

For the Pearl.

SCENES AND SCENERY IN NOVA-SCOTIA.

I.

A stranger pilgrim from a distant clime,
Takes up a fond, but long neglected, lyre;
Runs o'er its chords to strike a measured rhyme,
And fain to wake its numbers would aspire:—
But harsh neglect has quenched its wonted fire—
One single touch—one farewell note essaying
An old unmeasured strain—a broken wire
Recalls emotions which have long been straying,
And wakes neglected feelings of repressed desire.

II.

It is not that on classic ground we stand,
It is not that of Attic games we sing,
No sculptured marbles grace this foster-land,
Or Delphian temple, or Parnassian spring:
Not here, Apollo strikes the heavenly string,
Yet thoughts of bygone glories brightly burn:
The past—has charms of brilliant hues to bring,
And though inscribed not on the storied urn,
Hearts keep those thoughts as food for fond imagining.

III.

Even here, although no fabled altars shine,
No musty chronicle of ancient lore,
Though fair Acadia boasts no sainted shrine
Where bearded sages votive offerings pour;
Yet, even here, a spell rests on the hour
Which tells in witching numbers of the past,
Tradition lends its soul-entrancing power,
Restores the hues which time was fading fast,
And holds its mirror to the past in Fancy's bower.

IV.

A century since, these scenes were widely changed;
No city then marked Haligonian's plain,
No merchant shipping at her wharves arranged,
No pride of commerce, and no lust of gain—
Nor military trappings marked the train
Of British enterprise or British power—
But where her proud fleets sweep a wide domain,
And ocean now adds tribute to earth's dower,
The birch canoe alone held undisputed reign.

V.

Where the throned representative of state
And regal office, guards our liberty—
Palaced in wigwam—and accounted great—
The Indian savage, wild, untutored, free—
Here claimed a monarch's native right to be.
Barbarian spoils were his—the forest's lair
Sweeping Chebucto's shores, proclaimed that he
Alone, with human song, broke silence there,—
Till Britain's golden influence gemmed the Western sea.

VI.

Our song commences—years have passed away—
We leave a busy Town for vista's green—
Where groves of birch-trees shield from summer's ray
The cavalcade, approaching fast between;
A distant mansion on the hill is seen,
Thither with hasty tread, the train advancing,
Show in their midst a form of noble mien,
Whose conscious war-horse by his lofty prancing
Shows, as he enters there, a master's step, I ween.

VII.

Anon the scene is changed—the mirror'd hall
Spreads the rich banquet by the torches' glare:
A hundred guests obey a welcome call,
A hundred servitors their master hear.
Now the brimmed wine-cup sparkles in the air:
Each guest has risen—hearts with fealty bounding
Shout in one chorus—all the rapture share,
Health to the noble host—the pledge is sounding—
Edward the royal Duke—and England's prince—is there.

VIII.

Another change is past. Time's Chronicler,
Sage scribe of the events of ages gone,
Hath on his record numbered many a year
Of joys departed and of pleasures flown.
Full fifty suns have on the forest shone,
And fifty winters those old trees have whitened;
The harp of ancient days hath lost its tone,
Death the deep sorrows of lone hearts has lightened,—
All scenes its changes feel, all hearts its sceptre own.

IX.

Ruin now reigns where revel once was held;
Decay is rife where riot's roof-tree sprung;
Few things remain as they were found of old—
The greater need their glory should be sung.
The same blue skies are on this spot o'erhung,
The same bright birches are the same road shading,
Birds of bright hue are still the trees among;
And what though hearts and hands and eyes are fading
In such a glorious scene, thought ever will be young.

X.

Those rooms are desolate which once were filled,
The mantling ivy decks "The Prince's Hall,"
The gardens now rich fruits no longer yield,
The stables scarce are traced with vacant stall,
Hills no more echo to the huntsman's call,—
Choked are the fountains erst like chrystal streaming,
Mimic Pagodas into ruin fall,—
Music is hushed and still—no lights are gleaming,
Rotunda—Lodge—Park—Gardens—lie in ruins all.

XI.

Yet 'midst the changes which Time's hands have wrought,
Seasons and pastimes change not—these still move
In circles—still our hardy sons are taught
The customs of their ancestors to love.
Hail then, Adopted Country! 'twould behoove
A firmer hand than mine in graceful measure,
To sketch, in lines which time should ne'er disprove,
The gems of pastime and the scenes of pleasure
Won on the watery lake, or sought in leafy grove.

XII.

Stern winter reigns—on every branching pine
Innumerable brilliants deck the spray,
Droop pendant from the boughs that intertwine,
Or overhang the snow-white beaten way;
The frozen waters of the harbour lay
A winter pathway—and a starlit glory,
Lights midnight hours with splendor more than day,
And gems the scene—which winter stern and hoary
Has with a magic wand cast into rich array.

XIII.

Hark! 'tis the merry bugle on the hill,
A train advances—not in warlike mien,
Or trifling pastime—but as nearer still
They come, the Tandem Club—through vista's green,
The winter pride of all the land is seen;—
The merry sleigh-bells through the woods are ringing,
The fur-clad troop glisten with winters sheen,
The neighing steeds are through the snow-drift springing,
While laugh and merry shout enliven all the scene.

XIV.

But months have rolled along, the ice and snow
Have vanished all before the solar ray,
While torpid nature seems to undergo
A fierce convulsion ere its functions play—
The heaving earth—long frost-bound, breaks away
The crumbling cliff—bright life from death is waking—
And, as though vegetation brook'd delay,
Nature in haste its verdant robe is taking,
All scenes are full of life, and all Creation gay.

XV.

The roaring freshet rushes down the steep,
With sound of woodman's axe the forests ring,
Where sleighs were gliding—loaded waggons creep,
And vagrant birds now wheel on restless wing;
The lovely May-flower, herald of the Spring,
Sweet nursling of the snow—Acadia's flower—
With lowly welcome doth its tribute bring,
And as first occupant of Elora's bower
Hails the young season with its fragrant blossoming.

XVI.

Like the Aurora's glory—often streaming
A down this firmament—a short lived sight,—
So summer comes and goes, while man is dreaming
Days ne'er more will be brief—skies always bright:—
Sudden it bursts with rainbow radiance dight—
Its path is strewn with wild but lovely flowers,
Here—humming-birds stay—sip—resume their flight,
There—varied notes ring through the forest bowers,
And every scene is gay and every heart is light.

XVII.

Now the shrill grasshopper exerts his song,—
The fire-fly glances like an evening star,—
The loaded fruit-trees bend their boughs along,
Tempting the hand to reach the bounty rare,—
The ripened cornfields pay the anxious care
Of patient husbandman—who long foreboded
A scanty harvest—but whose plenteous share
Is seen in rounded stack and garners loaded,
While grateful praise to Heaven succeeds his fervent prayer.

XVIII.

Then comes the time—when to the gentle breeze
The snow-white sails unfurl, and contest, mild,
But vigorous, marks the strife where all would seize
The palm of the Regatta—each has toiled,
Amateur, Mariner, and Indian wild,—
And all are pleased, and wearied all, I ween;
And now that festive mirth has time beguiled,
A gorgeous sunset ends the lively scene,
That sun, which all the day on the blue waters smiled.

XIX.

Summer now yields to Autumn's russet dress,
And doffs her emerald robe of shining green,—
A magic hand with passing loveliness
Has clothed the fading woods in brilliant sheen;
Had fancy struck her wand—this had not been,—
Had artist sketched them, 'twere a fiction deemed;
But, as though clouds were prisms held between
The forests and the sunlight—so it seemed
With every rainbow hue to have decked the transient scene.

XX.

Then, like the echo of a well-loved strain
Round which hang recollections of the past,
A chord we ne'er may hear so touched again,
So, on the verge of autumn, ere 'tis cast
On the rude charity of winter's blast,
A second summer, with Italian skies,
Not long to bloom, and far too bright to last,
Wears a brief diadem—then fades and dies
When hoary frosts speak winter's cold approaching fast.

XXI.

Now rude boreas shakes the rustling trees,
The faded ground with yellow leaves is strewn,
(Like lines upon a cenotaph—so these
Speak of departed joys and pleasures flown)
Storms now howl o'er the ocean with a tone
Which speaks of danger, and the falling shower
Of flaky snow, precedes the gusty moan
With which stern winter ushers in its power,
To mark a season icebound, dread, deserted, lone.

XXII.

The task of song is o'er—the harp is still,
Another hand than mine may wake its strains,—
And when another spring shall clothe the hill
With verdure, other seasons deck the plains,
Death's firmer tie may hold in icy chains
The heart whose plaintive sighs these strings have swept,
Yet have I sung—and ceased—though much remains,
Lest, if I had not sung—I had not kept, [tains
Thoughts of some scenes whose memory the feeble song re-

WATERLOO.

I have trodden many of the spots remarkable in the history of Napoleon's career. I have stood where in the Cathedral of Notre Dame, a Corsican soldier of fortune placed upon his own head—seizing it from the Roman pontiff, whom he had summoned to grace his inauguration—the imperial crown of one of the richest realms of Europe. I pictured to my mind the gay train of obsequious courtiers, and the stern phalanx of hardy warriors, who then encircled him; and I was dazzled at the splendour of that imperial soldier's destinies.

I have sat in the little room, in his favourite palace of Fontainebleau, where he was compelled to sign away, as it seemed forever, his authority, and then to bid, as it was thought, a last adieu to the comrades with whom he had victoriously traversed half the world; and I could not but feel somewhat for the humiliation of that mounting spirit; for terrible must have been his agony as he tore himself from the the veterans who adored him, and kissed with streaming eyes the eagles that he had guided so often to their quarry.

But I have wandered over the field of Waterloo—the bloody stake of the last act in the tragic drama of his career, where his single and unprincipled ambition carried lamentation and wee into thrice ten thousand homes. The selfish, unbridled passion of one man placed again the world in arms, and consumed, in perhaps the shortest campaign on record, more victims than probably were ever sacrificed before in such a little space.

I went into the quiet, country-looking church of Waterloo. The walls on each side are covered with tablets to the memory of the brave who fell in the battle.—Then I walked on to Mont St. Jean. Almost every house I passed had a history belonging to it. Some distinguished person had either lodged there before the engagement, or had been brought hither after it to die.—In one, about the best looking in the place, the Duke of Wellington had slept, my guide told me, for two nights, June 17th and 18th. To another, some way further on, Sir William de Lancey had been carried mortally wounded. Oh, what tales of thrilling woe those walls, if they could speak, would tell! There was not a more gallant spirit than Sir William de Lancey. He had won renown while yet quite young,—and, with high hopes and happy prospects, had married just two months before. His poor wife was at Brussels. She hurried to the house where he lay—it is a neat, pleasant-looking cottage;—and there, on the third day, she closed his eyes. Hers was one of the many sad hearts into which every peal that celebrated that glorious victory must have struck a desolate chillness.

The guide who accompanied me was an intelligent man. He described with civil minuteness the terrors of that awful time. Most of the inhabitants of Waterloo and its neighbourhood had left their habitations, and fled to the woods; and though it was the Sabbath, no chime on that day called the people to the house of prayer.—He himself was a farm servant at Mont St. Jean; and he pointed out, on the left of the road, nearly the last house, the place where he lived. It was just behind the English line; and