

But meanwhile the Beloved is behind the wall. And He is there with all the sympathy for our difficulty which His perfect knowledge of it enables Him to have. "Jesus needed not that any man should tell Him, for He knew what was in man." He knows the weariness of praying on against apparently unanswered prayer; against the pain of physical restlessness, the labor of thought, the irksomeness of concentration, the perpetual gathering together of the forces that are playing truant in a thousand fields, recalled for a brief space only to be off again more wayward for their capture. All this He knows. And our remedy is to remember that He knows it. He who has appointed prayer to be the channel of grace, means such prayer as we can bring Him. He does not ask impossibilities. He does not place us amid distracting work all day long and expect us to shut it out by an effort of will, the moment we kneel down to pray. Nor even to shut it out by repeated efforts sometimes. He would have us turn our distractions and weariness, not so much into matter for self-reproach, or humiliation even, as into a loving, trustful plea for His pity and His help. This is a prayer. Lay the tired brain, the strained muscles, the aching head—lay them all down at His feet without a word, just for His eye to rest on and His Heart to help and heal.

There are times when physical lassitude, cold or heat, an importunate thought, a trial with its sting still fresh, baffles every effort to fix the mind on the subject of prayer, and concentrates the whole attention on what for the moment is all-absorbing. Times harder still to manage, when mind and heart are so absolutely vacant and callous that there is no rousing them to action. This reflection will sometimes be helpful then—What should I have to say were I in the presence of the one I love best in the world; with whom I am quite at my ease; my friend *par excellence*; to whom my trials, difficulties, character, the secrets of my soul are known; that one in whose concerns and welfare I take the deepest interest; whose plans and view are mine, discussed again and again together; in whose company time flies and the hour of parting comes too soon—what should I find to say?