

which we can find no other channel of expression. We have nothing to say here in reply to semi-philosophical refutations of prayer as a dynamic force. Enough for us to insist upon it as a spiritual power. We are very sure that the heart without prayer is like a ship without a rudder, which the currents of passion will carry against the pitiless rocks. No one who has not tried can tell what a security a devout ejaculation will prove against temptation, or how singular a solace a few words of prayer will afford in the time of doubt and disappointment. Alas for prayerless men!

“For what are ‘they’ better than sheep
and goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hearts of
prayer
Both for themselves and those who call
them friend?
For so the whole round earth is every
way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of
God.”

Many great and all good men have been prayerful men, seeking with humility of spirit an intimate communion with their Divine Master. The fiery soul of St. Francis of Assisi, the stern heart of Butler, were alike subdued and sanctified by prayer. Brave men like Columbus have found in it an aspiration of the truest courage. It has brought a wonderful

calmness of endurance to poets like Milton and statesmen like Gladstone. It supported the saints and martyrs as they suffered at the stake. It cheered the gallant heart of Sheridan as he rode into battle. It sanctified the genius of Fra Angelico as he breathed life into the painted canvas. There can be no successful work without prayer, which is its crown and consecration; “prayer,” as St. Augustine says, “not that God’s will may be altered, but that it may be done; that we may be kept out of all evil and delivered from all temptation which may prevent our doing it; that we may have the ‘daily bread’ given to us in body, soul, spirit, and circumstance, which will just enable us to do it and no more; that the name of Him to whom we pray may be hallowed, felt to be as noble and sacred as it is, and acted on accordingly.” Prayer, offered up in this humble trustful spirit, may not bring down God to us, but it will raise us up to God.

“Prayer,” says St. Francis, “opens the understanding to the brightness of Divine light, and the will to the warmth of heavenly love; nothing can so effectually purify the mind from its many ignorances, or the will from its perverse affections. It is as a healing water which causes the roots of our good desires to send forth fresh shoots, which washes away the soul’s imperfections, and allays the thirst of passion.”

