

*R. T. Hatchford.*

## NEAR TO NATURE'S HEART.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### A CHILD OF NATURE.

THE granite mountains that form the historical Highlands of the Hudson, have changed but little during the past century. On the 17th of June, about one hundred years ago, a day inseparably associated in American memory with Bunker Hill, and the practical severance of the cable of love and loyalty that once bound the colonies to the mother country, these bold hills undoubtedly appeared much as they do now. In the swales and valleys, the timber, untouched as yet by the woodman's axe, was heavier than the third or fourth growth of our day. But the promontories overhanging the river had then, as now, the same grand and rugged outlines of rock and precipice. The shrubbery, and dwarf trees, that catch and maintain their tenacious hold on every crevice and fissure, softened but little the frowning aspect of the heights, that, like grim sentinels, guard the river.

But nature in her harshest moods can scarcely resist the blandishments of June; even as the stern-