

toils are ended, "and the gathering darkness of night comes on." Oh! then, before the weary body seeks repose, let the thankful heart send up its secret orison, and the penitent heart its mourning cry; and let not slumber settle upon the eyelids until the day's mercies have been acknowledged, and the days sins forgiven.

Then, as to a *place*. "Thy closet," said Jesus. It is well to have a place if we can,—a place hallowed by communion with heaven, and where no sordid cares shall ever intrude. The earnest heart will not be baffled in this matter: it *will* have a closet somewhere. "I can always find a closet at the masthead," said a pious sailor. And should all other places fail, we can still make a closet of our hearts. Even while pacing the crowded streets we may turn our hearts into a sanctuary, and in that closet, into which God delights to come, have audience with the Deity.

There are difficulties sometimes, in the way of secret prayer, but these may all be overcome. The chief difficulties we will find in ourselves,—in those states of mind which are not favorable to closet devotion. "I cannot pray," says one: "I do not know how." Neither does any man. The gift of true prayer is not natural—it is Divine. All Christians have to confess, "We know not the things we should pray for as we ought" but "the Spirit helpeth our infirmities," and "maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

"My thoughts wander when I try to pray. I kneel down, and begin to speak unto the Lord, and wake up to find my thoughts away at the ends of the earth." This is a common complaint; and it has two principal causes. The first is—prayer, to you, is not a familiar exercise. You have not formed the habit of fixing your mind on this thing. Habit has much to do with it. Don't expect miracles here. "The Spirit *helpeth* our infirmities." He will not do all for us: *help* is all we are authorized to expect; and in this, as in other things, he "helps those who help themselves." This inability to "fix" the thoughts is not confined to prayer,—it is just as true of other unfamiliar exercises. Take a lad from the farm or the workshop, and set him down suddenly to the study of a language or a science, and his thoughts will "wander" too. But let him keep on,—let him acquire the habit of application,—let him rally his scattered thoughts again and again, and soon they will marshal themselves at his bidding, and bear the strain of steady application for hours. "Wandering thoughts" in prayer may not be overcome in a moment, or by a single spasmodic effort. We must become familiar with the exercise; and to this end it is well, especially at first, to cultivate the habit of ejaculatory prayer. Do not weary yourself in the fruitless effort to keep your mind straining in one direction. Let your petitions be brief, but let them be frequent. Many a man can give undivided attention to a subject for two consecutive minutes, who could not do so for twenty.

Another cause for this wandering of the thoughts is, the heart has been occupied with other things. He whose thoughts all day have been "of the earth, earthy," cannot, in five minutes, put himself in such a heavenly frame as to get beyond the reach of what has filled his mind for the