

## VII. UNITED BRANCHES.

*Love one another.* v. 12.*"Walk in love."* Eph. 5. 2.*"As touching brotherly love."* 1 Thess. 4. 9.

## Thoughts for Young People.

## Lessons from the Vine.

1. *Fruit-bearing is our business as Christians.* God wants no empty branches.

2. *Only the branches need pruning;* the true vine needs none. Christ's life is perfect and pure. We are the ones who are sinful.

3. *Pruning is not punishment.* It is loving care. God prunes the fruit-bearer that he may bear more.

4. *There are branches on every vine that do not bear.* They are cast forth. Let us heed the solemn warning.

5. *Blessed is the man whose delight is the law of the Lord,* for he "bringeth forth fruit in his season," and "whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

## Lesson Word-Pictures.

BY REV. E. A. RAND.

A noble vine, its tendrils sweeping gracefully down, clothed with foliage, decked with clusters of fruit, falling like the rich drapery of the high-priest's robes with their wealth of ornament. What a picture of life, fruitfulness, blessing to all who come to it!

All kinds of branches; some with a thrifty look, lifting fruit just forming, or drooping with their purpling clusters, while other branches are dying, perhaps dead, brown, withered, scrawny, useless.

And hark!

I hear the step of the vine-dresser. I catch the flash of his sharp pruning-knife. How swiftly it descends upon the deficient branches! Its sharp edge will be felt in our loss of property, the ravages of disease, the death of friends. How the severed limb bleeds! And yet there will be new buds, a healthier growth, a greater fruitfulness. But notice that foolish branch! Just separated from the vine, it is trying to live by itself! It has the semblance of a hopeful fixture. Its leaves are still green. Its extremity is inserted in the soil. There are no roots, though, and it can make none. It will soon wither. As for any developing cluster, it will die. Foolish branch, away from the vine. It dreams of life, but there will only be death.

But hark again!

It is the step of the vine-dresser returning. He looks at that pretentious but hopeless branch.

"Only fit for the fire!" he murmurs, and tosses it upon the bonfire-pile. At the evening hour there will be clouds of smoke rolling up from this heap, while the scarlet flames flash gloomily amid the darkness.

But notice that thrifty branch on the vine! Does it know how comely it is! Fruit everywhere upon its tendrils, reddening clusters, pulpy growth, rich harvest. O, how it honors the vine! What a goodly name it brings to the parent stem! How men desire that the roots of this vine may run all through their lives and send up shoots there! How the goodly grape-clusters of temperance, honesty, charity, courage, and self-denial honor that goodly Vine, the Lord Jesus so holy, self-devoted, fearless, loving, sacrificing!

And will not the branches, the men and women of the Lord Jesus, strive to maintain and confirm their union with the Vine? Will not the disciples strive to abide in the love of their divine Master?

The Saviour is talking about his love for the disciples. Has it not been pictured, expressed, told by the way-side, in the wilderness-hunger, on the sea in the storm, in the hour of suffering and dying? Will they not love one another? He is referring to a man's greatest love, proved by death for friends. He is anticipating his own great sacrifice on Calvary. He is calling them not servants, but friends. They see a picture of some pretentious, ostentatious lord. He lies alone on his banquet couch, or he sits solitary on a throne. Servants bow before him, wait upon his nod, run to do his bidding. They stand in the silence of a great awe, or move and give signs of life only as he bids. His frown is a sentence. His smile is a fortune. This picture is not that which the Saviour emphasizes. It is a circle of friends grouped together and he in the midst of them, their loving center. They recline side by side at the same table, or walk together in the same path. They talk in freest tones. They rejoice with one another, or they lean upon one another, and, bending over the same grave, sorrow together. O thou great Friend, make us fruitful branches on thy Vine! Utter in our ears the sweetness of thy benediction, and in the shadow of thy cross help us to live and dare; to do and die!

## By Way of Illustration.

BY JENNIE M. BINGHAM.

"*Abide in Me.*" The problem of the Christian life is simplified to this: To abide in Christ, to be in position, that is all. Much work is done on board a ship crossing the Atlantic. Yet none of it is spent on making the vessel go. The sailor but harnesses his vessel to the wind. He puts his sail and rudder in position, and, lo, the miracle is wrought. All the work of the world is merely a taking advantage of energies already there. God gives the wind and the water and the heat; man but puts himself in the way of the wind, fixes his water-wheel in the way of the river, puts his piston in the way of the steam, and so, holding himself in position before God's Spirit, all the energies of omnipotence course within his soul.—*Drummond.*