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BIOGRAPHY,

LEIGH RICHMOND.

[CONTINUED.]

CHAPTER IV.

Development of his character—Dedication of his time and thoughts to profitable objects—Fondness for the scenes of Nature—Spiritual reflections upon them—Zeal in his ministerial duties—Extracts from Letters and Diary—Remarks on the foregoing—Poetry.

In the preceding chapter, we have recorded the remarkable change of which Mr. Richmond was the subject. We shall now proceed to illustrate it by its effects, which form the best evidence of its existence, and one of the strongest arguments for its necessity. With this view, we shall consider its operation and influence on the qualities of his mind and heart—his ministerial habits—his epistolary correspondence—and the more solemn and unpressive exposure of the inward recesses of his soul.

In our intercourse with men, we meet with an almost endless diversity of character; and he who studies human nature, is apt to classify those who are the subjects of his contemplation, according to their respective shades and gradations. But how painful is the discovery, when we see persons endued with the finer qualifications of the mind, and the interesting sensibilities of the heart, wasting, on unprofitable objects, the powers which, rightly directed, might render their possessor the instrument of extensive usefulness and good. We cannot help feeling, that there is wanting the heavenly spark to kindle the holy flame within. We seem to behold a beautiful and imposing structure, but it is not occupied by the rightful owner. The Lord of the mansion is absent, and a stranger has usurped his place. We turn with disappointment from the scene, exclaiming, "God is not there;" and if God be not there, how can they ever be with God! Nor can we withhold the prayer, that ere long the fatal illusion may cease, and the chain of the captive be broken.

In Mr. Richmond every qualification became consecrated to religion. His imagination, taste, affections and endowments received an impulse which directed all their energies to the glory of God, and to useful and profitable purposes.

To illustrate what we have said, we subjoin the following passage, which not only shows his powers for descriptive scenery, but proves, that in admiring the works of Providence, he never failed to associate with them the contemplation of the wonders of his grace.

"It was not unfrequently my custom, when my mind was filled with any interesting subject for meditation, to seek some spot where the beauties of natural prospect might help to form pleasing and useful associations.

"South-eastward I saw the open ocean, bounded only by the horizon. The sun shone, and gilded the waves with a glittering light, that sparkled in the most brilliant manner.

On the north the sea appeared like a noble river, varying from three to seven miles in breadth, between the banks of the opposite coast, and those of the island which I inhabited. Immediately underneath me was a fine woody district of country, diversified by many pleasing objects. Distant towns were visible on the opposite shore. Numbers of ships occupied the sheltered station which this northern channel afforded them. The eye roamed with delight over an expanse of near and remote beauties, which alternately caught the observation, and which harmonized together, and produced a scene of peculiar interest."

The reflections awakened by these scenes are thus expressed.

"How much of the natural beauties of Paradise still remain in the world, although its spiritual character has been so awfully defaced by sin! But

when divine grace renews the heart of the fallen sinner, Paradise is regained, and much of its beauty restored to the soul. As this prospect is compounded of hill and dale, land and sea, woods and plains, all sweetly blended together, and relieving each other in the landscape; so do the gracious dispositions, wrought in the soul, produce a beauty and harmony of scene, to which it was before a stranger."

Again, we insert one more brief reflection. "What do they not lose, who are strangers to serious meditation, on the wonders and beauties of created nature! How gloriously the God of creation shines in his works. Not a tree, nor leaf, nor flower, nor a bird nor insect, but it proclaims in glowing language, 'God made me.'"

In his parochial engagements, we find him fulfilling all the duties of an active and zealous parish priest. The important and essential doctrines of the Gospel, were now made the powerful and affecting themes of his public addresses. As we shall have occasion elsewhere to enter into a minute detail of the subject and manner of his preaching, it is sufficient in this place to observe, that man's fallen and ruined state, and his deliverance and redemption by Jesus Christ, formed the grand outline of his discourses; and if the truth be best estimated by its effects, he could appeal to unquestionable evidences that he proclaimed it; for God blessed it, and numerous converts attested its efficacy and power. No such discoverable results appeared in his former ministry, because it was incompetent to produce them. In addition to the usual and appointed duties of the Sabbath, he visited his flock, and went from house to house, taking care not to make these opportunities the mere occasion of friendly and condescending intercourse, but the means of real improvement, and spiritual edification. The children of Brading were also the objects of his tender solicitude. They were in the habit of repairing to him every Saturday, for the purpose of religious instruction, and his memoirs of 'Little Jane,' records one of the happy results of these youthful meetings.

Within the parish of Brading was situated the hamlet of Bembridge, at the distance of about two miles. To this place Mr. Richmond went once in every week, to expound the Scriptures, and to meet those who, through age and infirmity or other causes, were unable to attend the parish church. A chapel of ease has since been erected, and consecrated in the summer of 1827. There was also another hamlet, called Arreton, where he was accustomed to meet the poor, for religious edification. He had likewise the care of the parish of Yaverland; and as the scenes of his early piety and zeal cannot but be interesting to his numerous friends, the following description so completely localises every object, and presents them so vividly to the imagination, that we insert it in his own words:

"I had the spiritual charge of another parish, adjoining to that in which I resided. It was a small district, and had but few inhabitants. The church was pleasantly situated on a rising bank, at the foot of a considerable hill. It was surrounded by trees, and had a rural, retired appearance. Close to the church-yard stood a large old mansion, which had formerly been the residence of an opulent and titled family; but it had long since been appropriated to the use of the estate, as a farm-house. Its outward aspect bore considerable remains of ancient grandeur, and gave a pleasing character to the spot of ground on which the church stood. In every direction the roads that led to this house of God possessed a distinct but interesting feature. One of them ascended between several rural cottages, from the sea-shore, which adjoined the lower part of the village street. Another winded round the curved sides of an adjacent hill, and was adorned, both above and below, with numerous sheep, feeding on the herbage of the down. A third road led to the church by a gently-rising approach, between high banks, covered with young trees, bushes, ivy, hedge-plants, and wild flowers.

"From a point of land which commanded a view of all these several avenues, I used sometimes to assemble together at the hour of Sabbath worship. They were in some directions visible for a considerable distance. Gratifying associations of thought would form in my mind, as I contemplated their approach and successive arrival within the precincts of the house of prayer."

His reflections on this occasion are thus interestingly expressed:—

"How many immortal souls are now gathering together to perform the all-important work of prayer and praise—to hear the word of God—to see I upon the bread of life! They are leaving their respective dwellings, and will soon be united together in the house of prayer. How beautifully does this represent the effect produced by the voice of 'the good Shepherd,' calling his sheep from every part of the wilderness into his fold! As these fields, hills, and lanes are now covered with men, women, and children, in various directions, drawing nearer to each other, and to the object of their journey's end; even so, many shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God."

DIVINITY.

REV. GEORGE CROLY.

Collection for the benefit of the Charity School of the Parish.

Text, *Galatians*, vi. 10.—As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

Nearly two thousand years, said the Reverend Preacher—about one third of the whole period of the world's duration, have elapsed since the sacred book, of which these words form a part, was written. Empires and governments have passed away; one system of knowledge after another has been lost in the flood of time; all things else have changed: Christianity alone hath survived all revolutions, and endureth as it was in the beginning. Few stronger evidences than this, could be adduced of the divine character of the Christian faith; it was of Heaven, and therefore it was imperishable.

The most sublime feature of this faith, and that which distinguishes it from all others, was the universal benevolence which it enjoined.—"A new commandment send I unto you, Love one another." "Herby shall all men know that ye are my disciples—if ye love one another." Never before had "Good-will and peace on earth" been inculcated as of such paramount necessity to our future happiness, nor was there ever an excellence more calculated to make man more worthy of his Maker. Were it only to prevail among mankind to the extent commanded in the Scriptures, a comparative heaven would be established on earth.—The condition of our nature in this state of being was such, that a large portion of pain and misery must always be mixed up with it; but it was this arrangement of Providence which furnished a constant supply of objects for the active exercise of that love for one another enjoined by our Saviour. Good will without good works could avail but little. Many were the virtues of the Christian character, but "Charity excelleth them all." "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

One of the most noble, since it is one of the most extensively useful exercises of Charity, was that of giving education to the poor.—Some apprehensions had been entertained as to the policy of extending knowledge to the lower classes; but they were founded in the grossest prejudice, and showed only that those by whom they were entertained, had profited but little by the lights imparted to them.—Never was there a blessing without alloy, nor ever one which had less than Education. The preponderating good indeed was here so vast, as to make

* The Isle of Wight.