

THE PARSONAGE:
MY FATHER'S FIRESIDE.

After the lapse of about thirty years, I lately paid a visit to what had once been my father's fireside. It was in the month of October I visited the manse of Kirkhall. My father had been minister of that parish; and I received a kindly welcome from his worthy son—one of the warmest hearted and learned men in the church of Scotland, whom I have long known and esteemed as a father. I found myself again seated beside the hearth in the little parlor which was now gladdened with a mother's smile—I was once cheered with the childish prattle of brothers and sisters—which was halcyon by the prayers and presiding virtues of my affectionate father. They are all departed to the land of spirits!

When I looked round me, every object seemed to assure me that they were still near me; every thing else was unchanged. On looking through the window from the elbow in which I sat, the old and magnificent tree which, in the days of my youth, had its branches and foliage in wild luxuriance over the court, and gave assurance of shade and shelter, was still unscathed. Its faded flowers were indeed faded—for the breath of approaching winter had touched the verdure; but its variegated green and yellow leaves were the same as when I had seen them, and attempted, with boyish hands, to pluck them, nearly half a century ago. A little farther off, the "decent church" peered among the majestic ash, elm, and chestnut-trees, with which it was surrounded—the growth of centuries—casting a deep and gloomy shadow over the place of graves.—The humble offices, and the corn yard in which I had rejoiced to mingle in rural occupations and frolic, were near; and nothing wanted to realize the scenes of my youth but the presence of the venerable patriarch and his mother, and their little ones grouped around their knees, or at the frugal

table. The illusion was short lived. A holly tree in the adjoining parterre, caught my eye. When I knew it of old, it was a little tree in which the goldfinch and linnets used to be protected under my juvenile protection; but now it had grown up to a large tree. I saw in the mirror, over the

mantelpiece, the image of my own visage, in which were lines that time and the world's cares imprint on the smoothest brow and the most blooming cheek. The yellow locks of my forehead were fled, and the few remaining hairs were beginning to be silvered with grey. My son, too, rising almost to manhood stood up before me, unconscious of the recollections and visions which flitted through my mind. These things dispelled my reverie; and my wandering thoughts were recalled to the passing hour.

It was on a Saturday evening that I thus revisited Kirkhall; and my melancholy meditations were soon partially dissipated by the cheerful, but moderate hospitalities of my host; which were truly such as to make me feel that I was as it were, among my own kindred, and at my Father's Fireside.

What a flood of emotions and remembrances spring forth at the mental utterance of these words! On retiring from the parlor, I was ushered into what was, of old denominated in the quaint colloquial language of Scotland, "The Prophet's Chamber"—that is, the apartment for study, was to be found thus distinguished in all the old manse of our clergy. It was now a bedroom, the library being established in another apartment; and I laid my head upon the pillow in a chamber which was consecrated, in my memory, by the recollection that within its walls good men had often thought of "the way of God to man," and prepared their spirit in the depths of silence and seclusion, for proclaiming in the sanctuary the glad tidings of salvation.

It was a tempestuous night; and, though the blast was completely excluded from the manse by the dense masses of trees with which it was surrounded, the wind howled and moaned through their branches and on their summits, and, like the thunder, gave forth a solemn music to the soul. I did not sleep, but listened to the sounds of the tempest with that pleasure which philosophy cannot explain. Ere long, the current of thought reverted to my own former relations to the dwelling in which I reposed; and busy memory, in the watches of the night, supplied, with all the freshness of a recent event,