

Selected.

OUR MINISTER'S SERMON.

The minister said last night, says he,
 "Don't be afraid of givin';
 If your life ain't worth nothin' to other folks,
 Why, what's the use of livin'?"
 And that's what I say to my wife, says I,
 There's Brown, the miserable sinner,
 He'd sooner a beggar would starve than give
 A cent toward buyin' a dinner.

I tell you our minister's primo, he is,
 But I couldn't quite determine,
 When I heard him a givin' it right and left,
 Just who was hit by his sermon.
 Of course there couldn't be no mistake
 When he talked of long-winded prayin',
 For Peters and Johnaton they sot and scowled
 At every word he was sayin'.

And the minister he went on to say,
 "There's various kinds of cheatin',
 And religion's as good for every day
 As it is to bring to meetin'.
 I don't think much of the man that gives
 The loud amens at my preachin',
 And spends his time the followin' week
 In cheatin' and overreachin'."

I guess that dose was bitter enough
 For a man like Jones to swallow,
 But I noticed he didn't open his mouth,
 Not once after that to holler.
 Hurrah, says I, for the minister—
 Of course I said it quiet—
 Give us some more of this open talk,
 It's very refreshin' diet.

The minister hit 'em every time,
 And when he spoke of fashin',
 And riggin' out in bows and things,
 As woman's rulin' passion,
 And comin' to church to see the styles,
 I couldn't help a-winkin'
 And a-nudgin' my wife, and says I, "That's you,"
 And I guess it sot her thinkin'.

Says I to myself, that sermon's pat,
 But man is a queer creation,
 And I'm much afraid that most of the folks
 Won't take the application.
 Now if he had said a word about
 My personal mode of sinin',
 I'd have gone to work to right myself,
 And not set there a-grinnin'.

Just then the minister says, says he,
 "And now I've come to the fallers
 Who've lost their showers by usin' their friends
 As sort o' moral umbrellas.
 Go home," says he, "and find your faults,
 Instead of huntin' your brother's;
 Go home," says he, "and wear the coats
 You tried to fit for others."

My wife, she nudged, and Brown he winked,
 And there was lots o' smilin',
 And lots o' lookin' at our pow,
 It sot my blood a-bilin'.
 Says I to myself, our minister
 Is gettin' a little bitter;
 I'll tell him, when the meetin's out, that I
 Ain't at all that sort of a critter.

—Selected.

THE USES OF TRIALS.

"Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy."

Affliction occupies a large place in the economy of salvation, for though suffering is the result of sin God takes hold of it and transmutes it into one of the richest blessings to His own people. From whatever secondary causes the afflictions of the righteous may arise, whether from the sins of their forefathers, the cruelty of their enemies, their own mistakes or the mistakes of their friends, or the malice of Satan, it is their blessed privilege to realize that the Lord permits and overrules all, and that He has a gracious end in every sorrow which he allows to overtake them. Happy the Christian who, though he cannot see this "end" at present, is able to trust in the goodness which chastens, and

cloave to the hand that smites. It may help us, however, to "endure chastening" if we consider two or three of the gracious ends or uses of our trials.

1. That trial reveals us to God.

There is a sense, doubtless, in which trial reveals us to God, makes manifest to him what is in our hearts. Perhaps some one may object and say, no, no, we need nothing to make manifest to God what we are, He understands us perfectly, He knows what is in man and needs not anything to tell Him. True; and yet He says to Abraham: "Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from Me." And to the Israelites, "And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldst keep My commandments or no." Now God knew that Abraham feared Him, and He also knew how far Israel would keep His commandments; but He did not know as a matter of *actual fact* until the fact *transpired*. He must have the latent principle developed in action before He could know it as *action*. Thus Abraham by his obedience to the painful command made his love manifest to God. Not that God had previously any doubts of Abraham's love; but he desired a practical manifestation of it towards Himself, or to know it in *action*. The Divine love is like all other love in this respect, it delights in practical proof of love in return, nor will it be satisfied without. Remember this, Christian, in thy various afflictions. The Lord is leading thee about in the wilderness to prove thee, and to see—to make manifest to Himself—what is in thine heart, and whether thou wilt keep His commandments or no. Remember, also, that in nothing is love made so manifest as in willing, cheerful suffering for the sake of its object. It is easy, nay joyful, to labor, but patient, cheerful suffering requires a deeper love, a more perfect self-abandonment. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." "We glory in tribulations also."

2. Trial also reveals us to ourselves.

Although we do not agree with the adage, that untried grace is no grace at all, yet, unquestionably, much fancied grace has proved itself in the hour of trial to be but as the early cloud and the morning dew. "How many who have received the word with joy, and for a while have believed, in time of temptation have fallen away." How many a professing Christian, if he could have had predicted to him the effect of adversity upon his heart and life, would have said with Hazael, "Is Thy servant a dog, that he should do this." And yet when the true test of character was applied he fell. When he had eaten and was full, then his heart rebelled; or when he was chastened by the Lord he grew weary and said, "Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency." There is no surer test for the Christian as to the state of his heart than the way in which he receives affliction. How often, when all has appeared prosperous and peaceful, and the child of God has been congratulating himself on spiritual growth and increased power over inward corruption, has some fiery trial overtaken him. When, instead of being met with perfect submission and cheerful acquiescence, it has produced sudden confusion, dismay, and perhaps rebellion, revealing to him that his heart was far from that state of divine conformity which he had hoped and supposed. Thus, the Christian often suffers more from a conscience of insubordination under affliction than from the affliction itself. Dear reader, how is it with you in this respect? When trials overtake you are you able to say, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good"; and "I know Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me?" Are you able to realize that "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth," and

that these light afflictions are working a future increase of glory? If so, happy are you. This is the best of all evidence to yourself that the Divine Spirit is working in you to will and to do of your Father's good pleasure. This fruit does not grow on the corrupt soil of unregenerate nature, it springs only from a heart renewed by the Holy Spirit and baptized into fellowship with Christ and His sufferings. But is it otherwise with you? Does your heart chafe and fret and rebel? Are you saying, "All these things are against me?" If so, this is proof that the work of grace is at a low ebb in your soul, that your faith is weak and your spiritual preconceptions dim. It is high time for you to wake out of sleep and cry nightly unto God for a revival of His work in your heart, and for a sanctified use of the affliction which has overtaken you. "If God dries up the water on the lake, it is to lead you to the unfailing fountain. If he blights the ground, it is to drive you to the tree of life. If He sends the cross, it is to brighten the crown. Nothing is so hard as our heart; and as they lay copper in aquafortis before they begin to engrave it, so the Lord usually prepares us by the searching, softening discipline of affliction for making a deep, lasting impression upon our hearts."

3. Trial also reveals us to the world.

As the greatest manifestation of God to the world was by suffering, so the most influential revelation of His people to the world has been by suffering. They are seen to the best advantage in the furnace. The blood of martyrs has ever been the seed of the church. The patience, meekness, firmness and happiness of God's people in circumstances of suffering, persecution and death, have paved the way for the gospel in almost all lands and all ages. A baptism of blood has prepared the hard and sterile soil of humanity for the good seed of the kingdom, and made it doubly fruitful. The exhibition of the meek and loving spirit of Christianity under suffering has, doubtless, won thousands of hearts to the Divine Author, and tamed and awed many a savage persecutor besides Saul of Tarsus. When men see their fellow-men enduring with patience and meekness what they know would fill them with hatred, anger and revenge, they naturally conclude that there must be a different spirit in them. When they see Christians suffering the loss of all things and cheerfully resigning themselves to bonds, imprisonment and death, they cannot help feeling that they have sources of strength and springs of consolation all unknown to themselves.

Patient suffering, cheerful acquiescence in affliction and anguish, mental or physical, is the most convincing proof of the Divine in man which it is possible for humanity to give. "Truly this was the Son of God," said those who stood by the cross when they saw how He suffered. And how many who have been thoroughly sceptical as to the professions of their converted kindred, and have most bitterly persecuted them and withstood every argument and entreaty advanced in health and activity, have yielded almost without a word before the patience and peace with which the billows of suffering and death have been braved, nay, welcomed! Such evidence by persecutors and blasphemers.

Abraham might have written a book and preached all his life long, as doubtless he did, but the whole, ten times told, would not have convinced his family, his contemporaries and posterity of the depth and fervency of his love to God, as did that holy, calm surrender of the best beloved of his soul to the requirements of God. Job might have been the upright, benevolent, righteous man he was, but probably we never should have heard of him but for his wonderful submission, patience and faith under suffering. It is this which lifts him up as an example and a teacher to all succeeding generations. It was when sitting on the dunghill, apparently forsaken of God and men, and suffering the direct physical agony which Satan could inflict, that Job attained his greatest victory and made that wonderful exhibition of trust in God which has been the