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A
SHORT NARRATIVE

OF
THE LIFE

OF
MR. RICHARD LEE:

CONTAINING

A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF HIS
NATIVITY, CONVICTION, AND CONVERSION;

ALSO,

A TENT OF HIS TRIALS RESPECTING IMPROVING HIS
GIFTS OF PRAYER, &c. IN PUBLIC;
AND HIS SUFFERING
BY THE ENEMIES OF RELIGION IN A CHRISTIAN LAND;
AS IT IS CALLED;
AND ALSO, HIS TRIALS BY AFFLICTIVE PROVIDENCES.

Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth
him out of them all.

Psalm 135

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR

1821.

NARRATIVE OF RICHARD LEE

(1747-1823)

Richard Lee, pewterer, preacher and farmer, would have been interesting to the historian even if he were not famous as a distinguished American craftsman. His narrative illustrates cogently the hold which literal religion had upon the minds of our forebears as well as the sometimes pathetic nature of its expression. The faithfulness with which he held to his light, despite almost unbearable every-day tribulations, seems almost unbelievable to our modern secular minds. Many have suffered more for religion than Richard Lee, but few more mundanely and with less reward, either material or spiritual.

Very little was known of the man before the discovery of this narrative. J. B. Kerfoot, in his authoritative volume on American pewterer, thought him to be an English craftsman who settled in Taunton, Mass. As a matter of fact, as will be seen from the text, there were two Lees, father and son, both of whom made pewter. Tradition has it that both of them worked in Springfield, but Lee the elder in his autobiography admits only to selling pewter for his son while in Vermont. At the present time we have no clear way of distinguishing between the work of the father and son, since both are marked R. Lee, R.L. or Richard Lee. Possibly the different touchmarks distinguish the two, but we do not know which is which. Notable examples are in the collections of Mr. Harold G. Rugg, Albert C. Bowman, William C. Staples, and the Vermont Historical Society.

Lee was more than a pewterer, as can be seen from his story. He certainly speculated in land, not from a distance, but by actually acquiring and improving farms in Vermont with crops and buildings. This he claims he did to pay his debts, acquired through neglect of worldly callings in pursuit of the Lord's word. He dealt some in wild lands as well, and tinkered with distillates of herbs. He had the children gather winter green for him, and repaid them with picture books. Indeed, his own reminiscences were not all he had published. Let us hope that the children did not receive some of the others (though, knowing the man, we may presume they did). They went under such fascinating titles as The Melancholy End of Ungrateful Children. A

long life, at least, was the reward of his labors. He died March 26, 1823, and is buried with his son, who survived him by about thirty five years, in the cemetery at North Springfield, Vermont.

No liberties have been taken with the author's text, except to correct a few obvious typographical errors. We print only the first half of the book (of which there were two previous shorter versions) which contains the Narrative. The latter part is an extensive consideration of theological matters, particularly relating to baptism.

NARRATIVE OF RICHARD LEE

The Author's Miscellaneous Apology

To The Reader.

I was loth for a while, to undertake this work because of my inability to do it, but being desired by many of my acquaintance to undertake it he offered to assist me therein, and fix it for printing; and having a desire to do all I can for the glory of God . . . , and to leave something which may speak of his goodness to me after my decease: I now feel willing to expose my weakness.

No doubt many serious and candid minds would be glad of the most favorable grounds, to judge of the adverse circumstances of Richard Lee, who presents himself to the world, as a friend to the religious cause. Yet I know that after all I can say, there will be different opinions; no doubt some favorable, and some unfavorable — but I must leave it, and beg the Lord to bless it for the good of some souls if it be his will.

Richard Lee.

NARRATIVE

I WAS born at Scituate, Providence Plantations, January 27, 1747. The day I was seven months old my mother left this world; and my father, a poor man, was left with five small children, four daughters and myself. I was nursed from home for some time. My father married a young woman for a second wife, and had eleven children more, six sons and five daughters.

Not long after this marriage my father moved to Swansey, in Massachusetts, his native place, where I was brought up. My father being ambitious of hard labour, was enabled to support a large family: but his zeal led him to condemn learning as idleness. The scarcity of schooling in those parts was another circumstance that wrought against my share of learning, by which disadvantage I ever expect to carry my badge of ignorance; for I was put at work at five years old as steady as a man; while others of my age were at school, especially in more noble places of learning — and being smote with the ambition of my father, I could not bear to be faulted for lack of what was in my power to do: yet being of a slim constitution and no own mother, I was in feeble circumstances to lay hold of common advantages: and as I advanced towards manly age, every embarrassment stood mightily in the way of maturing my mind by learning; for God sent adversity of much sickness and fire, which consumed my father's house, with almost all that was therein; and he escaped death with great wounds in his flesh by fire. This stream of adversity kept us low till I was of lawful age. But what was more melancholy to detail, I never heard a prayer in my father's house until this time, except in case of sickness when a minister was called, which happened three or four times; nor did I hear my neighbors pray in their families.

Here is a general hint of my obscurity until I was almost twenty-one years of age; at which time I trust God brought me out of darkness into his marvelous light.

And here I take occasion to note that ever-memorable object of thanks to God for his distinguishing act of grace in calling my parents to the knowledge of the truth, before their death, who came forth to the acknowledgment of Christ's name and worship, with the New Lights, whom they had before greatly disdained, and now joined in full fellowship with them.

But before I pass on further I wish to observe upon the shame of bringing up a family like heathen, in a land of light and wealth, destitute of knowledge to read the bible to advantage, destitute of the example of prayer, and the noble instructions of the sacred book; which I think is to expose ourselves to Divine anger; according to Jeremiah's invocation: "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen, and upon the families that call not on thy name." Jer. x. 25. The duty of family prayer has been shamefully neglected and abused by many; and we ought to try ourselves by the word of God, and see how the case stands with us; There is but right and wrong, and no path between; we must be in "the straight gate and narrow way that leads to eternal life; or in the gate and broad way that leads to everlasting death." But few find the narrow way to life; while many are in the broad way to destruction: therefore take warning. There are some brought up to a traditional form of prayer and think all is well with them; but are not attentively concerned for the prayer of faith. Those have the form of godliness, but deny the power thereof. There are others that will not pray at all, under pretension that they will not be hypocrites. But God commands all men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting, and they who worship God must worship in spirit and in truth: so that he who prays without faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is only mocking God, and he who neglects praying in faith lives in open violation of the command of Heaven. Some make great pretensions of constant prayer, and doing what they call duty, in their way, and yet use their tongues to curse, and swear, and lie at other times. O! how has it made my heart to bleed, for the rising generation whom these pretenders are leading down to hell! and think themselves in a fair way for heaven. Some are justifying themselves in open courses of sin, such as drinking, gambling, frolicking, jesting and carnal courses which they know are condemned in the word of God; and ground their plea on this: "They are not professors;" as though not being professors justified them in open violation of the word of God. These condemn themselves at large. The boldness of their sins is enough to testify against them.

But I return to my narration respecting my change, which has been hinted. I acknowledged that before my change my childhood and youth were vanity and I had a great delight in frolicking; and had promised myself pleasant opportunities at huskings in the fall before I was twenty-one and having bought my time, I felt the more

important, because there were none to forbid me in my choice of pleasure. But ere the pleasant scene had come, about the first of September (blessed be God) an unexpected blow turned my joy into sorrowful scenes. God in his providence led me to an old man who was a new light, whom I hated for his religion, and also determined not to regard a word he should say upon religion. From the prejudices of a low and traditional education, I had conceived from my parents and neighbors, that the new lights were the false prophets, deceitful workers, with many they were accounted as the filth of the world and the off-scouring of all things. But I must go to him for a job of work, and in the bargain he spoke of some cloth; I answered that I wanted some cloth to make me some clothes. He looked upon me, and said, clothes you want to cover the outside; but how is the case within: my thoughts were turned within: O! the sorrows that struck me now! From seven years old these sorrows, in some degree, at times, had been my domestic acquaintance. But now they came heavier than thunder. I saw nakedness within, and called before my judge, unprepared to appear. I saw I was a lawbreaker; nor had I been seeking for reconciliation; but still offending: nor had I ever been willing to put on Christ the gift of God, to clothe my soul with lying vanities, and saying to my conscience, "I am not so bad as others," so that I might not hear its voice; but for all this I felt myself undone! The New-Lights whom I so much hated ceased to trouble me now; for none were worse than myself, or had undone themselves more than I had. My former hatred towards them was crushed by mine own terror. Thus was my stubborn distressed soul dragged by the wheels of time through husking, until six or eight weeks had held me under my heavy load (thanks to God for cutting me off from my carnal pleasures). In those six or eight weeks I frequented the New-Lights' meetings, and (in the manner I suppose other unconverted souls prayed) I ceased not to cry for mercy.

But O! the memorable first day of the week which I attended through the day and evening meeting, and returned home much fatigued in body and mind, which brought me ready to sleep; but was alarmed in a dream, that I had given away to the temptation of one of those delightful sins I was easily carried away with: notwithstanding I supposed I had been praying more than six weeks to be delivered from sin. But starting from my pillow I sat up with the alarming apprehension — the world is at an end. And now were my sorrows rekindled with a double flood of anguish, with this important ques-

tion, *How stands the case between God and my poor soul?* The answer was at hand. I failed at heart; condemnation was full in my conscience, enforced with these words, "Whosoever falleth on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall it shall grind him to powder."

My conscience condemned me: God's holy law condemned me, (as it does all unbelievers). I feared the wrath of an angry God, which made me cry — *What shall I do?*

Being in an upper chamber, my first thought was, I will go down and try to read: the answer was, I shall not live to get to my book. Crying out again, *What shall I do?* I thought I would try to pray to God once more in secret; and had not proceeded more than three or four words before there seemed a still small voice, sounding through my heart, with these instructions — why are you afraid of the world? I then prayed with a loud voice, for all fear of death, hell, and the world, were gone from terrifying me as though they were not. And now it was as easy to pray as for the water to run down a smooth descent. The first breath of the new air was crying glory to God with all my heart and soul with strong desires for the eternal welfare of my fellow creatures; and so continued for some time praying, not fearing the breaking of the rest of two families. Ending my prayer, I got up and went into another chamber, where there were some under concern for their souls: but when I informed them of my feelings, they said they feared I was deluded — which turned me to this reflection: What is the matter with me sure enough?

I went down to try to read; but the woman of the house called, Richard, what is the matter? I attempted to answer her, was overcome, and went into prayer, in which it appeared to me that I was swimming in an ocean of God's love. After this I could speak to her with great freedom: I tried to read, then returned to my bed again with great composure: and as the fore part of that night presented me with the blindness of a natural state, which is darkness, and the pit; so the latter part presented me with the glory of God's grace and power, in delivering my soul from the depths of the pit of darkness and destruction, and setting my feet on the rock of salvation, as I hope.

And here I wish to give my opinion on the movement of the passions. At my first entrance into the kingdom of grace, the powerful effect of the invisible world in my heart (it being such as I were wholly ignorant of until now) struck my senses like lightning, which

shineth from one part under heaven to the other; and enlightened my soul to behold the glory of God in the face of a Saviour, who had been at my door knocking; and finding this blessed Saviour, it set my weak passions all on a flaming zeal; causing in me rejoicing, crying, groaning, praying, talking, and exhorting.

For it was not possible for me so ignorant of the Bible, to give vent to feeling created by a subject so important, sudden and interesting, (whence my soul was overwhelmed with wonder) than only in the feeble accents that nature could afford. I do not justify a noisy appearance, where nature and art can make a greater demonstration of the glory of God's grace. But I think I am bound to thank God's wisdom that suffered my noisy method, lest I should have condemned all others in the same thing.

I conceive the human mind under great impressions may be compared to the rain, which sometimes comes down in a gentle and still shower; and sometimes very powerfully, attended with wind. The same difference is found in children of the same family, with the same subject of joy or sorrow; one may be profoundly calm, while another is flowing with tears.

But I return to my Narration of Sunday evening; And as Peter mistook a reality for a vision, when he followed the Angel out of prison, Acts xii, 9 — so I wist not that I was born again, until Tuesday evening. I was communicating my thoughts to a christian woman who repeated two scriptures which filled my mind with joy and strength, (*viz*) "I will bring the blind by a way they know not; I will lead them in paths they have not known," Isaiah, xlii. 16. The other is, "There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the Vulture's eye hath not seen, the Lion's whelp hath not trodden it, nor the fierce Lion passed by it." The application of these words was with great joy to my soul, and confirmation to my heart; for I felt the spirit of adoption, crying, Abba, Father. And now my soul was let out again in prayer, and giving thanks to God; for his wonderful goodness in the deliverance of my soul from my weighty sorrows. O thou eternal, three one God! thou hast made, preserved, and redeemed me. I commend my all to thee.

Heaven here, and heaven there,
Comforts flowing everywhere;
This I boldly can attest,
For my soul has got a taste.

I was exceeding happy in those days, time appeared very short, and I rejoiced in viewing a blessed eternity just before me.

But it was not long before clouds of darkness would pass over my mind, so that sometimes I feared I had committed the unpardonable sin: but when those dark clouds were withdrawn and the sun of righteousness appeared again, I felt happier than before; so that I could bless God for all his dealing with me. But the winter following I was tried about baptism, for before this I did not see it to be my duty, although I thought it was a duty for others, and now I did not know whether the Lord called me thereto or not. But at last I was brought to cry to God for the knowledge of my duty, that I might do whatsoever was his will; for I greatly desired to please my God. And the matter was soon made plain to me. I saw it a command of God which I longed to obey, and a beautiful example which I longed to follow, and I made haste and delayed not to keep his commandments; and I found that in keeping this command there was a great reward, and I had a great blessing in this duty, and went on my way rejoicing for some time.

But I was so ignorant and short sighted that I could see but one step at once. I did not see at first that it was my duty and privilege to join the Church, and come to the Lord's table, and my mind was sometimes darkened by sin, so that I was afraid to come to sacrament lest I should come unworthily and so eat and drink damnation to myself. My mind was much tried about this, but he that is the Leader as well as commander of his people, was so kind to me that he let me see that it was my blindness and ignorance that kept me from this duty. And I saw that if I was fit for one duty I was fit for the other, and then I joined a Church, and Lord made it a great blessing to me. I would here remark, that I have ever found a blessing in obedience to my Lord's commands, when I am willing to take up my cross, holding forth the word of life, I find the peace of soul the world cannot give nor take: but if I forsake the Lord, and seek for comfort in the world, I find nothing better than tribulation. So that I find the way of peace is to keep my eye on the Lord Jesus, and aim at his glory in all things.

I will here reprint a little pamphlet for my reader, which briefly shews a scene of disappointment and worldly trouble which I have passed through, chiefly in the space of 7 years.

“IN the year of our Lord. A.D. 1773, I assisted the removal of a family to Lanesborough. I liked the land so well that I bought 50 acres, and took a bond for a deed in 5 years, with paying interest yearly, and the principal to be paid at the end of five years, not being able to pay down; and before I returned home I cleared two acres, and sowed it with wheat. Then I returned home, the distance being 150 miles: I had then the hard fortune to break one of my knees very bad, so that for eight months I was unable to work, besides cost of doctoring, and other charges. But notwithstanding, I had great courage and resolution to go on with clearing my land, and so cleared up the largest part of seven acres, and partly built me a log house, and paid eleven silver dollars interest money for the land, and had hired the greatest part of my household goods moved up there, and expected to go with my family every week for several weeks.

I was, however, disappointed; the unhappy war broke out in this country, and everything being in confusion, I must confess that I did not know what to do. I enlisted myself for eight months in the service, and went to Roxbury; and I agreed with one of my brothers to come down and take my place a week or two, whilst I should come home to see my family, and as it happened I had served about two months and a half, and my brother came down to take my place, and I had been sick about five days; and one of the soldiers got the captain's horse and carried me home sick; and I was exceedingly sick for three months, and confined to my bed and room, and I had to pay my doctor, and for other expences, which was great and they had a well man in the army instead of me, a sick one, and my brother drew the pay. Besides I was not able to do two hours work in a day for two years, and I have never been well a day since, which is more than twenty-two years and one month; and by this means I lost almost all the labor of clearing my land, and building my house, and moving my household goods 150 miles.

Besides eleven silver dollars in money, towards the land, I not being able to pay for the land, nor do any more work on it; which with all other losses of sickness and doctoring, has left me behind hand, and unable to do hardly any work, so that doctors advised me to take to riding for my health, so I did awhile, and traded a little, having a family to take care of, and then I moved back into the country, about 40 miles, and set up keeping a small shop of goods, which I purchased on credit, being unable to labour on the land; and being

very proud spirited, and unwilling that any body should lose any thing by me, I kept trying to make up the fall of paper money to every man that I traded with, and did do it. But others that I traded with did not so by me, and I was such a fool that I trusted in little sums, and I always sold at the stated prices, which many others would not, so that when I came to purchase again, I was obliged to give three times as much for the same quality of Goods. I used to sell provision and clothing to the soldiers and their families, whilst they were in the army, by agreements with them before they went away, and when they came home and paid me, paper money had fell, so that it would take six times as much to purchase the same quality again; which we must think was very hard for a poor man to get along with, and support his family.

I used to make it my rule to go to Providence once in three weeks, and furthermore I took as much as six thousand paper dollars, as was called, in the course of three weeks, and when I came to Providence to make payment, at the three weeks' end, paper money had fell, so that my creditors would not take it of me for debt nor for goods again, but for one half as much as it was three weeks before. Now by all these disappointments, through the fall of paper money, I was so discouraged, that I like a fool, went and took up all paper money securities that I had against me, and gave notes for silver money, it being very plenty at that time. So that I can say, that I think the turn of silver money hurt me almost as bad as the turn of paper money; for I think it was not more than six months, before silver money was reckoned as good again as it was six months before. Also, at that time I lost my wife, which left me with six little children, one of whom was but twenty seven hours and a half old; which sorrowful dispensation of Divine Providence in the turn of times, took away my house, and land, and shop of goods, which cost me more than one thousand hard silver dollars, which now by the turn of money, of the silver currency, would not discharge more than five hundred dollars.

These losses with many others which might have been mentioned, took away all that I had, and left me one hundred pounds worse than nothing, and six little motherless children to maintain, which rendered my circumstance very difficult, under my indisposition of health. By which means I have been unable to pay my honest debts so fast as I would have done, which has caused me disagreeable feelings, and many sorrowful hours, looking back and viewing my numerous misfortunes, it has been such a burden to me, that even I could not sleep

nights, and finally has almost brought me to despair at times, and no one can tell the disagreeable feelings, but those that have had the trial that I have had.

And all these misfortunes happened in about seven years, and indeed it has been but a little better ever since, which is almost seventeen years; for I have had two very long fits of sickness since, besides my family, and all other losses and crosses. But when I number myself among the class of the poor and unfortunate, I have this sole consolation left me, that in all my pilgrimage, I never bought so much as a dram for myself to drink, nor never gambled away one shilling in my life. Now I leave the reader to judge as he pleases.

I have tried all my debts to pay,
But found great trouble in the way;
This present life will soon decay,
Perhaps my time will end today:
Oh may I reach that heavenly shore,
Where sin shall vex my soul no more.

As I had hired my children kept, and being poor and in debt, and under great trials in my mind about improving my gifts in public, I had concluded that I would give up one half of my time to go to meetings and labor for the good of souls in a private way, and the other part of my time to support my children, and pay my debts. So I sat out on a journey, and on the next Saturday night, I got to a Minister's house, where I was well acquainted; and the next day I was at a meeting with him, and spoke a few minutes after he had done preaching; and then they put it to me to speak in the afternoon, to which I consented, and after meeting they desired me to speak again in the evening; and then desired me to have a meeting next day, which I consented to, which opened doors in different towns and places, for upwards of one hundred miles, for which cause I never had time to do but one day's work in thirteen months.

But I being traditionally taught that it was wrong for preachers to receive anything for preaching, therefore by my traditions, after being gone three months at a time, with my horse well shod when I set out on my journey; and when I was returning home seventy miles from home, and not money enough to shoe my horse, it caused my heart to sink within me. By this we may see what tradition will do; and therefore I find there is none so blind as them that wont see: therefore I will compare mankind to two one eyed horses, each blind

on the opposite side; if you let them have their way, going over a high bridge they will one run off one side and the other off the other side, and between the two there is a good bridge. So the people where I was brought up, seeing the extravagance in setting up their minister above all others, so that if all other children had to go barefoot by paying him, it must be done. — And some of our baptist people were so afraid of that error, that they ran into a worse one; for they say, they must have nothing for preaching — and to prove they will say as Paul says, I have labored with my hands for my necessities; and as Christ said to his disciples, that they should not take two coats, neither purse, or scrip: and where Paul says, that they that preach the gospel shall live by the gospel: — which they say it means the spirit of the gospel. As near as I can state the matter, this was as I was brought up, which I now think is to read backwards just about as much as my Congregational brethren do in saying that sprinkling is baptize, when scripture and divine reason tell us better: but believing what father and mother said was right, and not paying close attention to what the Lord hath spoken, wherein he commands us to search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me. But to my shame and confusion I learned to conform with flesh and blood, and it laid me almost useless for some time, which brought me into distressing trials; but blessed be God, he has brought me from Tarshish, and now commands me to preach the preaching that he bids me. But I shall now shew you how this Lord hedged up my way.

I would now insert a note from Mr. *Isaac Backus's* book, entitled, "A Door opened for equal Christian Liberty," which relates to some matters of fact that happened to me within the thirteen months before mentioned — taken from the 7th to the 11th page including two lines of the 11th, by the signs " ".

"After a glorious reformation, the first church in Middleborough, were bereaved of their beloved pastor, in April, 1744. The church then consisted of above one hundred male communicants; but after they had voted to hear Mr. Sylvanus Conant four sabbaths upon probation, the parish committee went and got another minister to supply the pulpit the same days. And a council of six ministers approved of their so doing. By this means the society was divided; and a pastor, chosen by three quarters of the church, and who proved to be one of the best ministers in the county, had no better place than a barn to preach in, till they built a new meeting house for him. The ministers

who *caused that division* belonged to Scituate, Hingham, Hanover, Pembroke and Bridgewater. And the setting up of the world to govern the church about soul guides, was the evident cause of the following prophane, cruel, and scandalous actions.

“Mr. Richard Lee, a gifted member of one of our churches, having labored with success in Scituate, was earnestly requested by a man in Hingham, to come and hold a meeting at his house, which he consented to. The meeting was appointed to be on the evening of May 28, 1782; but as the people were assembling for worship, a large mob came up, armed with clubs and staves, and warned Lee and his friends to depart out of Hingham immediately, or it would be much worse for them. He enquired whether they came with any authority? and finding that they did not, he, with the bible in his hand, began to exhort the people to fear God rather than man, upon which one of them violently seized him by his arm and collar, and others also laying hold of him, hauled him away out of the house, and out of the town. When he attempted to speak, and to recite passages of scripture, they repeatedly smote him on his mouth with the palms of their hands, and also made loud noises to prevent his being heard. As one who had hold of him blundered down, another shook a club over his head, and swore that if he flung another down, he would sink Lee to hell in a moment. He then said, “I look upon this holy bible to be the very best law that ever I heard of.” Upon which it was spitefully struck out of his hand, and stamped under foot, with curses and execrations too horrid to be here repeated! When the mob had got him over the town line, their captain shook a club over Lee’s head, and swore that if he ever came into that town again, he would tie him up, and whip him thirty stripes. Said our suffering brother, “that’s not so much as they whipt Paul.” *What! d—m you*, said one, *do you compare yourself with Paul!* A Hingham man said, Mr. Lee may go and hold a meeting at my house. But others declared that if he did they would burn his house down, and carry him out of town. One of the mob cast soft cow-dung in Lee’s face, and then they insulted him because of that defilement, with a great deal more of abuse to men, and blasphemy against God. Two other baptist brethren were then hauled by violence out of Hingham, and they went and held a religious meeting in Scituate the same night.

“In the above actions they tore Mr. Lee’s clothes considerably, and also bruised and injured his body so much that he was ill for some days, and then he returned home to Gloucester in the county of Provi-

dence. In July I met him at Scituate, where we were credibly informed that his safety, and even his life, were still threatened by those rioters. We then went to Boston to ask advice; and many there as well as in the country, advised him to present a complaint to the grand jury of Suffolk county, as a necessary means of securing the public peace, and the liberties of mankind. This was accordingly done, when the county court sat in Boston, in October. Thirteen men were named in the complaint, which was supported by the testimony of eight witnesses; and a warrant was granted against five of the rioters, four of whom were taken, and pleaded not guilty before the court; upon which their trial was appointed to be on January 14, 1783.

“Snow, ice, and a very sharp air, caused the travelling to be exceedingly difficult; yet Mr. Lee travelled seventy miles from his house to Scituate, and, with other witnesses, twenty-three more from thence to Boston, at the appointed time. But after an expensive attendance of four days, the case was put off till April. And the ill treatment he then met with made him determine not to appear there again, without somebody from a distance to speak for him; and the event justified this determination. For no sooner did a lawyer from Providence appear for him in Boston, on April 23d, than a proposal was made to leave the whole affair to chosen men to settle it. This was agreed to; and the gentlemen appointed met upon it in Bridgewater the sixth instant. But then the defendants could not bear to have their case publicly opened; and Mr. Lee was prevailed with to settle the matter with them, upon their paying a sum far short of what many thought they ought to have done. So that none can justly charge him with prosecuting them out of a revengeful spirit, nor with taking all the advantages of them that the law would have given him. — And their names are not omitted in this publication, out of any fear of not being able fully to prove every article; but because we could expose and give proper warnings against such actions for the future, without mentioning their names; and we hope and pray for their repentance and salvation.”

I would note that these men did not know any thing about me either good or hurt only by hearsay: but there being a reformation in the town adjoining and they being so much opposed to it, they were determined to put a stop to it by some means or other; so they laid this plan, and hired a man as a Judas, I was informed, to open his door for me to preach in, and they were to give him five gallons of

rum. But if only hearing of the work of the Lord on the hearts of sinners at a distance, will prejudice and agitate the minds so much, what would it be to them if they could be admitted into heaven with the same heart, where there is perfect peace, and praise to Almighty God, which may show us the necessity of having a new heart; and judge ye if it did not appear of the same nature as Paul did when the work of the lord was spreading at Demascus:— He desired letters from the high priest, that he might go and persecute them; and so went breathing out threatenings against Christ, and all that believed in him.

By this the public may see what a spirit there is in the children of anti-Christ, against the disciples of Christ, when they are moved upon to speak for the Lord. — But I think I can say, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

I was very happy in mind though much hurt and bruised in my body; so that I was ill for some time. Neither did it shut any doors against me; but it rather proved like St. Paul’s trouble, *which fell out for the furtherance of the gospel*. Thanks to God for it.

I shall leave this subject a while, and relate some of my misfortunes, which came on me of worldly matters, whilst I was disobedient, neglecting the work which I think the Lord called me to; which may not only be a warning to others, not to live in disobedience; but serve as some apology for my not paying my honest debts so soon as I wish to do. It is a hard case for a modest man to make much apology for himself and a harder case for a christian to plead self-justification, when confessions are commonly more suitable for us. But yet a christian may plead his innocent designs, in the fields of adversity, where I stand. And here I will give my creditors and the world the cause of my adversity or misfortunes.

In the first place when I married my second wife, I sought to extricate my self from debt; and for this end I set up tanning in Gloucester (Providence) and hired a man for one year. This was at the close of the British war with America, which caused such a turn of time, that I lost almost all my labour, and flung up. From thence I moved to Springfield, Vermont where I retained fourteen acres of land, and built an house and cleared ten acres, and sold it towards paying my debts. Then took a lease lot, and after clearing four acres and building another house, sold that for the same purpose.

From thence I moved to Grafton, in New Hampshire, where I set up store keeping, bought my goods on credit, and sold them in like

manner, which did not answer my purpose. I traded in wild land, and helped others to farms, but it all turned against me. I bought me a farm, built me a house and store, but the farm being out of repair, the profits were far behind the expenditures; so there could be nothing gained to pay for it. Then I traded in fat cattle, sheep and wheat; but being unable to collect a large quantity of wheat, I had paid for, was obliged to pay for the same again, at a double price, to answer my obligations, at the loss of three hundred dollars. Whether this was owing to my lack of judgment, or lenity or the blast of Divine Providence on crops of wheat, I leave it to others to judge. At this time my violent and successful resistance of fire, attacking a number of buildings, hurt my blood, and caused me a fit of sickness from home, and a long confinement; which added not a little to my calamity — for the partial recovery of my health forbid my labouring on my farm. — Now I must sell again to pay my debts.

My next object was pewtering with my son, and making hardware buttons; but the cost of tools was great, and we were obliged to purchase them by labour, which caused us both to be gone from home eleven months, in which time we both were sick, but through the goodness of God we recovered, and then removed to Ashfield, in Massachusetts, where we lived one year; being unwell myself and family, we met with a train of disappointments too numerous to mention; — From thence we removed to Lanesborough, in Massachusetts, where we lived two years and an half. Here to augment our debts and sorrows we all had the small pox. But after recovering I set out with my two sons a long journey, to collect debts, and sell wild land, and make payment as fast as possible. We purposed to return in two months; but I met with a hurt in one of my eyes, and outstayed the time and here the advantage was taken by three men. The two first proceeded in a legal way, and took twenty-two and an half dollars. Here I object not, but to the needless cost: but the other, a Mr. Hoyt, I had settled with to a trifle, before I went from home: If my family had lived in his house till spring, I should have owed him fifty shillings only. He laid violent hands on my tools and clothes, and household furniture, (my property being in value near 200 dollars) and sold them, as I was informed, in the daytime, in a dark room, by a candle light. A quart bason mould was sold for two dollars twenty-five cents; which to buy new would cost me thirty dollars. Two other moulds were sold for two shillings and six pence, which cost

me five dollars each; and other things in like manner. He turned my family out of doors in the winter, stripped to distress. My wife had to flee 140 miles, to her father's house for shelter. Here is a specimen of the wastage of my goods, and family distress. These tidings met me before I got home to Lanesborough. It may well be expected that I was dismayed at human cruelty.

But here my friends advised me to go immediately to my wife, get her information and go to Lanesborough and settle matters there. Now I was poorer than before I set out on my journey. I must begin to obtain my tools again, *the Lord knows how*. But the reasons why I did not return to Lanesborough were these: as soon as I got where my wife was she was taken sick, and before she recovered I was taken sick, and so remained three months: this falling sickness brought me unable to pay my debts. The doctor's bill not a little swelled the tide of debts; for I have had three long fits of sickness within twenty years; and for myself and wife we had more than twenty different doctors. Under these distresses, I have been obliged to plead the benefit of the insolvent act; not to defraud my creditors, but to have the liberty to accumulate something for them, which I have been doing; and I thank my respectable creditors for signing my petition for the benefit of the act. May they find grace in Christ: and it is my wish to make them ample satisfaction for their kindness.

But since all my desire to compensate my friends, the Lord sent sickness into my family: my wife lay a year and an half under the doctor's care, with great expence, concluding my last sorrowful scene of duty and obligation to her, before she took her exit from these dreary mansions, to where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest: where no oppressor covets her house or rest; and I joyfully hope for her soul. I thank God her friends did not forsake me, amidst the troublesome scene of her sickness; but gave much assistance: the Lord bless them, for I have no other reward, than to resign all she left with hearty thanks.

And now candid reader, I pray take warning by my trouble. Avoid needless debts; for commonly creditors have better memories than debtors; and different feelings when money is due. It is common with people to let their fancy run away with their judgment; so that whilst they think they are running in debt for goods, they often prove evils. It is hard reforming until fancy is dead. If all would learn to live within the circle of their incomes, *how much better the times would be!*

Above all be aware of that infinite debt which never can be paid, nor forgiven, but through faith in Christ; and pardons through his blood; which can take away sin or debts of trespass. Not communicative, for such we have none with God; for all our debts before God are transgressions of a law which nothing pays, but must be forgiven through Christ, or we perish.

Concluded in the September issue.