
And she saw that he heard it too.
His eyes were open wide
With a ghastly look of dread,
And when she had watched him a moment's
space,
She turned away from the dead!

She opened the door again
And looked out through the tempest wild,
And she thought she saw, at the forest side,
The form of a little child.
With a cry of anguish and fear,
She rushed to where it stood,
But its garments were gleaming farther on
In the darkness of the wood.

Still, she followed it fast,
And still, it fitted before,
Until she thought her weary limbs
Would bear her on no more;
Still as the night wore on,
She followed the flying shade,
Till she came to an old stone carved cross,
And there knelt down and prayed.

There with a breaking heart,
She prayed to be cleansed within;
That her mind might be freed from its deadly
chain,
And her soul be washed from sin.
She prayed till the light was faint
In the east, when a slumber stole
Over her weary senses,
Soothing her guilty soul.

The trees were dripping above her,
The skies were stormy and wild,
But she saw nought in her slumber,
Save the form of a little child.
The child stood close beside her,
And spoke in accents low,
Not like the tones of terror,
That haunted her, hours ago.

"Mother, here in the forest
You left me to starve and die,
And here, where my bones are bleaching,
Your lifeless corpse must lie;
But now, the gates of Heaven
May open to let you in,
For true and hearty repentance
Has washed away your sin."

Up rose the sun in his glory
And lighted the forest glade,
And shone on the old stone cross,
Where the woman's form was laid;
The grass grew high around her
Heavy with dew and rain,
But she lay wrapped in a slumber
That never knew waking again.

Initial efforts, like the drama of "Saul,"
and these lyrics from the backwoods, lead
us to hope that one day we will be as
proud of our Canadian Literature as we
now are of our Canadian Land.

AGE OF THE PYRAMIDS.—Mahomoud
Rey, the Astronomer of the Viceroy of
Egypt, has just published a work on this
subject, in which he has considered the
exact position of these remarkable monu-
ments in relation to the star Sirius.

He finds that this star when it passes
the meridian of Gizeh, shines exactly on
the southern front of the Pyramids; and,
by calculating the change of position of
this star through a series of centuries, he
has arrived at the conclusion that 3,300
years before the Christian era the rays of
Sirius when it culminated would be ex-
actly perpendicular to the southern face
of these Pyramids, incline 52.5 degrees
to the north horizon. According to the
principles of astrology, the powder of a
star is at its maximum of action when its
rays fall perpendicular on the object it is
thought to influence. Thus, supposing
that the Pyramids have been erected 5,000
years, it appears that their faces have
been given the inclination of 52 degrees,
in order to receive the rays of the most
beautiful star of our hemisphere, conse-
crated to the god Sothis, the celestial dog
and judge of the dead. M. Radaw (who
reports these details in the *Cosmos*) states,
in addition, that the Pyramids, being
tombs, would naturally be placed under
the patronage of Sothis, (the same as the
great Hermes, Cynocephalus, Joth and
Anubis,) whose symbol is a pyramid ac-

companied by a star and a crescent. The
date, 3,300 B. C., as that of the founda-
tion of the Pyramids agrees with the cal-
culation of Bunsen, according to which
Cheops reigned in the thirty-fourth cen-
tury, B. C.; and with the Arab tradition,
which represents them as having been
built three or four centuries before the
deluge, which happened in the year 3,716
before the hegira.

THE CAMBRIAN, HURONIAN AND LAU-
RENTIAN FORMATIONS, are the oldest
known to geologists. In a paper read at
the last meeting of the Geological Society,
(England,) Dr. J. J. Bigsby gives some
observations on them, pointing out the
very local distribution of the Cambrian,
its mineralogical and stratigraphical char-
acter, the scarcity of its fossils, its con-
formable upward passage into the Silu-
rian, and its absence in America and
northern Europe. In the second part of
his paper, Dr. Bigsby described the
Huronian of Canada, the Azoic rocks of the
southern shores of Lake Huron and Lake
Superior, and the second Azoic group of
Norway, all of which are considered by
Dr. Bigsby to belong to the same period.
He then stated that the Huronian forma-
tion, and its equivalents agree in being
unconformable to the Silurian, and con-
formable to the Laurentian. It contains
many beds of lime-stone, and a large
quantity of copper ore, and in the total
absence of fossils; in all of which res-
pects they differ from the Cambrian. He
therefore came to the conclusion that the
Cambrian and Huronian are distinct for-
mations, and that the latter is very much
the older.

THE WATER-PROOF POROUS CLOTH.—Seve-
ral inquiries have been made lately, res-
pecting the mode of preparing cloth to
render it water-proof and yet maintain its
porosity. Close water-proof cloth fabrics,
such as glazed oil-cloth, india-rubber, and
gutta-percha cloth are completely water-proof,
but do not permit perspiration and the exhaled
gases from the skin to pass through them,
because they are air-tight as well as water-
tight. Persons who wear air-tight garments
soon become faint, if they are undergoing
severe exercise, such as that to which soldiers
are exposed when on march. A porous water-
proof cloth, therefore, is the best for outer
garments during wet weather, for those whose
duties or labor cause them to perspire freely.
The best way for preparing such cloth is by
the process adopted for the tunics of the
French soldiers, during the Crimean war. It
is as follows:—Take 2½ lbs. of alum and dis-
solve them in 10 gallons of boiling water; then
in a separate vessel dissolve the same quantity
of sugar of lead in 10 gals. of boiling water, and
mix the two solutions. The cloth is now well
huddled in this liquid until every part of it is
penetrated; then it is squeezed and dried in
the air or in a warm apartment, then washed
in cold water and dried again, when it is fit
for use. If necessary, the cloth may be dipped
in the liquid and dried twice before being
washed. The liquor appears curdled, when
the alum and lead solutions are mixed to-
gether. This is the result of double decompo-
sition, the sulphate of lead which is an
insoluble salt being formed. The sulphate of
lead is taken up in the pores of the cloth, and
it is unaffected by rains, or moisture, and yet
it does not render the cloth air-tight. Such
cloth is also partially non-inflammable. A
solution of alum, itself, will render cloth,
prepared as described, partially water-proof,
but it is not so good as the sulphate of lead.—
Such cloth—cotton or woolen—sheds rain like
the feathers on the back of a duck.

IRON-CLAD MEN.—It has been suggested to
us, in view of the improvements which are
daily carried out in iron-clad ships and
batteries, that the same principle might be
applied to their crews, or to infantry in
the field. Some steps have already been
made in this direction, and life-preserving
vests have been sold, we believe, in great
numbers; why, then, can we not shroud the
human body so that it will be perfectly pro-
tected against rifle balls at least, and yet,
at the same time, preserve its elasticity and
activity unimpaired? The force of a bullet,
stopped in mid career, would doubtless make
the iron or steel-clad recipient wink, if it did
not entirely destroy his center of gravity, but
we think most of all our sharpshooters would
gladly exchange the possibility of being stun-
ned or even stricken senseless for a time, for a
time, for the certainty of being killed outright
without such protection. The ancient men-at-
arms and Knight Templars wore suits of mail,
but they weighed down both horse and rider
and had to be abandoned. Let some ingenious
person invent a complete personal protection,
and he will assuredly reap his reward.