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LETTER I.

From Miss Fannie Forester at Brantford, to her Mamma at London, Canada West.

June 14th, 1864.

DEAR MAMMA,—I'm in debt for a letter to you; Stop a bit—let me see—I'm afraid it is two; And before I left home I assured you I'd write A letter a week on each Saturday night. But Brantford, Mamma, such a very sweet place is, The beaux are so nice, and the girls have such faces; And that rattle, Jane Parker, with whom I'm now stopping, Besides a most lady-like penchant for shopping, So keeps the whole household blithe, happy and gay, With laughing and singing, and kitten-like play, That I scarcely get five minutes leisure a day; And then to a stranger all here are so gracious, 'Tis no wonder my promise to write proved fallacious— And I'm sorry to say, walking down by the river, I caught,—do not scold— a queer sort of a fever; 'Tis not typhoid, remittent, nor tertian I mean, Cousin Harry informs me it's called *Scarlatina*.

You remember you've oft tried to make me afraid Of an officer's sword, scarlet-coat and cockade, His gay, easy manner, his flattering tongue, As apt to mislead the unwary and young; But when told there would march through the town for the West, And encamp on the banks of the river to rest, Of Her Majesty's regiments, one of the best, I thought I might venture to see them march by, To hear the band play, and see England's flag fly, For, said I, I am certain that no danger lurks In one little peep at these terrible Turks, So I chose a becoming mantle and hat, And as for my heart,—pooh! I'd no fear for that.

The evening was cool, and the dear birds were singing, In my ears their delightful, rich music was ringing; While clouds of gay insects were buzzing around, Who seemed to chime in with their murmuring sound; The trees were fresh clad in their garments of green, Through their clustering branches the river was seen, Where the fishes were bobbing about in the stream, You would think they enjoyed the mild sun's setting beam.

I envy their life, oh! how often one wishes At this time of year for a swim with the fishes— The apple-trees now in the height of their bloom, Fill the air all around with the richest perfume. The sheep and the cattle are grazing around, While the milk-laden cows to their homesteads are bound, The picture is framed by the forest's dark screen, Amidst which a few farms, as if peeping, are seen— Near the stream about which a few words I have said, Thirty tents since the morn their white canvases have spread, And the dear Union-Jack flutters proudly o'erhead, I listen with joy to the organ's shrill sound, To the drums, fifes and clarions echoing round, O'er the river the melody sweetly floats, While the sun lights up brightly six hundred red coats. Now I own, dear mamma, that I did not delay To take to this scene of enchantment my way.

By the time we arrived at this "Vanity Fair," At least half of Brantford contrived to be there, And we'd passed as we bustled and jostled along, Of ladies and lawyers and doctors a throng, We found sheriff, and Judge, the Town Council and Mayor, Were paying respects to the "Chef Militaire," "Noble Colonel, your servants, just say if you please, How it is in our power to add to your ease," I was not to the *cortège* sufficiently nigh To hear with distinctness the Colonel's reply, But I caught the words "ladies" and "greatly desire The acquaintance of those, whom we so much admire." So the Sheriff, the Judge, the Town Council and Mayor, Introduced us in form to the officers there, And before I had either refused or consented, To Captain Tremorne I was duly presented.

You know, dear Mamma, that no girl o'er was briskeer To admire, to doat on—a beautiful whisker, And blacker or glossier or curlier will seldom Be seen on the cheeks of the choicest of *sweet-doms*, Than the sweet pair so jetty and fierce that adorn The cheeks and the chin of dear Captain Tremorne.

My mind, you know well, as its choicest of treasures Has always esteemed conversational pleasures; I had only just read through the volume by Russell, So to talk of the Russian campaign was no puzzle, For I don't seem to forget what I read like a dunce, And we seemed to strike up quite a friendship at once, As we strove how the heroes we best could extol Who gloriously conquered at Sebastopol. At Inkermann, Alma, and famed Balaclava! (How delightful it is to converse with the bravo,) I recited the poem, and never once blundered, That Tennyson wrote on the noble "Six Hundred;" While some girls near the tents were for jiggling and dancing, As if Captain Tremorne *cared a pin* for their prancing: For the band, marching round us, was playing quite gaily A lively quick step, then sang a *Chorale*.

Alas! friends must part, and the gloaming was nigh Tremorne was "on duty," and said with a sigh, As he left to attend to his company's "rations," That certainly one of the prettiest "stafors," Might at Brantford be placed, and if he had his way, At so charming a spot, he for ever could stay.

I was sleepless that night, so I thought 'twould be wise To get up quite early, and see the sun rise; It was scarce four o'clock when the men had to start, I strolled to the river, and saw them depart.

'Twas a noble display, for the sun rose up bright, And illumed their red coats and their arms with its light; But 'twas pain and not pleasure I felt at the sight— For I could not help feeling it hard to be borne, I'd no chance to say "farewell" to Captain Tremorne.

Now from that day to this my wild fancy is fed In the strangest of ways by a passion for red— I've now trimmed my bonnet to suit... 's new taste, My hair has red roses, red ribbons my waist, My Bertha has red bows, and red flounces my dress, Of shades nicely sorted, I trust you will guess.

And what's a queer, when at breakfast I've taken my seat, I've grown quite fantastic in what I can eat— It never is much, for my appetite's baddish, But I always can fancy a bright scarlet rasher, Red herrings, I love, you remember our cook Called them "soldiers," whenever of them we partook. At dinner time salmon with good lobster sauce, Or "Soupe à la tomate," may afford the first course. A red capicum always my plate is set nigh, And beets and red cabbage my pickle supply— You remember, mamma, in my juvenile days, How I followed some very particular ways; If my meat were half-cooked my aversion was great, And I left it with shuddering untouched on my plate, Nay so squeamish I was, that I scarcely could bear To hear schoolfellows singing Tom Moore's "Richard and Jane."

But now I should rise from the table unfed If my beef were not gushing with gravy, and red, And I drink with some pleasure a glass of red wine, If there's old port or claret wherever I dine— At dessert I'm oft tempted quite long to remain For from cherries and currants I seldom refrain, And a rosy-cheeked apple I never disdain— At supper some tongue, or ham sandwich is good, And shrimps and anchovies not often withstood.

At night I rest badly, so 'tis not surprising If I do not care often to view the sun's rising; But to look at his setting's a glorious sight, A pleasure, in which I indulge ev'ry night— Some clouds tipped with red, like rancid squadrons appear, And some like huge castles their tall turrets rear, So I often can dream I'm beholding the van Of the army assaulting some fiery Redan— While the sky's a red plain, where I see the sea founder, A red-hot cannon ball, ten times bigger and rounder Than Armstrong or Whitworth's great five hundred pounder!

I have said my sleep's bad; but one horrible night I had such awful dreams, that I woke in a fright— At first they were charming; I thought I was walking With Captain Tremorne, gaily flirting and talking, About uniforms, epaulettes, forget and such, And at balls and at parties who cut the most dash— "The soldiers," I said, "were with me the top-sawyers."

And I cared not a pin about doctors or lawyers, When over the hue of my dream came a change, 'Tis strange as it's true, and 'tis true as it's strange! For I thought as I lay snugly coiled in my bed That my skin, teeth, hair, nails, and my eyes were turned red— A red Indian squaw, with the poll of a parrot, Eyes like a white rabbit's, and nose like a carrot! Now more red on my cheeks I could easily bear, And red coral lips are the colour I'd wear, But coral don't suit with the tip of the nose, And a red breast like Robin's!—"c'est tout autre chose!"

I leaped out of bed, and exclaimed in affright, Like Shakspeare's King Richard, that "shadows to-night," Such errors have struck, that with "ten thousand soldiers" I sooner would meet, than have, hung down my shoulders, Long ringlets of red for the sport of beholders— I rushed to the mirror, and viewed with delight My hair glossy black, and my skin lily white, My eyes, teeth and nails were all perfectly right.

But thus to see visions and dream ugly dreams, To your suffering daughter quite horrible seems, And I do not know where I can find consolation To render more easy this sad dispensation.

My brain seems quite addled, my pulse is too high, Sometimes I'm in tears, very often I sigh, I asked cousin Harry the best way to mend us, And remove, what he calls my "*Delirium Tremendous*." He's now reading hard as a student of physic, Can cure cough or cold, fever, ague or phthisis; Has become quite a dandy, and dresses so fimsy, But I'm sorry to add he's grown sandy and cynical— He said bump of hollows I would bid good, And hump-sock and cucumber cool for the blood— For my diet, he told me, he greatly would fear If I fed much on goat's flesh or that of red deer, Water-lilies and purslane should be my potation; And from Galen he made a most learned quotation.