

LINES BY B. SIMMONS.

INSCRIBED TO LADY E. S. WORTLEY, AND SUGGESTED
BY A SKETCH IN THE "KEEPSAKE" FOR 1837.

"I immediately followed Mademoiselle Rose into the chamber, and was introduced to the mother of Napoleon. Madam Lætitia was at that time *eighty-three* years of age, and never did I see a person so advanced in life, with a brow and countenance so beaming with expression and undiminished intelligence; the quietness and brilliancy of her large sparkling eye were most remarkable. She was laid on a snow-white bed in one corner of the room, to which, she told me, she had been confined for three years, having, as long ago as that, had the misfortune to break her leg. The room was completely hung round with pictures, large, full length portraits of her family, which covered every portion of the wall. All those of her sons who had attained to the regal dignity were represented in their royal robes; Napoleon, I believe, in the gorgeous apparel he wore at his coronation. * * * *

She then, seeing us looking earnestly at the magnificent picture of Napoleon, which was hung close to the side of her bed, asked if we did not admire it, gazing, herself, at it proudly and fondly, and saying, '*Cela ressemble beaucoup à l'Empereur; oui, cela lui ressemble beaucoup!*' *

After having attentively examined all these interesting pictures, I returned to take my place beside the bed of the venerable lady. I could not help feeling that she must exist, as it were, in a world of dreams, in a world of her own, or rather of memory's creation, with all these splendid shadows around her, that silently but eloquently spoke of the days departed. She then commissioned me to say a thousand affectionate things to Lady D. Stuart, and charged me to tell her that she ardently hoped that she would come and pay her a visit in the ensuing winter: adding, with a tone and manner that I shall never forget, so profound and mournful was the impression it made on me:—'*Je vous en prie dites à ma chère Christine que je suis seule ici.*'

—*A Visit to Madame Lætitia, mother of Napoleon—KEEPSAKE, 1837.*—[Lady Dudley Stuart is daughter to Lucien Bonaparte, and Lady E. S. Wortley, who visited the old lady, is daughter to the Duke of Rutland, and married to the second son of Lord Wharnccliffe.]

It was the noon of a Roman day that lit with mellow gloom,
Through marble-shafted windows deep, a grandly solemn room,

Where, shadowed o'er with canopy, and pillowed upon down,
An aged woman lay unwatched—like perishing renown.

No crowned one she; though, in the pale and venerable grace
Of her worn cheek and lofty brow, might observation trace—

And in her dark eye's flash—a fire and energy to give

Life unto sons, whose sceptre-swords should vanquish all that live.

Strange looked that lady old, reclined upon her lonely bed

In that vast chamber, echoing not to page or maiden's tread;

And stranger still the gorgeous forms, in portrait, that glanced round,

From the high walls, with cold bright looks more eloquent than sound.

They were her children. Never yet, since with the primal beam,

Fair painting brought on rainbow wings its own immortal dream,

Did one fond mother give such race beneath its smile to glow,

As they who now back on her brow their pictured glories throw.

Her daughters there—the beautiful!—look'd down in dazzling sheen;

One lovelier than the Queen of Love—one crown'd an earthly Queen!

Her sons—the proud—the Paladins! with diadem and plume,

Each leaning on his scepter'd arm, made empire of that room.

But, right before her couch's foot, one mightiest picture blazed—

One august form, to which her eyes incessantly were raised;—

A monarch's, too!—and monarch-like, the artist's hand had bound him,

With jewell'd belt, imperial sword, and ermin'd purple round him.

One well might deem from the white flags that o'er him flashed and rolled,

Where the puissant lily laughed and waved its banner'd gold,

And from the Lombard's iron crown beneath his hand which lay,

That Charlemagne had burst death's reign, and leaped again to day!