

SKETCHES ON A JOURNEY.

BY H. V. C.

"Yes," life is like a journey!" Kind reader, do not throw aside these pages, because they begin with a trite remark, old as the world's history, and uttered by wise men and fools, in their various experience, ever since Adam and Eve turned their reluctant steps from the terrestrial paradise of their early innocence!

Very unlike the garden of Eden, seemed the good steamer, the *Iron Duke*, on a warm afternoon of June, and it must have been a vivid imagination indeed, which would have likened the motley group assembled on its deck, to the bright forms that we are told, walked with our first parents, among the trees of the garden, in the brief days of their sinless purity. There were a group of *habitans* returning from the day's market, with their stolid faces, and their barbarous *patois*, and their baskets in every one's way. Here a knot of priests stood talking together, with their loose, tucked-up garments, and their downcast looks, so carefully averted from the roving glances of any saucy bright eyes that might chance to fall upon them. Then all those rows of benches, filled up with men and women, old and young, black, brown and fair; buxom dames from the country, in their best attire, and village girls with smart ribbons and ruddy cheeks, greatly pleased with themselves and all around them; and in lively contrast here and there might be seen a few fashionables from the city, too genteel to observe anything, and pleased only—with themselves. Men of all grades filled up the niches which were left void of other matter, most of them, if phrenology may be trusted—gifted with more beard than brains, and always, with praise-worthy care for their own comfort, keeping possession of the best seats, and filling as much space as possible. And there, always beautiful to look upon, were children's happy faces, and echoing from every part was heard the ringing laugh, which is sent only from the careless lips of childhood.

How fast the good old city recedes, and the lovely mountain, with its rich crown of verdure, dwindles to a speck. St. Helens, like a fair water nymph decked out with green, seemed floating on the stream; and Nun's Island, solitary as a cloistered votary, stands unmoved amidst the rushing waves, which for centuries have

foamed around it. One may travel through many lands, far off, and world-renowned, and the eye could scarcely rest on scenes of more quiet loveliness, than spread around it, while crossing the broad St. Lawrence to Laprarie.

At Laprarie—there the illusion fades; the petty village is now put to its legitimate use, a depôt for railway cars, and it is a blessed chance which sends a brief sound of bustle to its dull shores—it would never get up one of its own accord—like some inert people, who may be acted on by external causes, but have no power of volition within themselves. And that slow, dull rail-road, to St. Johns, at which everybody rails, does seem to be getting a little more lively—the broad prairies have a somewhat greener hue—now and then a smart new house raises its ambitious head—more fields are beginning to be cultivated, and the cows, pigs and geese, which rove at large, and live on stones and grass-hoppers, are fattening a little, and do not look quite so much like those myths of by-gone days—the *oldest inhabitants*—which they did some twenty years ago. And then that beautiful, undulating line of far off mountains, bounding the horizon, to which distance lends enchantment—who can look at them and not feel their fancy taking wing for the regions of wild romance!

Ah! that most comfortable of all steamers, "the United States" is lying at the wharf of St. Johns; the steam whizzing off gives token that all is in readiness; and right gladly one exchanges the monotonous cars, for the freedom of its capacious deck and airy saloon.

Who ever thought of looking back, on the miscellaneous, mongrel town of St. Johns, when the broad lake spread before them—its glorious expanse of water, tinged with the rich dyes of a summer sunset, and its swelling shores and fairy isles, greener than the emeralds of an eastern fairy tale! Beautiful it had appeared on many a day of former travel, and one might imagine that no variation could surprise, or present new forms of beauty. But never before had such perfect repose seemed to rest upon the sky, the shores and the waves; you looked into the crystal depths, and the golden sunset lay there in a flood of saffron light, till broken by the swift passage of the boat, the calm waters rose in