

## THE PRAYING MACHINE.

WELL, who ever heard of a praying machine before! What can be meant by it? Where is it to be seen? How is it to be used? Such, we can well imagine, will be the exclamation of some of our young readers.

But, if it were merely to be thought of as a wonderful thing, we should not have spoken of it in the "Instructor." No: it is a vain and foolish thing—we might almost say that it is a *horrible* thing; for it is a means by which the poor, ignorant, and sinful people of Thibet—a country to the north-east of India—think that God can be prayed to and worshipped! And how insulting must this be to Him who has told us that He is a Spirit, and that they who worship Him must do so "in spirit and in truth!"

It appears that the people of Thibet suppose that the more prayers a person can repeat the more merit he has in the sight of God. As a means, therefore, of multiplying their prayers, they have invented these praying machines. They are either wooden or iron, or copper cylinders, which they fill with a long but narrow roll of paper or cloth, on which their idols and symbols are painted, and below are prayers, either painted or written, in the language of the country. The cylinder has a rod lengthwise through the centre, upon which it is made to turn round. Some of these praying machines are very large. A missionary saw one of this kind, which was turned by a handle, and near which a number of people were sitting, in order that the wind caused by turning it might touch their faces, which is considered a blessed thing for them.

In some cases the people set up these machines in rivers, and small streams, near their houses, so that the water, by turning the cylinder, performs the necessary prayers for them! The way the people manage it is this. They fix in the bed of the stream a post, with a hole bored in the top. Turning freely in this hole is a horizontal (or flat) cross of wood, to which is fastened the rod that passes through the cylinder. Now then, to make the machine go round, a stream of water is brought through a trunk of a tree, or some such simple channel, and made to fall just upon the cross of wood, which of course turns round with the cylinder that is fastened to it.

The people are very unwilling to part with these machines. "Some time ago," writes a missionary, "I met one of the people who was turning his praying machine most quickly whilst he walked; his small bundle of property being on his back. I stopped him, and asked him if he would sell me the machine. At length, after some difficulty with him, he consented, and I gave him three rupees, or six shillings, for it. After I had paid him the money, and he had given me the machine, he asked me, after a little while, to give it him again. As soon as he had it in his hands once more, he put it three times to his forehead, made his salaam—or did reverence to it, and then, poor fellow! he returned it to me, and off he went."

Such is the thick darkness of Thibet! We will only add, that it has just struck us, that it is possible there may be praying machines nearer home than in that distant country. What shall we say of the boy or girl who mutters over a number of prayers, either in or out of church, in which his heart is not engaged? Is he or she not a mere *praying machine*? and oh, how offensive to God!—*Church Miss. Juv. Instr.*

## HAVE YOU THOUGHT OF IT?

ALL you into whose hands this little book shall come, O let me beg you to consider how your hearts can endure to think of being shut out of Heaven, out of blessedness for ever! Ask your heart these questions. Can I burn? Can I endure the vengeance of eternal fire? Will a glowing oven, a scorching furnace, be an easy lodging for me? O why, my soul, wilt thou not be persuaded to repent? Is there too much pain in that? Talk to thee of crucifying the flesh, or parting with thy worldly companions, of entering in at the strait gate. O these are hard sayings, who

can bear them? But how wilt thou dwell with devouring fire? How wilt thou dwell with everlasting burnings? Think on hell, O poor soul, and then think on Christ; and consider if a Redeemer from such misery be not worth the accepting of. Think on hell, and then think on sin and carnal pleasures; consider how thou wilt relish them in the everlasting fire? Are these the price for which thou sellest thy soul to hell? O bid these lusts and pleasures be gone; bid your companion-sins be gone; and, though you loved them well, and have spent your time sinfully with them, yet tell them you must not burn for them: that you will not damn your soul to please your flesh. Having thus briefly laid down the use of terror, to awaken some poor souls out of the depth of carnal security, I shall proceed to encourage poor sinners to lay fast hold on Christ before it be too late.

O poor soul! Hast thou kept Christ out a long time, and art thou not yet resolved to open thy heart to him? What shall I say to thee? Let me say this—Christ waits still for thee; Christ is still willing to receive thee! Why, then, wilt thou undo thyself by neglecting so great a salvation? Think what message He sends to thee, what errand He comes on; it is no dismal message; it is no dreadful errand. If Christ had come to destroy thy soul, could He have had less welcome than thou hast given him? O for thy soul's sake receive Him! O ye fools, when will ye be wise? Come unto Jesus, and He will have mercy on you, and heal all your backslidings, and love you freely.

But some poor soul will say, I have a desire to come to Christ, but I am afraid Christ will never receive such a wretched sinner as I am, who have stood out so long against Him. In answer to this let me give you some directions.

1. Ah, poor soul! art thou willing to come to Christ? Then will Christ in no wise cast thee out, if thou comest to Him poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked. O sinner, come not to Him in thine own strength; but come thou and say, O Lord, here is a poor soul not worth any thing! O Lord, make me rich in faith! Here is a miserable soul, O Lord, have mercy on me! Here is a poor blind soul, O Lord, enlighten me from above! Here is a poor naked wretch, O Lord, save me, lest I perish, for I cannot help myself.

2. Come to Christ by believing in Him. Yes, when thy poor soul is sinking into hell, and sees no way to escape the fearful wrath of God, O then at such a time seize fast hold on Christ! O apprehend and apply all His benefits to thy soul! Come and grasp Him in the arms of thy faith, and say, I believe in thee, Lord; help my unbelief. And the answer, which thy Lord will give thee, will be this—Be it unto thee according as thou wilt. Let Christ be in your hand, and the promise in your eye, and no doubt, though thou hast been a rebel and a traitor, yet Jesus Christ, having received gifts for the rebellious, will show mercy to thee, and receive thee.

3. Come to Jesus Christ by repenting and forsaking all thy sins. Thou canst never come to the wedding without the wedding-garment; the old man must be done away, before all things can be made new. "O Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved; how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?"—*Jer. iv. 14.—Samuel Rutherford.*

## PLEADING WITH GOD.

ABRAHAM teaches us the right way of conversing with God—"And Abraham fell on his face, and God talked with him." When we plead with Him our faces should be in the dust: we shall not then speak lightly of Him, nor complain; nor will there be any more boasting. We shall abase ourselves, and exalt God. The Christian's secret intercourse with God will make itself manifest to the world. We may not see the husbandmen cast the seed into the ground, yet, when the corn grows and ripens, we know that it was sown. The mere professor, who may be found every where but in his secret chamber, may think that with care he shall pass for a good Christian; but

he mistakes, for the spirit will discover itself, of what sort he is. He, who would walk safely and honourably, must walk closely with God in secret—*Cecil.*

## THE MORALITY OF BARGAIN-MAKING.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM ARTHUR.\*

The maxim, "It is my duty to buy in the cheapest market, and to sell in the dearest," has a manifest basis of truth. It would be wrong for a merchant to go and buy tea at eightpence per pound when he knew another market where he could get the same tea for fourteen. It would be wrong for him to neglect a market where the price was eighteen, and to sell in one where it was fourteen. In either of these cases, he would display a negligence which, if habitual, must end in ruin. But it is one thing, to go to the cheapest market, and another thing, when there, to set your heart on buying so cheaply that you will wrench from the anxious seller every hope of an honest profit.

"But the buyer must not pretend to be judge of the seller's business. He knows at what price it will answer his purpose to buy. Every man can take care of his own interests." This seems fair; and, when two men meet on equal ground, it is fair. The manufacturer ought to be the best judge how many shillings a bale of cotton is worth to him. The cotton merchant ought to be the best judge how many shillings his bale of cotton is worth to him. The buyer may take it for granted that the seller will not take any sum but one which is, just then, of more value to him than the goods. The seller may take it for granted that the buyer will not give any sum but one which is, just then, of less value to him than the goods. The argument, then, seems complete; "I may buy as cheap as I can, and sell as dear as I can; for every one with whom I deal is the best judge of his own interests." It is not always so comfortable. But it is not to be wondered at that many an honourable man should be perfectly satisfied with reasoning which seems so fair, when the conclusion is so inviting.

Admit two things,—that the parties are equally solvent, that the parties are equally shrewd; and then, as a mere piece of dry mechanism, your principle may stand tolerably upright. But two men do not meet as two machines; they are two brothers. Each one is bound to look not only "on his own things, but also on the things of another." You cannot divest yourself of this duty, God has ordained it, and, while God is love, the law is unalterable. In your neighbour you are bound to see a brother whose feelings, whose reputation, whose property, whose family, are all sacred as your own. "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth," is a precept weightier than all the dicta of the exchange. It is highly convenient to evade this precept by assuring yourself that every man will look to his own interests, and that therefore you may just gripe all that others will let you gripe. But, in doing so, you let yourself down from the level of a Christian to the level of a scambler. Even amongst men who meet on equal terms, commerce on your principle, is not a system of mutual services, but a system of mutual supplanting. But among men, who meet upon unequal terms, that principle will bear you out in cruel oppression. A cloth-maker offers to a cloth-merchant a parcel of cloth. His manner, or something else, tells the merchant that he is under the necessity of finding money. He asks a fair price. According to the best judgement of the merchant, that price would afford the maker a fair remuneration, and would afford himself a fair profit. But he knows, or he guesses, that money happens to be, at that moment, of exorbitant value to his neighbour. On this conviction he refuses the fair price, and offers one that would double his own profit, but would leave the other without any profit, or with a loss. The other hesitates, rea-

\* From the "Successful Merchant." London: Hamilton, Adams, & Co.