



"TO RAISE THE GENIUS AND TO MEND THE HEART."

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POPULAR TALES.

Original.

THE COTTAGE RETREAT.

In a part of Upper Canada, near the road that leads from S. to the Capital, is a valley whose solitary aspect instils into the minds of all that travel through it, a sort of pleasing melancholy. A narrow stream flows through the dell, which is adorned with groupes of pine, hemlock, and ash; the surrounding heights are covered with sheep, and on the slope of one of the most distant hills may be seen the white spire of the village church of T. peering over the lofty trees that seem anxious to conceal it from the profane and vulgar gaze. On the banks of the stream not far from this interesting and natural scene, stands the *Cottage Retreat*, embowered in fragrance. It is carpeted with purple thyme, while the blue-bell, the poppy and the yellow-checked daisy border the pathway that leads to this pleasing abode.

MARION and HELLEN MELVILLE, the last remaining branches of an ancient and highly respectable family, lost both of their parents when quite young, and were solemnly committed to the care of their uncle, who was unmarried; and though disappointed in a first attachment, seemed like to continue so, to the end of his life. Two years after his brother's death he was appointed to an official situation in Canada. He was for some time at a loss to know how to dispose of his interesting nieces. Should he take them with him, accompanied by a capable governess, and have them carefully educated under his own eye? or leave them behind at one of the fashionable boarding-schools, and trust to the general surveillance of a distant female relation? He decided on the former course, and accordingly shortly after, set sail. Nothing material happened on their voyage, and they soon arrived at their destined port. After travelling in Canada a few weeks, he purchased the *Cottage* before mentioned—then almost in a ruinous condition. He made no very important changes in the exterior of the dwelling; but within, carpets, ottomans, vases and mirrors,

proclaimed both wealthy and tasteful residents. His own portrait, distinguished by its strong, bold, peculiar light; views of the surrounding scenery; a guitar, piano, and harp; a time-piece of Italian workmanship, in which the hours flew round, offering rose-wreaths to each other—all served to give the interior of this mansion an aspect of peculiar beauty.

It was in the year 18—, when they left their native land, and was three years since their arrival at the *Retreat*; in which nothing had happened either to damp pleasure or create pain. Mr. Melville saw but little company, as he was naturally of a retired disposition and fond of quiet. His greatest care was the education of his interesting nieces, with whom he spent the greater part of his time. Marion had now attained the age of sixteen, being reared by her kind governess and the fostering arm of her affectionate uncle; she was at once an amiable and lovely girl, possessing a disposition naturally kind and affectionate to the extreme. Hellen was eight years younger than her sister, with a heart as gay and lively as the butterfly, and a mind which promised to possess some of the more reserved and engaging qualities that adorned her elder sister. Marion possessed many natural acquirements, and among those which she loved to practice, was the pleasing art of drawing, in which she took great delight. Amid the pleasant evenings of summer she might be seen, accompanied by her little sister, Hellen, sauntering out to her shady, vine-covered bower, in which stood her easel and other implements of drawing. There would she sketch views of the surrounding scenery—some wild and fearful enough for the pencil of *Salvator Rosa*; others calm, sequestered and luxuriant as the spots over which *Claude* loved to throw his bland, warm coloring. It was now in the pleasant month of September, when all things around seem to have come to full maturity—the fruit ripe, and the yellow ears of corn peeping through their husks, shewing themselves ready for the reaper; the flowers and vines beginning to tinge from the light frost; and indeed when all nature seems calm and