

window up. Men pray for others, and *feel* it is right—men pray for themselves, and feel they must: they pray for faith, and gentleness, and love and truth—they pray everywhere, upon desert plains, upon the wild, unpeopled wastes of the earth—in crowded thoroughfares—in gorgeous temples—in humble cottages—in the mansions of the great and the noble—the *people* pray—and the great human heart throbs responsive to the Master's voice that rings out over all the want and woe and tearful agony of the world, "Ask and it shall be given you—seek and ye shall find—knock and the door shall be opened unto you."

If we Christians are right in asserting that no law, no decrees can come between God and ourselves—that prayer is possible, is reasonable, and is grandly helpful; then the question comes, what is prayer? What do we mean by it? I said just now that prayer is religion in motion. That is a broad and general definition, but we must have something more specific. Now prayer, I take it is, subjective, and it is objective—that is to say—it embraces the man praying and the God addressed.

Some men seem to think that prayer is a mere sentiment and nothing more. But that is not so at all. It is not a mere sentiment, a state of mind, a condition of heart, a passive thing. It is a work; it is an effort; an effort that calls into play all the deepest, highest, truest forces of the soul. When a man sinks down upon his knees at night, because he is accustomed to do it, and utters a few sentences he has got accustomed to utter, confesses sins of which he is not conscious—or, if he is conscious of them, feels no burning shame in consequence—asks for virtues that he has no thought of seeking, and would hardly house them in his heart if they came in answer to his call; but thinks only of the work he has done to-day, and the cares that will come to-morrow, that man doesn't pray. Prayer is not simply the throwing of oneself into a certain attitude that bespeaks humiliation; prayer is not the saying of words merely; it is an exertion; a great conscious effort of the whole man. It is an effort of the understanding. A man must *think* if he would pray. He speaks to the Being whom he calls God, the Almighty, the All-wise, the Eternal. What do those words mean? What do they mean to the man who utters them? If they are simply phrases, words upon words and nothing more, the effort is not great. It is as easy to say God, as hill—Almighty, as mountain. But when the words are but the dress of great conceptions, great ideas, great thoughts, then the man will be almost overwhelmed with the tremendous importance of the words he is using. To think of God, the mystery of His being, the Almightiness of His power, the immensity of His presence, besetting us all behind and before, and laying His hand upon us, is surely thinking of the highest kind, is surely the most royal effort of the understanding.

And then, to pray is to put the affections, the emotional part of man, into activity. True prayer is not born of fear, it is the outcome of the love principle as it lives and moves in the heart. The human love goes out and comes into contact with the love of which is divine. The divine beauty is the object of highest admiration—the divine power calls forth loving awe and worship—the divine will—so strong, and yet so beneficent, brings the human heart to feel obedience, and the feeling rushes up to the lips, breaking out in the cry, "not my will, but Thine be done." And so prayer is the highest effort and exercise of the emotions—it touches every fibre—it sweeps across every tightened string, and calls forth all the music of the soul.

And then, prayer is also an exertion of the *will*. You cannot pray, unless you will to pray. Men talk of wandering thoughts in the sanctuary, of distraction of mind; they say they are worldly, and worldly thoughts will come. No wonder that they do come. There is no effort made to keep them back. They have no such distractions during hours of business—at least, I have not heard of it—and they have no such distractions during the hours they have to devote to pleasure. There are no ugly black cares rising up to torment them when they have met genial companions, but there are when they enter their closet to pray, there are when they enter the house of man's worship. That is no mystery. When they go to business they put forth all the strength of will they have; they will hear of nothing else, will talk of nothing else, will think of nothing else until the day's work is done. And they *do* the day's work, not yawning over it. If men would pray, they must *will* to do it just as much; they must shut the door and draw the bolts; they must come to the sanctuary, not to wait for an inspiration, not hoping to be interested, not to yield themselves to any influence the preacher may have, or to find the Spirit of the place; they must bring a spirit into the place; they must come to worship God as expressly as they go to work in the week. There must be the same stern and resolute will, the same concentration of thought and purpose. So you will see, I hope, that prayer is not beneath the care and concern of practical men; is not a mere sentiment fit only for the weak and the dreamy; but is the highest exercise of the highest faculties; is the grandest exertion of which the soul is capable. The loftier the thought, the finer the emotion, the stronger the will, and the truer the prayer will be, and the firmer the grasp of faith and love upon Him who is the object of all prayer.

But where it begins it does not end. It embraces God, the living, loving, personal God. That cry of the exiled forsaken Psalmist was significant. It was the cry of humanity—"my soul thirsteth for God, even for the living God." A living God alone can be the object of true prayer. Not the god of the heathen, carved from wood or stone; not the god of the mere philosopher, an abstraction, an essence, a system; and not the god of science, fettered by His own laws, and a prisoner in the world He has made, but God as the patriarchs and prophets knew Him, personal, present, a King, a Friend, God as Jesus Christ revealed Him, that clothes the lily with beauty and feeds the ravens when they cry, that notes the fall of a sparrow, that succours and saves men, is the universal Father of universal man, not giving a stone to the starving, or a serpent to those who ask for a fish, but knowing how, and being always willing, to give good things to those who ask him.

Prayer is petition; it is the cry for bread; it is the cry for the graces and virtues of the spirit; it is the soul, conscious of its weakness, of its imperfections, crying out to have the infinite strength to lean on, and the infinite peace in the heart. But it is not always petition—at its highest, perhaps, it is not petition at all—it is the converse, communion between the Son and His Father—between the quickened soul and the quickening spirit. The child, always

conscious of its wants, is always making petition, but the man who has learnt to love God greatly, who has got to feel that religion is more than a mere escaping of hell and getting into heaven, is more than mere forgiveness and inward peace, is in truth great principle, great character, great manhood, longs most of all for communion with God. He wants to talk with the Father of his spirit; he wants to receive God's thoughts into his mind. The bond of union is sealed, but the soul requires more; it must have fellowship. And that is prayer. In prayer you cry to the great giver of good; you stretch out your hands empty, but imploring. You do more: You talk with the King of kings and Lord of lords; you hold communion with highest heaven. What can you seek loftier than that? You can forget your wrath, and all the cares it brings. You can forget your poverty and the cold of it. You can lift your manhood to its highest, and feel the heart burn with truest rapture as the Lord talks with you by the way.

CORRESPONDENCE.

It is distinctly to be borne in mind that we do not by inserting letters convey any opinion favourable to their contents. We open our columns to all without leaning to any; and thus supply a channel for the publication of opinions of all shades, to be found in no other journal in Canada.

No notice whatever will be taken of anonymous letters, nor can we undertake to return those that are rejected.

NATIONAL DEBT.

To the Editor of the CANADIAN SPECTATOR:

SIR,—Given a sufficiently long and strong lever, together with a fulcrum, and doubtless some ingenious individual would find a way of moving the world out of its present position, destroying the balance of both centripetal and centrifugal force, thus ending the chapter of life; and so, if it be allowed to Mr. Thos. Darling to start on the premises that he does, he will doubtless be able to prove that National Debts are a curse instead of a blessing to a country. Says your contributor: "The evils necessarily resulting from National Debt appear to be powerless to restrain Ministers from resorting to loans, although the welfare of the nation clearly indicates the expediency of an opposite course." Now, nothing whatever in the whole of the contribution proves convincingly that first of all there *is* an evil in borrowing, although Mr. Darling does to a certain extent shew the *modus operandi* at present in use for Canada is at fault. "The practice at one time," in short, says Mr. Darling, "was to amass money and hoard it up, so that if any unforeseen circumstances arose money should be forthcoming to meet such emergency." Is your contributor speaking according to chapter and verse? and if so, will he give one solitary instance in history when nations have not had to call pretty roundly on the people for money under exceptional circumstances? For what matters it whether you call up enough for 1, 2 or 3 years all at once—as is the case in modern times—or come down every year for the amount. The only difference is, that in the last case additional hardship is necessarily entailed, and with no practical benefit whatever. Take a simple case as an illustration. One buys a house and invests all the capital at command, and after living in such house for a twelvemonth certain repairs of considerable extent, and improvements also, need to be done. The owner's income is not large enough out of one year to allow of a deduction sufficient to meet this unforeseen expense, and is he, therefore, according to Mr. Darling, not to trench on his future income for the benefit of his present and future accommodation? May he not rightfully enough divide such expense, say into five, and spread the amount over that number of years? A national debt is exactly the same sort of thing. A young nation like Canada needs opening up by means of railways, canals and roads. It would be utterly impossible for the inhabitants to supply the money as a *tax* for the carrying on and completion of the necessities of trade and civilization; yet is the country to stay behind in an undeveloped state when the money can be obtained at easy interest and payable by a sinking fund? If such were to be the case, it would be a poor look out for the Dominion; for not only would she be *kept* poor, but the door by which she can be delivered from such poverty is effectually shut. If I recollect rightly it was no less an authority than John Bright, M.P. for Manchester, who once stated that no country was well off till it had a good national debt to act as a sheet anchor.

Referring to the present raising of £3,000,000. It has been obtained at a low rate of interest, comparatively speaking. Supposing Government had determined to raise it in the country by putting on a tax of so much in the dollar on all its subjects, what indescribable misery would be caused! The little money a farmer may have put by for buying the land adjoining, or in stocking his already-owned farm, would be swallowed up, and at a cost of about five times more than that at which it can at present be borrowed, since the much larger interest that the farmer could earn would be lost to him and so indirectly lost to the country. The argument that as much of the loan as conveniently possible should be taken up in the country is good and sound, and to carry this out I would propose that the Government in future should do as is done in France, viz., issue bonds of small amount, say \$10, and so put it in the power of everyone to hold some stake, however small, in his country.

Another fallacy Mr. Darling has fallen into is that the present labourers in the country can be sustained by the present products. So far, good; doubtless they can. But how are they to obtain the wherewithal to purchase such products? There are thousands out of employ—men who have been used to better things than day labour—yet many and most of them are so driven as to be glad to earn bread honestly anyway, and if not honestly—why, dishonestly; for one cannot expect a man to agree with the magistrate who said, upon the prisoner at the bar excusing his theft on the plea that he must live, "I really don't see the necessity for that." The introduction, therefore, of capital into the country acts beneficially in every way, provided moderate rates of interest be paid for such advances, for, firstly, it creates a demand for labour to expend such money; secondly, the labourers create a demand for the products of the country through their labour; and thirdly, the country generally becomes more prosperous by the dispersion through different and multitudinous courses of the such acquired wealth. I must apologise for trespassing so much on your valuable space, but trust the importance of the subject will prove a sufficient excuse.

CANADIENSIS.