

The Furnace.

YOUR fiery trials, followers of Him
Who was "the Man of Sorrows," deem not strange.
"No Cross, no Crown!" the motto still remains
Of every Pilgrim; and the oracle
Of Heaven is unrepeal'd:—"Deny thyself,
Take up thy Cross, and daily follow Me."
'Tis in affliction's furnace, as of old,
He loves to choose His people; and although
These desolating trials may appear
To the unthinking crowd inexplicable,
Like the mysterious column, whose red glow
Illumed of old the desert wilderness
To cov'nant Israel, but lent no ray
Of guiding light to the pursuing hosts
Of Egypt,—so before a wond'ring world,
Mystic and dark, the dealings of our God
Are bright with mercy to His chosen ones,

The emanations of eternal love.
Yes! Blessed Lord, Thy preciousness and grace
Ne'er can the Christian estimate, till brought
To taste the bitter cup of earthly sorrow.
Thy Promises how wondrous! Like the stars
Sparkling as jewels on the brow of Night,
Invisible until the orb of day
Sinks in his couch. So not until the Sun
Of fondly-treasured comforts disappear,
The firmament of Truth a galaxy
Displays of brilliant promises, which, like
The glow-worm, shine most brightly in the dark.

Bereaved Mourner! call'd to take thy stand
Amid the scorching flames, didst thou not see
"One in the Furnace like the Son of God,"
Whose gracious presence caused thee pass un-
scathed
The fiery ordeal? Approach'd, perchance,
Trembling with awe, like those who "fear'd to
enter"
The cloud on Tabor; yet, on ent'ring it,
What sights and sounds burst on their ravish'd
senses!

A Glorified Redeemer!—vista-views
Of bliss!—each tongue exclaiming, “Lord, ’tis
good

For us to linger here!” So oft when call’d
To climb the Mount of Trial, hast thou not
Refreshing hours enjoy’d, ev’n in the cloud
That frown’d in terror o’er thee? Did not here
There burst on thee in bright apocalypse
Resplendent visions of redeeming grace,
The antepast of Heaven; and made thee feel
Almost in love with grief, because unfolding
So much more of thy God? The countenance
Of earthly relatives may be withdrawn,
As was the voice of the twin delegates
On Tabor’s Mount; but, like the “Three,” thou hast
Thy Best Friend left. Dissolv’d though human ties,
Jesus along with thee the Mount descends,
Vouchsafing fellowship that knows no change,
And love that cannot die (consoling words!)—
“Lo! ‘I am with you, to the end of Time!’”

Fear thou not, then, this Furnace, for HE lights
it,
Not to destroy, but only to refine;

To purify the gold, and purge away
The dross, and fit for glory. Wondrous thought!
The Great Refiner seated by the Fires,
Temp'ring their fury! Few amid the throng
Of ransom'd spirits have not felt their power.
Go upwards; pass along their bright array,
And let the Blood-bought myriads themselves
Bear living testimony. One can tell:
"Once was I ruining my precious Soul;
Eternity was barter'd for the baubles
Of a vain, transient world. God struck me down,
Blighted my prospects, wither'd up my gourds,
Laid my clay-idols in their mother dust,
And o'er the precincts of a happy home
Spread the eclipse of Death! 'Deep call'd to
deep.'

Tear follow'd tear, as wave succeeds to wave;
But 'All is well.' Each trial did but sever
The earthly tie, to rivet me to Heaven—
Shiver'd the reed, to bring me to the Rock,
And give to God Himself the creature's place!"
Another one can tell: "I lov'd my Gold;
Deified Riches—made my idōl Mammon:
God wrote its Verdict: 'Gold which perisheth!

It mock'd the hand which grasp'd it; but its loss
Led me to value treasure which no time
Corrodes, nor moth corrupts; laid up in Christ
'Riches unsearchable' beyond the wealth
Of worlds!" Another there can tell: "The Sun
Of Earth too brightly shone, and with false glow
The lustre intercepted of a land
Whose atmosphere is love. Upon a couch
Of languishing God laid me; weary days
And nights of pain were mine. Now for each
stroke

I praise Him! It was needful discipline—
To wean my spirit from the shadowy dreams
Of a vain world. The Harp which when on Earth,
Broken with sorrow, hung upon the willows
Tuneless and mute, I now rejoice to sweep
Its new-strung chords, to own the faithfulness
And love which wrung each tear-drop from my
eye!"

Exceptions rare there may, indeed, be found
To this appointed discipline of Heaven.
Some gentle spirit purified for bliss,
Not in the Fire, but by the "still small voice"

Of love, a Jewel for Immanuel's crown
Prepared. Of old, when Salem's Temple rose
In strange majestic silence, "neither hammer
Nor sound of axe, nor other tool, was heard"
Within the stately fabric: So at times
The hammer of affliction scarce the stone
May feel, and yet 'tis polish'd and made meet
For the Great Builder's use; the spirit wafed,
Like Israel's prophet in his car of fire,
Upwards to glory, tasting scarce the pangs
Of human woe! Unwonted case! to reach
The heavenly goal uncover'd with the scars
Of Earthly Battle! Christian Combatant!
The conflict is unchanged. Who would the path
Of suffering avoid his Saviour trod,
Or claim immunity from woe, when HE
Attain'd *His* crown with "garments roll'd in
blood"?

Nowhere canst thou so magnify thy God
As in the Furnace-fires! Submissive tears
Wrung from the grieved yet unrepining heart,
In silent eloquence proclaim the power
Of Christian faith;—a living evidence

To an ungodly world, that Gospel peace
Is no vague theory. Mourner in Zion!
In this thou hast a mean of glorifying
The Lord who loved thee angels cannot have.
Meek acquiescence is a grace unknown
In Heav'n, where trial enters not. No cup
Of anguish'd sorrow there to drink, no tears
Through which with murmuring lips to breathe,
"Father, Thy will be done!" Oh, may'st thou not
(If thy submission has one Sinner led
To magnify the grace which thee sustain'd
So wondrously) with humble praise rejoice?
And, looking forward to Eternity,
Would not thy sorest tribulations prove
Their own best recompence, if, through the years
Of never-ending bliss, one voice were heard
To own that these thy Sorrows, sanctified,
Had proved the means of leading it to Heaven?

Mine be the Cross, however hard to bear!
Oh, shall I not be willing to endure
Whate'er my God sees meet? How many plants
Before emitting fragrance must be bruised?
So must the soul. Endure I rather would

The sharpest cuttings of the pruning-knife—
Be stripp'd of all I have, than "left alone,"
Abandon'd Cumberer! Yes, rather far
Encounter fiercest hurricanes, than have
The bark which bears immortal destinies
Lull'd in the treach'rous calm, and suffer'd there
To sleep upon its shadows—fearful prelude
To an eternal tempest! Welcome storm
Which sends the Christian Pilot to his knees,
And, in a midnight of tempestuous gloom,
Directs the eye of faith, with longing gaze,
Upon the Star of Bethlehem! 'Twas not
Until the wind roused in tumultuous wrath
Gennesaret, the faithless mariners
Importunate awoke their sleeping Lord,
And forth the fiat of Omnipotence
Lull'd every angry wave. Oh! blessed end
Of sanctified affliction; brought to call
Upon our Heavenly Pilot, and to listen
The Almighty Mandate, "Peace; be still!"

This reconciles to every tempest-shock:
"Each crested billow wafts me nearer rest!"
Safe in that haven which no wave disturbs,

The retrospect of life's disquietudes
Will then unfold a "need be" in each storm,—
Unmingled mercy in each falling tear.
Yes, gracious, precious drops! I grudge not one;
Dimming the eye to a dark land of Shadows,
But bright with sunshine from a tearless world,
Where the same gentle hand which made them
 flow
In tenderness shall wipe them all away!

Then shall the lacerating thorn be weaved
Amid the dearest laurels of my crown;
The brightest gem which sparkles there shall own
Affliction's polish; and th' Eternal Song
Shall louder, deeper, and still deeper roll
By reason of such sorrows, whose existence,
Weigh'd in the Scales of Immortality,
Shall then appear but light and momentary,
And an amount of glory "working out,"
Beyond what "eye hath seen or heart conceived."