

The Habit of Prayer.



WHEN Hezekiah received the blasphemous letter from Rabshakeh, he knew what to do in his extremity, for he "spread it before the Lord." When Nehemiah was challenged by the Persian monarch for his sadness of countenance, and asked what his request was, he was not dismayed, for even with the king's cup in his hand, "he prayed unto the God of heaven." When this mutinous band, at the sight of Ziklag's smouldering ruins, spake of stoning David, he was not appalled, for "he encouraged himself in the Lord his God," and said, "bring me hither the ephod." When his "thorn in the flesh" afflicted Paul, he, too, had his resource in prayer, and "besought the Lord thrice" concerning it. And to take the highest and holiest example, when the Divine Lord Himself was oppressed by that mysterious agony, which came upon Him in Gethsemane. He cried, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

Now, if we ask how it came that in these times of special emergency those great ones ran first to God we shall find the answer in the fact that prayer had become the habit of their lives. They had kept always open the pathway to the mercy-seat; so in the hour of urgency they could find it easily, and run along it with speed. These were not exceptional instances in their histories, or if exceptional at all, they were not in the direction which their souls took, but only in the gravity and perplexity of the crisis. The men who never pray save when they are in peril, rarely, if ever, get at such times the full benefit of prayer. Their cry then resembles the shriek of a conquered enemy for quarter, and is not the entreaty of a loving son for help, and so it brings them little relief. But he who has been daily, or even more frequently, at the mercy-seat for years, and knows God as his Friend, receives always grace sufficient for him, and strength according to his day.

Not long ago, a friend told us that when a youth he was sent by his father for some purpose or other to a farm-steading which had been for a long time tenantless and neglected. The buildings were going to ruin; the grass had grown in the court-yard; the road into the place was almost indistinguishable from the field along the side of which it ran. There was no trace of the recent presence of human beings, except in one particular, and that was *the pathway to the well*. That had been trodden by many feet every day for years, and it was still hard, almost as asphalt, clearly marked and easily found. So let it be in our case with the foot-walk to the mercy-seat. Whatever else we neglect, let us keep up the

habit of communion with God. Prayer is the key of position. He who holds that has still God in reserve, and can say, "The Lord is on my side; I will not fear what man can do unto me."—*Rev. W. Taylor, D.D.*

"Only Just Tell."

Mathew xiv. 12.

BEARING the burdens alone, My child!
Sending away thy Friend!
Dost thou not think I can help thee, child?
Canst I succour lend?

Only just tell Me thy greatest grief;
Whisper thy hidden care:
Even the telling will bring relief,
Giving the less to bear.

Trust Me, I never will thee betray,
Bad though thy case may be;
Only just tell, if thou canst not pray,
Leaving thy prayer* to Me.

Lift up thine arms unto Me, poor child!
Burdens and all I'll take;
Throw thyself fully upon Me, child,
Knowing I'll not forsake.

* Heb. vii. 25.

CHARLOTTE MURRAY.

Three Thousand Stones.



E are not to measure power by results. Our work often seems to depend upon our success. If we are successful we are stimulated to more work; if we are unsuccessful, we are discouraged. We often hear it said that if we were only filled with the Holy Ghost, men and women would be converted by hundreds. You remember that Peter was filled with the Holy Ghost, and he preached his sermon on the Day of Pentecost, and secured 3,000 souls. Men say, if we were only filled with the Holy Ghost people would run and cry, "What shall we do?" But Stephen was filled with the Holy Ghost just as really as Peter, and all he got was 3,000 stones! One man got 3,000 souls, and another 3,000 stones. But Stephen did not live to see what he got. He got the stones, but soon after he got Saul of Tarsus, who really found the beginning of his Christian life in those words of Stephen which cut him to the heart, and which sent him thoughtful and troubled down to Damascus; and, so out of Stephen came Paul, or, in another sense, we may say, that out of the grave of Stephen rose the Apostle Paul. Let us not be discouraged or over much encouraged by the immediate results of our work.—*Dr. G. F. Pentecost.*