

seemed to partake of his own joy. The bright waters wear a new smile; the birds have new songs; the groves are filled with the presence of a life-giving Deity.

In a day or two he entered his school for the last time. He felt much more like praying with his pupils, and exhorting them to flee to Christ, than attending to his ordinary duties. He commenced his accustomed routine, but soon the scene was changed. One of the pupils while reading began to shed tears at the thought of parting so soon with her teacher. Many from kindred feelings soon imitated her. The teacher found himself unable to restrain his tears. He spent the remaining hour in accordance with his own feelings. "Though more than forty years have passed," said one of those pupils the other day, "I have not forgotten that scene. I never shall. We all wept." Years afterward Mr. Phinney had the privilege of reaping fruit of that day's sowing.

Dear reader, you have seen in this case the sinner strive to sear his conscience by plunging deeper and deeper into sin. But such is the nature of the soul of man, that it can never be at rest till reconciled to God. In a state of alienation it has tribulation, but in Christ it has peace. May that peace be yours, evermore.

## CHAPTER II.

FROM HIS CONVERSION TO HIS UNION WITH THE CHURCH.

UPON Mr. Phinney's return from Standish, the news of his conversion soon spread among his neighbors, and furnished them with a theme for not a little conversation. Many of his former associates took early occasion to call upon him, that they might converse with one after his conversion, who before, had so often made them merry by his witticisms in regard to religion; and, when they found him who once "had the legion, in his right mind," they were not a little astonished. When they left, instead of the idle curiosity which had prompted their calls, a wholesome conviction of their need of a similar change, had possession of their minds; and one of the number soon submitted to God.

Though for no good reason he delayed joining the church, he exercised his influence in awakening the consciences of others, and his own soul made rapid advancement in the new life. But he could not long remain in this condition in safety; for soon he began to feel the need of sympathy and encouragement from others, both for his own progress, and for his highest usefulness toward others. On the other hand he began to fear, that if he should join the church, and be faithful to the grace already operating in his heart, he would be called to a life more public than he desired. Here he faltered. His zeal departed. He

wounded his conscience. He could no longer be at peace among Christians. He forsook the house of God, and the cares of this world choked the germ that had begun to unfold itself in his inner life. This plant will not endure neglect. It seems not to be indigenous to the human heart. It seems rather to be an exotic that requires careful culture. It must strike its roots into the soil of a soul wholly submissive to the Divine will, and supported, under ordinary circumstances, by the sympathies arising from "brotherly love." In such a soil it rapidly absorbs all the energies, till every plant not of heavenly planting is rooted out.

Step by step Mr. Phinney departed till he was entirely conformed to the world. He was however more unhappy than before his conversion. In the year 1809, some three years after his conversion, there was a revival that extended its influence over a considerable part of Western Maine. Under the labors of Elders Z. Leach and Samuel Hutchinson, it visited Fort Hill, to which part of Gorham Mr. Phinney had moved soon after his conversion. During this series of meetings he, by public confession of his sins, returned to his "Father's house." From that time to the present he has led a very faithful Christian life; enjoying almost without interruption, a high degree of communion with God, and, as we shall see, he has been, as a consequence, a great blessing to the church; and eternity itself can only unfold the amount of good the Savior has wrought through him.

During the same revival were converted five young men who became ministers, viz., Joseph White, Zachariah Jordan, David Sweat, Allen Files and Sargeant Shaw, son of the Christian so instrumental in Mr. Phinney's conversion. Of these, one only, Joseph White, has been called to his reward; and it is gratifying to be able to state, that an account of his life will soon be given to the denomination to which he was both a great blessing and high honor.

After alluding to those above named, it is painful to state in contrast, that many, who at the same time and place professedly passed from death unto life, have given us good reason to fear, if we judge them "by their fruits," that the Savior will say to them in the great trial-day, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity." This revival in the vicinity of Gorham commenced in the following manner: At one of the accustomed weekly prayer meetings, quite a young lady began to pray for the conversion of sinners. She became quite enthusiastic, and at length exhausting her strength to a great degree, she fell prostrate upon the floor in what they called a "swooning fit." Thereupon considerable excitement arose, and soon other similar cases occurred. Not many weeks passed until it was regarded as a great virtue to feel so much for souls, as they called it, as to induce this "swooning." Whenever religion is made to consist in any thing but real submission to the will of God — in any thing but genuine goodness — there religion will have an abundance of votaries. So in this case. Not only did nervous young ladies become subjects of

this folly, but even many able-bodied men: Persons seeking this "experience," would arise in prayer meetings and begin at first, perhaps, quite calmly to exhort; soon, however, by self-moved efforts on their own part, and sympathetic efforts on the part of others, they would become more and more excited, till at last, whirling round and round, they would fall prostrate in "a swoon."

Looking back from this date, it seems to us strange that any but natural enthusiasts should have entertained toward this proceeding any other feeling than regret or disgust; but we are assured by one who has been through a long life, marked for his discretion, not to say too much caution, that *he* even reproached himself because he could not be among those favored by such deep feeling for the conversion of others. He even prayed and struggled for this blessing, as he then deemed it. At length one evening, while in meeting sighing for it, he began to feel "the spell coming over him." To that point did he go, that he felt certain, by yielding to his feelings, he could experience that for which he had been seeking. But at once, like any honest man who is sufficiently on his guard against self-deception, he aroused himself. "The influence," to use the language of mesmerizers, soon passed away, and he bitterly reproached himself for his folly. Thereafter he failed not to bear his testimony against it as a delusion.

This "swooning" did not accompany this great revival in all the towns; and it is a fact worth remembering, that wherever it did appear, there great

declension soon followed; while in other places the converts as a general thing remained steadfast. In Gorham, Standish and Raymond, for instance, where this feature was very prominent, such sad declension followed, that in less than a year many of the converts, as they were called, were in a condition far more hopeless than before conversion; while in New Gloucester, Gray and other towns where this element was absent, the converts have proved by useful lives the reality of their conversion.

These facts have not been given on the authority of one. The two ministers upon whose authority these statements have been made unite also in saying, that they cannot call to mind a single individual subject to this "swooning," who has proved, by a faithful life, the genuineness of his conversion. In a town some miles distant, some preachers went so far in this delusion that they absolutely demanded it of their converts; and, if at any time, they feared that "the burden" was too great for any under this influence, they directed others to relieve them by taking it themselves, which they accomplished by taking those to be relieved by the hand.

This "swooning" appeared from time to time for years in that vicinity; and indeed it is not yet wholly gone, as within a year a few cases have occurred.

One circumstance that greatly facilitated the spread of this delusion, ought not to be passed over in silence. The young converts were regarded as peculiarly holy, and suffered to give mold and character to the meetings; while Christians who had, by years of faithful-

ness, shown that they were living for God, were set aside as of little or no importance. This mistake, to call it by no harsher name, soon brought, as we have seen, no small calamity.

All fanaticism produces sooner or later infidelity; and never have the friends of true religion more cause for sadness, than when her garb is assumed by such a delusion as we have described. But as it will be our painful duty, before closing this volume, to notice another similar delusion, we postpone such reflections as we wish to make upon this subject to a future chapter.

To return. Mr. Phinney, after this revival, soon found a field of usefulness open before him. One day while engaged in his labor he felt impressed with the importance of having a prayer meeting in that part of the town where he resided. He says, he "conferred not with flesh and blood," but started immediately to Mr. Baker's, one of his neighbors, to ask the privilege of appointing a prayer meeting at his house. Permission being given, the appointment was made. Some curiosity was excited to see how the prayer meeting was to be managed, as no minister was to be present. When the evening for the meeting came, Mr. Phinney found the room full, but Mr. Baker was absent praying in secret, as was afterwards ascertained, for the rash man who was to undertake, without any help from a minister, to conduct a prayer meeting. When Mr. Baker returned, he not only found his house full, but six of his unconverted neighbors were on their knees begging for God's

mercy. With such power was the Spirit present in that meeting, that no less than five or six dated their conversion from it. Among these was Mrs. Phinney, who was immediately baptized and added to the church, even before her husband. Mr. Phinney was making another attempt to live without joining the church. He at length became convinced that he would again backslide, should he continue the experiment longer. After various doubts and trials on the subject of his duty as to baptism, he became settled in his course. Some three or four years after his conversion, he was baptized by Elder Samuel Hutchinson, whereupon he joined the church. Thus at rest in his mind, we shall see that important fields of usefulness opened before him.

It will gratify the reader that we are able to give the closing incident of this chapter in his own words, communicated to us in a letter some time last year. We will only remark, that the Catechism it contains is much more efficient for enhancing that religion which is to be judged by its "fruits," than all the dogmatical or sectarian creeds ever proclaimed by far-famed councils.

"It was, I think," says he, "sometime in 1810—11, I was instructing a school in Gorham. One day when I started to my school, I was intending to get a stick on my way to chastise certain insubordinate scholars. While thinking of the discipline of my school, the following questions were presented to my mind:

Are you not a scholar? Yes. Who is your Master? Jesus. Do you obey him as well as your pupils do you? No. Are you not a fallible teacher? Yes. But is not your teacher a perfect one? He is.

With these thoughts I began, in my mind, to invite the world to come and go to school with me. I forgot my stick, and when I arrived at the school-room, instead of punishing my scholars, I sung them the invitation to my Master's school, composed on the way.

### THE HEAVENLY SCHOOL MASTER.

Come, come, my friends, where'er you be,  
Come—will you go to school with me?  
Christ Jesus is my Master's name,  
Come deaf and dumb, come blind and lame.  
So heart and hand to heaven we'll go,  
Glory to God who reigns on high.

My Master makes the blind to see,  
Then come, ye blind, the school is free;  
My Master makes the lame to walk,—  
He can teach the dumb to talk.

So heart and hand, &c.

He, too, can teach the deaf to hear,  
Then, come, ye deaf and lend an ear  
Unto my Master's pleasant voice;  
He'll make your mourning souls rejoice.

So heart and hand, &c.

He'll teach the swearing man to pray,  
Come, ye profane, without delay;  
He'll change your tongues to praise his name,  
And spread abroad the Master's fame.

So heart and hand, &c.

His school-books are the Scriptures true,  
His lessons are forever new,  
His scholars nothing shall impede,—  
It is a blessed school indeed.  
So heart and hand, &c.

Come, brethren, dear, who are at school,  
I pray attend to every rule;  
'Tis best for all "to mind their books,"  
Who have all sinful ways forsook.  
So heart and hand, &c.

When these frail tenements must die,  
Then we shall lay our school-books by,  
We'll reign with Master Jesus then,  
Glory to God, glory! Amen.