

the heart of winter, and on firm and seemingly enduring ice, we had crossed with heavy artillery, and surrounded by hundreds of stealthily gliding Indians, to the attack of an American army which we defeated and destroyed. Here, in summer, we had crossed the lake in batteaux on an expedition of a similar kind, and attended by a similar result; and ever, on these occasions, enjoying the rude song of the men, or their quaint recital of some anecdote, provoking the laugh of their officers, as, in treating of the differences of condition of the soldier in war and in peace, I have already remarked.

When we had crossed the bar, and drawn nearer to the river at the mouth of which the little town of Amherstburg is situated, the feeling of desolation which had been gathering in my mind, amounted to absolute painfulness. There was a stillness—a nakedness—a vacuity about everything, as we approached it, that, but for the leading features of the beautiful scenery, might have led one to doubt its identity. Before the town, and bounding with it the narrow channel for vessels of the deepest burden navigating the lakes, had once pleasingly arrested the eye of the stranger, a small island of extreme beauty of shape, and covered with a dense and luxuriant foliage. Nothing could then have been more picturesque than this island, which is about three-quarters of a mile in length and half a mile in breadth, covered as it was with the wigwams and watchfires of the Indians. Now it had been disfigured in every direction by the bad taste of the commander of the garrison, who, in consequence of the patriots having sometime previously landed on the island, had hesitated not to sacrifice a scene of surpassing beauty to their apprehension of a danger which in fact existed no longer. In order to deprive them of the possibility of shelter in the dense cover of the tall and verdant wood, he had caused the axe to be laid at the root of trees which had existed for ages, and in removing the dark curtain which the sun invariably goldened with his rays, before dipping finally from the view, destroyed a beauty which no human hand—no human ingenuity can renew.

Then, again, in the harbor, where so often had resounded the busy hammer of the ship-builder, and where had floated seven godly barks of war, manned by crews eager for an encounter with their enemy, and where had waved the proud pennants of England, scarce a sound was to be heard—scarce an evidence of human life was to be seen. Beyond the fort the same monotonous stillness prevailed. Then, gathered around the house of council which had since disappeared, had been collected three thousand warriors taken from at least twenty different tribes. These, clad in their wild costume, and formidable in their war paint, had contributed by their presence to give an air of animation to the scene, which was furthermore increased by that of their wives and children. At the period at which I had last seen them assembled on that ground they counted not less than ten thousand souls. Now there was not the faintest vestige of an encampment, and if a solitary Indian exhibited himself, he was so changed in character and in appearance from the warriors of those days, and presented so uninteresting an exterior in his unbecoming garb of civilization, that his presence only added to the melancholy of the feelings induced by the contemplation of the change.

Nay, the very town itself had altered its character, and, instead of making that progress which should have been looked for in a new and enterprising country, had, by the operation of very unfavourable circumstances, retrograded in the very proportion in which it should have advanced. The streets were dull and dirty, the houses of wood, which then were bright and pure in tasteful colors, were now almost without a shadow of the paint which, formerly, had adorned them, and ruin and dilapidation seemed to have done their slow and quiet work of destruction in every object that had once been familiar to my eye. Often, in my dreams, had I revisited this spot, and imagination had treacherously, and with startling fidelity, decked it in the hues which were most familiar to my mind—nay, so vividly had the future been represented, that I could not but feel deep pain when the chilling reality stood, in all its nakedness, before me.

But who has ever returned to the home of his boyhood, after an absence such as mine had been, full of the confidence of meeting its well remembered scenes, and yet not felt his heart to sink within him, when, instead of the warm greeting of familiar acquaintances—animate and inanimate—he finds himself almost a stranger to everything he beholds.

How is it that the sympathies cling so fondly, and with such tenacity, to the early past? There are certainly no very pleasant impressions with the maturer man arising from the recollections of his boyhood. The lecturings of parents, the flagellations of tutors, and the spirit of pugnacity which every where throughout the universe prevails among children, whether of the same family or strangers, marking the incipient cruelty and selfishness which characterizes his after life, leave, one would incline to believe, little cause for regret that these scenes never can be renewed: and yet, notwithstanding all the alacrity with which we throw off that then hateful thralldom—in despite of all the pleasure with which we leaped into new life, dissociating ourselves from all that tended to clog our early hopes and aspirations, when Time has woven the web of wisdom or experience around our vision, causing the eye

no longer to view, through an illusive medium, the things of life such as our young imaginations had loved to paint them, but to gaze on the stern reality—how do we incline to recal these days of our infancy, which we then regarded with loathing and dislike, but which a long and intimate communion with the selfish world, had taught us to discover was but the state of early preparation for the after trials of the heart, and the least unhappy of the existence of unhappiness accorded to man.

I had first breathed the breath of life near the then almost isolated Falls of Niagara—the loud roaring of whose cataract had, perhaps, been the earnest of the storms—and they have been many—which were to assail my after life. My subsequent boyhood, up to the moment, when at fifteen years of age, I became a soldier, had been passed in a small town (Amherstburg) one of the most remote, while, at the same time, one of the most beautifully situated in Canada. I had always detested school, and the days that were passed in it, were to me days of suffering, such as the boy alone can understand. With the reputation for some little capacity, I had been oftener flogged than the greatest dunce in it, perhaps as much from the caprice of my tutor as from any actual wrong in myself—and this had so seared my heart—given me such a disgust for Virgil, Horace, and Euclid, that I often meditated running away, and certainly should have gratified the very laudable inclination, had I not apprehended a severity from my father—a stern, unbending man, that would have left me no room for exultation at my escape from my tutor. It was therefore a day of rejoicing to me when the commencement of hostilities on the part of the United States, and the unexpected appearance of a large body of their troops, proved the signal of the “break up” of the school, or college, (for by the latter classical name was known the long, low, narrow stone building, with two apologies for wings springing at right angles from the body), and my exchange of Cæsar’s Commentaries for the King’s Regulations and Dundas. The transition was indeed glorious, and in my joy at the change which had been wrought in my position, I felt disposed to bless the Americans for the bold step they had taken.

Time passed—I had seen a good deal of active service during the war which succeeded, and had glided through nearly fifteen months, emancipated from the hated shackles of a scholastic life, and growing daily more and more wedded to my new pursuits, when, at length, notwithstanding the stupendous efforts of my regiment to continue the defence of that particular section of the country entrusted to them, they were overwhelmed by numbers, and defeat and capture were the result. The last time I passed through the home of my boyhood, it was as a prisoner of war. The place was filled with American irregular troops, and the usual excesses and spoliations had been committed. It could not therefore have been with much reluctance that I quitted a scene offering so little temptation to remain in it, nor can it be supposed that, with the feelings I have just expressed, I then entertained any great desire to return.

But notwithstanding all this—even although my after life had been passed amid scenes of excitement, in which a recollection of the simple and unobtrusive cares of my early years could scarcely be expected to enter—albeit the fascinations of the most polished capital of Europe had thrown their potent influence around me, to such a degree that, in the meridian of life’s enjoyment, I had never cared to revisit it, and even during periods when the pleasures or business of life had diverged the attention into a different channel: often and often, had memory recalled those scenes, every street, every house, every thought, every remarkable incident connected with the past, and this with so great fidelity and force, that I have had difficulty, on awakening, to satisfy myself I had but dreamt. Dreams have insensibly a tendency to excite an interest in the human heart for the object dreamt of, and the oftener this be repeated, and the more vivid the picture, the more endearing will be the feeling of attachment for the original. Thus, to cite an instance which must be familiar to every mind, it often happens that a person of one sex will dream of one of the other, for whom, previously, coldness, or indifference, or even aversion, had been entertained, but by the operation of an influence over which there can be no possible control of the will, and which, in contradistinction to the “animal,” may be considered and called “moral” magnetism, the most radical change is effected, and a most powerful passion for the person dreamt of thereby engendered.

If so, then, in regard to those who are originally indifferent to us, how much more powerful must be the desire of beholding them once more, when we dream of scenes that were endeared to our infancy, no matter what the circumstances of disadvantage under which we became familiar with them. They whom a proximity to the home of their boyhood robs of the pleasing, painful, aching desire of beholding it once more, and of feasting the eye on each well-remembered feature, know not the deep, the intense gratification of the wanderer who, after an absence of years, rendered even more exciting by distance, finds himself at length about to realize the anticipations of a life, and approaching that goal which nature, who directs the love of the individual man for his home, even as she does that of the mass