

it has been remarked that the romance of real life is often more stirring than that of fiction. During the greater part of the time occupied in the church service, my eye had continued to dwell in admiration upon this beautiful tree, which cast its high shadows at intervals upon the window I have alluded to; but little did I imagine at the time that it drooped over him who had been the companion of my boyhood, and a sharer in the military glories which had commenced even at that tender period of our existence. Life to me had lost most of those charms with which, in the exuberance of our bright and youthful anticipations, we had too sanguinely invested it; and as I afterwards visited the grave and marked the stillness, the beautiful repose of all around, broken only by the faint and almost inaudible whispering of the light air through the gracefully yielding foliage of the willow, I half desired to share in the lovely grave of him over whom it seemed to mourn.

#### CHAPTER VIII.

Finding it impossible to procure a house in Amherstburgh, we made our dwelling of a den in Sandwich, a small village about twenty miles up the river, and the spot from which General Brock embarked on the occasion of the capture of the American fortress of Detroit, nearly opposite. The gable end of this house fronted the street, and was ornamented, at the angle of the sloping roof, with a suspicious looking projection and pulley that very much likened it to the residence of a hangman who does business on his own account. The two rooms below were just large enough to enable the body to be turned, without rubbing the coat or petticoat which covered that body against the white-washed, or rather yellow-washed, wall; but the twin brother, or twin sister, rooms above, it required some dexterity, and not a little practice in the art of dodging and stooping, to move in without bumpings innumerable on the cranium. In all, there were four rooms and an apology for a kitchen, the whole occupying the space of a moderate-sized drawing-room, and for this bountiful accommodation I was only charged at the moderate rate of forty pounds a year. Still, as it was the only house to be had, we were glad to have wherewithal to shelter our heads for the few months I purposed remaining.

The town and people of Sandwich, I found precisely in the same condition of apathy and poverty with those I had so recently quitted, so that I was glad to avail myself of all opportunities of crossing to the American shore, where I was much better known than in Canada, and where I ever experienced a hospitality and kindness which I can never forget. At Detroit, and in its immediate vicinity, was laid the chief scenes of my Indian tale of "Wacousta," and as the Americans are essentially a reading people, there was scarcely an individual in the place who was not familiar with the events described in it, while, on the contrary, not more than one twentieth of the Canadian people were aware of the existence of the book, and of that twentieth not one third cared a straw whether the author was a Canadian or a Turk. Nor is this remark meant to apply simply to the remote region I was now visiting, but to hundreds of the more wealthy classes in all sections of the province.

It has been the custom in all ages, and in all countries, for men of education and acquirement to join in testifying regard for their authors, however mediocre their talent; and even in the United States—the last country which has given birth to men of genius and literary accomplishments—we find the caterers to the republic of letters treated with that consideration, which the civilized world has agreed in according to them. In Canada, they have this yet to learn and practice. Not, be it remembered, that I accuse the whole of my countrymen of being so absorbed in the pursuit of pounds, shillings, and pence, as to have utterly lost sight of the conveniences of life. There has been one exception, and this I have the greater satisfaction in recording, because it occurs among those who, not being so richly endowed with the gifts of fortune, were the last to have been expected to take the initiative in the matter. The compliment conveyed to me through the following letter, which was sent to me while absent from Sandwich, is no doubt far beyond any incidental merit I may possess, still it is the only document indicative of honor or approval that I have ever received since my return to my native country. It is the only bays that has been offered to me in Canada, and I must be permitted to wear it, for when I die it is to be hoped this book will survive me:—

GOSFIELD, February 20th, 1846.

—, A Committee, composed of John Scratch, J. P.; Thomas Hawkins, M. D.; and Thomas Brush, Esquires, appointed to make all necessary preparations, in order to commemorate the battle of Point-au-Pelée Island, by a public dinner, request me to make known to you a hope that you will honor them with your presence on the 3rd of March next, at the Gosfield Hotel, yourself, Colonel John Prince, M. P., and the Reverend William Johnston, Rector of Sandwich, being invited as the guests of a highly respectable portion of your fellow subjects of the county of Essex.

The Committee would beg, through me, to inform you that this small testimony of the esteem entertained for you by your grateful countrymen, is but another way of evincing their respect and admiration of the man of talents, the gallant soldier, and the accomplished gentleman.

For myself, except of my warmest wishes for your future welfare, and rest assured that I shall ever feel proud, as an adopted Canadian, to hear

some distinguish the character of a gentleman who, by the splendor of his genius, has shed an additional lustre on his native country.

I have the honor to remain, with high consideration, &c.,

—, Sandwich.

L. C. KEARNEY, Secy.

The above is certainly couched in strong language, and were it not, as I have already remarked, that it is the only document indicative of a desire to do honor to me in my native land, I should have hesitated to publish it. Let it not, however, be supposed, that it has had the slightest tendency to create in my mind any undue estimate of my "genius," as the letter flatteringly terms the pourtrayings of my pen. No man less than I do, possesses the vanity of authorship. I look upon the art of ingenious writing, not as a merit, but a mere incidental gift, for which one is more indebted to nature than to judicious application. The mechanic possesses the same in a variety of ways, and I regard the works of many of these with a wonder and admiration surpassing even those which are produced by a contemplation of the more elegant and accomplished arts of painting and sculpture, and yet I am familiar with the *chef d'œuvres* in both. Painting and sculpture are, after all, but imitations,—splendid, I grant, but still imitations. The exquisite beauty of the perfect human form is placed before the artist as a model, and the whole secret is to copy with accuracy and fidelity. I am far from wishing to convey a belief that nicety of execution, in those more refined occupations, does not require both inspiration and genius; but the inspiration is one of thoughts which are familiar to the mind, and the genius has a tangible foundation on which to build. But in mechanics how different! There is no model no design on which, or after which, to erect a structure. For instance, in the construction of the higher orders of mechanism, both of an ancient and modern date, what inexhaustible powers of imagination have been put forth in order to invent, combine, mould, harmonize, and finally give life and motion to that on which the eye has never hitherto gazed, and which has alone been woven on the labyrinthine meshes of the brain. Such have ever been my sentiments, such my views in regard to the relative bearings of the fine arts to the more complicated mechanics, and even at the hazard of being accused of having "no music in my soul," do I now avow them. Not, be it understood, that I look upon mechanics with anything approaching to the enthusiasm with which I have gazed on the breathing Venus de Medici in the Louvre, or the glowing Madonna of a Raphael; but because I conceive that there is more of absolute genius in one than in the other. If, therefore, I regard painting and sculpture as requiring far less ingenuity than certain complicated operations in mechanism, how much less in the scale of comparison must I necessarily class literature, and particularly that lighter literature which is embraced in works of fiction. The power so to weave together the incidents of a tale that they may be made comprehensible and attractive to the reader, is a mere gift, which some persons possess in a greater or less degree than others; and can reflect no more credit upon him who is endowed with it, than can reasonably be claimed by any man or woman who has been, by nature, fortunately gifted with personal beauty and attraction superior to that enjoyed by the generality of their kind. A man who chances to possess this advantage, cannot write ill if he would; neither, if nature has been lavish of her bounties, and made him what is called a man of talent, can he employ that talent in a less luminous way, whether for good or evil, than nature herself has assigned and willed. It costs him no effort, and therefore there cannot be said to be much merit.

These, then, being my honest impressions, it may be asked wherefore it is that I allude, in a spirit of censure and complaint, to the absence of honoring notice by their countrymen, of the literary effusions of the few Canadian writers we have. The answer to this is very simple: Because it is the custom of the civilized world, and has been such for ages; and however I may differ from that world in my estimate of the lighter literature of the day, still as all are agreed in rendering honor to those whom they have invested with an overrated merit, the exception is so gross and glaring as to form a proper subject for animadversion. Where nations unite among themselves to elevate their men of letters, and when it is universally admitted that their efforts reflect favorably upon the land of their birth, and tend to raise it in the scale of civilization, any deviation from a principle so sacred and acknowledged, can only be regarded as a slight, whether originating in ignorance or in wilfulness. True, I have elsewhere remarked that the Canadians are not a reading people. Neither are they: but yet there are many hundreds of educated men in the country, who ought to know better,—who possess a certain degree of public influence, and who should have been sensible that, in doing honor to those whom the polished circles of society, and even those of a more humble kind, have placed high in the conventional scale, they were adopting the best means of elevating themselves. England prides herself on her innumerable host of literary men; France, on hers; Scotland renders homage to the shades of Scott and Burns; Ireland boasts of the versatility of talent of her many eminent writers. Every nation in the Old World has done honor to the profession of letters, and the United States, in the New, glories, and justly glories, in the well-won reputation of her gifted Cooper; nay, if I mistake not, the land of reciprocity of pollution and crime—New South Wales—has not shown herself so degraded as not to seek for honorable estimation, by producing and encouraging or two native authors who have recently flourished amongst them.