

**SERMONIC FANCY WORK  
ON THE FIGURES OF OUR  
FIRST ACQUAINTANCES  
IN LITERATURE**

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Sermonic Fancy Work on the Figures of Our First Acquaintances in Literature by John Paul Ritchie

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# SERMONIC FANCY WORK

ON THE

*FIGURES OF OUR FIRST ACQUAINTANCES  
IN LITERATURE.*

BY

JOHN PAUL RITCHIE.



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## PREFACE.

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A PREACHER of righteousness need not always put the thread of his discourse through the eye of a text of Scripture.

There are sermons in stones—the only difficulty is to get them out. As the artistic eye, looking at mere stains and scratches on a whitewashed wall, will discern in them the outlines of suggestive figures, so the simplest forms of speech will yield far-reaching, many-sided meanings to anyone who will take the trouble to consider them attentively.

You may see infinitude reflected in a dew-drop. As Schiller says, "Any way will take you to the ends of the earth."

The interpretations put upon the familiar texts, on which these Sermons are based, may seem to be far-fetched, but that is of no moment if they are found to be well worth the carriage. The meaning of a text embraces all that may be seen through it—all that it may help you to discern.

To chain the understanding down to the limits of the literal sense, even of the divinest language, is the death of Revelation. "The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life."

The intermingling of the elements of gravity and gaiety presented in the subject-matter of these Sermons may, perhaps, appear to some to be a somewhat questionable experiment. But whatever may be thought of such a combination as a matter of art, it can scarcely be regarded as utterly "against the use of nature;" for how often do we see the face of "laughter, holding both his sides," reflecting "thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

It is to be hoped that the established sermon style will sustain no serious harm by the application of it to *Our First Acquaintances in Literature*.

If any apology is needed for the publication of this little book, let it be found in its appearance among other "Fancy Work," as a contribution to a good cause.

J. P. R.

*November, 1878.*