

For the Pearl.

LITERATURE.

A work, for some time expected in Canada, entitled, *Trifles from My Portfolio*, has recently appeared in Quebec. The author is a staff Surgeon, it appears, and belonged to the 66th Regt. during its campaigns. From a notice made of the work in a Quebec paper we would suppose it to be interesting, thickly interspersed with incident, and description, and, in the main, highly respectably written. A long extract is given, containing an account of an interview with Napoleon, at St. Helena. We take a brief passage, which contains an estimate of Napoleon's character.

"Napoleon always appeared to me a being of an unique character—isolated—unapproachable—*sui generis*, or rather a genius in himself. Possessing a daring and comprehensive mind, which could at the same time conceive the most magnificent schemes and designs, and embrace all the prospective steps and minute details necessary for their accomplishment, he found himself at once pushed on by fortune, into an elevated station and then raised himself to the highest by consummate political talent and military skill, directing the chivalrous devotion of masses of enthusiastic soldiers. But, as has been well said, Lord though he was of France, and almost of Europe; he was never thoroughly master of the little world within; for the fierce Italian passions would boil up in his bosom, and overboil, without effectual constraint. At length, rendered giddy by the immense elevation he had attained and the constant whirl of his perilous prosperity, he yet soared higher—but the ascent could not always last, and he began to totter to his fall. One fatal false step was on the domes of the Escurial, and another, still more fatal, on the towers of the Kremlin. Long and bravely, and tenaciously, notwithstanding, did he cling to his lofty position; and when he found himself falling, attempt to regain it with astonishing power of resilience—but the fiat had gone forth against him, and it was all in vain. At length he tumbled down hopelessly and far ever, without the smallest sympathy from mankind to soften his fall."

This passage exhibits comprehension of view, and smoothness of style, but is it not rather deficient in its rhetorical figures? The comparison of the "Lord of France and almost of Europe," an over-boiling utensil, is degrading instead of exalting to its subject, and vulgarises the passage in which it occurs. But immediately after, we have the boiling cauldron taking a very sublime flight. This flight is illustrated by a harsh metaphor, one which has such appearance of literal expression, and is so odd and ludicrous in its images, that the sublimity provokes a smile, and "tumbles down" to caricature. We have the "little corporal" taking one step, to the top of the Pope's palace at Rome, and another, still more fatal, to the domes of the Czars at Moscow. Finding his footing insecure—as how else could it be, in dragon boots among the thin air and slippery marbles of the Russian house tops—he holds on like "grim death," until the fiat having gone forth, he tumbles down, and finding no angel hands to bear him up, is dashed to atoms. Now had Napoleon been merely described as climbing some metaphysical height, such as "fame's proud steep," the metaphor would have been passable enough; but to name the elevations that he figuratively clambered among, and these, roofs of certain dwelling houses, in certain cities, is a most odd and unauthorized license. It sinks the metaphor, and brings forward the literal, and, by the drollness of the picture, as we before intimated, turns the whole into caricature. How much more effective would a spirited statement of the real facts of the case be,—or, if a more poetical strain were essential, poetry in accordance with its own laws. A second volume of the "Trifles" is to contain sketches of Upper and Lower Canada, which, no doubt, will be amusing and instructive. The notices of the first, are loud in its praises, and we have no doubt that it will be considered, generally, a welcome addition to the copious supplies of military literature, which late years have furnished.

For the Pearl.

POETRY.

In a late paper of St. John, N. B., the subjoined note and lines appeared under the head Poetry.

"The following lines were written by a Novascotian on board the steamer at Louisville, in April last, on her passage from New Orleans to a beautiful little village called Donaldsonville, sixty miles above the "Great Southern Emporium," on the banks of the Mississippi.

TO THE MISSISSIPPI.

Flow on in thy majestic grandeur—flow,
We'll stem thy current spite of every wave;
Not lisp'ing winds, nor tempests when they blow,
Can stay the boat that thro' thy billows lave
'Tis Man that rules: his power is supreme,
And dares the vengeance of thy mighty stream.

Flow on and murmur like the evening bird,
That weeps when dewdrops on the lilies rest;
'Tis music, since no other notes are heard,
And darkness frowns upon thy heaving breast;
Whilst tranquil Peace reposes on each shore,
And seems to smile at thy perpetual roar.

Flow on unchanging thro' the length of age;
Thy course is onward as the march of time—
No aged furrow can thy strength assuage,
But onward, onward—thou art still sublime.
List! what's that sound that bursts upon the ear?
You swelling wave, that breaks in wild despair!

Flow on while slumber yields to us her balm;
The howling wind—the spray that dashes round
Like a fond mother lulls us into calm,
Whilst thro' thy bosom fairy-like we bound—
Or like the sea gull on the ocean wide,
That scorns the wave which dashes by its side."

Some matters are noted for their great size, others for their delicate minuteness,—some for their elegant truthfulness, and others for their grotesque dash of caricature,—each in its way is worthy of notice, and it is only the dull and purely mediocre, the neither very high nor very low, that has no features of its own but a mere appropriation of other men's wares covered with original dress, that is too mawkish for attention. With this view we have copied the lines above, as a fair specimen of the grave caricature,—painting that may be taken in earnest, as it appears by the ignorant, but that to the initiated, exhibits a rich strain of hyperbole or irony.

The third and fourth lines of the first stanza may be cited as an instance;—who but a keen observer of what does not exist, and a wag to boot, would talk of lisp'ing winds? To lisp is to speak with a too frequent application of the tongue to the teeth. A common man would not know how the winds could have tongue or teeth,—but the writer of the address to the Mississippi,—knew, that the winds are said to "lift up their voices," and how could they do this,—how could they, in common language, "give tongue" if they had not that useful member. Again, as to teeth, what more frequent than to hear of a biting wind when a blow is experienced from the north-east of a morning in January, and the "barber" is making the waters send up vapours like a cauldron? If a wind may be said to bite, how could it bite without teeth,—and if it has tongue and teeth, why not one of these too frequently touch the other,—and, as a consequence, why should not "rude Boreas" be a lisper as well as a "blustering railer?"—Yet a writer of mediocrity would be unaware of all this, and would tremble to use such an epithet as lisp'ing in connection with such a fine, powerful, but unsubstantial, agent as the Wind. The remainder of the lines under consideration is as good as the part just noticed. We are told that, neither lisp'ing winds, nor tempests when they blow, can stay the boat. The author is not bold enough to dare the tempests in all their moods, it is only, when they blow, that the boat defies them. Some might be puzzled to understand what a tempest could be when it did not blow,—but the poet's fine frenzy ascertains matters incomprehensible to common intellect.

Again, in the fourth line, your carefully correct, but creeping author, would decline sacrificing grammar to rhyme, and would write *laves*, instead of *lave*; and, moreover, would not see how the boat could be said to *wash* through the billows, and therefore would not use either the term, *lave* or *laves*. But the poet under consideration was not to be so shackled, and so he preserved his rhyme; and surely, if the boat herself did not wash, as she dashed along, many on board her did. By a well known figure of speech, one object may be expressed when another is understood; thus we say, John reads Milton, when a book written by Milton is meant,—and how much more poetic to speak of the boat, *washing*, although it really did not, than of Sambo the cook, or others who actually did perform ablutions as they moved along. We cannot, however, say so much for the fifth line, we fear it borders on profanity. To call man's power *supreme*, in contact with the elements, is rather an exaggeration. In the sixth also we are somewhat puzzled to account for the *vengeance* of the river. Pouring down from its mysterious founts, with all its auxiliary streams rejoicing to swell its volume, as it hastes to the ocean, what cares the Mississippi though man's steamer should crawl up its mighty highway? The poet, however, the man what really did steam in the Louisville, ought to know.

A poetic surprise occurs in their first line of the second stanza. The mighty stream, is told to flow and murmur like,—like what,—plain, prosaic reader,—guess,—like behemoth, like leviathan? Like fiddle-sticks; no such thing,—like, says the poet,—like "the evening bird." That is a rhetorical "ha ha" indeed, and the poor reader is so confounded by the fall, that he is doubtful whether he should laugh or cry,—whether he should applaud the ingenuity of the framer of the trap, or denounce him as an unnatural trickster. The Mississippi *murmuring* like, the evening bird, is nevertheless prime in its way; a poor plain matter of fact man, would no more compare the fresh water monster, 2000 miles long, to the nightingale or the whip-poor-will, than he would compare the "Great Western" to Dame Durdon's tea pot. Such flights only belong to the bold and brave in the realms of poesy. We have written too rapidly, however, in our admiration,—the bird could not have been either nightingale or whip-poor-will, for we are told that the feathered individual alluded to, *weeps* when dew drops are on the lilies,—and as neither of these birds do this, nor any other that we have ever heard of, we must wait some further revelation on the subject before the ornithological novelty can be named.

We must plead obtuseness, as to the compliment in the next line. What would Phil's think of Damon, if while she sang for his pleasure he were to say, "Tis music, because no other sound is heard, and darkness frowns upon thy heaving breast?" We

cannot fathom the excellencies of one another here, and must only be silent and satisfied in our limited comprehension.

How palpable, though, is the next figure. A great man is sometimes said to have come to this continent in three ships,—his importance being intimated by the impossible exaggeration of his transit. So the personification of Peace is said to repose on both shores of the Mississippi at the one time, *smiling* at the roar of its mighty neighbour. It cannot be that Peace was gigantic enough to reach across, making a footstool of one shore and a pillow of the other, for then the "Louisville's" way would have been barred by something worse than a sand-bank,—the figure must be, as we before intimated, one of exaggeration by impossible dilation.

In the next stanza we are told that no aged furrow can assuage, the river's strength. It is not very apparent how furrows could or should assuage vigour, neither how a furrow could be supposed aged when its very existence is described as impossible. Here also we must acknowledge our defective vision for such "imaginings."

Another surprise claims attention in the last line of this verse. The waters of the Mississippi have been described as grand, mighty, musical, unchanging, unfurrowed, sublime, and yet,—we are told that its wave "breaks in wild despair." Why? Despair at what, or for what? In vain we ask the question, we are baffled, and give it up *in despair* of a solution.

The majestic open of the last stanza is very striking. The tourist, on his route, orders or permits, the Mississippi, to "flow on" while he sleeps. How considerate!—what damage to commerce would result, had he told the mighty stream to, tarry still, while he lay down to slumber. The beneficence, however, like a great deal of the article, is tinged, we find, with some interested motives,—for the howling wind, and dashing spray, increased, or caused by the motion of the river, is said to act the part of a fond mother to the traveller. These two, by the bye, the wind and the spray, are treated as some advertisements offer to treat two apprentices,—as one of the family. Both only form one mother; and while lulled in this mother's arms, the gentle traveller becomes fairy-like, and then, very like a gull; which, very unlike gulls in general, *scorns* the wave that dashes by its side. The gull, by the way, must be very large, or the wave very small,—for though a common gull could dash or splash by the side of a wave, a common wave could not well be said to dash by the side of a gull. Parts of it might, but not the whole, for it could not be a wave at any part of the gull's side. Enough about gulls, however, lest the author might suspect that we wished, figuratively, to make a gull of him: we only add in conclusion, that when he writes again on the scenes which have been happy enough to come under his notice, may we be favoured with a glance at his poetry.

THE PEARL.

HALIFAX, FRIDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 22, 1839.

NEWS OF THE WEEK.—Latest arrivals from Europe bring London dates to the 20th Oct. It appears that a crisis of some consequence was expected in the money market, and trading departments. Some would make this news wear a very gloomy aspect, but when we recollect how prone people are to "make the most" of such things, particularly if fears or interest influence them,—and also the wealth and resources of England, and the many stormy seasons which her commercial institutions have gallantly weathered, we are inclined to trust that the foregoing shadows will be found more serious than the substance.

Nothing of consequence has come to hand respecting U. States affairs.

All seems quiet in Canada, and we trust that the approaching winter will not be marked by any such frontier atrocities as were exhibited in former periods. The possible alteration of the seat of Government from Quebec to Montreal, provided the Canadas are united,—the proposed union of the Provinces,—and the question of the dissolution of the U. Canada Assembly before its natural termination, occupied the pens of controversialists. On the latter it is thought that the prerogative will not be exercised. The union meets with many objections: it is said that it would not negative the French power in L. Canada, for that so large a number of the U. Canadians would support them in political measures, that a majority of the whole would be found to continue agitation. The U. Canadians, or many of them, desire the annexation of Montreal to that province, but not the proposed union.—Respecting the removal of the seat of Government, the comparatively exposed situation of Montreal is urged against such a step,—and as a matter of convenience to have the capital in a central position, it is argued, that in the union of Scotland or Ireland with England, the alteration of the seat of Government from London to a more central situation, was never thought of. Quebec, it is said, is the key of Canada, and should, as such, retain its present political importance.—Halifax may soon be said to be the Quebec of the Lower Provinces, and it will, we trust, increase rapidly in general prosperity. Within Nova Scotia everything continues its usual aspect