

LITERATURE, &c.

FROM THE BUFFALO LITERARY INQUIRER.

THE LAST INDIAN.

I saw the last of that numerous and powerful race, who once occupied and possessed this vast continent. Age and grief had blanched his thin and scattered locks; the heavy weight of years had bowed down his once stately and majestic form.—Time had marked his noble brow with its indelible impress. Though his keen black eye still retained its original fire, and told with unerring certainty that no persecution, no misfortune, no adversity could tame that proud, that manly spirit, which inhabited this frail tottering tenement. He was arrayed in the garb of an Indian chief, and adorned with a profusion of glittering decorations, which clearly indicated his superiority. A tomahawk hung on his belt, together with a scalping knife; but, however efficient they might once have been in the work of massacre, they were now useless appendages, serving only to revive the recollection of other and better times. A quiver of arrows was suspended from his shoulder, and in his hand he grasped a bow; but the debilitating effects of extreme longevity had unstrung his iron nerves, and a load of sorrow had disinclined him for the pleasures of the chase. There he stood, that lone one—the only survivor of millions of his race—the little remnant of unnumbered generations—the sole depository of the traditions of his fathers. His infancy had been cradled east of the 'big river'; but he had been driven by the continued and repeated encroachments of the white man more and more distant from the scenes of his boyhood and the grave of his ancestors; till at last the vast and trackless forests bordering upon the Pacific, waved their dense foliage between him and the nearest settlement.

He looked around him; but in vain. He saw no one whom he could call brother—no one with whom he could claim connection, save the faithful but superannuated dog that crouched beneath his feet. His parents lay entombed far, far away. He had buried his only child many leagues towards the rising of the sun. His associates in the council house were slumbering beneath the very mansions of the white man; his companions in the chase were no more; those who had been with him in the bloody scenes of battle were either whitening the plains of their enemies with their bones, or manuring them with their ashes. Vice, luxurious indulgences, and the uncongenial practices of civilization, had swept thousands upon thousands of his own race from the land of their former glory and dominion. The cup of intoxication and the sickly dainties of refinement had been presented to them, and they partook. A gradual degeneracy in their physical nature, as well as a distaste for their former habits, succeeded. Disease, moral degradation, and corporeal debility became the prominent traits in the character of the modern red man. The widow of the aged councillor disappeared; the agility of the youthful hunter forsook him; and the arm most terrible in the hour of strife had become nerveless. Thus for many years they had been fostering the cankerworm, which while it gave a thrill of pleasure in its operations, was voraciously preying upon their vitals. Little did they think, that they were swiftly treading the road to total annihilation, and that in the course of a few more revolving suns, there would not be a red man on this vast continent to relate the tradition of his father.

But he, whom Providence had reserved for a more protracted existence and a later death, beheld, with bitter sorrow, and all the anxiety that national pride would produce, the fatal excesses of his brethren, and the alacrity with which they were digging their own graves. As he saw them one by one withering under the blast of moral desolation, and sinking in rapid succession to an untimely tomb, a tear of regret stole down his manly cheek. He wept over the follies and miseries of his countrymen, contemplated with sensations of horror an approaching period, when he should be the only monument preserved from the general wreck, to remind the world that the red man *was*; and in view of so deplorable an event, he put forth his feeble arm to arrest the onward tide of ruin that overspread the aborigines. But it was of no avail. Destiny had sealed their doom; and the angel of destruction was abroad among them. But amid this scene of gloom and death, he had one consolation that sweetened the cup of his afflictions, and rendered the sorrows of his declining years somewhat tolerable. He was conscious that he had dashed untasted from his lips the proffered cup of liquid poison, which had beguiled many thousands of his unfortunate nation to premature death; and as he reflected upon the numerous temptations to participate, he had with noble firmness repelled, his trembling and bended form would almost resume its original erectness, strengthened by the inward force of virtuous pride.

As he stood upon a shelving rock projecting from the bank, with the broad expanse of the Pacific before him

and a boundless forest behind—lifting his whitened locks above the surrounding shrubbery—the noblest being in that silent solitary place, he lifts his feeble voice in solemn soliloquy.

'I am the last of my race. A hundred annual suns have rolled over my head. I have stood upon the summit of the Allegany mountains, and washed my feet in the blue waters of the Mississippi. I have pursued the panting deer in the wilds of Illinois, and chased the furious buffalo over the country of the Sacs. But my legs are weary, and my feet are not light. I have seen my brothers one by one fall down and die. And now I have no one to comfort me. I will go to the hunting ground of the Great Spirit, where my fathers and my children are.'

Having thus spoken, the old man proceeded to his little hut, and seizing a fire brand, applied it to the roof. A few moments and his only earthly habitation was wrapped in fire. He stripped himself of his ornaments, his bow and arrows, his tomahawk and scalping knife, and consigning them to the flames, slowly retraced his steps towards the rock. A moment elapsed. He buried his wrinkled face in his palsied hands. He looked up again. A sudden gleam of joy beamed from his countenance, he gave one whoop—the last that shall ever resound through the forests of America—and then plunged into the ocean beneath. One groan, a slight agitation of the hitherto serene surface, a ripple, and the returning waters had for ever closed over the LAST INDIAN.

FROM THE KNICKERBOCKER MAGAZINE FOR JUNE.

STANZAS.

Thou little star, that in yon purple cloud
Hang'st like a dew-drop in a violet's bed—
First gem of Evening, glittering 'mid the shroud,
'Neath whose dark folds the day lies cold and dead!
As though my tears my soul looks up at thee,
Loathing the clay chains that bind it here,
There comes a fearful thought, that misery
Perhaps is found, e'en in thy distant sphere.

Art thou a world of sorrow and of sin,
The heritage of death, disease, decay?
A wilderness, like that we wander in,
Where all things fairest, soonest pass away?
And are there graves in thee, thou radiant world,
O'er which Affection, weeping, bows her head?
Where Hope's bright wings in the dark dust are furl'd,
And living hearts lie buried with the dead?

Perchance they do not die, that dwell in thee,
Perchance theirs is a darker doom than ours:
Unmeasured toil, and endless misery,
And striving that hath neither days nor hours!
Horrible dream! Oh! dark and dismal path,
Where now I weeping walk, I will not leave thee.
Earth has one boon for all her children—death!
Open thine arms, Oh! mother! and receive me!
Take off the bitter burthen from the slave—
Give me my birth-right—give the grave—the grave!
F. A. Kemble.

THE BORDERER'S LEAP.

ESSELTON HEATH, on the northern side of the borders, is the entrance to one of those jumbles of rocks and mountains which seem to have been destined by nature for the haunt of such wild and desperate characters as he'd in these districts the reign of blood and terror, before the union of the two kingdoms and for some time after. It was there that the Raven of Hornecliff, as he was called, one of the last of the border thieves, terminated his career in a manner well worthy of his life. The crime which led to this catastrophe, although not unparalleled in the annals of the period in which we write, would seem, to the refinement of modern taste, too gross for historical detail,—it may suffice, therefore, to say, that at the marriage of one of his enemies, which was celebrated that morning, the Raven made his appearance—a guest as unlooked for as unwelcome—with a numerous train of followers, massacred a great part of the company, violated the bride before the bridegroom's eyes, and set fire to the house. Unexpected succours, however, arrived—although not before the work of revenge had been but too well accomplished: the assailants were assailed in their turn, when least prepared for defence—the bridegroom liberated, whom they had intended to carry off as a prisoner—and their chief obliged to betake himself to flight, alone and unarmed.

It was the afternoon when the outlaw arrived at the borders of the heath, and his breath became freer as he felt the cool air from his own mountains, and saw the declining sun, which hung over the cliffs to which his fugitive steps were directed, pointing as it were to the place of their mutual repose. He slackened his pace for an instant, to look around on the well-known scene; his heart dilated with a kind of pride as he felt his foot once more on his native heath, which it pressed with an elasticity hardly diminished by the weight of fifty years; and his eyes sparkled with a fierce joy as he saw the approaching termination of his flight. But he was alone and unarmed—for his sword had been broken off to the hilt; a host of enemies were behind, and his place of refuge yet distant. He looked back as he gained the summit of an eminence; and although, to a less experienced traveller, no sound would have been heard to break the stillness of the hour, and no living form ap-

peared to give animation to the desolate heath, save that of the wild bird now and then startled by his sudden step from its resting place; yet when he had bent for a moment his keen eye to the distance, and then turned his ear in the same direction, as if to catch some note of confirmation, the outlaw snuffed up the wind like a fox pursued to his covert, and, bending his body forward to the mountains, darted on with renewed velocity. He did not rest again until he had reached the base of the ridge of the mountains, which forms the termination of the heath; but his exertions during the latter part of the journey, although not less steady than before, were less violent. Perhaps his long and rapid flight—or, it may be, the pressure of approaching age—had contributed to stiffen his wearied limbs, and to depress his stout heart; or, perhaps, it was only some consideration that induced him to reserve his strength for the greater hazard and fatigue of ascending the rocks: but so it was, that towards the conclusion of the race, although the foremost of his enemies was distinctly in sight, the pace of the outlaw became gradually slower; and at length he threw himself down by a small stream of water that gushed through the cliff, and turned his eyes deliberately upon the heath.

As his pursuer approached nearer and nearer, it could be seen that he was a young man, of a strong athletic make: in his right hand was a sword covered with blood, which the mid-day sun had baked into a brown crust on the blade; and in his left he held a costly handkerchief, such as was at that time worn on holiday occasions by females of wealth and rank. He was dressed more like a chambering gallant than a rough warrior, who seeks the brown heath with the naked brand; but the disorder of his apparel, which was torn and daubed with the marks of mortal strife—his long hair, hanging in clotted heaps on his half-naked shoulders—and his wild and ghastly aspect, where fury, horror and despair were written in mingled characters—seemed yet fitter for the lonely heath than the festive hall. When he saw his enemy fall down by the side of the stream, a low but deep cry broke from his lips, resembling half the shout of the tired forester, when the stag who has held him to bay, sinks powerless at his feet, and half the greedy and savage howl of the wolf-dog over the quivering carcass of his quarry. The Raven of Hornecliff smiled scornfully as the sound broke on his ear through the distance; but when his pursuer came within a space when farther delay might have been dangerous, he plunged his head into the cool stream, tore open his dress and splashed the invigorating element over his bosom, then springing upon his feet, threw back his hair over his forehead, shook his limbs, and returning the premature cry of triumph by a shrill yell of defiance, began to ascend the sides of the mountain, and speedily disappeared among the rocks. The bridegroom, with his black lips and burning forehead rushed past the stream without even a look on its reviving waters.

Guided either by previous knowledge of the outlaw's haunts, or by an instinct similar to that which leads the bloodhound to his unseen prey, he threaded the maze of rocks with undeviating accuracy; till at length the sound of his enemy's feet—the crashing of the branches that were laid hold of to assist his ascent—and, finally, the rushing of stones and fragments of earth, dislodged by his feet, down the steep path, convinced him that he gained upon the object of his pursuit, and that a few more efforts of his strong and youthful limbs would place the fell destroyer before his eyes. In the meantime the outlaw, avoiding the steep breast of the mountain, turned short into a rocky pass which cuts through the ridge, and which, although dry at that time, in winter forms the bed of a torrent. In a few minutes more, he found himself within sight of a place, that, on former occasions of as great need, had stood him in lieu of friends and fortress; and with renewed energy he rushed down the steep declivity, which forms the east side of the mountain he ascended by the west, and leads directly to a singularly situated rock, even at that time known by the name of the Raven's Tower. On this side, the mountain sweeps down for more than half way to a tolerably smooth declivity—but then stops suddenly short, and with frightful abruptness descends, in an almost perpendicular manner, for the remaining space of nearly a hundred and fifty feet. Its rugged and projecting points overhung the turbulent river below in a manner which precludes the possibility of a man's descending alive; and although a fordable part of the stream lies immediately under, the traveller is thus obliged to make a circuit of some miles before reaching it. The rock we have mentioned, although seeming at a little distance to form a part of the steep—only projecting in a bolder manner than the rest, and surmounted by a capital resembling slightly the battlements of a fortress—yet, on nearer approach, is discovered to be, in reality, quite distinct and separate from the mass of the mountain. It raises its gigantic form from the bosom of the dark waters below at a distance of a good many feet from the main land; but, in the corresponding shape of its landward side, and the strata of its substance, a geologist might infer the traces of a more intimate connexion subsisting at some remote period, and look upon it as a further token of the great natural convulsion believed to have once visited the elements of our globe—

"For neither rain, nor hail, nor thunder
Could wholly do away, I ween,
The marks of that which once had been."

The outlaw whose flight we are relating had good title to bestow his name on the Raven's Tower; for he alone, even of all the desperate adventurers who infest that part of the country, had strength of limb, steadiness of brain, and boldness of heart to leap across the chasm which separates it from the mountain. This feat he had performed on several occasions of imminent danger, and always successfully; for, when once he had gained the rock, a natural path down the riverward side—although one filled with danger even to him, and only made available by the heath, brush-wood, and projecting stones, which af-