

A

MEMOIR

OF THE

REV. JOHN H. RICE, D.D.

First Professor of Christian Theology in Union Theological Seminary, Virginia.

BY WILLIAM MAXWELL.



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guage, to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. May this be the happy lot of you, and me, and all that are ours!

I thank you for your interest in the Magazine. It needs the prayers of all who love the truth as it is in Jesus. Pray that it may be useful in promoting truth and piety. This is its great object; may it be obtained. Excuse the hurry in which I write; and accept for yourself and family the best wishes of Mrs. Rice, and your friend in Jesus,

JNO. H. RICE.

TO THE REV. ARCHIBALD ALEXANDER, D. D.

*Richmond, September 3d, 1818.*

MY DEAR SIR,

We shall be very happy to see Mr. Post, and will give him all the support in our power. I wish that you could send us several missionaries more. We do most grievously want them.

I have just seen J—— B——, from St. Louis. Mrs. Rice got a letter from Mrs. T——, by him. We are thus pretty fully informed of the state of things in that rising territory. They have had one or two preachers at St. Louis, who did not suit that place. One shows a disposition to speculate, another wants talents, and so on. B—— says that the interests of religion imperiously require a man of *talents*, and fervent piety there. A man of this description, who would show no worldly spirit, but give himself wholly to the work of the ministry, would be handsomely supported.

I perfectly agree with you on the subject of local feeling; but the ardour of my attachment to Virginia does not lessen my interest for the cause of religion in any other place. I often pray God to bless the Seminary at Princeton; and that at Andover; as well as our little affair at Hampden Sydney.

I am very desirous to draw up a memoir of Mr. Davies for the Magazine. The meagre notices that have been published of him, are no credit to their authors, or the society of which he was an ornament. I have got hold of some documents, and have thought that it was not yet too late to afford a better portrait of him than has ever yet been given. Can you lend me any aid? Perhaps there are some documents about Princeton. Ask Dr. Miller if he can help me to any thing."

The new labour of writing and preparing matter for the Magazine, added to his other duties, now kept him pretty closely confined to the city for some months. He still found time, however, and made it a point of conscience, to attend the judicatories of the church, wherever they might be held; and in going and returning on these occasions, he would usually embrace, or make opportunities of preaching by the way; calling, too, most commonly, at the houses of some of his friends on the road, where the neighbours, or perhaps a company of acquaintances going on to the meetings, would be assembled, to hear the words which he would now speak to them, and in strains of earnest and affectionate exhortation that could hardly be excelled. Accordingly, in the following fall, we find him leaving Richmond to attend the meetings of the Presbytery and Synod, which were about to be held successively in Lynchburg and Staunton; and, thinking now of his Magazine which was always in his mind, he kept a little journal of his tour, which he afterwards wrote out into what he called, "An Excursion into the Country;" and published, on his return, in that work. We should be glad to give our readers the whole of this piece, which contains some very pleasing sketches of men and things, interspersed with many valuable reflections, and is highly characteristic; but it is rather too long to be inserted entire, and we can only indulge ourselves in quoting the part which follows.

“On the 7th of October, I arrived in the town of Lynchburg, after an absence from it of nearly three years. I was astonished at the changes which, during this period, had been made. New streets opened, new buildings erected, bustle and activity in every direction, showed it to be a place of considerable and growing importance. The *business* part of the town lies at the foot of a hill, along the margin of the river, quite convenient to the boat navigation; and when the improvements now begun shall have been completed, it will be neat, agreeable, and sufficiently handsome. At a little distance from the river, the ground is broken into hills, which afford various, pleasant, and almost picturesque prospects to the beholder. On these hills, quite decent houses for family residence are rising up with great rapidity. There are three very comfortable brick churches in Lynchburg. Whether the people are wise enough to attend worship regularly, in ordinary times, I had not the means to determine. All that I can say is, that two or three sermons were preached every day whilst I was there, and heard by great numbers.

“The Presbytery of Hanover met in Lynchburg, the day after my arrival. I think that I have never attended any meeting with more pleasure. Perfect harmony reigned in the whole body: the same spirit seemed to be breathed into every member; and even when differences of opinion arose, those men seemed to differ with much more cordiality and kindness than are manifested in the agreement of many.

“An aged clergyman, who attended the meeting, particularly engaged my attention, and, I may say, even fascinated me. He had, in his manner, nothing austere nor reserved; but seemed accessible and communicative to every one. All stiffness and etiquette, all *doctorial* dignity, are perfectly foreign to his nature and habits. Every thing about him is plain, simple, and unaffected. The tones of his voice are more expressive of cordiality and perfect good

will, than any that I have ever heard. His eye expresses the deepest tenderness. The whole cast of his countenance indicates strong intelligence. His perceptions are quick and clear, and his imagination ever ready to kindle into a blaze. It is impossible to hear him speak without being convinced of his absolute sincerity. His style is like himself, perfectly plain and unadorned. He never uses any but common words, put together in their most natural order, and in sentences usually very short. But as these words express the conceptions of a strong, original thinker, and the feelings of a most affectionate and tender heart, they seize and enchain the attention, and subdue the hearts of his hearers. His preaching is in the tone, and style, and whole manner of animated conversation, except when occasionally he is borne away by his feelings, and speaks too loud for his own ease, or the comfort of his audience. In fact, this is the only thing that I could censure in his manner of speaking. On the whole, he comes near, in many respects, to my idea of an orator. And he has convinced me, over again, that simplicity is one of the highest attributes of true eloquence. Involved sentences, unusual expressions, the fragments of splendid metaphors broken and mixed together in dazzling confusion, are, since I have heard this venerable preacher, more disgusting than ever.

“From Lynchburg I took my departure, in excellent company, for Staunton, anticipating a pleasant ride over the *Blue Ridge*. But very soon the clouds began to gather and sink down on the mountains; the rain descended in torrents, and roared down the vallies. It is a remarkable fact, that when one has the prospect of a comfortable house, a *blazing ingle*, and a good bed at the end of a day's journey, such weather, instead of producing despondency, has the direct contrary effect. There were five or six in company, more than half of them ladies, and yet I have never seen people more cheerful. By the way, however,

I would never advise a traveller, who has *ladies in company*, to attempt *Robinson's Gap*, unless he has time to get clear of the mountains before night; or can make up his mind to encamp in the woods. If he is alone, or accompanied only by two-legged, unfeathered bipeds like himself, he need apprehend a want of nothing that kindness and hospitality can afford. But *verbum sat*.

“There is something awfully solemn and sublime among the mountains in a stormy day. The roar of the winds, and the deafening clamour of the mountain torrents; the dark clouds which roll down the lofty precipices and suddenly involve the traveller in a night of mist, and then, struck by the wind, flit away; the summits of the mountains, one while shrouded in darkness as though the spirits of the storm were there holding their secret councils, or celebrating orgies not to be seen by mortal eyes, and then by some sudden gust laid bare, with their naked crags frowning above you; the whole field of vision sometimes limited to a circle of a few paces in diameter, and then opened so as to include vallies dressed in gay livery, and farms under every variety of aspect; one while the descent into a little vale, rendered gloomy by the overshadowing pine and chesnut, and presently a steep ascent, from the top of which one has, through the opening clouds, a glimpse of a pure blue sky and of a radiant sun, reminding him of the transient views which good men, in this vale of tears, have of the heavenly country to which they are journeying—all these objects passing in rapid succession, and presenting as they glide before the eyes the most lofty ideas, make the whole scene most perfectly interesting and impressive. The wild grandeur of the scenery, the majestic forms of nature, and even the elemental war which rages around, dilate the conception, and enkindle the heart of the traveller. He almost identifies himself with the objects about him, and seems to partake of the attributes with which they are invested. If he is imbued with the spirit of fervent piety, he associates with these scenes

ideas of God his mighty maker, hears his voice in the storm, sees his chariots in the rolling clouds, regards the mighty winds as his messengers, and though drenched in rain, and fatigued with labour, finds his heart burning within him; and pauses, that on this great altar of nature, he may adore Him who holds the winds in his fist, who has weighed the mountains with scales, and the hills in a balance—who sitteth on the circle of the heavens, and sways his sceptre over all.

“Having passed the mountains in safety, though not without much labour, and finding no public house where we could be accommodated, we were constrained to try the hospitality of a private family, and had no reason to be sorry for the necessity. The household consisted of a father, mother, eight or ten children, and three or four domestics. It was not easy to divine how they made out to pack themselves in the little house which they occupied—yet every thing afforded to us was in excellent plain style; we were entertained with a cordiality which would have commended much coarser fare, and were stowed away most comfortably for the night. It was really curious and amusing to observe the tokens of household industry, and of attention to mental improvement, exhibited here. In one place you might see a large map suspended on the wall, and next to it a proportionally large bundle of *hanks* of yarn; here a bookcase pretty well stored with useful books, and there a pile of counterpanes and bed-quilts; and the frame of a fine print of a distinguished American hero, served to hold up skeins of thread, or bunches of quills. Now, however—this curious intermixture might be regarded by some, the *tout ensemble* was altogether pleasant to me, because associated with the ideas of industry, or economy, simplicity of taste and feeling, and of that regard to the culture of the mind which ought to characterize, and which ennobles a Virginia farmer.

“From the family where we were so comfortably entertained, and which we regarded as a very favourable specimen of the Cohees, we pursued our way, to the south of Lexing-

ton, down the delightful valley, lying between the north and south mountains. This whole country, consisting every where of small hills, and narrow vales, possessing a temperate climate, and a very fertile soil, abounding in copious springs, and bold rivulets, affords the finest field for the hand of taste that is opened any where in Virginia. Scarcely a tract of land can be found so small, that it does not afford a beautiful eminence for the site of a house, a fine southern slope for a garden, and a brook of water as pure as the dew of heaven. A neat, white, cottage-built house, surrounded with green trees, would present a lovely prospect to half a dozen different plantations, and would command one equally extensive. At present almost every house is placed near the *spring*, be that where it may. And sometimes the position is curious enough. In addition to this, it is remarkable that very few families pay any considerable attention to gardening. Yet such is the kindly nature of the soil; so well is it adapted to the produce of vegetables, and many of the most valuable fruits, that industry directed in this way would meet with a most ample reward.

“It is gratifying, however, to be able to say, that the people in the valley afford many clear indications that the spirit of improvement is among them. That activity and economy for which they have long deserved and received commendation, are producing their proper fruits. Wealth is flowing into the *valley*. Agriculture is improving. A love of reading increases; and every thing indicates that the people will, in time, use the facilities afforded by nature, and make their country as delightful as the simple taste of a republican can desire it to be. The realizing of these hopes however presupposes one thing, namely, that the present inhabitants, contented with their happy situation, will remain where they are. The spirit of emigration may make sad havoc of my speculations. They who are now doing well may wish to do better, *that is, suddenly to grow rich*; and may sell their pleasant farms to Dutch emigrants, who with their descend-

ants for another century will probably build their dwelling houses *next door* to the spring house.

“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 tried, 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 journied 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 church-yard, 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 strong terms how deeply they felt their loss. Others whose emotions were too powerful for conversation,

stood apart, and, leaning on the tombstones, looked like pictures of care. Presently the sound of the multitude was heard. They came on in great crowds. The elders of the church assisted in committing the body to the grave; after which, a solemn silence interrupted only by smothered sobs, ensued for several minutes. The widow stood at the head of the grave surrounded by her children, exhibiting signs of unutterable anguish, yet seeming to say, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth unto him good." After a little time, on a signal being given, some young men began to fill the grave. The first clods that fell on the coffin gave forth the most mournful sound that I had ever heard. At that moment of agony, the chorister of the congregation was asked to sing the familiar hymn, "When I can read my title clear," to a tune known to be a favourite of the deceased minister. The voice of the chorister faltered so that it required several efforts to raise the tune; the whole congregation attempted to join him; but at first the sound was rather a scream of anguish than music. As they advanced, however, the precious truths expressed in the words of the hymn seemed to enter into their souls. Their voices became more firm; and while their eyes streamed with tears, their countenances were radiant with christian hope, and the singing of the last stanza, "There I shall bathe my weary soul," was like a shout of triumph. By the time that the hymn was finished the grave was closed, and the congregation in solemn silence retired to their homes.

"We lodged that night with one of the members of the church. The family seemed bereaved, as though the head of the household had just been buried. Every allusion to the event, too, brought forth a flood of tears. I could not help exclaiming, "Behold how they loved him!" And I thought the lamentations of fathers and mothers, of young men and maidens, over their departed Pastor, a more eloquent and affecting eulogium than oratory with all its pomp and

pretensions could pronounce. After this, I shall not attempt a panegyric. Let those who wish to know the character of Samuel Brown, go and see the sod that covers his body, wet with the tears of his congregation.

“On the 15th of October I arrived at Staunton. The Synod of Virginia met in that town on the same day. A Synod is a provincial council. According to the constitution of the Presbyterian church, this council meets annually, on its own adjournments; and is composed of bishops or pastors, and ruling elders or presbyters. Formerly all the Presbyterians in Virginia were embodied under the Presbytery of Hanover, of which the celebrated Davies was the founder. Now there is a Synod in the state made up of four Presbyteries, Hanover, Lexington, Winchester, and Abingdon. Since the first organization of this church in Virginia, it has produced a number of men who would have done honour to any society in Christendom. Davies has just been mentioned. To his name may be added those of Henry Patillo, Samuel S. Smith, John B. Smith, William Graham, and James Waddell, besides others of persons recently deceased, or now living.

“By far the most important business brought before the Synod was the subject of the Theological Seminary. This institution languishes not a little for the want of funds, and is greatly embarrassed in its fiscal operations for want of a charter. As far as I could judge, some of the members of the Synod seem to despair almost of placing the Seminary on a respectable and permanent foundation; and perhaps are disposed to throw the funds already raised, and all that may hereafter be collected, into the institution at Princeton. But the majority are determined that they won't “give up the ship.” This determination, however, is not the result of blind obstinacy, but seems to be founded on the following reasons.

“1. Money enough for purposes of education has been flowing from Virginia into other states, without any addition to the copious stream.

“2. It will be for the honour of Virginia to have in it, erected and endowed by the liberality of some of its citizens, a Seminary in which an extensive and liberal Theological education can be obtained.

“3. Men educated among *ourselves* are better suited to the habits of thinking and feeling which prevail here, and in the Southern country generally; and of course can minister to greater acceptance among the people.

“I cannot but commend the perseverance of these men, and admit the validity of their reasoning. Notwithstanding their embarrassments, they can hold all the money that they seem likely to procure in any very short time; and even with their scanty means they are doing great good. Let them persevere, and their object will finally be accomplished.

“While in Staunton, I experienced the kindness of the people of that place, and had the pleasure of observing that they were in a great degree attentive to the preaching of the gospel by the members of the Synod. The Presbyterians have a large and very decent house of worship in the town, in a state of considerable forwardness. If completed in the style in which it is begun, it will do great credit to the public spirit of the citizens.

“It is understood, that the meeting of Synod in Staunton was the occasion of exciting a pretty strong religious feeling among some at least of the people there. But what the result has been we have not yet heard.

“On taking our departure from the kind and agreeable friends in this place, we travelled by Waynesborough, over the mountain at Rock-fish Gap, and by Charlottesvile.

“So many have seen the prospect, which, in all its loveliness, breaks upon the eye of the traveller when on the highest declivity of the mountain at this Gap, that a description of the scene is unnecessary. The writer of this has passed that way more than twenty times, but never without a pause to contemplate the beauties which here crowd on

the vision. There is nothing of that wildness of desolation which seems to forbid the approach of man, but the mountains are clothed with verdure to the very top, while the vallies and plains give sure indications that the husbandman there rejoices in abundant harvests, and bears home the *spolia opima* of a patriotic farmer.

“The day after leaving Staunton, we passed the site of the Central College. It was not in my nature to go by, without pausing at a place marked out as the seat of the University of Virginia; and, as I stood in front of the buildings already erected, my feelings dictated a soliloquy of the following import.

“This is a beautiful situation! The prospect is indeed fine! The plan of these buildings too, as far as it is developed, is judicious, and does credit to its author. The extent of the outline indicates the possession of considerable pecuniary resources. The public spirit of the friends of this institution is more than idle talk. Let them have the praise that they deserve. But the public spirit of Virginia is aroused. Thanks to those who gave the impulse! And thanks to those who established the literary fund! But this University is to be either a radiant point, from which will flow streams of genial light into all parts of our country; or it will glare on the land with baleful and malignant fires; or, to change the figure, it will be either a fountain of living waters diffusing health and vigour, or a poisoned spring spreading disease and death. Here virtue will exercise her gentle sway, or vice will erect her throne. Much will depend on the habits of students previously formed; on the domestic discipline to which they shall have been subjected; and much on the internal organization and conduct of this institution. Will those who manage its interests have wisdom to consider, that mere knowledge is not sufficient to make men good citizens? That one may possess the abilities of an angel, and be a fool; may explore every field of human science, and be a profligate!

Sound principles and correct habits are unspeakably more important than genius and learning. What, then, will be the moral discipline of this national institution? Will its alumni go out into life with passions inflamed by indulgence, and with hearts hardened and minds darkened by the pride of philosophy, falsely so called; and thus be prepared to scatter around them arrows, firebrands, and death! Or will they, after years of laborious study, and willing subjection to wise discipline, appear among their countrymen, modest, humble, unassuming, pure, benevolent, and, in a word, adorned with every virtue, as well as trained to all sound and solid learning? These are questions of vital importance. Verily, there is an awful responsibility resting on those to whom this great affair is entrusted. Should they commit any vital errors, they will entail a curse on their country which ages cannot remove. But should they act wisely, no words can adequately express the extent of the benefit which they will confer.

But what will they do in relation to the delicate and important subject of religion? Will an attempt be made to exclude its influences? This is impossible. Man can as soon pull the moon from its orbit, as alter the fundamental and original principles of his nature, as to free himself from the influences of religion in some form or other. And as so surely as the University of Virginia shall be established, it will, in a short time, assume a decided character in this respect—it will be either *Deistical*, or *Socinian*, or *Christian*. It will be utterly in vain to attempt the conduct of it on general principles: because religion strongly seizes on the mind, and creates a most powerful interest in every bosom; and powerful feelings will not deal in *heartless generalities*. These remarks are founded on experiment. They are supported by an ample induction. Indeed there is not a literary institution of any note in the world that has not a decided character in reference to religion. The people of Virginia ought to know this; and in the whole plan of their univer-

sity have reference to the nature of man as a religious being. Should it finally be determined to exclude Christianity, the opinion will at once be fixed that the institution is infidel. Men according to their prejudices will affix to it different epithets. Some will call it the Socinian, others the Deistical, or Atheistical University. Christians of various denominations will loudly complain, that, although they are citizens possessing equal rights with others, and equally interested in this national school, their money is appropriated utterly contrary to their wishes. These complaints will give rise to recriminations. Warm controversies will be carried on; and, under the excitement produced by them, *opposition institutions* will be erected; and the energies of the state, instead of being concentrated for the support of the University, will be divided and expended on several subordinate establishments.

“To prevent a result like this, is the object in publishing these thoughts. I am not prepared to say what course will be the best. But let the subject be discussed; and the wisdom of Virginia be put in requisition for the solution of this difficulty. The fundamental laws of the state respecting the freedom of religion are most excellent, most salutary. If any laws ever deserved to be like those of the Medes and Persians, *unalterable*, these are the laws. Let due honour be given to the Legislators who enacted them. All discussion, then, must proceed on the principle that this part of the constitution is not to be changed. At the same time, it ought to be assumed that religion, so embodied as to make it an efficient practical rule, is to be taught in our schools. The plan humbly suggested is to allow Jews, Catholics, Protestants, Episcopalians, Methodists, Baptists, any and all sects, if they shall choose to exercise the privilege, to endow professorships, and nominate their respective professors. Let it also be a statute of the University, that the students shall regularly attend divine worship; but in what form, should be left to the direction of parents; or, in failure of this, to the

choice of the students. In addition to this, the professors in every case, must be men of the utmost purity of moral principle, and strictness of moral conduct. A man who requires powerful stimulants to put him up to the best of his abilities is not to be admitted for an hour within the walls of the University. In fact none is to be allowed to hold a place, who does not practically adopt that wise maxim of the ancients, *Maxima reverentia debetur puero.*"

TO WILLIAM MAXWELL, ESQ.

*Richmond, Januray 10th, 1819.*

DEAR FRIEND,

Your affectionate letter came to hand, and was greeted with a most hearty welcome. I thank you for all your kind expressions, and with true Virginian cordiality reciprocate every good wish.

I shall lose some two or three hundred subscribers to the Magazine at the close of this year, I expect, when all the returns are made by the agents; and shall probably not get as many new subscribers in their places. But I do not despair. I shall need all the aid that you can afford; for some of our brethren on whom I depended much, seem to be getting remiss. But this does not dishearten me.

While some complain, I receive very solid testimonials from men whose judgment is well worth regarding; and I hope to be able to make the ensuing volume more creditable, every way, than the first. I have bought a little fount of Hebrew and Greek type, and hope to show the world that we are able to give them a *little* that is uncontaminated from these springs.

I want you here in Richmond most egregiously. I have purchased a printing press; and have formed a little company for carrying on the machine. The capital necessary to commence is divided into eighteen shares of one hundred dollars. The press, with all its fixtures of type,