

THE
PRESBYTERIAN MAGAZINE.

NOVEMBER, 1855.

Miscellaneous Articles.

CHRIST THE VINE, AND THE FAITHFUL THE
BRANCHES.*

1. I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

Christ is the true vine, the excellent, spiritual, and heavenly vine, of which all others are but types and shadows: the vine planted by the hand of God in the womb of the virgin, in the field of the world, and cultivated by the same hand. This vine does not produce a bitter kind of fruit like that of the synagogue; but a wine by which the world is redeemed, washed, sanctified, nourished, strengthened on earth, and, as it were, inebriated in heaven. Christ resigned himself up to the hand of his Father, to be cultivated and pruned according to his will. Let us adore this heavenly husbandman; and since we are branches of his vine, let us submit ourselves entirely to his care and management; for if he do not cultivate us after his divine manner, we can be nothing but unprofitable branches.

2. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every *branch* that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

Christian professors without works are branches without fruit. That person has no faith who chooses rather to be one day cut off and taken away from the body of Christ, than to be exercised and purged by the afflictions of this life, in order to bear the fruit of good works. Both good and bad branches are joined to the vine, but both do not bear fruit: the latter will not be separated from the vine forever, till the great day of separation comes. There is

* Extracted from "The Gospels, &c., by PASQUIER QUESNEL," lately republished by Parry & McMillan, Phila., under the editorial supervision of Dr. Boardman. These extracts are designed to give a fair specimen of the work.—ED.

husband to pay attention to her; *talk small talk*; or listen to it. But a minister's wife ought to remember that she is, in a certain sense, identified with her husband, and that a great deal of the respect and attention she desires to have, depends on its being thought that her husband is *a growing man*. She ought, therefore, to aid him in study for her own sake, as well as from motives of a higher and purer character.

5. If a woman is prudent, judicious, and refined in her taste, yet gentle and meek, she will do more than any other person can do, to correct bad habits of a certain kind, or to prevent their being formed. Thus she may correct striking and offensive *mannerisms*, or improprieties in word or gesture; tediousness in prayer, or in preaching, &c. I have often heard it asked of a preacher's wife, "Why don't she tell her husband about his long prayers?" And the remark has been made many a time—"That woman can't be much, or her husband would not have such rough and uncouth manners."

I would say much more, but time and paper would fail. I do not say these things because I suppose you particularly need them; but because I wanted to give you some token of fatherly affection. And I add as a final remark, that a heart entirely filled with the love of God, and into which the Spirit is fully breathed, will teach you better than anything else; because you will then, in every case, feel how you ought to act.

Mrs. Rice loves you as I do; and I know she joins in the earnest prayer that in your present relation you may fully discharge every duty, be a blessing to your husband, and a faithful servant of the Lord.

Bless you, my daughter,

Yours truly,

JOHN H. RICE.

A LETTER OF CONSOLATION.

DR. JOHN H. RICE TO MRS. JUDITH M. SMITH.*

RICHMOND, Jan. 11th, 1819.

MY BELOVED FRIEND,—I am more embarrassed than usual in attempting to write to you. I knew so well the worth of him whom God hath removed, and so fully appreciate the loss, that my mind is borne down; and I do not know what to express but lamentations and sorrow. Mr. Smith was one of my best and dearest friends. I know well the purity of his motives, and the integrity of his heart. He was as a brother to me; as such I loved him; and his memory will ever be cherished by me with the warmest

* Mrs. Smith was the mother of the Rev. BENJAMIN M. SMITH, D.D., Professor in the Union Theological Seminary, Va.

affection. I, too, am bereaved by this dispensation; and I feel it. I have lost a friend whose place can never be filled.

But I do not murmur—No! it is the Lord. He gave, and he hath taken away; and it is all in infinite wisdom and goodness. I can have no doubt as to the place to which my departed friend is gone. If ever I knew a Christian, he was one. Not a wordy professor; but a practical believer: not a man of high flights and rapturous feelings; but one who, in public and private, acted on religious principle, who made his light shine around him, and before the world adorned his profession. Knowing as I knew him, the Gospel does not allow me to doubt respecting his future condition. And I am ready at all times to apply to him the words of the poet:

.... "His upward flight Philander took,
If ever soul ascended."....

Yes—he now rests with God, and beholds his face in peace. He has gone to join those who went before him, and to inherit the promises. There is comfort in this. Indeed, it is a great consolation. But that meekness, and gentleness, and conscientiousness, and charity, and faith, which assure us of his happiness, serve too to enhance our sorrow, and embitter his loss. Such is our condition in this world. Our joys are mixed with fears, and our very consolations suggest reasons for sorrow. This is the case with everything earthly. No object nor being in the universe can afford unmingled good but God. He is all perfect, and knows no shadow of change. Hence, the wisdom of habitually looking to him, and referring everything to his will. "Even so, Father, for it seemed good in thy sight." We know that what God does, is wisest and best in all things. It is his will that my friend should be taken away; that you and your children should be bereaved and destitute. We know this because the afflictive event has taken place. To His will we are bound to submit. But that we in our weakness may be the better able to render this submission, various most condescending and gracious declarations are made in Scripture; and made in the kindest and most appropriate manner. For instance, "I will be a father to the fatherless, and a husband to the widow."—"Sorrow not as those who have no hope; for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."—"Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth; and this for our profit, that we may be made partakers of his holiness."—"All things shall work together for good to them that love God."—"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." See the appropriateness of these promises; their adaptation to the feelings of distress that alternately have sway in the bosom of the afflicted. So you feel forsaken and destitute; and is this feeling rendered more pungent every time you look on your children? God is *your husband*, and *their father*. Are you borne down by the thought that he whom

you so long loved, and with whom you so often took sweet counsel, is now removed from your sight? He sleeps in Jesus, and God watcheth over his dust; and he will bid it rise invested with the glories of immortality, and you shall see him again. Do you sometimes almost sink under the idea, "This affliction has come because I was unworthy to enjoy such a blessing any longer, and the Lord in righteous judgment has bereaved me." Remember that God thus dealeth with you as a child; that this is for your profit. (See Heb. 12 : 1-12.) Are you ready, in deep despondency, to say, "Now I and my children are ruined." God says that these afflictions shall work for your good; shall "work out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Do you look forward to the new duties imposed on you; to the new labours that you have to undergo; to the new trials that you must sustain; and, conscious of your weakness, do you say, "I shall never be able to sustain all this." Think of the promise of God, "As thy day is, so shall thy strength be;" and "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." What wonderful knowledge of the exercises of our afflicted hearts seems to be in the Scriptures! How graciously are they adapted to our condition! How accommodated to our weakness! How suited to give us consolation!

There is another view which it is important that we should take. Every condition in life has its duties. The active discharge of duties is as necessary for our present peace, as for our future felicity. One of the divine promises is, to communicate new vigour to the sick, debilitated, and borne down by affliction, that they may be better prepared for the discharge of duty. A person, then, who, in affliction, looks to God, and relies on him for grace to fulfil duty, is the only person who has a right to expect that the promises will be fulfilled; because it is to such alone that they are made. If, at any time, we are so placed that our only duty is to bear suffering with patient submission, then in doing that we may expect God to be with us. But when active service, as well as submissive endurance, is required, then our daily endeavour must be to do as much as we can, as well suffer as patiently as we can. I offer these remarks, because they have an important bearing on your present state, and because I know the pain produced by making efforts when we are deeply afflicted.

I greatly regret that I was not with you in your time of affliction. The accounts received by us were not such as to induce apprehension of any immediate danger. Had I known the truth of the case, I would have broken through every other engagement, and had at least one more interview with my much-loved, well-tried, and faithful friend.

We intend as soon as possible to visit you. At the same time, we pray you to believe that we love you with increased affection, and feel a double interest in all that concerns you and your children. May the God of all grace and consolation be with you to

keep and sustain you, to guide you in all your ways, and uphold you in all future trials, and, at last, may you join those who have gone before you, and who now inherit the promises.

Give my best love to dear Mary, and the other children. May the God of their father be their God and guide!

Nancy joins me in all that I say and feel in relation to you and yours, as well as in the renewed declaration of the increasing affection of ever most truly yours,

JOHN H. RICE.

A PASTOR'S FUNERAL IN 1818.*

THE REV. SAMUEL BROWN.

THE record of the incidents of this day (14 Oct.) presents something like a map of human life. In the morning we were gay and cheerful, amusing ourselves with remarks on the country, or the comparative genius and habits of our countrymen, and a thousand things, just as the thoughts of them occurred, anticipating a joyful meeting in the evening with some well-trying, faithful, and beloved friends; when suddenly, as the flash of lightning breaks from a cloud, we were informed of the almost instantaneous death of one of the choicest of these friends, and one of the most valuable of men,—the Rev. Samuel Brown. The road which we should travel led by the house in which he was accustomed to preach; and, on inquiring for it, we were asked if we were going to the funeral! Thus, as in a moment, was hope turned into deep despondency, and gladness of heart exchanged for the bitterness of sorrow. We journeyed on in mournful silence, interrupted by occasional remarks, which showed our unwillingness to believe the truth of what had been announced, and how reluctantly hope takes her flight from the human bosom. It might have been a fainting fit—an apoplectic stroke, mistaken for the invasion of death; and still he might be alive. The roads, however, trampled by multitudes of horses, all directed to the dwelling of our friend, soon dissipated these illusions of the pleasing deceiver, and convinced us of the sad reality. Still, however, when we arrived at the church, and saw the people assembling, and the pile of red clay (the sure indication of a newly opened grave) thrown up in the churchyard, it seemed as though we were then, for the first time, assured that Samuel Brown was dead. Only a few people had come together on our arrival. Some, in small groups, were conversing in a low tone of voice, interrupted by frequent and bitter sighs, and showing in

* Extracted from the Diary of Dr. JOHN H. RICE, contained in his Memoir by Mr. Maxwell. The Rev. SAMUEL BROWN was the honoured father of five of our ministers now living.—ED.