



"BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL."

(MATT. vi. 13.)

BY THE RIGHT REV. THE LORD BISHOP OF PETERBOROUGH.

THIS petition of the Lord's Prayer brings us back again to the point from which that prayer started. It begins by turning our minds to God—God as He is in Himself, and God's eternal purpose for ourselves. Then it turns our minds to ourselves and our frailty, our difficulties in the body where we are beset by the needs and the temptations of our daily life. And then at last it turns us back again sharply and directly to God, as the one Power to help us, the one means of deliverance from all our difficulties. There they are—the flesh, the world, and the devil—revealed in all their strength; it is God, and God only, who can draw us out of the sphere of their influence. Did we pray for the growth of the Kingdom of Heaven? Did we ask for all that we needed to fit us for entering therein? Yet one thing more is needful, God's grace to deliver us from the dominion of evil, which is ingrained in our mortal nature, which surges round us on every side, and is so hard to fathom in all its manifold seductiveness. God, and God alone, can deliver us from it; He must keep us true to our citizenship of Heaven; He must teach us to see in all we do the difference between good and evil, between the temper of His children and that of the children of this world. For *evil* means the whole region of the power of wickedness—the evil one and all his works, and all the means by which he works them. Our prayer is not

merely the expression of our desires to God, but has in itself a mighty power to educate and to reveal. Only after we have contemplated God and His Kingdom, can we appreciate our own needs; and as we frame an expression of our needs, we see the root of them all in that mysterious power of evil by which we feel we are surrounded. Only when we have seen this clearly are we secure in our hold upon God, because the sense of sin stamps on our soul indelibly the need of God's help to keep us from the dangers which beset us on every side. "Deliver us from evil": it is the supreme cry of the soul for itself and others; it is the form in which God's kingdom is brought most near to us. In itself that Kingdom of God may seem vague and shadowy, distant and unapproachable. Look around you, and see what else there is which is clearer and yet adequate to your needs. Look at the world as it goes on its way: does this satisfy you? Look into your own heart and see what are the real motives of much that you think and say and do: are you pleased with the result of your examination? There is evil everywhere; the mark of imperfection, the trace of damage. You can conceive an orderly and gentle life; you can reason about the causes of error; you can prescribe an ideal line of conduct which would secure happiness. Why are men so blind to their own true interests? Why do they profit so little from the moral experience of others? It seems that