

LITERARY DEPARTMENT.

ASTONROGA,

AN INDIAN TALE.

'Let us go on deck, Father,' said a sprightly young lady to an aged gentleman with whom she was sitting in the cabin of a packet boat, bound eastward on the Erie Canal. Passing her arm thro' his, they ascended. It was a lovely day in the month of June, 1835. The boat was then a short distance above the upper lock at Little Falls.

'Father, what a romantic village!'

'It is indeed a pleasant place.'

'Pleasant did you say? It is delightful! What wild and fanciful scenery! How strikingly these mountain ranges converge to the east! See to what a dizzy height this bluff point rises on our right? What a beautiful circular sweep we have in view upon the opposite side of the Mohawk river? What is this village called?'

'Little Falls; it takes its name from the rapids in the river.' 'I see them here at the left. How the water chafes and foams along its rocky channel.—But the buildings, how finely they rise to view, stretching up yonder northern ascent, and along the eastern slope? Look, Father! what is that queer shaped edifice upon that lofty hill away there at our left?'

'That is the old Octagon church.'

'I wish the boat would not move so fast. How sweetly those dwellings cluster up that little ravine northward, and then along the brow of the first ascent eastward!—and then the dense range of buildings stretching east and west through the centre of the village—and still nearer, there are one, two, three new churches; Father, where are we going?'

'Not to church.'

'But—'

'There is no danger, child.'

'O! This is a fearful place! What huge masses of perpendicular rock on either side! Ah, as we pass the bank in the Canal the mystery is solved—it is an island upon our left. Here the branches of the Mohawk again unite.'

'Do you perceive that low isolated rock lying near the middle of the northern channel and a few rods above the confluence of the waters?'

'I can discover a dark mass apparently lying on the surface of the water.'

'That is the rock named in Indian tradition 'Astonroga'—Anglice 'the rock of thunder.'

'And what of it, Father?'

'The passage through these rocks which we have just traversed, as well as the northern channel of the Mohawk, and the one we are about to enter, have undoubtedly been cleft through and enlarged to their present dimensions, by the action of the elements.'

'But what has that to do with the Astonroga?'

'You shall hear.—the valley of the Mohawk a thousand years ago—'

'A thousand years ago, father? Who can tell us of the valley of the Mohawk a thousand years ago?'

'And why not? Indian tradition furnishes us with many interesting facts, —'

'But quite too uncertain for any reliance as matters of history.'

'Uncertain? How much of ancient history have we that is more veritable? A single instance.—What know you in truth of ancient Troy but from early traditions collected, freshened and moulded into the exquisite verse of the immortal Homer? Again, Who was it that recently (after the lapse of eighteen centuries) stood and waved his magic wand over the crumbling ruins of Mount Moriah, until Jerusalem, that was, and her matchless temple, resplendent with gold and living sapphires, stane's again before us?—aye, and the dense mass of her mighty population is also revealed madly rushing to and fro, under the impulse of passions fiercely sweeping round and round their own flaming circle of fire? And yet in after times, this creation of fancy may become an accredited portion of history. Believe me—tradition is the rough material.—Genius is the Sculptor; drawing largely upon probabilities, he chisels forth the due proportions, and the mystic drapery of time completes the tout ensemble of oracular history.'

'Proved to a demonstration—ha, ha.—Well, tradition is history, and Indian tradition of all traditions the most veritable; I yield the point, for I am dying to hear about Astonroga.'

'Listen, then. Indian tradition says that six ages ago, the valley of the Mohawk, from Little Falls westward was covered by one of those beautiful inland lakes, so common in our country. That to form this lake a solid barrier of granite rock was thrown across the