

# CANADIAN SKETCHES.

NO. VI.

## BRIAN, THE STILL HUNTER.

BY MRS. MOODIE.

O'er mem'ry's glass I see his shadow flit,  
Though he was gathered to the silent dust  
Long years ago:—a strange and wayward man,  
Who shunn'd companionship, and lived apart.  
The gleamy lakes, hid in their gloomy depths,  
Whose still dark waters never knew the stroke  
Of cleaving oar, or echoed to the sound  
Of social life—contained for him the sum  
Of human happiness. With dog and gun,  
Day after day he tracked the nimble deer  
Through all the tangled mazes of the forest:

AUTHOR.

It was early day, in the fall of 1832. I was alone in the old shanty, preparing breakfast for my husband, and now and then stirring the cradle with my foot, to keep little Katie a few minutes longer asleep, until her food was sufficiently prepared for her first meal—and wishing secretly for a drop of milk, to make it more agreeable and nourishing for the poor weanling—when a tall, thin, middle-aged man, walked into the house, followed by two large, strong dogs.

Placing the rifle he carried across his shoulder, in a corner of the room, he advanced to the hearth, and, without speaking, or seemingly looking at me, lighted his pipe, and commenced smoking. The dogs, after growling and snapping at the cat, who had not given the strangers a very courteous reception, sat down on the hearth-stone, on either side of their taciturn master, eyeing him, from time to time, as if long habit had made them understand all his motions. There was a great contrast between the dogs: the one was a brindled, grey and white, bull-dog, of the largest size,—a most formidable and powerful brute; the other, a stag-hound, tawny, deep-chested, and strong-limbed. I regarded the man and his hairy companions with silent curiosity. He was between forty and fifty years old: his head, nearly bald, was shaded at the sides by strong, coarse, black, curling hair. His features were high; his complexion brightly dark; and his eyes, in size, shape, and color, resembled the eye of a hawk. The expression of his face was sorrowful and

taciturn; and his thin, compressed lips, looked as if they were not much accustomed to smiles, or, indeed, often served to hold communication with any one. He stood at the side of the huge hearth, silently smoking, his keen eyes fixed on the fire; and now and then he patted the head of his dogs, and reproved their exuberant expressions of attachment, with—"Down, Chance! Down, Music!"

"A cold, clear morning," said I, in order to attract his attention, and draw him into conversation.

A nod, without raising his head, or taking his eyes off the fire, was my only answer; and turning from my unsociable guest, I took up the baby, who just then awoke, sat down on a low stool by the table, and commenced feeding her. During this operation, I once or twice caught the stranger's keen eye fixed upon me; but word spoke he none; and presently after, he whistled to his dogs, resumed his gun, and strode out.

When M—— and Monaghan came in to break-fast, I told them what a strange visitor I had; and they laughed at my vain attempts to get him to talk.

"He is a strange, mysterious being," I said. "I must find out who, or what he is."

In the afternoon, an old soldier called Layton, who had served during the American war, and got a grant of land, about a mile in the rear of our location, came in to trade for a cow. Now, this Layton was a perfect ruffian,—a man whom no