

FRIENDS OF EARLY YEARS.

By Mrs. Abdy.

I sought my youthful home again;
The birds poured forth a tuneful strain,
The silver stream its waters flung
O'er banks where blushing wild-flowers clung;
The lambs were sporting on the lea,
Light waved the milk-white hawthorn tree;
And yet I viewed the scene with tears,
I mourned the Friends of Early Years.

I left that spot of light and bloom,
To seek the church-yard's sheltered gloom,
They slept beneath the mossy earth,
Untold, unsung their simple worth;
Yet, fondly, sadly, I avowed
That none amid the dazzling crowd
Had shared my hopes or soothed my fears
Like these—the Friends of Early Years.

That home I wish not now to see,
It boasts no charm, no joy for me;
Yet Time my feelings cannot chill,
My faithful friends are near me still:
I lift to them my longing eyes,
Whene'er I view the peaceful skies;
For there the blessed home appears,
Where dwell the Friends of Early Years.

Metropolitan for May.

A HIGHLAND ANECDOTE.

By Sir Walter Scott.

The same course of reflection which led me to transmit to you the account of the death of an ancient borderer induces me to add the particulars of a singular incident, affording a point which seems highly qualified to be illustrated by the pencil.

The story is an old but not an ancient one. The actor and sufferer was not a very aged man when I heard the anecdote in my early youth. Duncan, for so I shall call him, had been engaged in the affair of 1747, with others of his clan, and was supposed by many to have been an accomplice, if not the principal actor, in a certain tragic affair which made much noise a good many years after the rebellion. I am content with indicating this, in order to give some idea of the man's character, which was bold, fierce and enterprising. Traces of this natural disposition still remained on Duncan's very good features, and in his keen grey eye. But the limbs had become unable to serve the purposes and obey the dictates of his inclination. On the one side of his body he retained the proportions and firmness of an active mountaineer; on the other he was a disabled cripple, scarce able to limp about the streets. The cause which reduced him to this state of infirmity was singular.

Twenty years or more before I knew Duncan, he assisted his brothers in farming a large grazing, or pastoral farm, in the Highlands, comprehending an extensive range of mountain and forest land, morass, lake and precipice. It chanced that a sheep or goat was missed from the flock, and Duncan, not satisfied with despatching his shepherds in one direction, went himself in quest of the fugitive in another.

In the course of his researches he was induced to ascend a small and narrow path leading to the top of a high precipice. Dangerous as it was at first, the road became doubly so as he advanced. It was not much more than two feet broad, so rugged and difficult, and at the same time so terrible, that it would have been impracticable to any but the light step and steady brain of a Highlander. The precipice on the right rose like a wall, and on the left sunk to a depth which it was giddy to look down upon; but Duncan passed cheerfully on, now whistling the gathering of his clan, now taking heed to his footsteps, when the difficulties of the path peculiarly required caution.

In this manner he had more than half ascended the precipice, when in midway, and it might almost be said in middle air, he encountered a buck of the red deer species coming down the cliff in the same path in an opposite direction. If Duncan had had a gun, no rencontre could have been more agreeable; but, as he had not this advan-

tage over the denizen of the wilderness, the meeting was in the highest degree unwelcome. Neither party had the power of retreating, for the stag had not room to turn himself in the narrow path, and if Duncan had turned his back to go down, he knew enough of the creature's habits to be certain that he would rush upon him while engaged in the difficulties of the retreat. They stood therefore perfectly still, and looked at each other in mutual embarrassment for some time.

At length the deer, which was of the largest size, began to lower his formidable antlers, as they do when they are brought to bay, and are preparing to rush upon hound and huntsman. Duncan saw the danger of a conflict in which he must probably come by the worst and as a last resource stretched himself on the little ledge of rock which he occupied, and thus awaited the resolution which the deer should take, not making the least motion, for fear of alarming the wild and suspicious animal. They remained in this posture for three or four hours, in the midst of a rock which would have suited the pencil of Salvator, and which afforded barely room enough for the man and the stag, opposed to each other in this extraordinary manner.

At length the buck seemed to take the resolution of passing over the obstacle which lay in his path, and with this purpose approached toward Duncan very slowly, and with great caution. When he came close to the Highlander, he held his head down as if to examine him more closely, when the devil, or the untameable love of sport peculiar to his country, began to overcome Duncan's fears. Seeing the animal proceed so gently, he totally forgot not only the dangers of his position, but the implicit compact which might have been inferred from the circumstances of the situation. With one hand Duncan seized the deer's horn, whilst with the other he drew his dirk. But in the same instant the buck bounded over the precipice, carrying the Highlander along with him. They went thus down upwards of a 100 feet, and were found the next morning on the spot where they fell. Fortune, who does not always regard retributive justice in her dispensations, ordered that the deer should fall undermost and be killed on the spot, while Duncan escaped with life, but with the fracture of a leg, an arm and three ribs. In this state he was found lying on the carcass of the deer, and the injuries which he had received rendered him for the remainder of his life the cripple I have described. I never could approve of Duncan's conduct toward the deer in a moral point of view—although, as the man in the play said, he was my friend—but the temptation of a hart of grease offering, as it were his throat to the knife would have subdued the virtue of almost any deer-stalker. Whether the anecdote is worth recording or deserving of illustration remains for your consideration. I have given you the story exactly as I recollect it.

EVENING THOUGHTS.

A FUTURE STATE.

Happily for the interests of virtue the doctrine of a future state has a most powerful advocate in the conscience of every individual. Where is the necessity for a labored train of argumentation to sustain it? Evidence the most convincing exists in each mind. Let any one listen to the language of hope and fear. Let him view, in their true light, the ceaseless aspirations that rise toward heaven—the dissatisfaction with the present, and the earnest grasping at the future, and he will not be left in darkness or doubt on this subject. We have in ourselves the faithful witnesses of our immortality. They are interwoven in our very constitution—they make a part of our inward frame. Skeptics may invest this matter with as much gloom as they please. Corrupt philosophy may start its objection. Casuists may reason their lives away in efforts to prove the impossibility of the independent and everlasting being of the soul. What are all their objections? Who can believe them when, from within, there sounds a voice more emphatic, declaring our immortality? Not at one time—not in one state does this monitor speak. We hear it when the mind is as tranquil as the sleeping lake. We hear it when the storms of passion agitate us—when the elements within rise in their terror and convulse the prison that

confines them. We hear it in the time of prosperity moderating our wishes and reproving our worldly anxieties. We hear it in the hour of adversity teaching submission and reconciliation by the promise of a more perfect state. We hear it in the visitations of Jehovah when the dove-like spirit descends upon our heart and tenders all its feelings. We hear it in the dreams of midnight when the souls revels in her native freedom independent of sense and matter. Whether we pine unseen beneath the withering influence of despair or float away over the realms of the future on the strong pinions of hope, we have an assurance that we shall continue to live when our dust has mingled with the particles of its kindred earth.

PROVIDENCE.

Our present happiness is closely connected with a belief in the doctrine of a providence. It is hardly possible for an undisturbed serenity of mind to be preserved independently of a confidence in this truth. That man who discards the idea of a superintending providence has no real tranquility. His happiness, if happiness he have, lies at the mercy of every occurrence. Events sport with him as the winds with a feather. He has no steadiness of feeling—no constancy of joy. In the strong language of Byron, he is

Like a Weed,
Flung from the rock on ocean's waves
To sail where'er the surges may beat or tempest's breath prevail.

Let the condition of the believer in an universal providence be contrasted with the state of such a man, and how advantageous does it appear! Taught by the sacred volume to regard every thing as the wish and ordering of the Supreme Being, he murmurs not at his fate. If his cup be bitter he refuses not to drink it. Clouds may lower over his head—woes may fall upon him—schemes may fail—but he is secure. He is invulnerable. No dart can pierce him, for he is clothed in the panoply of God and defended effectually on every side. He knows that He who sent sorrow can quickly remove it when it has accomplished His purpose. He believes that the power which sent forth the winds can restrain their fury and bind them in submission, and that the breath which kindled the lightning can easily direct its course. I never look upon such a character without sentiments approaching reverence. I look upon him as a moral hero, decked with a brighter laurel than a conqueror ever wore. I look upon him as I gaze upon a rock, at whose base the irritated waves dash but upon whose elevated summit the glad sunlight rests.

OUR FATHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN.

And is it the privilege of mortals, sinful and polluted as they are, to be brought into the above delightful relation? May they feel towards God as a child to a father? Yes, it is so. Of all the unions which exist between us here, is there one so pure in its nature and so glorious in its effects as this? Not one. The sweetness of connubial felicity and the tenderness of friendship's tie are trifling when compared with it. There is one peculiarity belonging to it that is attached to no other connection, and that is the eternity of its duration. Warm as our earthly love may be, that love is soon broken. The closest ties are severed! Friends are torn from friends—parents from children, and husbands from their wives. Death breaks the cords of the deepest affection. How different with this relation! Distance cannot interrupt it,

"Since God is every where,
In the void waste as in the city full."

Nor can death disturb it. He numbers its destruction not among his achievements. He gathers not a portion of his spoils from it. It is entirely out of his reach. What a source of perennial bliss is here! When troubles assail and dangers affright, how dear is the reflection that we have a Father in heaven! When our relatives are snatched from us here, where do we look for support? There is but one answer: to our Father in heaven. If in life there be one joy richer than another, surely that joy is derived from "Our Father, in heaven." And if, in the music of Paradise, there be one note that swells higher than another, certainly that is to "Our Father, in heaven." In the brightness of that world we shall hear our Father's voice, see our Father's face, and rest our wearied frames on our Father's bosom forever and ever.