

A SKETCH FROM NATURE

BY MRS. CARELL.

NEAR Richmond, Virginia on the banks of James R., or that great and rapid artery of the Old Dominion, stands Powhatan, a beautiful, time-honored mansion; the hereditary seat of the Mayo-family.

The spot is peculiarly interesting, as being the *ancestral* residence occupied by the Indian chief whose name it bears, and the abode of his gentle daughter Pocahontas.

Traditionary lore informs us (and who would wish to doubt?) that it was the scene of her romantic attachment and interposition for her ungrateful lover, Captain Smith. The very stone upon which his head was laid for decapitation, when, like a guardian spirit, she appeared and rescued him from the death-blow, is pointed out in the garden, while a more massive rock in the house-yard is designated as the simple and unlettered *sepulchre* of her relenting father.

Around this rock a few young cedars are planted, and on its smooth gray surface, the impressions of two feet may be traced; faint, indeed, but still there they are, evidently the print of a child's and a man's foot—*when, how or by whom* engraven, none living can tell.

On a neighboring height, o'er-towering the river, is the Mayo Cemetery, where venerable cedars and other trees of yore shelter some antique granite tombs and several white marble monuments of modern date, which, though less interesting to a disciple of "Monkbarns," are more precious to individuals of the present generation. Besides these sacred memorials, there are many stoneless, turf-hillocks, whose long grass, waving in the summer gale, whispers to the heart the names, the unchiseled yet unforgetten cherished names of dear ones reposing below.

'Tis a sweet and tranquilizing spot; and often at the close of day, my fancy lingers over its beauties and melancholy attractions, for within its solemn precincts lie buried *my dead!*

Thus sadly musing one evening, busy thoughts wove themselves into the following stanzas:—

In twilight's musing, mystic hour,
Visions of the past come o'er me,
And Memory, with her thrilling power,
Brings the loved and lost before me.

Those who now in graves lie sleeping,
Near Powhatan's fast-flowing tide,

Around whose death-couch he stood weeping,
When they looked farewell and died;

On whose tombs the light is gleaming
Through each tall, thick cedar's crest,
And the slanting sun rays streaming
Athwart their mournful place of rest,

In the dim pensive time appear!
I trace their features—hear them speak?
'Tis but a dream—they are not here,
And tears bedew my burning cheek.

From earth they are forever gone—
Forever from our home-land riven!
They left us lonely, one by one,
Called to a brighter home in Heaven.

Death ruthless broke the cords of love
Which sweetly bound our hearts together,
Removed the idols of our grove,
And doomed the flowers of Hope to wither.

Some left us in their strength and bloom;
O'er their young forms the dirge we sung
Grief-struck, we bore them to the tomb,
And laid them there our sires among.

And some departed ripe in years,
Whose annals, like a moral page,
Instruct us to resist earth's snares
And emulate a virtuous age.

Be not the precious record slighted,
But studied as the evening star,
When, to the wildered and benighted,
It shines a guide to homes afar.

Then will it prove to us a mine
Of golden thoughts and precepts pure,
Teach us to sue for faith divine,
Life's bitter trials to endure.

Lead us to seek God's holy fane,
To kindle at His altar there
Devotion's sacred, Heaven-born flame,
The life-breath of the Christian's prayer;

The flame which lights our way to bliss,
And constant burns in densest gloom,
Infuses strength the *rod to kiss*,
And makes each thorn a floweret bloom.

Thus loved ones of the "spirit land"
Still speak from out their blest abode,
To the wand'ring, weary pilgrim band,
Toiling yet through earth's rough road.

* The Indian appellation and ancient name of James river.