

**MY
EARLY DAYS**

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My Early Days by Walter Ferguson

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WALTER FERGUSON

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BY WALTER FERGUSON, ESQ. X



BOSTON :

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1827.

TO
* MY NEPHEWS
ALLAN AND WALTER,
FOR WHOSE INSTRUCTION IT IS WRITTEN,
I DEDICATE
THIS SKETCH.

WUR 20 JUN 34

MY EARLY DAYS.

CHAPTER I.

I HAVE no distinct recollection of the facts and feelings of my existence previous to the sixth year. Distance has given to the occurrences of that period a vague and vapoury remembrance, like the dimness of a dream. I have a faint idea, of faces that smiled upon me which I have never seen again, and of a home resembling not that where I spent my after hours; but of these things I am by no means positive. I possess only a painful certainty, of a temporary blindness produced by the small-pox, and the fatigues of a journey made in my mother's arms during a winter storm.

Allan Ferguson, my father, was a Scottish clergyman, a dissenter from the established form of his country's faith. Devoted, with heart and soul, to the cause in which he had engaged, he bade adieu to his native land, for the purpose of aiding the faithful few, that, amidst danger and privation, caused the seeds

of the Gospel to rise and ripen on the shores of Ireland. He was appointed colleague to an old clergyman, who held the congregation of B——, a large seaport town in the north of that country. There he first beheld, and was united to, my mother. She was the only daughter, though not the only child, of a rich merchant, named Maxwell. At the house of her aunt, an amiable and religious woman, she became acquainted with my father. Gentle affections and similarity of sentiment produced between them a feeling of esteem, which gradually grew into one still more endearing. An explanation ensued. After some delay, the church joined their hands—their hearts required no formal union. The happiness of the wedded pair would have been completely without alloy, had not old Mr. Maxwell, whose love of money and ideas of family consequence made him averse to the match,—though he refused not his assent, withheld his daughter's fortune.

The income of a dissenting clergyman's assistant was of course very, very limited. My father's mode of life was, however, habitually simple; and my mother's, by inclination, no less so. The kind relative, who had been the means of their meeting, and who did all she could to facilitate their union, insisted on their making her house their home, until it pleased

Providence to produce a change in their humble fortunes. Among beings of such a cast no reserve existed, or could exist. Accordingly, the proposal was accepted as frankly as it was made. The delicate attentions of this estimable woman—the fond fidelity of a beloved companion, ingenious in devising a thousand little plans to make him happy—that unrestrained freedom of communication which can only exist among the pure of heart—the calm and constant recurrence of religious duties, and the total absence of worldly interference, which ever taints what it touches, gave to this period of his existence a holy charm, which rendered it very dear to the memory of my father. To make the bond of sweet society still more complete, my birth took place. I was born on the first of August, eleven months after the marriage of my parents. They gave me the name of Walter, from my maternal grandfather. My mother thought to propitiate his stern temper by this device of affection, and made it her request. On the birth of a girl, two years afterwards, she smilingly insisted that her husband should use a like privilege. He thanked her with a playful kiss, and called the infant Mary. It was my mother's name; and he said it was the name of all others the dearest to his heart.

Six years glided by since their wedding-day, and we were still residents at B——. The

death of a boy, who was taken from us, without knowing that he left a world of sin and sorrow behind him, was the only incident that broke in upon our domestic quiet. Considerations, however, arose which proved that a change of temporal situation, however painful it might be, was at all events a thing of necessity. Circumstances detained my father much longer than he originally contemplated, under the roof of her who had so hospitably received him. He deemed it incumbent on him, as a Christian and a man, to delay no longer calculating on uncertainties, but instantly to seek for some place, permanent and independent, however limited that independence might chance to be. In leaving the generous woman who had been so instrumental to his happiness, and the flock over whom he had watched for years, he anticipated many a bitter pang; but it was very obvious, to his understanding and his heart, that the improvement of his fortunes kept not pace with the growth of his children; and the duty of a parent was esteemed by him far too sacred to allow a moment's trifling with their future hopes. From Mr. Maxwell he had no expectations. Continued neglect seemed to shew that he had forgotten his having ever had a daughter. The peculiarity of his situation, as colleague to the clergyman of B——, held out no positive

prospect on which he could rely with certainty. He therefore accepted a call from the congregation of Glen-O, distant above forty miles from his present residence.

After undergoing the regular forms of ordination, it was necessary that he should immediately enter on the duties of his pastoral charge. He was therefore obliged to remove his little family, although it was now winter. We commenced our journey in the middle of December, and I have yet a strong recollection of the circumstances connected with it. The vehicle on which we rode was a rude car, intended for agricultural purposes, furnished with long cushions, stuffed with straw, placed on each side for the ease of those it carried. The horse was poor, and his colour of a sickly grey. My father acted as driver, occupying one side of the car, with my sister, a stout little girl, warmly wrapped in the folds of his great-coat; while I, who was still suffering from the effects of illness, sat on my mother's knee, encircled by her arms. I particularly remember the features of a female, advanced in years, who, as she folded a large shawl round my mother's neck, appeared to be weeping bitterly. As we travelled on our way the sun broke through the thick clouds at noon. His cheerless beam falling on our sorry vehicle, and the wintry wastes through which we journeyed, seemed