

able as I thought ; and anyhow you don't believe that any prayer can save people who have died in their sins?"

"I don't pretend to know who those are, Jack. I don't know how far God's mercy goes, and all I ask Him about *that*, is to save all who *can* be saved."

"When you come to think of it, people who don't think as you do, pray in what comes to very much the same way. You remember old John Perry, who died last winter?"

"Yes ; what of him ?"

"Why, he was quite unconscious for hours before he died, and the doctor told his wife that he would be like that to the end. Well, I looked in to see him, and his friends and the parson were praying for him then, and yet he was almost as good as dead."

"Yes ; they knew if he had not repented before, he could not do it then. He was still alive, but his day's work was done, and whether bad or good it could not be altered. Still, they were right to pray for him, and I don't see why they should leave off now."

"But don't you think, Tom, that this sort of belief will make some men careless. Very often they put off repenting for their sins long enough as it is ; but if they think other folks' prayers are going to do them good after they are dead, why they won't repent at all."

"They know we pray for the conversion of all sinners now, but I never heard of anybody who thought that was going to save him the trouble of repenting. But now many of us, you know, ask God continually in our prayers to turn those who are leading a bad life. Yet a good many

of those prayers don't seem to be answered, do they ?"

"You mean that those men go on just as bad as ever ?"

"Yes ; because they stand out against the grace of God that we asked of them, and will not have anything to do with it. If they do that now, all their lives, there is not very much hope that they will do any different in the next world."

"You said you wouldn't say how far God's mercy goes."

"And I don't say it. A man I may have been praying for, seemingly in vain, for years, may repent to-morrow, for all I know ; but I haven't the same hope that he will, as I have about one who has only just gone wrong. And so with souls in the other world : prayer may help many of them, but it is more likely to help those who have lived consistent lives in this world."

"I see, you think the same about all prayer, whether for the living or the dead ?"

"Just the same. The Bible tells us to pray for *all* men, and to make *all* our wants known to God. I take my stand on the plain words, and I say that when God says : *He* means *all*. I can't help thinking about those that are gone, and wishing for their good. It is natural to do it, for where our treasure is there our hearts are also. And if God would not have me take those thoughts and wishes to Him, as well as all my others, He would have told me so. And that, Jack, He has not done ; not by one word from one end of the Bible to the other."

"It is a new thought to me, Tom, but I must own there is a deal of comfort in it, for as we get old, most of those we love best are in the