

her departed greatness fill the mind with awe; and we behold them with silent wonder. Reason and Revelation have taught us that God is a spirit, and as such must be worshipped in spirit and in truth; that the contrite heart is his proper temple. But to whom can man dedicate his labors, and the ingenuity of his inventions, with greater propriety than to the munificent Being from whom he received his knowledge? Our ancestors devoted a great portion of their wealth in erecting abbeys and churches—in founding hospitals for the sick, and asylums for the poor,—through a superstitious belief that these good works would absolve them from sin, and win them an entrance into glory. We, who live in a more enlightened age, are apt to sneer at the gross credulity which could imagine that salvation was to be purchased by acts like these. But, before we condemn them, we ought to remember that the knowledge of the Scriptures was confined to the priests, who imposed upon the ignorance of the people, to increase their own power. They taught the wealthy that such endowments were the surest means to obtain the forgiveness of their sins; and the guilty, tyrannical noble, trembling beneath the apprehensions of future punishment, eagerly embraced the offered means of obtaining grace and pardon. Society felt the benefit arising from their mistaken zeal; and it would be uncharitable in us, who enjoy the full flood of gospel light, whilst standing among the ruins of a darker age, to condemn the motives which influenced their actions. The work of their hands is crumbling to dust around us—their bones are beneath our feet,—and their sole memorial is with God.

So thought Arthur Fleming, as his eye slowly measured these stupendous relics of departed grandeur. In the ivy covered niches, once occupied by the carved images of saints and martyrs, the owl built her nest in security, and the sparrow and swallow unmolested hatched their young, verifying the words of the sweet Psalmist of Israel: 'Yea, the sparrow had found her an house, and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young; even thy altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King and my God.' He looked from the moss covered pile up to the glowing heavens. Untouched by time, the glorious luminary, whose parting beams shone upon prostrate towers and crumbling arches, that gilded the dark rich leaves of the ivy, and encircled the hills and woods with a diadem of ruddy light, had seen the foundation stone laid of that haughty pile, and watched its gradual progress towards perfection. The same flood of brilliant light had rested, from age to age, upon the Abbey's massy walls, and had seen it slowly sinking beneath the waves of time, until its shattered frame and broken buttresses alone remained of all its ancient pomp and grandeur,

'Like a flag, floating when the bark's engulf'd.'

"Oh, vain and foolish ambition," said Fleming, "which induces man to place all his hopes on objects as perishable as himself, and exchange the promised blessings of eternity for a few brief years of anxiety and pain. Here, the pleasures we anticipate with such eagerness fade in the enjoyment, and leave behind them the heart-withering conviction of blighted hopes and time wasted in vain. In a few years our names are as much forgotten as if we had never been. The relatives who moistened our ashes with their tears, form new ties; and long ere the changeful climate wears the marble that covers our cold remains, another generation supplies our place. The trees we planted flourish, and the children of a distant age gambol beneath their shade. Our descendants gather the flowers that spring upon our graves, unconscious that kindred dust sleeps below; or that their own being is in any way connected with the ground they tread upon. Well has the poet said,

'O'er them, and o'er their names the billows' close.
Tomorrow knows not they were ever born.'

Fleming was roused from his reverie by Sophia, —who had been selecting a beautiful bunch of wild briar roses for her pencil—taking a seat beside him.

"Tell me, Mr. Fleming," she said, "why ruins create in the mind such a deep interest? Is it solely produced by the ideas we connect with them—the spirit of past ages, which appears to hover round and hallow them; or the picturesque forms, which masses of broken columns, overgrown with ivy, generally assume?"

"I have often asked myself the same question," said Arthur, "when sailing down the Rhine, and our vessel has cast anchor beneath some ancient castle, now a vast mass of crumbling and disjointed stones. A rock, a tree, a natural waterfall, may fire the imagination, and lift the soul to God, as the author of all the wonders of this visible world; and the shapes which they assume surpass any thing of man's skill and contrivance; but they do not convey to the heart the same mournful lesson, nor point out so forcibly the instability of human greatness. No, Sophia,—it is the ideas which we associate with these relics of antiquity—these scattered fragments of the grandeur of a former day—that constitute their greatest charm: as a tale acquires tenfold interest when we have every reason to believe it true, and the actors in the drama no creatures of the poet's fancy. They have walked this earth, have lived and suffered, and were, like us, subjected to all the trials and sorrows of humanity. While gazing on these walls, we know, that they were once filled with beings endowed with the same feelings—exposed to the same temptations—actuated by the same passions, and bound to life by the same moral obligations, and kindred ties. Like