

ming pitcher and the virgin earth which her careful hands bring to the greenhouse.

Carry this same principle into your religion. Do you pray with your lips for growth in holiness, growth in heavenly-mindedness, growth in spiritual *stamina*? Then to the work of cleansing the heart-field! Then to the putting up of the tares of covetousness—the johnswort of pride—the nettles of selfishness—the briars of deceit—the overgrown burdocks of sloth—and the seed-scattering thistle of unbelief! Pull them by the roots. Give your inward lusts no quarter. Keep no terms with them. Make no compromise with some darling sin to sprout and grow unobserved in some back corner of your soul-garden. Clear out every weed, in order that the seed-corn of godliness may have the full strength of the affections and the energies to make it grow. Watch over that precious seed. Water it with prayers and penitential tears. Strengthen it with Bible truth. And as you pray for the growth of heart-piety, let no indulged lust, no pet sin, harboured in secret places, prove your uttered prayer to be an abomination in the sight of the all-searching God. "If I regard iniquity in my heart" (that is, if I cling to it and cherish it) "God will not hear me." Nor will the Lord of holiness answer with a *Yea* what we are practically answering with a *Nay*.

2. Let us illustrate and apply this principle, in the next place, to parents who are praying for the conversion of their children. No petition is more fitting than this; none could be more acceptable to God. But what hope have you, my friend, for the renewal of your children's hearts, if you pray in one direction with the lips, and quite in the opposite direction with the life? We see constantly the two antagonistic types of parental influence. Both are nominally Christian: only one is really such. The one man pleads at the altar for the sanctification of his household—that his sons may become sons of God, and his daughters may be as polished stones in the temple of Christ. He makes religion prominent in his family; it is visible, legible, and *above board*. The books that are brought home for the children to read, the newspapers that are taken, the amusements that are chosen, the society that is sought, the aims in life that are set before those children, all bear in one direction and in the right direction. God is not asked by that father to convert his offspring to godliness while he is doing his best to pervert them to sin and worldliness. Nor is God implored to convert them while the parent uses no agencies to effect the longed-for result. No more than the Lord would be asked to restore the sick boy from a typhus fever, and yet no physician called in and no medicine administered. How much worse if the father, having prayed that his child be restored, should fall to giving the poor boy strychnine or prussic acid in large doses!

Yet professed Christians do this very thing often in morals and religion. They pray for their children's recovery to holiness, and then poison them! They pray for a son's purity, and then flash the wine-cup before his eyes. They pray for a daughter's conversion, with a theatre-ticket in their pockets—a "family ticket" for the whole household! They go to church, look devout, and then come home to trifle, to gossip—to entertain Sunday visitors at a sumptuous feast, to talk politics, to do anything, in short, but follow up the teachings of God's minister with