

THE WILL TO PRAY.

Mrs. Merrill E. Gates in Life and Light.



HE prayer of the Christian is meant to work changes in the world. Some have said that all changes for the better in the world are only in answer to prayer. But we fear to limit God and his working to the narrow range (even at its widest) of the petition of his people. Yet we doubt not that wonderful manifestations of spiritual power have been and are the direct consequence of faith and prayer; and were there more will to pray, the working of the Spirit would be more marvelous still.

Certainly prayer seems to be included in the "greater works" which Jesus said believers should do after his return to his Father. The words, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my Name, that will I do," following so immediately after the promise, show how clear the connection was in his own mind. Equally clear is the connection between "bringing forth fruit" and prayer, if indeed prayer is not itself the fruit for which he says, "I have chosen you and ordained you."

For these "greater works" prayer is needful. By means of the prayer of intercession in particular, are we called to work changes in the world about us. God places himself at the disposal of the believer who with ardent and urgent faith asks for another that which is according to God's will. Is it possible that in refusing to pray through saints and the Virgin, Protestants have lost sight of the power of Christian intercession? The intercessory prayers of the Bible teach us that they are God's appointed way. Moses' prayer is free from every selfish motive as he says, "Yet now if thou wilt, forgive their sin; and if not, blot me I pray thee out of the book which thou hast written." The crown of intercessory prayer is the high-priestly prayer of our Lord—the link that binds his prayer on earth for his disciples to the powerful, unceasing intercession which he ever carries on at the Father's right hand,—a prayer that is occupied to-day with our needs.

The heart of the father and of the risen Christ are one. Why then does Christ plead his sacrifice, and ask blessings for us from the Father? Is it not that while the love of the Father and the Son are one toward us, Christ is the channel through whom the riches of the Father's heart

are poured out on his children? Because he bare the sin of many he makes intercession for the transgressor. The heart of Jesus exalted is the pathway of the Father's love to us.

In the representation of the Lord, as saying "that there was no man" and as "wondering that there was no intercessor," we feel the strength of the mighty response. He himself filled the great need. "Therefore his arm brought salvation!" From the heart of our Father, through our divine Daysman, the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts.

When we pray for others we join an intercession ceasing not day nor night, and in this one highest act of love we seem to partake of the very prayer and love of Jesus himself. Let us pray for our children, friends, fellow church members, missionaries, heathen converts, nameless to us but known by name to God, for all whom the Spirit brings to mind as those whom we may help. The line of direction and of spiritual aid is through the heart of Jesus interceding.

Why is it that more prayer and more effectual prayer is not offered? The church upon its knees is the imperative ideal of the true church. How do we know that there is a lack of the prayer of faith? Because we judge that if every Christian were asking and obtaining through intercessory prayer the things which the church and the world need, there would be such great and vital turning to the Lord as the world has never seen.

The cause of the failure and deficiency is found in the unprayerful will. We do not *will* to pray, as we will other things and do them. We are not bent on prayer for others. Are we resolved that not a day shall pass that we do not fervently and with active faith pray for one or more or many whom we know to have spiritual needs which only God can supply? What is the secret of strengthening the will? *Attention* to a subject is the source of interest in it; *interest* awakens feeling; *feeling* gives rise to thought; thought stimulates and decides the will, and will controls action. Only let the will be strong enough and the action, which is the object of that will, will necessary follow. Begin to-day to make your will firm in this matter by giving to it attention—a word which means "bending toward"—bend your mind toward this matter of prayer. Give some time each day to intercession, and become one of God's remembrancers.