

# THE PEARL.

DEVOTED TO POLITE LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND RELIGION.

VOL. I.

HALIFAX, N. S. SATURDAY, JULY 1, 1887.

No. 4.

## NORICENE.

### THE FAIR HAURED GIRL OF THE ALPS.

By J. N. M'Jilton.

Of sackcloth was thy wedding garment made;  
Thy bridal fruit is ashes; in the tomb  
The fair haired daughter of the Alps is laid.—Byron.

Who that reads of the Alps, but is lost in wonder at the grandeur and awfulness, the terrors and sublimity, which necessarily involve with every description of those stupendous monuments of the skill and power, of the mighty architect? Well might the French philosopher, at the foot of St. Foy, exclaim, while his eye was rolling in astonishment over the immense piles that surrounded him—"Surely a better philosophy could alone rescue us from the persuasion that they are the pillars on which the heavens are propped. When one observes the immensity of their bases, and the abruptness with which they terminate, we can but imagine that their heads soar far beyond the clouds in which we lose them."

Travellers have endeavored almost in vain to designate the most beautiful and interesting portions of Alpine scenery: like the students of astronomy, who

"Trod from star to star  
Up to the firm base of the eternal Triad,"

each new adventure has arrested their senses with newer and more absorbing interest, until they have abandoned the idea of particularizing the excellencies of any localities of a territory presenting as a whole, such a vastness and continuity of wild and wonderful scenery.

The Pass of Guil is one of the most difficult and dangerous of all the narrow footways that wind about these lofty barriers, that lift up their proud summits as if to dare the enterprize and intrepidity of man. Even the terrible St. Bernard, that arrested for a moment the daring spirit of Napoleon, does not produce upon the feeling of the traveller more awful and subduing sensations, than does the frightful scenery of this rock-hewn labyrinth. Nature, the prince of aristocrats, seems to have thrown the whole long continent of the Alps together for purposes of her own, and fixed upon their granite heads, chambers for her sole retirement; but man, her initiated to her secret dwelling places; he has hewn himself a home among her mountain rocks, where he has bid defiance to her profoundest terrors. The frowning Guil has been witness of his daring, and has smoothened at his magic touch.

The rugged ravine which forms a passage for the Guil, is one of the latest places upon earth to hunt a human being, and yet human beings have stood upon the fearful heights that shelve above the stream, and gazed in rapture on the wild and varied grandeur that hang on every side:

"Too wild for pen or pencil to portray,"

No one can possibly form an estimate, from description, of the awful sensations experienced in beholding from this single pathway, for miles on every side,

"Where Alps on Alps arise."

A chasm is before you, deep and bewildering to gaze upon; its almost bottomless abyss, over which the very birds seem fearful of flying, and into which you are momentarily in dread of falling, so much so, that the perpendicular and fistulated rock at your side, is grasped with a firmness that brings the blood to your finger-ends.

"High as the sight can reach,  
The terrors magnify,"

And the effect is alone for him who has stood upon a portion of rock smaller than his feet, and supported himself with his hands bearing hard upon a trifling recess, and, while huge pieces of rock were breaking from the summits and rolling with irresistible velocity by his side into the chasm below, has tremblingly waited,—gazed, and won-

dered. Few have possessed daring sufficient to gratify curiosity a second time in so dangerous a situation.

The soldiers of Hannibal wrestled with the icebergs of the Alps, and Napoleon's troops defied their slippery glaciers—these went forth in multitudes that "darkened heaven in their flight"—the spirit of each animated by the intrepidity of his companions and fired by the enthusiasm of their conquering leaders, and the world has wondered at their bravery and admired their resolution. Less have they wondered, and less have they admired, the intrepidity and firmness of the minister of the cross, who, "single-handed and alone," with no prospect of subduing earthly kingdoms or winning earthly fame, has traced his solitary travel over these immense mountains, with no eye upon him but the eye of heaven, to witness his devotion to his holy calling, and his determination to give up his dangerous mission but with life. With no human companion to animate and cheer him, and nothing but the consciousness of duty to warm his bosom, he has climbed the rugged steeps and slid their dangerous descents, to tell his fallen fellow men of the Redeemer's death, and warn him of a future world. Holy ones have perished in their employment, and others, undismayed, have succeeded them, and preached, with faithfulness and zeal, the doctrines of the cross.

In the eighteenth century, Felix Neff left his happy fire-side and friends, to encounter the difficulties of a mission to the inhabitants of the gloomy Alpine regions, and never did a more devoted servant equip himself for labor in his Master's vineyard; with talents that would have shone in the brightest circles of refinement, he left the arena of honor and worldly preferment, and sought amid the wilds of Arvieux for the neglected children of his God, to whom, though they were poor and ignorant and despised, he felt bound, by the brotherhood of his faith.

Dormilleuse was the spot he loved, and a wilder home for man, was never hewn from rocks that bear eternal snows. Here by the flickering firelight he taught the peasant's child to spell its Maker's name, to read and venerate his holy laws; here he made the son and daughter glad in the knowledge of salvation, and here he made the father's heart to leap for joy at the mention of the Saviour's love, and his own throbbed with deep unison of praise when the power of the Highest gave efficiency to his holy labor.

Neff was an itinerating pastor, his flocks were scattered among the mountains; and on foot, with no companion but his staff, he visited them all, and regularly administered to their spiritual necessities. At Dormilleuse he spent much of his time, finding there greater field for usefulness than in any other location in his district. The cottage of De Visa a poor but respectable peasant, was his shelter and his chapel; in it, he was supplied with nourishment for his temporal existence, and in it, he administered in return the bread of everlasting life.

De Visa had one daughter, an only child; his wife he had wept over and laid in her narrow house; the grave was in the garden, but a short distance from the cottage, surrounded by a beautiful bower, planted and cultivated by the father and the child; there was the loved retreat of the bereaved—the place where they prayed and wept and rejoiced together. Noricene alone was left to be the comforter of her beloved parent; she was all his hope on earth, the staff on which he leaned in the midst of his affliction.

"To woo and win her from his arms,  
Unnumbered suitors came."

Albert L'Arvon was the choice of the unsophisticated, simple-hearted girl; his piety and regular habits made favorable impressions upon both father and daughter, and their preference was soon apparent, for the young man shared oftener and deeper in the hospitalities of the cottage than

did those who were received merely as friends. The minister gave his hearty sanction to the union of feeling and warmly reciprocated affection of the two young persons in whose happiness he felt so much interested.

Noricene though she had pledged herself to marry Albert, resolved never to leave her father, and on one occasion, when asked by him if she would consent to go with him to some more civilized part of the world—of which he had been often told by the missionary—she paused a moment, evidently delighted at the suggestion, but the remembrance of the tie that bound her father to the cottage came up in her mind, and she broke forth in the following impassioned language:—"No, Albert, the places where those more civilized people live, though they afford a thousand inducements, I can never visit;—I can never leave my father—I will remain at his side, and when his hoary head shall be placed beside the spot where my mother sleeps in death, I'll spring the bower over both their graves, and teach the mountain blossom to bloom in tenfold beauty above them; there shall be my pilgrim shrine; and there with you, my Albert—for I feel that you will stay with me—will I often kneel, and the spirit of my parents shall commune with ours, and tell us of that eternal spring that has neither cloud nor storm, where flowers are forever fresh, and friends shall be separated no more."

In these individuals, as in many others among the hard laboring peasantry, Neff saw the effect of his pious exertions, and rejoiced in being the chosen instrument, in the hand of heaven, of their enlightenment. Their condition was in every respect bettered by his instruction, and as religion was mingled with every lesson; in giving it, he received a portion of his reward, for nothing expands the mind and develops its capabilities in a greater degree than the knowledge of the all wise Creator of all things, and a right conception of his works and of his will to fallen man, depending as he does entirely upon his mercy and goodness; Neff saw new capabilities spring into existence with every line he taught, and he thanked heaven for the rich and abundant blessing.

No heart can love like those tempered by religion. In addition to those intrinsic excellencies which awaken kindred sympathies, and those personal accomplishments, the resources of which afford ample food for admiration, the bosom warmed by religion, has a higher and more exalted theme; it loves the object and source of all love, and has a deeper feeling for all who love that object, than it has for the mass of mankind, whose thoughts and feelings arise no higher than sensual pleasures, and even for these it has more affection than has a heart unwarmed by the heavenly influences of religion, for it has a more exalted view of man, as well in relation to social intercourse with his fellows, as his duty towards his God: besides, the influence of religion tends to soften and refine the hardest feelings, and enlarge and purify the mind; it reveals capacities for affection and enjoyment, that the grosser habits of life would forever hide.

Albert L'Arvon enjoyed religion. This, in the opinion of both the preacher and parent, was an all-powerful recommendation and had its effect upon the guileless and unsuspecting Noricene. She saw the youth who had asked her love, bending in prayer before the same Being to whom, in secret, she had often dedicated the powers of her soul: in meek submission, at their Saviour's feet, she heard him humbly ask for grace to strengthen the infirmities of his nature, and assist him to bear the ills and reverses of a life of doubt and accident: her feeling intuitively mingled with his, and she rejoiced that they were travelling in the same path, with the same Saviour to lead them to one common heaven.

Noricene plighted unconditionally her faith to Albert.