

special providence; and it is gratifying to the pious heart to see how he can give an answer to the humblest petitioner. No matter though all the laws of nature seem in the way of an answer; God can so modify their action as to conform them to the case of every petitioner. War, famine, and pestilence may all be upon us, yet humble prayer may turn them all aside, and every other physical evil; and that without a miracle, if best for us and for the universe. Tell a man that the only effect of prayer is its reflex influence upon himself, in leading him to conform more strictly to nature's laws, and you send a paralysis and a death chill into all his moral sensibilities. Indeed, he cannot pray; but tell him that God will be influenced, as is any earthly friend, by his supplications, and his heart beats full and strong, the current of life goes bounding through his whole system, the glow of health mantles his cheek, and all his senses are roused into intense and delightful action.

The sad influence of a perversion and misunderstanding of the doctrine of nature's constancy upon the youthful mind, is well exhibited by a late able writer. "Early trained to it under the domestic roof," says M'Cosh, "the person regularly engaged in prayer during childhood and opening manhood. But as he became introduced to general society, and began to feel his independence of the guardians of his youth, he was tempted to look upon the father's commands, in this respect, as proceeding from sourness and sternness, and the mother's advice as originating in an amiable weakness and timidity. He is now careless in the performance of acts which in time past had been punctually attended to. How short, how hurried, how cold are the prayers which he now utters! Then there come to be mornings on which he is snatched away to some very important or enticing work without engaging in his customary devotions. There are evenings, too, following days of mad excitement or sinful pleasure, in which he feels utterly indisposed to go into the presence of God, and to be left alone with him. He feels that there is an utter incongruity between the ball-room, or the theatre, which he has just left, and the throne of grace, to which he should now go. What can he say to God, when he would pray to him? Confess his sins? No; he does not at present feel the act to be sinful. Thank God for giving him access to such follies? He has his doubts whether God approves of all that has been done. But he may