

tion. Darwin, in later years, reflected upon his omissions, and discovered that they had given finality to his career. Several things had been so long omitted that they found no longer any response in his nature. One comes to be known by his omissions. One comes to be the resultant of his omissions.

Some lives are not merely fixed by their omissions, but ruined by them. In the midst of infinite riches, they remain in beggary. They have reached after trifles and missed kingdoms. They have taken up for development the poorest and least profitable strain in their own make-up. They remember the body and forget the mind. They cultivate the mind and omit the spirit. In this intensely practical age they omit all but what the day's work demands, and so it often happens that, knowing nothing besides, they must perforce toil on at tasks for which they are no longer competent. Omissions long persisted in have narrowed the life to one interest. Hence, so few people of advanced years retire, or, if they do, fewer still continue long as vital influences. They may have something to retire on, but nothing to retire to. The part of their natures not drawn out to the definite goal of pursuit is merely a great gulf. A well-selected hobby is for the busiest a "savor of life".

Beware of fatal omissions. "One thing thou lackest", said Jesus to the young man. That "one thing" meant everything. And there is one thing that if we omit will leave us poor eternally. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness."

Ottawa

### The Desire and the Prayer

By Esther Miller MacGregor

"I wonder why our prayers are not answered." The chairman of a little gathering of Sunday School teachers, met to discuss ways and means, suddenly propounded this question. They had confessed that they had all been praying for their classes, but the pupils had not been blessed.

One reason after another was given, when finally an old man arose and startled the company with,—"Because we don't want

what we ask for." There was a murmur amongst his hearers, but no one denied the accusation. Many of them realized that too often their prayers had been half-hearted, or hurried, or performed merely as a matter of duty. They had not been possessed with that soul-hunger for an answer which alone can open the fountains of blessing.

"Any teacher who neglects the preparation of his lesson", the old man continued, "or absents himself without a strong reason, or is not anxious about his pupils' welfare every hour of the week, cannot pray for them because he doesn't really care about their salvation."

The aged teacher had not alone discovered that truth. Ruskin, in one of his great lectures, once gave a solemn warning in regard to prayer. "If we hear a man swear in the streets", he says, "we think it very wrong and say, 'He takes God's name in vain.' But there is a twenty times worse way of taking His name in vain than that. It is to *ask God for what we don't want*. He doesn't like that sort of prayer. If you don't want a thing, don't ask for it; such asking is the worst mockery of your King you can mock Him with."

So the Sunday School teacher must not ask for the redemption of his class unless he wants it. But what teacher does not, one feels like asking. There is a great difference between mildly wishing for a thing,—considering it desirable,—and being possessed with a passionate yearning for it.

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire", says the poet, with true insight. "Sincere desire",—that is the key word. "Desire", a reliable dictionary tells us, "is imperious, it demands gratification." The door of heaven is closed against any petition that does not arise from such a strong craving. "When thou prayest", said the One who taught His disciples how to pray, "thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are."

So, then, the teacher who would have his prayers for his class answered, must be absolutely in earnest, so much so, that he will let no personal consideration stand in the way of their spiritual welfare. It must be the "sincere desire" of his heart. He must fix upon their salvation with his whole mind and