

The section in which he exhorts young men to *pray* we give entire, only remarking that our author seems to limit the advantage of prayer too much to its effect *on us*, without granting with sufficient fulness that prayer can and does, without miracle or disorder, move the hand of HIM who moves the world.

"In connection with the delicate function of moral self-review, it occurs naturally to mention PRAYER. In this scientific age, when everything is analysed, and anatomised, and tabulated, there is a tendency to talk of knowledge as a power to which all things are subject. But the maxim, that knowledge is power, is true only where knowledge is the main thing wanted. There are higher things than knowledge in the world; there are living energies; and in the moral world, certainly, it is not knowledge but aspiration that is the moving power, and the wing of aspiration is prayer. Where aspiration is wanting, the soul creeps; it cannot fly; it is at best a caged bird curiously busy in counting and classifying the bars of its own confinement. Of course, we do not mean that any person should be so full of his own little self, and so ignorant of the grandeur of the universe, as to besiege the ear of Heaven with petitions that the laws of the universe shall be changed any moment that may suit his convenience. We do not pray that we may alter the Divine decrees, but that our human will may learn to move in harmony with the Divine will. How far with regard to any special matter, not irrevocably fixed in the Divine concatenation of possibilities, our petition may prevail, we can never tell; but this we do know, that the most natural and the most effectual means of keeping our own noblest nature in harmony with the source of all vital nobleness, is to hold high emotional communion with that source, and to plant ourselves humbly in that attitude of devout receptiveness which is the one becoming attitude in the created towards

the Creator. Practically, there is no surer test of a man's moral diathesis, than the capacity of prayer. He, at least in a Christian country, must be an extremely ignorant man who could invoke the Divine blessing day after day on acts of manifest turpitude, falsehood or folly. In the old heathen times, a man in certain circumstances might perhaps, with a clear conscience, have prayed to a Dionysius or an Aphrodite to consecrate his acts of drunkenness or debauchery; but, thanks to the preaching of the Galilean fishermen, we have got beyond that now; and universal experience declares the fact that genuine private prayer (for I do not speak, of course, of repeating routine formularies), which is the vital element of a noble moral nature, is to the coarse, sensual, and selfish man, an atmosphere which he cannot breathe. Take therefore, young man, the apostolic maxim with you—PRAY WITHOUT CEASING. Keep yourself always in an attitude of reverential dependence upon the Supreme Source of all good. It is the most natural and speediest and surest antidote against that spirit of shallow self-confidence and brisk impertinence, so apt to spring up with the knowledge without charity which puffeth up and edifieth not. What a pious tradition has taught us to do daily before our principal meal, as a comely ceremony, let us learn to do before every serious act of our life, not as a cold form but as a fervid reality. Go forth to battle, brave young man, like David, with your stone ready, and your sling well poised; but be sure that you are fighting the battle of the God of Israel and not of the devil. Whether you have a sword or a pen in your hand, wield neither the one nor the other in a spirit of insolent self-reliance or of vain self-exhibition, and, not less in the hour of exuberant enjoyment than in the day of dark despondency and despair, be always ready to say—"BLESS ME, EVEN ME ALSO, O MY FATHER."