

The
Gates of Dawn

*DEVOTIONAL READINGS
FOR A YEAR*

❖ · W · L · WATKINSON · ❖

Library of The Theological Seminary

PRINCETON · NEW JERSEY



PRESENTED BY
The Estate of
Harold McAfee Robinson, D.D.

BV 4811 .W37
Watkinson, W. L. 1838-1925.
The gates of dawn

THE GATES OF DAWN

W. L. WATKINSON, D.D.

The Gates of Dawn

Devotional Readings for a Year... net, \$1.25

Life's Unexpected Issues

and other Papers on Character and
Conduct.net, \$1.00

The Fatal Barter

and other Sermons.....net, \$1.00

The Supreme Conquest

and other Sermons Preached in Amer-
icanet, \$1.00

The Duty of Imperial Thinking

and other Essays on Themes Worth
While.net, \$1.00

The Bane and the Antidote

and other Sermonsnet, \$1.00

Lessons of Prosperity

and other Addresses on Personal
Conductnet, 50c.

Mistaken Signs

and other Addresses on Christian
Experience.....net, 50c.

Noon Day Addresses

on Themes Affecting Life.....net, 50c.

Inspiration in Common Life

net, 35c.

INTERNATIONAL LEADERS' LIBRARY

Frugality in the Spiritual Life

and other Themes for Meditation, net, 50c.

The Blind Spot

and other Sermons.....net, 50c.

Studies in Christian Character

net, 50c.

Studies in Life and Experience

net, 50c.

LIBRARY OF PRINCETON
SEP 16 1912
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THE GATES OF DAWN

Devotional Readings for a Year

BY

W. L. WATKINSON, D.D.

WITH A SHORT SERIES OF PRAYERS

BY THE

REV. LAUCLAN MACLEAN WATT, M.A., B.D.



NEW YORK CHICAGO TORONTO

Fleming H. Revell Company

LONDON AND EDINBURGH

January 1

SCRIPTURE READING—Ps. xxvii.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart."—Ps. xxvi. 2

IT is indeed well on the first day of the New Year thus to submit our heart to the Divine criticism. We do not know where the weak spot may be.

Somewhere in London there is a museum of broken materials used in engineering work. This organised testing laboratory is to examine materials which have failed, and by practical tests to show why they failed. The museum contains hundreds of broken pieces of steel, iron, brass, wood, stone, and cement, and the reason for their failure is revealed. The Psalmist daringly, trustingly, brings his reason and heart into the laboratory of God, and demands that any secret flaw therein shall be detected and exposed.

The metallurgist cannot always determine the cause of failure; again and again he is brought face to face with the inscrutable; but the Divine heart-searcher infallibly penetrates to the hidden weakness, the blind spot, the diseased fibre.

Let us, with the Psalmist, solicit "the eyes of glory," which at once reveal and cleanse.

THE GATES OF DAWN

January 2

SCRIPTURE READING—PHIL. ii. 1-11

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him."—PHIL. ii. 9

THIS is the object on which we must fix our eye. The descent of our Lord into the sphere of time and sense is a solemn fact to be celebrated with wonder and gratitude, but His exaltation is cause of endless exultation to all His ransomed worshippers. The crown of thorns glows into gold and multiplies into diadems; the marred face makes the sun dim; the pierced hand grasps the universal sceptre; the cross towers and expands into a throne based on the jasper and girdled by the rainbow.

Do we think enough, anything like enough, of the royalty of our Master? In all the days when we have the sense of impotence and struggle, let us remember whose we are and whom we serve. In every season of need and solitude let us remind ourselves that our Lord was parted from His disciples whilst blessing them, and although carried up into heaven, He has never ceased that blessing.

And let us expect His coming again in like manner. As Andrew Bonar writes: "How seldom the expression 'going to heaven' is used in the Bible! It is rather going to be 'with the Lord,' as if the Lord wanted to keep our eye on Himself as the heart and soul of heaven."

THE GATES OF DAWN

January 3

SCRIPTURE READING—Ps. xvi.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Thou wilt shew me the path of life; in Thy presence is fulness of joy."—Ps. xvi. 11

THE "path of life" may be rough, dark, steep, or long; but, seeing that it is the path of life, nothing else is of serious concern. If only I am on the right path, all the rest matters little. There is a path that seemeth right, but the end thereof are the ways of death. What shall I be profited if I follow this path, even if I have roses and music all the way?

"Thou wilt shew me." God is the safe pathfinder. Left to ourselves, we mistake at every step; directed by others, we are beguiled into false ways—we are lured into by-paths which mock, we plunge into a wilderness of briers. How blest is a teachable and obedient disposition! "I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel."

"In Thy presence is fulness of joy." Whatever the path may be, it is forgotten in the charm of the Guide. In the midst of the roughest sea I am in port with the Pilot of Galilee. "At thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." The path, royal; the pathfinder, infallible; the prize, sublime and sure.

THE GATES OF DAWN

January 4

SCRIPTURE READING—ISA. lv. 6-13

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"There is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared."
PS. cxxx. 4

"HE will abundantly pardon." It is strengthening to remind ourselves of the vastness of the Divine compassion and clemency. Nothing less than a sense of infinite mercy and grace can meet the case of the true penitent, with his sense of the infinity of sin.

Whenever grace is shown by society to an offender, it is finely calculated and qualified. Says the master: "I condone the fault this time, but it will not again be overlooked." Grudgingly one friend complains of another, "I forgive, but I do not forget." The magistrate inclining to forbearance, "The prisoner is discharged, but must come up for judgment when called upon." The prison authorities open the gates, but the liberated convict is a "ticket-of-leave" man, who must periodically report himself. When the capital sentence is stayed, the reprieved one is "detained at the King's pleasure." The lifted thunder still rumbles and threatens.

How pure and absolute the mercy of God! He forgives all, hopes for all. How comforting is this in the light of the guilty past! And what an obligation it imposes upon us for the future! How can we sin against such magnanimity?

THE GATES OF DAWN

January 5

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. x. 1-15

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Freely ye have received, freely give."—MATT. x. 8

NOTHING is of our creation, and so we have no property. How free are all the great blessings of nature—the air, rain, sunlight, the precious things of the garden, vineyard, and field! And yet selfish men begrudge us these things, and withhold them when they have opportunity.

Recently a writer told us that one day he climbed a steep path in the neighbourhood of Lynmouth, to enjoy a view from the top. There, however, he found a board bearing the inscription in large letters: "This Outlook is Private." Ah! there are men who would make a private path of the Milky Way, claim all rights in the rainbow, and proclaim the ocean their heirloom.

If Nature is thus free, how much more the higher gifts which we have in Christ! All the riches of the Gospel are freely given of God. Will any one dare to inscribe on the crest of Calvary, "This Outlook is Private"? Every gift of life is a free gift, the "unspeakable" gift most of all.

"Freely give." Ask for nothing in return—no renown, no appreciation, no gratitude. Let me be content to bless, finding my whole reward in the joy of blessing.

THE GATES OF DAWN

January 6

SCRIPTURE READING—ISA. xxxv.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not."
—ISA. xxxv. 4

STRENGTH for every duty and trial is ours in Christ. One of the greatest of chemical discoverers, M. Berthelot, pressed on the attention of scientists the question of the possibility of tapping the central heat of the earth and making use of it as a perennial source of energy. If this should ever come to pass there will be power enough for all possible purposes. Power to drive unlimited machinery, to illuminate the mightiest cities, to remove mountains.

But revelation shows a far grander thing—it shows how the central blue has been tapped, and how the fulness of the heavenly power has become available for the moral uses of man. The Old Testament caught sight of this great truth; the New Testament shows how it has been fully realised in the gift of Pentecost.

Let me not then faint. With the power of Christ perfected in my weakness, I am equal to every temptation, competent for every duty, equipped for every struggle, the master of every fear.

THE GATES OF DAWN

January 7

SCRIPTURE READING—LUKE xxi. 5-15

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist."—LUKE xxi. 15

FROM time to time one might think that the world was going to pieces ; and it often seems as if the Church was on the verge of destruction, with backslidings, heresies, schisms, infidelities, and persecutions. Cataclysms and cyclones give the hue of tragedy to all history.

But, whatever is destroyed, something better is substituted. "The end is not immediately," perhaps, but it is sure. The hurricanes of history have purified the world, and the rough purification proceeds. The Church from time to time is dissolved, only to give place to a worthier. "The Temple adorned with goodly stones and offerings" perished, to be succeeded by the Christian Church ; and defective Christian societies are yet being dissolved to secure a worthier representation.

Through the ages of conflict and sorrow Christ will give His people patience ; He will inspire with wisdom and strength ; He will keep alive their courage and hope.

"Unmoved above the storm they lie,
They lodge in Jesu's breast."

THE GATES OF DAWN

January 8

SCRIPTURE READING—ACTS iv. 32 ; v. 11

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul."—ACTS iv. 32

TRUE brotherhood is realised in the power of the Holy Ghost. The multitudes of them that believed were of one heart and one soul, because of the spiritual grace that rested on them. When the tide is low the coast is a scene of agitation; a thousand savage splinters of rock jut out, and the shore is girdled with angry foam. But when ocean's tide, rolling in fullest pride, returns, the disturbing *débris* is buried in the depths and the sea becomes smooth as glass. So the divisive things of the world are obliterated in a great tide of heavenly purity, love, and power.

An old writer says: "God sometimes writes in shorthand." And in this union of hearts and community of goods in the primitive Church we may see, writ brief and small, what will come to pass on a world-wide scale when all men believe in Christ.

But let me observe the order. Too many dream of a rich and contented world, whilst ignoring the moral conditions of such a millennial state. This glorious flower can only grow from a pure spiritual root; otherwise, the blossom will be dust.

THE GATES OF DAWN

January 9

SCRIPTURE READING—PROV. xii.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The wicked is snared by the transgression of his lips."—PROV. xii. 13

WE ought to be on our guard against the fatal power of words. We often count words as light as air, and yet how tremendous their significance! By our words we are justified, by our words we are condemned.

"Thou lovest all *devouring* words, O thou deceitful tongue." Have I ever thought of the destructive influence of the speeches which fall so glibly from my lips? Bitter words, unkind words, mischievous words, words of spitefulness, deceit, and falsehood, are "devouring words," "words of swallowing up."

As a French writer justly observes: "Insults, harsh words, threatening utterances kill morally those who give expression to them." He who thinks to deceive another is himself deceived; he who slanders another wrongs his own soul; he who wounds another by harsh words commits moral suicide.

"Keep, O Lord, the door of my lips." Other doors are to keep my enemies outside; this door is to save me from being mine own enemy."

THE GATES OF DAWN

January 10

SCRIPTURE READING—Ps. cxxxix. 1-12

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

“There is not a word in my tongue; but lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether.”—Ps. cxxxix. 4

“THERE is not a word in my tongue; but lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether.” We feel it must be so. He must know every atom of the globe, every vibration of the air, every flake of the snow; and, by virtue of His omniscience and omnipresence, He must know the finest film of character, the lightest word we breathe. A recent aeronaut tells us that when far up in the heavens he could hear the whispering of the leaves as they were stirred by the wind. Our faintest word reaches higher still, and is judged above the sky.

How great my task to be offenceless in word! An old writer tells of an illiterate saint who came to someone to be taught a psalm. Having learnt the single verse, “I said I will take heed to my ways, that I offend not with my tongue,” he went away, saying that was enough if it were practically acquired. When asked six months and again many years after why he did not come to learn another verse, he answered that he had never been able truly to master this. Rejoice! The things impossible with men are possible with God.

THE GATES OF DAWN

January 11

SCRIPTURE READING—ACTS v. 29-42

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"We ought to obey God rather than men."—ACTS. v. 29

THE counsel of Gamaliel is a fine specimen of the reasoning of the worldly wise, the logic of the politic. On the face of it it is plausible in the extreme, but duly examined it is proved temporising and cowardly. We do not wait to see the issue of a thing before we form an opinion of it. Usually we have to decide and act at once. Gamaliel's reasoning was the sophistry by which cowardice is made to counterfeit statesmanship.

How different the temper of the Apostles! "We ought to obey God rather than men." No waiting to see how the thing turns out. No policy here, only obedience to what they knew to be the will of the Lord. Gamaliel had a reed for a spine; the Apostles belonged to the true backbone family.

Let me make life clear and simple by first obtaining the knowledge of God's will, and then securing the daily strength by which I shall render prompt obedience. It is well sometimes to have "the courage of our opinions," but it is better to have the courage of our convictions, wise, firm, tender.

THE GATES OF DAWN

January 12

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. x. 16-22

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul."—MATT. x. 28

"IT shall be given you in that hour." We are not subjected to the same kind of trial as were the first disciples. We are not delivered up to councils, not scourged in synagogues, not brought before governors and kings, but in these modern days for the sake of Christ His followers endure great tribulation. In various ways our work, bread, fortune, health, promotion, family, yea, life itself, is put in jeopardy by our faithfulness.

Life has a place for compromise, but when duty becomes clear there must be no tampering with it. The wet hand may be plunged with impunity into metal if it is only white hot, and we are held harmless as we directly brave unrighteous opposition in its extreme wrath. Conciliation is sometimes admirable, but we may be stung because we fail to grasp our nettle. As R. L. Stevenson puts it: "No man is of any use until he has dared everything."

Our Master is with us. "The goldsmith is never far away when the gold is in the fire." Let me then be calm and confident. In "the same night," in "the same day," in "the same hour," I shall find Him strong to deliver and good to redeem.

THE GATES OF DAWN

January 13

SCRIPTURE READING—I PETER iii. 8-18

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"If ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye."—I PETER iii. 14

THE attitude in which we should deal with trial and hostility is here described. Compassionate, loving as brethren, tender-hearted, humble-minded, returning blessing for reviling—it is thus we should meet criticism, injustice, impatience, persecution. There is a kind of iron that is known as "passive iron"—such is the true saint, yielding and gentle in spirit whilst firm as heaven's pillars.

Describing the force of the waves which beat on the Eddystone lighthouse, a writer goes on to say, "But without a quiver the lighthouse supports these terrible attacks. Yet it bends toward them as if to render homage to the power of its adversaries. The summit of the tower describes an arc of more than a yard in extent. For the rest, this very pliancy may be regarded as a pledge of durability. Towers built after this fashion are, in fact, reeds of stone which bend before the wind; but, like the reeds, they raise their heads again as soon as the hurricane is past." Let me then meet the storms of life with the fixedness and plasticity with which the lighthouse overcomes the wild tempest.

THE GATES OF DAWN

January 14

SCRIPTURE READING—ACTS vi. 1-15

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"He that is greatest among you shall be your servant."—
MATT. xxiii. 11

HOW forcibly does this teach the need of the highest character and gifts for the right discharge of life's lowliest duties! The Apostles could not at the same time minister in two spheres successfully; they therefore confined themselves to their spiritual work: yet the ministry of tables was in no wise depreciated by their action. They chose men of good report, full of faith, wisdom, and of the Holy Spirit.

The commonest duties of life demand the highest qualities, and, indeed, they can be fulfilled perfectly only with the soul at its best. Some gardeners, it is said, can grow orchids better than wallflowers; and society abounds in dilettante people who court great places and things, despising homelier posts and callings.

When princes like Stephen were thus made stewards of carnal things, let me not forget the sovereign and sacramental character of the secular, or that the utmost saintliness and wisdom are necessary for the ordinary routine life.

THE GATES OF DAWN

January 15

SCRIPTURE READING—HEB. xi. 1-10

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."—HEB. xi. 10

WE are strangers and pilgrims, as all our fathers were; and we, with them, look for a city which hath foundations whose builder and architect is God.

I do well to lay to heart the fugitiveness of human life, and the passing of all the things of wealth, beauty, and joy in which the natural man delights. Delitzsch renders Isa. xxxviii. 12, "Mine home is broken up, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent." How soon must I thus bemoan myself! It is a fact, a fact it is folly to hide or forget.

Yet this thought is not to embitter the present life, only to enlarge and enrich it by causing me to realise eternal ideas.

Three weeks before his death Corot exclaimed, "You have no idea of the things I could paint now. I see what I have never seen before. Ah! if I could show you these immense horizons."

Let me live in full sight of these "immense horizons"; so shall this passing life be greatly inspired, and clothed with strength and grandeur.

THE GATES OF DAWN

January 16

SCRIPTURE READING—HEB. xii. 1-11

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Let us run with patience the race that is set before us."—
HEB. xii. 1

THE impatience which has its root in unbelief was shown by Israel at every period of its history. It took centuries for the working out of God's great design in His people, and again and again they became impatient, and in despair did desperate things.

How much room there is for patience, both in regard to things personal and things of the Church! And what do we gain by discontent and fretfulness? A Malabar proverb gives an excellent hint, "By running in the boat, do we come to land?"

No worry on our part hastens things. Neither our own canoe, nor the ark of Christ's Church, go a whit faster for our feverish oscillations between stem and stern. Far better to bend the oar, to hoist the sail, and sweetly trust the Pilot.

"Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord." The "end of the Lord"! Our God is great in His endings, and in His faithfulness round about Him. To patient faith the prize is sure.

THE GATES OF DAWN

January 17

SCRIPTURE READING—Ps. lxxxix. 7-16

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound."—
Ps. lxxxix. 15

THE fear of God brings joy to the individual, and peace to the commonwealth. "Blessed are the people to whom the solemn sounding of trumpets is a familiar sound." One might fancy reading of "cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music," that all the instruments of jubilation belonged to Babylon; but Jerusalem also was rich in trumpets, psalteries, and harps, which accompanied purer festivals and discoursed nobler music.

Felicity of spirit is the prerogative of the saints, peace and joy are ours beyond all worldly dreaming. Says R. L. Stevenson: "I do not call that by the name of religion which fills a man with bile."

There is nothing in daily discipleship with Christ calculated to create bile; and any fretfulness, bitterness, or melancholy on our part wonderfully discredits our religion.

The colouring of our moods depends largely upon ourselves. Whether we walk on the sunny or the sunless side of the street is much a matter of choice.

THE GATES OF DAWN

January 18

SCRIPTURE READING—ISA. lii, 1-10

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."
—ISA. lii. 10

WHEREVER the messengers of Christ go, teaching His holy Word and working in His loving spirit, flowers spring in their footsteps. The advent of the adventurer is not always a blessing to the native. Not that of the soldier, not that of the trader, but the feet of the missionary are always beautiful, bearing the message of peace and salvation.

How gloriously is this prophecy fulfilled before our eyes in the Acts of the Apostles! "There was great joy in that city"—joy in every city that received the anointed messengers.

Ever since that period the missionary has waved wide the torch, scattering the darkness; he has sown the germs of life, causing the wilderness to blossom.

The grandest thing in the history of the world is Christ's effort to save the world. The richest solace of good men is the thought of the unresting growth of the kingdom of righteousness and peace.

This shall be a pure, beautiful, happy world yet. Am I to share in the glory of helping to make it so? Let me think, give, work, pray!

THE GATES OF DAWN

January 19

SCRIPTURE READING—I COR. i. 18-31

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty."—I COR. i. 27

WE must not be faint-hearted because we are consciously poor instruments. Something certainly depends upon an instrument, but, after all, the main question is the mastery of him who uses it. It would be a poor fiddle indeed that Paganini could not bring music out of; a poor pencil with which Raphael could not create a masterpiece; and the power of the Spirit behind the least gifted can work to glorious issues.

A science writer observes: "Nature and Art abound with cases where a little energy, rightly directed, controls energy infinitely greater in quantity. Often in a chemical compound the poise of attraction is so delicate that it may be disturbed by a breath, or by a note from a fiddle, and the substance explodes."

It is far more wonderful what a little talent or energy may accomplish in the moral world; there a note of warning, a breath of prayer, a shake of the hand may bring about the mightiest change in men's hearts and lives.

Let me put myself wholly at God's service, whatever I may be; greatness is not called for, but "meetness" for the Master's use.

THE GATES OF DAWN

January 20

SCRIPTURE READING—ACTS viii. 26-40

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."—ACTS viii. 37

PONDERING the great blessing of salvation which came to this officer, we are first arrested by the fact of his readiness for the blessing. He "had come to Jerusalem for to worship; and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah." Attention, predisposition, sympathy, expectation. All high blessing is ours as we await it in a certain state of preparedness, ripeness, susceptibility, and desire.

We often hear of men lighting accidentally on great discoveries. Newton luckily observed the falling apple, and the grand truth of gravitation flashed upon him; so we are assured the grandest discoveries and inventions are usually the consequence of the veriest accident. But it will always be found that it was by a prepared, pondering, sympathetic mind that the great truth was discovered, seized, proclaimed. Others cannot see, hear, or understand.

Let my mind be intent on spiritual things, my heart open and longing, my will inclined to obedience. Let my soul be sensitive as the photographic plate is to the unseen stars; wistful as the eye that watches for the morning; eager and acquisitive as the flower to the pollen.

THE GATES OF DAWN

January 21

SCRIPTURE READING—ISA. liii. ; ACTS viii. 32-35

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."—ISA. liii. 6

WHEN the New Testament thus interprets the Old, we may be very certain about the real signification.

That we cannot understand all that is implied in Christ suffering in our stead, dying for our sins, need not blind us to the precious fact. Thousands of thinking men to-day believe in the doctrine of evolution, that all the higher forms of life were evolved from lower forms, but they confess themselves unable to understand how Nature proceeds in her work of development.

I am not able to give an account to myself of the way in which Christ's death becomes the basis of my salvation; but I see the law of vicariousness operative everywhere, and why should I not believe in Calvary as its supreme illustration? It satisfies my conscience; it wins my heart; it becomes a sublime law for my own life that I shall suffer for others.

Living the vicarious life, I shall perhaps the better understand the doctrine of vicariousness, the central doctrine of the New Testament.

THE GATES OF DAWN

January 22

SCRIPTURE READING—Ps. cxix. 9-18

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

“Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.”—Ps. cxix. 18

REALLY, so far as spiritual vision is concerned, the angels must look upon this earth as a big blind asylum. We see close to us, but not afar off; we see the surface, and miss the depths; we see not as wide awake, but as those who rub their eyes hardly knowing whether they wake or sleep.

Have I seen the “wondrous things” out of God’s law? The things which accompany salvation. Many feel the intellectual interest of God’s Word, enjoy its eloquence, extol its moral worth, or they appreciate its prudential wisdom, like Napoleon, who put it in the political section of his library; but they do not grasp its spiritual, saving message. They gather shining pebbles and painted shells, and overlook the pearl of great price.

Oh! to see the wondrous depths of redeeming love! Whilst I study systems of theology and search the commentaries of exegetes, do I sufficiently remember the promised Revealer and wait His illumination? “Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things.”

THE GATES OF DAWN

January 23

SCRIPTURE READING—I TIM. vi. 9-19

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"God loveth a cheerful giver."—2 COR. ix. 7

WE must combine a life of unselfishness with a spirit of graciousness; constantly doing helpful things in a fine, free, rejoicing temper. Friends at weddings sometimes dash the confetti so violently into the face of the bridal party as to bring tears into their eyes; and it is quite possible to bestow blessings so ungraciously that we wound those we relieve.

Giving a "cup of cold water" in the name of the Master we do not lose the reward. But note that the water must be *cold*; herein lies its beauty and merit. In a burning clime the host has been considerate and gives his guest a chilled draught. A water-pot full to the brim on which no care has been bestowed counts for little; it is the emptied cup that expressed thoughtfulness and love that the King fills with gold. A warm heart tenders *cold* water.

Let us take care in all our helpfulness that the spirit in which it is done is lovely, multiplying the value of the gift and service a hundredfold. Let nothing be cold, except the water.

THE GATES OF DAWN

January 24

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. xxv. 31-40

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."
—GAL. vi. 2

THE spirit of love realised in Christ and revealing itself in the law of self-sacrifice is the determining line between the saved and the lost. What a truly solemn thought!

How many people cunningly and persistently contrive to shift their burden to the shoulders of their neighbours! They are not particular as to whom they saddle with their duty and care, but they determine to bear as little of it themselves as is possible. In youth somebody must fag for them; they treat their friend as a valet; their public life is parasitical; as husband or wife, they shuffle the whole weight of responsibility on their partner.

The ingenuity of the ignoble to make themselves comfortable at other people's expense is no small part of the comedy and tragedy of human life.

How different the spirit of Christ! Let me manfully accept my own burden; and then, by thought, sympathy, influence, and substantial aid, let me lighten the burden of my neighbour. My Master was the great burden bearer of the race. Let me drink in His spirit and follow in His steps.

THE GATES OF DAWN

January 25

SCRIPTURE READING—GAL. vi. 1-10

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men.”—GAL. vi. 10

“**T**O work that which is good towards all men” is a simple and sublime canon. We have special reason to succour them that are of the household of faith, but after that the field is wide—all are brothers, all have a brother’s claim.

So “then, as we have opportunity.” What a great thing it is in life to seize the opportunity! An Eastern traveller tells us that “the Arab is never ready.” If a gazelle is surprised it generally makes good its escape whilst he is fumbling for his gun. How much like the majority of us in regard to the chances of life!

But if we are unready to get, are we not, too, often strangely blind to the opportunity to give, help, bless? Our most genuine sorrow is again and again occasioned by the knowledge that we let a gracious opportunity slip. We see, too late, what we might have done if we had only been awake.

May I this day be alive to the golden chance of doing good! Let me be ready to buy up the opportunity. Blessing is missed for want of thought as well as want of heart.

THE GATES OF DAWN

January 26

SCRIPTURE READING—2 COR. viii. 1-9

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath and not according to that he hath not."—2 COR. viii. 12

THE feeling obtains widely even among sincere people, that we do so little good because we have little resource. We dream of the vast things we should have accomplished with talent and fortune.

Yet is not the whole history of Christianity designed to teach the contrary idea, the wealth of the poor, the power of the feeble? He who had not where to lay His head, has made us all rich. His Apostles without silver and gold dowered men with health and salvation. The churches of Macedonia in affliction found abundance of joy, and in deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. The race has been helped most by benefactors who struggled with narrow means.

The degree in which I bless the world is far more a question of what I am than of what I have. Power is determined chiefly by personality. Sixteen ounces of gold are sufficient to gild a wire that would encircle the earth; but faith, love, and prayer make a very small bit of gold do far greater wonders in the moral and spiritual life of mankind. Shakespeare made a few scraps of knowledge go a long way, but grace effects more than genius; faith, love, and prayer make of slenderest intellectual gifts instruments of measureless blessing.

THE GATES OF DAWN

January 27

SCRIPTURE READING—2 TIM. iii.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed."—
1 PET. iv. 16

NO man need be ashamed who has suffered as a soldier. The leg or arm lost for his country's sake is his glory. No man need be ashamed who has suffered in the interests of society. Many cripples emerge out of the army of industry as well as from the field of battle, and the blindness and mutilation of such are tokens of honour moving the spectator's admiration and sympathy. The physician who has suffered in the interests of humanity has only pride in his scars. How much more if we are counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake! That is to suffer for the race in the highest sense of all.

Christ suffered joyfully. He wore the crown of thorns as if it were a wreath of roses; He went to Calvary with a hymn on His lips—"I delight to do Thy will, O my God."

Am I a partaker of *these* sufferings? Is any part of my tribulation anxiety, pain, and loss on account of others? Do I voluntarily undertake services for humanity which involve sacrifice and sorrow? Do I rejoice that I am thus partaker of Christ's suffering?

If "we suffer with Him we shall also reign with Him."

THE GATES OF DAWN

January 28

SCRIPTURE READING.—ACTS vii. 54 ; viii. 4

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word."—ACTS viii. 4

THE distribution of plants is to the scientist a most engrossing study; how the wind, tides, and birds carry the seed to widely-sundered shores is a veritable romance. Even more mysterious are the manifold ways by which the knowledge of Christ has been, diffused throughout the nations.

It took root in the red streets of Jerusalem; it sprang as by magic in the fields of Samaria; it blossomed like a rose in the desert in the Ethiopian chamberlain; its first-fruits were gathered in Asia, and directly harvested in Europe.

Gardeners often have a piece of spare ground which they use for the trial of seedlings. Let us put to proof the gracious truths of revelation in our own heart and experience; and then, having proved how precious and beautiful they are, let us become sowers of the germs of life, scattering them by tongue, pen, and influence wherever we go.

THE GATES OF DAWN

January 29

SCRIPTURE READING.—PROV. xxiii. 29-35

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging."—PROV. xx. 1

"REDNESS of eyes" signifies in the original "muddled, confused sight"; and the main idea of the sacred writer is that in intoxication we cease to see truly—we become the victims of hallucinations, we blunder painfully as to the fact.

When an opiate was offered to the dying queen Maria Theresa she put it aside, saying, "I will meet my God awake." If noble souls could desire to enter eternity with unclouded mind, is it less desirable that we should deal with the momentous things of life with perfect sobriety of thought and feeling?

The pilot of a ship, the driver of an engine ought not to suffer from "muddled, confused sight"; and surely in all this solemn and dangerous life we ought to see with clear eyes and be in full possession of ourselves with every step we take.

Truth and sobriety may seem prosaic, but they are infinitely better than the lurid illusions of false excitements with their tragic awakenings.

THE GATES OF DAWN

January 30

SCRIPTURE READING.—GAL. v. 13-25

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

“Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”—GAL. v. 16

WHAT a terrible list of vices! What an infernal garden of weeds and nightshade, with the devil for gardener ever sowing poison-flowers and planting up as trees!

On the other hand, what a catalogue of graces! A veritable paradise of God, full of blooms which never spring naturally on earthly ground.

“Walk in the Spirit,” in His wisdom, power, and peace; order your lives by the Spirit’s guidance, and ye shall by a sweet necessity break into the fruition of light; ye shall reap the harvest of the Spirit’s sowing; and, on the other side, there will be no fear of your gratifying the cravings of the sensual nature.

Belonging to Christ, sharing in His death, we have slain upon His Cross our sensual nature, with its passions and its cravings (ver. 24).

This is the drastic fashion of dealing with the animal self. No soft impeachment of it, no feeble chiding of it or gingerly treatment of it, but its crucifixion. We are dead to sin and can live no longer therein.

THE GATES OF DAWN

January 31

SCRIPTURE READING.—MATT. xxiv. 42-51

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

“Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.”—MATT. xxiv. 42

“**I**N an hour that ye think not the Son of Man cometh.” The surprises of life are many, but usually the ending of life is the greatest surprise of all.

Many are fond of speculating about the coming of the Son of Man to judge the nations, a problem none can hope to resolve. But I know, and am perfectly sure, that it cannot be long before the Son of Man will be revealed to me, and call me to give an account of my stewardship. I ought not to be greatly surprised at any hour to receive His summons. Let me leave the larger question and concentrate myself on the personal one.

When the Master comes He ought to find me living the life of spirituality, love, purity, helpfulness. Alas! if He surprise me in sloth, selfishness, sensuality. Richard III. went out at twilight to reconnoitre; he found a sentinel fast asleep at the outposts. The king promptly stabbed him to the heart, with the stern words, “I found him asleep, and I leave him so.”

What does the 51st verse mean?

THE GATES OF DAWN

February 1

SCRIPTURE READING.—EPHES. v. 1-21

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

“For the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth.”—EPHES. v. 9

“THE fruit of the light.” How beautiful on paper! the list of the graces reads like a poem, and in actual life we feel the full power of their beauty. A writer has just complained that flowers in the garden often fall far short of the glowing description of them in the seedsman’s catalogue; but when the sowing of the Spirit has free course there is no disappointment; very rich and delightful are the passive and active graces of the Christian character.

But a sensual taste is the old serpent that destroyed the primitive Eden. He brings blight and ruin. The ghastly trail of an unchastened carnal desire defiles the soul’s beauty; the creeping passion bites like a serpent, poisons like an adder, finally wrecking the garden of the soul.

Do not be bewitched by his beauty, or beguiled by his sophistry. Remember the promise, and “trample upon the adder.” Call to your aid Him who bruises the serpent’s head. Save your paradise.

THE GATES OF DAWN

February 2

SCRIPTURE READING—ACTS x. 17-33

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God."—
ACTS x. 31

OUR little acts of kindness may be unremembered by our friends and neighbours, yet they are never forgotten by God. Our memory is usually retentive as to what is owing to us, and short in regard to what we owe others; but God tenderly keeps in memory our best moments and deeds, rejoicing to remember our sins no more.

We must not think of our sacrifices as forming a ground of merit, yet we may safely and helpfully recall the fact that God is not unrighteous to forget our acts of faithfulness and love. For a single fault, real or imaginary, friends take umbrage and ignore the better things wrought by us in many bygone years; but in the days in which we falter and fail Heaven reminds itself, and us, that we are capable of better things. Do let us remember that God is full of gracious consideration and rich sympathy.

What a grand response the prayers and gifts of Cornelius elicited! Similar running-over measure will God mete out to us.

THE GATES OF DAWN

February 3

SCRIPTURE READING—GAL. iii. 7-14

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The just shall live by faith."—GAL. iii. 11.

THIS whole question of faith and works is simply a question whether religion is to be a matter of personal love, trust, and fellowship, or to be a matter of rule, ceremony, and sacrament; whether it is to be personal or official, spiritual or material, vital or mechanical.

Faith means vision. The constant sense of things unseen and eternal. Faith means trust. Daily confidence in the faithful Creator, the loving Redeemer. Faith means expectation. The anticipation of the recompense of the reward. Faith is the root, hope is the blossom, charity is the flower of true religion.

Let me beware of the technical, the tangible, the formal in my religious life; let me keep intact the ethereal chords which bind me to the upper universe, and which bring into my life the spiritual electricity on which everything depends. I live by trust, love, admiration, fellowship, revealing themselves and justifying themselves in obedience.

THE GATES OF DAWN

February 4

SCRIPTURE READING—JOHN iv. 1-14

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

“Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.”—JOHN. iv. 14

THE fulness of the grace of the Lord Jesus. “Whosoever.” The Old Testament might suggest limitation in God’s thought and love, but the New Testament dissipates the mist and makes clear the universality and plenitude of saving grace. As Andrew Bonar says, “The well of life never sinks below the brim,” and nations may drink and live.

How free that grace! “That I shall give him.” What a price in suffering and sacrifice the pilgrim must pay for the waters of the Ganges! Every blessing in Christ is ours for a look, a sigh, a breath!

How effectual is the gift! “Shall never thirst.” He who knows the love of Christ and the peace it brings, no longer envies the golden goblet of wealth, the “loving cup” of worldly festivity, the waters of Lethe, or any of the many broken cisterns of the carnal life.

“Whosoever *drinketh.*” Let me consider that word. “*Eateth,*” “*drinketh.*” Do I by personal faith appropriate the blessing?

THE GATES OF DAWN

February 5

SCRIPTURE READING—LUKE xxiii. 33-47

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Thy God, whom thou servest continually, He will deliver thee."—DANIEL vi. 16.

LET us beware of desperate moments. The God whom we serve continually, He will deliver us. In the darkest hours, in the most threatening circumstances, let us trust and hope.

The triumph of Christ on the Cross, the establishment of His Kingdom in the very hour and power of darkness, is the assurance of the deliverance and victory of the good in all ages when the sun's light fails and the earth is removed out of its place. When the worst comes to the worst, God and His salvation come.

In the deepest despondency we rise again, trusting in the Eternal love and faithfulness. "I am astonished," says Quinet, "at the resources that are in the human heart, since it can be reborn in the very moment it seemed to die. Oh! if we could but trust a little to time." Yes, if we could only trust a little to time; but infinitely better still if we trust to eternity! That shall see us gloriously righted and satisfied.

THE GATES OF DAWN

February 6

SCRIPTURE READING—ACTS ix. 1-19

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"—ACTS ix. 6.

"**L**ORD, what wilt Thou have me to do?" The turning point. Hitherto Saul had done what he liked, and liked what he did. Breathing threatening and slaughter, haling men and women to prison suits the selfishness and truculency of human nature, as fire and smoke a volcano; but Saul must have been conscious, when he asked this question, that he was inviting much that would go sadly against the grain.

This acquiescence in the will of God is of the very essence of conversion. According to the Bulgarian proverb, "The true hermit retires from himself." He not only removes from the world, he renounces himself; forsaking the life of selfishness and sin, he subjects himself to that higher law which contradicts flesh and blood at every step.

This fusing of the human will in the will divine is only possible in the fire of love. As Spenser sings—

"Love that two hearts makes one, makes eke one will."

THE GATES OF DAWN

February 7

SCRIPTURE READING—I TIM. i. 12-17

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."—I TIM. i. 15

WHATEVER we can do for ourselves heaven leaves us to do; it never weakens or stultifies by relieving us of obligations with which we can personally cope. Christ coming into the world to save sinners demonstrates our helplessness. There is no more pathetic sight than to see poor human nature struggling to raise itself above itself.

How infinite the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, how it abounds to the chief of sinners! Paul for once seems egotistical and to lay claim to pre-eminence over all men; he confesses himself the guiltiest of all.

But do not all who see themselves as God sees them share the Apostle's conviction? There are as many claimants for the lowest place in the dust as there are true penitents.

All are included under sin that He might have mercy on all. Oh! the wonderful love, the infinite compassion, the almighty grace. None must presume; none despair. Just as I am, let me come.

THE GATES OF DAWN

February 8

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. xvi. 21-28

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself."—MATT. xvi. 24

OUR Lord denied Himself in the path of redemption, in the procuring of salvation for a lost world. We are to deny ourselves along the same path in making that salvation known. A life of sacrifice does not consist in a few agonising dramatic acts, but in a patient effort to let men know how much Christ loves them, how much He has done for them, how much He waits to give them.

What keeps me back from publishing the sinner's Friend? Why do I not throw myself more heartily into evangelic work? Indifference? How little I can know of the Saviour's spirit if I neglect to publish the benefits of His death! Pride? The Son of God will teach me to stoop! Sloth? What a deadly sin is sloth, especially the sloth that causes me to forget my Lord's vineyard!

There are tens of thousands of Christian men and women of gifts, culture, leisure, doing nothing, or next to nothing, and all the while missions are without helpers, schools are lacking teachers, the poor the sick, the sad, are unvisited!

THE GATES OF DAWN

February 9

SCRIPTURE READING—I THESS. I.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Rejoice, because your names are written in heaven."—LUKE
x. 20

HERE the Apostle strikes the note of triumph. Very chequered were his experiences as he passed from city to city, but here the note is altogether that of victory and thankfulness.

If we envy this holy joy of successful toil, let us mark the qualities ensuring success. We have no cause to rejoice in the Church except as through it fresh names are being written in heaven; how, then, shall we secure this?

The work of the Thessalonians was in faith, inspired by faith. It was vitalised throughout by a great belief in God, in Christ, in the human soul and its destiny. Their toil was born of love. Out of a pure heart, beating warmly towards God and man, sprang all their teaching, travelling, and sacrifice. Their strong endurance was sustained by their waiting for the coming of the Lord, by their patience of hope. These are the founts and elements of success.

Faith, love, patience: can any work fail in which this trinity is engaged?

THE GATES OF DAWN

February 10

SCRIPTURE READING—ROMANS x. 6-17

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."—ROM. x. 13

REVELATION leaves no method unemployed to bring home to us the fact that Christ died for all men, for the worst of men, and that salvation is a free gift.

Doughty, whose knowledge of the Arabs was most intimate, says of them, "In their greediness to spoil the castaway life, whom they will not help forward, the Arabs are viler than any nation." When they find any sick, destitute, or helpless, they are in haste to strip the forlorn ones of whatever rags may be left, and to leave them to perish.

How absolutely contrary to the genius of the Gospel! To save the castaway life is the express mission of the Church of Christ—the helpless, friendless, hopeless ones of the whole earth.

How shall they hear without a preacher? It is the duty of every saved sinner to tell of this rich, free grace; to seek to bring home to his fellow-sinners the knowledge of salvation. Am I faithful?

THE GATES OF DAWN

February 11

SCRIPTURE READING—DEUT. xviii. 9-14

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God."—DEUT. xviii. 13

THE Israelites were to keep themselves severely free from the vices of the heathen; we are required to have no commerce with the spirit and ways of the world.

"Ye *cannot* serve God and Mammon," said the Master; yet how cunningly and persistently we attempt the impossible! In curious ways we seek to combine the spiritual and the carnal, the consecrated and the profane, the divine and the worldly.

Chemists are continually discovering the possibility of blending substances once thought incompatible; but the Christian spirit, and the spirit of the world, are infinitely disparate, and can never be reconciled.

How much easier and happier is the Christian life when once we have effected a complete severance from the world! Henry Drummond says truly, "The most of the difficulties of trying to live the Christian life arise from attempting to half live it." To be an out and out disciple is to enjoy peace and strength to which the double-hearted are entirely strange.

THE GATES OF DAWN

February 12

SCRIPTURE READING—ACTS xiii. 26-41

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

“Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.”—ACTS xiii. 38

GOD forgives sin in the most royal fashion. As Dr. Owen writes, “The forgiveness that is with God is such as becomes Him. It is not like that narrow, difficult, halving, and manacled forgiveness that is found amongst men; but it is full, free, boundless, bottomless, absolute, and before which our sins are as a cloud before the east wind and a rising sun.”

John saw “a rainbow round about the throne” of God and the Lamb. The rainbow, as we see it, is always an arc. The rainbow John saw was orbicular, a vast, completed ring of glory.

We see the tints of the rainbow in human forgiveness, we behold a majestic arch in the Mosaic dispensation, but the bow of the cloud in its completeness is witnessed only about the mediatorial throne. The law made nothing perfect, but that is exactly what Christ does. The remission of sins is so complete that “every one that believeth is justified from all things.” Do I know this grace in all its richness and blessedness?

THE GATES OF DAWN

February 13

SCRIPTURE READING—EZEK. iii. 4-11

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The house of Israel will not hearken unto thee, for they will not hearken unto Me."—EZEK. iii. 7

THE privileges we enjoy may be misused to our injury; our very knowledge, through pride and prejudice, may render impossible further and clearer light.

Bessemer, speaking of his discoveries, said, "I had an immense advantage over many others, inasmuch as I had no fixed ideas derived from long-established practice to control and bias my mind, and did not suffer from the too general belief that whatever is, is right."

He meant that he owed much to "golden ignorance," to freedom from prejudice, to a sincere disinterested mind. If this be true in purely intellectual questions, how much more is it so in moral and spiritual life!

A little knowledge is a dangerous thing, and all spiritual knowledge is little; but when associated with conceit, arrogance, and self-will, the light that is in us becomes darkness. "Teach me Thy way, O Lord; show me Thy paths."

THE GATES OF DAWN

February 14

SCRIPTURE READING—2 COR. v. 11-21

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."—2 COR. v. 17

THE main point of the passage concerns the regenerative, transforming power which accompanies the preaching of the Word. The end of the whole redemptive process is that in Christ we become new creatures.

Richard Spruce tells of a poor Mamaluco sailor whom he encountered on his travels, and who was a bit of a philosopher. "How is it," said the native, "that almost every animal except man renews its youth and beauty at stated seasons? Birds moult their plumage, snakes slough their skins, even the cockroach casts off its old covering, and all come forth bright and beautiful as in the days of their youth; but we" (casting his eyes on his brown wizened hand) "grow uglier and more discoloured every year, and the same skin must serve unto our dying day!"

The poor fellow knew nothing of that transformation "in the spirit of the mind" which is infinitely more wonderful than any change that Nature knows, the same skin, but a new creature whose adorning is a transfigured soul.

THE GATES OF DAWN

February 15

SCRIPTURE READING—2 TIM. iv. 1-8

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise."—
2 TIM. iii. 15

THE strength, safety, and serviceableness of Timothy was, in the estimation of St. Paul, largely the consequence of early familiarity with the sacred writings.

Careful experiments have shown that the deviation of the compass on board iron ships is very perceptible, which is due solely to the position occupied by the vessel while it was lying on the building slip, where it acquires a definite magnetic character, the needle invariably turning to that part of the ship which was farthest from the north while she was in process of construction.

Is not the human character profoundly affected whilst on the building slip? Is there not then imparted to the soul a bias which strangely persists through the years? Do we not then acquire a definite moral character? Let us watch carefully the culture of the child, building ever with an eye to the cardinal points, so shall the delicate needle of choice and sympathy suffer no deviation, but point infallibly to the true lode-star.

THE GATES OF DAWN

February 16

SCRIPTURE READING—2 COR. iv. 5-18

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Death worketh in us, but life in you."—2 COR. iv. 12

THE point specially to be observed here is the unselfishness of the Apostle's suffering. His sorrows were to a large extent vicarious, and because they were vicarious, his humiliations were changed into triumphs, his losses into gain, his grief into gaiety.

The martyrs of science are so renowned because they suffered poverty and persecutions that they might enrich the world with their discoveries. The martyrs of literature are honoured because their genius carried our burden; they bled for our larger illumination and delight. The martyrs of patriotism are crowned with flowers because they wore the crown of sorrows for our political emancipation. The martyrs of God are sublime because they laid down their lives for their brethren.

The more the element of disinterestedness comes into life the more is life exalted, satisfied, honoured. Unselfishness is the secret of sorrow's transfiguration. Selfish sorrow starves, paralyses, embitters, works death.

THE GATES OF DAWN

February 17

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. xxiii. 1-13

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"He that is greatest among you shall be your servant."—
MATT. xxiii. 11

IT was, indeed, an original thought in the world when Jesus Christ identified greatness with service. Closely regarded, the morality of the New Testament is full of originality, yet nowhere more than here.

The iron crown of Lombardy is composed of a broad circle of gold, set with large rubies, emeralds, and sapphires, on a ground of blue and gold enamel. But the most important part of the iron crown, from which it derives its name, is a narrow rim or band of iron attached to the inner circumference of the circle. This inner band of sacred iron is believed to have been made of one of the nails used at the crucifixion, and accounts for the veneration in which the crown has always been held.

How instinctively men feel that the true greatness is not in the gold, rubies, emeralds, and sapphires of pride; but rather in the iron which entered into the soul of one who served and suffered for us all! Any work, suffering, sacrifice, with the element of service in it, is sublime. The nail is the Koh-i-noor. The crown of thorns the diadem of the kingliest. The throne of glory is prepared for the loving helper of his brother.

THE GATES OF DAWN

February 18

SCRIPTURE READING—GAL. ii.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"For I through the law am dead to the law that I might live unto God."—GAL. ii. 19

THE contrast here is between law and life. "I, through the operation of the curse of the law, have (in Messiah's person) suffered the death which puts me beyond the reach of the law, to live henceforth a life consecrated to God."

The death of Christ freed me from the dominion of the law as given by Moses, by creating within me the law of the spirit of life. The difference between art and nature shadows forth the difference between obedience in the Mosaic dispensation and the obedience of Christ. It is the difference between the artificial flower and the garden rose, between the sculptured figure and the breathing body; the one shaped from outside, the other determined from within. It is the difference between the mechanical and the vital; the one unsympathetic and constrained, the other organic, instinctive, voluntary, delightful. The law is henceforth put within our mind, written in our heart.

Let me seek that the grace of Christ so hallows my thought, and conscience, and will, that my very nature becomes identified with the eternal law of righteousness.

THE GATES OF DAWN

February 19

SCRIPTURE READING—JOHN xv. 17-27

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only."—JAMES i. 22

THESE things I command you that ye should go and bear fruit." The Jews generally were guilty of unbelief and disobedience, but the disciples were to believe in Him in such a way that their faith would demonstrate itself in beautiful works and ways.

They were to be doers of the word and not hearers only. How easy it is to fall into the error of treating Christianity as if it were an abstract thing; to entertain it as a mere doctrine, to discuss it controversially, to deal with it as a theory, as an abstruse speculation! This is a great and subtle peril. Yet how entirely unsatisfactory! It is like cheating ourselves with the reflection of a bank note in a looking-glass. As love is the glory of God, so must it be reckoned the glory of man. Glory not in strength, riches, or genius, but in the love that seeks another's good. The love of God suffered and bled. So our love must not evaporate in poetry, but take upon itself vicarious sacrificial burdens.

Let me realise my creed in thought, prove it in experience, illustrate it in character, obey it in daily practical life. Thus do I build on the rock.

THE GATES OF DAWN

February 20

SCRIPTURE READING—I COR. ii. 1-16

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us."—TITUS iii. 5

THAT our salvation is wholly of God is a truth that ever becomes clearer to a sincere spiritual mind.

Our works of righteousness are really not works of righteousness at all; if you put the whitest snow, the purest dew, under the glass, they are found defiled; and beneath the criticism of the spiritual law our best feelings and deeds are not perfect before God.

When the great theologian, Richard Watson, was on his death-bed, he confessed, "I feel myself like a worm that has just crawled out of the earth amidst the glory of the meridian sun. It behoves me to lie very low in the dust before God."

The noble missionary John Hunt said in dying, "Let me go, a heap of inconsistencies, backslidings, and unfaithfulness; let me go, as I trust I shall through Divine mercy alone, to heaven."

If these eminent saints thus abandoned themselves, to trust wholly in God's mercy and Christ's merit, can I dare to reckon on anything that I am or have done? It is sweet and safe to pray with the Apostle, "That I may find mercy in that day."

THE GATES OF DAWN

February 21

SCRIPTURE READING—I JOHN iii. 18-24

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Let us not love in word, . . . ; but in deed and in truth."
I JOHN iii. 18

SINCERITY is of the very first importance in all human life and conduct. J. A. Froude writes most wisely on this point. "Be sincere with yourself, whatever the temptation. Say nothing to others that you do not think, and play no tricks with your own mind. Of all the evil spirits abroad in the world insincerity is the most dangerous."

Truthfulness in dealing with God. Nothing unreal, simulated, affected; nothing without veracity and honesty of purpose. Is not the etymological signification of sincerity, sunshine? "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in the darkness, we lie."

Truthfulness in dealing with men. To think to deceive them is to deceive ourselves, and we do not mislead them for long. They discern the hollowness of sham goodness much sooner even than the worthlessness of sham jewellery. There is an idiom in truth, actuality, sincerity, that our neighbours rarely mistake.

THE GATES OF DAWN

February 22

SCRIPTURE READING—JAMES iii. 1-18

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work."—JAMES iii. 16

IT is a common thing in South America for a person stung by a scorpion to have the tongue paralysed for some hours; but stung by the scorpion sin, the tongue acquires a fatal nimbleness.

How true that envy and strife breed every evil work! The destructive fires which mysteriously occur in the great forests of the West are said to be occasioned by the friction set up by the wind agitating the branches of the trees. Two branches rub against each other until a spark is kindled, and in the end the forest is reduced to ashes.

How much this resembles the irritations of the home, the oppositions of business, the rivalries of members within the Christian Church!

Let me seek peace and pursue it. A tranquil, kindly, genial temper means much. Astronomers prize serene, clear nights for the vision of the heavens; so I best see the unseen and eternal through an untroubled medium. I best serve my neighbour, and he best serves me, as we live in peace.

THE GATES OF DAWN

February 23

SCRIPTURE READING—PROV. x. 11-22

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The tongue of the just is as choice silver."—PROV. x. 20

SILVER-TONGUED orators are greatly famous and much sought after; yet, after all, the tongue of the just is the rarest eloquence, and this excellence is open to all.

Beware of "flattering words"; words of ensnaring eloquence, of specious argument, of smooth deceit and seductiveness. Watch against "the multitude of words." "If we talk much we talk well," said a lady to a cardinal. His eminence replied: "Half of that is true." Watch the scornful words which wound like a sharp razor. Use not the tongue as an engine of treachery. Condescend not to the idle gossip that wanteth not sin. Refrain from "devouring words"; that most brutal and truculent form of cannibalism which in slander swallows down a brother's reputation. Dread the impure, the impious word. Suppress the whisper that might bring down an avalanche of trouble and ruin.

How wide is the range of sin and mischief possible to the tongue! If we can only be innocent here, we shall be well-nigh guiltless of all offence.

THE GATES OF DAWN

February 24

SCRIPTURE READING--HEB. xi. 32-40

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Without faith it is impossible to please Him."—HEB. xi. 16

SIR SAMUEL BAKER says, "The African will believe in nothing, unless he can obtain some specific benefit from the object of his belief." Much faith in this day is of the same carnal species.

When a Bible-reader inquired of a poor creature in the slums as to what he believed in, the reply came frankly, "In a mutton chop."

Much modern faith in Christianity resolves itself into this sordid service. Something is to be said for the test of utility, but our Lord thought little of the faith occupied with loaves and fishes.

The test of pure faith is not in what it gets, but in what it yields; not in what it enjoys, but in what for the sake of the highest it is prepared to suffer; not in its material lucrativeness, but in its moral and spiritual efficiency.

The faith described in these verses is a very different thing from the faith that justifies itself by putting money into our pocket, bread into our mouth, and by scattering flowers on our path.

Let me know that faith of Christ which is set on the highest, which suffers for the highest, which achieves the highest.

THE GATES OF DAWN

February 25

SCRIPTURE READING—ACTS xii. 5-17

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry."—Ps. xxxiv. 15

IT has been wisely and truthfully written, "True prayer is no earth-born thing. It is falling helpless at a Father's knee in answer to His call. It is the putting up of empty hands to receive what has been already promised. It is a poor, weak, trembling echo of Divine love. It is a pure thought, born in Heaven, and struggling back again into its native atmosphere, with some of the dust of earth upon its wings.

"When you cry for special blessings in such a spirit, be sure that you are not only fulfilling the required conditions of all answered prayer, but that in answering you for your highest good, God is acting in exact accordance with the conditions of His own infinite being. The special answer will follow the special prayer."

We are always getting into straits of some sort which shut us up as in stone walls or iron cages. We know the remedy. The disciples did not petition Herod, but Heaven; and Heaven granted an order of release, which Herod could not gainsay. Do not let our poor ignorant reasonings about prayer stultify our Divine instinct.

THE GATES OF DAWN

February 26

SCRIPTURE READING—ACTS xiii. 1-12

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The Lord shall guide thee continually."—ISA. lviii. 11

THE Divine guidance of the Christian Church is a reassuring fact. The pilot of Galilee took charge of it from its very inception, and the Divine superintendence has never been withdrawn. Just as the philosophical historian recognises design and government in the world at large, the Christian believer must acknowledge the sovereignty of the Spirit in the development of the Church.

Do we seek as we ought this leading of the Spirit in the direction of ecclesiastical rule and evangelical enterprise? Our God keeps all things tremblingly dependent upon Himself. The Spirit accompanies the Bible, and is essential to its interpretation. He ever overshadows the Church, and is essential to its guidance. We must not forget the Spirit in the statesman.

Whilst ever alive to Christ's spiritual providence over the affairs of His Church, let us not forget his spiritual directorship in all the phases of our religious experience and history. "And may our Lord *pilot* your hearts into the haven of the love of God, into such calm patience as was Messiah's," is Arthur S. Way's translation of 2 Thess. iii. 5.

THE GATES OF DAWN

February 27

SCRIPTURE READING—ROM. xiii. 7-14

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Owe no man anything, but to love one another."—ROM. xiii. 8

LOVE is here shown as obligation. It is a debt; something that we owe. To love one another is usually regarded as a question of pure sentiment and caprice. We regard ourselves with infinite reproach if we do not discharge our financial liabilities, but that we fail to honour and help our neighbour seems at most as if we were only neglectful of the poetry of life. True love is dutiful; it has the sense of obligation.

Love has a wide range—it implies universal obligation. The Greek word translated in the text "neighbour" is given in the margin "the other." That is simple and large. "The other," never mind anything more. No matter about nation, rank, or kindred; no matter whether stranger, foe, or suspect; "the other." It is a debt to society, to humanity.

The sufficiency of love. It is the guarantee for the discharge of manifold obligation. Love is really ethical genius; it fits for the swift, complete, and delightful accomplishment of the universal duty. If law is the definition of love, love is the summation of law.

THE GATES OF DAWN

February 28

SCRIPTURE READING—ROM. vi. 8-18

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"If we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him."—ROM. vi. 8

HOW entirely the mind of the Apostle is occupied with sin! The fact of sin, its power, its mastery, is the subject of his whole thought. Nothing is to him of the slightest consequence in art, philosophy, or politics, compared with the question of understanding and dealing with the principle of lawlessness, which afflicts us. It should also be the first grand question with us all.

In our oneness with Christ we have died to sin; in our oneness with Him we have risen into a new, holy, immortal life. If the death unto sin is the first thought, the ascent unto righteousness becomes the second and final aspiration.

This is the primary, beautiful, dominant ideal of the Christian life—holiness to the Lord. The old self is dead, the grass grows over it, the Devil himself being the chief mourner; the new self walks in the glory of a divine and eternal righteousness.

Completeness is the grand thought of this passage. Completeness in the severance from sin; completeness of identification with the Lord of righteousness.

THE GATES OF DAWN

February 29

SCRIPTURE READING—2 COR. vi. 11-18

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers."—2 COR.
vi. 14

THERE are few greater illusions than to think that we can voluntarily enter into association with evil and yet be none the worse for it. Whatever precautions we may adopt, the coarse thing which we foolishly allow will infect us.

A photographic plate may be wrapped up in any quantity of black paper to make perfectly sure that there is no risk whatever of light getting to it; but if a radio-active substance is anywhere near, it will penetrate the black paper, and impress figures on the plate despite the protective darkness.

But the heart is more sensitive than any photographic film or plate, and if we gratuitously allow ourselves in equivocal associations, they will injuriously affect our thought and temper, in spite of the cleverest and most elaborate precautions.

It is enough that we have to guard against the depressing and defiling influences of daily life, without voluntarily touching pitch.

THE GATES OF DAWN

March 1

SCRIPTURE READING—I PETER i. 13-25

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy."—I PETER
i. 15

"AS He which hath called you." Judging ourselves in the light of the world, we may easily find grounds for personal satisfaction; but to judge ourselves in the light of the Lord, to measure ourselves by the Divine standard, is to put our pride to shame.

Corot said: "When I find myself in one of Nature's beautiful places, I grow angry with my pictures." Pleased with them in his studio, in sight of the glory of the world the artist was humbled.

We may be content with ourselves, comparing ourselves with ourselves, but in the presence of the purity and beauty of the Lord we are rebuked. O that I may see sin as God sees it, and renounce it with all my heart!

Yet our consolation is here. He who has called us to emulate His spotlessness will also do it. If we give Him free course, and loyally co-operate with His grace, our calling will become effectual, and the servant be as His Lord.

THE GATES OF DAWN

March 2

SCRIPTURE READING—EPHES. iv. 17-24

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."—EPHES. iv. 24

THE people used to complain of Chrysostom, the golden-mouthed preacher, that he was always harping on one string. The Apostle Paul might be similarly impeached ; holiness is the golden string on which he never ceases to make music.

Have we not all to fear imperfect repentance? That we put the sin away without abhorring it ; that we put it away partially ; that we put it away in gross forms, to entertain it in subtler forms ; that we bury our idols when we ought to burn them?

"Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." In Arabic countries the belief is common that if a child is sickly, or of infirm understanding, and his parents put upon him the name of wolf, or leopard, or lion, his human fragility will take on a temper of strength and nobleness. This superstition becomes a glorious moral truth as we hide ourselves in the name of Christ, and wrap ourselves up in His merit, love, and power.

The old offending nature dies, dies utterly, in fellowship with Him. It cannot survive contact with His grace and beauty. "And the new man, which after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth," takes the place of the annihilated sensual self.

THE GATES OF DAWN

March 3

SCRIPTURE READING—ACTS xvi. 1-15

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

—ROM. x. 17

IT is inspiring to remember that the Spirit of God is ever operating on the minds of men, preparing them for the reception of gospel truth and blessing. We see this in the longing of Macedonia, in the sensibility of Lydia.

It is a common mistake to assume the unfitness, the unripeness of men for the blessing, when in truth the very opposite is the fact. As the opening flowers display their leaves and gladly drink in the solar fire, so hearts all around us hunger and thirst for spiritual blessing.

Yet it is only when the appeal is made by the evangelist, only when he proclaims the gospel message of truth and love, that the spiritual affinities and aspirations of the waiting heart are evoked. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

When a grain of pollen is brought to a plant by wind or wing, it is fertilised, and its blossoms pass into richer flower and fruit; so often to a single gracious word human souls will respond in immediate joyous faith and love. "Whose heart the Lord opened, to give heed unto the things which were spoken by Paul." How the human and divine ministries are blended!

THE GATES OF DAWN

March 4

SCRIPTURE READING—PHILIPPIANS, iii. 1-11

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"I pray . . . that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ."—PHILIPPIANS i. 10

LOVE to God and man is to abound more and more, yet it is to remain reflective and discriminative. The ninth and tenth verses remind us that love is not vague sentiment, unreasoning enthusiasm, the mere poetic embroidering of life.

A recent writer on the growing of summer roses gives this advice: "A certain use of the critical faculty, even on the best of June mornings, some sort of classifying of sorts and specimens, and a defining of perhaps too vague ideals and desires, would, for many rosarians, repay ten times over the temporary loss of a little enthusiasm. A really skilled grower owns a mind balanced between zeal and caution; analytic even in its hours of fruition."

Do not many of the saints need similar advice? We need more discerning and classifying to define our too vague ideals and designs, to instruct our zeal, to get a sounder judgment into our fine enthusiasms.

What is love without knowledge? What is love without conscience, justice, right? What is love without character and obedience?

THE GATES OF DAWN

March 5

SCRIPTURE READING—PHIL. ii. 12-23

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."—PHIL. iv. 13

THE great ideal of Christian character and life is possible because of the Divine power which worketh in us. He who supplies the ideal supplies the grace. He who sets the task inspires the genius.

Having attained to a pure and blameless character, we become luminaries in a dark world. As a lighthouse shines across the sea, so we hold forth the word of life in our lips and lives. There is such a thing as speaking for Jesus, singing for Jesus, working for Jesus, and there is such a thing as simply shining for Jesus.

Does not the Apostle remind us that if we are to play the part of luminaries we must be real, and pure, and lofty? "Children of God without blemish." Spots on the sun are here of serious moment. Our faults terribly interfere with our usefulness. Let us not be dim lights, intermittent lights, lights in which there is the shadow of turning.

THE GATES OF DAWN

March 6

SCRIPTURE READING—ACTS xvi. 16-24

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

“*Strive to enter in at the strait gate.*”—LUKE xiii. 24

“WHICH brought her masters much gain by soothsaying.” “Her masters saw that the hope of their gain was gone.” How often do we find covetousness at the bottom of moral failure and spiritual declension!

Captain Scott, in *The Voyage of the Discovery*, tells of the immense care that was taken by the magnetic experts on board to banish all iron and steel from the vicinity of the magnetic observatory. Everything within thirty feet of the observatory had to be made of brass, lead, hemp, or some other non-magnetic material. These regulations secured the accuracy of the magnetic observation.

But the motions of the heart are most disturbed by a bit of gold anywhere in its neighbourhood. The thought of gain seems to mar and deflect the whole delicate machinery of the moral sense. Let a single yellow particle insinuate itself too near the sacred circle of the conscience, and the judgment is no longer true to the eternal verities. We must watch here lest greed should cause us to forget honesty, fairness, brotherliness.

THE GATES OF DAWN

March 7

SCRIPTURE READING—ACTS vi. 25-40

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"He that loseth his life for My sake shall find it."—MATT. x. 39

HOW real, great, and delightful was the change that the midnight prison witnessed! It was the habit of the old Methodists to speak of a newly converted man as one who had "found liberty," and strangely enough the gaoler himself this time was the ransomed one. Happy the man whose chains have fallen off, whose heart is free, and whose dungeon life gives place to the liberty of the glory of God's dear children!

How convincingly the change was demonstrated! "And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes. . . . And he brought them up into his house, and set meat before them, and rejoiced greatly." This was he who a little before had "cast them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks." Restitution, reparation is a fine proof of genuine conversion.

The interior change must be evidenced in the outward conduct, and no proof of conversion is more indubitable than the more faithful, generous, and loving treatment of our fellow-men.

THE GATES OF DAWN

March 8

SCRIPTURE READING—2 COR. xii. 1-10

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"My strength is made perfect in weakness."—2 COR. xii. 9

IT appears almost certain that the weakness here recorded was bodily weakness, which, in the Apostle's case, as in so many others, was closely allied with mental disturbance and trouble.

Torstensohn was one of the generals formed in the school of Gustavus Adolphus, and to whom that great commander transmitted the prosecution of the Thirty Years' War. Physically, he was so shattered and dislocated by disease and deformity, that he could neither walk nor ride on horseback. He had to be carried at the head of his forces in a litter. Yet no commander of his age was so relentless and terrible in his onset and so invariably victorious.

Let us be loath to accept infirmity as an excuse for uselessness. A naturalist asks: "How is it that the golden-crested wren, apparently so weak and helpless, can fly right across the North Sea from Norway?" Because God knows how to fix strange energy within delicate organisms. Our very infirmities through resolution and grace may give us special efficacy.

THE GATES OF DAWN

March 9

SCRIPTURE READING—DAN. iii. 19-27

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us."—DAN. iii. 17

THE Babylonians were to discover that there was another gold than that of which their golden image was made. The stuff out of which true men are fashioned is the fine gold of the universe.

The best people are greatly tried. "The most mighty men that were in the King's army" were set to bind the faithful three; and the fiery furnace was heated "seven times more than it was wont." Hell does its worst with the saints. The rarest souls have been tested with high pressures, strains, and temperatures.

But heaven will not desert us. "Lo, I see four men loose." There is always One extra. We sometimes think sadly and doubtfully of the fiery trials which are to try us, but to doubt is disloyalty. "Our God whom we *serve* is able to deliver us." Are we now trusting and serving Him? It is through practical obedience that we become dear to God, and through fire and water He brings us into the wealthy place. The fire does not consume but transfigures.

THE GATES OF DAWN

March 10

SCRIPTURE READING—I THESS. iii.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"For now we live if ye stand fast in the Lord."—I THESS. iii. 8

THE Apostle exults to know that amid great afflictions and temptations his Thessalonian converts stood firm. "This to me is very life, the consciousness that you stand firm in union with our Lord."

The writer knew a manufacturer of anchors and chains, who was exceedingly proud of a large photograph in one of his rooms, representing a ship riding at anchor in a tremendous storm. Some twenty vessels on that fatal day parted with their anchor and made shipwreck; whilst the anchor forged by my friend bore triumphantly all the stress of the terrible tempest. Thus the Apostle gloried in the firmness and victory of the much-tried Thessalonians. The anchor held.

One of the actors in the French Revolution, who was asked what he did during several awful weeks of peril, replied, "I lived." Sometimes it is just enough to live. Let us hold confidently by the great truths, promises, and hopes of our faith, and they will not fail us in the great crises of life and death.

THE GATES OF DAWN

March 11

SCRIPTURE READING—Ps. cxix. 97-104

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"O how I love Thy law I it is my meditation all the day."—
Ps. cxix. 97

THE scientist is a lover of law: the order of Nature fills him with delight. The artist is a lover of law; the principles of matter duly observed secure beauty and joy. The noble citizen is a lover of law; social order guarantees the wealth and progress of nations.

Just as the laws of Nature mean beauty, music, life; so the higher laws of the Spirit fill the soul with the sense of harmony, elevation, delightsomeness. To rejoice in the pure and majestic ordinances of love and righteousness is great indeed. "Believe it, my good friend, to love truth for truth's sake is the principal part of human perfection, in this world, and the seed-plot of all other virtues," wrote Locke to Collins.

Here is, too, the realm of freedom. Everything in Nature is necessitated, but the realm of the Spirit is the realm of liberty. Let me, then, prove my power and liberty by setting the will of God above my own, and lovingly and adoringly keep His commandments.

THE GATES OF DAWN

March 12

SCRIPTURE READING—Ps. cxix. 105-117

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."
—Ps. cxix. 105

THE Society of Illuminating Engineers and others too have long sought for a light which would, by excluding the ultra-violet rays, become fog-penetrating. An inventor has just made the desired discovery, and produced an electric lamp which can penetrate the densest fog. The Bible in the world of the soul is such a lamp. It is effective alike by what it includes and excludes. The sincere, prayerful student of the sacred page will find his way through black and blinding illusions and delusions.

Let me use it as "a lamp to my *feet*" for practical, personal uses. Not as a Chinese lantern, engaging the fancy by virtue of its artistry and imagery; but as a signal lamp on the railway, a Davy lamp in the mine, an electric lamp in the fog.

And the more we apply the sacred truths to action and experience the more precious and luminous do they become. "The man who insists upon seeing with perfect clearness before he acts, never acts," writes Amiel; but, bringing the statutes, commandments, and promises to bear on life, they become ever clearer, and more fully evince their divinity.

THE GATES OF DAWN

March 13

SCRIPTURE READING—JER. x. 1-16

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The Lord is the true God, He is the living God."—JER. x. 10

THE Lord is the true God, He is the living God"; this is the glory of our faith, the strength of our life.

Probably the only idol factory in the world is now located in the city of New York, where the idols of all countries are reproduced and new ones manufactured, some from models and some through the inventive genius and fertile brain of a designer. They are made in plaster, in aluminium and bronze, largely; but some are carved in ivory, while iron, brass, and other metals and materials are occasionally used.

In Christendom idols of this order are not called for, but their analogies are close and numerous. Fashion has its plaster gods, painted, oiled, and polished; wealth, its golden images and silver chains; art, its ivory divinities; sensuality, its gross fetishes; formal religion, its icons. Yes; God's eye discerns in Christendom vast chambers of imagery, a whole Pantheon of unholy gods.

Let me not coarsen, defile, and destroy my nobler self at the shrine of any idol. Let my eye be so full of the true and living God, that I can see no other.

THE GATES OF DAWN

March 14

SCRIPTURE READING—2 COR. v. 1-II

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"God is a Spirit."—JOHN iv. 24

THAT God is Spirit is a great truth touching the interpretation of our human nature. As Dr. Macmillan writes, "It is a sublime conception that a Personality is seated on the throne of universal empire. How much more ennobling is this conception than that of the material origin and existence of all things! We must postulate Spirit and not a thing as the first formative cause. The universe is not self-created and self-upheld. A thing cannot originate a thing."

"God is Spirit." "We are His offspring." Made in the image of His spirituality, holiness, infinity, what manner of men ought we to be!

That God is Spirit is a great truth concerning our future. We are made in the image of His incorruptibility and immortality. The spirituality of our nature suggests great things for the future. "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be." God hath given us "the earnest of the Spirit."

THE GATES OF DAWN

March 15

SCRIPTURE READING—2 COR. vi. 1-

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"When I am weak, then am I strong."—2 COR. xii. 10

JESUS CHRIST has been called "The Great Misunderstood," and His Apostle shared with Him this affliction. It was another mark of the Lord Jesus that St. Paul bore.

It is rather a common thing that ordinary men fail to discern and appreciate rare excellence. St. Paul suffered here. His greatness, resignation, and disinterestedness were not understood, were misunderstood, and he suffered greatly in consequence.

Is it possible that we have to pay the penalty of superiority? That our comrades and neighbours fail to understand the purity of our motives, the strength of our principles, the warmth of our love? The best servants of Jesus Christ are often cut to the heart by mean misinterpretation.

If this should come into our life, let it drive us closer to Him who was despised and rejected of men because of His supreme beauty, His unaccountable love, His infinite sacrifice.

THE GATES OF DAWN

March 16

SCRIPTURE READING—I COR. iv. 1-16

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful."—
I COR. iv. 2

BEFORE some spectacles silence is most becoming. They are so grand, beautiful, precious, that eloquence seems profane. Is it not so here?

It is inspiring to know that poor human nature can be raised to this height of nobleness. Patriotism, science, and commerce boast their martyrs, but surely the crowning consecration is in this Apostle who was so rich in the spirit of his redeeming Master. I might be crushed by this immense superiority, but let me rather be aroused and inspired by it. This wonderful portrait is not designed to paralyse, but to stimulate.

We can never hope to match the extraordinary intellectual achievements of the Apostle, or to achieve such a vast field of service, but we may share with him his pure, burning zeal. His master is ours. The grace which ennobled him may be magnified in us. He fully understood this. May we apprehend it

THE GATES OF DAWN

March 17

SCRIPTURE READING—JER. i.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee."—JER. i. 8

"I AM with thee, saith the Lord." Napoleon was fond of referring to his "star," but He who marshals the stars is the strength of His messengers. Nothing but this fact can account for the triumphs of the Gospel in the primitive age. It is madness to deny the supernatural. Men can do wonderful things, but their limitations are obvious enough. Stephenson could construct a railway, but he could not prepare a path for the march of the stars. Lesseps might dig a canal, but he could not tackle an Atlantic or Pacific. The triumph of Christianity is as manifestly the direct work of God.

God does not grant the necessary grace before the trial. He builds the bridge when we reach the river. We often fear that we shall sink under the fiery trials that we see others endure; we are afraid in the distance of the mystery and anguish of death; but we have not yet reached these crises, and grace is not vouchsafed before it is needed. "Jesus comes with our distress."

THE GATES OF DAWN

March 18

SCRIPTURE READING—ROM. xii. 10-21

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."—ROM.
xii. 21

COULD more beautiful things be crowded into fewer words? We think not. Every clause is a big, sweet flower. Or, to change the image, we have here a rare piece of music, every note majestic, lovely, or tender.

And this catalogue of graces is not to be divided among the many members of a Church for one to cultivate this excellence and another that; but each member is to adorn the doctrine of God in all things. As life and circumstances perpetually change, we are to display in sweet and unbroken succession the whole range of the variegated glories of Christian perfection, each trait in its season.

The garden, however, finds no difficulty in producing a thousand flowers of various forms, colours, and perfumes; the sun and shower easily make a paradise of it. So the vital influences of truth and grace acting on the good soil of an honest heart will in turn evoke every noble temper and deed.

THE GATES OF DAWN

March 19

SCRIPTURE READING—LUKE xviii. 1-8

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

“*Pray without ceasing.*”—I THESS. v. 17

“**M**EN *ought always* to pray.” The obligation of persistent prayer.

If a *judge* grants the importunate request what will not a father do? “Your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.” “How much more shall your Heavenly Father give?”

If an *unrighteous* judge is mastered by importunity, how much more hope in appealing to the righteous One! “God is not unrighteous that He will forget.”

If a *hard*, reluctant judge, who “regarded not man,” is conquered by obstinacy of supplication, what may we not expect from the sympathetic Friend whose mercy is not strained, but which droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven—from Him who waiteth to bless? There is a three-fold contrast, each one emphasising the efficacy of persevering prayer.

“Speak to Him, then, for He hears,
And spirit with spirit may meet;
Closer is He than breathing,
And nearer than hands and feet.”

THE GATES OF DAWN

March 20

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. xxvii. 11-26

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave."—Ps. xlix. 15

NOWHERE else is the question of death dealt with as in the New Testament. By various cunning devices we seek to hide from ourselves the painful aspects of our mortality, or to reconcile ourselves to the inevitable, but the serious problem is seriously dealt with only by Him who is the resurrection and the life.

When Jesus entered the chamber of death He put forth the flute-players and the babbling crowd. It was a parable of what He has done on a vaster scale. He has dismissed from the death chamber the philosophers with their guesses, the sceptics with their everlasting farewells, the sentimentalists with the chaff well-meant for grain, the flute-players of poetry and music, who by melodious words and strains seek to disguise the tragic fact, and shown us how death is a sleep with a golden awakening.

The Living One, with His majesty, love, and promise, is the "strong consolation" of the dying saint.

THE GATES OF DAWN

March 21

SCRIPTURE READING—MARK ix. 1-10 and xv. 16-32

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"He was transfigured before them."—MARK ix. 2

WHAT possibilities of glory there are in human nature! Scientists perceive in us undeveloped senses, and anticipate a period when man will possess qualities, perceptions, and powers far exceeding any attributes of the present.

It is in Christ Jesus that the latent glory of our nature stands most fully and conspicuously declared. In Him we see what man is in the Divine ideal. He has shown of what our moral nature is capable; in Him we behold the transfigured conscience, will, affections, character. He has shown of what this physical vesture is capable in exaltation, refinement, and splendour.

They "spake of His decease." Through His death He attained His mediatorial glory and secured to us eternal life. Sin eclipsed our glory; and the Cross, taking away sin, has unmasked the hidden beauty, strength, and effulgence. We need not fear death. Christ transfigures the shroud into shining raiment that waxes not old. Let me only fear sin.

THE GATES OF DAWN

March 22

SCRIPTURE READING—I COR. xv. 1-11

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"For I know whom I have believed."—2 TIM. i. 12

HALL CAINE tells us that Rossetti was not an atheist, but simply one with a suspended judgment; in face of death his attitude was one of *waiting*, he did not *know*.

Now the great work of Jesus Christ touching the doctrine of immortality was to convert it from a speculation into a certainty. The evidence for His resurrection, which carries with it the doctrine of our incorruptibility and immortality, is overwhelming; as one has said, it is the best authenticated fact in history.

The Christian is one who *knows*. The Spirit of God has so opened up to our consciousness the truth of Christ's teaching, the fact of His resurrection, that we are satisfied of our continued and permanent existence as we are that we exist at all. The nearer we live to Christ, the more deeply we drink into His Spirit, the more the assurance of eternal life grows upon us.

THE GATES OF DAWN

March 23

SCRIPTURE READING—I COR. xv. 12-28

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept."—I COR. xv. 20

OUR Lord has demonstrated the harmlessness of death, the powerlessness of the grave. To the natural eye death effaces all our beauty, and the grave is the last humiliation in which our strength and glory finally disappear. The empty grave of our Lord delivers us from the dominion of our senses, and convinces us that on our real selves death has no power.

The story is told that a chamber in a certain dwelling was reputed to be haunted, and the family regarded it with terror. But one night the father determined to sleep in it himself, and, coming forth the next morning all safe and sound, laughed away the fears of his children. So our Lord entered the grave, and dwelt among the dead; but in the morning He issued forth crying to His affrighted ones, "All hail!" and the gloomy chamber is divested of its terror.

THE GATES OF DAWN

March 24

SCRIPTURE READING—EPH. iii.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named."—EPH. iii. 14, 15

IT is a good thing to take a large view, and we have one here. The word "agoraphobia" is used to designate a remarkable type of disease that manifests itself in a *fear of open space*, which is the literal meaning of the term. Persons suffering from this illness experience it whenever their gaze is directed to some considerable expanse of open space.

Many are afflicted with this malady in their mind, and dare look at nothing but the cramped spaces of this mortal life.

How vast the outlook of the Apostle! How unutterably grand and inspiring! "The Father!" "Every family in heaven and on earth," divinely named and gathered together in Christ! The saints raised to a sublime perfection in love, knowledge, and felicity! Glory revealed in the Church throughout all generations. How far-reaching, profound, and magnificent are the thoughts that the faith of Jesus Christ brings into human life! And I have a personal interest in all this!

THE GATES OF DAWN

March 25

SCRIPTURE READING—ISA. xliv. 6-23

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"I am the first and I am the last, and beside me there is no God."—ISA. xliv. 6

IN this last dispensation everything connected with religion has been spiritualised. The Epistle to the Hebrews shows how the material has been replaced by the spiritual idea in all that concerns faith and worship. At the same time the devil has spiritualised the pantheon of idols.

"Shakespeare is my god," said a great German to George Eliot. Literature is the god of many. "Eat, drink, and be merry." Appetite and pleasure are popular idols. "I will pull down my barns and build greater." Goods become a god.

Exclaimed Marie Bashkirtseff, "It is two o'clock; it is the new year. At the theatre, precisely at midnight, watch in hand I wished my wish in a single word, intoxicating, whether it be written or spoken—Fame." Honour and renown are the twin gods of multitudes.

An idol is whatever takes the thought, love, admiration, and service which ought to be centred on the living God.

THE GATES OF DAWN

March 26

SCRIPTURE READING—I COR. xvi.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"God loveth a cheerful giver."—2 COR. ix. 7

IT has often been objected that the collection should follow the sermon "because it spoils the fine spiritual tone of the service." But the Apostle did not feel this. He passes abruptly from the glorious theme of the resurrection to the matter of finance. He felt that there was no anomaly in so doing.

Let us give to our Lord our best, just as the natives in South America are said, when they find a rare orchid, to plant it on the church roof or in its precincts. And let us contribute in the best way, making our gift as free and graceful as love and prudence united can effect. When we present lovely flowers to anyone, we so arrange them that their disposition adds to their beauty.

There is nothing merely material and commercial to a truly spiritual man; his money contributions are spiritual and sacramental. Of such gold are the walls of the New Jerusalem fashioned.

THE GATES OF DAWN

March 27

SCRIPTURE READING—JAMES ii. 1-13

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."—JAMES ii. 8

THE whole of this passage turns on the first verse: "Hold not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons." In the Lord Jesus Christ we not only see the glory of God, but also the glory of man, and henceforth must judge humanity in the light of the Incarnation, the Cross, and of that heavenly universe of which Christ has taken possession in our name!

Scholarship teaches that the word which James uses for "respect of persons" means to "take the outside surface for the reality, the mask for the man." How apt we are to do this; to judge by the ring and the clothing, instead of looking to the essential qualities and destiny!

By taking our nature, the Lord has shown that whatever a man wears on his skin, he wears scarlet on his soul; we must therefore treat all with courtesy, justice, and love. We are all royal, and must deal with each other according to the royal law.

THE GATES OF DAWN

March 28

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. xxii. 34-40

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."—MATT. xxii. 37

GEORGE MATHESON asks in his *Landmarks of New Testament Morality*: "In what order is the love of God to come? Is it to precede, or is it to follow, the love of our neighbour? To that question Platonism and Christianity both give an unequivocal answer; but the answer of Platonism is not the answer of Christianity. Platonism says: Love God before all other things; begin at the head of the ladder, and then descend as far as you can descend without losing sight of the Divine Idea. Christianity, on the other hand, says: Begin with the love of *men*; start from the foot, and not from the top of the ladder; enter first into communion with the heart of your brother, and ascend thence into fellowship with the heart of God."

We emphatically believe that this view is wrong. We do not climb from the love of our neighbour to the love of God. As we know the love of God we get the secret of human love. "Glory to God in the highest" comes first; then peace and goodwill among men. A vital point.

THE GATES OF DAWN

March 29

SCRIPTURE READING—JOHN xv. 1-17

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"This is My commandment, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you."—JOHN xv. 12

THIS is My commandment, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you." Some complain that there is little originality in Christian teaching. Here, then, is something original—a new standard.

"*Even* as I have loved you." This makes the second commandment new by the fresh thought and power put into it. Christ loved His disciples before they loved Him; He continued to love them when they were unlovely—with small jealousies, ambitions, and conceits; He still bore with them in their angry, impatient, and unbelieving moods; He did not cease to love them when they all forsook Him and fled.

Our Lord shows us what love means; what it will suffer; what it will give; what it will do. Hitherto it had been much of an abstraction; in Him it took shape, and we saw its majesty and beauty.

Ruskin writes: "The best things are seldomest seen in their best form." The best thing, the greatest thing in the world, was seen in its best form only once in Him who is our standard and pattern.

THE GATES OF DAWN

March 30

SCRIPTURE READING—COL. i. 21-29

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him."—COL. ii. 6

IN Christ are the grandest transformations, gifts, felicities, and hopes. Corot said that he would have liked to paint the walls of prison cells, so that the prisoners might have been refreshed and purified by the glories of landscape; but Paul needed no such works of art to relieve his imprisonment. How these few verses absolutely teem with the wealth of grace and the splendours of hope!

And these treasures and splendours are for all. "Every man perfect in Christ." The Apostle was an absolute democrat in the highest things.

A legend of the Jews relates that the prophet Ezekiel once raised a number of his countrymen from the dead; but the miracle was so far defective that the resuscitated ever after retained somewhat of the complexion of corpses, and their garments a certain scent of the sepulchre. Not thus does Christ raise us from the death of sin. "To present you holy and without blemish and unreprouable before Him." *Perfect, and every man perfect.*

THE GATES OF DAWN

March 31

SCRIPTURE READING—COL. ii. 1-10

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."—COL. ii. 9

THE sufficiency of Christ is one great thought here. He is the secret of God ; in Him is disclosed the completeness of light and grace, love and power. The fulness of spiritual blessing is assured in Him. Away from Him are gleams, wells, fragments of heavenly wisdom and blessing ; in Him is the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

They who knew Him not had the cup, we the sea ; they saw the heavens through a skylight, we walk in the noonday ; divine truth and beauty appeared to them in a flowerpot, we possess the summer landscape. Forget not your mighty privilege !

"And in Him ye are made full." Let nothing come between you and your Lord, is another great thought here. Let no philosophy, no ecclesiasticism, and, for that matter, no theology, come between you and the living Lord ! Deal with Him at first hand. Be one with Him. Be rooted in Him, as the tree in the soil, and you shall abound in fruits of light ; build on Him, as the lighthouse on the rock, and you shall never fall.

THE GATES OF DAWN

April 1

SCRIPTURE READING—ACTS xxi. 1-17

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."—ACTS xxi. 13

THE progress of the Apostle is beset by trial. "They that sow in tears." How much the great evangelist knew of this experience! Much of the Christian life partakes of the nature of conflict, and this is equally true of the working part—the trowel in one hand, the sword in the other.

We should not object to the sowing if the task were that of the dainty sowing of seeds and planting of bulbs in a summer's garden. It is quite interesting and delightful on a spring morning to sprinkle the mould with a few selected seeds.

When evangelical work resembles this playfulness we are not indisposed to it; but to put our hand to the plough and break up the waste; to toil in the vineyard, bearing the heat and burden of the day; to cast our bread on the waters whilst we mingle them with our tears, this kind means sacrifice, and we too often shirk it.

Yet, really, sowing generally is of little moment until it is sowing in tears.

THE GATES OF DAWN

April 2

SCRIPTURE READING—ACTS xi. 22-30

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength."—ISA.
xxx, 15

THE union of spiritual fervour and practical charity is well illustrated in this reading. The Orientals have a saying, "All is vanity which is not bread"; and here the disciples are active in the distribution of the heavenly bread and the bread that perisheth.

The reproach that the faith of Christ concerns itself with spiritual enthusiasms and forgets earthly needs is the emptiest of sarcasms. There was little of philanthropy before Christ came; but such is the example and inspiration of His mighty love that ever since He came sacrifice for the humble and needy has become a commonplace in the circle of His followers.

We remember reading that when the alms box of the Samaritan Fund of St. George's Hospital was opened at Tattersall's, after an interim of twelve months, not a single farthing was found in it.

We must go elsewhere than to racing circles, and such-like, for sympathy with those ready to perish.

THE GATES OF DAWN

April 3

SCRIPTURE READING—LUKE vi. 27-38

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"As ye would that men should do to you do ye also to them."
—LUKE vi. 31

THE world had said, "Blessed are the great, the rich, the strong, the famous." And the world says so still.

But our Lord taught us another and far deeper lesson: that the satisfaction of life lies in sincerity, humility, patience, surrender of the will to God, kindness, and the spirit of self-sacrifice. And have we not, in some degree at least, proved the truth of His philosophy? Our happy hours are distinctly those in which our heart has leisure from itself, in which we cease from self-will to sink into the will Divine, in which we escape from our vain dreams, and are able to live in lowliness and love.

Whilst enjoying all the good gifts of God, let me not forget that my life does not, that it cannot, consist in these. I must launch into the deep of thought, devotion, experience, and service.

Nothing can so fill the soul with joy as the sense of the Divine favour.

THE GATES OF DAWN

April 4

SCRIPTURE READING—LUKE xviii. 28-34

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

' Though He cause grief yet will He have compassion.'—LAM.
iii. 32

RENUNCIATION and sacrifice mean manifold and everlasting enrichment. The Master endured the cross, despising the shame, for the joy that it brought Him; and His disciples must prove the same discipline and recompense.

How astonishingly illuminated, noble, powerful, and delightful the Apostle Paul became in that life of intense and continuous trial! A French writer has finely said, "Great sorrows are the forcing-houses of the soul." How strangely, and often suddenly, do misfortunes mature character! In the high temperature of affliction and grief how the graces flower; how the branches grafted into the bleeding vine bear their choicest clusters.

Austere discipline saves us from conditions that we have most reason to fear. As Lacordaire expresses it, "Suffering is better than decay." And sanctified loss and labour may bring us precious fruits not otherwise ours.

THE GATES OF DAWN

April 5

SCRIPTURE READING—I COR. ix. 19-27

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

I keep under my body and bring it into subjection."—I COR.
ix. 27

HE self-denial that finds its reason and its object in considering others is the divinest form of self-sacrifice.

We think sometimes that we are hardly realising the Christian idea of self-sacrifice because our back is not scourged and our feet bare, because we keep no fast days and wear no hair shirt. Let us not distress ourselves. So to live that we may help and bless those around us will often involve sufficient mortification, and in its best form.

To endure the unreasonableness of some is to wear a hair shirt; to bear patiently their tongue is to be beaten with stripes; to live with them is to suffer martyrdom in a slow fire. To please all men to their edification is a fine form of martyrdom, and a severe one. It will tax our faith, patience, humility, and perseverance to the uttermost.

The "daily round will furnish all we ought to ask," and generally all we shall care to ask.

THE GATES OF DAWN

April 6

SCRIPTURE READING—I COR. viii.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."—PHIL. ii. 4

WHEN we are disposed to resent the claim of our neighbour to sympathy and consideration, will it not be well to think how often he has suffered through our fault! The consequences of our ignorance, foolishness, and sin are hardly, if ever, confined to ourselves; consciously or unconsciously, we affect society injuriously. Let me then be willing to make reparation for the wrong I have done my fellows, by bearing their sicknesses and dealing tenderly with their prejudices and frailties. I owe it to them.

We once knew a poor old man who trudged miles to repair the country stiles that they might be a little easier for the aged and infirm. The people voted him a lunatic, but in the Great Day he will outshine Napoleon.

To take a stumbling-block out of our brother's way, and to help the cripple over the stile, is to reveal the mind that was in Christ Jesus.

THE GATES OF DAWN

April 7

SCRIPTURE READING—I PET. v. 1-II

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God."
—I PET. v. 6

A SCEPTICAL writer speaks of humility as "a monkish virtue" which it is not well for the manly to cultivate; and it is quite the fashion in some quarters to reproach the lowly spirit enjoined by Christ as being cowardly and servile.

Yet we instinctively reverence the humble, we at once know modesty as a great quality. What a singular serene joy attends its exercise! There is not a more delicate and delicious sensation than that which accompanies an act of genuine humility. What power it hides! It implies quiet, assured, treasured strength. How safe it is! Inviting no disasters.

Jesus Christ came to teach us this grace because it is of the essence of perfection. He best asserts his greatness who humbles himself before God, as the seraphim veil their face with the wings on which they soar.

THE GATES OF DAWN

April 8

SCRIPTURE READING—TITUS ii.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"We should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world."—TITUS ii. 12

WE are to "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things"; and we may observe that this instruction is given to servants. The grandeur and loveliness of the Christian doctrine can be shown in the humblest people and in the homeliest things. It is not only kings, bishops, and statesmen who may manifest its power and beauty, but also manservants and maidservants; it may not only be illustrated advantageously in the grand affairs of empire, but in the meanest task of labour.

Milet, the great painter, taught that it was the business of art "to make use of the trivial to express the sublime." It is certainly the duty and privilege of the saint so to handle the trivial as to express the sublime doctrines and principles of his holy faith.

I do not need a big sphere, or big interests, to show men what a noble faith is that of a Christian.

THE GATES OF DAWN

April 9

SCRIPTURE READING—EPH. vi. 1-20

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"As the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart."—EPH. vi. 6

REALLY the love of Christ turns life into a concert of sweet relations. Fathers, mothers, children, harmonised by love, and all things in the household, moving as to the measures of stately music.

What a grand thing true godliness is in the household! Religion never enters a cottage without making it a palace. Ah! far more than most palaces. A sanctuary of peace, love, and blessing.

And all that the business world needs is that Christ should be recognised as the common Master. If all men would so live as to please Him, they would be surprised to find how nearly they pleased one another.

What is needed to solve all problems of domesticity, of politics, of capital and labour, is higher character, Christian character, and they will never be solved without. It is a mistake indeed to think that religion ignores earth. Heaven supplies the motive that sets right the terrestrial.

THE GATES OF DAWN

April 10

SCRIPTURE READING—REV. ii. 1-11

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life."
—REV. ii. 7

THE promise is consistently "to him that overcometh." The ideal life to the Greek was one of serene pleasantness; the life of the Christian is ever represented as a strenuous conflict in which we must strive to overcome.

When we read these verses we feel how severe and tragic was the lot of the primitive Christians. It has been objected to Rubens' picture of the Crucifixion, that he has painted Golgotha like a garden where you can hardly see the skulls for the flowers.

It might seem as if in the softening processes of the ages that the Christian life was nothing like so stern and sorrowful as of old; that many flowers have sprung up in the place of persecutions and martyrdoms. Yet we too have our difficulties, temptations, and sorrows; often as much as we can bear.

Our one duty is to overcome. A poet of scepticism boasts: "I am captain of my soul." If Christ is Captain, I am also: otherwise defeat is inevitable.

THE GATES OF DAWN

April 11

SCRIPTURE READING—PHIL. iii. 1-16

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ."—PHIL. iii. 7

AS to the sacrifices we may be called upon to make for Christ's sake, they will differ immensely. They will necessarily be peculiar and personal, and it is well that they are so. Amongst the Arabs to-day every man kills his sacrifice, as in the ancient world, with his own hands. It is fitting that our renunciations should be marked by something peculiarly our own.

"Peter began to say unto Him: Lo, we have left all and have followed Thee." A few old fishing nets. How infinitely beyond their sordid calculation was the spirit of Paul in the text! The fact is that in the meantime the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ had been better understood; and by the side of the sacrifice of Calvary every sacrifice we can make is light indeed. "He *emptied* Himself," withheld nothing. Here is our motive and pattern.

Christ tells us to "count the cost" of discipleship, but He never asked us to count the gain. He knew we could not; there is no arithmetic to compute that.

THE GATES OF DAWN

April 12

SCRIPTURE READING—LUKE xxi. 20-28

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"In your patience possess ye your souls."—LUKE xxi. 19

WHEREVER the flowers of the North are distributed they prevail; they establish themselves in all climates, driving out the native flowers. On the other hand, the flowers of the South cannot establish themselves here. The explanation is that what the northern blooms have endured has made them robust and victorious.

The Christian religion is one of endurance. This was first and pre-eminently true of our Lord. The first ages of the Church were ages of martyrdom. Ever since then the Christian faith has borne the weight of opposition and trial. As the glacial period has made the flowers hardy, so the discipline of suffering has made the Church of Christ the very home of patience, power, heroism.

In this power of patience we win our souls—we realise ourselves, save ourselves everlastingly. We may be put to death, but not a hair of our head shall perish. That is, not a jot or tittle of our great self shall be lost; every jot and tittle shall be secured and glorified.

THE GATES OF DAWN

April 13

SCRIPTURE READING—Ps. xxvii.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"—Ps. xxvii. 1

WE speak of causeless fear, but in truth all fear touching wordly things is causeless to one who believes in God; that is, in One infinitely wise, powerful, and good. Causeless apprehension is bad every way. It is bad, as it tends to make us insensible to real danger.

Fear impairs the reason. It causes us to act wildly, irrationally. Fear spoils our joy in to-day by anticipating shadows which to-morrow may not cast. Fear saps the strength and courage which are so necessary when trial does arrive. Fear has a tendency to bring upon us the very thing we dread. If we are afraid of a dog it bites us.

A rationalistic lady recently remarked to us that Christian people in actual life display no more composure and courage than purely worldly souls do. Is there not some truth in this charge? We do not apply our theoretical faith to practical life. "The extent to which we have put fear under our feet is a good measure of manhood," writes Carlyle. It is certainly a good measure of Christian manhood.

THE GATES OF DAWN

April 14

SCRIPTURE READING—ROM. xv. 14-29

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing."—ROM. xv. 13

THE writers of the New Testament know how to raise vices into rare virtues, just as clever gardeners convert noxious weeds into handsome flowers. Paul made "guile" lovely, showed how we might nobly "provoke one another," taught us how to "covet earnestly" and yet be pure, whilst here he puts "ambition" into the front rank of the graces.

"Being ambitious so to preach the Gospel." Truly the ambition of a noble mind! To go to those beyond, to go to those to whom no one else had gone, to go to those who needed him most. There was a big piece of Columbus in St. Paul; he was indeed the Columbus of the Christian Church.

Let me be "ambitious" to do good. Not making the greater show, but the greater sacrifice. Not that I may be the greater in station, but in service. Not that I may be most famous, but most useful. Is there not some special line of usefulness open to me? It would be well if there were a bit of Columbus in me. Some neglected work, some work along the line of my gifts calls me.

THE GATES OF DAWN

April 15

SCRIPTURE READING—ISA. xli. 8-14

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God."—ISA. xli. 10

I N the recent life of an unbeliever we read in one of his letters: "Anxiety is a poison, and I do not know how much more of it I could stand. It was a friend's treachery that broke me up recently. . . . I don't know that being brave would serve me much."

But a Christian ought to know nothing of this. No one is more sensitive than a saint, alive to life's mutabilities and sorrows, but such is his faith in the Divine faithfulness that he remains calm and confident in trying hours. Anxiety is a poison, a poison destroying thousands to-day. It works in the days of prosperity as well as in misfortune, embittering all life.

An atheist ought to be anxious; a believer in a faithful Creator and gracious Redeemer ought not to have a care in his heart, a tear in his eye, a murmur on his lip.

THE GATES OF DAWN

April 16

SCRIPTURE READING—2 COR. v. 11-21

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The love of Christ constraineth us,"—2 COR. v. 14

HOW much inspiration and strength do we owe to this heavenly hope. The naturalist tells us that in the forests of Nicaragua the ground is sometimes carpeted with large flowers that have fallen from some invisible tree-top above; or the air is filled with a delicious perfume, for the source of which one seeks around in vain, for the flowers that cause it are far overhead out of sight, lost in the great overshadowing crown of verdure.

How much sweetness and inspiration does that upper, invisible world bring into this! "For which cause we faint not." It consoles us, strengthens us to do and suffer, creates in us a holy joy and ecstasy.

Do I look up as much as I might to where these flowers and immortality grow whose perfume is wasted into this lower life? It will do me good to think oftener of being "at home with the Lord."

THE GATES OF DAWN

April 17

SCRIPTURE READING—JOHN v. 39-47

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Had ye believed Moses ye would have believed Me, for he wrote of Me."—JOHN v. 46

' I AM come in My Father's name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive." They rejected the pure and guiltless Jesus, and approved Barabbas! And do not many still show the same preference?

As Archer Butler writes: "Who, then, are the darling idols of human applause? Who are the chosen of our race that poetry crowns with its halo of glory, and every young imagination bows to worship? Who but the laurelled Barabbases of history, the chartered robbers and homicides that stain its pages with blood, and that, after eighteen hundred years of Christian discipline, the world has not yet risen to discountenancing? Remove the conventional discredit that attaches to the weaker thief, exalt him to the majesty of the military despot, and how many would vote for Barabbas, how many linger with the lowly Jesus?"

"He shall convince the world of sin; of sin because they believe not in Me." Those in whom the world believes condemn it for not believing in the Son of God. The world proves its sin by its hero worship; proves what it is by rejecting the pure and guiltless One.

THE GATES OF DAWN

April 18

SCRIPTURE READING—Ps. civ. 24-35

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"O Lord, how manifold are Thy works, in wisdom hast Thou made them all."—Ps. civ. 24

GOD'S absolute mastery over nature is a favourite theme with this poet; he revels in the thought that his God is above stars, seas, and seasons.

To apprehend nature in its relation to the Deity is to see it in enhanced glory, and to find its infinite meaning. Contemplating the universe in the light of God, the light of the moon becomes as the light of the sun. To see nature in its relation to man is to complete the charm.

Art almost unconsciously reveals that nature must be known in relation to humanity, if we are to feel the fulness of her fascination. If the sea is painted, it must bear a sail; if a landscape, it must be relieved by a human figure; if a wood, smoke must suggest a dwelling; nature only satisfies as it is recognised in its relation to human kind.

The Bible knows nothing of the atheism of paganism that leaves God out of nature; of the cynicism of the paganism that despises man in contrast to the grandeur of earth and sky. On the ocean God walks; "there go the ships" in which men sail. Let us beware of the paganism that ignores the Lord and that belittles man.

THE GATES OF DAWN

April 19

SCRIPTURE READING—Ps. xlvii.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Be still and know that I am God."—Ps. xlvii. 10

"**T**HEREFORE will we not fear." "Be still and know that I am God." Paul knew a great deal about shipwreck. "Thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep." "In perils in the sea." In "perils of rivers."

Yet with all his acquaintance with the terrors of the ocean, he knew a worse shipwreck far. Writing to Timothy, he speaks of some "having made shipwreck concerning the faith." Ah! this is the saddest calamity of all. What a wonderful ship is faith! She discovers worlds beyond anything found by Columbus. What a freight she carries! Riches beyond the treasures of Solomon's ships of gold. To what a glorious realm she transports! Faith is sweetly lost in sight of what never entered the heart of man to conceive.

This is the wreck to be feared. To lose faith in God, faith in His government, faith in His promises, faith in the inheritance He has prepared for His people. Faith is the grandest galleon of all that dare the deeps. Let no rock shatter it; no tempest leave it derelict; no pirates spoil it.

THE GATES OF DAWN

April 20

SCRIPTURE READING—Ps. xviii. 1-19

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"He delivered me because He delighted in me."—Ps. xviii. 19

THE personal note here is very striking. "Man is nothing compared with the grandeur of nature!" cries the modern cynic; but here the thought is quite to the contrary, the grandeur of nature is nothing compared with the majesty of man, and all her movements are subordinated to his welfare and salvation. Shaken hills, bowed heavens, blazing lightnings, are all regarded in the light of instruments of personal blessing. "I," "me," "my," come in with every line. Sublime egotism! The soul is more than the stars.

Robert Louis Stevenson tells a correspondent that "the world turns upon vast hinges," and that it is a mistake to believe that Nature and Providence contemplate the individual welfare. It was Stevenson's mistake to say so. Nature and history turn upon straws, and personal welfare is the supreme end of the supreme government.

Let us not obliterate ourselves in the mass, the vast, the awful, the universal. "I" am the object of God's thought; He contemplates "my" welfare; delights in "me," and brings "me" into a large place.

THE GATES OF DAWN

April 21

SCRIPTURE READING—I THESS. v.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light."—ROM. xiii. 12

WE ought very practically to recognise the momentousness of the day in which we live, and our special obligation. Every age is a crisis, every age transitional, involving serious and immediate duty to its own generation. "*Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and olive-yards and vineyards, and sheep and oxen?*" was the rebuke of Elisha to his covetous servant.

Is not the age in which we live one of manifest momentousness? Surely we are called to play our part at a great juncture, and we must recognise the imminence of a great crisis. Strange things, terrible things, glorious things are impending!

What is our obvious duty? To put away the things of greed, enmity, and indulgence, and to array ourselves in the shining invulnerable panoply of charity and righteousness. "Clothe you with the nature of our Lord, and let not the body, and the pampering of its cravings, be your life's aim." Hasten on the dawning day of the great Deliverance and Salvation.

THE GATES OF DAWN

April 22

SCRIPTURE READING—ISA. vi.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Past feeling."—EPH. iv. 19

THE Spaniards have a popular legend concerning the Petrified Man. The story relates that once he was in the flesh, but that he appealed to the blessed saints to turn him into a stone image if he had committed a certain fraud, of which really he was guilty. In a moment a curious change came over him. Gradually his legs turned to white stone. The stone continued to creep further along his body until he was altogether petrified.

Does not the unfaithful soul suffer a similar change? The whole moral nature is gradually materialised. The heart becomes fat, the ears heavy, the eyes shut; so that they who quench the Spirit cannot see with their eyes, hear with their ears, or understand with their heart. The higher nature suffers petrification—becomes insensible, deaf, blind to the eternal.

How carefully should we guard against the unbelief, worldliness, and sensuality which bring about this awful transformation!

THE GATES OF DAWN

April 23

SCRIPTURE READING—HEB. iii.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief."—HEB. iii. 12

IT has been recognised as a most difficult task to keep heights to which the soul in rare moments attains. The Christians to whom this Epistle was written were in danger of bartering their glorious privileges and hopes in Christ for the social and secular, going back to beggarly elements.

The newspaper told within the last few months of a digger who for the sake of a passing indulgence surrendered a silver claim which ultimately yielded twenty millions sterling, the vendor at length dying a labourer on the estate he so foolishly alienated. Yet what is this compared with the relinquishment of the Christian faith and hope for the coarse interests and pleasures of a carnal and godless life?

Let me watch against the subtle processes of spiritual degeneration. Through yielding to grosser tastes the unbelieving Israelites lost Canaan; let me not through unwatchfulness and worldliness lose the eternal reality of which Canaan was only the symbol.

THE GATES OF DAWN

April 24

SCRIPTURE READING—2 COR. xi. 16-32

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Yet of myself I will not glory, but in my infirmities . . . for when I am weak then am I strong."—2 COR. xii. 5 and 10

IN a recent autobiography, Lady Cardigan relates that her husband, Lord Cardigan, who led the charge of the Light Brigade in the Crimean War, hardly ever referred to the magnificent dash that he so valiantly led. It is strange how silent the most brilliant heroes are concerning their achievements, and we can see here how keenly the Apostle felt the necessity for this recital. In his reckoning all this was nought compared with the recompense of the reward.

Whatever we do, give, or suffer is little indeed in the light of Christ's sacrifice for us. Let us, whenever we think our sorrows exaggerated, weigh them against Calvary.

Let me not look at my trials just as they immediately concern me. Let me estimate them in their relation to Christ Jesus, my example and perfecter, in relation to the soul's incomparable worth, in relation to the eternal gain; then I shall demur to speak of them, so insignificant are they.

THE GATES OF DAWN

April 25

SCRIPTURE READING—2 COR. xiii.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves."—2 COR. xiii. 5

"THIS is the third time I am coming to you." What solemn obligations arise from repeated opportunities! If only once we are granted a full opportunity it ought to be enough, but as a rule Heaven extends the reprieve and grants us many seasons of repentance, reformation, perfecting.

How repeatedly are we privileged in hearing the Word of God! Line upon line is conceded us, we listen to a thousand calls. How life is perpetually furnishing openings to a new or a higher life! Bright things and sad things, ordinary events and extraordinary appeal to us, and make possible the better things to which they solicit us. How the Spirit of God strives with us, exhorting, chiding, wooing!

Let me hasten to put away the evil thing, let me not delay to close with the offers of grace, let me beware lest the last chance be missed. "He that being oft reproved and hardeneth his neck shall be destroyed suddenly, and that without remedy." "Whilst it is called to-day."

THE GATES OF DAWN

April 26

SCRIPTURE READING—2 COR. ix.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"He which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully."—
2 COR. ix. 6

THE other day an engineering paper recommended a Universal Grinding Machine. It went on to describe this tool as being calculated "to do all cutter grinding, flat grinding, parallel and taper, outside and inside grinding." This machine reminded us of a few persons we have known; indeed, we think we can remember men who could have given that machine points.

How different to all this is the spirit of Christ! It does not calculate what it can get out of men, but what it can do for them. It does not niggardly, but abounds. It is not reluctant, but free and cheerful. The Universal Grinding Machine becomes a loving brother, giving time, sympathy, prayer, influence and money to those who need.

Let us not give to God as we pay the income tax. As the fragrance rises from the flower, as the sweetness drips from the honeycomb, as the ripe fruit drops from the tree, so freely must we offer.

THE GATES OF DAWN

April 27

SCRIPTURE READING—DEUT. xxxi. 1-13

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The Lord thy God, He it is that doth go before thee, He will not fail thee."—DEUT. xxxi. 6

"**I**N the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne." Moses died and was buried, but the Lord God went before the bereaved host. Paul is martyred, yet Timothy takes the torch from his sinking hand and waves it high. Kings, prophets, and apostles, mighty standard-bearers faint, but the scent of mortality never infects the great cause. Time writes no wrinkles on the sublime front of the Gospel.

"Be strong and of a good courage." God is with us, and the world is ours in Him. Let there be no faintheartedness, no unbelief, no despair. We cannot despair without unreasonableness and faithlessness. The possession of Canaan by the Israelites was a dim, imperfect foreshadowing of the irresistibility and universality of Christ's dominion.

Let us not argue and speculate about the conquest of India, China, Africa, and the rest of the regions of the earth, as if their future conquest were an open question; let us mark them, claim them, go in and possess them.

THE GATES OF DAWN

April 28

SCRIPTURE READING—JUDE 17-25

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

“Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.”—JUDE 21.

AS against the heresies and lusts of ungodliness which threaten the Church, the disciples are called to personal vigilance and endeavour. “Keep yourselves in the love of God.” They are to work out their own salvation. Fatalistic Orientals are said to be poor marksmen, because believing that the bullet will of necessity hit the predestined mark they take little care to perfect themselves in shooting; there is such a thing as leaving to heaven everything that concerns our salvation, and neglecting our part. If we do this we shall do badly. “Keep yourselves.”

“Unto Him that is able to guard you from stumbling.” But working out our own salvation, we must remember at every step our dependence upon God. If we fail to keep alive this consciousness we may stumble and fall; we *shall* stumble.

With what a soaring peroration this letter ends! The apostles are continually breaking into glowing poetry. Life in Christ will be completed with a grand peroration.

THE GATES OF DAWN

April 29

SCRIPTURE READING—PHIL. iii. 17-iv. 9

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour."—PHIL. iii. 20

THE "high calling," or as the margin, "the upward calling." Migrating birds fly high, often very high, and they are said to do this for three reasons. They get a vaster outlook and note more clearly the points of direction. They are more secure from enemies and hindrances. And the greater refinement of the atmosphere enables them to accelerate their flight.

The higher we soar the more clearly do we discern the will of God and all the great truths by which we live. Living in high altitudes we transcend temptations and obstructions which delay and impede the more earthly minded. And our progress is all the more marked and delightful in the higher realms of thought and life.

"Swift as the eagle cuts the air,
We'll mount aloft to Thine abode."

Covet the purer, ampler air, everyway it is the best.

THE GATES OF DAWN

April 30

SCRIPTURE READING—LUKE xvii. 20-37

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Behold, I send My messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee."—MATT. xi. 10

TIMES of doubtfulness occur in every Christian life. We live in an atmosphere of controversy and are distressed by moods of unbelief. We stand in doubt of the things most confidently held by the Church of God. By the mysteries of life we are sometimes staggered, and even suspect our Master.

In these hours of questioning let us remember how the faith of Christ has verified itself in character. It has created in successive generations the fairest and noblest types of character.

It verifies itself in experience. Hogarth, painting the legend of the god descending in a shower of gold, introduces an old woman trying one of the coins in her teeth. The truths of our faith prove their preciousness, submitted to the test of experience.

It verifies itself in action. The faith of Christ is favourable in its influence upon all human institutions, action, circumstance.

THE GATES OF DAWN

May 1

SCRIPTURE READING—ISA. xl. 1-8

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together."—ISA. xl. 5

JOHN, whose distinctive teaching concerned the fact and guilt of sin, was the first to recognise the unique grandeur and mission of the Messiah. He taught the doctrine of repentance, but it was repentance unto remission, and remission of sin in Christ. "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world."

Here is "the glory of the Lord." "I paint," cried Raphael. "I build," was the boast of Michael Angelo. "I rule," cried Cæsar. "I sing," cried Homer. "I conquer," cried Alexander.

"I seek and save," cried Jesus Christ. This is the glory of the Master and of His gospel. He knows the secret of delivering us from the curse of sin, guilt, shame; the secret of eliciting and perfecting all the glory of our nature.

Let me pray that I may "see" this glory of the Lord.

THE GATES OF DAWN

May 2

SCRIPTURE READING—JOHN iii. 22-36

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"He must increase."—JOHN iii. 30

HOW vast, then, our privilege! We have the greatest of teachers. It is the fashion in some quarters to exalt the founders of the great religions of the East to an equality with Jesus Christ, and to put the ethnic scriptures on a level with the New Testament. Let us not be perplexed or misled. Christ never looks greater than when you put a great man by His side; and the glory of the New Testament is never more impressive than when you compare it with human documents; just as the sun appears most splendid tried against lime-light.

"He must increase." That is true to-day. All faiths must pale in Christ's diviner light, as the dawn dispenses with the stars. Our religion is destined to be the religion of the world, the religion of the ages. Let me then rejoice in my lot, prove all the blessedness of my privilege, and see to the full that in Christ I possess my possessions.

THE GATES OF DAWN

May 5

SCRIPTURE READING—HEB. ii. 10-18

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"In that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted."—HEB. ii. 18

THE real and thorough humanity of our Lord is a mighty consolation to His afflicted children. He became one with us not that He might know us, He did that by virtue of His divinity, but that we might know that He knows us.

"In that He hath suffered, being tempted." He knows what we want in the trying hour. We cannot think that an angel could enter into our feelings and fears. The Chinese ask, "What can a butterfly know about ice?" It knows nothing. It belongs to another sphere, and leaving the realm of sunlight and roses can little understand the significance of battling with frost and snow.

So the angel from Heaven fails to interpret the mystery of human suffering and trial. Christ can. He not only comprehends, but "He is able to succour." We often can only look upon the tried without being able to render them any help, but Christ can make us share His own invincible courage and strength.

THE GATES OF DAWN

May 6

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. iv. 12-25

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"In the region and shadow of death light is sprung up."—
MATT. iv. 16

HOW dark was the world without Christ! We cannot realise the depth of the darkness, having never known what it is to be without Him.

The inhabitants of the tropics cannot conceive a Siberian winter, but it would be far easier for them to do so than for us to imagine the state of mankind without Him who is the light of all our seeing.

When unbelievers to-day refuse to acknowledge the Sun of Righteousness, they nevertheless walk in its reflected light. How dense the gloom when that orb of glory was yet entirely below the horizon!

"For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory." The advent of our Lord has given this precious passage extraordinary signification. The Eddystone Lighthouse, which now glows like a star, showed once only a tallow candle. The Church of God before the Incarnation threw only a faint lustre on the vast night; now in Christ Jesus it is as the sun shining in its strength.

THE GATES OF DAWN

May 7

SCRIPTURE READING—MARK ii. 13-17

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."—
MARK ii. 17

HUMAN nature at its worst did not excite the contempt of Jesus Christ; there is an absolute absence of cynicism in Him, and so far He differs from certain philosophers; so far, too, He is separated from proud moralists and erring scientists. The New Testament regards with reverence and sympathy the saddest ruins of humanity.

Exactly here Christ finds His welcome sphere. When Howard, the philanthropist, visited Exeter, he found that the medical officer of the county gaol had a clause inserted in his agreement with the magistrates, exonerating him from attendance and services during any outbreak of the gaol fever! That was, he stipulated to be excused when he was most wanted. The opposite is the genius of Christianity—it seeks out the darkest places, the worst nations, the neediest souls.

Is not such a faith truly Divine! Let me despair of none, not even of myself.

THE GATES OF DAWN

May 8

SCRIPTURE READING—MARK viii. 27-38

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross."—MARK viii. 34

IT is suggestive to read how immediately the disciples responded to the Master's call, leaving all to follow Him. It was certainly not much financially that they renounced, but it was their all. It was a complete and decisive renunciation.

And the New Testament tells us of no regrets in those who sacrificed themselves for Christ. The apostles never pathetically recite the story of what they gave up for the Christian ministry. They counted all as refuse. The ancient martyrs sometimes kissed the stake at which they suffered so cruelly. This is the spirit in which we should lose, suffer, and die for Christ's sake.

By thus renouncing all we gain all. The flower of a worldly pleasure lost, blossoms into a celestial paradise; the piece of worldly gain refused, glows into streets and walls of gold. Nothing yields higher interest than loving self-denials for the highest claims.

THE GATES OF DAWN

May 9

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. v. 1-16

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God."—MATT. v. 9

THE fundamental teaching of our Lord concerning blessedness is that it is attained through obedience, through spiritual obedience. The world has ever thought that happiness was a matter of happy circumstance, whilst our Lord has opened our eyes to the fact of the inwardness of true felicity. It is seen to be a question of disposition, temper, feeling, principle and purpose.

If the soul is wrong, it is little matter what our circumstances may be; the outer grandeur only mocks the interior desolation, the outer poverty only completes the inner misery. If the soul is humble, serious, pacific, pure, pitiful, coveting righteousness and joying in sacrifice, the infinite peace fills and rules the heart irrespective of the colour of life and circumstances.

"Out of the heart are the issues of life." Spiritual goodness is the flower and happiness its perfume.

THE GATES OF DAWN

May 10

SCRIPTURE READING—JAS. ii. 1-5

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom?"—JAS. ii. 5

THE dignity and blessedness of human life spring from the grandeur of the soul. Jesus Christ once for all propounded the true philosophy of clothes.

"What could I do more in royal robes, father, than in this plain garment?" said Edward I. to a bishop who remonstrated with him on his attire as unkingly. The kingly spirit, word, deed is the main matter, not the gold embroidery of Asiatic purple. The serene countenance not the jewelled circle, the clean hands not the bracelet, the magnanimous mind not the pageantry.

In estimating myself, let me survey myself in the perfect law and not in the mirror. Let me honour all men; especially reverencing the noble, whether they are rich or poor. It is astonishing how easily we are dazzled by fine feathers, how easily misled by poor clothing.

THE GATES OF DAWN

May 11

SCRIPTURE READING—ACTS ii. 1-21

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."—ZECH. iv. 6

THE baptism of the fulness of spiritual energy, of moral force, is a mysterious and an extraordinary event in the history of the race. "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God." The Old Testament knew the manifestation of this power in varying measures, yet it never witnessed the revelation of that power in its fulness.

The Romans with pick and spade could do little in making roads through rocks and mountains. The use of gunpowder in the seventeenth century raised blasting to a science. The introduction of dynamite, thrice as powerful as gunpowder, entirely revolutionised that science. And then, again, nitro-glycerine, half as strong again as dynamite, has largely superseded dynamite. In the moral world, in various directions and ages, men have proved in various degrees the spiritual power by which they subdue sin and achieve holiness, but to us is the Spirit given without measure.

Do I realise the saving, sanctifying Power?

THE GATES OF DAWN

May 12

SCRIPTURE READING—PS. I.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly."—Ps. i. 1

THE fulness of blessing lies in our just relation to the highest law, the law of holiness expressed in revelation, and whose supreme exponent and example is Jesus Christ.

We must know the law. How much the Psalmist has to say about knowing, learning, understanding the law! By much meditation and prayer we must learn what the commandment means, and have our conscience touched to fine issues.

We must love the law.

What an intense delight some men take in nature! Says Spruce, the great botanist, "Throughout the journey, whenever rains, swollen streams, and grumbling Indians combined to overwhelm me with chagrin, I found reason to thank Heaven which had enabled me to forget for the moment all my troubles in the contemplation of a simple moss."

But if the scientist can thus delight in a fragment of nature, how much more ought we to delight in the beautiful laws, the lovely graces, the glorious works, of the moral world!

THE GATES OF DAWN

May 13

SCRIPTURE READING—Ps. xxxii.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."—Ps. xxxii. 1

THE condition of blessedness is purity, and when blessedness has been forfeited through sin, it can be regained only through repentance and pardon.

It is little use talking to men about happiness until you can show them how to get rid of a guilty conscience, and of the diseased, depraving principle which infects our nature and life.

In the South Seas is one of the most beautiful islands of the world, but it is inhabited by lepers. It would be mockery to tell the sufferers to look at the flowers and be happy. They first want health.

In the Bay of Naples is another island, a gem set in a golden sea, but it is wholly tenanted by convicts. It would be cruel to bid them be happy. They first want liberty. Then talk to them about sunrises, sunsets, and all the glories of sky and sea.

We want first the peaceful conscience, the smile of God, the principle of health and freedom established in the soul by the power of the Holy Ghost. Then dawns Heaven.

THE GATES OF DAWN

May 14

SCRIPTURE READING—I PET. iv. 12-19

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."—REV. xxi. 4

IF in any real sense we are partakers of Christ's sufferings we may rejoice, and that joy no form or degree of suffering can banish.

The joy that is contingent on pleasant conditions is not the true or lasting joy. A recent writer dwells on gardening in the shade. He complains that few understand the garden possibilities of shade; they occupy the ground with a few excessively monotonous evergreens, and forget how many and how delightful are the plants that will grow in the shade, and how innumerable are the advantages it offers to the gardener in providing a succession of even those flowers that love the sunlight.

Our Lord taught us the art of gardening in the shade, whilst men had hitherto thought that the coveted flowers of felicity could be gathered only in the sunlight. Under the darkest clouds, within the densest shadows, we may grow the purple blossoms of delightsomeness, the richest fruits of goodness, "supposing Him to be the gardener."

THE GATES OF DAWN

May 15

SCRIPTURE READING—REV. vii. 9-17

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God."—MATT.
v. 8

THIS is a passage to think about rather than to write about. The bulbs that have been subjected to the bitterest winter often bear the rarest flowers, and those who come out of great tribulation are most radiant in felicity.

It is perfect gladness. "And God shall wipe away every tear." How many tears, tears for manifold sorrows, dim our eyes! He shall wipe them *all* away. Sorrow shall cry, "The tears are drying in my eyes"; sighing shall complain, "I can't get my breath"; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. It is everlasting joy. Our gardeners to-day are busy attempting to make roses, carnations, and sweet flowers generally, evergreen. That problem in the sphere of the soul has been solved in Christ.

Let me be resigned, brave, hopeful. It has not entered our heart to conceive the grand things which are close to us, ours for ever.

THE GATES OF DAWN

May 16

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. v. 17-26

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."—MATT. v. 17

TRUE religion is no mere mystic passive dream of devotion—a gazing in rapt reverence on the mystery of godliness, and no more. It is a system also of high, comprehensive, delicate law, which demands daily determined obedience. It is a doing and a being.

The righteousness of Christ is excelling; it signifies infinitely more than civil law, social courtesy, or ecclesiastical discipline. It means a noble heart governing daily life in its most delicate relations and situations. It is no "rule of thumb," but of finer discriminations than the most exquisite instruments of science.

Let me not mistakenly spend life in arguing down and arguing away the lofty laws of Christ. Let me not labour to accommodate them to my weakness. Let me daily pray for the grace that will bring me up to the height of the law, and not attempt to bring down the law to my frailty.

THE GATES OF DAWN

May 17

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. v. 38-48

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Love your enemies ; bless them that curse you."—MATT. v. 44

ONE day an *aide-de-camp* of the Emperor Nicolas threw himself at his sovereign's feet, and begged as an extraordinary favour permission to fight a duel. The Emperor immediately and emphatically refused.

"But, sire, I am dishonoured ; I must fight," cried the disconsolate aide.

The Czar frowned, and asked him what he meant.

"I have been struck in the face," was the ready reply.

"Well," said the Emperor, "for all that, thou shalt not fight ; but come—come with me." And, taking him by the arm, the Emperor led him into the presence of the Court, which was assembled in an adjoining saloon.

Then, in view of the flower of his realm, the Emperor kissed the cheek of the aide-de-camp which had received the blow. "Go now," he exclaimed, "and be at peace ; the affront has been effaced."

The knowledge of God's infinite patience and love to us and the race, the consciousness of His sympathy in any injustice we may suffer, the sense of His overflowing love to His wronged children, ought to inspire us to superhuman excellence. His kiss settles all.

THE GATES OF DAWN

May 18

SCRIPTURE READING—Ps. cxix. 33-48

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"I will delight myself in Thy commandments."—Ps. cxix. 47

IT is quite impossible that memory should retain all the precepts of the law, and that we should be able to reproduce them on the spot and at the moment; but we may have our eye so filled with the beauty of holiness, our mind so saturated with its spirit, our heart so kindled with its love, that we shall obey instinctively every commandment.

The scholar in writing does not recur every moment to the grammatical law which determines the construction of the sentences in which he expresses himself; the grammar is in his mind, and is unconsciously obeyed; the painter does not with every touch consult the special canon which applies to the particular work on which he is engaged; he obeys the precept whilst forgetting it.

So let the law be written on my heart, so let my mind be saturated with its truth and beauty, that I shall in the infinitely varied situations of life do the becoming thing.

Obedience is the secret. Not slavish obedience, but sympathetic, loving, eager obedience. "His delight is in the law of the Lord." May the law of holiness be to me welcome as the light, sweet as the flowers, more to be desired than much fine gold!

THE GATES OF DAWN

May 19

SCRIPTURE READING—I SAM. xxiv. 1-19

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink."
—ROM. xii. 20

THE history of David and Saul shows how in the long-run patience, long suffering, magnanimity prevail; the throne was not lost, but won.

Revenge is the most odious of the vices. It is the dark passion of the savage; the peculiar disgrace of low civilisations. A large part of the misery of Eastern and Southern nations is occasioned by it. Ought not the opposite virtue of forbearance and forgiveness, then, to appear as beautiful as vindictiveness appears hideous? Is not magnanimity the characteristic of the noblest of men and nations?

David respected Saul because he was royal. He was "the Lord's anointed," and therefore must not be touched. But is there not a kingship about all men, a sacred greatness, a divinity that doth hedge them? We must stand on our guard lest we become regicides. Let me beware of cherishing resentment, of pursuing my enemy with rancour, of taking the law into my own hands. Far beyond this, let me be clement, returning good for evil.

THE GATES OF DAWN

May 20

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. vi. 1-15

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"When thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee as the hypocrites do . . . that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward."—MATT. vi. 2

NOTHING further was to be expected. They coveted the praise of men; they got it, and so the account was squared. True life is the "laying up" of treasure; the luxury of doing good in a right spirit is the foretaste of a perpetual feast; substantially everything is to come.

The almsgiving that comes up before God is without selfishness. It is without calculation, grudging, or ungraciousness. It gives as the sun its light, the flower its fragrance, dropping as the gentle rain, bubbling up as the sparkling waters of the spring. It is without pride. It glorifies God, it sympathises with the needy, it is the fruit of a heart at leisure from itself. It is without ostentation. It does good and throws it into the sea, knowing that the smile of God is enough.

What blessing is better than a big heart? Let me seek such a heart, and let me take care that I do not starve it.

THE GATES OF DAWN

May 21

SCRIPTURE READING—JOHN i. 29-34

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God."—JOHN i. 34

THE awakening of the soul to the glory of Christ is a memorable event in any life. "And I knew Him not." John certainly knew Christ before this in a technical sense; he knew of Him and had a certain superficial acquaintance with Him; but John did not know Him, did not appreciate the real grandeur and mission of the Messiah. In a given hour the Baptist's eyes were opened to the glory of the Lord.

We may have a knowledge of Christ, be indeed familiar with Him, and yet not know Him as the Son of God and the Saviour of the soul. "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" We only know Christ when we know His divine glory, His sacrificial death, His pardoning grace, His sanctifying power, and know these great truths in relation to our own personal needs and salvation. Knowing Him thus really, we may know Him more fully, with fresh flashes of illumination.

THE GATES OF DAWN

May 22

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. xxiii. 23-39

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The Lord looketh on the heart."—I SAM. xvi. 7

OUR Lord can be satisfied only with perfect sincerity; we must be genuine, honest, having no decoration other than the natural shining forth of a superior spirit and character.

A recent writer extols Japanese artists for their method of bringing out the beauty of the natural wood; they trust everything to the quality of the material itself, treating the wood as we do precious marbles, and adding no ornamentation of carving or paint. In the end the wood under their hand becomes quite as wonderful a material as our expensive marbles. And this writer concludes, "In Japan one comes to the final conclusion that stains, paints, and varnish are nothing short of artistic crimes."

This is precisely the position of our Lord in regard to character. There must be interior purity, truth, sincerity, love, reality, and beauty in the very grain and texture of the soul, and that will suffice. Here "stains, paints, and varnish" are moral crimes.

THE GATES OF DAWN

May 23

SCRIPTURE READING—ISA. i. 10-20

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Cease to do evil, learn to do well."—ISA. i. 16, 17

WORSHIP is a ghastly mockery without moral faithfulness. It is truly strange how many permit themselves the appearance of piety, whilst their character is grievously at fault.

Great painters created altar-pieces representing Our Lord and His saints, masterpieces of consummate purity and beauty, and yet they themselves were of infamous character. Famous literary masters have written charmingly concerning piety and ethics, whilst personally glaringly immoral in practice. Ecclesiastics most punctilious in ritual have yet at the same time lived a sensual life and done outrageous deeds.

Character must certify worship, or worship is an insult to high Heaven. How sternly revelation keeps its eye on righteousness! It permits nothing to blind us as to the supreme thing. Let me bring this jealousy into my life. If I regard iniquity in my heart the fire in the censer becomes unhallowed, the Litany profane, the Sacraments sacrilege.

THE GATES OF DAWN

May 24

SCRIPTURE READING—LUKE xviii. 9-14

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"God be merciful to me a sinner."—LUKE xviii. 13

AT the root of all true prayer is the consciousness of sin, the hunger of the soul, the sense of humility and dependence.

We are not likely to use the language of the Pharisee, but we may easily glide into his spirit. In true prayer we think of our sin, not of our merit. In true prayer we think of our own sin, not the sin of others. In true prayer we think of our sin in God's sight, and do not pray as did the publican, "with himself." We stand before the great white throne and bemoan our shame, not before a mirror to contemplate our beauty.

We remember our sin, we confess it, with a contrite heart we lament and forsake it, and it is then that we find the gift of justification and all other blessings. How often do we miss the benediction because we come to the throne feeling rich and increased in goods and having need of nothing? The law beats us to our knees that the gospel may put a crown of pure gold upon our head.

THE GATES OF DAWN

May 25

SCRIPTURE READING—Ps. xxxiv.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.—Ps. xiv. 1

HOW foolish prayer looks to the carnal eye! A man on his knees soliciting blessing from the Invisible, the Unknown!

Yes, and how foolish a telegraph clerk looks standing by his strange instrument working a crank, click, click, click! Very foolish, perhaps, to an ignoramus, but not so to the instructed. It is all sublime, although the message despatched may sometimes appear trivial.

So, only infinitely more wise and wonderful, is the saint in the act of prayer. Ethereal chords bind world to world, star to star, sun to sun, and all worlds to Him who is the Life and Ruler of the universe, as electric wires bind city to city, and the saint on his knees thrills his prayer along these chords into the ears of the Almighty.

Thus all spiritual and worldly good, all blessing for time and eternity, become ours. "Shall not want any good thing." What a charter! Let me observe the condition and pray always. All things are ours, for we are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

THE GATES OF DAWN

May 26

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. vi. 19-34

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Ye cannot serve God and mammon."—MATT. vi. 24

THE highest life becomes impossible when we cherish in our heart a secret covetousness.

In art a sordid motive is fatal to perfection. To make a brilliant social position his end is to stultify the artist's genius and fame. The greatest artists decline to produce "pot-boilers."

Commercialism in science is equally bad. The greatest experimentalists worked with a simple passion for truth, entirely neglecting the idea of the market value of their research. The very thought of mercenary advantage acts like a blight on intellectual life.

How impossible, then, is it to serve God and mammon! Two supreme passions cannot exist within us at the same time. Gold is often a by-product of godliness, but if covetousness, worldiness, and ambition are cherished in our hearts, godliness becomes impossible.

Let my soul live for God, for Him alone, and I leave altogether with Him the more or less of earthly good.

THE GATES OF DAWN

May 27

SCRIPTURE READING—HAG. 1.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."—MATT. vi. 34

HOW often fears for the future render us mean in our dealings with the cause of God, which is also the cause of man! If we could only feel certain about to-morrow we might justly do more generously to-day. So we check and quench the finest impulses of the heart.

But may we not feel certain about the future? It has been well said that God never permits a man to be ruined by his virtues, and certainly we cannot believe that He will permit any of His children to be ruined by their magnanimity and deeds of love. Solicitude and stinginess easily bring into life a mysterious blight; they will never really enrich us.

Let me not nervously put away the alabaster box of precious ointment with misgivings that one day I may need it for myself; let me lovingly, and even daringly, break it to-day in honour of my Lord and in furtherance of His Kingdom. If I do, as surely as the world stands, He will never see me want.

THE GATES OF DAWN

May 28

SCRIPTURE READING—LUKE xii. 16-34

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not."—LUKE xii. 33

SURELY nothing in this world is more insane than setting our hearts on material fleeting treasure.

The Greeks spoke of Plutus, the god of riches, as a fickle divinity, representing him as blind, to intimate that he distributes his favours indiscriminately; as lame, to denote the slowness with which he approaches; and winged, to imply the velocity with which he flies away. And are we to put our trust in such a god as this? In all the pantheon of idolatry no god is so rotten as the golden god.

"The hedgehog's hoard" is a Gaelic saying of significant force. It is expressive of the folly of the worldly-minded, who part with all at the grave, as the hedgehog is compelled to drop its burden of crab-apples at the narrow entrance of its hole. How strange is the infatuation of heaping up treasure! Let us strive to be "rich toward God."

THE GATES OF DAWN

May 29

SCRIPTURE READING—REV. iii. 14-22

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare."—
I TIM. vi. 9

"THE love of money can only be remedied by 'the expulsive power of a new affection.' If we would not have the ivy creep on the ground we must erect an object which it can embrace, and by embracing, ascend; and if we would detach the heart from embracing the dust, we must give to it another and a nobler object."

The Scriptures describe the nobler objects to which we should cling: the knowledge and love of the Giver; the cultivation of sublime qualities of character and principles of conduct; the service of our generation in the highest things; the laying up in store for ourselves against the time to come; the living all life in the fear of God and in the sense of the eternal.

The spiritual ideal and hope is eternal truth and life, and if we covet earnestly the things which are above we shall not be much tempted to let our heart creep along the ground.

THE GATES OF DAWN

May 30

SCRIPTURE READING—LUKE xviii. 18-30

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven."—LUKE xvi. 22

HOW immense the change wrought in the Christian nations by the example and spirit of Christ, in the attitude of the rich and powerful towards the needy in any sense!

Think how the Greeks and Romans regarded their slaves as cattle, how harshly they treated the captive, how they despised the poor. That attitude has been entirely reversed, and if the change has not been effected by Jesus Christ, by whom has it been effected?

Let us seek to be imbued with the spirit of sympathy and self-sacrifice. The ruler in the text stifled a gracious emotion and lost a grand opportunity. Whenever the Spirit of God excites us to holy and magnanimous renunciation and endeavour, let us be instantly obedient to the heavenly vision and impulse, lest the precious opportunity be gone for ever.

THE GATES OF DAWN

May 31

SCRIPTURE READING—Ps. xxxvii. 1-20

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Delight thyself in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart."—Ps. xxxvii. 4

WE must not measure the success of life by financial or social success. It is infinitely better to possess a modest estate and status with honour than to hasten to be rich by feverish and false methods.

The Gaelic proverb is indisputably true: *Better the long, clean road than the short, dirty one.* The short cut to pleasure, wealth, or greatness is at once a great temptation and a great mistake. How many who try it never get out of it! They stick to the mud, slip in the mire, perish miserably in the slough, having never reached the glittering things of their desire; or, if they do reach the prize, how the dirt clings to them, spoiling all.

Let me keep contentedly to the clean road, long or short, for whether or no it leads to earthly eminence or wealth, it certainly leads to glory, honour, immortality, eternal life.

THE GATES OF DAWN

June 1

SCRIPTURE READING—Ps. xxxvii. 21-40

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."—MATT. vi. 33

THE newspaper recently told of a poor lunatic being found on the railway line gathering stones together with great excitement. He maintained that he had discovered a gold mine!

How far removed from this insanity are they who trust in gold and make fine gold their confidence? Their perverted imagination beholds the final treasure of existence in the dust of the earth.

Let me never forget that the real wealth of life is in the things of wisdom and personal worth. Let me seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. If then I have but little, the real wants of life are little. If I have more, I have a greater instrument of usefulness. If I have nothing, I have yet a kingdom, a world within of power and peace and hope.

May I be saved from the illusions of worldliness. May I be a true alchemist, ever converting the baser metals of earth into the fine gold of moral worth.

THE GATES OF DAWN

June 2

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. vii. 1-12

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."—MATT. vii. 12

THE place that the New Testament gives to the matter of criticising one another is very remarkable. Never before in the history of morals had this question occupied the position of importance that is now assigned it; indeed, so far as we know, this particular phase of conduct had never before been recognised. In the teaching of our Lord a new view of duty emerges.

Goethe frankly confesses: "It is only necessary to grow old to become indulgent. I see no fault committed that I have not committed myself." How much truth is implied in a confession of this order we must all acknowledge. If, then, in fact or in feeling, in thought or in deed, in motive or desire, we have been guilty of pretty nearly all the failings of our fellows, how silent ought we to be or how tender in judging them! As Shakespeare puts it: "Wilt thou whip thine own faults in other men?" To condemn our brother is to condemn ourselves.

THE GATES OF DAWN

June 3

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. vii. 13-20

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Overcome evil with good."—ROM. xii. 21

BY love, long suffering, uprightness and purity of life, the spirit of forgiveness and forbearance, we must meet and overcome the unkindnesses and injustice we may be called upon to witness or to suffer.

At Kew Gardens, among the striking pictures of Miss North is one representing a fig tree which has nearly strangled a poison tree, in a fork of whose branches it started life as a seeding epiphyte. It soon grew apace, and sent down many roots to the earth, where they obtained food and grew in size, finally enclosing and crushing the trunk of the nurse-tree. So evil is to be overcome by the good. We must seek to master evil by beauty, love, and righteousness, as God does.

To do this we must strike our roots deep in the soil of the truth of revelation, we must daily in prayer refresh our branches in the dew and rain of heaven, we must grow in power and grace in the sunshine of the Lord.

THE GATES OF DAWN

June 4

SCRIPTURE READING—LUKE xi. 5-13

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth."
—LUKE xi. 10

THE men who succeed in life are the men who will not be denied. They persist through difficulty, delay, and disaster, and, as a rule, finally succeed.

Our inventions are the fruits of indomitable genius, our discoveries the triumphs of persistence, our science and art the splendid consequences of infinite patience, our national victories the achievements of warriors who did not know when they were beaten. The entire history of civilisation and progress is made up of the biographies of men in all spheres who would not accept repulse.

Ought we not to bring into the realm of prayer and service more of this spirit of resolution and persistence? "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and men of violence take it by force." Ordinary life is a failure without a measure of assertion, audacity, perseverance; and the spiritual life demands bold and positive elements. "For every one that asketh receiveth."

THE GATES OF DAWN

June 5

SCRIPTURE READING—ROM. xv. 1-13

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification."—ROM. xv. 2

THE Apostle everywhere reveals anxiety that the Church should remain united, unanimous, sympathetic, and peaceful. He is not nearly so troubled about the hostile attitude of the world outside as he is that within the brotherhood cordial relations should be maintained. He knew that nothing injures the Church like interior discord.

Jungle fires are said to be caused by the dead stems of the bamboo rubbing together during high winds, and thus kindling flame. So members of the Church who have not much of their Master's spirit provoke and agitate one another until the forest of the Lord's house is destroyed as by fire.

Therefore we must beware of dogmatism and masterfulness. We must be willing to take up the burden of the tender scruples of the weak ones, and not aim at consulting our own pleasure only. We must try to make our neighbour happy, keeping in view his true interests, aiming still at building up the structure of his spiritual life.

THE GATES OF DAWN

June 6

SCRIPTURE READING—LUKE xiii. 18-30

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Strive to enter in at the strait gate."—LUKE xiii. 24

THE world has "postern gates" by which we are promised entrance to heaven's highway; there is an ecclesiastical "lych gate," and various schools of philosophers and moralists have "wicket gates," which are much commended for convenience and facility, but Christ's strait gate and narrow way alone lead to life. Christ Himself being "the door," and "the way."

So strait and narrow that Vanity cannot enter with all her bravery of pride; Selfishness cannot thrust in her swollen shape; Appetite fails to wedge in her groaning table; Worldliness is arrested because she cannot smuggle through her darling muck-rake. It is the path of sublime self-renunciation, of noble self-denial; of the love of God and man, and that only.

The fact is eternal life is the present life of the soul full-grown. Glory is grace in fruition. Heaven is enfolded in a pure heart, as the royal oak is cradled in the acorn. There is no Kingdom before us except as there is one in us. The one imperative question is, Is the sovereignty of Jesus set up now in our soul?

THE GATES OF DAWN

June 7

SCRIPTURE READING—JAS. iv.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."—JAS. iii. 17

WE often see in men strange inconsistency; they are admirable in respect to certain qualities, whilst painfully destitute of others; they reveal a good spirit in some relations, and a bad one in others equally important; moral on one point, they are immoral on another. On one branch fruits of Eden, on another the apples of Sodom; they mingle the river of life with the waters of the Dead Sea.

Christianity does not sanction this irregularity; it demands singleness of purpose, unity of character, uniformity of life.

True Christians are one throughout; they reveal one spirit, obey one law, are dominated by one master passion, contemplate one end. The fountain may be turbid sometimes, there may be sour clusters on the tree, but if we are Christ's in sincere and full consecration, even in our faults and failures, the reality of our goodness will make itself felt. We shall not excuse our failures, but strive not to repeat them. The result will be, "Without partiality and without hypocrisy."

THE GATES OF DAWN

June 8

SCRIPTURE READING—I JOHN ii. 1-11

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments."—I JOHN ii. 3

AMONG moralists, some reject the feelings of the heart, and are satisfied with mere obedience; whilst others resolve all morality into the feeling of love, and reject obedience. Both are wrong; they have reached only half of the truth.

The New Testament enjoins the complete truth: "Whoso keepeth His word, in him verily hath the love of God been perfected." We must keep the word, be obedient to the commandment, be true both to the letter and spirit of the law. Christianity is a system of law; its first word is duty. But, at the same time, it demands and excites the feelings of the heart. The love of God is the availing motive; the constraining force of the Christian life. The secret of the strength of the saints is their consciousness of God's love to them.

Through love we become dutiful, and through obedience love is perfected. Then at last holiness becomes our very nature, obedience an instinct, duty delight. "Thy statutes become our songs in the house of our pilgrimage."

THE GATES OF DAWN

June 9

SCRIPTURE READING—JAS. i. 16-27

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

“Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”—JAS. i. 22

SOME time ago a smart-looking youth was charged at the Mansion House with having stolen a ring from the shop of a jeweller in Leadenhall Street. The youngster was examining a tray of rings, and contrived to slip one of these into his pocket. When apprehended, he had in his pocket a card on which was written, “Golden Rules—truthfulness, honesty, industry, sobriety, and, above all, avoid bad company.” With an affectation of innocence, he told the magistrate that he had studied the “golden rules” that were found upon him, and he was therefore not likely to commit a robbery. The magistrate considered that he was after the wrong kind of gold, and that a further study of those rules was necessary in the House of Correction.

What a picture of the manner in which thousands of us dupe ourselves! We have golden rules in our knowledge, memory, tongue, profession, but forget them, violate them, in daily life and conduct. “Deceiving your own selves.” Yes; but not deluding those who know us—certainly not deluding God.

THE GATES OF DAWN

June 10

SCRIPTURE READING—LUKE vi. 39-49

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good."—LUKE vi. 45

OUR Lord teaches that the heart determines the life, and that if the life is to be abundant in fruit the heart must be rich in feeling.

Do we give due attention to our interior life, strengthening our faith, feeding our love, renewing our confidence and hope?

Certain plants are known as air plants, because they merely cling to trees and rocks, without any very evident source of nutrition, but botanists know that really they absorb matter that collects on the surfaces to which they attach themselves.

There is no living on air. We must have root, and draw into ourselves fresh life. Day by day we must replenish the treasury within if life is to be wealthy in good works. There are ornate cisterns of taste, cisterns of wrought gold, cisterns embowered with the roses of pleasure and fashion, but they all leak and mock. As I drink in the spirit of my Lord I find the life indeed.

THE GATES OF DAWN

June 11

SCRIPTURE READING—I COR. iii. 9-23

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."—I COR. iii. 11

WE are to be careful as to where we build, and with what we build. The Eddystone Lighthouse was once demolished because it did not properly rest on the rock; and if we are not built on Christ—His doctrine, merit, fellowship, promise—we must be confounded. Let me be sure that I am morticed into the impregnable Rock!

Careful with what we build. Eddystone Lighthouse perished once because it was built of wrong material—constructed of wood, it was burnt. How much often enters into the Christian creed that is not jewel or gold—fancies, speculations, notions, utterly worthless! How much often enters into the Christian life that is superficial, freakish, trivial, inferior, and inharmonious! Strange combinations of the true and false, the precious and the paltry, the beautiful and the vulgar, the essential and the absurd!

Lord, grant me grace to build on the granite—to build on Thee.

THE GATES OF DAWN

June 12

SCRIPTURE READING—MARK i. 21-31

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth."—MATT.
xxviii. 18

JESUS did not treat slight ailments, only the most profound, obstinate, ghastly maladies. He did not concern Himself with simple aches and pains, but proved His divine authority and efficacy in distinguishing leprosy, palsy, fever, blindness, and terrible psychic derangements.

Numbers of reformers are prepared to deal with the superficial ailments of humanity—with its tooth-aches, sores and scratches; but only One dares attack the deep, stubborn, chronic diseases of our nature, the fundamental evils of the race. He alone is the grand physician of the world-lazaretto, the healer of the incurable, despairing of no man.

Let me, then, seek in Him for the grace that shall root out the most malign morbid humours of the soul. The darkest and deadliest elements of evil He can rebuke and expel. "Lord, that I might be clean!"

THE GATES OF DAWN

June 13

SCRIPTURE READING—MARK i. 32-45

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases,"—Ps. ciii. 3

"HE healed divers diseases." Just as physical weakness and distemper betray themselves in manifold diseases, so the virus of sin in our nature reveals itself in a variety of irregular passions and appetites—in one falsehood, in another intemperance, in a third uncleanness.

But the grace of God in Jesus Christ cures *all* infirmity. In the power of His Spirit He makes our heart pure, and out of that deep central health we become "whole," no matter what the kind of our sickness.

Whilst potentially, seminally, every species of evil is in us latent, lethargic, yet depravity usually shows itself in some one special way determined by our individual constitution and peculiar circumstance. Whatever may be "the sin that so easily besets us," let us take it to Him who healeth "all manner of sickness."

THE GATES OF DAWN

June 14

SCRIPTURE READING—LUKE xvii. 11-19

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

“Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?”—LUKE xvii. 17

“Ah, how guilty we are of thanklessness!
I hate ingratitude more in a man,
Than lying, vainness, babbling, drunkenness,
Or any taint of vice whose strong corruption
Inhabits our frail blood.”

SO the great dramatist, piercing to the very essence of this sin, finds it most hideous, although we are apt to think of it so lightly.

But whilst I so often forget God's benefits, do I not most of all overlook the grace so continually vouchsafed me, and by virtue of which I am happily restrained and saved? Is anything in life more wonderful and precious than our daily salvation from the dominion and power of sin? To think that my Master, by His grace, word, and discipline, is continually cleansing me from the foul leprosy of sin! This is surely the grandest boon of all!

Do I justly recognise this daily salvation? Do I glorify God for it with a full heart? Do I count it my chief blessing and celebrate it as such?

THE GATES OF DAWN

June 15

SCRIPTURE READING—MARK X. 46-52

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

“Without faith it is impossible to please God.”—HEB. xi. 6

“**T**HY faith hath made thee whole.” In the miracles of Christ faith is the pivot on which everything turns. If the suppliant can put a true large trust, or even a true trembling trust, in the Redeemer, nothing is impossible; where there is no faith there are not many mighty works.

“Without faith it is impossible to please God.” That need be no mystery. Whom can we please without faith? Will a parent be pleased with a child that fails to trust him? Will a captain be satisfied with a crew and passengers who do not believe in their pilot?

We have every conceivable ground to rest implicitly in the promise of God. We have in all terrestrial things. Does He not daily fulfil His word and reveal His faithfulness? And have we not firm ground for confidence in His perfecting grace and promised glory? Preserve my soul; for I am bound to Thee by the tie of covenant love.

THE GATES OF DAWN

June 16

SCRIPTURE READING—ISA. xxxv.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Then shall the lame man leap as an hart."—ISA. xxxv. 6

WHAT richness and fulness of blessing in Christ! He restores the soul by His matchless grace, and then joy is possible—nay, inevitable.

We have secular writers who confidently exhort us to be joyful. They beseech us to put on holiday attire, to crown ourselves with roses, to eat, drink and be merry, without once attempting to deal with the interior disease and discord which are of the essence of our misery.

Think of exhorting captives in prison to be merry; first they want liberty. Think of beseeching the patients in hospital to enjoy themselves; first they require health. Think of summoning lunatics in the asylum to rational gladness; they first want the restoration of a right mind.

Our Lord goes to the root of the matter; He cleanses the heart of the foul stuff, of its discontents and passions. Then come sparkling eyes, ravished ears, then the once lame leaps as a hart, and the tongue of the erstwhile dumb sings.

THE GATES OF DAWN

June 17

SCRIPTURE READING—Ps. ciii.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses."—MATT.
viii. 17

JEREMIAH reminded sinning, suffering Israel, "Thou hast no healing medicines." And again, "In vain shalt thou use many medicines, for thou shalt not be cured." In no sphere is there so much quackery as in the moral and religious sphere. Many medicines, but no healing medicines; many physicians, but no real cures.

In some of our hospitals hang fine pictures, but nobody expects them to cure agues, fevers, cancers, and similar maladies; so the creations of art, the charms of literature, the prescriptions of philosophy, the nostrums of politics will not avail against the deep, rancorous, passionate workings and outgoings of the fallen soul.

What a healer, restorer, comforter is the Lord! Here is the hope of mankind, and mine. Nothing meets my case except His words which are spirit and life, His love and grace which strengthen the soul, His salvation which saveth to the uttermost.

THE GATES OF DAWN

June 18

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. viii. 18-27

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still."—Ps. cvii. 29

IN the religion of Egypt a conspicuous place was given to what was known as the Boat of the Sun. This vessel was supposed to be built with magic material, it carried the Sun-god, and whatever souls embarked in it were conveyed safely through the perils of unknown worlds to a haven of final safety and happiness.

This mythological boat shadows forth a glorious truth, which is the consolation and hope of Christ's people. To sail in the same boat with Him is the strength and assurance of the believer in life and death; we cannot perish when He is the pilot.

The highest ambition of the Egyptian was to obtain a passage in the Boat of the Sun; what harm of fire and flood could they suffer with the Sun-god on board! O joy to be near Christ, to be shut up with Him, in Him, as Noah was in the Ark, to share His infinite tranquillity! In the fiercest storm with Him we are in port.

THE GATES OF DAWN

June 19

SCRIPTURE READING—Ps. cvii. 1-31

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"They cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saveth them out of their distresses."—Ps. cvii. 19

WE are apt to forget the benign design of the storms which agitate the ocean. Whatever disasters are implied by the storm, a protracted calm is most pernicious: stagnating, the very sea begins to rot.

Quiet epochs often tend to enervate and corrupt society. Pacific conditions often develop the atheistic and materialistic temper, whilst public calamities give to the mind a strong impulse towards religion. Neither are long periods of rest and prosperity best for the individual, so far as his highest interests are concerned.

"Then I said, I shall die in my nest." Job's words contained more truth than at the moment he understood. All that is grand in a man is apt to die in a downy nest. Therefore it was that God broke up the patriarch's nest and sent him flying before the tempest.

THE GATES OF DAWN

June 20

SCRIPTURE READING—LUKE viii. 26-40

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Shew how great things God hath done unto thee."—LUKE viii. 39

THE miracles effected by Christ in the natural world are less wonderful than those wrought by Him in the sphere of the human spirit and character. It was great to hush the wrath of the sea, it is greater to compose the discords of the spirit. Once the fashionable doctrine declared that we were born good, but the modern scientist has discovered in us animal appetites and passions.

And the New Testament teaches, what the universal consciousness confirms, that not only does the earthly and sensual work within us, but also the devilish.

"He was in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan; and He was with the wild beasts." Our Lord encountered both, conquered both. He can cast out of my life every relic of debasing beast and unclean fiend, and make me a partaker of the divine nature.

THE GATES OF DAWN

June 21

SCRIPTURE READING—EPH. ii.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"By grace are ye saved through faith."—EPH. ii. 8

WE are no longer saved by attention to carnal ordinances, as the ancient Jews were. Those ordinances were instituted as a test of obedience, but that time of arbitrary training is past. We are not saved by ecclesiastical observances, good as they may be in their place. We are not even saved primarily by moral conduct, essential as such conduct may ultimately be.

The confidence of the heart in God is the one condition of salvation in this evangelical age. Confidence in God is the living principle of obedience. Confidence in His love, in His redeeming love; confidence in the faithfulness of His word and in His dealings with us; confidence in His declared promise of life and immortality. Out of this trust of the heart grows everything that is dutiful and beautiful.

What a ground of confidence we have in God's promise of mercy and salvation in Christ!

THE GATES OF DAWN

June 22

SCRIPTURE READING—LUKE vii. 36-50

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."—LUKE vii. 50

THE badness of the good comes out in the Pharisee. Simon was outwardly the righteous one. Accepted by the people as such, flattered by himself as such, and yet how much coldness, artificiality, and heartlessness was evinced by him! He thought himself gold, and yet the Trier of hearts revealed him as utterly loveless—that is, utterly worthless. Let me not mistake the whiteness of whitewash for the whiteness of the great white throne.

The goodness of the bad is suggested by the woman. Judging by appearances, she was one to be shunned, and yet in her heart the spirit of true holiness was dawning.

The goodness which begins in deep sorrow for sin, which discovers the beauty of the Lord and trusts in Him, which demonstrates its genuineness in a new self-sacrificing life, is infinitely better than the social etiquette or ecclesiastical propriety which knows nothing of the love of God or man.

THE GATES OF DAWN

June 23

SCRIPTURE READING—LUKE xix. 1-10

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."—LUKE xix. 10

THE readiness of Zacchæus for the blessing must strike us. "He ran on before." He made haste and came down." If we had looked on the publican that morning we should have thought him the most unlikely of men to become the host of Jesus Christ, yet he received Him joyfully.

We cannot penetrate to our brother's conscience and heart, and where the carnal eye can see only thorns and briars God's eye beholds "fields white unto the harvest."

The readiness of Christ to confer the blessing. "When Jesus came to the place he looked up." He knows where the true penitent awaits Him. "And said unto Zacchæus, make haste, and come down." It is all a matter of haste. No time for delay, no waiting for a convenient season, no putting off until to-morrow. "To-day I must abide at thy house." "To-day is salvation come to this house."

THE GATES OF DAWN

June 24

SCRIPTURE READING—LUKE XV. 1-10

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."—I TIM.
i. 15

THE inwardness of Pharisaism was that it excluded the sinner, it was without sympathy and sacrifice. Amongst animals in their wild state, if one is injured, sick or dying, its companions forthwith forsake it, or worry it to death. Savages often reveal a similar truculence.

The sign of civilisation is growing sympathy with misfortune. What wild beasts do in the natural world Pharisees do in the social and moral; they are greedy to spoil the castaway life.

The essence of the Christian faith is the direct contrary, a passion to recover the castaway life. It has faith in human nature at its very worst, and honours it in its lowest estate.

The righteousness of the Pharisee was self-contained, proud, selfish, unspiritual; the righteousness which is of God by faith in Jesus Christ is spiritual, humble, dependent upon God, full of the spirit of compassion and sacrifice towards them that are out of the way.

THE GATES OF DAWN

June 25

SCRIPTURE READING—MARK xvi. 1-8

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth which was crucified: He is risen; He is not here."—MARK xvi. 6

THE thought of resurrection and immortality was in the heart of mankind from the very beginning. When the mummy of a famous beauty, one of the queens of Egypt, was discovered in the tombs, it held in its withered hand a plant of the rose of Jericho, a symbol of the resurrection. This queen lived and died long before the coming of Christ. So the great nations, even whilst darkness covered the earth, dreamed of a future life and died in the hope of it.

Our Lord converted that dream into reality: ever since His abundantly witnessed resurrection, the hope of immortality has been one of the most influential facts in the experience of the race. The Rose of Sharon means infinitely more than the Rose of Jericho—the one history, demonstration, assurance; the other suggestion, speculation, and the mere poetry of life. We need a great fact to confront death with, and we have that fact glorious and indisputable in the empty grave.

THE GATES OF DAWN

June 26

SCRIPTURE READING—JOHN xviii. 28-40

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"My Kingdom is not of this world."—JOHN xviii. 36

HISTORY shows that the extinction of a nation politically may yet give it a spiritualised existence far wider and more influential than when it figured historically.

Ceasing to have "a local habitation and a name," the genius of Greece took possession of the world. Rome perished politically, but perishing nationally it informed all modern civilisation with its spirit.

Titus dissolved the Jewish State, but, destroyed corporeally, it became a greater force in its moral doctrine than when it was a world-power in the reigns of David and Solomon.

So in the death and resurrection of our Lord; His Spirit went forth through all the earth, His words and grace unto the ends of the world. Christ has vanished from our sight; we know Him no longer after the flesh; He has dropped all that was physical, local, relative, circumstantial, but only that He might fill all things. In the moment of perishing He triumphed. His spiritual Kingdom is supreme, universal, everlasting.

THE GATES OF DAWN

June 27

SCRIPTURE READING—MARK v. 35-43

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Be not afraid, only believe."—MARK v. 36

WE see here what faith means—a venturing, trusting, expecting beyond all carnal appearances. "Thy daughter is dead; why troublest thou the Master any further?" Here speaks the world. Up to a certain point blessing is possible and may be expected, but that point reached, all is hopeless.

Within the understood laws of nature, help, relief, salvation are considered possible; but if the laws of nature forbid, "why trouble the Master any further?" If a person is nobly born, comes into the world with a fine disposition, he may be nobly built; but if the law of heredity has determined a man basely, "why trouble the Master any further?" If we turn to virtue in early life, much may be made of us; but when, having lived long in sin, we have become a bundle of bad, tyrannical habits, "why trouble the Master any further?"

Christ saveth unto "the uttermost all who come unto God by Him"; and it is best to leave Christ to determine where the "uttermost" lies. What is impossible with men is easy to Omnipotent grace.

THE GATES OF DAWN

June 28

SCRIPTURE READING—MARK ix. 17-29

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief."—MARK ix. 24

FAITH for our sons who occasion us trouble. How many godly fathers have sons suffering from the moral malady as the youth here suffered physically and mentally! That the very best of men are afflicted by children wayward, undevout, wicked beyond the common, is one of the mysteries of life. "They are children in whom there is no faith."

But we must not despair if this should happen to be our sorrowful fortune. The Church has not succeeded, yet resolutely bringing them to Christ in believing supplication they may still be saved. Their recovery may gladden our later years. Or after we have gone they may return.

"If Thou canst!" With importunity and tears we must commend our children to the mercy and grace of God, nothing doubting His willingness and power to save. Let us be sure the end will justify our faith and patience.

THE GATES OF DAWN

June 29

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. ix, 35-x, 15

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."—MATT. x, 7

AS the Lord sent forth the Twelve, He is ever sending forth messengers whom He has chosen to forward His great work. A few are greatly gifted, for the most part they are simple souls. Of the major number of the original disciples we do not hear again, but let us remember that "real power is not measured by the noise which men make."

The essence of the commission entrusted to the disciples was their message. "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." They were to do good of various kinds, but the medical, social and philanthropical were secondary to the evangelical and spiritual.

We must execute our commission in the spirit of pure love. "Freely ye received, freely give." It has been finely said that "good hearts feel the obligation of doing good more than men feel the other necessities of life." Certainly the Christ-like heart feels this overmastering necessity.

THE GATES OF DAWN

June 30

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. x. 23-33

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

'He that endureth to the end shall be saved.'—MATT. x. 22

IN the East is found a wood so fragrant that when buried feet deep in the earth it yet continues to fill the air with sweetness: the Christian spirit must similarly make itself felt, however hidden and silent.

But we are not only to make ourselves felt in suggestion and insinuation, we must stand prepared on occasion to avow Christ at all risks, to witness for Him whatever it may cost. For our own sake, our brother's sake, for Christ's sake, we must tell out what a Saviour we have found, or the stifled truth will be revenged upon us in subtle and painful ways.

It often requires a courage not less than sublime, as well as a most sublime wisdom, to witness for Christ in the familiar haunts of life. But the opportunities for martyrdom are getting rare, and if it should happen to cost much in feeling to speak for Him let me not hesitate.

THE GATES OF DAWN

July 1

SCRIPTURE READING—LUKE x. 1-16

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you."—LUKE x. 9

"THE Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you." The great privilege. To live in this last age is to be highly favoured amongst men. That the Kingdom of God is preached in our streets, pressed on our acceptance, and that it touches our heart, is the distinguishing privilege of our age, nation, and life.

The great refusal. We are always missing gracious visitations, losing splendid prizes, trifling away rare talents and opportunities, but to fail of the grace of God is the saddest disaster of all. How solemnly our Lord indicates the awfulness of the rejection!

"I have touched the gold," cried a diver, who came up from the wreck of an Australian vessel lost on our coast; and that was all, for the treasure was never recovered. Is it to be thus with us in relation to the grandest thing of all? Is the kingdom to come near us, and yet are we to miss it? Are we only to touch the gold?

THE GATES OF DAWN

July 2

SCRIPTURE READING—ISA. lxxv. 17-25

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee."—JER. i. 8

"**M**OREOVER, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what seest thou? And I said, I see a rod of an almond tree." A wakeful (*i.e.*, early) tree. "Then said the Lord unto me, Thou hast well seen; for I will hasten My word to perform it." "I am wakeful over My word." Heaven is ready, waiting, anxious to bless. Men are ready for the blessing.

To our eye the vineyard is often of most unpromising aspect—we look upon the work of God as upon a cactus, slow flowering, late flowering, flowering after a century; when we ought to regard it as an almond tree, the harbinger of spring, that unfolds its blossoms long before other trees put forth leaf and flower.

God is working in the hearts of men, even when to the carnal eye they appear hopeless. Do not feel, brother labourer, that you are working on cacti. That naughty child, perverse scholar, rough class, wild district, barbarous tribe, is yet an almond tree; and working in faith and love it may suddenly surprise you with blooms and clusters

THE GATES OF DAWN

July 3

SCRIPTURE READING—JOHN iv. 27-38

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

“Freely ye have received, freely give.”—MATT. x. 8

“THE fields are white already unto harvest.” Here our Lord touches the same truth as that suggested by Jeremiah’s “rod of an almond tree.” The Spirit of God working on the hearts of men and making them ready for the heavenly blessing. The Spirit is before us, and there is far more susceptibility in men to gospel truth than we suspect.

“Freely ye have received, freely give.” If there is this readiness even in the most unlikely let us put it to the proof by immediate appeal.

The scent of flowers is delightful whilst they freely yield it on the air, and whilst they delight they bloom; but if they are placed under a bell-glass so that the atmosphere becomes saturated with their own scented exhalations, they poison themselves in a few days or even hours.

Let our lip and life radiate the truth and grace of Christ, for if we think to imprison it in our own breast, unspoken and unrevealed, it will destroy itself as the flower is suffocated by its own imprisoned perfume.

THE GATES OF DAWN

July 4

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. xi. 1-19

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"*Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me.*"—MATT.
xi. 6

I N judging others we unconsciously judge ourselves, and in some instances this is specially the case. William Hazlitt, in his essay on *The Character of Burke*, makes this remark: "It has always been with me a test of the sense and candour of any one belonging to the opposite party whether he allowed Burke to be a great man."

But what a test of personal character is our estimate of Jesus, His character, doctrine, and work! We have critics who sit in judgment upon our Lord, and affect to discover His limitations, errors, and frailties, little thinking all the while that they are convicting themselves.

"Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me." Whenever we differ from Him let us be sure that He is right and we are wrong. Whenever we suspect Him we detect false elements in ourselves. The more fully and delicately we harmonise with His spirit, teachings, and method, the nearer are we to perfection.

THE GATES OF DAWN

July 5

SCRIPTURE READING—JOHN x. 22-42

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me."—JOHN x. 25

JESUS does not make the question of His Messiahship to turn upon what is abstract and controversial, but entirely upon the undeniable fact of the beneficence of His action.

The present day is specially one in which we place emphasis on the actual result, the practical effect of doctrine and philosophy. Writing to Emerson, Carlyle confesses, "I grow daily to honour facts more and more and theory less and less."

And this is exactly the position of thinkers to-day. How far does this doctrine help us? How does this system practically advantage us? What are the substantial fruits of this theory?

With what absolute confidence can we submit the faith of Christ to this ordeal? It never touches personal character except to ennoble it. It never enters a cottage without making it a palace. It never acts upon a community or nation without proving itself the blessing of blessings.

THE GATES OF DAWN

July 6

SCRIPTURE READING—MAL. iii. 1-6

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"He shall purify the sons of Levi and purge them as gold and silver."—MAL. iii. 3

GOD sent many ambassadors to His people to prepare them for the advent of the Messiah, but the Baptist, with his stern, searching ministry, was pre-eminently the forerunner of the Lord of truth and righteousness.

The end of Christ's coming was to purify. "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver. He shall purify the sons of Levi." How much dross is there in the people of God, how their very virtues, prayers and good works are mingled with inferior elements! It is the work of the Holy Spirit given in Christ to expel the latest atom of the base and bad.

"And like fuller's soap." A quaint Quaker described certain formal, inconsistent professors as being "starched before they were washed." Christ, too, has His eye on these, and seeks to work in them that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.

THE GATES OF DAWN

July 7

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. xi. 20-30

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me."—MATT. xi. 29

IN Christ we enjoy supreme spiritual privilege, and to be deaf to His words, to deny His call, to resist His grace, is to make our sin red like crimson, and to bring upon ourselves supreme retribution. Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, have been blotted out from under the sun, not a fragment of them survives, and the souls that dwelt there are reserved to a judgment more severe than that which awaits the guiltiest pagan.

According to the intensity of the light is the depth of the shade, the white limelight makes the blackest shadows; and according to the fulness of our rejected privilege shall be the emphasis of our condemnation.

Let me remember the immense obligation of living in the light of the Gospel. Where sin abounded grace doth much more abound; but abounding grace despised makes penalty much more to abound. Oh, for a contrite heart and a life fully surrendered to the gracious Master!

THE GATES OF DAWN

July 8

SCRIPTURE READING—EZEK. xxviii. 1-10

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."—PROV. xvi. 18

THE immense pride and satisfaction of the human heart is depicted in self-glorious Tyre. A poor lunatic mastered by dazzling delusions is always a pathetic spectacle. He reckons himself an oracle, apes the attitudes of conquerors, revels in phantom millions, mistakes his rags for purple, and with straws crowns himself a king.

How infinitely more sad is the human soul boasting its wisdom, strength and virtue, in the sight of God! For such God can do nothing except pity them, Christ can do nothing except weep over them.

Let me beware of this spirit of blind conceit and self-sufficiency, which excludes every great blessing that Christ has to give. Let me be teachable, conscious of my weakness, ever dependent upon God, my contrite heart and lowly walk established by His grace. Then will the Divine Spirit give me true light, power, riches, righteousness, peace and joy.

THE GATES OF DAWN

July 9

SCRIPTURE READING—ISA. i. 1-9

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me."—ISA. i. 2

SHALL we ever understand the mystery of sin —its black ingratitude, its horrible treason, its inexplicable infatuation, its tragic folly and woe! Yet are we all more or less under its awful power and guilt.

And because of these things comes the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. It is not volcanoes, earthquakes, and blizzards that desolate, deform, and destroy the earth, it is the wickedness of the people; all the rest is a trifle compared with the consuming power of passion, the plague of unrighteousness, the retribution of sin.

And yet our God remembers mercy, or we should have been as Sodom, we should have been like Gomorrah. Shall we ever understand the mystery of Divine love? The infinite patience, the inexhaustible long-suffering, the measureless clemency, we shall never comprehend. Let the love and mercy of God move me, melt me, awe me into obedience.

THE GATES OF DAWN

July 10

SCRIPTURE READING—I COR. I-8

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."—I COR. I. 31

NOTHING meets the need of sinful, perishing man like the truth and grace of Jesus Christ. The Roman Catholic Sanctuary of New Pompeii has a garden filled with roses. These roses are pulled to pieces leaf by leaf, dried, and made up in little packets sent to the sick. The sick person swallows them, and is supposed to recover. The rose-leaf cure is celebrated throughout Italy.

But really the rose-leaf cure is celebrated throughout the world. "They have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly." What vain philosophies, tricks of politics, quackeries of culture, are supposed to cure the deep, destroying maladies of our bosom!

Only one rose has the virtue of sovereign healing. The Rose of Sharon alone cures the sickness of the soul. He brings into our life strength and beauty. Let me hold Him closely to my heart and He shall fill my life with sweetness, loveliness, and delight. "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

THE GATES OF DAWN

July 11

SCRIPTURE READING—JOHN vi. 35-45

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out."—JOHN vi. 37

HOW the note of universal, undistinguishing love sounds throughout this discourse of our Lord's! Human nature alternates between widely removed extremes. On the one side vaingloriousness, on the other side remorse and despair. The Gospel sharply rebukes the first, and then wooingly seeks to excite within the contrite breast courage and hope.

The ancient Romans recognised what they called "inexpiable crimes." But Christianity knows no "inexpiable" offences; it leads us perpetually from repentance to love, and from love to repentance, it discloses a Mediator exercising infinite mercy and forgiveness.

Yet Christianity, whilst recognising no single transgression as "inexpiable," yet brands as damning sin the deliberate and final rejection of the free grace of the Son of God. "Of sin, because they believe not on Me." Grace is a golden mystery that welcomes the chief of sinners.

THE GATES OF DAWN

July 12

SCRIPTURE READING—ISA. IV.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."—MATT. xi. 28

"A FEAST of things purified," as Isaiah speaks in another place, is here spread by the hand of Him who is the great Master of feasts. He who knows best how to spread a table, as we see in nature, excels Himself as He spreads the banquet of redeeming grace.

It is substantial. The Orientals have a saying: "All that is not bread is vanity." No mockery about the provision in Christ, it satisfies the longing soul and fills the hungry soul with goodness. It is rich and overflowing.

There is a book entitled *Crumbs Swept Up*, but that title will not do for the New Testament. The fatted calf is killed. The flagons of love are filled to the brim, the cup runs over with strengthening and refreshment.

It is free. No other qualification is demanded beyond that we hunger and thirst. "And shall I perish with hunger?"

THE GATES OF DAWN

July 13

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. xii. 1-14

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath day."—MATT. xii. 8

THE standing danger of the devout lies between the exaggeration of ordinances and their neglect.

Christ is greater than the temple, but He does not therefore discredit it. He emphasises its high significance as the meeting place of spirits—the Spirit of God and the broken and contrite spirit of man. Christ is Lord of the Sabbath. He does not, however, abolish it, only confirms it by showing its larger spiritual meaning.

So long as the letter expresses the spirit, revere both ; if the letter obscures the spirit, be loyal to the latter. Men are more than institutions, as the soul is more than the body.

The English Government maintains in force a severe code respecting the landing of aliens in this country, but the other day, when an emigrant ship took fire, the Customs authorities at once waived all regulations and welcomed the rescued.

THE GATES OF DAWN

July 14

SCRIPTURE READING—Ps. lxxxiv.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house: they will be still praising Thee."—Ps. lxxxiv. 4

WE sometimes hear the plea that God is everywhere, and that we can see and worship Him in the green fields as well as in a church. It is true that we can keep the Sabbath and worship amid trees and flowers, yet is there a special blessing in spending the sacred day where God has put His name.

One might reason, You can see the sky anywhere, you can watch from your own windows the sun, moon, and stars; why, therefore, spend days and nights in an observatory? Yes, but you get in an observatory a view of the firmament you get nowhere else: by the aid of special instruments and teachers you master secrets of the heavens in that astronomical coign of vantage not possible in your house or on the common.

God's house has special privileges and promises. There the heavens 'open; there God's voice is heard in majesty and mercy; there He feeds us with the bread in the strength of which we go many days.

THE GATES OF DAWN

July 15

SCRIPTURE READING—PROV. xxiii. 15-23

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Wine is a mocker; whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise."
—PROV. xx. 1

SOME of the strongest denunciations of Holy Writ, alike in the Old and in the New Testament, are directed against "witches" and "sorcerers," that is against the dealers in drugs for the purpose of debauch. They are represented as the vilest of men, as guilty of producing the darkest crimes, reserved to severest judgment.

Without confusing opium and wine, Holy Writ never fails to warn us that excessive sensual indulgence entails the same bad consequences as do the most noxious narcotics. Red magic may easily become as deadly as black magic. With what circumspection ought we to walk!

The restrained and hallowed life has its "sequel." It issues in glory, honour, and peace. Lest we be tempted by the purple bubbles at the brim of sin's cup, let us remember its poisonous dregs. "The end of these things is death." "And in the end eternal life." Let me all the day long look beyond to the sequel.

THE GATES OF DAWN

July 16

SCRIPTURE READING—I KINGS xx. 1-21

THOUGHT FOR THE D. Y

"Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things."—I COR. viii. 25

BEN-HADAD lost the battle through drinking, and through indulgence we may lose the battle of life.

"Every man that striveth in the games is temperate *in all things.*" Let us be on our guard against the cheap luxury of damning sins to which we have no inclination, and yet all the while practising others equally bad.

We are often guilty of sad partialities. He who has the mind of Christ cultivates a catholic goodness. It is possible to be temperate in eating and drinking, and yet very intemperate in temper, in the love of money, and in the criticism of one's neighbours. We must watch and chasten ourselves on every side.

"Temperate in all things," and say nothing about it. The athlete is so intent on the crown that he never dreams of magnifying the denials of training.

Let my soul be so intoxicated with the great visions and hopes of my faith that I shall count all things loss for the sake of moral conquest, that I smile at toil and pain if I may only win Christ.

THE GATES OF DAWN

July 17

SCRIPTURE READING—I COR. xii.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"By one Spirit we are all baptized into one body."—I COR.
xii. 13

THE unity of the Church is a great fact. Carlyle writing Emerson affirms: "No truly great man, from Jesus Christ onwards, as I often say, ever founded a sect—I mean wilfully intended founding one." Jesus Christ did not intend to found a *sect*, but He certainly wilfully designed to found a Church. It is impossible to read the Gospels without being satisfied of this.

The diversity within the unity. Diversities of gifts diversities of ministrations, diversities of working. The Saviour of all men creates an organism that is rich in many gifts, ministries, instruments, and programmes, so that His catholic truth and love may be brought home to all the redeemed. It would have been a pity if the rainbow had been of one colour; it is absurd to try to make it so.

The efficacy of every arrangement and gift must not be forgotten. "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to profit withal." Nothing is in the Church simply to satisfy the theories of ecclesiastics, nothing for ornament, everything exists for the conversion of sinners and the building up of the saints.

THE GATES OF DAWN

July 18

SCRIPTURE READING—JOHN xvi. 1-14

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth."—JOHN xvi. 13

GOD did not at the beginning of history give to the race a full account of nature, or of the principles of society, or of the goal of things, but as the ages unfold He gently opens our eyes to the facts and philosophy of the world.

So He did not give to His Church full and final knowledge of all that relates to the experience of His children and the fortunes of His kingdom. The rays of light filter through, are ever filtering through, as they are needed.

Our infallibility is with the Spirit. The light that never leads astray shines directly from heaven, and this Oracle all sincere, penitent, believing men are invited to consult. The grandest privilege of humanity is here, to speak with God as with our friend.

"If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God." Prayer finds the true "Inquiry Office." Whatever we need to solve our doubts, to guide our steps, shall be given.

THE GATES OF DAWN

July 19

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. xiv. 1-12

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed."—I CHRON. xxi. 17.

SO conscience worked in the murderous Herod! "This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead."

Caracciolo, the Neapolitan patriot, at the instigation of Ferdinand, the Bourbon King of Naples, was hanged at the yardarm of a frigate in the Bay, when weights were attached to his body, and it was sunk in the sea. A few days later it would seem that the weights slipped, and the corpse reappeared, to the horror of the conscience-stricken king, who happened to witness it. So the ghost of John tormented the guilty Herod. How strange and terrible the power of conscience! In the crypts of the soul sleep all dark memories, and they are ever being startled into life to convict and punish the sinner.

"I believe in the forgiveness of sins." Conscience is a tremendous reality; let me then understand the *power* of Him who forgives sin and who cleanses it. We have all crimson sins which He alone can purge.

THE GATES OF DAWN

July 20

SCRIPTURE READING—MARK vi. 20-29

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin."—ECCLES. v. 6

WE all need to stand on our guard against the dangers of gay occasions. Herod on his birthday making a great supper was carried away by excitement to do what was contrary to his sober opinion, and what, ever after, he bitterly regretted.

The newspapers often warn us against "holiday perils"; that is, the special dangers of boating, bathing, and climbing during the summer vacation. Then we are gay, hilarious, venturesome, off our guard, and are liable to accidents as we are not on ordinary occasions.

So the festal day, the jubilee celebration, the social function, brings its peril, and many a worthy man and woman has had bitter reason to regret the lapses of gala days. We may not be tempted to sacrifice the heads of other people, but we may easily lose our own:

"Gird thy heavenly armour on;
Wear it ever, night and day;
Ambushed lies the evil one:
Watch and pray."

THE GATES OF DAWN

July 21

SCRIPTURE READING—LUKE ix. 1-9

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked."—ISA. xlvi. 22.

WHAT a striking contrast is established in this section of Scripture! First, we see the Twelve sent forth on their errand of mercy and salvation. They are to cure diseases, to publish peace, to destroy the works of the devil. And all is simple and modest in an extraordinary degree. Yet how truly grand is the mission, and how incomparably majestic the missionaries! All is unselfish, magnanimous, and full of blessing.

Then in contrast we have the Tetrarch, a guilty wretch wrestling with spectres. The Apostles without a staff, Herod with a sceptre; the one without bread, the other making great suppers for lords and captains; the one with a single garment, the other with a wardrobe stuffed with purple and gold. Yet how infinitely superior the men of love, purity and sacrifice!

Well may Corot exult, "Long live conscience and simplicity! There lies the only way to the true and the sublime." Let me choose the better part, which shall not be taken away from me!

THE GATES OF DAWN

July 22

SCRIPTURE READING—DAN. vi. 10-17

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Thy God, whom thou servest continually, He will deliver thee."—DAN. vi. 16

WE see in Darius, and again in Herod, the power of false honour. Darius regarded Daniel, and set his heart to deliver the prophet. Herod was deeply impressed by the character of John, and was exceedingly sorry to do him violence. Yet from a false sense of duty they both became guilty of capital crime. They forgot that "a man cannot be just if he is not humane."

To-day a false sense of honour is the source of much mischief, of many evils. Let us not mistake here. True honour is a golden bond binding to deeds willed in high and holy moments; false honour is only an article of the devil's decalogue, an iron bond in which there is no real obligation, only illusion and disgrace. We had better appear cowards before men than before God.

"Honour rooted in dishonour" is best repudiated at the earliest moment. Nothing is binding that is inhuman, nothing that is impious, nothing that is unjust. Let us watch lest we make snares for ourselves.

THE GATES OF DAWN

July 23

SCRIPTURE READING—LUKE vii. 24-30

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"He was a burning and a shining light."—JOHN v. 35

IT is a great thing to be eulogised by the lips of Christ! We are sure of the grandeur of one whom He sanctions and glorifies. How profoundly He appreciates the Baptist, and on what a pinnacle He sets him! John in the black hole of Herod had apparently moods of depression; for a moment it would seem that the gathering tragedy bewildered his great, pure soul; but the Master has nothing to say of His servant's human frailty. Only splendid words of praise!

Oh! to be approved by Christ. No matter what we think of ourselves if only He recognises us. No matter what the world says about us, if He counts us worthy. And we may be approved by Him.

Truly, John was a great man, "Yet he that is but little in the Kingdom of God is greater than he." The little, the obscure, the unremembered, may have Christ for their panegyrist. "Salute Apelles, approved in Christ." Nothing more is known of Apelles than this; it is enough. Let me simply live for this.

THE GATES OF DAWN

July 24

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. xiv. 13-21

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Give us this day our daily bread."—MATT. vi. 11

THE multiplying power of God is a thought to be laid to heart. We are apt to look simply at that which is before us, and to forget its possibilities of enlargement and reduplication.

A Scotchman, named David Fife, of Canada, obtained from Glasgow some wheat of a special kind. Only three ears, the produce of a single grain, ripened, but the splendid Canadian harvest of 1908, more than eleven million quarters, was wholly descended from that one seed. The multiplication of the loaves and fishes was a passing illustration of the far larger miracle of the daily feeding of the race.

Let me remember the multiplying power of God in all my earthly affairs. The barrel of meal, the cruse of oil, shall not fail if my faith and faithfulness do not fail. My opportunities in the spiritual life may be very meagre; but in my scraps of knowledge, my narrow resources, my restricted privileges, I may find bread enough, and to spare.

THE GATES OF DAWN

July 25

SCRIPTURE READING—EX. xvi. 10-21

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven."—
JOHN vi. 51

"AND when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, What is it? for they wist not what it was." Our Lord worked His miracle, and mysteriously the multitude was fed. They understood not the process of the creation of the banquet of the desert.

But is not our daily bread also bread of wonder? Who can understand the secret of the nourishing of the body? Even Voltaire could write, "Ask by what secret mystery this bread and this meat digest in the body, and are transformed into a sweetly prepared milk? How, always filtered in its unerring course, does it run in long purple streams to swell my veins? How does it give to my languishing body a new power, and make my heart beat, and my brain think?"

Why should I then stumble at the mystery of the spiritual life, and the support of that life by the truth of Jesus? Let me eat and drink of my Lord by faith with thanksgiving.

THE GATES OF DAWN

July 26

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. xiv. 22-36

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid."—MATT. xiv. 27

THE mystery of the ocean well represents the mystery of life, especially in relation to the sadness of life. We sail in daily peril, we are helpless amid the waves, we are liable to shipwreck, we founder in the deep. But our Lord and Master walks the wave. He is the true Lord High Admiral of the seas. Amid all the uncertainty of life, its seeming cruelty, its terrible wreck and ruin, there runs wise and generous law, enjoined and administered by Almighty power and grace.

But let me be guilty of no presumption. There was no necessity for Peter to attempt the sea, and his temerity brought humiliation. Let me stick to the ship until my Lord calls me to forsake it. In other words, let me humbly use all prudential measures for the safeguarding of life, and then I may confidently hope for deliverance when the hour comes to set my foot on the wave, without even a cork to trust to

THE GATES OF DAWN

July 27

SCRIPTURE READING—MARK iv. 35-41

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith."—
MARK iv. 40

"WHY are ye so fearful?" In addition to its natural mystery and danger, a whole host of superstitious terrors have become associated with the deep. Sea giants, diminutive dwarfs, cunning fairies, wonderful goblins and demons are supposed to haunt the depths. So human life teems with spectres.

"Why are ye so fearful?" Because we know ourselves too well. Conscience is at the bottom of fear. If life were smooth and still as the lake of glass before the Throne, we should see spectres on its glittering surface, sharks in its jewelled depths; conscience makes us cowards.

"Why are ye so fearful?" Because we do not know our Master well enough. If we once believed in the riches of His grace to forgive, in the fulness of His power to save, there would be no more sorrow on the sea.

THE GATES OF DAWN

July 28

SCRIPTURE READING—Ps. cvii. 32-43

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"He bringeth them unto their desired haven."—Ps. cvii. 30

HOWEVER often one has been to sea, it always seems wonderful that after weeks on the deep without guiding marks the vessel at last strikes exactly the lighthouse or beacon that indicates the haven. So shall the Divine Pilot steer us true.

Let me then, when life seems vague, when there is nothing to show where I am, no pathway, no signal, let me be sure that there is a plan and programme notwithstanding. When life seems without progress let me yet be confident.

However fast a vessel moves at sea, the horizon moves at an equal pace, and it seems ever the same horizon. So sometimes we urge onwards with much effort and motion, and yet appear just as far off from our ideal as ever. "So" we are brought to the haven.

"Jesus, Saviour, pilot me
Over life's tempestuous sea!
Unknown waves before me roll,
Hiding rock and treacherous shoal;
Chart and compass came from Thee!
Jesus, Saviour, pilot me."

THE GATES OF DAWN

July 29

SCRIPTURE READING—LUKE vii. 1-10

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."—LUKE vii. 9

"HE marvelled because of their unbelief" (Mark vi. 6). How often had He to do this? But for once at least, Jesus is surprised by a miracle. "He marvelled at him." How rarely we give our Lord this joy!

"Say with a word." How strangely and fully did the centurion apprehend the majesty and sovereignty of Jesus! With a word the centurion ordered his affairs, because at the back of his word was the authority and strength of the Roman Empire—the sceptre of Cæsar, the tramp of legions, the majesty of the law, the axe of the lictors. The world trembled at that word, and obeyed.

What, then, will a word of God effect? "He spake and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast." And His every word of grace is strong as that which built the skies. Not a syllable of His but more than twelve legions of angels are behind it. It is in this word that I trust for all that life means, all that death and eternity mean.

THE GATES OF DAWN

July 30

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. xv. 21-28

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Lord, help me."—MATT. xv. 25

THE cry of misery: "Have mercy on me, O Lord." The woe of the daughter was the woe of the mother, and very deep and bitter it was. The rebuke of misery: "Send her away." How callous we often are! A great writer has observed how much more ready we are to sympathise with the successes and victories of our neighbours than we are with their misfortunes. But even the Master seemed to chide. He who feels for us most sometimes deeply tries us by strange delays.

The logic of misery. When we want a thing badly enough we become wonderfully acute and eloquent. Aeronauts say that a woman's voice is heard farther up in the sky than any other sound. But how far does her voice reach in anguish and faith? Right up to the throne of God.

The victory of misery. "Be it done unto thee even as thou wilt." Wrestling Jacobs, pray on. Prevail you must!

THE GATES OF DAWN

July 31

SCRIPTURE READING—Ps. cxlv.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works."—Ps. cxlv. 9

THIS is the Psalm of universality. "The Lord is good to *all*, and His tender mercies are over *all* His works." It often looks otherwise, but "He meaneth not so."

"The Lord upholdeth *all* that fall." We see a dark side to life, but the mercy of the Lord is active here also. Here He is graciously present to comfort, heal, and deliver. He is with us in all our misfortunes to convert them into blessings.

"The Lord is nigh unto *all* them that call upon Him." All have free access to the throne of grace, and no petition is rejected when we "call upon Him in truth."

The optimism of this psalm concerning all beings and things is remarkable. In the poet's opinion, goodness is at the bottom of it all, pervades it all, and endures through all. There is no pessimism except to the deliberately and persistently wicked.

THE GATES OF DAWN

August 1

SCRIPTURE READING—Ps. lxvi.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer."—
Ps. lxvi. 20

THE Psalmist tells his experience of God's answers to his prayers. Note that the blessing is given in answer to prayer. Can we expect either gift or deliverance when we do not ask for it?

But it would appear that the answer was not given immediately. Heaven sometimes treats us as our Lord did the Canaanitish woman. When the prayer was answered, it was not in the way expected.

The English peasant believes that lightning ripens the corn, and the Italian believes that comets ripen the vine, but certainly God brings into being His greatest blessings through great tribulations.

"But verily God hath heard me." He does finally answer, and He pays well for delays. Does He not sometimes best answer our prayers by not answering them at all in the form we urged? A saintly woman said that she had "lived long enough to thank God for some unanswered prayers."

THE GATES OF DAWN

August 2

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. xiii. 1-23

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man."—MATT. xiii. 37

WORKERS for God may find much to suggest discouragement in this parable; and yet its conclusion is comforting and inspiring.

Not so many years ago the Island of Krakatoa was utterly destroyed by a terrible volcano, and every vestige of vegetation perished. Yet its present condition demonstrates in a remarkable degree how quickly plants are able to take possession of a sterilised region even under the most unfavourable conditions. From a variety of causes, a large proportion of the germs reaching the desolated shores perished; and yet, despite all this difficulty and destruction, in about fifty years the island was covered with vegetation, flowering plants, ferns, orchids, palms.

So is there ever difficulty, delay, and failure in sowing the golden seed of the Gospel; yet in wild neighbourhoods, in rough hearts, in heathen lands, shall the sowing not prove in vain.

THE GATES OF DAWN

August 3

SCRIPTURE READING—Ps. xix.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul."—
Ps. xix. 7

WE want to be sure, in the first instance, that the doctrines we learn, hold, teach, are indeed the seed of the Kingdom. The seedsman's catalogue, as the gardener runs over it in January, raises within him visions of delight—all sorts of things, gay, sweet, splendid. And yet, when the season arrives, the blooms do not by any means justify the catalogue. The seeds, perhaps, were not of the best.

It is said that seed should always come direct from its native home, imported direct from the country to which the flower belongs, and not taken from flowers domesticated here. Let us, whilst thankful for all human aid in understanding God's Word, be sure that we again and again go back to "the native home" of God's truth in the Holy Book.

Then we shall never be disappointed. The divine Word is full of enlightening, purifying, converting power.

THE GATES OF DAWN

August 4

SCRIPTURE READING—MARK vi. 1-6

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The word of the Lord endureth for ever."—I PET. i. 25

HOW often men miss the great blessing through occupying themselves with a variety of curious questions! Instead of fixing their mind on the astonishing teaching and gracious words, they turn to superficial and irrelevant questions about the Master's relatives.

In close proximity to the diamond as it is found in the mine are inferior substances known as boart, carbonado, and graphite. They are interesting formations in some respects, but useless for gems. How strange it would be if men should stay to discuss these pebbles and forget the diamond! Yet this is exactly what critics do in regard to the "pearl of great price." They ignore the substantial thing in discussing curious questions of many kinds.

Let me be sure that I seize the essential thing. That I find in Christ my divine, complete, personal Saviour. That I prove in my Bible the word of God saving the soul.

THE GATES OF DAWN

August 5

SCRIPTURE READING—ACTS ii. 37-47

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Let the word of God dwell in you richly in all wisdom."—
COL. iii. 16

HERE is the seed that falls on honest hearts—true, sincere, obedient hearts. "Added in that day about three thousand souls."

There is a wonderful germinating, multiplying, fructifying power in evil. A single weed taken into a foreign country in a few years becomes a gigantic nuisance; but we will still believe that the conquering vitality is with the good and beautiful.

In the individual life it is the same. It is astonishing how a single Gospel truth, honestly and warmly held, takes possession of our whole being and influences the whole life.

A lichen is minute and frail, yet it will corrode quartz, pulverise the hardest rocks. So get a very fragment of Christ's truth into the soul, and it subdues the powers of evil, brings forth sweet and glorious fruits of light.

THE GATES OF DAWN

August 6

SCRIPTURE READING—JOHN iv. 35-42

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields: for they are white already to harvest."—JOHN iv. 35

IN some parts of Russia only six weeks elapse between the deep snows of the winter and the ingathering of the harvest. And the Master, who here again appears as a glorious optimist, declares the ripeness of human hearts for the heavenly blessing.

Let us remember this in the house, the sanctuary, the school. If we take a bulb into an ice-house it may well be an age before it flowers, if indeed it ever does so; but take it into a hot-house and it blooms directly.

The chilling way some Christians have in dealing with the unconverted is as snow in summer, and not calculated to assist the working of the Spirit.

The husbandman goes around garden, orchard, field, saying to everything that grows: "All is ready, you are expected, come along." So should we treat the undecided.

THE GATES OF DAWN

August 7

SCRIPTURE READING—MARK xiii. 24-43

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."—MATT. xiii. 43

HOW soon we become aware of the conflict ever raging in the world between truth and error, good and evil! How real it is, mysterious, and sometimes peculiarly disheartening!

The origin of our common weeds is a very difficult question to solve, and very perplexing is the problem of evil, its sources and subtlety. The universality and persistency of weeds astonish the naturalist; and we may be even more astonished as the false and foul everywhere assert themselves, and cunningly intermingle with whatever is true and beautiful, alike in the individual and in society.

But the distinctive teaching of this parable is clear enough, evil *is* evil. "An enemy hath done this." One of the deepest, deadliest evils is to think lightly of evil. We are never right or safe except when we glow with an enthusiasm for good, and dread evil.

THE GATES OF DAWN

August 8

SCRIPTURE READING—GEN. iii. 1-8

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The devil sinneth from the beginning."—I JOHN iii. 8

IN God's field, beautiful field of Paradise, came the devil sowing black germs.

Yet how tempting often are the malign fruits of evil! They appeal to the appetite. "Good for food." Whilst the diet of health is sober, the devil's viands are piquant and intoxicating. They appeal to the imagination. "Pleasant to the eyes." They appeal to the intellect. To "be desired to make one wise." The knowledge of evil that means pride, violence, presumption is peculiarly seductive. Poison flowers are sometimes gay, poisonous fruits are ruddier than the cherry, and the things which destroy morally are often replete with fascination.

Let me beware of the desire of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. The chaste beauty, the sober gold, the pure sweetness of innocence and goodness are infinitely beyond the fierce and fatal delights of the fool's paradise.

THE GATES OF DAWN

August 9

SCRIPTURE READING—JOHN viii. 39-47

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"He that is of God heareth God's words."—JOHN viii. 47

TO surrender to evil in any shape is to render ourselves insusceptible to the eternal light. A fruit that grows in Queensland, and which possesses a specially pleasant flavour, is said to induce paralysis of the optic nerves and cause blindness and death. All sin acts thus on the optic nerves of the soul.

"He that is of God heareth God's words." A sincere soul, a pure life, makes us tremblingly alive to the truth. The leaves, stems, and petioles of plants are extraordinarily sensitive to sunlight. According to Darwin, grass seedlings will curve towards a source of light so faint that it is indistinguishable to a human eye. Yet far more sensitive is the true soul to the faintest shining of the eternal light.

The sincere-hearted are just as quick to discern in Christ the very things for which they long. As the needle turns to the pole, so their hearts turn to Christ.

THE GATES OF DAWN

August 10

SCRIPTURE READING—2 PET. iii. 8-17

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth."—2 PET. iii. 13

THE conflict between good and evil continues from age to age, yet nevertheless it is not for ever. "The day of the Lord *will* come."

Professor Thomson recently pointed out that a certain radium substance attracted and repelled an object much in the style of a pendulum, so that with some clockwork attached to the pendulum we should have a clock that would require winding up only once in a million years.

This is the kind of clock to measure God's action by. To consummate His plan, to make and unmake worlds, He requires ages.

Yet time is not of the essence of the question. However long the conflict of right and wrong may continue, the struggle will end in the achievement of the Divine purpose, and the present system of things will vanish because it has answered God's design. No matter when the second coming of our Lord may be, how soon He will come to *me*!

THE GATES OF DAWN

August 11

SCRIPTURE READING—2 THESS. i. 1-10

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ."—ROM.
xiv. 10

IT is justice on God's part to requite with retribution those who afflict the saints, and to reward the suffering saints with the final and eternal rest.

How different is all life according as to whether we are the subjects of a fearful looking for of judgment, or are anticipating the saints' everlasting rest! A while ago we were returning from a long journey to spend Christmas at home; whilst in another part of the train we noticed a prisoner chained to a policeman, on his way to the county gaol. How different the journey to the two travellers! The train got on too fast for one, not fast enough for the other; every mile increased the misery of the one, heightened the joy of expectation in the other.

May my faith in the great crises of the future become so vivid and sure that it shall most powerfully influence all my days! May my hope be so strong as to constrain me to whatever is good and true!

THE GATES OF DAWN

August 12

SCRIPTURE READING—REV. XX. 11-15

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Every one of us shall give account of himself to God."—ROM.
xiv. 12

ALL things are being recorded, and we shall have to face the music of the archangel's trumpet.

We are assured by science that every fugitive movement registers itself, photographs itself, and in a sense becomes eternal. Is it a superstition to believe that the individual life makes its mark on the page of nature? We write our history in the book of our body. Yes, the body is a rubric, a story sternly recorded in red lines, partially seen even to-day. And in the book of conscience the deeds done in the body are recorded as by a diamond pen in the rock for ever. We are the recording angels of our own life.

"And the books were opened." The secret characters will blaze out, and we cannot deny our own handwriting and signature. Let me then, by Divine grace, write my passport to the skies. How terrible to think of writing our own death warrant!

THE GATES OF DAWN

August 13

SCRIPTURE READING—DAN. xii.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father."—MATT. xiii. 43

AGRICULTURALISTS are often sadly troubled by the weeds which get mixed with the seed corn. A pound of "clover seed" was found to contain 14,400 seeds of no less than forty-four distinct and separate weeds. So farmers take great care to ensure that no weeds are sown along with the true corn. Yet do what they will, the dormant possibilities of evil are quite incalculable, and germinating weeds steal in and mock them.

So are the good and evil mingled in society, mingled in families, mingled in the Church, and it is often impossible for us to discriminate and divide them without doing more harm than good.

Yet a day is coming when eternal justice and faithfulness will accomplish what is impossible now. "Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly cleanse His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the garner, but the chaff He will burn up with unquenchable fire." He is doing this by His Spirit now; He will complete the tremendous process before He has done with us. Spirit of God, bring home to me the solemn lesson!

THE GATES OF DAWN

August 14

SCRIPTURE READING—ACTS xix. 1-20

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed."—ACTS xix. 20

THE workings of grace may be shrouded in deepest secrecy, and proceed in profoundest silence, but their power is marvellous. The workings of iniquity are put to shame, whatever their pride and boasting.

It is impossible to say what was the reality and measure of this power of magic, but it yielded to the mighty power of the "word of God." All evil partakes of the nature of magic—whilst pretentious, it is unreal; whilst boasting great things, it is vain and fruitless.

Many pestilent weeds grow just too deep to be reached by the ploughshare, but the Gospel plough reaches the root of every error and turns it up to the light and air of the upper universe which kill every evil thing.

Let us not lose faith in the kingdom of God because of its modesty and noiselessness. A fern springing in a cranny splits the rock more certainly and thoroughly than a thunderbolt, and the hidden action of truth and grace works in human hearts and institutions effects simply miraculous.

THE GATES OF DAWN

August 15

SCRIPTURE READING—PROV. iii. 13-26

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."—PROV. iii. 17

HE who has found Christ "hath paradise found," as the hymn of Wesley declares. By freeing us from the sense of sin and guilt the Saviour delivers us from all the blighting power of life. By the strengthening and purification of our moral being He enables us to taste all the sweetness of natural things; none enjoy the riches of sense as do the pure in heart. "The world is yours." By granting us the riches of grace, He adds another vast realm to our possessions of comfort, power and hope.

Christ is "the rose of Sharon." He is the noblest, loveliest, sweetest of all the flowers of the garden of God. To wear in our bosom that flower is to breathe and to diffuse perpetual sweetness.

We have not understood Christ whilst we cherish a regret for anything His service may have cost us. He who is adorned and enriched by pearls of great price does not grieve over the oyster-shells he flung away.

THE GATES OF DAWN

August 16

SCRIPTURE READING—DAN. vii. 8-14

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth."—
MATT. v. 5

THE strange beasts of Daniel's vision symbolise the various and terrible forms of iniquity which afflict the world and destroy the race. They are horrible to the sight, terrible in strength, wholly destructive.

How hopeless it would seem to enter upon a struggle with them! A lion with eagle's wings, a bear with three ribs in its teeth, a leopard with four wings, and a dreadful beast with horns and iron teeth! And what have we to oppose to these rampant, roaring dragons? A lamb!

Yet shall the lamb prevail, taking away the world's sin and vanquishing its foes. The softness of love, the gentleness of meekness, the insinuations of truth, the charms of peace, shall prevail against the wild passions of men and the rage of hell. Let me not be afraid for my Master. Because He is meek He brings salvation. His gentleness shall make us great.

THE GATES OF DAWN

August 17

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. xii. 22-37

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"All they that hate me love death."—PROV. viii. 36

THE old poet sings of moments when we "into glory peep," but here we get sudden insight into the frightful realities of the infernal. Under the decent surface of things how hell seethes! The fierce, malefic, polluting, murderous elements are never far off. As an awful gulf of fire smoulders beneath the pleasant landscape, so our Lord reveals that fiendish forces work beneath the crust of civilisation, putting us in peril every hour.

In the presence and fellowship of our Lord is our safety from the powers of wickedness. The helplessness of man in the power of the devil, and the helplessness of the devil in the power of Christ, are the lessons writ large throughout the narratives of the demoniacs.

The heart will suffer no vacuum; and to refuse Christ as our royal guest is to surrender ourselves to the craft and power of Satan. Let me be a temple of the Holy Ghost, and no demon dare lurk in its neighbourhood.

THE GATES OF DAWN

August 18

SCRIPTURE READING—Ps. xxiii.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies."—Ps. xxiii. 5

HOW the rich provisions of grace reach God's people whilst they are shut up by most unpropitious circumstances! In desert places our God provides heavenly feasts. Thousands of sincere men and women are compelled to live in neighbourhoods and work in scenes where there is nothing to feed the soul, yet even there do they find meat of which the world knows not.

Multitudes through manifold accidents are cut off largely from worship and sacraments and fellowship, yet the Lord of the feast by His Spirit and word makes them to share in His dainties.

Let me not fear for the supplies of grace, whatever may be my circumstances. The fairy story tells of a magical table-cloth which might be spread anywhere, and was at once covered with delicacies. I have that wonder-working thing. Let the hand of prayer spread the cloth of faith, and I have the bread of heaven and wine on the lees well refined.

THE GATES OF DAWN

August 19

SCRIPTURE READING—JOHN vi. 46-71

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"We believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."—JOHN vi. 69

AN imperfect attachment to Christ is good, just as it leads on to something more profound, but let me beware of precarious ties. He who follows Christ from mere intellectual admiration, or for social status, or for utilitarian advantage, will very probably before long begin to doubt and desert him.

"Many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him." How many have we known who from one cause or another have fallen away from Christian discipleship! The fire dies down in their heart; the joy passes out of their life; the crown slips through their fingers. Alas!

This saddest of all lapses, in a world where men are always missing great chances, can be prevented only by keeping the soul alive to the essential glory of Jesus Christ. "My Lord and my God." Let me daily recognise His majesty, preciousness, sweetness.

THE GATES OF DAWN

August 20

SCRIPTURE READING—JOHN xi. 18-46

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God."—JOHN xi. 27

WHAT power and majesty our Lord assumed! Can *He* be confounded with men? The woman knew by an instinct that will not lie that He was the Divine One. "I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God."

Nowhere is the majesty of our Lord more impressively expressed than in His dealings with death. Mythology records how Hercules successfully wrestled with Death, and brought back to the upper world the body of Alcestis. But how pale is the classic fable by the side of the resurrections of the New Testament! Here a mightier Hercules smote the King of Terrors. "He brought to naught him that hath the power of death."

Let this fact comfort me in the prospect of death, in the article of death. Christ is everything to me to-day, and He will not be less on my last day. No; then He will be specially precious.

THE GATES OF DAWN

August 21

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. xvii. 1-21

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"As He prayed the fashion of His countenance was altered."—
LUKE ix. 29

USUALLY our Lord appears in the simplicity and weakness of ordinary human nature, but how much did this veil! His suppressed magnificence suggests much to think about. For a moment, however, His disciples are dazzled by His majesty.

It is a good thing, when troubled by the apparent weakness of the Church and its gospel, to think of the silent reserve power they mask. It is not the purpose of God to dazzle the carnal eye, but, all the same, infinite majesty and strength pertain to His Kingdom. Let me never forget "the hiding of His power."

The transfigured is also the transfigurer. He causes the soul of His people to shine as the sun. He makes their lives white as the light. One day He will light up their "too solid flesh" into a heavenly transparency. Our Lord will bring out our vast possibilities, *our* suppressed magnificence, conforming our whole personality to the body of His glory.

THE GATES OF DAWN

August 22

SCRIPTURE READING—JOHN xii. 23-33

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

' And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.'—JOHN xii. 32

THE glorifying of Christ is the theme. And yet how strange that the process of glorification is through sorrow, suffering and sacrifice! He attains the power of judging the world, and saving the world, through voluntary obedience to the law of renunciation, pain and death.

Just as the glory of Christ is bound up with His willing humiliation on our behalf, so the glory of His Church can spring only out of following its Lord in the path of the Passion. The attempt to transfigure the Church by marbles, jewels, robes and pageantries is a very superficial expedient. She is glorified rather by what she puts off, by what she gives, endures, renounces, suffers for the common salvation.

Glory through sacrifice is the grand secret. Through sympathy and sacrifice does Christ attract men magnetically, saving them, lifting them up, and thus only can we bless men in the highest sense. Am I willing to learn the lesson, and pay the price?

THE GATES OF DAWN

August 23

SCRIPTURE READING—MARK i. 1-11

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me."—
JOHN xvi. 27

"THE beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." We are fond of penetrating to the origin of things, and here we get to the very fountain of that living stream of truth and grace which we know as Christianity.

How superficial and inadequate are the explanations given by Gibbon and other philosophers to account for the spread of the Christian faith! Nothing explains its power and prevalency except that it is the breaking forth into time of the eternal love and righteousness. The heaven of heavens is at its back.

Men are fond of quoting the saying, "Hitch your wagon to a star"; but all the stars are harnessed to the Gospel chariot, and He who counts the stars drives it. Much is against me, but let me never forget the universe^o of glory that is carrying me forward.

THE GATES OF DAWN

August 24

SCRIPTURE READING—JOHN viii. 12-20

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"I am the light of the world."—JOHN viii. 12

AN ancient legend tells of one who lighted a torch and sallied forth to seek the sun. But, really, we need no torch to discover the sun; the sun discovers itself. We best find it by its own light.

"I am the light of the world." We need no extraneous evidence to attest the Divine authority of our Lord. The sincere of heart must recognise in him "the master light," and listening to and obeying His teachings we prove that light of life which is its own witness. We need invent no instrument to know that the sun shines at noon; and thousands of men need no laboured treatises to assure them of the authority of their Lord; His words, finding the reason, conscience and heart, bear witness of Him.

Many failed to recognise in Jesus a teacher sent from God because of their insincerity and hardness of heart. Many do so still. Let us with honest hearts listen to the great Teacher. He beareth witness of Himself, and the Father that sent Him beareth witness also.

THE GATES OF DAWN

August 25

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. xviii. 21-35

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him."—LUKE xvii. 3

FORGIVENESS such as the New Testament enjoins is a very difficult act indeed, may we not say to the natural man an impossible act? When we have been sorely wronged in feeling, reputation, estate, or character, it is not a light thing to forgive from the heart. Marcus Aurelius could write, "The best way of revenge is not to imitate the injury." Fine, indeed, from the pagan source, but signifying far less than the absolution of the Christian disciple.

Here, therefore, our Lord supplies a master motive. He takes the subject to the highest ground. How can we, in the light of Divine pardoning love, be severe on our brother! A new and mighty motive has been brought into the realm of ethics.

Let not my hand be on my brother's throat for an hour; it may strangle two.

THE GATES OF DAWN

August 26

SCRIPTURE READING—GEN. I. 14-21

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven."—LUKE vi. 37

THE sovereign spirit of holiness and love has been working in the world from the beginning, and elect souls have transcended all the standards and environments of imperfect ages, reaching at a bound the ideal. Was ever love and clemency seen in greater beauty than here!

Just as Joseph illustrates this Divine virtue toward those of his own household, let me remember how domestic life is usually a sphere in which we may display the gracious spirit. How many are the possibilities of irritation and misunderstanding in an ordinary household! What heart-burnings are there! What deep and bitter alienations are developed!

Let charity, then, begin at home. Lord, give me a large mind that does not easily take offence, a large heart that easily forgives it, an understanding heart cleverly to smooth away the inevitable discords.

THE GATES OF DAWN

August 27

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. xix. 16-26

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."—MATT. xix. 19

IT is possible to be good without being good enough, to be very good yet not good enough. This is the moral of the story in the text. The youth seemed perfect, he evidently considered himself perfect, and yet by a subtle touch of the Master the fair creature was found wanting. Good before the Church and Society, he was not "good before God."

And what was wanting was vital. As if vaunted gold proved to lack gravity, as if the glittering gem turned out crystal, Christ showed that really the youth was destitute of the faith without which it is impossible to please God, that he lacked the love without which all the rest is sounding brass and tinkling cymbal.

All of which is a solemn warning to me. When I read a narrative like this I understand why the holiest of men are always bringing themselves to the touchstone of the Spirit's searching.

THE GATES OF DAWN

August 28

SCRIPTURE READING—DEUT. xxxi. 14-23

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The Lord, He it is that doth go before thee: He will be with thee."—DEUT. xxxi. 8

THAT the Lord goes before me I most fully believe; every day confirms my faith in the benign purposefulness of life. That there is a real end, a distinct end, an adequate end toward which moves the individual and general life, I am firmly persuaded. God is grand in His endings, and I know that these frail sproutings will pass into purple blossoms and rare fruit.

But we enter into the promised inheritance through dutifulness toward the law. Some naturalists believe that migrating birds are guided by the stars; certainly God's pilgrim children are. Keeping our eye on the starry lights of God's word, we shall find the path unerringly to God's eternal rest.

Let me be a close student of my chart; stopping my ears to the songs of the Sirens, shutting my eyes to seductive golden sands, braving threatening seas with confidence. I shall arrive.

THE GATES OF DAWN

August 29

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. xviii. 1-14

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."—MATT. xviii. 14

SEE that ye despise not one of these little ones." Our Lord here inculcates sympathy and tenderness not only toward little children, but also toward that considerable class of persons who manifest the feebleness, witlessness, and helplessness of children. The singularly weak, the unskilled and inefficient, the "mean whites" of society, the men and women who never get out of the cradle.

A couple of volumes by a distinguished naturalist were recently published, setting forth his travels in strange lands, and the records were chiefly occupied with discussing the mosses of the regions he visited. He passes by stately palms and gorgeous orchids to describe the obscure and flowerless mosses that most of us would neglect and despise. It was thus with our Lord. His heart was ever occupied with humblest life.

Have we not, then, a duty here? The weak, the needy, the "poor creatures" of the world of every type, have a special claim upon us, and we must care for them, cost what it may.

THE GATES OF DAWN

August 30

SCRIPTURE READING—LUKE xii. 13-21

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Take heed and beware of covetousness."—LUKE xii. 15

MONEY grows upon men. They do not know how sweet it is until they have saved a bit, then they begin to be strangely enamoured. If they have not tasted blood they have tasted gold, and a mysterious passion begins to awake, the consequences of which none may foresee. It brings with it the sense of importance, power, large possibilities of honour and indulgence, until in the end the man is mastered by it and ruined by it, as bees are sometimes drowned in their own honey.

Let me not forget that the power and joy of sacrifice grow upon those who exercise it. Pure passions grow as well as dark ones. Men do not know how sweet it is to relieve, comfort, bless, until they have done a bit, then they too have tasted blood, the blood that is drink indeed.

Having felt the luxury of doing good, they are in delightful danger of becoming noble epicures who shall finally regale themselves for ever at the Supper of the Lamb. This is whereunto the appetite for doing good will grow. So checkmate the base by the divine.

THE GATES OF DAWN

August 31

SCRIPTURE READING—ROM. xii. 1-9

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good."—
ROM. xii. 1-9

I N the vineyard are many labourers entrusted with diverse tasks. It must be so if the vintage is to be gathered. May God save us from the spirit of criticism and exclusiveness! In reading history one is struck by the fact that so many campaigns have ended disastrously because of the want of unanimity in the army. The various sections were jealous of each other, despised each other, did not co-operate. Does it not often look as if the battle of the Church is endangered from the same cause?

It is incredible how many various workmen are essential to the making of a pin. Need we, then, wonder how many various agents, methods, organisations and instruments are necessary for the salvation of a world? Let me be sure that I do my own work, and do it well.

THE GATES OF DAWN

September 1

SCRIPTURE READING—MARK xii. 41-44

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Prepared unto every good work."—2 TIM. ii. 21

WE need a large, reckless, never-despairing faith in working for God. We must break up the most unpromising ground, tackle most unlikely people, plough the sands, and throw in the seed with desperate confidence.

The South African native at the diamond mines will save a little money and entrust it to his employers; but it must be kept in the rag in which he brought it, and every few days he goes to look at it. This is the spirit in which some do good. They must be able to keep their eye on it. They must see exactly what they have done, and be able to measure, weigh, and reckon it.

How much better to throw our mite trustfully into the treasury of the King! It will not be lost; it cannot be lost. Let me boldly do good against all odds.

THE GATES OF DAWN

September 2

SCRIPTURE READING—I TIM. iv

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions."—2 TIM. iv. 5

A GREAT art critic has said that a picture ought to be judged in the evening twilight. In the sober light of eventide it is seen what the merit of the picture really is. The glare of the noon may give it tints which do not belong to it, and false estimates of its worth are probable.

The evening twilight enables us most truly to judge of life. Alas! how many lives fail to bear this test! When the irradiations of imagination cease, when the glow of vanity and pride fades, when the lurid colours of passion die away, then the poverty and folly of the wasted life sadly appear. The Apostle's career bore triumphantly the stern test of eventide. Then its truth and beauty, its power and promise, were revealed. The colours were the colours of heaven.

Let me often anticipate the final days. When they arrive may they witness that I have been a brave soldier, a faithful steward, a winner of the unfading crown.

THE GATES OF DAWN

September 3

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. xx. 17-28

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister."

—MATT. xx. 26

WE mistake as to wherein true greatness lies. We fancy it to consist in golden treasure, in soft raiment, in the likeness of a kingly crown, whilst our Lord shows that substantial glory is found in sympathy, service, sacrifice.

Whilst the disciples are coveting crowns, and disputing as to which amongst them should be the greater, our Lord has an ear for the cry of misery. The multitude had no sympathy, and the disciples little, but the majesty of God demonstrated itself in bringing salvation to the humble.

The stars of Christ's renown were the eyes He opened, the castaway mantle of the blind was His royal attire, His bodyguard was composed of those whom He had saved, His crown of glory was the diamonds rescued from the dustbin of the despised and forgotten. I cannot open eyes, but I can wipe away tears.

THE GATES OF DAWN

September 4

SCRIPTURE READING—MARK viii. 34-38

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the Gospel's, the same shall save it."—MARK viii. 35

GREATNESS is acquired and revealed by voluntary sacrifice on behalf of those whose salvation can be secured in no other way. Selfishness arrayed in the glittering frippery of wealth and pride is contemptible; the real sublime is the mother suffering for her child, the patriot bleeding for his country, the rescue party braving death in the burning mine, or on the wild sea.

Our Lord gave the supreme illustration of this, and His Cross has made paltry the magnificence of palaces and the pride of kings.

And let me not lose myself in the sublimities of the thing. Just as the scientist can best discern in comparative trifles the manifestation and working of nature's supreme laws and forces, so may I bring out the fact and glory of the principle of sacrifice in nameless deeds of love to my neighbour, in trifling attentions, in cups of cold water.

THE GATES OF DAWN

September 5

SCRIPTURE READING—MARK ix. 30-37

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all."—
MARK ix. 35

SCARCELY a day passes without showing us fresh instances of vaulting ambition over-leaping itself and falling on the other side, of selfishness losing all because it grasped too much, of pride hiding its eyes in the dust.

Let us be sure that the spirit of Christ is the spirit through which we shall possess life. The simple win whilst the subtle fail. "There is a profound as well as a superficial simplicity." The unselfish find out the strange truth, "there is that scattereth yet increaseth."

In humility men prove greatness. "A really great man has always an idea of something greater than himself," and this very sense of something greater is the key to its possession.

Simplicity, lowliness, moderation, here is the secret. The meek possess the earth. As Rutherford writes: "Down, down, for God's sake, with your topsail! Be humbled."

THE GATES OF DAWN

September 6

SCRIPTURE READING—JOHN xiii. 1-17

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you."—JOHN xiii. 15

JAMES SMETHAM writes: "I never before saw, as I have since I tried to get into it more, the humbling influence of the *life* of Christ." Yes, at every page of that wonderful life we are impressed with the majesty of meekness, the nobleness of humbleness, the luminousness of simplicity, the sweetness of contentment.

We are always being told of the richness, abundance, and variety in the wardrobes of our kings and queens, but here the King of Glory, passing on His way, girds Himself with a towel! Oh! how He has freed us from illusions! Helpfulness is glory.

Am *I* freed from illusions? Is the principle of my life selfishness or disinterestedness? As a great philosopher puts it: "Magnanimity owes no account of its motives to prudence." Losing my life, in substance, in reputation, in leisure, let me find it in finer quality, richer measure.

THE GATES OF DAWN

September 7

SCRIPTURE READING—ISA. xlii. 1-8

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench."—ISA. xlii. 3

VERY wonderful is the tenderness of God in Christ. Sir Philip Sydney writes: "Children about a tender father from a long voyage returned, with lovely childishness hang about him, and yet with simple fear measure by his countenance how far he accepts their boldness."

So we, half-trusting, half-fearing, draw near to God; but we need not be anxious, the bruised reed shall not be broken, the faintest spark quenched.

And this tenderness is over us all lifelong. Gilbert White relates that a pair of fly-catchers who inadvertently placed their nest in an intolerably hot situation, hovered over it "all the hotter hours, while with wings expanded and mouths gaping for breath they screened the heat from their suffering young." So does the eternal Love hover over us, and in all the hotter hours screen us from the heat of the day.

THE GATES OF DAWN

September 8

SCRIPTURE READING—MARK x. 32-45

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."—MARK x. 45

MAY the Divine Spirit this holy day imbue us richly with the genius of our Master, "who in a definite compass set forth infinite beauty!"

The *Imitation of Christ* was always on the pillow of Corot, the famous artist. He said it was the book which gave him to live in ease of heart. "I always keep it in my room," he said, "and read it nearly every evening. It has taught me that men must not be puffed up because they are emperors, and add this province or that to their territories, or because they can paint and win a name for themselves. If these men are gifted more or less, I see no merit attaching to them. Theirs is no glory compared to that of a Sister of Charity."

Corot had seized the marrow of the great teaching of the lesson. Loving God and man, and in the grace of the one seeking the salvation of the other, is more than all social splendour or intellectual renown.

THE GATES OF DAWN

September 9

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. xxi. 1-17

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Learn of me: for I am meek and lowly in heart."—MATT. xi. 29

THE horse is in the Old Testament the symbol of worldly brute power, whilst the ass represents humility and unobtrusiveness. With what silence and meekness our Lord entered upon His mighty task! The secular history of that period records the doings and writings of a crowd of kings, statesmen, conquerors and poets, but it contains hardly an allusion to our Lord, His teachings or His works.

And yet under all this aspect of mildness what power was hidden! To ride an ass's wild colt was a triumph indeed. This is what the meek and patient Jesus has been doing ever since. Taming the wild power, curbing the wild passions of the nations. Bringing high thoughts, irrational tempers, defiant lusts, into captivity to the law of reason and love.

King of power and peace, put a bridle into my lips!
Subdue my whole proud, restless being by the magic
of Thy will and mastership!

THE GATES OF DAWN

September 10

SCRIPTURE READING—MARK vii. 31-37

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Behold, the world is gone after Him."—JOHN xii. 19

THIS enthusiasm of the mass left a good deal to be desired, but it is very wonderful to note how Christ fascinates the people.

He appeals to the crowd by His words. They recognise in His doctrine a power and grace found nowhere else. He appeals to them by His works. They may not comprehend philosophy and theology, but they feel the witness of Lazarus raised from the dead, the power of Christ in men raised from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. He appeals to them by His personality.

Misled by their rulers, the multitude assisted at the crucifixion, but the unsophisticated heart recognised the Deliverer, and strewed His path with palm. The intellect of the great is oftener wrong than the heart of the simple. "The world is gone after Him." Yes, it has. The needle turns to the pole. "I will go also."

THE GATES OF DAWN

September 11

SCRIPTURE READING—LUKE xix. 37-48

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"How often would I have gathered thy children together . . . and ye would not."—MATT. xxiii. 37

"**O**H, that all the Lord's people were prophets!" For the hour they were and saw the glory of the Lord. We all have these times of revelation. In privileged hours obscuring unbeliefs melt away, and we see the beauty of the Lord, we recognise His authority, we perceive the blessedness of His service.

The Orientals speak of a certain hour of the morning as the "false dawn." It seems as if the day were breaking, when it suddenly sinks back into darkness. This scene of the palm-strewing was the last "false dawn" of Jewish history. Again and again had there been mocking epochs of repentance and hope, but now the final national penitence and recovery was to sink back into the blackness of Calvary.

Let me know the day of my visitation. Let not the great truths and hopes which I see so clearly, which I feel so deeply, ever be hidden from my eyes.

THE GATES OF DAWN

September 12

SCRIPTURE READING—Ps. viii.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?"—Ps. viii. 4

THE Psalmist saw the greatness of man in the light of nature. He did not see exactly wherein that greatness lay, but marking man's place in creation he became conscious of the mysterious significance of his kind.

But the great thought of our reading is that the ideal greatness of humanity is *manifested* in Jesus Christ. The glory set upon the heavens is dim by the excelling light of the glory revealed on the earth in the Son of Man.

The greatness of humanity is *realised* in Jesus Christ. He not only shows us what is possible for us, but in His faith and fellowship we awake to actual greatness and blessedness. The glory of humanity is bound up with Jesus Christ. Strewing branches for the feet of Christ we are strewing them for our own. It is in Him we get the victory over the beast and his image; that we attain the mastery of the world; that we vanquish death.

THE GATES OF DAWN

September 13

SCRIPTURE READING—JOHN ii. 13-22

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Holiness becometh Thine house, O Lord, for ever."—
Ps. xciii. 5

TO confound gain with godliness is a most heinous sin. As Montesquieu states it: "To investigate our interests too strictly is to apply a sponge to all the virtues."

What is our temperance worth if based only on economy? What is purity when tainted by calculation? What is love prompted by greed? What is generosity governed by the thought of recompense? The suspicion of gain makes the noblest virtues infamous.

The Persian when in the act of worship puts away from his person all silver and gold. His instinct is right. We must renounce all thought of pride and covetousness in dealing with God.

Is there not a special danger here in these days when secularism eats as doth a canker? Let me beware of making God's house a barn, a market place a Stock Exchange, a cattle market.

THE GATES OF DAWN

September 14

SCRIPTURE READING—2 CHRON. xxix. 15-20

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people."—
ISA. lvi. 7

THE iniquities of our holy things" are many. Some are quite obvious. Making a theatre of the temple; a scene of gorgeous spectacles, of impious baubles. Making of it a music-hall. Making it a Vanity Fair for the display of fashion. Sunday "church promenades!" All this is no better than the sin of sacrilege.

Some of these "iniquities" are more subtle. "And the priests went in unto the inner part of the house of the Lord to cleanse it." There is not only much vulgar rubbish to cart away, but secret faults which only the Spirit of God can disclose and cleanse. Secret unbeliefs which profane the altar, secret sins which pollute the sacred vessels, secret worldliness desecrating the table of the Lord, secret pride offending the Divine Presence.

We often in puritanic zeal talk of worshipping God with "four bare walls and a pure heart," but it is easier to get the first than the second.

THE GATES OF DAWN

September 15

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. xxi. 23-32

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner."—MATT. xxi. 42

A GENTLEMAN sowed on a plot of carefully prepared soil some rare seeds. None of them grew, but a few that accidentally fell on the hard, stony garden walk flowered sweetly. Many Gentiles surpassed the privileged Jew. Many in heathen lands to-day are entering the Kingdom, whilst the favoured European remains outside. The Lazarus of the East-end becomes a saint, whilst Dives sinks into a pagan. In the most unfriendly surroundings are beautiful souls; whilst, with everything to help, others are sinners exceedingly.

If the lot falls to me in pleasant places, and I have a goodly heritage, all will be unavailing if I do not stir up myself to make the best of golden opportunity. If, on the other hand, my situation seems inimical to spiritual and moral life, let me remember that an earnest soul triumphs over circumstance. The rose that failed in the conservatory grows among the stones.

THE GATES OF DAWN

September 16

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. xxi. 33-46

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Take ye heed, watch and pray."—MARK xiii. 33

THERE is a time of national visitation that may pass unimproved, and not again return. Speaking of art, Ruskin writes: "No nation ever had, or will have, the power of suddenly developing, under the pressure of necessity, faculties it had neglected when it was at ease; nor of teaching itself in poverty, the skill to produce, what it has never in opulence had the sense to admire."

Is not this true in regard to the religious sense and moral faculty of a nation? Can it in days of disaster suddenly develop faculties it had neglected when it was at ease? Can it teach itself in adversity to produce what it had not the faithfulness in happier days to admire and practise?

What is true of a nation is true of the individual. Wasted privilege may not be retrieved; neglected opportunity atoned for. "And thou mourn at thy latter end, and say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof."

THE GATES OF DAWN

September 17

SCRIPTURE READING—JER. xxv. 1-11

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

“Turn ye again now every one from his evil way.”—JER. xxv. 5

“THESE three-and-twenty years, the word of the Lord hath come unto me, and I have spoken unto you, rising up early and speaking; but ye have not hearkened.” How great the Divine graciousness! Through many long, rebellious years does the long-suffering God bear with us!

Disregarded warnings! It is not one clear call that we get, but repeated calls; and, alas! how deaf many are to these heavenly entreaties! We know that we ought to break with sin, to follow Christ, to confess Christ, but we trifle and postpone. There is, however, a last call; are we to hear that without heeding it?

If not hitherto, let me now be obedient to the heavenly vision.

“I will accept His offers now,
From every sin depart,
Perform my oft-repeated vow,
And render Him my heart.”

THE GATES OF DAWN

September 18

SCRIPTURE READING—ACTS vii. 37-53

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands."—
ACTS vii. 48

THE impeachment of Israel by Stephen charges it with forgetting God, and violating the moral law. They "served the host of Heaven." They did not worship what was low, mean, small, impure; but what was lofty, large, splendid, and chaste—the starry heaven. But glorious as it was it came between them and God, and the issue of such idolatry was unrighteousness of the darkest type.

Our modern danger is not that God will be shut out by vulgar things, but by things as superb as nature, science, art, and literature; He is to be hidden from our eyes by the vast, the beautiful, the sublime.

But whatever renders us forgetful of God means before long the bad, the base, the bitter. Whatever separates us from Christ implies degeneration and destruction. Let us be warned. If we "turn back in our hearts unto Egypt," we "shall be carried away beyond Babylon." There is an inevitable and awful retribution for abused privilege!

THE GATES OF DAWN

September 19

SCRIPTURE READING—EZEK. XX. 1-20

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Walk in My statutes, and keep My judgments, and do them."

—EZEK. XX. 19

HOW this admonition is repeated again and again, as by a peal of bells!

The indispensable thing in religion is obedience. Some seem to think that the seat of religion is in the imagination. It is in their sight wholly æsthetical, the poetry of life. Others argue as if good and beneficent affections constituted virtue. Others act as if the whole duty of man was a round of ecclesiastical ceremonies. But, as Vinet writes: "Obedience alone constitutes moral good. It has not pleased God to be worshipped without being obeyed. Religion is always a law and a prohibition." "Walk," "keep," "do."

"Do as you are told," says the parent to the child. "Do as you are told," cries the master to the scholar. "Do as you are told," is Heaven's grand admonition. We have not to sound depths of mystery, but to do as we are bid. Oh! for the spirit of simple, prompt, exact obedience! The doing of God's will without questioning, delay, or repining.

THE GATES OF DAWN

September 20

SCRIPTURE READING—LUKE xiv. 12-24

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God."—
LUKE xiv. 15

HOW superficial and untenable the excuses offered for the neglect of true religion, that is the faith of Christ! "They made light of it," made light of that on which all Heaven concentrates itself.

How frivolous the excuses occasioned by property! "I have bought a field." They fondly call their lands their own, and exhaust themselves in acquiring an inheritance that to-morrow must pass to others. How vain the apologies of the commercial! "Bought five yoke of oxen." Coveting gain and gold, and ignoring all the mighty facts and hopes which make us men, as if they were no better than the oxen whose points they canvass. How absurd the social subterfuge! "I have married a wife." No legitimate social duty or pleasure need stand in the way of godliness.

Let nothing separate between me and the Gospel of the glory of the blessed God. If even lawful things accidentally interfere let me renounce them without a pang. It is better to enjoy the King's love than to possess the King's gold.

THE GATES OF DAWN

September 21

SCRIPTURE READING—PROV. ix.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Forsake the foolish and live, and go in the way of understanding."—PROV. ix. 6

THE feast of reason and the flow of soul," how pure and lovely! How infinitely more noble and delightful is the intellectual than all sensual gratifications! Her house is of celestial architecture, her wine without dregs, her table allures with sweet morsels, the virgins, her companions, minister in unspotted white.

But if the voice of philosophy is thus musical as is Apollo's lute, and her viands sugared sweets, how ineffable is that diviner wisdom which concerns itself directly with God Himself, His Kingdom, law, and righteousness!

In the Lord Jesus we have the last revelation of Wisdom, the fullest expression of divine Philosophy.

Let, then, my chief joy be in this banqueting chamber. Let me leave gross things for high delights of reason and knowledge; let me then ascend to the highest delights of the spirit in the fellowship of the Lord Jesus.

THE GATES OF DAWN

September 22

SCRIPTURE READING—ACTS xiii. 42-52

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles."—ACTS xiii. 47

HISTORY makes us familiar with the forfeiture of great gifts and privileges. But whilst one nation fails, another is entrusted with its stewardship; God's purpose cannot be baulked through the faithlessness of men or empire. We may despair of a nation, never of humanity; of a Church, never of the Kingdom.

If England prove faithless to her high calling, yet God abides faithful. The vineyard is "given to others," the removed candlestick sheds its light elsewhere. Will England in coming ages know a "wailing place" where it will weep over its forfeited glory, as the modern Jew amid the ruins of Jerusalem bewails the humiliation of his faithless nation?

Let me beware of losing my personal gifts and opportunities. The figures of Alsace and Lorraine in the Place de la Concord, Paris, covered with funeral wreaths, tell the grief of a nation at the loss of provinces; but what does it mean to lose an immortal crown and inheritance?

THE GATES OF DAWN

September 23

SCRIPTURE READING—PROV. i. 20-33

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Whoso hearkeneth unto Me shall dwell safely."—PROV. i. 33

HOW fully is the truth of our position set before us by God's Word! We cannot plead ignorance. A fierce light is made to fall on our situation. We are instructed, we are warned, we are entreated.

And yet how criminally we neglect warning and scorn reproof! The French Ambassador at Berlin exactly informed his master of the warlike temper and preparations of the Germans, but these warning letters, after the calamity that overtook the gay nation, were found in the royal palace unopened. So tens of thousands disregard the appeals of God's Word.

"See that no man take thy crown." The bitterest grief is not occasioned by what is torn from us by stern circumstance, but by what is lost through presumption, apathy, folly and faithlessness. "How camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless." A thousand excuses now, not one then.

THE GATES OF DAWN

September 24

SCRIPTURE READING—ROM. xiii. 1-8

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"If thou do that which is evil, be afraid."—ROM. xiii. 4

THE faith of Christ is eminently favourable to civil welfare. Sceptics have repeatedly declared that the religious idea ought to be respected and the Church patronised because of their restraining influence on the lawless.

The fact is that the fear of God and the faith of Christ strengthen and hallow all social and civic bonds, and are to be cherished because they are at once true and ameliorative.

We respect the law, we honour the magistrate, because without order there can be no security, happiness, or progress for the community. Sick of tumult and revolution involving profound public misery, a sceptic like George Sand could write: "It is high time we had lights that are not incendiary torches."

Jesus Christ gave us those "lights." Personal goodness, the love of our neighbour, the doctrine of the Cross, the spirit of moderation, patience, and aspiration toward the City of God. Let these "lights" put out incendiary torches.

THE GATES OF DAWN

September 25

SCRIPTURE READING—DEUT. vi. 1-13

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God and serve Him."—DEUT. vi. 13

OBEDIENCE to the highest law secures national prosperity. It has been profanely declared that there is "no law that reaches above the mountain tops," nothing more binding than human codes. If the top of Sinai were meant we would not dispute, for its law descended out of heaven from God. The nation that comes nearest to its keeping is a sovereign people; and he who observes it most faithfully is the noblest and happiest of men.

We are told by travellers that it is not wise to ask the Indians to do any kind of work as a task. But take them as for a walk, they are all alacrity to climb or cut down the trees, the gathering of the flowers being all the while represented as a mere matter of amusement. Such are savages, incapable of seriousness, duty, purpose.

The civilised man is such because of his growing respect for law; he has seen that self-limitation and duty are essential to fuller, worthier life. The saint understands that loving obedience to the highest law means the best on earth and in heaven.

THE GATES OF DAWN

September 26

SCRIPTURE READING—LEV. xix. 9-18

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart."—LEV. xix. 17

WHAT a lovely passage! A bundle of myrrh, the perfume of frankincense, the scent of Lebanon! We are assured by geologists that all the most beautiful things of our world came late. The birds with their music, the butterfly with its splendour, the orchid, the rose, and lily were among the latest creations.

So we conclude that only in the later revelation of the New Testament are the highest and loveliest moral teachings inculcated. Yet here, in the morning of the ages, the most exquisite social duty is enjoined! Nothing in the whole Bible is more delightful.

We shall need all the grace of the New Testament to reach the ideals of the ancients. There is a terrible Bulgarian proverb: "May God think of you as your neighbours think!" Let me act so justly and generously to my neighbour, with so much courtesy, consideration, and magnanimity, that he shall think handsomely of me, and that God shall do the same.

THE GATES OF DAWN

September 27

SCRIPTURE READING—ROM. viii. 1-14

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"To be spiritually minded is life and peace."—ROM. viii. 6

HERE, again, we are brought face to face with the sovereign power of regeneration and sanctification, and there is the utmost need that we should remind ourselves of it and realise it. St. Paul tells that he fought with beasts at Ephesus, but long before that he makes it clear that he had found a den of wilder beasts within his own breast. And when the science of our day finds the relics of ancient animality in us, fierce and foul, we are not surprised; we knew that all along.

But think of the holy power working in the believer! The Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of God, the omnipotent saving energy! He who brought the world out of chaos delivers from the law of sin and death, and energises us to walk in newness of life. It is not a human power in which we trust, but one altogether divine. More than the strength of the stars, the pull of gravitation, the throb of the ocean, the quickening of the sun, work in us to make us pure, and to keep us so. Let us not then be afraid of "the power of darkness," nor of all the wild beasts that roam in it.

THE GATES OF DAWN

September 28

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. xxv. 1-13

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh."—MATT. xxv. 13

THE tragedy of the light that failed! The fact that their "lamps are going out" shows that those they represent have a measure of grace. They possess the vital thing in insufficient measure.

It is manifestly possible that we outlive our faith. Either the events of life or doubtful reasonings quench the light of high belief, and leave us like the explorer of the catacombs whose torch is extinguished. Our love may wax cold, and its sweet light glimmer to extinction. Our duties of meditation, prayer, and worship may little by little be neglected, until we have no longer pleasure in them, and the power of godliness departs and nothing is left but the form.

Let me be solicitous that my lamp is *kept* brightly burning. This is the grand point. Daily may I replenish the soul with sacred oil. Then, when the candle of my natural life fails and flickers, my spiritual life shall glow into the glory of the King's banquet.

THE GATES OF DAWN

September 29

SCRIPTURE READING—LUKE xix. 11-27

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"From him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him."—LUKE xix. 26

IT is astonishing how spiritual power may be multiplied, moral character and life enhanced, by diligent, faithful, persevering service. Our religious possibilities are immense.

A few years ago the sweet-pea was one of the poorest and most despised of flowers, but a gentleman devoted himself to its special culture, and it has become the pride of the garden, the peer of the roses, the rival of gorgeous lilies, the loveliest of lovely things.

Here see a parable of the soul true to grace. We are poor in knowledge, vision, strength, joyousness, general efficiency and fruitfulness, not because we are constitutionally, organically inferior, but because we do not realise ourselves in the light of the truth, in the power of the Spirit. It is all in us, and if once the quickening energy stir the soul we shall unfold to unexpected perfection.

THE GATES OF DAWN

September 30

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. xxv. 31-46

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him."—MATT. xxv. 31

THE Son of Man is the final judge. We are not to be judged by a moral code, by certain abstract rules and principles, but by the standard of character and action revealed in Christ Jesus and expounded in His Gospel.

Our relation to Christ and His Kingdom is the standard of decision. This relation is not conventional, a thing of tradition and forms; it is not a question of doctrine, a matter of barren orthodoxy; it is not a question of ecclesiasticism, membership with the visible Church; but a living relation that fills the heart with Christ's own self-sacrificing love, the hands with generous aid to our neediest brothers.

Richard Rothe accuses certain religious enthusiasts of his day of neglecting practical helpfulness: "You Pietists have set before yourselves no work of world-wide importance to accomplish for Christ! Does it not startle you to hear it?" If the charge were true it ought to have startled them, and it may well startle us.

THE GATES OF DAWN

October 1

SCRIPTURE READING—EZEK. xviii. 25-32

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness."—ACTS xvii. 31

WE cannot too often be reminded of our personal responsibility as against collective responsibility. We are usually quite anxious that for our meritorious qualities and deeds we shall not be confounded with the multitude, but in the day of reckoning for misdemeanour we are ready to merge ourselves in the crowd.

Yet individual responsibility is a solemn truth, not for a moment to be forgotten. All modern knowledge is intent on recognising the unit. Our fathers were impressed by magnitudes, we are more occupied with the molecule. He who is perfect in knowledge deals primarily not with races, nations and families, but with individual souls.

And how exquisitely just will God be! We sometimes think that we discern signs of inequality in His dealings with us, but in our deepest self we know that this is an absolute impossibility. Let us waste neither time nor feeling on any criticism of God's ways: let us watch and pray lest *our* way be unequal.

THE GATES OF DAWN

October 2

SCRIPTURE READING—ROM. ii. 3-16

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"There is no respect of persons with God."—ROM. ii. 11

TO what a very slight extent are we estimated by our fellows for what we really are! That is, for what we are morally at heart. It has been truly said that "very little of the blessing of our fellow-creatures' good opinion of us is due, in reality, to any merits, or, indeed, to any characteristics, of our own." They estimate us rather in the light of our family status, our social repute, our talents and culture, the offices we hold, our wealth and power.

But there is One in whose reckoning all these things of the surface drop away, who, disregarding all gilding and veneer, weighs the spirit, who knows us for what we are in strict reality.

Let me, then, appraise myself on the grounds of what I really am before God. Let me, as far as that is possible, judge myself to-day as God will judge me finally, let me test myself by the ultimate criterion.

THE GATES OF DAWN

October 3

SCRIPTURE READING—HEB. iv.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."—HEB. iv. 11

FEW things in life are more painful than to look back and recall the great opportunities we neglected, the great things we missed.

But to miss the one grand object of life! This is the dire catastrophe we have most to fear. Perhaps we sometimes exaggerate the importance of the chances we ignored, the value of things we threw away; the fish that escapes the angler is always the biggest: but we cannot exaggerate the importance of the grace and salvation that make a success of this life and the next. If we ignore the blessings that are now freely given to us of God, we inflict upon ourselves a loss for which there is no remedy.

Let me seize the present; these are the golden hours, the critical moments; they are big with fate. The Spirit is ever telling me this. Lord, arouse my drowsy sense.

THE GATES OF DAWN

October 4

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. xx. 1-16

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Behold thy King cometh unto thee; He is just, and having salvation."—ZECH. ix. 9

SOME persons appear to have a much more manageable constitution than others. We all know men whose temper is such that they must ever be held in with bit and bridle, and it is with them a long and bitter struggle to rule their flesh and spirit.

With others the softness and geniality of their disposition is such that the laws and duties of the Christian life seem quite natural and easy.

Some seem to have a much easier lot than others. From first to last life is smooth with one, rough and bitter throughout with another. Some seem to slip into heaven at the last five minutes, whilst another suffers conflict and sorrow through a long lifetime.

Let me not perplex myself. "They supposed they would receive more." Let me drop my suppositions and leave all with God. "He is just, and having salvation." What more do I wish to know? There will be no defect of justice, only an excess of grace will surprise us. The excess of grace will surprise us all. The final problem will be the greatness of God's love.

THE GATES OF DAWN

October 5

SCRIPTURE READING—JOHN xii. 1-8

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The house was filled with the odour of the ointment."—JOHN xii. 3

THERE is an economy that is truly admirable ; to this our Lord gave His sanction when the fragments of His divinely-created feast were gathered into baskets. This economy in magnificence was most striking.

Here the Master teaches the complementary lesson of magnificence even in sight of the needs of poverty. While respecting the claims of prudence, we must not refrain from giving play to the finer feelings of the heart — the impulses of love, reverence, devotion, sacrifice. Poetry must not be extinguished on the urgency of pence.

Let me be careful not to discourage the warm, spontaneous, expansive emotions of the soul as they are evoked by the presence of Jesus and the claims of His Kingdom.

"We must be ready for the right moment. Genius is perhaps not so rare as the five hundred hands to seize opportunity by the forelock." With at least two hands let me grasp my great opportunity. Jesus is passing by. Now or never!

THE GATES OF DAWN

October 6

SCRIPTURE READING—LUKE x. 38-42

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her."—LUKE x. 42

THE Master does not extol sentiment at the expense of practical duty. We once knew a lady who sat for hours mooning over religious themes, and who grew quite lyrical on the subject of entire sanctification, whilst her fire-grate was choked with ashes, and her house became a veritable chaos. She mistook herself for Mary.

Our Lord delicately touches the defect of Martha in the word "cumbered," or, as it is given in the margin, "distracted." Simply, we must not allow legitimate cares to impair our full and free fellowship with our Master. It is here that so many of us err. The sisters represent two types, in themselves equally admirable; as an old writer puts it, Martha is good before dinner, and Mary after. Happy the Christian who combines the two!

"One thing is needful," essential—the pure love and service of the Master; after that, few things suffice. "One thing I know." I know Christ has opened my eyes, and I behold His beauty. "One thing I do." I lovingly seek to please and serve Him.

THE GATES OF DAWN

October 7

SCRIPTURE READING—LUKE iv. 16-24

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel."—LUKE iv. 18

NO wonder that they wondered. Here was one who spake living words. Not the cold, dry, formal, Rabbinical talk with which they had been so long familiar, but vital breathings. A recent invention has made it possible for heart-beats to be heard at a distance. These listeners at Nazareth heard heart-beats, the throbbings of the largest, truest, tenderest heart that ever beat in a human bosom.

"Wondered at the words of grace." They dropped as the gentle dew upon the place beneath. The world was thirsting for such a message—a hard, dark, cruel, despairing world.

Good tidings to the humble, release from the tyranny of the devil, recovering of the inner vision of God and the wider horizons, comfort and healing for the bruised and bleeding heart, the dawning of the golden year of universal salvation, these were the messages that fell like heavenly music on the ear.

Lord, I too am listening; speak to me the words that shall make my heart burn within me!

THE GATES OF DAWN

October 8

SCRIPTURE READING—JOHN xiv. 15-27

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me."—JOHN xiv. 21

THE intimate oneness of law and love! Law is love defined, love is law in essence and power. We prove our love to Christ by keeping His commandments, by keeping His commandments we abide in His love.

The best legacy that any man can bequeath the race is great thoughts, heightened ideals, enlarged and assured hope. This is the reason why we think so highly of the master authors from Plato to Shakespeare.

Christ's grand gift to the race was the Spirit of truth, righteousness, and love, and the more loyal we are to this Spirit in character, in actual life and conduct, the more certainly are we Christ's.

And in personal faithfulness, in positive obedience, we realise most intimately the presence, love, and blessing of God. "If a man love Me, he will keep My word; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." In keeping the word of Christ we prove divine fellowship. Action is also prayer, availing prayer of the highest kind.

THE GATES OF DAWN

October 9

SCRIPTURE READING—LUKE xxii. 7-20

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"This cup is the New Testament in My blood, which is shed for you."—LUKE xxii. 20

HOW strikingly simple the place, vessels and associations of the Last Supper! Entirely devoid of the pomp of circumstance which attends the feasts of the rich, the banquets of kings. We are taught by this that the spiritual principle is the essential thing in the commemoration of the Lord's death. It is not designed as an appeal to the senses, a festival for the imagination, but as a simple love token, reminding us of Love's supreme sacrifice.

An enthusiast in art writes: "The man who drinks from a wooden bowl is nearer to the brute that drinks from a stone trough than he who quenches his thirst from a crystal cup." It may be so, or it may not; but he who realises the spiritual blessing of personal pardon and peace through the simplest ceremony at the table of the Lord is far nearer the Lord's ideal than he who at gorgeous altars chiefly satisfies his æsthetic sense.

Let no shadow or symbol rob me of the precious substance—the realisation of the Saviour's merit and grace.

THE GATES OF DAWN

October 10

SCRIPTURE READING—EX. xii. 21-28

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us."—I COR. v. 7

AS the angel of death passed by the Israelites when he saw the blood on the lintel, so shall the angel of retribution spare those who have found refuge in the Cross.

Flippant men suppose that nothing is easier than the forgiveness of sin. They cannot believe that it presents any difficulty to God. But it has justly been said, "A fault is not effaced because we reproach ourselves with it." No, it strikes infinitely deeper than that; it loudly calls for atonement or punishment, and all revelation teaches that the supreme act of Divine wisdom and power was the provision of redemption for a world of sinners.

That redemption is in the blood of Christ, shed for me. "Being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him." I do not understand the mystery of redemption, as I do not understand many other mysteries; but if I am not forgiven, healed, perfected through the Crucified, I see no other way of escape from the law of retribution. It is either the red cross or the red sword.

THE GATES OF DAWN

October 11

SCRIPTURE READING—ROM. v. 1-11

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"While we were yet sinners Christ died for us."—ROM. v. 8

LET us have peace." "Let us rejoice in hope."
"Let us also rejoice in our tribulations."
The Apostle exhorts us to claim our great privileges.

We have read a good deal lately about unclaimed funds in the great banks, about unclaimed prizes, dividends, and legacies, it would seem that mighty treasures await undiscovered proprietors and heirs.

But what spiritual wealth lies unclaimed! "Let us have peace." Many of us have very little. "Being justified by faith," we have a right to peace. Let us claim our inheritance, let us enter upon it. "Let us rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Gold, jasper, pearl, all manner of precious stones, harps, crowns, everlasting light and song—all are ours. Claim it, taste the earnest of it. "Let us rejoice in our tribulations." Triumphant strength is ours in Christ; ours for the asking.

Great gifts, experiences, blessings are mine; let me then claim them, live as if they were mine. Why live with a mere title, without the estate?

THE GATES OF DAWN

October 12

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. xxvi. 36-46

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"In all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren."
—HEB. ii. 17

VERY clearly does our Lord apprehend the frailty of human nature, and most delicately does He sympathise with us in our infirmity. Frailty and fault are often so subtly intermingled in human nature that we are unable to determine whether an act is a frailty to be condoned, or a fault to be condemned.

It is good to know that our Heavenly Father comprehends us perfectly alike in our strength and weakness. "He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust." Our Lord gives this tender truth a fresh setting, and an enhanced richness and force.

The sympathy of God in Christ is a wonderfully healing thought. When I am perplexed by my moods and doings, hardly knowing whether to excuse or chide myself, let me submit myself with confidence and hope to Him who urges for all sincere souls the strong and loving apology, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

THE GATES OF DAWN

October 13

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. xxvi. 47-56

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Thy will be done."—MATT. xxvi. 42

LET me never despair of my Master because he appears weak, nor of His cause because it seems to fail, nor of myself because apparently forlorn and helpless.

Even in Gethsemane our Lord was the conscious Master of measureless power. "*Even now* send Me more than twelve legions of angels." There is a vast ocean of power at the back of things awaiting our Lord's bidding. In the moment of His deepest abasement He was conscious of this. In Gethsemane He felt the pulse of omnipotence.

Let me often dwell to my great comfort on the reserve power of my Lord. He who revealed His Divine authority in being able to summon legions of angels, and who more fully revealed the sufficiency of His power by not calling them, can fully take care of Himself, and of His cause, and of me, even when the worst comes to the worst, and when to the carnal eye everything appears desperate and lost.

THE GATES OF DAWN

October 14

SCRIPTURE READING—HEB. v. 1-10

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

“Though He were a Son yet earned He obedience by the things which He suffered.”—HEB. v. 8

“COMPASSED with infirmity,” appointed to suffering, our Lord entered into the deepest experience of humanity, and attained the secret of perfect obedience to the will of God.

We may see in our suffering Lord how through sanctified suffering we attain harmony with the eternal will. One of the greatest of modern artists reminds his young brethren that artistic perfection is not reached through easy and pleasant exercises, but through battles and agonies. How much more the immortal perfection of the spirit!

Let me not resent the discipline of trial. A famous traveller tells us that it is a principle thoroughly believed in by all Asiatics, that the bitterer the remedy the more efficacious it is. This may not be true in physics, but it is certainly true in morals, when our sorrows are ordained by God and accompanied by His grace. Let me not, then, wear the fool's cap in the school of suffering, but fully learn the great lessons of submission, patience, trust,

THE GATES OF DAWN

October 15

SCRIPTURE READING—JOHN xviii. 1-11

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation."—HEB. v. 9

OUR garments are not made white through our own suffering, *our* hearts' blood, but through the blood of the Lamb. His agony brings us peace. Yet the purchased perfection is attained through personal pain.

"The cup which the Father hath given *Me*, shall I not drink it?" Have we not sometimes seen a parent coaxing a child to take a distasteful medicine? The little one is assured that the bitterness is nothing, the draught is guilefully disguised, sweets and toys are promised as allurements, and at length the cup is sipped. *Sipped*, and therefore all its bitterness tasted, and it is with utmost persuasion that at last the medicine is swallowed.

So much difficulty has God with His children. We sip when we ought boldly, trustingly to drink. And yet the cup He gives us is the cup of salvation. Let me welcome it, calling upon the name of the Lord.

THE GATES OF DAWN

October 16

SCRIPTURE READING—JOHN xvii. 1-13

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners."—
MATT. xxvi. 45

HOW the death of Christ is here distinguished from the death of martyrs, and raised infinitely above and beyond such deaths, however glorious they may be! The bold identification of Himself with the Father's glory and with His eternal will and purpose invests the Lord's passion and death with infinite significance.

Nothing is more wonderful in this lesson than its conclusion. "That they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves." Joy was the last thing we were thinking about amid these sad scenes. Yet the suffering Master knew through all His agony the eternal joy, and He suffered that we might share with Him that joy.

There was a law in Jerusalem that residents were not to grow roses in the city or keep a rose-garden close to the walls. But really in Gethsemane spring the most lovely and delicious of all roses, white and red—the white of a heavenly purity, the red of a glowing joy whose leaf does not wither.

THE GATES OF DAWN

October 17

SCRIPTURE READING—JOHN xv. 18-27

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you."—JOHN xv. 18

IT is often repeated that to behold beauty is to admire it, that to know the lovely is to love it, that we must of necessity reverence the good when we see it. This may be the case when human nature is sound and wise; but when it is morbid, ignorant, prejudiced, we know that it is not the case.

So was it with our Lord. His countrymen saw no beauty that they should desire Him. How could jaundiced eyes behold His glory, or vitiated palates taste the sweetness of His heavenly doctrine? They rejected, crucified the Lord of glory.

We must not be surprised if we share the fate of our Master. If we are out-and-out His disciples we shall sometimes be conscious of isolation. The insane are apt to be exasperated by flowers, and to root them up fiercely whenever they have opportunity. Spiritual disease and derangement work similarly; at the presence of goodness sin revives and rages. "But when the Comforter is come," here is the sovereign solace for days of loneliness and persecution.

THE GATES OF DAWN

October 18

SCRIPTURE READING—I PET. ii. 11-25

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again."—I PET. ii. 23

BEFORE I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Thy statutes." Here is the moral of our lesson. The praises, the flatteries of our fellows may easily relax and demoralise; buffeting us, they may render us higher service.

In South America the herds on the plains become enfeebled by the sultry season, when the hosts of stinging insects which attack them drive them to higher and higher ground, until they attain cooler levels of health and life. They run, panting and bleeding, but it is to tonic air, purer waters, healthier pastures. So the stinging distresses of life preserve us from settling down on enfeebling plains of popularity and prosperity; we weep and bleed, but the sting and spur of the world's neglect and unkindness chase us to purer, safer heights.

We "were going astray like sheep; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." Thank God for the discipline that saves from the world and that drives to the Shepherd's bosom!

THE GATES OF DAWN

October 19

SCRIPTURE READING—LUKE xxii. 31-34, 54-62

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."—LUKE xxii.

32

WE get a glimpse into a precious truth—the action of the Redeemer in the hour of His people's temptation.

He anticipates the trial of whose approach we are unconscious. Peter was profoundly ignorant of this diabolic malice and stratagem in the background, but the Redeemer was fully alive to the crisis, and warned his menaced disciple. Not only is Peter warned. He is strengthened in the supplication of his Master. And through all the fierce ordeal, the Redeemer does not forget the sincerity and hopefulness existing beneath all Peter's faithlessness. It is "wheat" that is being sifted, whilst the whirlwind raised by the devil carries away only the chaff.

Here is a mighty comfort for me! In all this trying, tempting life my Master watches over me with eyes of flame, with tender solicitude, with sovereign power, over-ruling my darkest moments to ends of purification and perfecting.

THE GATES OF DAWN

October 20

SCRIPTURE READING—PROV. iv. 10-27

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men."—PROV. iv. 14

L EONARDO thus instructs his brethren: "The painter requires severance from companions who are not in sympathy with his studies. His companions should resemble him in a taste for these studies; and if he fail to find any such he should accustom himself to be alone in his investigations, for in the end he will find more profitable companionship."

But if the artist is to sever himself from companions not in sympathy with his studies, how much rather the disciple of Jesus Christ from those who are without faith and character.

I cannot be too particular about my associates. Let me not frequent places and permit acquaintanceships of an equivocal character for the sake of interest, pleasure, or instruction. The science of our day teaches us to isolate ourselves with extremest care lest we suffer physical infection; how much more should we avoid places, people and pursuits which carry in them the germs of moral disease, of spiritual death!

THE GATES OF DAWN

October 21

SCRIPTURE READING—I COR. X. 1-13

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."—

I COR. X. 12

IN one place the Scriptures liken the life of man to the life of a tree; now a tree may suffer by a lightning flash marring it in a moment, or by a parasite slowly and insidiously strangling it.

No sudden temptation can destroy us whilst we live at our spiritual best. It is said that lightning generally strikes the rotten tree. Let this be as it may, it is certain when fir tree or cedar of the King's garden falls some secret rottenness has eaten out the heart of it.

No parasite, no creeping evil fastens upon those who abide in strength. Stealthy murderers wait all around, and watch their opportunity to seize upon us, but in the glowing, growing life they find no lodgment, no minute vantage ground to which they may cling. With watchfulness, humility, and dependence we are safe wherever it may please God to bring us. Have I, however, fallen into condemnation? Peter's Lord is mine, and He will heal all my backslidings, and love me freely. Let me put His promise to the proof.

THE GATES OF DAWN

October 22

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. xxvii. 15-26

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."—ISA. liii. 3

THE one grand point for me to note here is the proved sinlessness of Christ. He had many bitter enemies, but judged in the fiercest light the verdict of acquittal was unanimous.

Scientists will pass a ray of light through a diamond, and then examine it in a spectroscope, discerning impurities in the gem not otherwise visible. Sometimes the jewel is tested by polarised light, revealing strains and flaws; and by other subtle ordeals black specks are frequently detected even in the best stones.

My Lord and Master was tried in the Hebrew Court and in the Roman Prætorium; by Caiaphas, Pilate and Herod; but no fault was found in Him. He was declared one great white pearl. The faultlessness of Jesus is a precious truth to cherish and realise. In Him I see the actual embodiment of the highest ideal of humanity; in Him I find the power to make me sharer of His glorious perfection.

THE GATES OF DAWN

October 23

SCRIPTURE READING—LUKE xxiii. 1-12

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"I find no fault in this man."—LUKE xxiii. 4

THE moral cowardice of Pilate teaches a lesson that every generation needs afresh to lay to heart. By a variety of subterfuges he attempted to escape a dilemma, instead of at once doing the right which he so clearly saw. One clear, bold, decisive act would have saved his soul, but he had not integrity enough to make it.

Men who shirk responsibility, washing their hands, will before long wring them. Pilate did not escape retribution; his history henceforth becomes tragic; his name is everlastingly infamous.

There are times when we must not wash our hands, but cut them off. At the call of duty we must deprive ourselves of the ability to count the gold of worldly success, to handle sceptres of power, to wave palms of social pleasure and popularity. Our two stumps will qualify us for purer riches, kinglier sceptres, palms of an infinitely higher renown. Let me ever be loyal to Christ, faithful to conscience, obedient to duty, whatever it may threaten.

THE GATES OF DAWN

October 24

SCRIPTURE READING—I COR. xv. 12-26

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead."—I COR. xv. 21

TO propose difficulties about the resurrection is easy indeed. What a lot of difficulties we could have framed about this world before we came into it! Yet we find a thousand things are practicable and actual which in anticipation would have seemed incredible. The resurrection of our Lord settles the fact of ours, and for the explanation we can confidently wait.

Certain scientists are diligently seeking for facts to authenticate the belief that the dead reappear, so finding a scientific basis for the doctrine of immortality. But we who believe in Jesus are not deeply interested in these researches. One *has* come back from the grave, and shown Himself alive by many infallible signs. Upon the Living One, who conquered death and the grave, we build, nor shall we suffer shame.

"Ye are yet in your sins." Our consciousness of forgiveness in Christ is a prime proof of His resurrection and a trustworthy pledge of our own. Let me look chiefly in the moral, spiritual, experimental direction for the most convincing proofs of Christ's resurrection power.

THE GATES OF DAWN

October 25

SCRIPTURE READING—REV. i. 9-18

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."
—MATT. xxviii. 20

TWO men in dazzling apparel appeared in the sepulchre—an angel at the head, an angel at the feet. Francesco Francia, the old painter, represented one of these as sad, the angel of the past; the other as radiant, the angel of the future, only hoping for the time to come.

Standing by the Lord's sepulchre, and looking backward, there is sufficient cause for sadness. We see the abyss of wickedness in the human heart when we remember that human hands crucified the Lord of life and glory. We see the measureless depth to which the Son of God descended when He bore our sins upon His own body on the tree. "Did ere such love and sorrow meet!"

Standing by our Lord's sepulchre, and looking forward, there is abundant cause for rejoicing. What visions of delight open up there! The churchyard is full of palms; grave-stones become transparent, windows with peeps into heaven; the grave's mouth is a focus of glory. The risen and ascended Lord is the solution of the blackest enigma—the promise and pledge of glory beyond glory. Let me muse here until I, too, rejoice with joy unspeakable.

THE GATES OF DAWN

October 26

SCRIPTURE READING—I KINGS xii. 1-11

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work."—JAS. iii. 16

"CHECK a moment of anger," say the Chinese, "and spare thyself a hundred days of sorrow." Yes, and much more, perhaps, than a hundred days; an outburst of petulance and passion may spoil years, even mar a whole life.

In the shallow sea, in times of stress, the gardens of coral suffer the greatest havoc; whilst in deep waters rough weather is imperceptible at a depth of two fathoms, and however violent the surface commotion, the extreme limit of wave action is ten fathoms. How easily some people are "put out," exasperated, fretted, surprised into furious temper and speech! Shallow souls. How self-possessed are others subjected to provocation! Deep-souled and strong.

A true soul is a sleeping sea, large and profound, that no vagrant breeze may disturb. My great Master, give me this security against sudden wrath, a great soul, a soul stayed on Thee, a soul tranquillised by eternity.

THE GATES OF DAWN

October 27

SCRIPTURE READING—ZECH. vii. 8-14

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart."
—ZECH. vii. 10

THE house of the proud is the congregation of those whose high thoughts set at defiance the law of righteousness, the dictates of humanity, the claims of brotherliness. In our day there is an intellectual haughtiness, a vanity and loftiness of heart which scoffs at the generous and compassionate spirit enjoined by revelation, and audaciously glorifies blood and iron.

"They made their heart as an adamant stone." As a diamond; that is, as a substance which could not be graven, which could not receive the characters of God. It is possible to destroy that sensitiveness of soul which is the very grandest attribute of our humanity; to harden the heart until it is insensible to God, until it is no longer capable of sympathy, pity, or sacrifice towards men!

Lord, give me a heart that is truly a heart of flesh, tremblingly alive to Thee, yearning towards my neighbour.

THE GATES OF DAWN

October 28

SCRIPTURE READING—PROV. xv. 1-19

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

“A soft answer turneth away wrath.”—PROV. xv. 1

“A SOFT answer turns away wrath; but a *trying* word arouses anger.” A scholar thus translates the Hebrew. Now, many words that are not wrathful, not malicious, not exactly offensive, are nevertheless trying. They are pin-pricks that are difficult to define, but often hard to bear. Such a tongue resembles one of those trees known as monkey-puzzles, which lacerate whoever may incautiously come in contact with them.

“A wholesome tongue is a tree of life.” Another growth this! We recently read of a tree on which dozens of different fruits had been grafted; so a restrained, healing, sanctified tongue is a tree of paradise on which blooms every heavenly grace. Men are ambitious to possess an eloquent tongue; but a *wholesome* tongue is far more than a golden mouth.

What a great work lies in this direction, the hallowing of my lips, the sanctification of my words: That every utterance may be true, enlightening, kindly, inspiring! Holy Spirit, pity, restrain, illuminate, soften!

THE GATES OF DAWN

October 29

SCRIPTURE READING—PROV. xiii.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"He that walketh with wise men shall be wise : but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."—PROV. xiii. 20

WE recently read of one of Australia's sweetest birds of song being located near a saw-mill, where it picked up the sound of the filing of saws, and intermingled its splendid music with the most distressing discords. On the contrary, an English naturalist declares that he has known sparrows imitate the song of the nightingale.

"He that walketh with wise men shall be wise : but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." We are often sufficiently presumptuous to fancy that we can permit evil associations without suffering harm. It is a serious mistake. Meaner men reflect the golden colour of noble associations ; whilst the best of men cannot choose inferior companionships with impunity.

Let me not forget that the friendship of the good and wise are amongst the most precious means of grace. The Orientals say, "Grapes become purple by looking at one another," and in close fellowship pious people ripen one another. Let my desire be to the saints, and all my delight in the excellent of the earth.

THE GATES OF DAWN

October 30

SCRIPTURE READING—PROV. xvi. 16-33

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good."—PROV. xvi. 20

ALL nations are rich in proverbs setting forth the beauty and desirableness of humility, wisdom, sweetness of speech, gentleness of spirit and deportment; but the difficulty has ever been to get such fair plants to take root and grow.

An authority on gardening writes: "Many novelties that flower so amazingly in the catalogues make but a poor show in the garden." Men everywhere admire, enjoin, extol the lovely virtues we have just named; they are charming in the catalogues, but, alas! somehow they make but a poor show when we attempt to reproduce them in our personal life. And here the fault is altogether that of the gardener.

The fact is that the Book of the Proverbs is of slight actual service unless it is rooted in the New Testament. The burning sun of the Epistle to the Ephesians must paint these flowers; the Epistle to the Romans as a river of life must water this paradise; nothing less than the Apocalypse can ripen these celestial fruits; only when Christ Himself is the gardener can this ethical Eden bloom.

THE GATES OF DAWN

October 31

SCRIPTURE READING—2 CHRON. xiv.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"We have sought Him, and He hath given us rest on every side."

—2 CHRON. xiv. 7

IT is delightfully surprising to see what a great and good work one pure king could effect. Asa arose in the midst of manifold corruptions, like a white flower in a bog, and by his godly character and resolute action changed the whole aspect and atmosphere. We have a parallel to this in the modern world when the girl-queen Victoria transformed the Court of the Georges.

But the purifying power of one personality is not confined to palaces. One genuine saint in a ship's crew will effect a reformation throughout the vessel. So in a company of soldiers, in a workshop, in the cricket-field, in an office or warehouse, even in a council chamber.

None can tell the power of good that resides in one sincere and devoted soul. There is a contagion of health as well as of disease, there is an energy of light as well as a power of darkness. "The Ethiopians fled." The black army always does fly before the soldiers of God. One shall chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight.

THE GATES OF DAWN

November 1

SCRIPTURE READING—ISA. lxi.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations."—ISA. lxi. 11

I N the favour of God we find the *realm* of contentment and happiness. We are told nowadays that harvest-fields will not long be required, for scientists will manufacture chemical compounds to satisfy the hunger of the nations. "That which is not bread." The world for ages has been creating an artificial diet for souls, which "satisfied not." The knowledge, love, and joy of God alone rejoice the soul; these are the things by which we live.

In the smile of God is *lasting* happiness. The great Linnæus prepared a clock in which the hours were marked by the opening and closing of flowers. It began at three in the morning when the goat's beard opens, and stopped at midnight when the large-flowered cactus closes its petals. The true Christian life is timed by a floral clock in which no hours are missing. Winter's night and summer's day, youth and years, life and death, shall find us satisfied.

THE GATES OF DAWN

November 2

SCRIPTURE READING—2 CHRON. xxxiv. 14-33

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good."—ROM. vii. 12

AN eloquent writer observes, "There are no rules in art which some great artist has not shown us how to break with advantage." This may be so, but in that case it shows that the rules of art in question did not exactly or fully express the ideal.

No one has ever shown us how to break the laws of the decalogue with advantage. Many great men have thought that they could tamper with the moral law with advantage, but not one of them has been great enough to succeed.

Indeed, the greater men are the more clearly do they show the advantage of exalting obedience, the disaster of passion and self-will. These kings of Israel, good or bad, exhibit in a dramatic way and as by limelight the advantage or disadvantage. What they brought out on large and imperial lines is just as true in relation to the humblest individual and the private life.

THE GATES OF DAWN

November 3

SCRIPTURE READING—JER. xxxvi. 1-24

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls."—JAS. i. 21

IT makes all the difference in our estimate of the Bible as to the temper in which we approach it. We may readily treat it in a way that makes it of none effect. The bluebells of England have a name in Gaelic which signifies "the aversion of swine," because swine are said to have a peculiar aversion to the delicate delights. Men of animal preference or secular temper are not likely to appreciate the spiritual beauty and import of revelation.

Pride of intellect and heart may make it impossible to gain the blessing which awaits the sympathetic reader.

Dr. Dale writes truly: "Incessant talking, even about religious truth, will do nothing for you, nor hot zeal for truth. The rejection of error, passionate hostility against error, is not enough. The word, the Divine word, must be so received as to take root in life."

THE GATES OF DAWN

November 4

SCRIPTURE READING—JER. xvii. 1-10

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins."—JER. xvii. 10

IN a work just published a traveller tells of his descent into a goldmine in the heart of a tropical forest. "The candles shed a flickering light on the slimy, dripping walls, and for a few moments one felt completely confused—so hard was it to stand there shivering and yet realise that a few yards overhead was brilliant tropical light and sunshine, gaudy birds and butterflies. One seemed in a wholly different world."

Such is the contrast between the higher life with God, and the lower life of sensuality and earthliness. Above are the palms whose leaf is ever green, trees of paradise of gracious fruition, flowers of grace, doves of peace, the sweet sunshine of God. Below may be streaks of gold, and the coarse things that gold will buy, but darkness, mud, and fear are on every side. Bring me, O Lord, out of the horrible pit and the miry clay into the delectable land!

THE GATES OF DAWN

November 5

SCRIPTURE READING—ROM. viii. 15-28

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"They that are in the flesh cannot please God."—ROM. viii. 8

IT is the precious characteristic of revelation that it furnishes us with the key to the events of history. The profane historian simply records names, and paints the scenes and movements of empire; whilst the sacred historian goes to the spiritual roots of circumstance whether personal or national.

"The mind of the spirit." "The mind of the flesh." Here are the origins of history—individual, national, racial. The fortunes of men, singly or collectively, are determined by the soul. When "the mind of the spirit" is obeyed, life reigns through righteousness—the natural fruits are unity, peace, security, progress. When "the mind of the flesh" is indulged and developed, the inevitable result is discord, disintegration, ruin. How fully this is illustrated in the history of Judah and Israel!

"Out of the heart are the issues of life." All politics and policy that leave out the "mind" are on the surface. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

THE GATES OF DAWN

November 6

SCRIPTURE READING—JER. xxxvii. 6-21

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."—REV. ii. 10

WE, too, in our place and way and measure, may be called upon to suffer in reputation, substance, or even in health and life, for the sake of our absolute fidelity to our Master and His cause.

Erasmus confessed that he was not constituted of the stuff of which martyrs are made, and many of us feel a similar misgiving concerning ourselves. But if we resolve to be on the Lord's side He will wonderfully strengthen and deliver. The golden-crested wren is one of the tiniest of birds; it is said to weigh only the fifth part of an ounce, and yet, on frailest pinions, it braves hurricanes and crosses northern seas.

It often seems in nature as if Omnipotence worked best through frailest organisms; certainly the omnipotence of grace is seen to the greatest advantage in the trembling but resolute saint.

Give me the spirit of those who are faithful unto death!

THE GATES OF DAWN

November 7

SCRIPTURE READING—MIC. vi. 6-16

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Righteousness exalteth a nation : but sin is a reproach to any people."—PROV. xiv. 34

WHEN men will not reverence Sinai, the devil takes them up an exceeding high mountain and gives them his decalogue, which they diligently observe. What is the result?

"The treasures of wickedness." They get these. The devil has much to bestow. He makes his faithful servants eminent in infamy, splendid in false colours, rich in misery, of the bread of adversity and the water of affliction they have enough and to spare, an inexhaustible wardrobe embroidered with the broad arrow is theirs, and spacious palaces usually known as workhouses and jails.

He begrudges them nothing of emptiness, bitter luxury, gold and glory that turn to dust and ashes. God Almighty has His irony. "The Lord plentifully rewardeth the proud doer." "Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days." And even when they get the treasures of God in nature and society they have not power to eat thereof.

Let me "do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God," and the true riches are mine.

THE GATES OF DAWN

November 8

SCRIPTURE READING—DAN. i.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him."—Ps. xci. 15

IT is well from time to time to reassure ourselves that patient merit has a very real chance in a world of accidents. It might easily seem to the Israelites in Babylon that little hope was left them of amelioration and advancement, but such opportunity occurred after all, and it came from a quarter least expected.

Intellectual merit is rarely finally overlooked. Charles Reade writes of a gifted man in lowly life that "he was like a piece of striped jasper amid common paving-stones." One with rare capacity of any kind is not likely to be overlooked, his day will come. Society will not ultimately use as a paving-stone the striped jasper. As the Persian proverb states it, "A stone fit for the wall will not be left with the rubbish in the way."

What, then, about moral and religious merit. What about men with the genius of character? They are found out and distinguished even by worldlings, as these Hebrews were discovered by the Babylonian king. Be good, and trust and wait.

THE GATES OF DAWN

November 9

SCRIPTURE READING—JAS. v. 10-20

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Is any among you afflicted? let him pray."—JAS. v. 13

AS Delitzsch states it: "The law contains no command to pray. Praying is so natural to man as man that there was no necessity for any precept to enforce this, the fundamental expression of the true relation to God." But if the law does not enjoin prayer, how constantly does it urge it? "Ask and it shall be given." How vague! Ask what? Blessed vagueness—ask in everything, for everything.

God is little concerned about our forms, everything about our sincerity. We pray with a liturgy or without one. If our child writes an affectionate letter, what do we care about the quality of the paper, the pattern of the envelope, or the postman who delivers it? The letter, with its heart-beats, is the main thing; nay, the only thing.

Let me not wait until I can master the science of prayer. "It availeth much in its working"; that we know, and may leave the philosophy. Who is it that says, "Our prayers know their way better than we do"?

THE GATES OF DAWN

November 10

SCRIPTURE READING—I KINGS xix. 1-18

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him."—Ps. xxxvii. 7

WHEN Elijah appeared in Israel the times were dark and threatening indeed. The land was wholly given to idolatry, the royalty of the nation was corrupt, priest and people were alike backsliding.

Yet even at such times we must not despair. In dark days God has wonderful ways of overthrowing evil even in its utmost pride, popularity, and power.

In mysterious ways in nature God puts limits to destructive forms. Spruce records that great mortality ever and anon breaks out among the alligators, a sort of murrain, and their dead bodies go floating down the Amazon by thousands. So Heaven marks out for judgment corrupt persons, communities, and nations when they become utterly degenerate.

Trust in the Lord, do good, work for good, wait patiently for the Lord and the glory of His coming. He will vindicate Himself, He will preserve His cause. He will save His people who trust in Him.

THE GATES OF DAWN

November 11

SCRIPTURE READING—NUM. xi. 10-17

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance."—Ps. xlii. 11

THE burden of life sometimes seems too much for us. Hours of depression overtake the strongest natures, as is shown in Moses and Elijah; and if these giants faint, the rank and file may easily collapse.

These mighty souls had borne the responsibility for many, the multitude leaned upon them, and in their hour of agony they could expect no support from their fellow men. Shut up, they besought God, and one day we shall all realise the sense of solitariness and helplessness, and have to go to Him, or sink.

How wonderful is the sympathy of God with His over-burdened children! He knoweth that we are but dust. "Cast *thy* burden upon the Lord." As the margin suggests, the "burden *from* the Lord"; leave it *with* the Lord. He gives us no responsibility that shall crush us. With every task, trouble, bewilderment, He will make a way of escape.

THE GATES OF DAWN

November 12

SCRIPTURE READING—PS. xxxiii.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Our soul waiteth for the Lord. He is our help and our shield."
—Ps. xxxiii. 20

WHATEVER may be the pride and presumption of a sinful nation, "the counsel of the Lord" will prevail. The nation may appear strong and safe, but the very depth of the calm, the serenity of its false confidence, betoken disaster.

Guppy writes concerning certain aspects of the Southern world: "Overhead the cloudless, star-lit sky conveys its warning; for the stars shine with increased brilliancy, those of less magnitude, usually invisible to the naked eye, are now distinctly seen; and if the navigator who has often tried to count the six stars in the Pleiades can do so now let him look out for the black squall. Then sweeps along the lowering arched mass with its rain and its waterspouts, its wind, thunder and lightning."

So guilty nations and souls perish with surprise.
Am I nursing a vain confidence?

THE GATES OF DAWN

November 13

SCRIPTURE READING—Ps. cxv.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing."—
Ps. xxxiv. 10

ELIJAH predicted terrible famine, and it came, but the righteous few, we may be certain, knew no want. Somehow, when the earth ceases to grow corn, the heavens rain manna.

"Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." The Heavenly Father has undiscovered ways of multiplying bread, even as modern science is coming to perceive. As to our perishing with cold, somebody has predicted, "As to burning our coal, we will warm the world with grindstones by and by." Not at all unlikely. And so with all needful things. God's secret storehouses are stocked, and will never fail.

Good men have ground firm as a rock for putting absolute confidence in God. To worry about carnal things is pure paganism. He who has done such grand things for the soul will not starve the body. The one cause for anxiety is lest we should fail to seek God and His righteousness. If I am faithful here, I may well trust God for the rest alike in time and in eternity.

THE GATES OF DAWN

November 14

SCRIPTURE READING—ECCLES. ii. 1-11

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."—PHIL. iv. 11

THE universal desire for property, power and enjoyment is implanted in our heart by God; the desire is natural, instinctive, indestructible. It is the sign of the infinity of our being. Animals are satisfied with narrow limits; they eat, drink, sleep, and ask for nothing beyond. But in human nature is an ineradicable boundlessness. "Hedges are not made for swans." And certainly they are not made for six-winged birds like human souls.

But we have fallen into a false and superficial notion of proprietorship. We think nothing ours except it is held as leasehold, freehold, or copyhold.

The true proprietorship is of the wise mind, the pure heart, the obedient will, the dutiful life. Things are ours not because of documents in a safe, but because we possess the power clearly to see, wisely to use, richly to enjoy. "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Solomon made two mistakes. He did not go in for enough; and he forgot the spiritual law of inheritance.

THE GATES OF DAWN

November 15

SCRIPTURE READING—2 KINGS ii. 1-14

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death."
—HEB. xi. 5

MUCH that is mysterious invests these translations, but there is no difficulty about them to men who look beneath the surface of things. Nature is so full of marvels and mysteries, of sudden transformations and startling glorifications, that I feel quite at home in revelations; it so exactly corresponds with the delightful surprises with which the visible world has made me familiar.

And do we not see similar translations to those of Elijah and Enoch continually taking place before our eyes? Our loved ones are by our side, and then without a struggle or sigh they are with the Lord!

Swedenborg says somewhere that in the invisible are souls of saints who do not know of the change that has passed upon them until their attention is called to the fact. We may readily accept this as a poetical statement of the truth that death is often so natural, so easy, so swallowed up in victory, that it is a translation only as was the passing of Enoch.

For "*before* his translation." Ah! me, this is the great matter. Am I a man of faith, of obedience, "meet for the saints in light"?

THE GATES OF DAWN

November 16

SCRIPTURE READING—JOHN xiv. 1-14

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"We have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."—2 COR. v. 1

"*WE* have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Our God shall "take" us, as He did Enoch; bury us, as He did Moses; despatch for us a chariot, as He did for Elijah; exalt us to His right hand, as He did the Son of His love. All these grand truths and facts have a direct personal significance which no false modesty or subtle unbelief should overlook. Let me realise this.

The hope of immortality not only vivifies us in the hours when we vividly conceive and apprehend it, but it secretly strengthens, consoles, and hallows when we do not distinctly think about it; its latent, unobserved action upon character and life is as real as it is great.

Belt tells how in the forests of Nicaragua the air is filled with sweetness and the ground carpeted with blossoms, in consequence of unseen flowers growing at the tops of the exceedingly lofty trees. So the hope laid up in heaven makes itself felt throughout our whole earthly life.

THE GATES OF DAWN

November 17

SCRIPTURE READING—2 KINGS viii. 1-8

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life."—JOHN vi. 47

GOD has wonderful ways of restoring the years that the caterpillar has eaten. The twelve years John Bunyan spent in Bedford gaol appeared a desert patch, yet what magnificent compensations they brought!

The blue water-lily abounds in several of the canals at Alexandria, which at certain seasons become dry, and the beds of these canals, which quickly become burnt as hard as bricks by the action of the sun, are then used as carriage roads. When, however, the water is again admitted, the plant resumes its growth with redoubled vigour and splendour.

Human life has its seasons of fallow, hibernation, of arrested development, of suspended activity, of caterpillar, locust, and palmerworm; but to the faithful such dispiriting seasons are treasuring up, accumulating riches. This whole earthly life is full of denial, suppression, limitation; but it means splendid future enhancement.

THE GATES OF DAWN

November 18

SCRIPTURE READING—NAH. i. 1-10

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power."—NAH. i. 3

WE have to-day a school of dilettante moralists who, whilst generally approving of propriety of conduct, reprobate the introduction of heat into our relation to morals. We must look with calm toleration on vice, and contemplate with serene complacency whatever is good. Goodness and badness are only like beauty and ugliness in art, and are to be criticised without feeling.

The passage before us knows nothing of this lauded lukewarmness. Our God is a consuming fire—a God of rectitude and judgment. Loving with flaming affection the pure, devouring the obstinate perverse "as stubble fully dry."

"Ye that love the Lord, *hate* evil." Stand in relation to righteousness as God does, loving it with supreme delight, hating its opposite with inextinguishable indignation. Morality without passion is etiquette, not righteousness. There is little reality in our goodness until it stirs the soul to its depths.

THE GATES OF DAWN

November 19

SCRIPTURE READING—ROM. ii. 17-29

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh."—ROM. xiii. 14

WE know clearly how the great future may burst upon us at any moment, and yet how liable we are to be seduced by indulgences which appeal to our lower nature.

In ascending the lofty peaks of the Alps, the guides not infrequently, it is said, resort to the innocent artifice of endeavouring to interest the traveller in the beauty of the lovely flowers which grow there, to distract his attention from the fearful abysses which the giddy path overhangs.

The design of the devil on the perilous path of life is the very reverse of this. He seeks to dazzle and confuse with the yellow gold, the red wine, the purple pride, the rainbow hues of fashion and pleasure, that we may be betrayed into the gulf yawning under our feet.

Let me remember that I am a child of the light, a son of the morning. Let me look for my Lord more than they that watch for the morning.

THE GATES OF DAWN

November 20

SCRIPTURE READING—I KINGS xii. 25-33

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Little children, keep yourselves from idols."—I JOHN v. 21

RECENTLY a singular case was adjudicated upon by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. A suit was brought by an Indian Rajah, as custodian of some family idols, to recover possession of a village alleged to have been dedicated to the service of idols. How strange such a subject seems to Englishmen! Idols! A village dedicated to the service of idols! How remote, absurd, superstitious the whole thing seems in the light of European civilisation!

And yet dare we cast a stone? Have we no personal idols, family idols, national idols? Not merely a village dedicated to idols, but vast cities offering costly sacrifices to Bacchus, to Moloch, to Mammon, to gods many? How many things come between us and God, robbing Him of our love, worship, and obedience!

"Little children, keep yourselves from idols." Whatever is opposed to the God revealed in Christ, and to His worship in spirit and in truth, is idolatry.

THE GATES OF DAWN

November 21

SCRIPTURE READING—JOHN iii. 1-21

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else."—ISA. xlv. 22

IT is quite possible that a man may be a self-made moralist, and a very respectable one, too, but no education, reformation, or culture of our own can make sinful men good before God.

It is said that by chemical processes precious stones can be manufactured out of the dust of precious stones. The chemist takes the dust made by the jeweller in cutting, grinding, and polishing rubies, amethysts, or sapphires, and fashions the sparkling filings once more into complete jewels; but the furnace has never yet been able to create a diamond out of diamond dust.

By unaided effort we may fuse together certain virtues and build up our character into passable beauty and worth; but we shall never be able to transform our character into the loveliness and preciousness of true holiness. This is God's work. We must be new creations, born from above, created in Christ.

THE GATES OF DAWN

November 22

SCRIPTURE READING—ROM. viii. 31-39

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"If God be for us, who can be against us?"—ROM. viii. 31

HOW wonderfully does the thought of God and of His love nerve the Christian to face the bitterest conditions of life? The primitive saints, tried by manifold tribulations, were made perfect through mighty suffering.

Explorers tell us that in Arctic regions the snow itself affords shelter to the vegetation of those inhospitable regions against the piercing winds that sweep over fields of everlasting ice. Under the cold defence of the snow plants spring up, dissolve the snow a few inches around, and the part above being again quickly frozen into a transparent sheet of ice, admits the sun's rays, which cherish the plant as in *a natural hothouse*, until the returning summer renders such protection unnecessary.

So the wisdom, love, and power of God overrule the bitterest conditions of human life, and fits us through those very conditions for the everlasting summer.

THE GATES OF DAWN

November 23

SCRIPTURE READING—MARK xvi. 9-20

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Ye are the temple of the living God."—2 COR. vi. 16

NO charge against Christianity is more foolish than that which accuses it of doing injustice to the body. The Greek magnified the body in the interest of art; but ever since the resurrection of Christ, the body has become invested with a new strange sacredness. Just as the corn of wheat must die before it is glorified, so we discover the grandeur of the body in the grave. As Alexander Smith writes: "The meanest of us will look grand one day and however poor we may be, the mourners will uncover as they lay us in the dust."

And this sense of our dignity in death pervades all classes, even the lowliest. Lord Shaftesbury, speaking to his son, and referring to a pauper funeral he had once witnessed, where the bearers were drunk, said: "There is nothing, Evelyn, which the poor feel so keenly as dishonour to their dead." Whence comes this sense of the majesty of man in death, not of monarchs only, but of paupers? The burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ gave to the race a sense of the mystery and glory of our personality such as it never had before.

THE GATES OF DAWN

November 24

SCRIPTURE READING—2 KINGS xii. 9-16

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thine house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth."—Ps. xxvi. 8

THERE is a distinct tendency to-day to think lightly of the Church of God. The multitude keep holiday instead of holy day, and the sanctuary is painfully neglected.

"The Electric Palace" threatens to take the place of the "palace of God." Instead of the worship of God, we have organ recitals. Sacred concerts are the substitute for the penitent or adoring cry of the congregation. The devil's prayer-book, in the shape of secular and sporting journals, is fast becoming the popular liturgy. The tribes go up to the temple of nature—in other words, to the railway station—for cheap excursions. Golf supersedes godliness.

What does all this mean to this nation? England was not made by electric palaces, music halls, golf clubs, and picnics, and it will not be sustained by them. If we desecrate God's day by our games, before long He will make game of us.

Let every Christian disciple be faithful in a day of falling away. Let me be faithful.

THE GATES OF DAWN

November 25

SCRIPTURE READING—EZRA iii. 8-13

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The Lord is in His holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before Him."—HAB. ii. 20

“AND they sang one to another in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord.” There is a rapture that is unique and infectious in the solemnities of God’s house, in its triumphal music and song. It affords an evidence of the divinity of religion that is most affecting, most convincing.

The Japanese *Letters of Lafcadio Hearn* give a striking illustration of this. Hearn was a sensualist of the most pronounced type, a bitter scoffer at religion, one who wished that the missionaries might be shipped off to sea and the vessel scuttled; and yet in a frank moment he confesses to a friend that it is impossible to listen to a congregation singing “Nearer, my God, to Thee, nearer to Thee,” without deep emotion. His heart was wiser than his brains, and bore its witness to the eternal truth.

We get very near to God in His house; we eminently feel His presence and realise His blessing. Let all keep silence before Him that His voice may be heard.

THE GATES OF DAWN

November 26

SCRIPTURE READING—Ps. cxxii.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go unto the house of the Lord."—Ps. cxxii. 1

"**W**HITHER the tribes go up." We always ascend when we go in the right spirit to the house of God. "A high mountain is the mountain of Bashan"—a mountain of summits. What horizons it commands! Entering the sanctuary, we transcend fog-banks, dust storms, the narrow walls of the earthly, and behold the ample sky, the blue and gold distances.

What beauty we behold when we look upon the beauty of the Lord! Alpine plants increase in beauty and luxuriance in the higher altitudes, and on the heights of Zion we are charmed with Divine loveliness and delights. Bees gather the sweetest honey ever tasted from the flowers growing on the snow-line. So we on the summits of the hill of God.

It is a very strong evidence that we are in a state of grace when we have a keen relish for the sanctuary. And we are never then far from glory. There is but a step from the high hill of Sabbatic worship to the jasper pavement.

THE GATES OF DAWN

November 27

SCRIPTURE READING—2 CHRON. xxvi. 11-23

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

“When he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction.”—2 CHRON. xxvi. 16

ONE of the most pitiful sights is to look upon fair beginnings ending disastrously, as we do here.

A naturalist writes of certain creatures which degenerate as they grow older! “When they first quit the egg they are all free; they frisk, they swim with the rapidity of lightning, and at the close of life we find them deformed, as if a foul leprosy had atrophied all their splendid organs.”

Alas! how terrible are these degenerations in the moral life.

However long I continue in the right path, let me not presume. Stevenson somewhere speaks of the boasting “self-made” man as a veritable wind-bag; because he lights the gas in a back parlour he thinks he created the light. The “self-made man is a badly made man”; and, indeed, so far as he is made, is not self-made at all. By the grace of God I stand, and to the latest hour must beware of temper, appetite, covetousness, pride. A great general was maimed at Waterloo by the last cannon ball fired.

THE GATES OF DAWN

November 28

SCRIPTURE READING—GEN. xxxix. 1-6

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man."—
GEN. xxxix. 2

HERE again we see the power of character in the worldly sphere. David saw the "wicked flourish like a green bay tree"; so do we sometimes, yet let us be sure nevertheless that this belongs to the chapter of accidents which is the Bible of the fool, whilst the prosperity of Joseph and Uzziah belongs to the chapter of law which is the Bible of the wise.

A Bible is in existence which is printed throughout on the self-same paper as that on which bank notes are printed. A significant Bible that! Had it been made up of £5 notes how eagerly it would have been sought! Yet made of the special paper men love so much to feel is very significant and appropriate. The Bible is the book of the Wealth of Nations, although that is its least merit.

"And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man." "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth."

THE GATES OF DAWN

November 29

SCRIPTURE READING—2 TIM. ii.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Flee also youthful lusts : but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart."—2 TIM. ii. 22

THE most skilled workers are said to be most fastidious about their tools ; on occasion they do marvellously with indifferent instruments, yet of all craftsmen they are the most particular to covet tools of exquisite efficacy.

Thus God chooses the fittest instrument for the highest service. And what determines that fitness ? Not scholarship, genius, eloquence, but personal purity.

When a new railway is inaugurated, a nobleman is usually present who turns the first sod with a silver spade, and wheels it off in a fancy barrow ; but the rough navvy with coarse tools is the effective agent who constructs the line. So the fittest instrument of God may not be the dainty scholar, but rather the commonplace worker, rich in faith, spirituality and holiness.

Let me seek to be a cleansed vessel, fit for the Master's use.

THE GATES OF DAWN

November 30

SCRIPTURE READING—MIC. iv. 1-8

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"We will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever."—MIC. iv. 5

UNIVERSAL and permanent peace is to be secured through the teaching and influence of the Church of God. Some believe that war will be eliminated by international literature, art, trade, science, but really the spirit of mankind itself must be changed.

A celebrated naturalist writes thus of a murderous bird of extreme beauty: "The red hawk, in the blue of a spring day, is so refined in material as to seem a spirit; but it is the fell spirit of plunder and bloodshed. This is the pitiable side to so much of the beauty and wonderful design in nature—one of the desperate riddles of the world."

So there is a pitiable side to the beauty and glory of civilisation. It is a desperate riddle how nations with so much wealth, culture and gaiety, can yet cherish so much of the fell spirit of plunder and bloodshed. No; culture will not expel the truculent temper of humanity; only the Spirit of Christ can do this, making men loving brothers the world over.

THE GATES OF DAWN

December 1

SCRIPTURE READING—ISA. ii.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths."
—ISA. ii. 3

RENAN thus expresses his scepticism about millennial days: "Isaiah is sufficiently blind to all realities, to believe that justice can govern the world, and that the ideal of a perfect state will soon be realised. Isaiah much resembles our Socialists, whose illusions cannot be destroyed. After each abortive experiment they recommence their work; the solution is not yet found, but it will be. The idea that no solution exists never occurs to them."

The truth is, any kind of enthusiast, dreamer, or socialist, is preferable to men who believe in the possibility of nothing better than what exists already. The ever bettering world grows out of illusions, and would not grow without them. Dreamers are the architects of the new world; and the builders of it, the practical workers, appear in due season. If we had not first the splendid dream we should never have the splendid fact.

On the foreheads of the righteous diadems are beginning to take shape already.

THE GATES OF DAWN

December 2

SCRIPTURE READING—ISA. ix. 1-7

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."—ISA. ii. 4

"PETITIONS, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings shall be offered for all men, with special mention of kings, and, in fact, of all who are in authority, so that we may live an unharassed life of inward peace in all reverence for God and in self-respect."

Close by where this is written, stands a chestnut tree specially exposed to the action of the east wind, and year by year its leaves have been blighted and its glory lost. So discord acts upon character. Keep the peace in the house. No grudges, no irritations, no antagonisms. Keep the peace in the world. It is still at the centre of the whirlwind; and where the true Christian stands there may be a wonderful measure of peace in a warring world. Keep the peace in the Church. Lifting heavenward unsullied hands, pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

It has been affirmed that the Florentines are such rare artists because they live in such a tranquil air. Anyhow, living in a tranquil air makes rare saints.

THE GATES OF DAWN

December 3

SCRIPTURE READING—ISA. xxvi.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee."—ISA. xxvi. 3

LET us not dismiss this as mere poetry, but cherish it in our heart as the most trustworthy truth we know.

Had we lived in the geological ages we should have thought the earth as we now know it an utter impossibility. Then vast and awful monsters stalked the slime, the sea swarmed with ferocious sharks and snakes, the sky was darkened by winged dragons, and there was not a bird, butterfly, or flower. How sceptical we should have been if then one had prophesied of this modern earth with its sky full of singers, its meadows full of flowers, its silver sea a delight! Yet all has come to pass.

And greater things shall come to pass, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. A recent sceptic sneers at what he calls "the green-meadow happiness of the herd"; but to feed amongst the lilies is better, nobler, happier than to redden the meadows with our brother's blood.

THE GATES OF DAWN

December 4

SCRIPTURE READING—2 TIM. i. 1-14

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you."—ROM. viii. 9

IF any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." "And if Christ is in you." In the New Testament we see the example set us, and we are to walk as He also walked; but there is no real imitation of Christ except as His Spirit dwells in us richly.

Ingres, the great French painter, appealed to his students, "Do you think, when I tell you to copy, that I want to make copyists of you? No, I want you to take the sap from the plant." Christ does not want to make technical copyists of us, but by a living union we are to take the sap from the Plant of Renown, so that all the living fruits of righteousness may naturally appear in us.

"If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead" dwells in us, all the beauty, strength, and victory of the Master shall be repeated in the disciple.

THE GATES OF DAWN

December 5

SCRIPTURE READING—Ps. xiv.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."
—ROM. viii. 9

ARCHBISHOP ALEXANDER states the case exactly. "This age listens with a certain degree of patience when we tell it that sin is *transgression*, or that sin is *selfishness*. But when we assert that sin is *unbelief*, we are met with contemptuous anger."

Yet Jesus boldly declares that unbelief in Himself is of the very essence of sin. "If ye believe not that *I am*, ye shall die in your sins." "Of sin, because they believe not on Me."

Let me beware of "honest doubt," which doubts Jesus Christ. We have small patience with people who entertain doubts about the roundness of the earth, or concerning the scientific teaching that the earth revolves about the sun. No honest doubting is allowed here. Those who reject Christ and His claim must doubt their doubts in the light of the conscience and the heart.

THE GATES OF DAWN

December 6

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. xiii. 24-30

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The wages of sin is death."—ROM. vi. 23

IN the Oriental jungle is a fig-tree that begins life as a parasite. A thin, slender shoot, tremulously weak, leans lightly on the base of some tall tree, clings and grows. Soon a second shoot, slight and frail, emerges near the root, but at a different angle from its aspiring brother; and others as delicate follow, until the trunk of the host is sprawled over by naked running shoots, crafty and insidious. The trunk becomes enveloped in living lace, all the while squeezing and causing decay, sapping the life-blood of the tree at all points. A greedy, intractable, implacable foe, it gives no quarter, but flourishes upon its dead or dying friend, upon which in its youth it leaned delicately for support.

So did idolatry delicately insinuate itself into Israel, and in a few years the goodly tree was overrun and blasted by the stealthy murderer. So evil ever beguiles, enslaves, and destroys.

THE GATES OF DAWN

December 7

SCRIPTURE READING—NEH. viii. 9-18

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The joy of the Lord is your strength."—NEH. ix. 10

HEZEKIAH did much with music; Nehemiah also was anxious that the people should work with sunshine and song.

"Our preacher is a skylark Christian," boasted one of his people. Fine bird! It sings morning, noon, and evening; sings as it springs from the flowery sod, also when the ground is white with snow. What a song, too!—a shower of melody, an infinite sweetness with no undertone of pain. So is it ever with the Christian who lives in the power of his faith.

Some Christians, however, are of a very different feather. They recall the owl, or remind us of the pelican of the wilderness; they have not as much music as the sparrow on the housetop; they chatter like the crane or swallow, or mourn sore like the dove. If we would only realise the full truth and blessedness of our faith, we should continually go up and come down singing, until one fine day we should go up singing, up, up, beyond the blue, beyond the sun, and come down no more, lost in the eternal light.

THE GATES OF DAWN

December 8

SCRIPTURE READING—2 KINGS xvii. 19-23

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did."—2 KINGS xvii. 22

THEY kept not the commandments of the Lord their God." This was the front of their offending, they sinned against the light, against the brightest light that had been vouchsafed to mortals, and their unfaithfulness to the light exaggerated their doom. Much has been written lately about "The Repulsive Power of Light." Astronomers hold that every ray of light exerts pressure upon any surface where it impinges, and that in the case of sunlight the direction of the pressure is, of course, away from the sun; therefore very attenuated bodies fly away from the sun instead of falling toward it. The sun attracts a solid body, but repels a vaporised one.

Whilst men are sincere and serious they are attracted by the eternal Sun and blessed by its light; and becoming false and frivolous the light drives them farther from its Fountain, and acts upon them like a curse.

THE GATES OF DAWN

December 9

SCRIPTURE READING—REV. xv.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

“If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?”—I PET. iv. 18

“IF the righteous be scarcely saved.” We must not think it an easy thing to attain fitness for eternal life.

Said Millet, the famous painter, “Art is not a pleasure trip. It is a battle, a mill that grinds.” How much more is this true of the moral life.

Think of the difficulties often attending the beginning of the highest life; think of the strong opposition a righteous life must encounter and overcome; think of the severity of the discipline necessary for the perfecting of the saints; think of the sacred anxieties in which the best of men work out life, and with which they anticipate its close. Having thought of all this, we shall understand what is meant by the righteous being “scarcely saved.”

Yet the impossible to man is possible with God. Looking at it from the human side, we are saved with difficulty, but from the side of the Divine power and grace there is “abundant entrance.”

THE GATES OF DAWN

December 10

SCRIPTURE READING—DAN. ⅴ.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

“Evil will befall you in the latter days, because ye will do evil in the sight of the Lord.”—DEUT. xxxi. 29

“THERE came forth the fingers of a man’s hand,” and wrote on the palace wall of Belshazzar fiery words; but the writing was late; it was the sentence of immediate death. “In that night Belshazzar was slain.” The same fingers that wrote these words of doom wrote the warning words before the eyes of all Israel ages before the testing days came.

May not England to-day with solemn advantage study this. When a modern philosopher writes words like these, words applauded by many of our countrymen, is it not time to take alarm?—“Severity, violence, slavery, danger, dissimulation, stoicism, artifice, and devilries of every kind—all that is bad, terrible, tyrannical, predatory, and serpentine in man—serve as well for the elevation of humanity as their opposites.” If this teaching is to prevail we shall soon reach the crimson ending. To neglect the hand-writing in the tables of stone is to provoke the handwriting on the wall.

THE GATES OF DAWN

December 11

SCRIPTURE READING—ROM. vii.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."—PROV. xxix. 1

SINFUL men are fond of belittling the thought of retribution, but if any doctrine is beyond question it is that which teaches the necessity and inevitableness of retribution.

Speaking one day of different forms of human government, Goethe remarked: "It will be found that one cannot succeed in the long run with over great goodness, mildness, and delicacy, while one has beneath a mixed and sometimes vicious world to manage and hold in respect." If then human philosophers come to this conclusion, we may well believe in the self-executing moral order of the world.

And time is a consideration of little moment. If the broken law certainly avenges itself upon the transgressor, sooner or later, is a question of no consequence. The lapse of time does not change the crime. The lapse of time does not cause it to be forgotten or condoned. No Statute of Limitations has place in the government of God.

THE GATES OF DAWN

December 12

SCRIPTURE READING—HOS. xiv.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"They shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine."—Hos. xiv. 7

A MOST suggestive chapter touching the revival of life that has died down, or even died away. "They that dwell under His shadow shall return, they shall revive as the corn." How comforting to all who feel that somehow the vitality and richness of their spiritual life have been lost, as the corn and vine seem to have perished under the snow and frost of winter! Nothing seems more hopeless than the stem of the vine in winter, and yet at the breath of summer it bursts into a wealth of green and purple, all beauty and fragrance.

Let me not despair if from any cause my spiritual life should languish. Let me come back in penitence, desire, and faith to the God of all grace, and I shall "revive as the corn and blossom as the vine." The shadow of God is the sunshine of the soul. Let me dwell in that shadow, and I shall soon exult, "I am like a green fir-tree"; and He who is the dew, the sunlight, the summer unto Israel shall respond, "From Me is thy fruit found."

THE GATES OF DAWN

December 13

SCRIPTURE READING—LUKE i. 46-55

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction."—2 CHRON. xxvi. 16

SCIENTISTS teach that it was an advantage to certain animals to increase in bulk up to a certain point, but, having reached that point, the increase of size became the cause of their extinction. The glorious train of the peacock was at first an advantage, but as its plumes increase in number and size they become dangerous to the bird, it flies with difficulty. The expansion of the wings in butterflies of certain families seems to have reached a maximum, any further development threatens the existence of the species.

Whatever truth there may be about the danger to animals through development in size, it is very clear that increase in power, riches, or popularity is fraught with temptation to poor human nature. The peacock train soon makes it difficult to rise above the ground, the swollen estate has a determination to the head, the expanding butterfly wings prove a peril. Let me beware. A very small rag of purple is enough to intoxicate, and the purple is sad indeed if the white of leprosy shows through.

THE GATES OF DAWN

December 14

SCRIPTURE READING—2 CHRON. xxx. 13-23

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."

—1 JOHN i. 7

THE *ground* of forgiveness. "The priests sprinkled the blood." "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin." No forgiveness except at the cross. The life surrendered at Calvary atones for sin, brings purity and peace.

The *condition* of forgiveness. "Every one that setteth his heart to seek God," or, "him that setteth his whole heart." Truly a fault is not effaced because we reproach ourselves with it; it is effaced only when we set our whole heart to seek the Divine mercy and strength.

The *sign* of forgiveness. "And the Lord healed the people." The proof of pardon is the inspiration that cures us of our old sins. "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases." The proof of the former is found in the latter.

The *blessedness* of forgiveness. "Singing with loud instruments unto the Lord." Brass bands are enough to express earthly joy; all the golden bands of heaven are insufficient to express the gladness of those whose sin is forgiven, whose iniquity is covered.

THE GATES OF DAWN

December 15

SCRIPTURE READING—ISA. xxxvii. 5-20

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"And Hezekiah spread the letter before the Lord."—ISA. xxxvii. 14

WHEN we see the postman hastening from door to door we do not always think what a portentous messenger he is. He brings letters black-bordered, telling of heart-rending bereavements. Threatening letters are in his bag, and his sharp knock is to many the note of doom. Perplexing letters demanding replies we know not how to give, or hardly dare to give, are thrust into our hands. The postman is a great troubler of Israel.

What a grand thing to spread the letter before the Lord! He is the great "Dissolver of doubts," and will give light, comfort, courage, to all who seek Him.

A little boy who could not get satisfactory replies to his questions said to his mother, "I wish I could have five minutes with God." Oh! what a flood of light, hush of peace, pulse of power, flush of gladness, will five minutes with God give!

THE GATES OF DAWN

December 16

SCRIPTURE READING—EZEK. xxxv.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Whereas the Lord was there."—EZEK. xxxv. 10

THE "Intelligence Department" is sometimes strangely at fault. It takes note of tangible things, of troops, guns, and positions, leaving out impalpable factors on which really all turns—such as the genius of the commander, the heroism of the troops, the superiority of weapons. Assyria saw only what meets the carnal eye, "whereas the Lord was there." How often men forget the main Factor!

A mere handful of Spaniards conquered South America, prevailed against tens of thousands of Aztecs, because whilst the natives had only rude weapons, the invaders had powder and shot. That little fact made all the difference.

Celestial warriors come armed with a magical panoply, their weapons are subtle, they wield strange forces, and so a single angel breathes in the face of the foe, and they melt like snow in the glance of the Lord. When shall I believe in the irresistibility of purity and faith?

THE GATES OF DAWN

December 17

SCRIPTURE READING—Ps. xxxi. 9-24

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"My times are in Thy hand."—Ps. xxxi. 15

HOW much depends upon knowing when the time is exactly ripe! Not to interfere before the crisis arrives, not to let the opportunity pass when the crisis has arrived; this power of discernment, of patience and promptitude, is a gift of superlative value.

Who knows the psychological moment like the Keeper of Israel! He does not interfere too soon; He allows the enemy rope enough to hang himself; He waits until His people know their weakness and peril, and are shut up to Him. He does not interpose too late; at the critical juncture He smites the pride of the unrighteous, honours the faith of His people.

We see in nature how precisely God works by the clock; and certainly He is not less exact in the times and seasons of human life. We often speak of "the hour and the man"; let us remember the hour and the God. "A very present help in trouble."

THE GATES OF DAWN

December 18

SCRIPTURE READING—LUKE xxiii. 13-25

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Never man spake like this man."—JOHN vii. 46

NIETZSCHE, the German sceptic, whose delirious writings just now excite much attention, observes: "In the New Testament only one figure appears which we are compelled to honour—Pilate, the Roman Governor."

It must therefore be very interesting to the admirers of Nietzsche to read what Pilate thought of the Lord Jesus. "Behold, I, having examined Him before you, found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse Him." One with any sense of morality will find it difficult to honour Pilate, but his testimony to the purity of Jesus we are bound to respect.

So a great cloud of witnesses from all quarters testify to the glory of the Lord. Out of the mouths of His enemies praise is perfected by Him who makes the wrath of man to praise Him. The modern Pagan endorses the acquittal declared by the ancient Pagans.

THE GATES OF DAWN

December 19

SCRIPTURE READING—JOB i. 13-22

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example."—I PET.
ii. 21

ONE of the very greatest writers on science, in discussing the presence of pain in the world, has just reminded his brethren that the very existence of pain is one of the essential factors in evolution; that it has been developed in the animal world for a *purpose*; that it is strictly subordinated to the law of *utility*; and therefore never developed beyond what is actually *needed* for the preservation of life.

Is not this precisely the view that revelation gives of the place of suffering in the moral universe? Pain is essential to our highest development; it is always developed for a purpose; it is strictly subordinated to the moral design; and is therefore never developed beyond what is actually needed: these are the great teachings of the New Testament touching the presence and action of pain in the spiritual life. They are full of rational comfort

THE GATES OF DAWN

December 20

SCRIPTURE READING—2 COR. iii. 7-18

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes."
—Ps. xix. 8

IT is surprising what a magical power is operative in a ray of light. A naturalist writes: "Whilst I was watching, a ray of sunlight happened to fall directly on the path of the chrysalis under observation. Immediately there was a response. The pupa suddenly jerked as if startled by the light. This was the beginning of great things—that wandering ray of light was evidently Nature's signal to the hidden butterfly within, informing it that *then* was the opportune moment for it to come forth. Instantly the chrysalis began to bulge, the enveloping shell burst open, the butterfly quickly appeared."

Is it not somewhat thus when a ray of heaven's sunlight, reflected from the sacred page, falls upon the soul? What an illuminating, a quickening, rejoicing, converting power there is in the truth of the Gospel, in the truth as it is in Jesus!

THE GATES OF DAWN

December 21

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. ii. 1-12

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"We have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him."—MATT. ii. 2

WISE men from afar are still seeking that cradle. All the great religions of the earth are really feeling for Christ. The consummation of all deep thought and aspiration is in Him. And although often unknowingly, all the sovereign thinkers do Him reverence.

The geatest of men have in successive generations made that cradle the shrine of their sincerest worship. In the corn-fields the heaviest heads bow most, and the mightiest intellects have done the Master lowliest reverence.

All the ground is strewn with the tokens of their homage—sublime poems, harps and organs, deep philosophies, eloquent orations, rich sculpture, delightful pictures, magnificent architecture, dedicated to His praise and glory. Genius brings its choicest products to His feet, and thinks them poor.

THE GATES OF DAWN

December 22

SCRIPTURE READING—LUKE ii. 8-20

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people."—LUKE ii. 10

THE Lord manifested to the sage, the sovereign, is now manifest to the shepherd. This last was peculiarly significant of the genius of Christianity.

The people need Christ. They have their share of sin, suffering, sorrow. They deeply need the grace, consolations, and strengthening of the Gospel. The people are capable of Christ. Without the intellectual distinction of the Magi, or the social eminence of Herod, they have the essential greatness of soul which renders them capable of Christ and of His greatest gifts. The people rejoice in Christ. "The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen." From that day to this a new glory has shone on all common scenes, a new joy has filled the common heart that has been opened to the Prince of Peace, the Saviour of the world.

THE GATES OF DAWN

December 23

SCRIPTURE READING—LUKE ii. 25-35

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel."—LUKE ii. 32

THE manifestation of the Lord Jesus to the good. Simeon waited for the Messiah, and knew that he had not waited in vain. Scientists tell how the flowers of the Alps are buried for long months under the snow, yet all the time they are full of energy and expectation, and no sooner does the sun shine than in a few hours they open into glorious flower. So Simeon waited through a long life, waited as beneath cold snows, but at the first kiss of the Sun of Righteousness he broke into flower.

Men who have been good according to their lights, waiting for a yet higher good, and then suddenly coming into the knowledge of Christ, feel that they have found in Him just what they longed and hoped for, and forthwith blossom as the rose.

The Bible is a glorious revelation of mercy and helpfulness. It is the Magna Charta, converting a world of slaves into a world of free men rejoicing in the liberty of the glory wherewith Christ maketh free.

THE GATES OF DAWN

December 24

SCRIPTURE READING—MATT. ii. 1-12

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."—GEN. xii. 3

WHEN the morning dawns and the sun arises all obscene birds are disquieted and hasten to their hiding place; the snails leave their slimy trail, and take cover; the wild beasts lay themselves down in their dens. The sun searches them out. But now it calls forth whatever is of a higher quality! Instead of the slug, the butterfly; instead of the wild beast, the cattle feed in the meadows; instead of bats and owls, the lark sings at heaven's gate.

So it was when the "Sun of Righteousness" arose on the earth. "Herod was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him." Whatever belonged to the night and darkness was agitated and put to mortal fear. "When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy." At the first faint beam of the golden orb the pure greeted the day with rapture, all the birds of heaven broke into song.

Unto the sincere, the penitent, the good and pure, unto all them that believe, Christ is precious.

THE GATES OF DAWN

December 25

SCRIPTURE READING—JOHN i. 1-14

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given."—ISA. ix. 6

HOW the race from the beginning has been steadily gazing into heaven expecting a Saviour—one who should break the awful tyranny of evil by which we are accursed!

The race looks unto heaven for a deliverer, because it is profoundly conscious that it cannot save itself; that there is no law of salvation working in us, or in the nature of things. Science tells us that there is in creatures a "regenerative capacity" by which any injury they may receive is repaired; but in creatures high up in the scale of being the regenerative capacity is usually very slight. The regenerative moral capacity in the creature highest up in the scale of being is certainly pathetically inadequate to his restoration to purity and happiness.

Unto us the long-expected Saviour has been revealed. His shining form walks in the gulf of despair. Let me be sure that I prove His saving virtue.

THE GATES OF DAWN

December 26

SCRIPTURE READING—DAN. vi. 16-23

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust."—Ps. xci. 4

LIONS are not cannibalistic, they will not devour their own species, lion respects lion; and so they saw in Daniel the features of their own royal breed, and left him unscathed.

How majestic is courage combined with innocence! This is the main lesson of Daniel in the lions' den. He had faith in God, was absolutely loyal to the truth, and with a pure heart dared everything and triumphed.

Our defence from the powers of darkness is in the heroism of faith and purity. "He goeth about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour," but he has to keep a painfully long fast among the pure. The wicked one toucheth them not. Noah had a good many uncomfortable beasts in his cabin, but he lived to see the rainbow: and in the Ark of God I am safe until I greet the bow around the throne.

THE GATES OF DAWN

December 27

SCRIPTURE READING—EPHES. iv. 1-16

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."—LUKE ii. 52

COLERIDGE defined genius as "a capacity for growth." The real genius is he who is always transcending himself, always becoming more wonderful in vision, expression, execution.

"And the child grew." Is not the distinctive feature of everything connected with Christ's "capacity for growth"? Nothing pertaining to Him ever exhausts itself. The dew is ever on its branches, it is ever extending its shade, it is ever bringing forth fruits of life and beauty.

Do I grow as my Master did? The test of the Christian spirit is "capacity for growth." Ever becoming clearer-eyed, wider in knowledge, stronger in holy will, with a richer overflowing joyousness, and a larger passion for service and sacrifice. May the grace of God rest on me, making me liberally to share my Master's strength and glory!

THE GATES OF DAWN

December 28

SCRIPTURE READING—Ps. li

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Create in me a clean heart, O God."—Ps. li. 10

MEN who realise the subtlety, tyranny, and destructiveness of sin, know well that all amelioration, reformation is unavailing. Nothing short of a new heart and a right spirit will suffice.

Creation is absolutely the work of God. The ablest man is helpless until certain material is furnished him; it may be very little, but he must have it to start with, he cannot create the initial thing. Erasmus Darwin once wrote: "Give me a fibre susceptible of irritation, and I will make a tree, a dog, a horse, a man." Yes, granted the fibre we may do much; but the original fibre is the essential thing, without this we can do nothing, and thus we cannot create. After God creates within us a clean heart, much depends upon our personal culture; but the original implantation of right dispositions and principles is purely the prerogative of the Creator Spirit.

O that I may be "a new creation in Christ Jesus!"

THE GATES OF DAWN

December 29

SCRIPTURE READING—2 CHRON. xxxiv. 1-7

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"While he was yet young he began to seek after the God of David his father."—2 CHRON. xxxiv. 3

THE fact of pious Josiah springing from a father like Amon, and a grandfather like Manasseh, reminds us of a work on science entitled *The Survival of the Unlike*.

However heredity may prevail in the realms of physics and mentality, it is evident that it does not determine moral and religious character. The best of fathers have bad sons; the best of children may arise in godless and immoral households.

The principal of a large philanthropic Home told the writer, that many of the best children were the offspring of abandoned parents, lilies grown in the mud. The principle of individuality is mysteriously protected, the germ of freedom in the child sacredly preserved. Modern science discerns the originality and isolation of the individual. My ancestors do not determine my moral character, my spiritual affinity. Bodily succession does not imply a tyranny coercing the soul. I am independent and responsible. Therefore I give an account of myself unto God.

THE GATES OF DAWN

December 30

SCRIPTURE READING—I PET. iv. 1-II

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer."—I PET. iv. 7

IS not the whole philosophy of safety from the allurements of the animal life in this injunction?

Wholesomeness of mind is the true preservative. Says Alfred Wallace, "Health of body and of mind are the only natural safeguards against disease." And, again, "A condition of health is the one and only protection we require against all kinds of disease." Yes, it is the one and only protection we require against moral disease.

Keep the imagination undefiled, the thought sober, the heart pure. Hence Emerson justly warns us, "There is no greater peril than a voluptuous book." Shun the literature that will coarsen the brain, that will familiarise the mind with the gross and incontinent; and not only shun such literature, but also whatever else defileth and maketh a lie. A mind, sound, sober, spiritual, is a garrison that hell can neither surprise nor force.

THE GATES OF DAWN

December 31

SCRIPTURE READING—Ps. xc.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience."—ROM. v. 3

WRITING concerning the severe cyclones which occasionally visit North Queensland, a traveller observes, "Nature is rational even in her most passionate moments. Vegetation, rank and gross as in an unweeded garden, requires vigorous lopping. These storms comb out superfluous branches, cut out dead wood, destroy decayed shoots, and cleanse trunks and branches of parasitic growths. All is done boldly, yet with such skill that in a few weeks losses are hidden under masses of clean, healthy, bright foliage. The soil has received a luxurious top-dressing. Trees and plants respond to the stimulus with magical vigour, for lazy, slumbering forces have been roused into efforts so splendid that the realism of tropical vegetation is to be appreciated only after Nature has swept and sweetened her garden." What a vivid parable of the blessing brought by the tempests which sweep the soul!

He enriches us through suffering. "The ripest fruit grows against the roughest wall." He completes us through loss. As the sculptor perfects the statue by striking off one marble flake after another, so Heaven perfects the soul by a succession of blows and deprivations.

"Praise to the Holiest in the height,
And in the depth be praise;
In all His words most wonderful,
Most sure in all His ways."

THE
GATES OF PRAYER

BY

LAUHLAN MACLEAN WATT

AUTHOR OF "THE TRYST" "BY STILL WATERS"
"THE COMMUNION TABLE" ETC.

Minister of St. Stephen's, Edinburgh

THE GATES OF PRAYER

New Year Time

O GOD of the years that are past, and the years that are coming—through whose hand run the fleeting sands of the present, pardon us for the errors and sins of the days that are dead; help us in all our thinking and doing in the days that are to be.

Let us not remember too much the sorrows that have been. Lift up our hearts and our hopes to the dreams and ideals that are before us, that we may rise above the weaknesses, meannesses, and sinfulness which do so often dog us to our fall. Give us gladness in Thine own time, leading us, by Thy pity, nearer Christ; comforting us when we grow weary, by Thy love, and saving us at last through Thine unending mercy.

Father, take not the veil from the future. If only Thou be with us in the day that is coming, full of the unknown, it is well. Uphold us in whatsoever sorrows it may bring with it. Pity us in the trials that await us. Consecrate our gladnesses and our griefs together, and hold our hands when we walk through the darkness. Whatsoever Thou give to us or take from us let Thy blessing be above and about us, and keep us true men and women till we go home to Thee.

There are graves behind us all, O Father, and silence and darkness where there were voices beloved and faces that we knew in days gone by. Only let us not forget that Thou art ever before us and Thy love beside us, and we will still be brave enough to dare all that the dying days can hold. Guide us aright, O God.

Thou hast given us all the world and its beauty, O our God—all the friendships and the loves, the successes and the joys that we have known. We can offer Thee only our failures, our weaknesses, our sorrows, and our sins. Have mercy upon us, and pity us in our confessions, O our Father. Help us to find again the way we have lost, to see the light that we turned from, and to acknowledge the mastery of Thy holy will. For Jesu's sake.

THE GATES OF PRAYER

Sunday Morning

O GOD our Father, Who hast brought us to the threshold of another day, we bring into Thy presence the remembrance of the days that have died,—the sorrows and the joys which they have held, the sweet hopes and promises with which they began, and the pain of heart for the unrealised and the unfulfilled with which we drew the curtain over their completion.

We meant to be loving and faithful, tender to those Thou hast given us, and true to Thee ; but we have not remembered how feeble we are, and how easy it is for us to fail and fall. We have not been watchful against our weakness ; and little things of slight account have put our souls to shame. We have forgotten our duties to one another, and to our fellow-men ; and have lost sight, too often, of human charity, and the kindly graces of ordinary daily life. We have not been helpful to those whose needs we have encountered, nor humble in our claims upon others, nor unselfish in our relationships. And we confess, with sadness, opportunities unused and chances lost.

With this sense of the incomplete and the insufficient in our hearts, we pray Thee to have pity upon us. Let us feel within us the assurance of pardon. Give us new strength for the new days lying before us.

Make this day, for all Thy children, a day of glad promise in worship of Thee, whether with those who seek Thee in Thy house, or who, in the quiet of lonely rooms, bend in prayer before Thee. Let us rise from our knees to higher thoughts, fairer hopes, and nobler efforts after the beautiful, the loving, and the true. Open unto our knocking, O our Father, we implore Thee, and lead us in to whatsoever Thou wilt.

Put into the mouths of Thy teachers this day everywhere, words of renewal, inspiration, and quickening. Let Thy glory burn above Thy holy page, till its truth become lit with flame unquenchable. Keep us near Thee, O God, lest, like poor children, we miss Thy voice amidst our many distractions, and be lost for ever in the darkness. For Jesu's sake.

THE GATES OF PRAYER

Sunday Evening

LET all the world be brought nearer to Thee, O God, this quiet night. Let Christ lay His Cross over all hearts and all life's varied and fluctuating interests, claiming them for Thee; and may all roads everywhere be highways of Thine angels, till darkness and sin be driven far away. Be Thy light our guide, for evermore.

Heavenly Father, bless the place we live in. Guide its trade, and bless all whose enterprise has helped to make it what it is. Let its leaders always be men of noblest integrity and worth. Bless our native land, in all its interests. Watch over our soldiers and sailors, and all our colonists, scattered abroad across the world. Let Thy light be on the sea and on the land, guiding all for the best. Be with the weary, the sad, and the dying, giving them the rest, the consolation, and the strength they most require.

Comfort all mourners. Hush all angry passions. Let Thy peace steal over all the world's distresses. Calm the distracted, and lead the dying home. Bless all we love, and make and keep us worthy of the affection of our own dear ones, and the esteem of our fellow-men. Set Thy star above our darkness, and keep it shining till it guide us to Thy day.

O God, be near to those whose worship-hour brings no gladness of communion with Thy spirit, because their hearts are cold and forsaken. Soften and subdue unto Thyself all the world's children, O our God, and let Thy love, this night, unfold them with a blessing which shall make them truly Thine, full of a sense of Thy presence, Thy pardon, and Thy grace. For Jesu's sake.

THE GATES OF PRAYER

Monday Morning

O THOU Who art the God and Guide, alike of our rest and our labour, we thank Thee for the peace of the past night,—that Thou hast watched over us when we slept, and saved us from all harm. We thank Thee for quiet sleep, and for the restoration which comes thereby to our bodies and our souls. And, ere we go out to face the world's hard week again, we would kneel for Thy blessing, which is life itself to us.

Protect us, in the day that lies before us, from all that is mean, unworthy, and untrue. In the business of life, help us to keep our hands and hearts honest and clean. Let no gain lure us from the upright way, or tempt us to be unkind or unfair to those with whom we have our daily dealings. Keep us ever mindful that Thou beholdest all things, even our most secret thought. Suffer us not, O God, to darken or disgrace the joy of our beloved, or the trust they have in us; but may our lives, alike in their relation to those beside us and the world without, be evidences that we are Thine, or that we are seeking Thee.

We do not ask Thee to take the veil from the future. If only Thou be with us in the day that is coming, full of the unknown, it will be well. Uphold us in whatsoever sorrows it may bring with it. Pity us in what trials may await us. Consecrate our gladnesses and our griefs together, and hold us firm when we walk through darkened places. Whatsoever Thou wilt give us or take from us, let Thy blessing be always above us; and keep us true men and women till we go home to Thee.

Strengthen all who are shrinking from this day's duties. Breathe Thy grace over all who tremble before this day's pain. And give perseverance, steadfastness, and growth in grace to every brave heart which is trying to do its best. For Jesu's sake.

THE GATES OF PRAYER

Monday Evening

H EAVENLY FATHER, as we began the day on our knees before Thee, so must we end it; and as we sought Thy help and guidance in the morning hour, so would we beg Thy mercy and Thy pardon for all that has made our work a thing of feeble effort, wavering, fickle, and incomplete. We have tried, but not so bravely as we ought, to do our best, and we wonder at Thy patience with us, when we see how poor is the result of all we have attempted. We are ashamed to think how far apart our day's work stands from the hope of our morning prayer. It is a poor instrument on which we praise Thee, a thing of broken strings, jarring and out of tune. Be Thou the Master-musician, and set aright once more our souls' discordancies.

We confess our shortcomings, our errors of pride and obstinate self-will, our frequent halting in our quest of good, because it wearied us, or because it did not pay. Father, our wage is a sorrowing heart and unavailing pain over neglected duty and unfinished labours. Let the irresistible passing of the days that die be warning to us. Let us be up and doing, if Thou dost give us another day of grace, clutching opportunity as it runs by, and getting our doors and windows ready for our going.

We are ashamed, O God, to think how vainly with our words we beat at heaven's door of prayer, till, like dead leaves that one night's frost has nipped, they lie along the pathway of the angels. Help us to live our prayers. Help us to answer some of them ourselves through the grace Thou givest.

Seal this day with Thy blessing and pardon, we beseech Thee. Shut its door fast against the return of evil. Let no unavailing grief over the unrealised linger with us; but give our souls true repentance, which will turn us from the old that is unworthy and lift us to the new that has Christ's consecration upon it. Deepen the blessing of all that has been good in the day which we now leave behind us. Give us sweet sleep until to-morrow's light shall wake us. Feed our souls upon the bread of life, and give us the promise of the heavenly vision. For Jesu's sake.

THE GATES OF PRAYER

Tuesday Morning

O GOD, whose love makes every morning sweet and fair, full of new hopes and dreams, we thank Thee for the fresh opportunities that are about our feet on this new day which Thou hast given us. All Nature praises Thee; give our hearts, too, the utterance of our thanks for all Thy goodness, and for Thy beauty on the water and the land.

We thank Thee that Thou hast given us grace to be patient with life's worries and sufferings, for the daily task, keeping us brave enough to face what irks us oftentimes. We dare not meet the darkness or the day unless Thy love be with us; and sleeping and waking would alike be full of pain and fear, but for Thy pity which moves beside us as we go about our business, and watches near us till the morning's dawn.

Sweet is Thy love, O Father. It takes away the bitterness from every cup of duty, and we see, through it, sunlight where we thought that all was dark, and far-stretching ways where all seemed trackless waste.

Deepen our lives, that we may understand more clearly what we are, and learn more clearly what we may yet become. Loosen some music within us, that we may serve Thee gladly, and be enabled to cheer and encourage others. Give us honourable prosperity. We ask not gain from godliness; but grant us the treasure of golden deeds, and words of shining worth, wherewith to help the suffering and the poor, and guide the weary into calm.

Make us, day by day, more worthy of Thy mercy, of the love of those around us, and of our own esteem.

Remember all from whose life the light has faded, through sorrow, sickness, sin or shame, or by death's passing; and bless with Thy pity the forgotten, the poor, and the dying. For Jesu's sake.

THE GATES OF PRAYER

Tuesday Evening

O GOD, who hast brought us again safely through the day's varied difficulties and perplexities to the time of rest, we thank Thee for Thy care and guidance, and for all hopes and joys which Thou hast given us amidst the work and trials of its varying hours. Help us now to leave our worries outside these walls. Let sweet peace be at our firesides with our beloved whom Thou hast brought into our lives.

Wherein we have been deficient, pardon us; where we have been misled through frailty of our nature, give us Thy pity; and be merciful unto us in Thy judgment upon us here and hereafter.

It is hard for us to rise out of our temptations and imperfections to a life which can satisfy even ourselves, to preserve our garments white in an unclean world, to walk sure among so many pitfalls, and keep our words free from the taint of earthly conversations. But we know that Thy justice weighs all things aright, and that Thy love remembers with equalising mercy the failures and the wrecks whom bitter storms and adverse seas drive back from the course they aimed at, as well as the prosperous voyagers, and those whom success makes glad at heart. Help us, therefore, to turn away from what has saddened us, and to learn the lesson which they teach us. Be Thou our Saviour, and our Guide.

Especially be with the friendless, the forsaken, and the bereaved, this night, and all nights. Comfort all those to whom love's going forth has been as the setting of the sun; speak to them of daybreak on the other side.

Walk among our dreams, O Christ, and keep them fair. Let no dark shadows stain our lives in sleep or waking.

Unite the efforts of Thy Son's Church, and bless all who are doing their best for Thee, our Father. Give also even unto us the blessing of Thy grace which we ask for all the world. For Jesu's sake.

THE GATES OF PRAYER

Wednesday Morning

FOR whatsoever measure of gladness and of health that may be ours this morning, we give Thee thanks, O God; for the friends that will be beside us, and the love that will speak to us, and any prosperity or success which may crown our work. We praise Thee for Thy goodness, and Thy remembrance of us through the dark hours when we were laid asleep, folded in forgetful peace. We thank Thee for that protecting care which made the darkness safe, and kept us till the dawn.

Fountain of love, from whom all beauty flows, fill our hearts with trustfulness, that we may ever feel Thee near us as we walk through life. Source of all light, be over all our darkness, and let our narrow vistas expand into the fulness of Thy day. Consecrate the way in which our feet should go, and let us behold it sometimes shining clearly, in the mists and perplexities of our querulous doubtings and blinded gropings about the gate of life. Let us trust, even where we cannot see; and stretch forth our uncertain hands until we feel Thy kind hands near us, and be led, where we fear to venture. It is enough if Thou be in the darkness with us, if the music of Thy pleadings and Thy promises be kept moving in our hearts. Believing, we shall walk whithersoever Thy Spirit calls us, trusting always in our Father's saving love.

Pardon us our pride in what is so often unworthy of Thy redeemed, our seeking after low ideals and mean desires; and do Thou lift us nearer the noble life of service, aspiration, and achievement, for which we long.

Let the meaning of this day, unknown as yet, fall apart before us as we move through it; and keep and save us, with all dear to us, from everything whereby we may grieve Thy Holy Spirit, or prove unworthy of our Saviour Christ.

Bless the trade of our country. Prosper all her enterprise, so far as it conforms to honesty and truth; and let the fear of being false to Thee be the only fear within our hearts. For Jesu's sake.

THE GATES OF PRAYER

Wednesday Evening

OUR Father, we leave behind us the ache of the day that has ended; and, in the shadows of the deepening night, we come to Thee. Where the scars of the day are, let Thy healing love be laid. When our work has wearied us, and been distressful to our spirits, comfort us, O God. Here we would lay down our cross for a little while, and ask Thee, for the sake of Christ, who carried His, to make it a blessing to us. Remember all cross-bearers. Remember all who have burdens to carry, especially those whose crosses have been fashioned by fingers dear to them, and whose burdens are the heavier for the love that is in them.

We make sorrows often for ourselves, and we weary our spirits in the quest of joys that elude us, and satisfactions that slip from our grasp. Little disappointments make us forget Thy great promises; and shadows of things of small account bar our path with fears we cannot face. Give us a braver outlook on life's unequal demands. And when the thought of our own sin weighs us low, awaken within us the memory of Christ's love and sacrifice for us; and give to our souls the sense of pitying companionship and pain-uplifting pardon. Make us more ready to respond to Thy pleading, and fit us to be living instruments of Thy grace.

Remember all who are in danger or distress. Remember all who are in deeper darkness than the night itself can bring them. Remember the dying, and all who are watching by those dear to them. Give peace to the suffering and rest to the weary; and watch by the lonely till the dawn. Where the sleepless are mourning, where Sin sits wide-eyed and Pride will not repent, be Thou, this night, O Father.

Enfold all the world in Thy love, and let no heart ever cease to hope in Thee. Prepare us all more and more for Thy coming, and keep us watchful, and ready against Thy judgment day.

Bless us and our beloved, young and old together, with pardon for all that has been wrong, or weak, or imperfect in our day's work done; and grant that we may do better if To-morrow's chance comes to us. For Jesu's sake.

THE GATES OF PRAYER

Thursday Morning

O GOD Who hast flooded the sleeping world with sweet light, and awakened humanity to labour anew for daily bread, let Thy grace be unto us as the dawn of a new life, and do Thou open our hearts to knowledge of Thee.

As we ask Thee to be always with us, so would we pray that Thou be with men and women everywhere. Comfort those who have risen to face this day with old sorrows clinging to them, and strengthen any to whom grief is coming, that they may be able to bear what To-day is bringing. Be especially near the sick, whose eyes greet the dawn with weariness, out of a night of pain and unrest. Let this day be unto such as a time when Christ may be beside them with healing and love.

Make the whole world a temple of Thy truth, O God. Let the Christ of the knotted cords cleanse its places of traffic, driving out false dealings from trade, hypocrisies from religion, and unrighteousness from politics and statecraft. Make this day a day of honour everywhere.

Keep our own homes and our own hearts clean, O Father. Withhold us from all that would displease Thee, or hurt our fellows, or be unworthy of ourselves. Help us to maintain our name esteemed, or to lift it to the place of respect amongst upright men. For what Thou givest, make us grateful; what Thou takest from us let us resign with patience. Amid the flickering shadows and uncertainties of life let us often see Thy certain light guiding us in the way we ought to follow.

Remember every soul that shall this day be tempted into error, or weakness, or sin. Give them strength to resist unto victory.

Bless all workers everywhere, especially the poor, who have hardships and distresses every day to bear for themselves and those dependent on them. Bless all schools and teachers, and all who are seeking knowledge. Let the morning light have promise in it, as it enters asylums, prisons, hospitals, and darkened places. Bless little children, and keep them in Thy way, till, through brave manhood and fair womanhood, they reach Thy presence. Make us all children of Christ Jesus, in whose name we ever ask these things from Thee.

THE GATES OF PRAYER

Thursday Evening

FATHER, we thank Thee that Thou hast brought us, by a way untrodden heretofore, unto the close of another day. We are conscious of our weaknesses in all that we have done. What we prayed for with the morning's light, we have not followed till the evening hour. The truth which we knew, we have betrayed, and the faith with which we faced the world, we have denied, through selfishness and unrighteousness of thought and deed. Forgetfulness of simplest duties has made us, ere we knew it, enemies of Thine. Yet, Thou knowest, for Thou beholdest all our hidden heart, that even our failure and our weakness have been the best we could do to-day. Pity us in this, O Father, and make us fit to answer our own confessions on the morrow, by better resolves and truer deeds sprung from them. Be Thou the nearer us, O Christ, our Saviour, and help us to be worthier of our own prayers.

For what Thou hast been to us, no words can ever speak our thanks; for what ourselves have been, no speech can ever cover half our shame. Remember us when we are tried beyond our strength by the feeble things that do so often master us, and let not either joy or sorrow turn our thoughts from Thee.

Father, we hear, sometimes, through the dark, the footsteps of our loved ones going from us. Let us always feel Thee near to us and them. Let our loved ones, in their passing, leave a door open between us and Thee, that its light may lead us nearer to where Thou art, even in their going.

Make all our days here, days wherein we may seek and find Thee. Let no earthly shadow perplex us, and no vain voices delude us. Suffer us not, O God, to follow any light but Thine. And whatsoever Thou give or take, give us always the strength we need, with patient love to help us through each day's trial, and every daily duty.

Give us, and all dear to us, Thy grace with soft refreshing slumber, free from pain. Remember all Thy children, everywhere, and especially those who are sad, or suffering, or sick; and give all the world, this night, Thy peace. For Jesu's sake.

THE GATES OF PRAYER

Friday Morning

○ THOU that art our Saviour and our Friend, giving us strength to labour, hope to sustain us, and rest when the time of sleep comes to the world, we thank Thee for all Thy blessings which are past, and for the promises of Thy love as yet unrealised. Let not the days pass silent and meaningless. Give us renewed appreciation of Thy mercies; and, with the sure sense of Thy pardon in Christ Jesus, make our responsibilities become quickening realities. Make every day a new day for us, that we may shake off the bondage of evil which has been growing upon us, and stretch forward to thoughts and actions more worthy of the children of Thy saving grace.

Let the wretched have fresh inspirations toward the better life. Let the mean and the false see Christ's way waiting at their foot. Let them see themselves, and be ashamed in presence of the beautiful and true which they have been betraying and denying. Let the wounds of Christ grow in us and upon us, till our hearts break for the sorrows of others, and our hands rejoice to be pierced for the world's pain. Let men and women learn, through us, something about Thy love, and the life which has the Cross for its guide to peace and gladness here.

Thou hast been beside us when the way was lonely, when poverty made our doorstep unfrequented, and sorrow made us poor companions; and we thank Thee for the power Thou didst give unto us then, to be strong and to endure. Be with us also when success may make us forgetful of the constant need we have for Thy help; and when the crowd distracts us so that we do not hear Thy voice.

Give us, in the stress of our day, sweet breathing spaces where we may remember Thee. Let the music of the still waters, and the quiet of the green pastures be sometimes with us even in the streets and stairs and busy strife of towns. With the sorrows and the disappointments, the forgetfulness and failures, the weakness and the sin, give us the pity of Christ, and we shall hope again and strive once more, with new hearts, for the mastery. For Jesu's sake.

THE GATES OF PRAYER

Friday Evening

WE have said goodbye to another day, with all it has held for us ; and, as we turn from it, we seek peace with Thee, our God. We would shut the door on every shadow which can come between us and Thee, or between us and those we love. The selfishness which we confess, the unrealised desires after perfection, all effort which we have left unfinished, all wherein our life this day has fallen short, we would thrust behind us, out of our hearts, into the night. Come, Thou holy Spirit of the Father, and let Thy peace sink over our dissatisfaction and unrest. We are tired children, weary from our joys and sorrows alike ; and we cannot lie down to sleep unless we feel our Father near us in the dark. Stand by us in the shadows, we beseech Thee, till the dawn shall wake the world once again.

Pardon our sinfulness, and all wherein, through mortal weakness, we have done amiss. Pity us for our shifting wills, our tangled and confusing passions. We acknowledge our faults. We are ashamed. Save us from the things that perplex us, O our God. Where we have erred, direct us aright ; where we are weak, strengthen and support us ; where we fall, do Thou uplift us.

Remember all who are dear to us ; and hear their prayer wherever they may be. Remember all the world's children, alike those whom the world remembers, and whom the world forgets. Soothe the sorrows of the poor ; and uphold the faith of the dying and bereaved. Let the solitary know Thou art beside them in their hour of loneliness.

Bless our native land, and the children of our Empire scattered everywhere. Keep them worthy of the faith and conflict of their fathers. Let not the anguish of war come near our borders ; yet suffer us not ever to betray, through coward fears, the liberty men wrote upon our flag in days of old. Remember all who are oppressed, all who are fighting just battles, all who are sick and afflicted everywhere. Guide all physicians and nurses. Keep politics and religion honest. Bless those who are over us in authority, and surround them with the brave and the true. Pillow the world on Thy love this night and bless ourselves with the blessing which we ask for all men now. For Jesu's sake.

THE GATES OF PRAYER

Saturday Morning

○ THOU Whose days are deathless, keep us near Thy love in our brief dying days.

For Thy guidance in the week that now is closing, for the continued grace that has kept ways open for our stumbling feet, for the pardon which Thou offerest unto us through Christ, we give Thee thanks, O God. Our lips can never frame, and our words can never utter, the fulness of our sense of all Thy goodness. We can but kneel before Christ's Cross, and let our deepest silence be our strongest prayer. We know how empty are our lives, how weak our best endeavour, how poor our noblest thought.

Fill us with what we need, O bountiful Creator, and let us not be dark and shameful in the world which Thou hast made so fair. Let us not be voiceless when all creation praises Thee; and void of good when all except ourselves are fraught with blessing. Use us, our Father, for Thy purpose, even as water-bearers and love-bringers to those whose souls are parched and desolate here. Let us go forth upon our daily journey, knowing that Thou wilt help us to discern and to bring beauty and sweetness to those who know it not. Above all, touch our lives, we beseech Thee, with the love of Jesus Christ. Make us lowly and kind as He was, following His example in word and thought and deed. Guard us against all that embitters our relations with others. Fill our souls with true charity in judgment and in utterance. Let us seek good rather than ill in the lives of those around us, that we may help to sweeten the world for the day of the coming of Christ.

Let us find no rest in sin. Harden the path of our forgetfulness till we turn out of it into the way of life and earnest duty. Enable us to do good wheresoever the chance may meet us. If a word of helpful cheer be needed, grant that it may be given unto us to speak it; and let us see the hands that are outstretched, and the hearts that are darkened, as we go through the world. Gather the good of the week together for us, and bind it with Thy blessing. Help us to fling the evil for ever behind us. So keep us and all men busy in good work until the long rest claims us, out of which we shall awake to be with Thee. For Jesu's sake.

THE GATES OF PRAYER

Saturday Evening

NOW hast Thou brought us safely, our Father, through another week; and, in the shadow of the deepening night, we look back over the way we have passed hitherto, and wonder to remember how poor a thing we are making of our life. What will the unknown days hold for us, O God, that can render it easier to be good and true than in the days that we have known and used?

Make our hearts, this night, open to Thy Spirit. Silence the passions and distracting thoughts that have their dwelling there; and keep our souls calm and faithful for Thy service on the morrow. Take away separating things from the worship of Thy people everywhere. Let not human pride drive human love from the brotherhood of Christ. Make men strong enough to subdue themselves, that they may learn the more of Thee. Give Thy guidance to all who seek, through darkness and through sorrow, for the illumination and the comfort of the Cross.

For all that Thou hast given to us, and ever art bestowing, our silence must be still our deepest thanks. Shame for our neglect of our opportunities puts a finger on our lips. But Thou knowest what our confessions should be, and our regrets cannot be hid from Thy pity. If we were strong, no heights should be beyond us; but the steps give way beneath us, sometimes; our hearts faint and fail us, and the victory passes from our reach. Deepen our faith, O Thou Redeemer of men; and let us never forget how near Thou always art. Keep us more worthy of Thy remembrance, and the love of those we love.

Fold us about this night with Thy protecting care. Remember all who have not what Thou hast given to us, of comfort, of gladness, of love, and the means of life. Watch over all who are far from home, dwelling among strangers, or travelling by land or sea. Pity the homeless, and those that have no friends. Remember the empty-hearted, and all those whose lives have become dark and joyless through their own faults, or through the sins of others. For Jesu's sake.

THE GATES OF PRAYER

Sunday Morning

O LORD our God, Who with a Father's love preservest and guidest all Thy children day by day, we thank thee that, amidst sorrow, sin, and weakness, Thou hast still been by our side, and hast called us now to Thy feet on another day of hope. Be very near to us, O God, and teach us to worship Thee aright.

Purify our thoughts, that they may be fit to rise into Thy presence. Deepen and intensify our faith, that we may stand fast in the certainty of Thy love. Let not our hope pass from us, among the uncertain things of time.

We confess our unworthiness, our selfishness, and our sins, that sadden us when we remember Thee. Take them from us, O Father; pardon us for our foolishness and forgetfulness; and quicken us that we may learn to walk with those who, having followed Thee, have entered, passed the shadow, into Thine abiding rest.

Give us higher aims than we have known, and better resolves after a better life in Thee. Teach us how to walk through love to Thee. Help us by the hand, O Thou that art ever in the darkness, waiting for the weary, to guide them home. Forget us not, as we stumble, for without Thee we are all forlorn.

Teach us to think of others when we recall Thy love. Remember those who are with us in the house of prayer, and all who are hindered through care or sickness, sadness, poverty or dying. Remember the unremembered, the helpless, and the friendless, we beseech Thee; and help us to live our own prayers as we go through life's pilgrimage. Let us find wells by the way, and leave guiding marks for those who are coming after us.

Especially remove far from us all grudge against others, all petty anger over fancied slights, and all false estimates of our own worth in the world. And let each morning be truly a gate to sweeter thoughts, leading us nearer the realising of our hopes in Christ. For His name's sake.

THE GATES OF PRAYER

Sunday Evening

WE thank Thee, O God, for the day that now is closing, for its worship and its teaching, for the comfort and the peace it has given to our souls. Grant that Thy word may abide upon us, that we may carry with us into our week's labour and strife the influence of its power. When we are cast down, let the remembrance of it cheer us. When we are tempted and tried, let its promises strengthen us, and may Thy Sabbaths be to our spirits as times and seasons when Thou didst walk with us, receiving us into Thy love, as Thy children reconciled to Thee. May such a thought prove to us a never-failing help, when we recall it in our times of weakness and distress.

Grant, O God, that our hard hearts may have been broken unto Christ; that the pleading for His sake may not have passed over us entirely, like water on a stone, but may have sunk into our being, and revived the dreams of a better life, and hopes of higher things, which have been languishing there. Grip us and hold us fast. Steady us in our reeling world, O Father. Let Thy Spirit guide us, through all ways, unto the living Way.

May souls that were seeking Thee, this day have found Thee; and hearts that were weary away from Thee, feel refreshed by the dew of Thy love.

Let not the abandoned and the outcast abide afar from Thy presence; but, in Thy mercy, save and heal them all. In Thine own time, O Father, make us all Thine own; and lift the sorrowing world to a home of peace upon Thy bosom. Of Thy grace obliterate the transgressions of us, poor men and women everywhere, seeking Thee in our needs, our sorrows, and our sins.

Close Thou the day with Thy blessing, and let sweet rest be given to us all this night.

Remember those especially for whom the darkness shall be full of pain, in hospitals, asylums, and prisons; and let Thine angels be in all places, comforting, upholding, and restoring. For Jesu's sake.

THE GATES OF PRAYER

In Darkness

WHEN the days of darkness come, O Lord, remember us. Time bears us swiftly onward to the finish. O let the end of earthly things be the beginning of the perfect life in Thee.

Make us thankful for all Thy blessings, known or unknown to us, wherewith our lives have been helped, and our hearts comforted. Let thy pity enfold us because we have been blind, but now we see; and led away into pain through sin, but now we know, and long for the true highway of light. Let the sorrows of sight and knowledge be changed into gladness and peace, through Thy love abiding with us.

Especially remember the poor and homeless, the suffering and the dying, and let Thy love comfort earth's mourners, and all sad at heart everywhere.

Remember us always, O Father of Mercies, and make us worthier of Thy blessing.

O God, with Whom do dwell eternally the spirits of the faithful and the true, consecrate our remembrance of them, now and for evermore. We thank Thee for all the brave. We thank Thee that their influence abides; and that in every onward movement of the world, their souls go marching along. Let their names stand amongst us, a rebuke in degenerate days, an incentive to duty when the times shall call us, and a memorial of what true men have done. Bless those upon whose hearts their names are written deathlessly. Comfort and strengthen all such, everywhere. Bless our native land, our King and Queen, all who are over us—our soldiers and sailors, the children of our empire, in all the wide world. Keep war and distress far from us; yet farther from us keep all cowardly fears, that we may be more worthy of the race that bore us, and of the brave gone on before. Guide us for ever, O Thou King of kings, until the world and our day be done, and we go home to Thee. For Jesu's sake.

THE GATES OF PRAYER

Sacramental

H EAVENLY FATHER, as we are drawing near the time of the remembrance of the Holy Supper of the Lord Christ, prepare our hearts for His table. Cleanse us from all that hinders the fulfilling of His will within us. Give us true lowliness of life, deep earnestness of faith, and, above all, the spirit of true brotherhood, that in charity and peace we may gather in Thy house, ready and fitted to know the Lord.

We acknowledge our unworthiness to come into His presence, for we have been impure, untrue, and unkind; we have worshipped our own will, and our own pride of heart, and have not been so loving, so pure, and true, as those who profess to be His children should have been. Have pity on us, O Thou God of grace, for Thou knowest how frail and easily persuaded we are by nature, and how soon our best resolves are broken down. Grant that this season may verily be the door of entrance to a higher life; and as Thou callest us to nobler effort after righteousness, uphold us, we beseech Thee, when we try to do Thy will.

Remember all who are sin-pursued and grief-oppressed at this time. Be with the selfish, and the wilful, and the sinning; and let Thy saving love, like an angel of light, meet them in the way, turning them again to Thee. Be with the sick everywhere, and especially those known and dear to us. Mingle Thy pity and comfort with the cup of their sorrow and pain, and speak to the whole wide world of Thine always-abiding peace. Give us also, O our Father, the blessedness we ask for others—the earnest grace of seeking Thee, the joy of finding Thee, and the bliss of ever resting in Thy presence.

Seal with Thy blessing, O Heavenly Father, our services at this time. Go forward with Thy people who are seeking contact with Christ, and grant that at His table they may find Him. Remember in Thy mercy the poor, the weak, the sad, and the suffering, the lonely, the friendless, the forsaken, and the forgotten. Be a shelter to the homeless, and a friend to those who have none to help them. Guide the ship across the waters, and hear the prayers of those whose loved ones are sailing on the sea. Remember all who are far from home. Bless all widows and orphans, and fill the world with Thine unmasterable love, bringing us all in Thine own time closer to Thee. For Jesu's sake.

THE GATES OF PRAYER

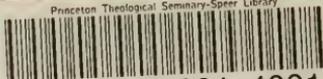
Sacramental

KNOCK Thou on the door of our hearts, O King of Glory; and grant that we may open unto Thee, that Thou mayest enter in and make the poor house of our soul sweet and beautiful again. Come, Thou Lord Jesus, who of old hadst human comradeships, and be to-day our Saviour and our Friend. O Holy Spirit, that didst move of old on the face of the dark waters, be Thou in the midst of our shadowed lives, and quicken us Godwards. Speak to each heart here, O Trinity of Love and Power, and make our tangled dreams and hopes, our failures and defeats, our joys and sorrows, straight and fair and lovely once again, that we may approach this table worthily, seeking and joyfully finding communion with the Saviour who died for us.

We praise and bless Thee for Thine undying remembrance and Thy goodness to us; for the love of comrade and of friend; for the love of husband and wife and child; for the light that is on the water and the land; for the shadow that folds us about in quiet sleep; for the joy that fills our hearts with music, and the sorrow that brings Thee near us and turns our souls to Thee; for the hope and strength and the consolation of this world, and the earnest expectation of the world beyond the shadows; for human help that we have known, human sympathy, human charity; and for the continued remembrance of what His life, His love, and His death upon the Cross mean for the ages of humanity.

Bless Thou unto us these holy symbols of our Saviour's sacrifice, and grant that to our souls, through faith, this bread broken, and this wine poured forth may become fit symbols of the body and the blood of Him who died for us on Calvary, to our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace. For His name's sake.

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 01001 4001