

"trust ourselves in God's hands," because we use all possible means for procuring the fulfilment of our legitimate desires, of which means we believe prayer to be one.

It is not quite an accurate statement of the case to say that we believe we should "pray only for such things as, for aught we know, may happen whether we pray or not." Out of the certain and the impossible we cannot possibly tell whether anything may happen or not; but we do not, therefore, remain inactive. The "region of uncertainty" is, undoubtedly, the region of human prayer as it is of human effort. Where we see a thing to be impossible, we neither pray nor labour. A passage in the present writer's original paper has been somewhat unfairly treated. It was said that no one would be "so presumptuous as to pray for the reversal of those conditions of our mortal life, on the uniform action of which all human calculations depend," and we are asked whether every physical law is not "a condition of our mortal life?" But, in the first place, we do not ask for a reversal of any "physical law," and in the next place, of course, what was meant was, that it would be selfish and wicked to pray, for instance, for our own convenience, that either seed-time or harvest might not come,* whereas, it is neither selfish nor wicked to pray for a timely shower or restoration to health, the granting of which, so far as we know, need injure no one. Neither the present writer, nor any one else, has "made it a Christian duty to imitate Elijah," in praying for what was a miraculous or an exceptional cessation of rain. The instance is given by St. James, not to show that we should imitate Elijah in the object of his prayer, but simply

to show that "the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much," in the physical as well as the spiritual sphere. We believe that God does not give the special direction and impulse to pray for anything of a miraculous nature except when, for wise reasons, He intends to answer it by a departure from His ordinary mode of procedure; and this is our answer to those who ask why we do not now pray for things we call miraculous. Our Lord Himself worked no needless miracles, and would not cast himself from a pinnacle of the Temple, when tempted to do so for an inadequate or unworthy end. Much more, for His followers to petition for the miraculous, without special direction, outward or inward, would be presumptuous in the extreme. We are told that, in praying for the removal of disease, we wish "that the case may not be left to the action of the ordinary laws of nature." To their undirected, spontaneous action, we certainly do not wish it left; otherwise we should not call in a physician or apply remedies, by which we desire to alter the course of these laws, and probably change the result. If man can thus direct and modify the course of these laws, are we to suppose that God cannot do so, either through these laws themselves, or by a direct act of power? Are we to forget that He can and does "bless human agency for the production of physical effects," or to assert that "God never can or never does use any other agency than that of man to act upon physical causation?" If so, we make at least a very groundless assertion. How often, in disease, does it happen that its course is determined by a seeming "accident," or a train of such. Are we to suppose that He who controls and directs all things has nothing to do with these, because free and responsible human agents may intervene? Sometimes the joy of the sudden presence of a beloved friend has recalled the ebbing tide of life, when all seemed hopeless. There is surely nothing unreasonable, nothing at variance with true science, in believing that He from whom life comes at first, might directly impart to that mysterious principle which we call vitality, sufficient force to enable it to throw off the disease. A well authenticated case is known to the present writer, in which the recovery of a little girl from an apparently hopeless malady was attributed by the at-

* The objection to this distinction "implies the argument that the possibility of prayer being answered does not depend at all on the reasonableness or unreasonableness of the petition, and that a prayer for something which involves the ruin of a world is quite as absurd as a petition for something which, for aught we know, or for anything that is probably true, may be done without any greater disturbance than is produced by any of our own actions in 'changing the existing order.' This argument is against common sense, and is obviously founded solely on the assumption that the reasonableness or unreasonableness of a petition has no bearing whatever on the possibility of its being granted, which possibility is absolutely negatived, wherever any physical change is concerned, however small this change may be."—Duke of Argyle, in *Contemporary Review*.