

Family Reading.

A REVIVAL INCIDENT.—BY JOEL PARKER, D. D.

In a season of religious revival in Western New York, more than thirty years ago, I witnessed a stirring incident, illustrating the fact that men often feel deeply the power of the truth while seeming to disapprove of its faithful exhibitions.

In the village of — was a boarding house, kept by Mrs. F —. At this house I was a lodger. Of the fifteen or twenty guests about the table was a young gentleman about twenty-four years of age. He was full of animation, and his vivacity created the impression that whoever else might be affected by the solemnities of the time, he was not.

On a Sunday morning the late Rev. Dr. Perrin preached a peculiarly effective sermon on the consequences of a life of sin. There was a singular unction and tenderness in the discourse, and its vivid pictures of hell's torments produced a most solemn and subduing effect.

As we were sitting at the dinner-table and remarks were passing freely in regard to the morning service, the young man above mentioned expressed in strong terms his disapprobation of the sermon, and added, "such preaching only hardens me and makes me worse." I replied, "It is possible that you think it makes you worse, when it only makes you conscious of sin that was before slumbering in your heart." "No," said he, "it hardens me. I am this moment less susceptible to anything like conviction, from hearing that discourse. I feel more inclined to resist everything like good impression than usual." "Yet," I rejoined, "*good impressions* are those which are best adapted to secure the desired end; and I am greatly mistaken if an increase of the effect which you feel would not be greatly useful to you. If, for instance, you should read now Watts' version of the 51st psalm, beginning with—

‘Show pity, Lord; O Lord, forgive,’

it would take deep hold of your heart.”

"Not the least," said he; "I could read it without moving a muscle. I wish I had the book, I would read it to you."

"We have one," said Mrs. F., who was fully aware of the excitement under which he was laboring; and in a moment the book was handed him, opened at the place. He commenced to read, with compressed lips and a firm voice:—

‘Show pity, Lord. O Lord, forgive,
Let a repenting rebel live;
Are not thy mercies large and free?
May not a sinner trust in thee?’

Towards the last part of the stanza, a little tremulousness of voice was plainly discernible. He rallied again, however, and commenced the second verse with more firmness.

‘O wash my soul from every sin,
And make my guilty conscience clean;
Here, on my heart, the burden lies,
And past offences pain my eyes.’

At the last part of this stanza his voice faltered more manifestly. He commenced upon the third with great energy, and read in a loud, sonorous voice,—the whole company looking on in breathless silence:—

‘My lips with shame my sin confess,

As he read the second line—

‘Against thy law, against thy grace;’

his lips quivered, and his utterance became difficult. He paused a little, and entered upon the third line with apparently a new determination:

‘Lord should thy judgment grow severe,’

Yet before he came to the end, his voice was almost totally choked; and when he began the fourth line

‘I am condemned, but thou art clear.’

an aspect of utter discouragement marked his countenance, and he could only bring out in broken sobs, "I am condemned," when his utterance changed to such a heart-broken cry of grief, rising at the same time and rushing from the room, as I had never witnessed in a convicted sinner.

The dinner was interrupted, but that was the beginning of a change, leading on to a new life in Mr. H., and probably every person in the room retains the impression to-day, that a view of the awful justice of God, in connection with the grace that saves from it, is often effective in subduing those who say, "Prophecy unto us smooth things," and that sinners are not always good judges in respect to what produces the best effect upon themselves.—*New York Observer.*