

The Vulture of the Alps.

I've been among the mighty Alps, and wandered through their vale,
And heard the honest mountaineers relate their dismal tales,
At round the cottage blazing hearth, when their daily work was o'er,
They spoke of those who disappeared, and ne'er were heard of more.

And there I from a shepherd heard a narrative of fear,
A tale to send a mortal heart, which mothers might not hear;
The tears were standing in his eyes, his voice was tremulous;
But, wiping all those tears away, he told his story thus:-

"It is among these barren cliffs the ravenous vulture dwells,
Who never fattens on the prey which from afar he smells;
But, patient, watching hour on hour upon a lofty rock,
He singles out some treant lamb, a victim from the flock.

"One cloudless Sabbath summer morn, the sun was rising high,
When, from my children on the green, I heard a fearful cry,
As if some awful deed were done, a shriek of grief and pain,
A cry, I humbly trust in God, I ne'er may hear again.

"I hurried out to learn the cause; but overwhelmed with fright,
The children never ceased to shriek, and from my frenzied sight
I missed the youngest of my babes, the darling of my care;
But something caught my searching eyes, slow sailing through the air.

"Oh! what an awful spectacle to meet a father's eye,-
His infant made a vulture's prey, with terror to descry;
And know, with agonising breast and with a maniac rave,
That earthly power could avail, that innocent to save.

"My infant stretched his little hands imploringly to me,
And struggled with the ravenous bird, all vainly, to get free;

At intervals, I heard his cries, as loud he shrieked and screamed!
Until, upon the azure sky, a lessening spot he seemed.

"The vulture flapped his sail-like wings, though heavily he flew;
A mote upon the sun's broad face he seemed into my view;
But once I thought I saw him stoop, as if he would alight,—
'Twas only a delusive thought, for all had vanished quite.

"All search was vain, and years had passed; that child was never found;
When once a daring hunter climbed unto a lofty spot,
From whence, upon a rugged crag the chamois never reached,
He saw an infant's fleshless bones the elements had bleached!

"I clambered up that rugged cliff,—I could not stay away,—
I knew they were my infant's bones thus hasting to decay;
A tattered garment yet remained, though torn to many a shred;
The crimson cap he wore that morn was still upon the head.

"That dreary spot is pointed out to travellers passing by,
Who often stand, and, musing, gaze, nor go without a sigh."
And as I journeyed, the next morn, along my sunny way,
The precipice was shown to me, whereon the infant lay.