

extending a bad custom. Now, if you were kindly to mention it to him, not complainingly, but as though you really desired to promote his usefulness and influence, might it not have a good result? Just try it: and if he is a reasonable Christian he will thank you for it.

The Prayer was too long.—Perhaps your own heart was not in a proper frame to sympathize with the devotions. You did not pray in private before you came to the public meeting, and consequently you wanted a praying spirit. There was then but little fellowship of spirit between you and the brother who sought to express what ought to be your desire; and if his heart was warm, and yours cold, it is no wonder you thought the prayer was too long.

The Prayer seems too long.—Was there any preaching in it? Sometimes brethren aim to instruct the congregation, and substantially turn their prayers into exhortations or statements of doctrine. I think, in all such cases, it would greatly add to the interest and profitableness of the meeting, if a division were made, and the things that differ were separated.

The Prayer seems too long.—Was it formal and heartless? Without unction and earnestness, did it seem as though the brother prayed merely because he was called upon, without appearing to have any special errand to the throne of grace? Did he seem to pray merely to fill up the time, or to perform his part in the prescribed routine of service? Was it the same old stereotyped prayer which he always offers, as though circumstances never changed, and our wants and supplies were always the same? If it were so, then the prayer was certainly too long, even if it occupied only one moment.

There may not be much poetry, but there is common sense and piety, in the following stanza:—

" Few be our words and short our prayers,
When we together meet;
Short duties keep religion up,
And make devotion sweet."

— *American Christian Visitor.*

BEGINNING FAMILY PRAYER.

The commencement of this sacred and delightful duty must often be attended by difficulties, where the head of the family has for years neglected it.

A middle-aged man of great respectability says, " I have never done any thing since I became a Christian, which required so much self-denial, and which was so truly a bearing of the cross, as beginning family worship. I felt that it was a duty, from the time I devoted myself to the service of Christ; but I shrunk from its performance so painfully, that day after day and week after week passed away without my attempting it. At length conscience reillustrated so loudly, and my conviction that it was a sin to neglect it was so strong, I determined to make the effort to perform it the next morning, cost what it would. It occasioned me a wakeful night, and again and again I implored strength from on high. I was constitutionally timid, and when morning came was much agitated."

" Before breakfast I said to my wife, ' I feel, C—, as if we ought to have prayer in the family. We have all souls to be saved, and we need God's blessing. I am sure you will not object to it.' ' No,' she replied, but the tone in which she said it was not encouraging. When we rose from the breakfast-table, it seemed to me the children had never been so noisy before, and it required an effort to request them to keep silence and be seated. They did so, but I felt that their eyes were fixed wonderingly upon me. I took the large Bible from the shelf and sat down. I wished to preface the service with some remarks, but I could not trust my voice, and I opened the book and read the first chapter that presented itself. I then knelt, and with faltering voice began to address the Creator. But my hesitation soon passed off. I know not why it was, but during the performance of this service, my soul was so filled with thoughts of God's great goodness in permitting me to approach him, and to place myself and those dear to me under the shelter of his protecting love, that I forgot the presence of others, and poured out my heart in supplications for his blessing with as much freedom and fervour as I had ever done in secret. When I arose, I perceived my wife's eyes were moistened with tears."

" The conflict was over—the duty was entered on—and the peace which follows the consciousness of having done right, came into my heart. Prayer with my beloved ones was no longer a burden, but a delightful privilege; and ere long, I had the satisfaction of knowing that the heart of my companion ascended in full unison with my own to the throne of grace. I can now speak freely in my family of the value and sweetness of this service, and to many of them, I believe, the hour of prayer has become one of the most highly prized of all the day brings us."

THE BLESSEDNESS OF DOING GOOD.

Mrs. Mary A. Dennison, whose recent volume of " Home Pictures " is attracting so much attention, we regard as one of our best delineators of social and domestic scenes. There is truth to nature in nearly everything she writes; and often a tenderness and pathos that overcome the feelings irresistibly. Witness the following from the Olive Branch. A poor wife and her daughter are toiling hard, early and late, amid self-denial and privations, to pay debt incurred by the husband and father. The

daughter, who has twenty dollars in her purse, goes to the home of a rich creditor, in order to tender him the sum in part payment, when this scene transpires:—

" Softly her feet sunk in the luxurious hall carpet. Stagnant in bronze and marble lined all the way to the staircase. The splendor of the room into which she was ushered, seemed to her inexperienced eyes too beautiful for actual use, and he who came in with his kind glance and handsome face, the noblest perfection of manhood she had ever seen.

" Well, young lady," he said, blandly smiling, " to what am I indebted for this pleasure?"

" My father, sir, died in your debt, and Eva, blushing, speaking very low and softly. " By the strictest economy and very hard work, we, my mother and I, have been able to pay all her creditors but yourself. If you will be kind enough to receive the balance of your account in small sums—I am sorry they must be so small, sir—we can, in the course of a few years, fully liquidate the debt, and then"—a sweet expression lighted up her eyes—we shall have fulfilled my father's dying wish, that every stain might be wiped from his honor." She paused for a moment, and said again, feebly, " My father was very unfortunate, sir, and broken in health for many years; but, oh, sir, he was honourable; he would have paid the last cent if it had left him a beggar."

" Very thoughtful said Mr. Miner, his dark eyes fastened upon the grateful face before him. After a moment of silence he raised his head, threw back the mass of curling hair that shadowed his handsome brow and said—

" I remember your father well. I regretted his death. He was a fine fellow, a fine fellow," he added musingly. " but, my dear young lady, have you the means? do you not embarrass yourself by making these payments?"

" Eva blushed again, and looked up, ingenuously, replied, " I am obliged to work, sir, but no labour would be too arduous that might save the memory of such a father from disgrace."

" This he spoke with deep emotion. The rich man turned with a choking in his throat and tears glistening on his lashes. Eva timidly held out the two gold pieces, he took them and, bidding her stay a moment, hastily left the room.

Almost instantly returning, he handed her a sealed note, saying, " There is the receipt, young lady, and allow me to add that the mother of such a child must be a happy woman. The whole debt, I find, is nine hundred and seventy-five dollars. You will see by my note what arrangements I have made, and I hope they will be satisfactory."

Eva left him with a lighter heart, and a burning cheek at his praise. His manner was so gentle, so fatherly, that she felt he would not impose hard conditions, and it would be a pleasure to pay one so kind and forbearing.

At last she was home, and breathlessly sitting at her mother's feet, she opened her letter. Wonder of wonders—a bank note enclosed; she held it without speaking, or looking at its value.

" Read it," she said, after a moment's bewilderment, placing the letter in her mother's hands—" here are fifty dollars; what can it mean?"

" This," said the sick woman, bursting into tears, " is a receipt in full, releasing you from payment of your father's debt. Kind gracious man—Heaven will bless him—God will shower mercies upon him. From a grateful heart I call upon the father to reward him for this act of kindness Oh; what shall we say, what shall we do to thank him?"

" Mother," said Eva, smiling through her tears, " I felt as if it were an angel of goodness. Oh, they do wrong, who say that all who are wealthy have hard hearts. Mother, can it be possible we are so rich? I wish he knew how happy he has made us, how much we love and reverence him whenever we think or speak of him, or even hear him spoken of!"

" He has bound two hearts to him for ever," murmured her mother.

" Yes, dear Mr. Miner! little he thought how many comforts we wanted. Now we need not stint the fire; we may buy coal and have one cheerful blaze, please God. And the tea, and the strip of carpet, the little luxuries for you, dear mother; and the time, and a very few books for myself. I declare, I'm so thankful, I feel as if I ought to write back and tell him that we shall love him so long as we live."

" That evening the grate, heaped with Lehigh, gave the little room an air of ruddy comfort. Eva sat near, her curls bound softly back from her pure forehead, inditing a touching letter to their benefactor. Her mother's face, lightened with the loss of carking care, shone with a placid smile, and her every thought was a prayer calling down blessings upon the good rich man.

" In another room, far different from the widow's home, but also bright with the blaze of a genial fire, whose red light made richer the polish of costly furniture, sat the noble merchant.

" Pa, what makes you look so happy?" asked Lina, a beautiful girl, passing her smooth hand over his brow.

" Don't I always look happy, my little Lina?"

" Yes, but you keep shutting your eyes and smiling—so;" and her bright face reflected his own. " I think you've had some thing very nice to-day; what was it?"

" Does my little daughter really want to know what has made her father look so happy? Here is my Bible, let her turn to the Acts of the Apostle, 20th chapter, 35th verse, and read it carefully."

" The beautiful child turned reverently the pages of the Holy Book, and as she read she looked up in her father's eyes—

" And to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said it to more blessed to give than to receive."