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### BIOGRAPHY.

#### LEIGH RICHMOND.

CONTINUED.

*His talent for extempore preaching—Family letters—Commencement of the editor's acquaintance with him—Public societies.*

The principle on which Mr. Richmond formed his ministry, have been laid before the reader in the preceding chapter; in which were detailed the soundness of his views, and the impressive manner of his delivery. He never failed to attract a crowded congregation, and seldom preached without the most decided proofs of a divine power accompanying his ministrations. He also possessed many natural endowments, which in no small degree contributed to his success. He was an eloquent speaker; but his eloquence was not laboured and artificial—it was the simple and glowing expression of a mind deeply impressed with the importance of his subject, full of affection, and intent on imparting the same feelings to those who heard him.

He used to refer his friends, who conversed with him on the subject of preaching, to the advice of his college tutor: "Don't use terms of science. The people have no abstract ideas—they cannot understand comparisons and allusions remote from all their habits. Take words of Saxon derivation, and not such as are derived from Latin and Greek. Talk of riches, not of affluence—of trust, not of confidence. Present the same idea in a varied form, and take care you understand the subject yourself. If you be intelligent, you will be intelligible."

Mr. Richmond's successful application of these useful rules, is well known to all who had opportunity of hearing his sermons. Though never offensively colloquial, he was well understood by the most illiterate of his congregation; nor was he satisfied till he had explained an idea in every possible variety and point of view. On this account, he sometimes seemed to persons unacquainted with his design, to employ a needless number of words. It was once pleasantly said, by one who heard him—"An excellent sermon, but with too many various readings."

He was also singularly felicitous in imparting interest to what, in familiar phraseology, is called a dry subject. He was once known to preach an hour and three quarters,\* on the incidental evidence of Christianity. On this occasion it was said, by a sensible man who heard him—"This is indeed a magnificent sermon! I always thought Mr. Richmond a good man, but I now know him to be a great man."

Mr. Richmond as we have before noticed, possessed a fine taste, and an almost enthusiastic admiration of the beauties of nature. From these he often selected illustrations, and embellished his subject with allusions to them. He used to say: "There are three books to be studied—the book of creation, the book of providence, and the book of grace. They confirm and illustrate each other."

These natural talents were consecrated to the service of religion, and gave an interest to his preaching, equalled by few, and excelled by none.

The editor would not be supposed, by these remarks, to lose sight of the influence of the Holy Spirit, without whom "nothing is strong, nothing is holy." He knows that "the Gospel is a mighty engine, but only mighty when God has the work-

\* This sermon was one of a course of lectures on the evidences of Christianity, preached at Olney, by the neighbouring clergy. Mr. Richmond took his plan from the "Howe Pauline," and applied Dr. Paley's principle, to every book of Holy Scripture, with great industry and success. It is much to be regretted that nothing remains of the sermon, except a few short heads of discourse, used by Mr. Richmond at the time of preaching.

ing of it." Yet is it most evident, that God is pleased to make human agency, the natural endowments and temperaments as well as the graces of his servants, subservive his purposes; and in the selection of instruments, there is always a peculiar fitness for the work in which he employs them.

The effect of Mr. Richmond's ministry was also considerably heightened, by the fluency of his addresses. He adopted a method of preaching usually called *extempore*; without premeditation, as to the words of a sermon, but not to the exclusion of much previous prayer, and labour in the arrangement of its materials. "It is a singular circumstance," observes a friend of his early life, "that his first attempt to preach *extempore*, in the very small church of Yaverland, in the Isle of Wight, was a total failure. He was so ashamed of it, that he declared he would not repeat the attempt; and it was only in consequence of the urgent solicitations of our common friend, the Rev. Charles Hoyle, that he was induced to make a second trial; when he succeeded beyond his hopes, and never afterward found any difficulty."

As a proof of the eminence to which he afterward attained, we venture to introduce another anecdote.

The late Mr. Whitbread went to hear him preach at St. Paul's, Bedford, in the year 1807, accompanied by a friend, who had expressed an earnest wish to be present. The church was remarkably crowded—the preacher animated—and the interest of the congregation strongly excited. The gentleman above alluded to at length observed, "He has now preached with incredible fluency, both as to matter and language, for three quarters of an hour, and he does not seem even yet to be exhausted, or to be drawing to a close." "Exhausted!" replied Mr. Whitbread; "he can hold on, in the same way, if necessary, for two or three hours longer."

Before we proceed with the narrative, we lay before the reader a few letters written about this time by Mr. Richmond, to his aunt and mother. They are not, indeed, connected with any previous or subsequent remarks of our own; but are here introduced to preserve the chronology of the memoir. They are pleasing proofs of Mr. Richmond's affectionate attention to the claims of his own family, amidst the incessant demands of public duties.

"*Turvey, January 10, 1808.*

"My dear Aunt,—Affection for one so long known and loved must indeed be asleep, if I did not hasten to express my tenderest concern on your account. My office and station calls me daily, in one place or another, to pour the balm of consolation into the wounded breast. I cannot, indeed, comfort you in person; but if I may be allowed to speak in my Lord and Saviour's name, I may often do so by letter. Indeed, my dearest aunt, I shall be happy in any endeavour I can exert, to prove to you how affectionately I am interested in what regards your welfare, both spiritual and temporal. I am daily exercised among the sick, the weak, the maimed, the suffering and the departing; and am constantly reminded of the uncertainty of life, even from one day to another. What a glorious light has the word of God thrown on the otherwise dark and gloomy uncertainty which would have overhung the prospect of eternity! How full, how free a provision has our gracious God revealed for the salvation of sinners who lay hold on his promises by faith! May you and I be enabled, under every trial and pang of soul or body, to flee to the strong One for help, remembering that in all our afflictions he was afflicted.

"May the recollection of every past instance of God's kindness lead you to trust in him, and repose on his redeeming grace and love. May your prayer be constantly heard and answered, when at the throne of grace you plead what a Saviour has done and suffered for you, and supplicate for a heart thankfully resigned to God, let what will be his

pleasure concerning you. I feel persuaded you will ascribe what I have said to a sincere affection, and a desire to contribute my mite of consolation under the trial which Providence has brought upon you. May you meet it with the true spirit of Christian fortitude! Sanctified afflictions are the Lord's peculiar mercies to those whom he loves. May your's prove one of this kind! Frequent meditation on the great change to which we are all daily liable: to which the youngest are rapidly hastening—is highly profitable to the soul, and begets a watchfulness and preparedness of mind for every event and circumstance. Seasons of sickness and debility are peculiarly calculated to this end. They are often expressly sent, that as in the day of health and prosperity we are prone to forget the Author and Giver of all our blessings, these messengers of mercy may be the means, in his Almighty hands, of collecting our wandering thoughts and affections, and of fixing them abidingly on him. Receive these reflections from one who loves you, who wishes never to forget that he is a minister of Christ, and always

"Your affectionate nephew,

"LEIGH RICHMOND."

"*Turvey, January 29, 1808.*

"My dearest Mother.—The return of this day\* reminds me of life, death, and eternity; it reminds me of times past, and anticipates times to come; it reminds me of my dear mother also, and of the many affectionate seasons which the successive anniversaries of my birth have from year to year given her, arising from the mingled hope of good and fear of evil. Sometimes you have written to me on this day, but lest a letter should not be penned between us, I take up the quill to write to you. Accept my kind, tender, and dutiful assurances of filial love and veneration, and ten thousand thanks for all your cares and prayers on my account, for six and thirty years, nor let it ever be thought that I am insensible to what I owe you. Happy shall I feel, if enabled and permitted to contribute to the ease and consolation of your declining years, and to mitigate the infirmities of old age, by the duly applied exertions of younger years! It seems but a little while since I was a boy myself, returning home from season to season, to enjoy the blessing and comfort of parental and sisterly society and affection at your home; and now I see myself surrounded by my boys and girls at my own home, growing apace and preparing to occupy the station in the world, which we now fill up. It is an old and worn out remark, 'how time flies!' Yet we cannot help all making it in our turn; we feel its force, and out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. One cannot help sometimes ejaculating with good old David, 'O, spare me a little, that I may recover my strength, before I go hence and be no more seen!' What a scene does eternity present—the years of life past—earthly connections dissolved—the secrets of all hearts laid open—souls saved or lost—Christ, a frowning judge, or a welcome saviour—all mistakes and errors in religion at an end—every false foundation undermined—a world in flames and consumed, as though it had never been—time itself no more—eternal ages of ages rolling on in ceaseless bliss or woe! Who is sufficient to speak on these things?

"Pray for me, that since the Lord has spared me another year, I may not prove such a barren fig-tree as Lot's fore. I could look at all that is past, and view myself as no better than a lumberer of the ground. But the gracious Vindictor intercede, and his prayer is full of love and mercy; may the Owner of the vineyard hear, and answer it. I have been very unwell but am now much better. The poor fig-tree is not yet cut down. May it bear fruit to the glory of the Father. Accept our love, and give it to those around you; and believe me,

"Your affectionate son,

"LEIGH RICHMOND."

\* Adams' Private Thoughts.

\* His birthday.