

there is no food in the house. What is to be done? A resource occurs to his distracted host. He will go at once to a neighbour's house, and borrow some bread. It is the midnight hour as he steals out into the darkened street, and, crossing the way, knocks loudly at his neighbour's door. 'Who is there, and what do you want?' are the questions which answer his knock. The story of the famishing traveller is briefly told, but for a time without success. 'Trouble me not,' is the reply which comes from within. 'The door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.' But the man in the street will take no denial. He will stand at that door till daybreak, sooner than go back empty-handed. There is bread, he knows, on the other side of that bolted door, and there is a hand within the house that can stretch it out. The man knows that his neighbour can supply his need if he will, and that will he resolves to make pliant by his importunity. It is importunity, not friendship; importunity and nothing else which draws at length the reluctant neighbour out of his bed, makes him light a candle, brings him downstairs, and leads him to the cupboard, whence he takes the three loaves and delivers them to his friend in the street. As he opens the door and feels the sharp night air, and hears the hurried and sincere thanks of his neighbour, he has learned, if anything can teach him, our lesson on the power of importunity.

Now, bearing in mind these two parables, each of which has one main point, and only one, namely, the power of importunity, let all who read these words resolve to lay hold of the Arm of Omnipotence with the grip of a dying man, with a grasp that nothing shall relax. As surely as the day dawns, so surely let our constant cry go up to God. Let not the noontide slip away without His hearing our voice. Let the lengthening shadows remind us that time is on the wing, and, though the Lord waits to be gracious, He is to be found only 'while He may be found.' And, though He has set bounds to His forbearance, He is no subject of time. Its changes affect Him not. He knows no night, nor does He ever sleep; He fears no tyrant; no evildoer can browbeat Him; no golden bribe can warp His sense of justice; no widow's thin and faded robe offends His all-pitying eyes; no rude, unlettered speech grates on His ever-open ears. No; given a poor and contrite heart, which trembles at His word; given a simple faith in the ever-blessed and glorious Trinity; in the Father who made, in the Son who redeemed, and in the Holy Spirit who sanctifies; given these (and who may not have them for the asking?), where is the child of earth that cannot say, and truly, 'All things are mine, so I be importunate with the Giver of all? He loves my importunity; my constant face before His great white throne, my reiterating voice, my earnest pleadings, my persevering prayers, all, all, are dear, very dear to Him. They manifest my faith; they stamp reality on my trust: and trust, tested by long waiting and repeated denials and failures, is a rare and a precious thing, in which my heavenly Father delights; a thing to which He opens His arms and His heart; a thing He welcomes with a kiss of love, and rewards with all the riches and joy of His house. To me, the child of need and importunity, methinks I hear Him say, 'Be it unto thee even as thou wilt. All, my son, that I, thy God and Father, am able to grant, be thine!'