

1888

An Idyl of Bar Harbor

Frederick W. Pearson

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AN IDYL OF
BAR HARBOR
BY

FREDERICK W. PEARSON.



NEW YORK:

THE WELLES PUBLISHING CO

695 BROADWAY.

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THIRD VOLUME

AN IDYL OF BAR HARBOR. A POEM

By Frederick W. Pearson

AN IDYL

OF

BAR HARBOR

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FREDERICK W. PEARSON

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THIS POEM
IS INSCRIBED TO
MISS NANNIE GARNETT EMORY
AS A MEMENTO OF
THE AUTHOR'S GREAT REGARD
AND HIGH ESTEEM

An Idyl of Bar Harbor.

A ROMANTIC POEM

Canto. First.

EVENING.

Evening.

I.

AFLOAT upon a sea of liquid gold,
'Mid isles of puffy clouds whose snowy white
Is blended with the splendor round about,
The stately sun at eve sails Westward ho!
The mountain peaks grow rosy red anon.
The waters in the bay like glass are smooth,
And seem a duplicate of that bright sea
From which they borrow every subtle charm.
The billows, rolling restlessly beyond,
Display a myriad hosts of diamonds;
And every drop of spray converted is
Into a jewel rare of brilliant hue,
Contrasting with the oceanic blue.

II.

All still and quiet seems God's pleasant earth,
And never hath it been more beautiful;
But yet all signs of life are not extinct,
For yonder sails upon its broad-spread wings,
With graceful sweep and perfect poise, a hawk;

While here a snow-white gull flies rapidly;
 And from yon rock a score of petrels rise.
 But more in numbers and in size more huge,
 And most uncertain in their movements, are
 The boats, canoes, the yachts and ships afloat
 Upon the bosom of the slumb'ring bay;
 For every able-bodied guest, methinks,
 From all Bar Harbor's well-stocked summer
 homes,
 Is out to revel in the splendor bright,
 As dying day gives birth to infant night.

III.

And many barks are ladened happily
 With merry parties, adding cheer and life
 To this most gorgeous scene of splendid calm.
 Anon a rippling stream of laughter comes,
 Soft floating on the balmy breath of heaven;
 And then, perchance, a pleasing strain of song;
 While frequently is heard a steamer's whur.
 But these stray sounds break not the magic
 spell
 Of mystic charm far more than words can tell.

IV.

But let us pass these partisans of mirth;
 For, though it please us oft to note the warmth

Of youth's light-heartedness and manhood's
 wit,
 There is a time when quiet thoughtfulness
 Befits more happily the passing hour;
 And such an hour, methinks, is eventide.
 Then let us note yon solitary man
 Within his light canoe, which easy strokes
 Propel with gentle speed and noiselessly.
 He lingers not amidst the restless fleet,
 But paddles far where billows roll and swell;
 Where solitude invites the weary mind,
 And lonely hearts a painful pleasure find.

V.

When lo! a soft sweet strain of melody
 Comes faintly, like a stray and wand'ring song
 An angel might have breathed while passing
 by.
 It ceases; then he paddles on once more,
 Until, abreast a jutting point of land,
 He sees a dainty maiden sitting lone.
 Her fingers lightly draw from singing strings
 Delicious harmonies and melodies;
 And as he pauses, half unconsciously,
 To feast his hungry soul with these soft sounds,
 She looks on him and smiling sweetly, says:—
 "O lonely mortal, whither goest thou?"

Thy boat is small; the ocean's waves run
high,
And darkness soon on half the earth will lie."

VI.

Before Lenado—for his name is such—
Can frame reply, the maiden's voice he hears
As she breathes forth in soothing strains this
song:

1.

Ah, stay with me,
I love but thee;
I long to rest upon thy breast;
And I can tell
Where pleasures dwell,
Beyond the reach of mortal quest.

2.

So close thine eyes
And Paradise
Will greet thy sight before the night
Shall pass away,
And dawning day
Reveals to man its pleasing light.

3.

For I'm a maid
Of whom 'tis said,
Her subtle charm doth bring no harm.
So billows swell;
And sleep thou well,
For I give thee my soothing balm.

VII.

And as she pauses, lo! he sweetly sleeps,
The rolling billows rocking quietly
His frail canoe, while golden streams of light
Transform him, seemingly, into a god.
And as he sleeps he fondly dreams of love,
And sees before him radiant maiden forms—
Clad only in the mermaid's clinging robes
Of sea-weed,—dancing, rollicking at will
Upon the rolling surface of the sea.
And all are wondrous fair to look upon;
And all are young; and all unconscious seem
That mortal man intrudes within their sphere.
But when, anon, the sun sinks in the West,
And they more brightly beam as it departs,
They gather 'round the drifting, lost canoe
And seem enraptured with the sleeping man,
They lightly rest upon the dainty bark,
And though a score or more in numbers, still

Their weight is nothing and the boat drifts on
 Unchecked, obedient only to the tide.
 Some gather 'round his locks of raven black,
 Contrasting them with their own tresses
 blonde;
 Some drink sweet nectar from his healthful
 lips,
 Or vainly try to ope his closèd eyes;
 Some fain to slumber on his heaving breast,
 And listen wond'ringly to each heart-beat.
 But others seem content to feast their eyes,
 And stand upon the nearest billow's top,
 And blend their voices in sweet harmony.
 Lenado seems to see and seems to feel
 Each pretty form, each gentle touch, and
 through
 His heart sensations pleasing thrill and bound—
 But still he slumbers quietly and sound.

VIII.

When lo! there is a far and distant blast,
 As though some god breathed forth a trumpet
 call;
 And every maiden instantly responds
 With loud and welcome songs of jubilee.
 They leave Lenado and his frail canoe,
 And speed across the waters, till there is

A line of brightness reaching e'en the spot
 Where sea and sky are blended. Then there
 comes,
 Upon the breath of infant night, this song:—

I.

We give thee welcome, Queen of Night;
 We love thy pure and silv'ry light;
 We bow in humbleness of mien
 To our beloved and gentle Queen.

2.

It is our custom, thou dost know,
 Upon thy coming to bestow
 Whatever we have chanced to see,
 Which will of value be to thee.

3.

And while this eve we danced and sung,
 And from the golden sunbeams hung,
 We saw this mortal, fearlessly
 Asleep upon the rolling sea.

4.

And now we offer him, O Queen—
 A gift more rare has never been—
 To please thy fancy; give delight
 To thee throughout this peaceful night.

IX.

And as they cease, the queen's sweet smiling
face

Arises 'bove the waters in that spot
To which the line of mermaids seems to reach.
Her silv'ry lustre bathes the peaceful sea;
Adorns each wave with myriad diamonds;
Fills all the air with mystic, magic charm,
Transforming prosy earth into a world
Of rare poetic beauty, love and peace.
She gazes on the sleeping mortal's face;
Observes its lines of nobleness and woe,
And feels compassion, as she reads his past.
"Wake not this dreamer," she begins, "for he
Has walked a rough and stony path in life.
He loves, O Mermaids, one of many charms,
Whose heart is cold to all his pleading words.
She revels thoughtlessly in dance and play
Within the social halls of yonder town,
While he, with breaking heart, has sought to
dull

The pangs of unrequited love in this
Far distant spot of quiet loneliness.
And here my handmaid, Sleep, hath given him
Her soothing balm to rest his troubled mind.
Then wake him not; but gather 'round me
here,

And list, for I've a plan for sport to-night.
Lenado, as he sleeps, looks not unlike
A god, his face so wondrous handsome is;
And we'll make use of his unhappy love
To give us sport, and will repay it well
By making all things right at early dawn."
Now she dispatches her most trusty page,
Well weighted with her duties to perform—
Lenado resting still in perfect calm.

Canto Second.

MIDNIGHT.

Midnight.

I.

THE waltz is over. Edith stands alone,
And gazes wistfully into the night.
Her cheeks are flushed from dancing, and her
heart

Is longing for a face she may not see
Among the merry men at Rodick's Ball—
A face more handsome far than any here.
In fancy now she sees the pleading look
Which filled his eyes, and hears his trembling
voice

As he besought her, oh, so tenderly!
To be his bride and fill his life with joy.
And she refused him coldly, heartlessly.
But yet she loves him; yea, she even now
Is wond'ring where her lover may have gone,
For surely she had seen him all alone
Within his frail canoe at sunset time;
But now 'tis close to midnight, yet he stays
She knows not where and fears some accident.

She sees the moon's pale, placid face, and
thinks:—

“O thou, the lover's friend time out of mind,
Seek out Lenado, wheresoe'er he be,
And tell him that my sorrow knows no bounds,
Remembering my cruel heartlessness.
Tell him, O Queen, I love him; love him more
Than ever maiden loved. And, O pale moon,
If he is safe and still has love for me,
Pray show a sign that I may feel less pain;
That I may hope he'll come to me again.”

II.

Now long and dreamily she lets her eyes
Roam restlessly among the heavenly orbs,
While ever tender thoughts pass through her
mind
And stir her heart with pangs of self-reproach.
When lo! a falling star attracts her gaze,
And she exclaims—“He thinks, he thinks of
me!
Oh, would I were a spirit of the night,
On noiseless wings to take my rapid flight,
That I might join him, wheresoe'er he be,
On land, on bay or on the rolling sea.
For I to him my love would fain impart,
And lay before his feet my broken heart.”

III.

As thus she speaks, as though a captive held
In some strange trance, unheedful where she
steps,
She seeks the rocky shore, where boist'rous
waves
Leap joyfully and seem to welcome her.
Unconscious how she came, yet full aware
Of where she is, she pushes swiftly on
Along the stony beach, 'round jutting points,
Until she sits exhausted on a rock,
Which guards the entrance to a gloomy cave.
The ocean waves, all sparkling with the rays
Of that fair queen who rules and sways its tides,
Break savagely upon the rugged cliffs,
And fling vast clouds of spray into the air;
While some, more mighty, roll resistlessly
Into the yawning cavern dark and deep,
And shake its huge foundations; wake its store
Of deep-mouthed echoes by their thunder roar.

IV.

The pale moon smiles as she beholds the maid,
Whose heart she has thus passionately brought
To feel the pangs of keen and deep remorse;
And seemeth pleased, for all doth promise well.
But Edith notes the constant rolling sea,

And feels her love more tender, evermore
 She sighs and prays, then prays and sighs again.
 At length, half dreamily, she lifts her voice
 In invocation to the spirits blest,
 Which lie within the bosom of the sea.

“Roll, roll, roll,
 Ye waves of mighty ocean;
 Roll, roll, roll,
 Proclaiming my devotion;
 For as ye roll eternally,
 Ye monster spirits of the sea,
 E'en so my heart beats fervently
 For one I fear is lost to me.”

Then drops her head upon her heaving breast,
 And she remains in silent, peaceful rest.

V.

A gentle breeze with dainty touch doth kiss
 The sleeping lips which breathed those words
 of love;
 And flying swiftly o'er the billowy waves,
 It lightly plays about Lenado's lips,
 Transmitting all the sweetness of those words
 Into his slumbering mind; whereat he says,
 As one doth often speak while slumbering:—

“Blow, blow, blow,
 Ye winds with sweetness laden;
 Blow, blow, blow,
 To her, my lovely maiden;
 And tell her truly, gentle wind,
 That peace at length doth fill my mind,
 For, though on earth she is unkind,
 In Heaven her pleasure I will find.”

VI.

Now soundly, yea more soundly still he sleeps,
 And she upon the rocky shore likewise;
 While from her throne the queen looks down
 and smiles
 Alike on each heart-broken suppliant.
 When both, as by one impulse stirred, breathe
 forth,
 Unknown to one another, these fond words:—

“Love, love, love,
 Rule thou my life forever;
 Love, love, love,
 Ah leave, ah leave me never;
 For all dark clouds which bring me woe,
 By thy warm light are made to glow
 With heavenly lustre, none may know
 Without thine aid in earth below.”

VII.

And now in sweet oblivion each is lost;
 While stronger blows the chilly midnight wind
 To waft Lenado's craft toward the beach.
 And higher rises now the ocean's tide
 About the rock whereon the maiden sleeps.
 It penetrates into the dark'ning cave,
 And ever louder roars more threat'ningly.
 Its foamy crests now break about her feet,
 As she, unconscious, rests in peacefulness;
 Sometimes the whitened spray doth wet her
 dress,
 And often show'rs her hand, so soft and white.
 At length there comes a billow monstrous high,
 With rumbling roar and seething, foaming
 flood.
 It sparkles in the silv'ry light as though
 It were a king of billows, crowned with gems,
 And girt on every side by countless hordes—
 A mighty army—come to storm the land,
 And break the power of rock and stony beach
 Upon the shallows, lo! with victory,
 It strikes; then leaps with speed unchecked
 Toward the rock which guards the cavern's
 mouth.
 Unable now to move this sentinel,
 Much angered, yet unbroken, on it rides—

With Edith taken captive—to the cave,
 Where all its fearful magnitude of power
 Is centred in one final effort bold.
 On, on, it goes with speed as great as though
 A half the unbound ocean lay before.
 Its husky voice each moment louder grows;
 Its seething flood fills all the air with spray;
 When lo! with awful shock it strikes the rocks.
 The earth now trembles; e'en the cavern's sides
 Do seem to sway; while on the midnight air
 The voice of thunder penetrates as far
 As to the limits of eternity.
 But not a rock doth fall, and with that roar
 The monster billow's power is spent and gone.
 Shame-faced it cowers back into the sea,
 And hides its head beneath the coming crests
 Of other billows doomed to like defeat.
 And as the cave the victory hath won,
 It claims all spoils with which the billow came,
 And consequently holds the trembling form
 Of Edith, frightened much, but free from harm.

VIII.

For many moments she unconscious lies,
 Still wrapt in that oblivion known as sleep.
 The waves about her roar and toss their spray
 Upon her placid face, yet wakes she not.

The deep-mouthed echoes of the cave are
 stirred
 And often shake the very rocks, so great
 Their power is; but still she slumbers sweet.
 A darkness, black as unlit midnight, reigns
 Within this foul, unholy resting-place;
 But lo! about the maiden as she sleeps
 A strange, unearthly glow may now be seen.
 Her face with untold beauty it illumes;
 It magnifies her stature many folds;
 And gathers 'bout her head, as though a
 cloud
 Of golden splendor crowned her loveliness.
 These transformations wake her not; but she
 Arises, standing like a stately queen,
 And, though still sleeping, mistress of the
 scene.

IX.

When lo! a frail canoe, all made of gold
 Apparently, rides in upon the crests
 Of billowy waves, all white with boiling foam.
 It passes swiftly by the standing form
 Of sleeping Edith unobserved, and strikes
 With gentle force the farthest distant point
 Within the blackness of this gloomy cave.
 It quickly overturns, depositing

Its royal cargo on the dripping rocks;
 And then as swiftly makes a sure retreat
 Upon the billows suffering defeat.

X.

Lenado, thus bereft of his canoe
 And waking suddenly, doth find himself
 Apparently alone within the cave.
 He, too, is crowned with clouds of brilliancy,
 Which, also, change his physiognomy,
 Transforming him into a mighty god
 Of vast proportions, grand and beautiful.
 He is awake, but knoweth not that he
 Is aught but poor Lenado, sad of heart;
 And, leaning 'gainst the dripping rocks, he
 sighs,
 And wonders how he came into the cave;
 Bemoans the loss of his unfriendly boat;
 Recalls his dreams of mermaids, fair and
 kind,
 And, longing eagerly to dream again,
 He drops his head upon his rocky bed.
 By some strange chance his eyes fell not
 upon
 The other inmate of this weird abode;
 And so he sleeps again, not twenty feet
 From her, whose love he did so oft entreat.

XI.

And now the water rises higher still,
And gurgles 'bout the feet of Edith, as
Most statue-like she stands unconsciously.
As one will often walk in sleep and shun
Some danger threat'ning, so she onward steps
Before the ever-rising salty tide.
At length she reaches where Lenado sleeps,
And, noting not his presence, doth recline
Upon the self-same rock whereon he lies,
Removed from him by not the breadth of one
Of her most white and dainty little hands.
Thus side by side they rest, while wave on wave
Comes thund'ring in this most romantic cave.

Canto Third.

MORNING.

Morning.

I.

AND now it chanced an old and snowy owl—
Who had for countless years inhabited
This cavern wild, and who this night had been
Abroad for food and bold, adventurous sport—
Returning, saw the fair intruders, bathed
In light so strong it pained his gloomy eyes.
“In sooth,” quoth he, “a most unhallowed spot
For maid so fair and man so brave to rest.
Unhappy fates indeed must persecute
The human heart, if lovers needs must seek
Such unpropitious rendezvous as this.
And rightly think they none may here intrude
To break the magic spell of mutual love.
But I will seat me here upon this ledge
And thus gain knowledge in the mystic lore.”
And so he silently doth watch and wait;
But soon impatient grows as neither moves.
“Alas,” quoth he, “they are exhausted both,
And sleep oblivious holds perfect sway;
Or else some stupefying spell deprives

Their guilty minds of power to know their joy.
 But I will wake them, if, perchance, I may."
 And suiting now the action to the thought,
 He screeches wildly, stirring echoes which
 E'en thund'ring waves unable were to rouse.
 Much like the cry a spirit damned might breathe
 When doing penance for a sin-cursed life,
 Did sound the awful screech of this foul bird.
 And lo! the lovers wake with frightful shock,
 And, trembling, stand upright upon their bed
 Of jagged rock; and staring wond'ringly
 Each in the other's face, yet knowing not
 On whom they gaze, for still the magic spell
 Doth mask their features, all, alas, too well.

II.

She looks on him and sees a splendid god,
 More fair than ever maiden's eyes beheld;
 And he beholds in her a vision rare
 Of queenly beauty never known before
 All speechless, breathless, wondering they
 stand,
 Forgetful wholly of their former loves;
 Forgetting everything except the wild,
 Ungoverned passion in their hearts,
 And are about to seek a warm embrace,
 When lo! the owl, unable to restrain

His feelings, cries aloud:—"For shame! for
 shame!"

Whereat they pause and each remembers then
 That other heart for which each heart doth
 ache.

The rock whereon they stand no larger is
 Than well to hold two human forms, and 'round
 Its base the angry waves both boil and foam;
 So they must needs in close proximity
 Await the end of this fatality.

III.

And so the night wears on, each watching each,
 And ever stronger grows this new-born love;
 While yet the voice of duty doth forbid.
 "O kindly Fates," at length the maiden cries,
 "Take from mine eyes this vision tempting me.
 O take me far from this unholy spot;
 Unchain my heart from these new bonds of love;
 Befriend thy child, O Fate, for yonder god
 Doth chain my every thought, my very soul."
 Like music sounds her voice upon his ear,
 And charms him, till he doth forget again
 His fair fond Edith whom he did adore.
 And burning with a love ungovernable,
 He flings himself before her feet and cries:—
 "O queenly vision, pure and beautiful!

O radiant maiden tord to please a god!
 O angel from a better world than this!
 Confide to me thy tender, loving heart,
 And let us drink this cup our lips do touch."
 "Nay, nay!" cries she. "Begone and tempt
 me not.

I am not free, my heart I may not give.
 Ah! pray begone; take thou thine eyes from
 me."

But he more ardent grows at this repulse,
 And breathes a sigh of pain, so real and deep,
 That she is moved and feels so drawn to him
 That she unconsciously doth nearer step.
 Quite mad with passion, now, he gains his feet,
 And whispers gently in her eager ear:—
 "Thou can'st not longer bid me pause, O come!
 One more repulse would drive me mad indeed."
 And she, as wildly passionate as he,
 Resisting not, forgetting thus again
 Her duty stern, doth smile a sweet consent.
 And he, as quick as thought, doth stretch his
 arms

To there enfold her, when the owl once more
 Breathes forth his warning. "Shame! for
 shame!" says he,
 When lo! they separate immediately.

IV.

Exhausted now they sink upon the rocks,
 Their hearts by wild, conflicting passions
 stirred;
 Their minds at work to reason with their
 hearts.

And furtively their eyes are wandering
 About the gloomy and malarious cave.
 From every jagged point the water drops,
 And all the hollows of the rocks are filled
 With water, while the waves still roar and leap,
 Although not now as fiercely as before,
 Because the tide has turned and slowly ebbs.
 The captive lovers note this change of tide,
 And also mark a line of rosy red
 Upon the distant horizon, as seen
 From through the cavern's amply yawning
 mouth.

And though they feel relieved to think escape
 Will soon be possible, still loath are they
 To put aside this new-born ardent love.
 They see each other not, nor speak a word,
 And yet their sympathy of feeling seems
 Uniting them as though their hearts were one.
 And thus the morning slowly dawns, while
 they
 All silently both watch and wait, and pray.

V.

And now the sun arises from the sea,
 A flaming ball of deepest crimson, girt
 By brilliant clouds in odd, fantastic shapes.
 The placid moon has now no mystic spell,
 And night's enchantment flies as day appears.
 Where dreamy shadows clothed romantic spots,
 All now stands out in naked bold relief.
 And, likewise, as the day draws nigh, the charm,
 Which so bewitched the lovers, doth depart
 And leaves them able now to see aright.
 And yet the memory of bitter-sweet,
 Of painful joy, which filled their hearts with
 woe,
 Remains to haunt them as an evil dream.
 Although the waters have departed now,
 And left the pathway clear toward the beach,
 Still move they not, for each doth fear to gaze
 Upon the other's face, lest once again
 They should be tempted by the power of love.
 And yet their hearts are warmed by longings
 deep,
 As silently they watch and wait and weep.

VI.

Ere long, as by one impulse stirred, they rise,
 And boldly gaze each on the other's face.

The charm has fled, and Edith now beholds
 Lenado's wan and troubled countenance;
 As he in turn doth see his fair, fond love,
 With trembling form and pale as pallid death.
 The smallest part of half a second they,
 In ecstasy resembling heavenly bliss,
 In wonder look each in the other's eyes.
 And now, restraint all gone and fear all fled,
 Their duty and their passion seeming blent,
 The owl unfit to see in broad daylight,
 They fall into each other's arms and weep
 A world of pent-up feelings, tenderly
 And thankfully repeating words of love.
 Oblivious, now, they rest in perfect peace,
 All sorrow gone, all joys to but increase.

VII.

How many hours thus flew away, who knows?
 Suffice it then to say, that ere the tide
 Again rose high, before the sun had reached
 Its zenith, they, with tardy, faltering steps,
 She resting heavily upon his arm,
 He walking proudly, beaming with delight,
 In safety reached the stony beach; where lo!
 A mass of frightened people met their gaze.
 For truth to tell the news was widely spread
 That Edith and Lenado both were lost.

And when, thus arm in arm, they do approach,
 Their garments soaked with salty brine, and
 yet

Unharm'd and flushed with happiness, the joy
 Of these enraptured guests doth know no
 bounds.

Some shout and cheer; some weep in unre-
 straint;

Some fling their caps into the air and scream;
 Some stand in utter, blank amazement, and
 With difficulty realize the truth.

And when the first astonishment has fled,
 They gather 'round this most romantic pair,
 And eagerly demand a full account
 Of how and where they spent the night. But
 not

A word escapes their lips, as slowly they
 Press through the curious and baffled throng.
 And murmurs of distrust and scorn are heard,
 As these old gossips find themselves outdone;
 While many surmise this; imagine that;
 And pass opinion on these reckonings
 Before they know if right or wrong they judge.
 But when a wedding is announced, ere long,
 And all the tale is known to old and young,
 There's not a man or woman, boy or maid,
 So wanting sentiment as to complain.

And ne'er before did bride receive such gifts
 Of costly rare magnificence and worth;
 No wedding ever yet attended was
 By such a numerous and kindly host;
 And seldom has there been a happier pair
 Launched forth into the very life of lives—
 He best of men, and she the best of wives.

FINIS.