

## THE SUCCESSFUL APPEAL.

Mr. Oliver was a christian, rather in the modern style, which being interpreted, means that he was a sort of half and half mixture of piety and worldliness. In early life he had looked into "the perfect law of liberty," but, failing to "continue therein," he had not only neglected to go on to perfection, but had actually lost much of the grace which characterised his original experience. After several years of spiritual conflict and mental struggle, he had, at length, settled down into the conclusion, by insensible degrees, that religion was a thing of fatuity—a matter to be referred to the death bed, and to the judgment seat; and that, in the meantime, it was his duty to make the most he could of the present life as a source of happiness. In other words, he had decided "to serve God from principle," which usually means to go through with the most prominent outward forms of religion by rule, and leave the all important interests of the "inner life" neglected and almost abandoned.

In the prosecution of this purpose he was usually punctual in family worship—rarely ever failed in his attendance at the house of God—paid his "subscription" every year towards the support of the ministry, and gave a "little something" for missionary purposes. I am sorry to say, however, that this latter contribution was made more in respect to public opinion than from any real zeal for the advancement of the kingdom of righteousness.

But to do our friend justice, he was what the world calls "a very clever man." He was pleasant and agreeable in his manners, and possessed some good traits of character, which were greatly modified, however, by the overruling influence of certain conflicting sentiments. A life of strict honesty and integrity, industry and temperance, had brought him the usual rewards of an unsullied character and great personal influence in the neighbourhood. He was always kind to the poor, and if any of this class applied to him in the hour of distress, he was sure to give them good advice. The truth is, he wanted nothing but a charitable, liberal, self-sacrificing spirit to make him an excellent man. Here was his great defect—his besetting sin. Love of the world, like the "grain of mustard seed," had sprung up in the soil of his heart, and had almost shaded down and stunted the tender christian graces which were struggling for existence in its vicinity.

Such was Brother Oliver a few years ago, but he is now to all intents and purposes, an altered man. The circumstances which led to this result were as follows:

At a little distance from his stately mansion stood the humble cabin of a pious woman, who was a member of the same church with himself. At the time of which we are now speaking, her husband had been dead for more than a year, and had left her in helpless widowhood and almost penniless with a family of children. For many long weary days she had struggled on with the ills of poverty, with a patient uncomplaining spirit. And although at times she had suffered almost to the verge of despair, a murmuring word had never escaped her lips. A few times only—very few—she had alluded to the deep afflictions through which she was passing, but always in the spirit of meekness and patience. But now her situation had become almost desperate. For several weeks she had been watching around the bedside of a sick child, with scarcely an hour's intermission during the entire period. Thus cut off from the only resource to earn by the labour of her own hands, she began to realize the miseries of total destitution. What was she to do? All earthly hopes had failed, and the widow's God was her only refuge. One dreary night, when despair and suffering had almost crushed out the last spark of hope from her mind, she fell on her knees by the bedside of her suffering child, and poured out the agonies of her bursting heart into the ears of Him who hath said, "As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." She pleaded long and earnestly, until the humble couch where she knelt was watered with her tears. At length despair gave way to hope, and she rose up with a strengthened heart. That prayer was heard; and the Mighty One had taken her case into His own hands.

At an early hour next morning Mr. Oliver was sitting alone in his comfortable parlour, reading the morning paper, and looking with especial interest over those columns which contained the last quotations of the Cotton market. The winter season had already set in, and the weather was cool and bracing. A cheerful fire was blazing upon the hearth, and an air of genial comfort pervaded the whole apartment. He had just ascertained, from the paper before

him, that there had been a slight advance on previous quotations of the Cotton market, with the prospect of an upward tendency in the scale of prices, and was about launching out into a broad calculation as to the probable income from his crop for the present season, when a timid knock at the door arrested his attention. The summons to enter was instantly obeyed, and a plainly dressed, middle aged woman entered the room. Her whole manner gave evidence of deep embarrassment, and her countenance wore an expression that indicated despondence and suffering. The reader will, of course, recognise in her the unfortunate widow, with some of whose struggles and afflictions he has already been made acquainted. Mr. Oliver received her with kindness, inquiring about the health of her family, and inviting her to a seat near the fire. Perceiving from the embarrassment under which she seemed to labour that the business upon which she had come was of an unpleasant character, he waited respectfully for her to introduce the subject. After making several ineffectual efforts to speak, she at length commenced by telling him of the afflictions in her family, of her extreme destitution, and the utter hopelessness of her situation.

"And now," said she, with a tremulous voice, "I have come to you, as a last resort, to ask for assistance. It pains me greatly to do so, but my condition is a desperate one. I am heart broken and wretched, and if not relieved soon, God only knows what is to become of me and my poor children."

Mr. Oliver listened with an appearance of profound sympathy to the rehearsal of her sorrows, but said, when she had concluded, that it was utterly out of his power to do any thing just then—times were very hard, and cotton at a low figure, and the crop extremely short. He suffered two consecutive failures in the corn crop, and was compelled to buy some provisions for the use of his own plantation, and that too at high rates.

"Besides all this," he added, "I have as you know, two daughters, and one son at College at a large outlay of money, and still have some outstanding debts that must be paid without fail this winter. Truly sorry for you, ma'am, but can't possibly do any thing for you at present."

During the delivery of this speech an expression of cold despair had gradually settled over the features of the poor woman, and when he had finished speaking, she rose from her seat, and advancing near to where he stood, said, in a subdued voice:

"Brother Oliver, I have but one more request to make of you."

"You have only to name it, ma'am, and if in my power, I shall be more than happy to grant it."

"It is this: if you can give us no assistance, do, for God's sake, pray for me and my famishing children." And bursting into tears, she turned away hastily and left the room.

The selfish man's heart was touched. Instinctively he walked to the door, and watched her retreating figure as she disappeared down the long avenue leading from his stately mansion. When at length she was out of sight, he turned slowly away, and tried to resume the reading of his newspaper, but it was all of no use. A burden was on his heart, and the tearful face and sorrowful voice of that suffering woman kept intruding into all his reflections. At last he threw aside the paper, and paced the floor for a considerable time; then seating himself again, and covering his face with his hands, he gave way to the train of painful thoughts that were crowding upon his mind. It was evident he was having a mighty struggle with himself. His manner was restless and agitated, and the perspiration stood in large drops on his forehead. Had an arrow of conviction pierced his heart? Was he repenting of the past? Was the long train of bitter memories that now came rushing back upon his soul about to awaken him to the fearful truth that he had been robbing God through a whole life time by a selfish appropriation of all his blessings? Let us see.

On a small table near where he was sitting lay the old family Bible. Involuntarily opening its lids, and glancing along the first page that met his eye, he read: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." "Have I done this?" said he to himself. "Have I not, even now, rejected the prayer of helpless suffering widowhood? Instead of keeping unspotted, has not the world been my daily idol?" He heaved a deep sigh, and glanced back a few verses in the same chapter, and read on: "For he shall have

judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment. What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he have faith and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them—depart in peace—be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding you give them not those things that are needful to the body, what doth it profit?" "Yes," he continued, "I see it all at last. I have been mocking God, and sowing to the flesh, and my religion is vain. O-God! help me this day to begin a new life."

He stepped to the door, and called an old servant to him, who was working near the house, "Jacob" said he, "I want you to get two of the best hams you can find, and carry them to Mrs. Wilson immediately." The old man had scarcely turned his back to execute the command he had received when the temptation about hard times again arose in Mr. Oliver's mind, and the enemy suggested that he was doing too much for the poor widow; at first he could not afford to be so liberal, at the present high prices of provisions. He mused for a moment or two, and then calling the servant to him again, he said: "Jacob, I have changed my mind. Go get the meal, and a hundred weight of meat, and a good sack of flour, and carry them over to Mrs. Wilson."

The old man opened his eyes to their utmost capacity and went his way.

When every thing was ready, and he was just in the act of starting, Mr. Oliver again ordered him to stop. Another paroxysm of stinginess had seized upon his heart, and he resolved to conquer the devil with his own weapons. He started to the house to get five shillings to send to the poor widow. The tempter suggested that it was too much. "Very well," said he to himself, "I will send her ten." He accordingly did so, and the temptation was conquered.

We leave the reader to imagine the surprise and joy of the poor woman on the reception of these timely and unexpected gifts. That night when Mr. Oliver called his family around the domestic altar for the evening devotions, the deep serenity of his countenance betrayed the peace that was reigning in his heart. While he was praying that God would bless the widow and orphan, his eyes ran over with tears, and his soul was filled with heavenly peace and love. He arose from his knees a changed man.—Thenceforth life had a new object for him, and that object was to do good. The poor widow and her family have been well provided for; and his beneficence and liberality since that eventful day have gladdened many suffering hearts.

The wants of the church, and the demands of benevolence, never fail to meet from him a hearty response. He says he learned by happy experience that "He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord," for the merciful One repays him thousandfold for all he does.

## Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

## "THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT."

There is much said in these days, and at this time especially, about the desirableness of a greater degree of union among Evangelical denominations; and consequently, the necessity of laying aside the peculiarities that distinguish these denominations from one another. Nor can any doubt arise as to the duty of christians in this matter. "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." Ps. cxxx. 1. "Now I beseech you brethren, by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." 1 Cor. i. 10. And it is worthy of note that this passage has greater force, from the fact, that it was written in reproof, the Corinthians at that time were in "contentions." The question however comes up, In what does real christian unity consist?

The context of the passages quoted give us a clue to the answer. Union in the first is compared to ointment on the head of Aaron descending even to the skirts of his garments. What a type of Christ the ever living head of his church, of whose fulness his children have all received, and grace for grace. "As the dew of Hermon that descended upon the mountains of Zion prefiguring the gracious effusion of His Holy Spirit diffusing its life-giving power to all the redeemed in all time, and to all ages. Thus, too, the Apostle, shews us, that not in men, but

in Christ the Church at Corinth, as everywhere else, is to be united. This is the focal point to which all true christians are drawn, when made partakers of the Holy Spirit; hence their union is in Christ, and therefore the argument of the Apostle to keep the "unity of the spirit in the bond peace; there is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, and through all, and in you all."

Let us bear in mind that the true union of the Church is spiritual, not material. In other words not uniformity, this relates more especially to likeness in form, model, or design, and may be applied to any organism.

We also remark there may be much uniformity in social compacts, or bodies corporate. The principles upon which they are organised, the laws by which they are governed, the design of their organizations may be all strikingly uniform. And again, there may be agreement in sentiment, and that too in relation to things sacred, and yet in all these, unity of Spirit be wholly wanting.

It is one thing to "see eye to eye" and another thing to drink of the same spirit. The former relates more to the intellect, the latter more to the heart; the one may be obtained by the force of evidence, the other only by imbibing the Spirit of the Master. And in proportion as we do imbibe the spirit of the master we shall be drawn together in bonds of peace. To substitute any thing as a base of union, except identity with Christ, will miserably lead to disappointment.

Is there not danger that the means employed in many instances in the present day to promote union will have a harmful tendency? There is certainly a great diversity of opinion among christians. On many points, the prophetic announcements, the truth revealed, the doctrines taught, the ordinances appointed, wide differences of opinions exist. Nor is it for us to impugn the conscientiousness of any with regard to these. We only ask the application of the Saviour's rule, "As ye would that men should do unto you, do ye also unto them." When any one is asked to lay aside any doctrine, or practice which he believes he is, as a Christian bound to retain, we do not hesitate to say, that in our opinion, the spirit of unity is injured, inasmuch as he who asks this, asks that which he would not, with equal pleasure, wish others to ask of him. We carry this thought a little farther in its application, when the request is made of any one, or of any body of christians, to forbear to proclaim any portion of Divine truth, conscientiously believed to belong to the great store-house of truth, for the sake of forming societies, however worthy their object, or for the purpose of uniting different denominations in any series of religious meetings; the spirit of unity is weakened. Surely no one would like to do this who holds "the mystery of faith in a pure conscience," and therefore no one should feel at liberty to ask the sacrifice of another. And if a compromise should be made to any extent, that compromise could never promote "the unity of the Spirit," it would only substitute so far as successful, the miserable apology of uniformity in externals for that spiritual union which is so truly desirable.

Bringing this question of Union, now so generally agitated, home to our relation with the visible church of Christ, to what does it come? namely to this, that to unite with other portions of the church, to the extent required, we must give up those peculiar sentiments, which not only distinguish us from other bodies of christians, but which are essential to our existence as Baptists. It may be replied, "Oh no, not so, but just abstain from presenting any truth not held in common by other religious bodies, for the time being, that union may be effected of the Evangelical churches." How plausible, and how different from the hemp and faggot argument of an earlier day. We cannot be won by it. We are Baptists, not by birth after the flesh, nor by any civil enactment; no hereditary prestige, save that of the Master shapes our creed. The word of God only gives us authority for our *personale* as the visible Church of Christ. Hence any change of sentiment or of practice, in regard to any sentiment or practice essential to our existence as Baptists, must of necessity impair that existence.

"Let us therefore as many as be perfect be thus-minded; and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained; let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing," and if we differ from others let us nevertheless love as brethren and thus preserve the "Unity of the Spirit."

ALEPH.