
THE PASSAGE
OF THE MOUNTAIN
OF SAINT GOTHARD.

—
TO MY CHILDREN.
—

YE plains, where three fold harvests press the ground,
Ye climes, where genial gales incessant swell,
Where art and nature shed profusely round
Their rival wonders—*Italy*, farewell.

3 THE PASSAGE OF S. GOTHARD.

Still may thy year in fullest splendor shine!

Its icy darts in vain may winter throw!

To thee, a parent, sister, I consign,

And wing'd with health, I woo thy gales to blow.

Yet, pleas'd, *Helvetia's* rugged brows I see,

And thro' their craggy steeps delighted roam;

Pleas'd with a people, honest, brave and free,

Whilst every step conducts me nearer home.

I wander where *Tesino* madly flows,

From cliff to cliff in foaming eddies tost;

On the rude mountain's barren breast he rose,

In *Po's* broad wave now hurries to be lost.

5 THE PASSAGE OF S. GOTHARD.

His shores, neat huts and verdant pastures fill,
And hills where woods of pine the storm defy;
While, scorning vegetation, higher still,
Rise the bare rocks coeval with the sky.

Upon his banks a favor'd spot I found,
Where shade and beauty tempted to repose;
Within a grove, by mountains circled round,
By rocks o'erhung, my rustic seat I chose.

Advancing thence, by gentle pace and slow,
Unconscious of the way my footsteps prest,
Sudden, supported by the hills below,
ST. GOTHARD'S summits rose above the rest.

'Midst tow'ring cliffs and tracts of endless cold .

Th' industrious path pervades the rugged stone,

And seems—*Helvetia* let thy toils be told—

A granite girdle o'er the mountain thrown.

No haunt of man the weary traveller greets,

No vegetation smiles upon the moor,

Save where the flow'ret breathes uncultur'd sweets,

Save where the patient monk receives the poor.

Yet let not these rude paths be coldly trac'd,

Let not these wilds with listless steps be trod,

Here fragrance scorns not to perfume the waste,

Here charity uplifts the mind to God.

9 THE PASSAGE OF S. GOTHARD.

His humble board the holy man prepares,
 And simple food, and wholesome lore bestows,
Extols the treasures that his mountain bears,
 And paints the perils of impending snows.

For whilst bleak Winter numbs with chilling hand—
 Where frequent crosses mark the traveller's fate—
In slow procession moves the merchant band,
 And silent bends, where tottering ruins wait.

Yet 'midst those ridges, 'midst that drifted snow,
 Can nature deign her wonders to display;
Here Adularia shines with vivid glow,
 And gems of crystal sparkle to the day.

11 THE PASSAGE OF S. GOTHARD.

Here too, the hoary mountain's brow to grace,

Five silver lakes, in tranquil state are seen;

While from their waters, many a stream we trace,

That, scap'd from bondage, rolls the rocks between.

Hence flows the *Reuss* to seek her wedded love,

And, with the *Rhine*, *Germanic* climes explore;

Her stream I mark'd, and saw her wildly move

Down the bleak mountain, thro' her craggy shore.

My weary footsteps hop'd for rest in vain,

For steep on steep, in rude confusion rose;

At length I paus'd above a fertile plain

That promis'd shelter and foretold repose.

13 THE PASSAGE OF S. GOTHARD.

Fair runs the streamlet o'er the pasture green,
 Its margin gay, with flocks and cattle spread;
Embowering trees the peaceful village screen,
 And guard from snow each dwelling's jutting shed.

Sweet vale! whose bosom wastes and cliffs surround,
 Let me awhile thy friendly shelter share!
Emblem of life! where some bright hours are found
 Amidst the darkest, dreariest years of care.

Delv'd thro' the rock, the secret passage bends;
 And beauteous horror strikes the dazzled sight;
Beneath the pendent bridge the stream descends
 Calm—till it tumbles o'er the frowning height.

We view the fearful pass—we wind along
The path that marks the terrors of our way—
'Midst beetling rocks, and hanging woods among,
The torrent pours, and breathes its glitt'ring spray.

Weary at length, serener scenes we hail—
More cultur'd groves o'ershade the grassy meads,
The neat, tho' wooden hamlets, deck the vale,
And *Altorf's* spires recall heroic deeds.

But tho' no more amidst those scenes I roam,
My fancy long each image shall retain—
The flock returning to its welcome home—
And the wild carrol of the cowherd's strain.

17 THE PASSAGE OF S. GOTHARD.

Lucernia's lake its glassy surface shews,

 Whilst nature's varied beauties deck its side;
Here, rocks and woods its narrow waves inclose,
 And there, its spreading bosom opens wide.

And hail the chapel! hail the platform wild!

 Where *Tell* directed the avenging dart,
With well strung arm, that first preserv'd his child,
 Then wing'd the arrow to the tyrant's heart.

Across the lake, and deep embower'd in wood,

 Behold another hallow'd chapel stand,
Where three Swiss heroes, lawless force withstood,
 And stamp'd the freedom of their native land.

Their liberty requir'd no rites uncouth,

No blood demanded, and no slaves enchain'd;

Her rule was gentle and her voice was truth,

By social order form'd, by laws restrain'd.

We quit the lake—and cultivation's toil,

With nature's charms combin'd, adorns the way,

And well earn'd wealth improves the ready soil,

And simple manners still maintain their sway.

Farewell *Helvetia!* from whose lofty breast,

Proud *Alps* arise, and copious rivers flow;

Where, source of streams, eternal glaciers rest,

And peaceful science gilds the plains below.

Oft on thy rocks the wondering eye shall gaze,

Thy vallies oft the raptur'd bosom seek—

There, nature's hand her boldest work displays,

Here, bliss domestic beams on every cheek.

Hope of my life! dear CHILDREN of my heart!

That anxious heart, to each fond feeling true,

To You still pants each pleasure to impart,

And more—oh transport—reach its HOME and You.