

THE
VIRGINIA
EVANGELICAL AND LITERARY
MAGAZINE.

VOL. III.

JUNE, 1820.

No. VI.

[We thank our corespondent for the following. It is a copy of a letter written by the Rev. Drury Lacy, to an old friend, in spiritual distress. It was blessed to her, and may be blessed to others. We gladly publish it, in hope that some who are walking in darkness may obtain light and peace, while meditating on the topics here brought forward.]

Ararat, Prince Edward, June 7th, 1804.

MY DEAR OLD ACQUAINTANCE,

Yesterday I heard that you were in an afflicted state, both of body and mind. I hope the Lord, who despises not the afflictions of the afflicted, will raise you from your distress, and put a new song into your mouth, even salvation unto our God. I tried to lay your case before the Lord this morning, and to plead that he would bring you out of darkness into his marvelous light: that if your distress proceeded from convictions for sin, it might terminate in the saving conversion of your soul to God, but if it arose merely from dejection of spirits, that you might be supported and come forth at last as silver purified seven times in the fire. You certainly have given too much way to the power of a temptation. It is your duty to resist the devil, and he will flee from you. He has told you that God will not have mercy upon such a sinner as you are; but he is a liar from the beginning. God says, "I will cleanse them from all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities whereby they have sinned and whereby they have transgressed against me." Jesus Christ says, that "he came to seek and to save that which was lost," and that "he will cast out none that come to God through him." Now which ought you to believe, God and Christ, or the devil? Is not God love? Did he not so love the world as to give his only begotten son, that

A LETTER FROM DRURY LACY.

whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life? Does not God assure us, that he has no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but had rather that he turn from his wicked way and live? Why then should you doubt of God's readiness to have mercy upon you, as well as upon any other sinner? Perhaps you are ready to say, "they are not so bad as I am." But I suppose God never pardoned a sinner who did not think himself worse than he would think you. Are you worse than Manasseh, whose heart the Lord humbled? Are you worse than Mary Magdalen, into whom seven devils had entered? Are you worse than Saul, who breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, and who was a persecutor, a blasphemer and injurious? Supposing then that you never experienced religion, that you are yet in your sins and that you are under the condemnation of God's law, yet you have no reason to despair of God's mercy. Every child of God was once in the same condition. God has mercy upon none because they are good, neither does he condemn any because they are bad, if they come to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation; and the greater sinners they are, the more is Christ honoured, and the riches of God's grace displayed in pardoning them. As a poor, helpless, condemned sinner, you are welcome to Christ. He says, "come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And you need not wait till your heart gets more tender and humble; you may come this very moment. Perhaps you will say, "I have never repented, and may a sinner come to Christ, who has never repented?" Yes, you must come to him with your hard heart, that he may take it away and give you a heart of flesh; for he is exalted to be a prince and a Saviour to give *repentance* and the remission of sins." Suppose you had experienced the severest repentance that ever a creature endured, it would not make you one grain more worthy of the favour of God, nor one grain more deserving the mercy of Jesus Christ. If you were to put any dependance in your repentance, you would certainly be rejected. I would by all means exhort you, not to satisfy yourself with any thing short of true religion. I would have you examine yourself about every grace of the holy Spirit; but I would not have you to distress yourself about marks that the scriptures do not point out as necessary. Many think that they must experience great degrees of sorrow and distress, and great degrees of comfort; and if their exercises do not equal the standard they have raised in their own opinion, they are ready to throw all away as nothing. But the truth is, that neither distress nor comfort constitutes the

true nature of religion. A christian does not always enjoy comfort—he may walk in darkness, and seem to have no light, while he trusts in the name of the Lord, and stays himself upon his God; that is, he knows all the time, that he has no other dependence for salvation, but the free mercy of God in the Lord Jesus Christ. You should not be anxious about the degrees of sorrow or joy you have felt, but should enquire whether God, as a holy, just, and merciful being, appears amiable? Whether you feel pleased that all things in heaven and earth are under his government, and desire that his will may be done on earth as it is in heaven? Do you want every body to love and serve him, and desire that all his creatures should adore and praise his name? Are you reconciled to his law? Can you say with the psalmist, “I esteem thy commandments concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way;” or with Paul, “the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, and just and good, and I delight in the law of God after the inner man?” Can you say, that you would not have one single precept altered, that you approve the law that condemns every sin, and that it would not appear right, if it allowed one single transgression? Do you hate sin, every sin, and wish to have it cast out of your heart? Do you hate even the vain and foolish thoughts that lodge within you? Do you desire to have every thought brought into obedience to the law and will of Christ, and would such a temper of mind be esteemed one of the greatest blessings you could obtain? Do you wish and desire to be saved by Christ, to trust the merits of his atonement, and that he should have all the praise of your salvation? Would it be a pleasure to you, if you could live as much devoted to God, as you think the most pious person you know does? Are you determined, by God’s grace, to endeavor to cast your guilty soul upon the blood and merits of Christ, and if you perish, to try to perish pleading for mercy and pardon? If you can answer these questions in the affirmative, I think I can venture to assert, that you are “renewed in the spirit of your mind.” Such desires are not the production or temper of a natural heart. “You are born of God, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him.” If you have these evidences, don’t be distressed because your exercises are not exactly like those you are acquainted with. “There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.” Your convictions may not have been so powerful as those of many others; but if they have been such as to wean your heart from the love of sin, and make you pray and long for

a deliverance from its power, every effect that the gospel requires has been produced; and you may patiently wait for every effect that God has promised. You may meet with some, who have had much more distinct and lively views of the plan of salvation, and of their interest in the Lord Jesus Christ, than you have ever enjoyed; but if you have had such views of him, as to make you desire him as the Lord your righteousness and strength, and you are willing to come to him and trust the salvation of your precious soul on his merits and blood, you need not be distressed on that account. Others may be enabled to tell you the very time and place of their conversion, when they were enabled to commit their souls to Jesus by Faith, and felt the love of God taking possession of their hearts. This is a great privilege and happiness to those who enjoy it, but it is not the privilege of all those who are God's dear children. The work of grace in many is very gradual, compared in scripture to "the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." The sun may rise, and we not be able to know the very moment, because a cloud may obscure our sight. But if our eyes are opened, whenever he breaks from under the cloud, we see, and know it is the sun. Some of the most steady, humble, persevering christians I know, cannot tell the particular time when this change took place. They feel the wind blowing, and carrying them on towards heaven in their desires, but cannot tell when it first began to blow towards them. If you are seeking holiness, and the religion of Jesus appears precious to your heart, because it is right and reasonable to love God and obey the gospel of Christ; I would not have you to be distressed because you cannot tell when these dispositions were first implanted, but rejoice that God has bestowed them upon you at all. There was a time when you were a stranger to these things. You were blind, but now you see.—Don't dishonor the precious Saviour by thinking him unwilling to save you. He has laid down his life an offering for sin, and now stands with outstretched arms, ready to embrace your perishing soul. May he encourage your heart, support you under afflictions, cause Satan to flee before you, and make you more than conqueror through his own invaluable blood and merits.—I am with sincere affection and sympathizing heart, your friend and servant for Christ's sake.

DRURY LACY.