

The whole region in which these Druzes live is divided into districts, each district has its secret council which assembles weekly; a delegate from each neighboring council is present at the meeting, to hear and communicate any interesting intelligence, and thus news is circulated with great rapidity, and unity of action is easily obtained. These meetings are always held at night in retired places, and the proceedings are strictly secret. None are admitted to them except the initiated. In this respect the Druze organization is like that of the Masonic fraternity. They are the strongest and most united body in Syria, and being warlike, they are now showing the world the bloody effects of their fierce prowess. How they are to be reached and subdued in their mountain fastnesses, is a problem of no easy solution.—*Banner of the Cross*

THE FURNACE OF AFFLICTION.

But there is another fire through which we needs must pass—which He did *not* kindle—but still into which He often puts His people. This is the fire of affliction. His care over those who are passing through this fire has led the prophet to describe Him as sitting like “a refiner and purifier of silver.” This is a beautiful figure. The mechanical process of refining silver is one requiring great care and nicety on the part of the operator, who sits by the furnace, intently eyeing the substance on which he is working, because, if the fire be suffered to act upon it at all too long, the effect is marred if not frustrated. He, therefore, sits ready to draw out the silver at the precise moment required, in order to subject it to the subsequent processes. In like manner does Christ sit beside the furnace of affliction, watching, with attentive eye, its effect upon those who are passing through it. He sits there eager to withdraw them from the trying ordeal when the proper moment comes. He does not sit to gloat over their pain, but to soothe it by his presence, and to allay it when its lessons have been duly learned. He sits there to see that his servants are not over-ried, and to give them comfort by his nearness to them and his sympathy with them. Let this thought, then, come to you in all its power in the day of trial, that, however fierce the flames which scorch you, Christ sits beside the fire with his eyes upon you; and if He is there, you may be sure that it is for some good end that you are tried, and that the affliction is destined, in his own good time, to work out for you “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” And is there not consolation enough in this thought! Does it not come like a cooling breeze to allay the fever of the fiercest anguish! Christ is near! Come, then, ye hottest flames of trouble and pain, and wrap me in your fierce embrace! While Christ sits by the fire, I will triumph in the midst of tribulation! Is it not worth while to languish on the bed of sickness and disease to feel that Christ is by our side! Is it not worth while to lose the pleasant lights of earth, to catch more clearly the diviner beams that mantle round Immanuel’s face! Teach me, O Christ, that Thou art near me in every hour of distress, and then though the furnace glow with a seven-fold fury, I will caress its hottest and