

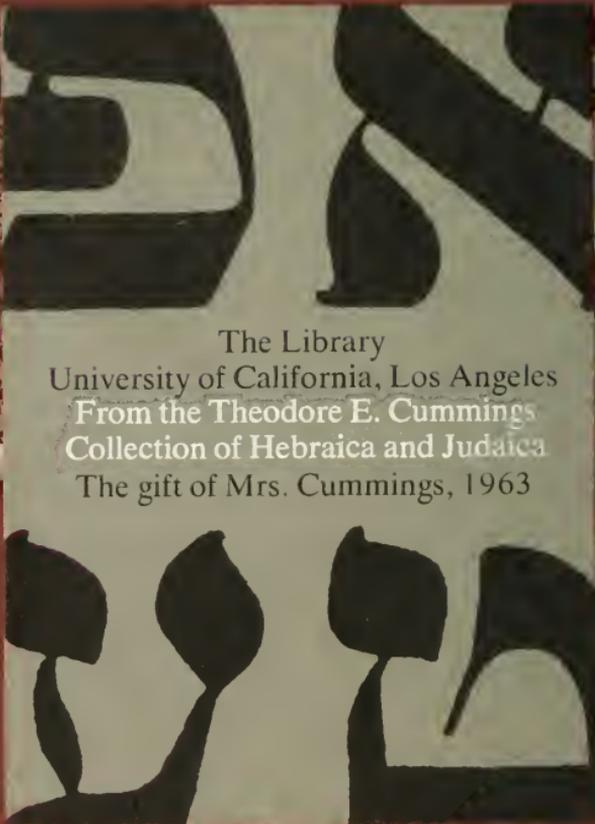


PRAYERS



AND MEDITATIONS





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PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS

FOR

EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR.

“Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.”—(*Psalm* xix. 14.)

LONDON :

PRINTED BY WERTHEIMER, LEA AND CO.,

FINSBURY CIRCUS.

1870.

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TO THE MEMORY OF
A FONDLY CHERISHED DAUGHTER
THE FOLLOWING PAGES ARE INSCRIBED
WITH FEELINGS OF UNALTERABLE LOVE.

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JANUARY.

1.

“Fear not, for I am with thee.”—(*Isaiah* xliii. 5.)

HOW can I fear and tremble, my Heavenly Protector, when Thou art with me always and everywhere from the cradle to the grave—when I close my eyes, and with thankful lips for the blessings of the waking hours humbly pray that the coming night may bring rest and refreshing sleep, and when I rise, and prepare for the performance of duty, for labour, and study, and exertion! Thou wilt not forsake me, Almighty God, in peril and distress. Thou wilt be my support in all my thoughts, feelings, and actions, if I prize and practise justice and truth, love and forgiveness. Thou wilt graciously vouchsafe to me the power of working and striving, undaunted by dangers and trials. With such pillars of strength as Thy Divine arm and hand to uphold me, fear shall vanish out of my path, while hope remains to brighten it; for Thou, O Merciful God, art my salvation for evermore. Amen.

2.

“And I will bless thee, . . . and thou shalt be a blessing.”

(*Genesis* xii. 2.)

WE besecch Thee, Lord God Almighty, to make us worthy of the Divine words of Thy goodness, so that with the heavenly ointment of Thy blessing on our heads, with the balm of it in our hearts, with that holy cordial of invincible strength in our conscience, with Thy power to support, and protect, and aid us, we may become a blessing to all around. And should it not be the most ardent prayer, the most fervid yearning, and the noblest aim of our existence, is it not the greatest solace in troubled times, the highest joy in happiness, to be a blessing, to be mercifully permitted to allay suffering, to cause peace and tranquillity to displace strife and irritation, to uphold the courage of the drooping, to point out the right path to the waverer, and to lend a helping hand to those who halt and falter, that they may overcome difficulties and conquer obstacles? Is it not the best and brightest fulfilment of our mission on earth to be allowed to give plentifully, that the hungry may be fed, the naked clothed, the roofless sheltered, the sick healed, and the ignorant taught; to give not merely substantial aid, but the celestial manna of hope and faith, to wrap the soft warm cloak of affection round those who need it; to offer the support of kindness, the charity that binds up the wounds of the heart-sore, the light of truth and love that disperses gloom and darkness? Thus we may become a blessing, O Eternal Lord, if Thou wilt vouchsafe

to us the precious treasures of Thy infinite bounty, if Thou wilt strengthen our understanding that it may see what is right, if Thou wilt bless our hands that they may do what is good !

3.

“ O ye whales, and all that move in the waters, bless ye the Lord.”

(Song of the Three Holy Children, ver. 57.)

THOU, Almighty God, who hast made the earth so beautiful, art inexhaustible in Thy gifts, and hast bestowed almost equal bounties and embellishments on the kingdom of the seas. We sail over the waters, and with wondering eyes strive to penetrate their mysteries. We cast our line into the glassy deep, we fling our nets into the sapphire caves, and all are teeming with life and beauty. Groves of coral, so wonderful that no pen can describe, and no pencil portray them, extend under the crystal mirror ; and fishes glistening with all the tints of the rainbow, swim in and out among the mimic branches, or sleep beneath the canopy of delicately painted shells, which lie in profusion on the countless sands. There are marine forests and lovely gardens of sea flowers, brilliant and shifting under the liquid veil that floats capriciously over them, now retiring, now advancing. The waves ebb and flow, and as they rush back, how marvellous is the humid world which they disclose—mosses and weeds, rocks, worn and honey-combed, and filled with clear pools all swarming with animated beings, many of them

unknown, unnamed, incomprehensible in their strange beauty! Large vessels career over the waters which raging storms lash into fury; but beneath, in the pure depths of the ocean, all is still, and calm, and peaceful, and fierce tempests howl and shriek, yet pass over them unheard and unfelt! And if all that moves in the realm of the seas mutely blesses Thy holy name, should we not bless Thee at all times, both silently and audibly, Almighty Lord, while we pray, that in the depths of our heart there may be stillness and tranquillity unruffled by the storms of fate, unharmed by the vicissitudes of life, that there may be undisturbed peace resting on calm belief, and unshaken faith in Thy tender and infinite mercies!

4.

“I long for Thy salvation, O Lord, and Thy law is my delight.”
(*Psalm cxix.* 174.)

THERE is much sorrow in this world, Almighty God, yet most of it is wrought by ourselves. The gloomy spirit, the rebellious heart, make joy impossible. There can be no gladness for us even when golden sunshine seems to brighten our path, unless we raise our thoughts to Thee in grateful acknowledgment of the mercies and blessings of Thy goodness. And how can we uplift our hands and our lips unto Thee, the Divine Dispenser of all beneficence, the all-seeing and unerring Judge, when we have allowed the mind which Thou hast given us, to be perverted by narrow prejudices, perhaps

by sinful thoughts? It is only the noble aim, the pious aspiration, the zealous activity, the dutiful exertion, that can lead us to happiness, or uphold and support us in affliction. When our anxious efforts tend to self-improvement, and when they are devoted in love and kindness to the service of our brethren, then, and then only, we shall know the fulness of bliss, and be able to enjoy the precious gifts and numberless treasures which Thy heavenly bounty has showered down upon the earth for the delight of Thy children.



5.

“I am the Almighty God; walk before Me, and be thou perfect.”

(*Genesis xvii. 1.*)

MAY Thy heavenly call, our gracious Lord, be heard by us at all hours of the day, and when we wake up in the stillness of the night! May it ring in our ears, and echo in our hearts, and be unto us like sacred bells that summon the faithful to the worship of Thy goodness and greatness, to the study of Thy holy Law! All nature wafts to us the melodies of Thy Divine voice. We seem to recognize them in the songs of the blithe birds which Thou hast created; in the lays of those myriads of winged choristers that fill with their jubilant notes the emerald temples of woodland and forest and the crystal vault of heaven, and seem to invite us to partake of the gifts and blessings of Thy bounty so lavishly vouchsafed to the animated beings whom Thy infinite mercy has formed and graciously placed in this world.

Thou hast bidden us, O Lord, to live in the light of Thy countenance, and be perfect. If we walk before Thee, Thy sunshine will irradiate our path, dispel all shadows, rend all veils, cause all mists to disappear from our sight, and make us glow with the warmth of true zeal, that melts even the icy coldness of adversity. If we walk before Thee, nettles will not sting, thistles will not wound, thorns will not lacerate us ; we shall escape from all dangers ; we shall have strength and power for the fulfilment of all duties ; benevolence, tenderness, and devotion for all great and gentle deeds ; and a deep horror and detestation of all that is mean, and base, and unfair. How can we walk before Thee, God of eternal justice and mercy, and harbour feelings of hatred, of malice or envy, of anger or revenge ? Thou hast enjoined us to be perfect ; how glorious is the command ! Even those who distrust their weakness or their often failing means, will be raised up from lowliness, and lifted on high-soaring hopes, and borne on eagles' wings by Thy sacred word ; they will be encouraged and supported to cherish the noblest aspirations, to yearn for that life of active and unceasing devotion, of ready, and anxious, and eager self-abnegation, which remembers its own wishes and inclinations only to lay them on the shrine of duty for the enjoyment and blessing of others. To walk before Thee in the clearness of Thy heavenly and all-searching daylight, in the brightness of Thy all-seeing eye, is to banish selfishness, is to be perfect and worthy of Thy mercy, O Lord God Almighty.

6.

“ I have blotted out thy transgressions as a thick cloud that passeth away,
and thy sins as a vapour; return unto Me, for I have redeemed thee.”

(Isaiah xlv. 22.)

I HAVE sinned, O Lord God Almighty, if not in word and deed, yet in thought and feeling; and how could my speech be soft and gentle, or the actions of my life productive of good, when my heart and mind were full of irritation? The fetters of my weakness, and the weight of my faults, overpowered me, the burden of indolence and neglected duties weighed me to the ground. I was headstrong, and my obstinacy reproached me perpetually, and yet I hoped on and on, from day to day, trusting that each morn might prove the beginning of a new existence, and that my conscience would, ere long, be free and light and pure, that Thy heavenly blessing would uphold me, and strengthen my courage, that Thy mercy would accept my repentance, and wipe away the stains, and lift the load from my soul. Thou, Almighty Father, hast heard my cry, and listened to my prayer, and seen my anguish. Thou hast caused the black cloud to drift away, and the sunshine of Thy countenance to give me peace and tranquillity. How can Thy servant ever show gratitude warm and deep, if not by the life-long service of a contrite heart?

7.

“ In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.”

(*Genesis* iii. 19.)

MAKE us thankful, Almighty God, for the laws of Thy Divine goodness; permit us to understand their heavenly wisdom, to obey them in love and reverence, to carry them out gladly and cheerfully. Allow us to feel that the bread which we eat after active labours, tastes all the sweeter for having been won by earnest, and anxious, and conscientious industry; enable us to know that work is the great law and rule of life. There is no inertness throughout the whole expanse of Thy wondrous universe. The moon, and the earth, and all the planets, revolving amid countless galaxies of stars, those distant and mysterious worlds, whose light travels for thousands, nay millions of years to reach our globe, are perpetually moving; the winds are always on the wing; the fountains bubble and sparkle for ever; the torrents rush; the cascades leap; the rivers flow; the waves of the ocean roar loudly, or murmur softly, dashing along, or dancing in the sunbeam, and reflecting the sapphire dome above with the swift clouds and the changes of every hour; the grass-blade grows and swells into yellow ears of corn, the rootlet shoots up, and then come branches, and leaves, and buds, and blossoms, and fruit, first pale and hard, turning daily softer, and sweeter, and brighter, under the clear gems of morning and evening dew, under the mellowing rays of the sun. Should we alone stand still on the surface of the earth—we, for whom, in Thy unbounded beneficence, Thou hast adorned it with so many

delights and enchantments—we, the highest of organised beings called into existence by Thy Divine will, to whom all other creatures have been made subservient, and whom Thou hast graciously formed in Thy own image? Could we enjoy the treasures of Thy bounty if we lived on in idleness, or in sloth and apathy? No; we must labour with every muscle and fibre of our limbs, with every thought and conviction of the mind, with every feeling and aspiration of the heart, with every word of the lips, with every pulsation of our existence, and with our life-blood, to do our duty, to win our daily bread, to earn the right of living. May we never forget the most sacred obligation of industry, and never be tempted to idle one precious moment away. Labour is its own and our reward; it enhances our joys, it mitigates our sorrows. Blessed, and for evermore blessed, art Thou, Almighty God, who hast graciously instituted the immutable law of labour for the well-being and happiness of Thy children.



8.

“Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.”—(*Isaiah* xlvi. 10.)

O MY God, I seem to wake out of a trance; the world has changed its aspect in my eyes; the duties of my life are no longer trials; all that vexed me has disappeared; offences have lost their sting; weariness does not cast me to the ground; I do not feel the weight of humiliation; and the heaviest load is not borne by me

as a burden. There are still thistles and thorns in my path, but they do not tear my garments, or cause my flesh to bleed ; there are sharp stones on the road, but they do not hurt my feet, for I have one great and everlasting sorrow in my heart, that dwarfs all minor cares and anxieties—one all-consuming fire in my bosom, which has reduced to ashes all vanities and vexations. If such was and is Thy Divine will, my Heavenly Lord, I bow to it in humblest resignation, and my soul neither murmurs nor rebels. But I implore Thee, Almighty God, with every ardent prayer and fervid hope that I can utter and form, to preserve my loved ones from affliction, and make them good, and pure, and gentle, without causing them to pass through the flames of anguish, which scorch the breast and consume joy and gladness.

9.

“ For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee.”—(*Isaiah* liv. 7.)

O MY God, to be utterly cast down is to be really forsaken by Thee ; to be encompassed by the black and impenetrable clouds of despair, is not to be remembered by Thy Divine goodness ; to have lost the buoyancy of hope, the anchor of faith, the refuge of prayer, is to be quite forgotten by Thy heavenly beneficence. What is to become of me without Thy help, without Thy guidance? What can I do? Whither shall I wander, or where hide myself, and when shall I find rest? I

can neither live nor die without Thy merciful pardon, without Thy heavenly balm, without Thy blessing. How can atheism be possible when existence itself is a misery and an unbearable load without Thy forgiveness and Thy help, without the light of Thy countenance, Almighty Lord, to shine through all troubles and afflictions, and bid the sufferer look up to heaven for solace and support in this world, and uninterrupted tranquillity in the next ! But Thou wilt not hide Thyself eternally, Almighty Father of compassion ; Thou wilt have pity upon me, and vouchsafe the cordial of celestial peace to my bruised spirit and to my broken heart. Amen.



10.

“ Thou shalt be buried in a good old age.”—(*Genesis* xv. 15.)

OUR God in heaven, who hast made this world so beautiful, and filled it with so many wonders and delights for the enjoyment and happiness of Thy children, Thou hast graciously willed that we should love life, and prize it, and look upon it as the greatest of blessings, as the highest of privileges. In the fulness of it we can obey thy holy commandments, carry out, and inculcate Thy sacred laws, praise Thy celestial power, worship Thee humbly and with devout faith, prove our adoration for Thy inexhaustible goodness by years of useful labour, by noble works and aims, and dutiful service—by a deep and glowing appreciation

of the gifts and treasures of Thy bounty, by gentle words and kind deeds among our fellow-beings, by winning their affection, attachment, and gratitude, and joyfully giving them ours. Thy gracious promise vouchsafed to us, our Creator and Preserver, to be buried in a good old age, means that we shall live long, reap many harvests, see many roses bloom and fade in the golden light of summer, and aid and help our brethren with heart and mind, so that all may thrive and improve around us. If this be Thy Divine will, Lord God Almighty, let our life be prolonged for the accomplishment of all good works ! Amen.

11.

“ The Lord is my praise and song, for He hath become my salvation.”
(*Exodus xv. 2.*)

LET us praise Thee, O Lord, and the gifts of Thy bounty ; they are manifold and infinite. Let our words be songs, and our deeds Hallelujahs, to glorify the marvellous works of Thy power and beneficence. Heaven and earth are made beautiful and lovely, and radiant by Thy Divine hand, and upon us Thou hast showered Thy mercies and blessings, and given us years of sunshine and happiness, and innumerable treasures of love. And when troubles and afflictions overtake us, Thou causeth the torch of faith to glow with more warmth and clearness, that it may light up the gloom of sorrow and mourning with the celestial brightness of Thy compassion and salvation. So was it always, so let it be, Lord God Almighty, until the end of time ! Amen.

12.

“I am like the pelican of the wilderness ; I am like an owl of the desert. I watch and am as a sparrow alone upon the house-top.”

(*Psalm cii. 6, 7.*)

WHAT can be more dreary than the wilderness, where no human labour is able to win harvests from the barren soil, where life-sustaining pastures cannot grow, where nought but thistles sown by the wind, or wounding thorns—not the flower and fruit—but the weapons of the bramble, thrive among stones, and boulders, and rocky clefts, where the blast howls unchecked through the dismal solitude? There lives the pelican, far away from happier and more favoured regions. What is more melancholy than the desert, pervaded by the hot and heavy breath of the simoon, yellow with wide-spread plains of burning sand, where skeletons of mules and camels wither under the piercing eye of blood-thirsty kites and vultures? There, on mounds of sand, the owl hoots and shrieks. Alone upon the house-top flits the sparrow, removed from the green trees of garden and forest, from the golden grain of the field, from the tempting sweetness of the grape.

I feel like the bird of the wilderness ; my path seems full of sharp hard stones and of lacerating thorns ; I am lonely like the owl in the desolate waste, like the sparrow on the house-top. But the fault and the sin are mine, Almighty God. Thy Divine goodness and compassion endure for ever, and are extended to all whom Thy beneficence has called into life, however forlorn they may feel. If, from the stony pillow where the patriarch found rest, he saw a ladder reaching to heaven, and, on it, visions of beauty and glory, may I not also, from the

hardest bed of rocks, throughout my earthly pilgrimage, descry angels of hope and faith descending to sustain me here, or pointing upwards to the celestial realms of my merciful Father? Even when my existence has become a desert, may I not look around for some oasis to cool my fevered* brow, and there lave my wounds, refresh my parched lips, and find balm for my aching and bleeding heart?

13.

“You shall not afflict the widow and the orphan.”—(*Exodus* xxii. 22.)

ALMIGHTY God of wisdom and of mercy, in Thy hands are the ways of life and death, the blessings and the trials of our earthly existence; and if by Thy impenetrable decrees the widow is deprived of her protector, and the orphan of a loving father, the abundance of Thy Divine goodness allows the balm of consolation to drop into the wounded hearts of the mourners. Thou hast commanded us not to afflict them. May we never, in a thoughtless moment, be led to increase by vexation or annoyance the heavy burden of their sorrows! Make us ever mindful of the lonely struggles and the helplessness that bend them down, of the shadow that must veil their world, of the obstacles in their path, of the weight of the poor mother's anxieties, of the support that has been withdrawn from her, of the irreparable loss she and her child have sustained, and of the void by their side. Allow us, our Gracious Lord, to offer to the sufferers more than mere pity—the gentlest solace, the best comfort, the purest and sweetest streams of that milk of kindness which, more than any other gift, recalls Thy heavenly compassion and beneficence.

14.

“Understand that the Lord, thy God, doth not give thee this good land to possess it on account of thy righteousness.”—(*Deuteronomy* ix. 6.)

OUR neighbours and friends, and all those near us, may deem that we are just and kind, generous and forgiving, devoted and full of self-denying love ; but Thou, Omniscient God, for whom the human mind has no secrets, the heart no mysteries, the soul no hidden depths—Thou seest not only our shortcomings, our failures and imperfect deeds, our want of power, our weak aims and feeble efforts, but the blemishes that mar the purity of our lives, the faults and offences, which even the best and most conscientious workers among us commit every day of their existence. How could we believe that the treasures of Thy bounty have been vouchsafed to us on account of our righteousness ! What is our generosity ? Only a handful from the golden granary of Thy beneficence, a dole from the table which Thy bounty has prepared for us, or a faint glimmering of the goodness which Thy Divine mercy showers down upon our path. What is our kindness ? One drop of honey. Our charity ? A mite. What are our indulgence and forgiveness ? Mere atoms of balm. Is not our justice incomplete, our devotion insufficient—the one often cold or harsh, while the other frequently halts and grows weary ? Our righteousness must be as nought before Thy all-seeing eye, Almighty God, and the gift which we most devoutly crave from Thee is true humility—the ever-present knowledge and conviction that we owe all blessings to Thy heavenly favour and compassion, and nothing to our own poor merit.

15.

“For a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand ; I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.”—(*Psalm* lxxxiv. 10.)

JOY lies only in the consciousness of a pure and innocent life. Though steep and wearisome and difficult the path of righteousness, though numerous its besetting thorns, the bright buds and blossoms of fragrance and the glowing roses of summer far outnumber its wounding briars. There is sweetness and freshness in an existence woven with good and gentle deeds ; whereas the malignant and the selfish can never know happiness. To the casual observer evil-doers may, indeed, seem to prosper ; and in spite of the envy and ill-will that mark their days, they appear perhaps to reap golden harvests and gather luxuriant fruit. Yet we cannot doubt that, however full the granaries, and richly laden the tables of their wealth, however brilliant their dwellings, the bread of nourishment turns to ashes on their lips, their wine-cup is poisoned by remorse, and to them the home, which, to the rightminded, the loving and pious, is a sanctuary, becomes a prison-house, filled with ever torturing reproaches. Allow us, Almighty God, to live perpetually in grateful contemplation of Thy beneficence, and, in zealous, though humblest imitation of Thy Divine bounty, to do good and serve our brethren to the utmost of the means with which Thou hast blessed us ! Amen.



16.

“Wisdom and knowledge shall be the power of Thy time.”
(*Isaiah* xxxiii. 6.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, there is no wisdom among men that Thou hast not bestowed, there can be no knowledge that does not come from Thee. Thy Divine beneficence allows us to understand the holiness of Thy commandments and to obey them ; through Thy goodness we may fathom the marvellous laws which rule the universe, comprehend the wonders of the earth, and study the writings of the good and great, all inspired by Thy omnipotent will, and we may conquer the difficulties of science and cultivate the beauties of art. The more we endeavour to read and fulfil Thy celestial precepts, the better we shall scan every page of the volume of nature ; the more earnestly we strive to remember the lessons it contains, the greater will be our power in subduing dangers and temptations, and the more complete our triumph over the disappointments and even the sufferings of life. By wisdom we gain the best influence among the ignorant and benighted, and learn how to dispel the dangers of darkness ; by knowledge we obtain that dominion over the forces of nature which Thy Divine decree has permitted us to wield. Allow us, Almighty God, to employ whatever wisdom Thou mayest bountifully vouchsafe to us for all labours of usefulness, and may we never cease to value knowledge as a great treasure, not to be selfishly hoarded, but eagerly imparted to all around us with the most ardent zeal, perfect truthfulness, and entire humility!

17.

“The result which includes all is, Fear God, and keep His commandments, for in this consists the whole duty of man.”—(*Ecclesiastes* xii. 13.)

THY beneficence is so wonderful, Thy mercies are so infinite, and Thy blessings so inexhaustible, that the commandment to fear Thee, O Eternal Protector, who art all love and compassion, seems indeed surprising. But we may well fear to displease Thee, our Gracious Lord, by leaving unfulfilled Thy admirable laws, and disregarding Thy holy precepts, which not only bid us to avoid evil, but teach us to do good. Thou hast decreed, Almighty God, that to take Thy Divine words to heart, and make them constantly known to all as beautiful truths vouchsafed to light up the most shadowy and intricate paths of this life, and to lead us in hope and faith to the shores of the next, is a duty which comprises the whole circle of our obligations. How clear and easy does the precept seem, yet how difficult do we find the performance of it! Our Heavenly Father, support our weakness, we beseech Thee, that we may be able to accomplish Thy sacred will, and while ministering to the happiness of others, feel that satisfaction which nought but the bright mirror of a pure conscience can give us as the reward of a zealous and dutiful life.



18.

“Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory.”—(*Psalm lxxiii. 24.*)

ALMIGHTY GOD, the paths along which Thou leadest us glisten with purest gems of dew, with light and sunshine. There are no thistles and thorns, no stones and boulders, no beetling rocks and yawning chasms, no lowering clouds, and darkening shadows, for those who walk along Thy ways; for them there are no weary feet, there is no weakness or lassitude. The adoration of Thy holiness keeps away from us all minor cares, and excludes all vanities and frivolous aims, all idle thoughts, and useless longings and strivings, and diverts from us every trouble save sickness and bodily suffering and death, and the grievous loss of our most dearly beloved; and then, even then, in our deepest anguish, we are mercifully allowed to look far beyond the present hour of affliction, beyond the valleys and the heights of this earth, to Thy eternal peace in the realms of bliss and glory.



19.

“Take heed that thou dost not say in thy heart, My power and the might of my hand have procured me this wealth ; remember that it is the Lord who giveth thee power to get wealth.”—(*Deuteronomy* viii. 17, 18.)

WHILE bent low before Thee, our Heavenly Father, and breathing ardent thanks for all the gifts of Thy bounty, and humbly invoking Thy mercies and blessings upon the paths of our loved ones, it would seem strange were we to say, even in the furthest and most mysterious depths of the heart, that the treasures which embellish our earthly existence, that the enjoyments which make it delightful, have been won by the ability of our own hands, and obtained by our own strength and power. And yet pride and vanity are often deeply rooted in the human breast, although it is difficult to understand that we should ever give way to the folly of these twin faults, and delude ourselves into the belief that even one crumb of bread from the wide-spread banquet of Thy munificence, Almighty God, or one drop of refreshment from the countless myriads of fountains which Thy goodness has permitted to stream from the bosom of the earth, could ever have been ours, that one day of prosperity or happiness could have fallen to our share, one moment of felicity, or one smile, without Thy holy will, without Thy unceasing beneficence, which gives us life and health, and has quickened the eye to see the world and all its glories, the ear to hearken to its enchanting melodies, the soul to know and love Thee, our Omnipotent Benefactor, and the lips to praise and bless Thy holy name for ever and ever.

20.

“Is not this the fast that I have chosen, to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal the bread unto the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thy own flesh?”—(*Isaiah* lviii. 6, 7.)

ON bended knees we implore Thee, Almighty God, to make us quick and keen-sighted, to remove the film of vanity from before our eyes, that we may look into the darkest corners of the mind, into the deepest recesses of the heart, into the furthest chambers of the breast, not only on the great days of penance appointed by Thy holy Law—not occasionally, to descry the faults committed, the obligations neglected, the sinful thought, or aim, or feeling, and the possible atonement, but to search constantly for the evil germ, ere it be developed into a dangerous growth; that regret, and self-reproach, and remorse be not indulged in merely at special times, such as fasts and periods of mourning instituted by Thee, O Gracious Lord; but that our self-reproach be prompt, our regret deep, our contrition sincere and enduring, so that the dawning light may bring before us the array of our duties, that by the declining beam of day we may see blemishes distinctly and wipe them out, endeavour to correct mistakes, strive to expiate offences, give from our abundance, and curtail our wants in favour of those whose needs are greater than ours; so that, however numerous our own privations, we may always endeavour to lessen the cares and sufferings of others.

21.

“Thou hast given him his heart’s desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips.”—(*Psalm* xxi. 2.)

O MY GOD, I beseech Thee, cause me to be humbly and ardently thankiul for Thy beneficence in having lent a gracious ear to the fervent prayer of my soul, in having hearkened to my supplication, and granted fulfilment to the most anxious desire of my heart. Thou alone rulest the elements, Thy hand unlocks the streams that rush and leap from mountain summits, and loosens all the waters of the deep, that rise tumultuously at Thy bidding, and are calmed by Thy Divine will. Thy holy spirit hushes the storm, and silences the roaring tempest. The clouds may gather above, and the abyss yawn beneath, but Thy Almighty voice arrests the wild fury of warring powers. Thy celestial arm stays the careering winds, and quiets the surging waves. They cease to menace Thy children, and danger vanishes. The dark and threatening sea becomes a diamond mirror, to reflect azure skies, and to gleam and glisten with the golden rays of the sun. The ship floats over the tranquil ocean, and with Thy heavenly blessing upon its living freight, it sails into the harbour. Mayest Thou be praised and glorified, Almighty God, for having brought home the voyagers in peace and safety! Amen.



22.

“ If you walk in My statutes, and keep My commandments and do them, . . . I will walk among you and be your God, . . . for I have broken the bands of your yoke, and made you go upright.”

(*Leviticus* xxvi. 3, 12, 13.)

OUR Heavenly Lord, Thy words are indeed clear and manifest, and not to be misunderstood. May their light and truth penetrate into the depths of our mind, and illumine the secret recesses of our breast; may we take them to heart and cherish them there, and strive to live in faithful and undeviating obedience to Thy holy laws, and to the rules which Thy Divine hand has laid down for our guidance! Then, Almighty and All-merciful God, Thou wilt destroy the yoke under which we are bent low, our bondage will cease, no chain will have the power of binding us, no fetters will impede our movements, and we shall be free. Yes, free to bask in the warm sunshine of Thy beneficence, for there is no slavery so overpowering as that cast upon us by our own faults; there is no captivity so incessant as that entailed by our own wickedness, which loads us indeed with shackles, and places bars around us, and locks the gates which lead to happiness, for joy and peace are impossible to those who transgress Thy eternally beautiful commandments. O Lord, our God, enable us always to remember Thy precepts, that they may be our guides throughout life, and lead us safely and unharmed, even by surrounding dangers, into the sanctuary of Thy holy presence! Amen.

23.

“ Thus saith the Lord God, In repenting and resting shall you be saved ;
in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.”

(*Isaiah xxx. 15.*)

ALMIGHTY GOD, Thou art supremely good and merciful, Thy pity is infinite, Thy beneficence unbounded, Thou art never weary of lavishing blessings,—the best treasures of heaven and earth—upon Thy children. But the laws of Thy Divine wisdom are immutable, Thy commandments are eternal. None can be happy who transgress them, none can enjoy peace and tranquillity who act in defiance of Thy holy precepts, in forgetfulness of the pure and beautiful tenets which Thou hast laid down for our guidance. But if we desist from evil courses, and, if abashed and humiliated by self-reproach and remorse, we repent in the depths of our heart, and cleanse ourselves from sin, and try to atone for the past with the humble words of our lips, and the earnest thoughts of our mind, with the zealous work of our hands, and the actions of our days ; then, O Almighty God of unequalled goodness, Thy heavenly compassion will cause our suffering and our punishment to cease, and faith in Thee and reliance on Thy celestial pardon will restore to us the tranquillity and enjoyment of life.

24.

“While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease.”

(*Genesis* viii. 22.)

MERCIFUL Father of infinite Goodness, Thy heavenly will has ordained for the guidance and sustenance of man every change of light and darkness, of sunshine and frost, and those revolving seasons which scatter their blessings through the valleys and over the heights of the earth. Make us devoutly thankful for these changes, and cause us to derive from them the best lessons for the labours and duties of our pilgrimage. In order that the harvest, the golden grain, the staff of life may be ours, we should not forget how much depends upon the seed. Thou givest us all in good time; let us use the gifts of Thy bounty wisely, with thrift and with care; let us weed and cleanse the land that the seed deposited in its furrows may be returned to us a hundred-fold. And if, in the outward world, the husbandman obeys this rule over the whole expanse of his fertile lands, how much greater is the need for its strict observance in the mysterious regions of the heart! Let us endeavour to free them from every noxious growth, from all faults and blemishes; let us purify them with the waters of repentance, and implant in them the strongest resolves of amendment and the best and holiest intentions, that these may take root and become good qualities and noble deeds. In summer, we cultivate the earth, our garden and our orchard; and with God's blessing, they yield fruit and corn, and wine and oil, and we gather and garner these treasures that the cold season may not be too barren

and dreary and destitute. So let us, in happy years, cultivate the best feelings of mind and heart ; they will not forsake us, they will not shrink away when the glow of summer is past, when the icy winter of death cuts down the brightest rose of our garden, extinguishes the most beaming smile, and hushes for ever and ever the sweetest voice, which brought music to our delighted ear, and happiness to our heart. And Thou hast said, O God, that day and night shall not cease—the day for arduous and patient labour, the night for rest. May we have strength and unshaken energy for work, that we may taste the refreshment of sleep ; and may greater strength still be ours, and more unwavering firmness for every act and deed of benevolence and charity, for generous devotion and self-denial, and even for self-sacrifice, so that a pure conscience may be our pillow, and the shadows of night may, like angels' wings, be softly folded around our slumbers. Thy blessing, our Heavenly Lord, which we implore, will enable us to do Thy holy will !

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25.

“She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness.”—(*Proverbs xxxi. 26*).

ALMIGHTY FATHER, Thou hast permitted the woman who humbly obeys Thy Divine commandments and cherishes Thy sacred Law in the depths of her soul, who carries zealous piety into every hour and every action of her life, into every thought of her mind, and every feeling of her heart, to be a blessing to her household, and a blessing to all around her. She

leads the children at her knees to the fulfilment of duty with the silken bands of love ; the links wrought by her unite them in brotherly affection, and are as wreaths of flowers, bright and sweet ; they are smiles of gladness and of sympathy, words of gentleness and kindness. She teaches them, and honey flows from her lips ; all bitterness is banished from her speech. She instructs them, and her lessons are more precious than gold ; they contain the spirit of Thy holy behests, the precepts which they can understand, and value, and apply. She says and shows to the children of her heart that they must be kind and good to earn joy and happiness, and she proves that amid care and sorrow a clear conscience is a protecting shield, which wards off and blunts all arrows of blame and reproach, and causes the past to rise before us undimmed by the black clouds of remorse. Almighty God, allow us who bow down before Thee with anxious prayer and ardent supplication, to tread in the footsteps of the wise woman, and to strive in Thy presence, strengthened by Thy celestial mercies, for the zealous performance of all good and noble works, at home and abroad, among strangers as among our friends and loved ones ! Amen.

26.

“For Thou wilt light my candle ; the Lord God will enlighten my darkness.”—(*Psalm* xviii. 28.)

THOU hast given me, O my God, a heart to love Thy ineffable goodness, a soul to worship Thy Divine power, a mind to study Thy wondrous works. The heart

that bows down before Thee in humble gratitude, the soul that adores Thy heavenly greatness, and the mind that strives to understand the beauties, enchantments, and mysteries of creation, and to act in accordance with Thy holy will, are all gracious gifts of Thy goodness; yet how often do the faculties with which Thou hast endowed mind and heart and soul cause us to tremble and fail; how insufficient are our aspirations, how feeble is our love, how incomplete our knowledge! What should we be, how often would darkness overwhelm us, did not the celestial flame of hope, the torch lighted by Thy Divine hand, dispel the deepest gloom of night, and the confusion of surrounding shadows!



27.

“If thou doest well, wilt thou not find acceptance? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door, and to thee is its desire; but thou shalt rule over it.”—(*Genesis* iv. 7.)

THY sacred words, O God of eternal wisdom, are verified and seem to become living truths to our understanding and our deepest feeling, at every hour of the day. The conscientious endeavour to do our duty, the anxious wish, the honest effort to act in accordance with Thy heavenly will, to obey Thy immutable laws, to be ruled by the precepts of Thy all-embracing goodness, must pervade our innermost being with cheerfulness, while the disregard of the holy and beneficent rules which Thou, O Lord, hast framed for our guidance, the neglect of Thy beautiful laws, the transgression of Thy

precepts, must inevitably cause sin to lie at our door and make its spreading nets encircle our steps with snares and pit-falls. Sin comes so close to our dwellings, it draws so nigh unto us, only when we have set aside Thy sacred commandments, the fulfilment of which keeps the greatest of all dangers, the perils that assail mind and heart, far aloof. Error is thus brought fearfully near, and then we stand most in need of Thy help and mercy, for Thou hast willed that we must rule over temptation, and vanquish it. Lord God Almighty, give us the strength, the energy and firmness, the qualities which are so precious, yet so easily undermined by sloth and neglect, that we may be powerful enough to conquer evil, that we may do well according to our human means, and be glad and rejoice in Thy presence, and feel devoutly thankful for all the blessings of Thy infinite beneficence! Amen.



28.

“The law of the Lord is certain, refreshing the soul : the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.”—(*Psalms* xix. 7.)

ALMIGHTY and Beneficent God, those among Thy children are indeed happy and blessed whose soul is filled with the perpetual adoration of Thy holiness, who open their lips at dawn with prayers of deepest gratitude, and with ardent supplications for ever increasing zeal, and close them at eventide with fervent praises and thanksgivings, and carry religion—the worship of Thy greatness and goodness—in heart and mind from early morn to latest night, and cause it to sanctify

their daily life, to adorn each hour with looks and words and deeds of healing softness and cheering power, of gentlest kindness and warmest sympathy. The love which the hearts of the worshippers bear towards Thee, Almighty God, and the humble yet full and constant appreciation of Thy Divine mercies, must teach them to love their brethren — like themselves the objects of Thy incessant care — to cherish them in health and in sickness, and help them in the hour of need, to strengthen them in their weakness, and reprove them when they err, to forgive and forget their offences, and so embellish their existence with every gift and offering of true and faithful devotion. While ministering to the wants of our neighbours, we minister in Thy temples, Almighty God ; while serving our brethren, we serve at the foot of Thy altars ; while gathering the sweetest flowers of enjoyment for their happiness, we burn incense in Thy tabernacles. And we too are happy, our Gracious Lord ; the cold of the outward world cannot freeze the breast which glows with holy zeal, the shadows of the earth cannot darken the spirit which Thou hast irradiated with Thy holy truth ; all minor cares and troubles vanish from our path, and, even when bowed low by Thy awful and mysterious decrees, we still look with hope and faith beyond the afflictions of this world for renewed felicity in Thy own brighter lands.

29.

“The poor shall not cease out of the land ; therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thy hand wide to thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy in thy land.—(*Deuteronomy* xv. 11.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, Thou hast decreed that poverty shall ever abide among and around us. This is one of the incomprehensible dispensations which our ignorance must humbly accept ; yet how deeply would it pain and grieve the happy and the prosperous were they not conscious of Thy holy Law ! Would not the sight of human misery, of gnawing hunger, and shivering cold, the cry of the suffering, and the sound of human wailing, dash every cup of joy from our lips, were we unable to give with pitying and soothing hands from the blessings which Thy beneficence has so lavishly bestowed upon ourselves ; were we unable to share these blessings with the distressed, to open our hands widely and generously, to extend comfort to our less fortunate brethren, to cheer the poverty-stricken, and bid the needy be glad once more ? We enjoy all treasures and gifts a thousandfold, if we may use them for the delight and happiness of others, if we may dry the tear of the anxious mother, appease the pangs of the clamouring child, clothe, and warm, and heal it, teach it to love and to know Thee, our Gracious Lord, to love Thee and praise Thy holy name. Strengthen us, Almighty Benefactor, in all good resolves, that we may not lose sight of these our most sacred duties and not be disturbed or blinded by vain and frivolous aims, but remember always that it is our highest and most glorious privilege to be the zealous stewards of Thy heavenly bounty ! Amen.

30.

“And Adam called his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all living.”—(*Genesis* iii. 20.)

LET us incline our thoughts in humble adoration before the Lord God Almighty, implore His heavenly blessing on our daily endeavours, and invoke His help, that His power may support our weakness and enable us to give the best treasures we possess in mind and heart to all around us, so that we may yield aid to the needy and feeble, comfort to the oppressed, solace to the afflicted, soothing balm to those who suffer, and strengthening cordial to the drooping; that we may learn to feel towards our neighbours as a mother feels towards her children, to feel as if they had been confided to us by the holiest and most binding ties, as if those amidst whom our life has been placed were indeed our own children. At the call of duty, a mother is ready and eager to relinquish for her sons and daughters, not merely her own labours and pursuits, her studies and her leisure, her associates and her friends, her time, her rest, and her health; but she also delights, at all seasons, in embellishing the existence of the much-beloved with every proof of watchful care, of unwavering devotion, of kindness varied in its daily expression, yet constant in its gentle ministrations, constant in that loving attachment which desires and strives to call into existence for them all the smiles of mirth and joy, and all the glow and sunshine of happiness. The charity which descends from heaven has on earth no more beautiful type than

a mother giving the milk of her bosom, even the last drop of her life-blood, to her thirsting and hungering children, and covering and sheltering them with the ample folds of her cloak, and thus hiding all their failures and offences, all their faults and blemishes. To be the best, and truest, and gentlest of friends, the most unselfish and most devoted, to be as a mother to all whom we may hope to serve and advise, or encourage and gladden, should be our aim, should be our ardent prayer to Thee, O Lord, in whose hands are the ways of life, to Thee, who alone art omnipotent, and able to bless and sanctify our pilgrimage on earth with the fulness of good deeds, and with the plenitude of labours of love and mercy.



31.

“For a thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.”—(*Psalm xc. 4.*)

HOWEVER humble and lowly our lot may be, Almighty God, however small and unimportant our position, permit us, we beseech Thee, to cherish the belief that our life has its value for good or for evil, and that the actions of each of us can influence the happiness of many; that every word of gentleness may be as reviving dew to the drooping spirit and to the desponding heart. Grant that our zealous efforts may awaken zeal in other minds, that our own useful aims may cause dreamers to become workers, that every arduous fulfilment of duty, and all acts of calm endurance, may kindle fervid enthusiasm; and

let us remember that it is impossible to neglect the fulfilment of any obligation without leaving a void in the chain of improvements wrought or intended by us ; that nothing wrong remains unpunished, nothing beneficent unrewarded ; that good deeds, and misdeeds, and omissions, are all weighed in the unerring balance of eternal justice ; that in Thy eyes, our Heavenly Lord, not time, but repentance, obliterates sin ; and that myriads of centuries are as a grain of sand in Thy sight. Thus, Almighty God, teach us to look upon all the moments of our existence as pearls beyond price, all meant to embellish life with gems of thought and feeling, with precious studies and imperishable works—with works that shall shine through all ages, and with words and deeds that shall abide, though the lips that spoke, and the hands that accomplished them, may, ere long, crumble into ashes, and be remembered by few or none !



FEBRUARY.



1.

“It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to his heart.”—(*Ecclesiastes* vii. 2.)

THAT man should repent one day before death is an ancient warning, the wisdom of which must be apparent to all. For hast Thou not most mercifully decreed, Almighty God, that the moment which is to sever us from the living, shall be concealed from our own knowledge and from the penetration of our brethren? In the toil and moil of daily labour, in the struggle for existence, in every endeavour for advancement and for success, in the efforts of ambition, in the dreams and visions of earthly greatness, amid the burning passions of human hatred and human love, or the icicles of indifference, which cluster around us, it is well that the sight of suffering and of mourning should check our swift, and, perhaps, heedless career, and bring before us the vanity of mere worldly aims, the evanescence of joy and happiness, of all beauty and

sunshine, and our fragile tenure of the brightest treasures and enchantments of earth. The angel of death, whose cold hand freezes all looks of gladness, whose cold breath extinguishes the light of all eyes, chills the sweetest smiles, and causes the glowing roses of summer to fade—that stern and silent visitor exhorts us to repentance, to meekness and humility, but he should not lead us to despair! Though life and its blessings end on this side of the grave, yet nothing that is really good can be lost. The labours of usefulness, which through Thy Divine help, Almighty Lord, we may have been so fortunate as to achieve, can never die; those who succeed us will not overlook or neglect the example of noble deeds; what is valuable cannot perish, nothing is swept away. Even the seed-corn that has been lying dormant for thousands of years on the stony breast of the mummy, retains its vitality, and if confided to the soil rises, and covers the land with golden harvests. When reminded of death, the great meaning of life becomes revealed to us, and then we shrink from the thought of wasting its brief but precious hours. Almighty God, we implore Thee to aid and uphold us, that we may remember our duty, that we may not fail to recognise the errors of our ways, and not sink into the grave as spendthrifts who fling away their best possessions, and leave behind nought but shame and regret.

2.

“Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbour’s.”—(*Exodus* xx. 17.)

THY eternal justice, our Gracious Father, has decreed that there shall be no greater self-torture than the transgression of the tenth commandment. The sin of covetousness brings its own punishment. It banishes gladness from our heart, satisfaction from our home, cheerfulness from every day of our existence; it robs all possessions of their charm and sweetness. Bread, the best nourishment, turns hard, and dry, and bitter, on our lips, when we covet our neighbour’s luxuries. The clearest and most sparkling water fails to quench our thirst if we cast the burning eye of envy towards the rich vineyards and wine-presses of our brethren, and we no longer value the clothing which protects us from the rays of the sun or the inclemency of wintry skies, while envying the purple and fine linen of others. But what are all these possessions, what are herds and flocks, and goodly harvests, and teeming pasture-lands, and the silver and gold and gems of the earth, and the pearls of the sea, when compared with the blessings of eye and ear and speech, and with the inexhaustible mine of wealth, which even the poorest carries in his bosom? In mind and heart, Thou hast given us, our Omnipotent Benefactor, treasures which far outshine all others—love, deep and warm for fond parents, for dearly cherished children and friends; Thou hast en-

dowed us with the power of thought and of active devotion; and, to lighten all trials and struggles, Thou hast mercifully vouchsafed ardent hope and faith to connect us and this earth with Thy greatness in heaven. Be ever near, Lord God Almighty, and help us, that we may, with relentless hands, pluck out from our breast the first evil germ of covetousness.

3.

“She stretcheth out her hands to the poor, and she reacheth forth her hands to the needy”—(*Proverbs xxxi. 20.*)

ALMIGHTY GOD, we beseech Thee to give us the light of understanding, that by it we may discover the wants and sufferings of those around us, ere they press too heavily upon them, and crush their energy, extinguish their hopes, leaving them dejected, embittered, yet clamorous for help, and us—if not quite powerless for aid—so deeply pained by the cry of woe and the sight of misery as to feel embarrassed and doubtful of success, and much less able to assist than if the evil had not been allowed to grow and expand, and, darkening the home of the poor, to exclude from it the warmth and brightness of sunshine. To us human beings of limited means and powers it is harassing to be overwhelmed with supplications, as we become aware that, while willing to listen to every one, we can only fulfil the wishes and expectations of limited numbers. But charity that is inborn, nurtured in the depths of heart and mind, makes the well-being of the needy and feeble, the

ignorant and the helpless, a labour of love, it makes it the zealous and persevering work of a whole life-time, and guards it from being the mere accomplishment of a perhaps burdensome duty, feebly performed to silence the upbraiding voice of conscience. Almighty Lord, we implore Thee to give us the vivid and enduring sympathy that feels for others ; the quick, clear, winged thought that shapes our aims, the patient industry that carries them out, and, above all, Thy heavenly blessing that causes them to prosper for the happiness of all around us. Amen.

4.

“ The Lord of hosts hath decreed, and who shall annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back? ”—(*Isaiah* xiv. 27.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, the prayer that we are allowed to offer to Thee, opens the heart, which overwhelming affliction has, perhaps, hardened and closed to all soft and tender, warm and gentle feelings. Great sorrow may have caused it to become stony, or adversity may have embittered, and even poisoned, its life-stream ; but when it lays itself bare to Thy all-seeing eye, when it shapes its anguish into a tearful and trembling appeal to Thy goodness, the dark shadows that oppress it lose their deepest gloom, and glimmerings of hope lighten their black edges. Let us not think, however, that supplications can change Thy mysterious behests, and that Thy heavenly arm, raised to punish, can be arrested by the pleadings of human lips. We do not understand the wisdom of Thy ways,

but we know that Thy celestial will, so often incomprehensible, is never to be shaken. Yet prayers assuage our sufferings ; prayers raise our thoughts and purify them ; they lift us from the chequered scenes of earth, from its numbing frosts and scorching glare, from its storm-clouds and whirlwinds, from its dreary wilderness and alluring dangers, into Thy Divine presence of peaceful serenity and of holiness. So be it ever, Almighty God ; have pity upon our weakness, and do not permit sore disease or lacerating grief to overpower us with the anguish of despair ! Amen.

5.

“Hath the Lord greater delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices than in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.”—(1 *Samuel* xv. 22.)

THE earth is Thy temple, Almighty God ; every flower that blooms fills it with the incense of its fragrance ; the birds of the air pervade it with their hymns of gladness ; from rosy morn till darkling eve, hill-top and valley become Thy altars, where the sun kindles its brilliant fires by day, and at night the stars hang their mysterious lamps in the crystal vault above. The golden harvests of the land bow before Thee ; the fruit-trees, with their clustered riches, bend down on the steps of Thy eternal shrine. And we, Thy children, have we nought to offer but myrrh and sweet perfume, wreaths and garlands, to adorn Thy sacred fane ? Can we do nought but chant Hallelujahs

and Hosannahs, and deck Thy Tabernacles with gifts and oblations? These, however humbly and piously offered, are not the best forms of worship inspired by our thankfulness. We adore Thee, Almighty God, most truly, when we obey Thee in our heart of hearts; we do homage to Thee most deeply, when we strive to carry out Thy commandments, when we hearken to Thy warnings and Thy lessons, when we endeavour to make devotion the rule of our life, kindness and charity the occupation of our days, when we try, with indefatigable zeal, to help and teach, to support and comfort, to encourage and cheer, and bid joy and happiness smile around us. By serving our brethren and neighbours and the stranger at our gate, we shall best serve Thee, our Heavenly Father, and then we may truly hope, that Thy Divine blessing will rest upon our ardent and well-sustained efforts. Amen.



6.

“And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace.”—(*Genesis* xv. 15.)

HOWEVER great and delightful the enjoyments of this life may be; however solemn and awful the thoughts of death and of the inevitable and mysterious separation from our loved ones, whether these sad pictures rise before us in time of suffering or amidst our brightest happiness, we are daily and hourly reminded of the impending doom; we are made to feel that all who live, must die—that all who know joy and gladness must, sooner or later, learn to know trouble

and sorrow, and be taught that the longest existence is brief indeed. When scenes of enjoyment surround us, or when the secrets of the tomb, and of eternity beyond it, appear before our view, affrighting and bewildering our minds, can we find a haven of tranquillity, an anchor of hope, except in Thy Divine and merciful promise, O Lord our God, who hast said, "Thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace"? To join the dearly beloved who have preceded us, is to quit this world without strife or struggle or rebellion against Thy holy will, without dread of the unknown, without pain or anguish after the trials and labours, schemes and disappointments, after the feverish and fleeting and uncertain pleasures of this earthly career; it is to leave life calmly and with that unspeakable feeling of blissful rest, which surpasses every other boon and treasure. May this be our destiny, O Gracious Father, and may Thy hand give us peace in life and in death! Amen.

7.

"And the angel of the Lord found her by a fountain in the wilderness."
(*Genesis* xvi. 7.)

GOD of unfailing help, of great and infinite beneficence, hear our prayer as Thou ever hearest the prayer of the suffering and distressed who raise their hands in supplication to Thee out of the depths of their agonizing misery! Even when all is dreary and desolate, and appears a barren waste, when injustice and wrong-doing and enmity have brought us low, when we cast anxious

looks around us, and strain our tearful eyes for human aid in vain, and yearn with sorrowful hearts for human love and sympathy, and are homeless and friendless, like Hagar in the desert, when life itself has become a wilderness, and we see no shadow to screen us from the glare of the world, no soft foliage of sheltering trees to cool our fevered brow, no bread nor fruit to appease our hunger, no grass-blade nor floweret of sweetness to recall happier times,—nothing but arid and burning sands; even then, we beseech Thee, preserve our hope and faith in Thy loving compassion! In the dreariest solitude, the despairing mother saw a fountain of life and waters of salvation to refresh the parched lips of her child, and to sustain her own courage. O God of eternal goodness, may the fountain of revival be ever nigh unto us; may the weary, and foot-sore, and dust-stained pilgrims seek and find it, and be refreshed and strengthened by its health-giving streams, that the wanderers droop not and faint not, that they fear and despair not, but be sustained to hope and to believe, till thou sendest one of Thy angels, Lord God Almighty, with renewed gifts and mercies for this life, or with blessed promises for the bright dawning of another world! Amen.

8.

“ Arise ye, and depart, for this is not your rest.”—(*Micah* ii. 10.)

HOW much less self-seeking would there be among us, Thy children, Almighty God, if we remembered our destiny more vividly and more constantly, if we

recollected that this earth is not our home, nor even a resting-place for our feet, but that during our journey along its winding paths, Thy heavenly beneficence has willed us to live and labour, and achieve works of usefulness for others, and has ordained that our efforts and endeavours shall last as long as our existence here. Our duties may be manifold and infinitely varied, but they must be unceasing until the grave closes over us. Even our struggles and trials, our sufferings and afflictions are examples and warnings. For us there can be no haven of repose and perfect peace, no quiet anchorage in life. We must move on and on, over land and sea, with zealous heart and eager mind; we must strive with indefatigable hands, with unflinching courage, and unwavering hope. Our aim is the good of those around us; by the diligent exertion of each, the great and noble work of progress is carried onward. But if the happiness of all be our object, how can we ever reach it? Not if we had chartered a thousand ships and freighted them with countless treasures, not if we could sail in safety with the whole fleet insured against winds and waves, storms and whirlpools—not even then should we arrive at the goal. And therefore, we cannot pause, and fold our arms in listlessness, and sink into apathy, but we must hearken to the voice of conscience which, in obedience to Thy Divine behest, Almighty God, whispers to us, early and late, and, indeed, at all hours of the day, “Arise, arise, for this is not your rest!”

9.

“ In the morning they are like grass, which groweth up : in the morning it flourisheth and groweth up ; in the evening it is cut down and withereth.”
(*Psalm xc. 5, 6.*)

HOW beautiful, O gracious Lord, is the world at early dawn, when earth and sky appear bathed in rosy light, and the grass twinkles in the first rays of the sun ; myriads of dew-drops, clear as diamonds, shine on every delicate blade and tiny leaflet ; the bee with velvet corselet, the insect with gauzy wings, the awakening bird of the hedgerow, the timid nestling in its green cradle, and the soft lambkin of the field, come and sip their early draft of sparkling purity, and buzz and sing and frisk until the fierce glare of the sun drinks up all the balmy coolness. But at eventide the sharp scythe passes ruthlessly over the gleaming wealth of the meadow, and the grass withers. Childhood is like the dew-gemmed brightness of the field. All the roses of dawn are showered upon it, the light of morning beams in its eyes, the clearest sunshine plays around its steps, all that is sweet and tuneful surrounds its path ; yet how soon, alas ! do the scorching rays of noon deprive the tender growth of its delicate freshness, and at eventide comes the reaper and mows it down. But Thou hast taught us, Almighty God, to look upon death as an angel of mercy, and we hopefully cling to the belief that, through Thy blessing, the buds and blossoms gathered in the vales of earth, live to bloom eternally in the gardens of heaven.

10.

“ Fear not, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.”

(*Genesis xv. 1.*)

EXTEND Thy protection, Lord God Almighty, and vouchsafe Thy buckler unto us, that we may walk fearlessly among dangers, and overcome the perils of this world, in whatever shape they may threaten our peace, our purity, and our happiness in mind and heart and soul. Let Thy heavenly power be a panoply to us, an indestructible coat of mail, causing even our weakness to become invulnerable, blunting all missiles aimed at our breast, shivering the barbed arrow shot by the most skilful archer, rendering innocuous the poisoned dart of the enemy, preserving us from all taint, from the blemishes and spots which a laborious pilgrimage through the valleys of earth is but too sure to leave upon the unprotected wanderer. Interpose Thy Divine shield between us and temptation, and we shall be safe and remain unharmed. Sickness and death alone come from Thee, Almighty God, all other cares and troubles are of our own making. The trials which Thou sendest are designed to wean us from the delights and enchantments, the smiles and allurements of this life. The illness which tortures the body, the suffering of our loved ones which lacerates the fibres of our heart, and death, the most solemn and awful of mysteries, are ordained by Thy unerring wisdom ; but even they—the heavy burden of bodily suffering, the almost crushing load of anxiety, the impenetrable shadow of death—are

lightened to those who hope in Thee, and pray to Thee, and have unwavering faith in Thy infinite goodness. Aid, help, guard us thus, O Lord, that we may never fear, but always feel safe and glad in Thy holy keeping ! Amen.

11.

“ Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.”

(*Psalm* xix. 14.)

ALMIGHTY FATHER in heaven, we anxiously trust that the fervent prayers of our lips, and the utterance of our hopes and wishes, may never be spurned by Thee, Almighty God, for Thou art all goodness as well as supreme wisdom and power, and wilt not disdain the lowliest and humblest that come before Thee with thanksgivings and supplications. But in Thy heavenly sight, none can expect to find favour whose entreaties flow from lips steeped in guile ; let no one believe that the grace of Thy blessing can rest upon worshippers whose feelings are tainted by hatred and malice. Words cannot be truthful and solemn, innocent and holy, and worthy of being breathed to Thy Divine ear, unless they harmonize with pure thoughts and feelings, with noble aims and aspirations. It is true that our hopes may soar far and high, our aims be often unlimited, our wishes unbounded, and we may, indeed, feel anxious to accomplish much that is useful and excellent ; yet our daily actions and the fulfilment of our duties fall sadly short of the picture painted by vivid imagination and

eager zeal. But when good intentions are followed by persevering endeavours, by patient and indefatigable labour, Thy tender mercy will be indulgent to imperfect success; and even the incomplete performance of earnest service will find acceptance before Thy holy throne.

12.

“ Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.”
(*Numbers* xxiii. 10.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, Thou who hast graciously given us life, and placed the love of it within our breast, support our weakness and bless our endeavours, that we may, by the grace of Thy holy spirit, make good and gentle use of its gifts, and having thus obeyed Thy Divine behest, be allowed to reach the threshold of death without fear or trembling, but draw near to it full of hope and faith. Thus the righteous approaches the gates of mystery, and resigns his soul into Thy hands, leaving on this side of the grave all strife and struggle, pride, vanity and ambition, frivolity and worldliness, all fleeting pleasures and evanescent sorrows, the smile of joy, the sigh of pain, sickness and its trials, happiness and its dangers, prosperity with its blinding veils, adversity with its cankering troubles, the bitterness that may spring from misery, the bright illusions of youth, the disenchantments of old age; but not these alone, also his honest efforts to keep Thy commandments, his humble and anxious words and deeds, the lessons of his

experience, the example of his days, the children and friends who follow in his footsteps, his last wishes ere the earthly journey ends, and he finds rest in Thy Heavenly arms. Thus let us live and die justly and fearlessly, Almighty God of all mercies, without dread of the future, closing our eyes in sleep to open them again at Thy Divine bidding. Amen.



13.

“The Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way, and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light.”

(*Exodus* xiii. 21.)

GOD ALMIGHTY, our Guide and Protector, our shield and our torch, we beseech Thee to be to us, as Thou wast to the Israelites of old, a column of strength, and to interpose Thy Omnipotence between our weakness and all perils, that our faith may be increased, and we may feel Thy Divine presence and Thy power while flying along the road of life before our most insidious enemies—those faults which at all times expose us to the greatest dangers and threaten us with endless suffering and misery. Be ever near unto us, we implore Thee; even when clouds surround our steps, and dense mists obscure our path; enable us, O Eternal, our God, to discern Thee through all veils, and to feel sure that Thy help is nigh. Let the pillar of fire which gave light to our forefathers, remind us that, however great the darkness, however dim the path, however sombre the shadows of our earthly career, there is a Divine brightness,

a glowing beam of Thy effulgence, ever nigh to rend asunder and to dispel the darkest gloom, the blackest night.

14.

“Oh that I had wings like a dove ! for then would I fly away, and be at rest.”—(*Psalm* lv. 6.)

ALMIGHTY FATHER, who hast formed all beings according to Thy inscrutable wisdom, Thou hast not bestowed upon us the wings of the bird that can fly from the fowler's net, the snare of the woodman and the weapon of the archer, to rise into the clear regions of air beyond the dust and noise of cities, beyond obscuring mists and threatening clouds, far away from dangers and sufferings. Our feet remain rooted to the earth ; we cannot escape from the turmoil of the world, its storms, labours, and anxieties, but our hopes and prayers may soar on wings lighter and swifter than those of the dove, and more powerful than the eagle's to Thee, our Gracious Lord, and at the foot of Thy heavenly throne crave and obtain the blessing of peace. Strengthen our faith, Almighty God, we beseech Thee, that the soul which Thou hast implanted in us may not be bent to the ground by even the heaviest load of care and affliction !

15.

“Unto Thee I cry, O Lord, and in the morning shall my prayer come before Thee.”—(*Psalms* lxxxviii. 13.)

THE expiring night has softened, if not steeped in oblivion, the fears and struggles of the past; the balm of slumber has quieted pain and suffering, and closed many aching wounds. The new day is like a fresh life to the re-awakening soul. Through Thy gracious beneficence, Almighty God, the morning dawn on which we open our eyes after the hours of sleep mercifully vouchsafed by Thy bounty, seems like a renewed existence. It is full of fond hopes and ardent aspirations, of eager resolves, of increased strength and courage, energy and zeal. The surrounding light and brightness appear to pervade my mind, and fill my heart with rejoicing. The depression, the hopelessness of the preceding day are gone, the fetters that bound me have fallen to the ground. My lips are uplifted to Thee, my prayer rises to heaven with the incense which the dew-gemmed flowers waft towards the gates of Thy sanctuary, with the hymns of the tuneful birds, with the softly blowing winds, with the rushing waters, with the tinkling bells of herds and flocks, with all the sounds and melodies of creation. And Thou wilt hear me, Almighty God, hear both my thanksgiving and my supplication, and allow this day, this new life, to be fruitful in earnest endeavours, in useful exertions, in labours of duty, of devotion, of love, and of gratitude.



16.

“My soul melteth for heaviness, strengthen Thou me according unto Thy word.”—(*Psalms* cxix. 28.)

ALMIGHTY GOD of eternal goodness, a life-long sorrow fills my heart and oppresses my mind, but what am I, and what have I done that my days should henceforth be otherwise than sad and dim? I bow down before Thee, not with murmuring lips or tears, but with thanksgivings for the happiness that once was mine; I worship at the foot of Thy holy throne with words of gratitude for the treasure of joy and love which once gladdened my days, for the sweet flower of brightness that bloomed at my side, and that blossoms now in the garden of heaven. And I humbly pray, O merciful God, that although my own horizon be veiled, until all veils shall fall, I may still descry, through mists and clouds, many shining stars of hope for those around me, the rosy dawn of much felicity for them, the radiance of Thy eternal sunlight, and the healing balm of Thy mercy for my fellow-pilgrims in the valleys and on the heights. Then the weight that lies on my breast will be lifted away, and though my own existence be shrouded in mourning, Thy beneficence will permit the power of sympathy to make the aching and sorrow-stricken soul share the bliss and gladness of others. Thus, yes thus, Thy blessings are eternal even on earth, Almighty God, and the darkness of despair is not everlasting.



17.

“I am the Lord that healeth thee.”—(*Exodus* xv. 26.)

O GOD, our heavenly Creator and Preserver, help us to vanquish our sore sickness, for, however great the knowledge and science of the physician, his skill is as nought without the blessing of Thy healing hand. Our illness may be painful or dangerous, but neither pain nor peril can pass away without the cordial of Thy celestial mercy. Our suffering may become intense, and be long protracted; aid and strengthen us to bear it meekly, without impatience or irritation, with gentleness to all around, and in humblest submission to Thy holy will. Do not let us be overwhelmed by the trial of bodily torture, by the languor and weakness which follow in the train of long and exhausting maladies. But allow us to rise from the bed of sickness cleansed and purified, free from many faults and blemishes, seeing more clearly the path of our duties, hearing more surely and quickly the voices of our fellow-labourers and sufferers, when they call for help and sympathy; and let us, we beseech Thee, our Divine Lord, understand and feel more and more deeply Thy beneficent wisdom and Thy unbounded goodness! Amen.



18.

“Behold I send an angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared.”—(*Exodus* xxiii. 20.)

OUR Loving Father, the angel whom Thy heavenly beneficence sends to walk before us in beauty and in radiance, to clear away from the most obscure and difficult road the sharp thorns, the hard stones, and rock-like obstacles, to dispel darkness, and prevent us from swerving to the right or to the left, from falling over precipices into the raging waters below, or the black mysteries of the fathomless abyss—that angel can be no other than the angel of faith. That holy spirit guards us from harm, and unveils to us Thy most sacred love. To believe in Thy everlasting goodness, to feel assured of Thy unceasing aid, our Gracious Lord, to toil or rest or bend down with heartfelt gratitude in the sunshine of Thy Divine blessing, to be upheld when we falter or faint, guided in times of uncertainty, strengthened in seasons of weakness, encouraged in all trials and struggles, soothed and comforted in all agonies of suffering and sorrow, enabled to overcome temptation, to avoid peril, and resist sin—the angel of faith must be near us and shield our helplessness with protecting wings, must precede our steps, and light our path, and lead us to the home which Thou hast prepared for us, Thy children.

God Almighty, allow the Heavenly guide to dwell nigh unto me, that my eyes may ever see, and my heart ever feel Thy abounding mercies, that my breast may throb with thankfulness, and my soul, in its implicit belief, know that, whatever Thou hast ordained, is decreed for the best and wisest ends.

19.

“ This commandment which I command thee this day, is not hidden from thee, nor is it far off; . . . but the word is very nigh unto thee in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.”

(Deuteronomy xxx. 11, 14.)

THERE are Divine dispensations, O Lord our God, which the wisest and best of mortals are unable to fathom ; there are decrees of Thy holy will, which the human mind—even the lore of the greatest sages—fails to understand ; but Thy celestial commandments, so excellent, so admirable, and so beautiful, are clear as daylight, they are not shrouded in clouds, no veil conceals them from our view, their fulfilment lies quite near to us, our lips can shape themselves to accomplish their bidding, the tongue may proclaim them at every moment of the day, our words can transmit them to all around us, and the heart which Thou hast placed within us harbours and prizes them, and watches over them with anxious care. From the heart issue the ways of life ; may they ever be in accordance with Thy sacred Law, which guides and teaches, and allows us to perform Thy holy will. Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, who hast given us the power of carrying out Thy commandments for the happiness of our brethren, and for the peace of our own conscience. Amen.

20.

“Thou shalt not raise a false report.”—(*Exodus* xxiii. 1.)

AMONG the many gifts of Thy bounty, Almighty God, so graciously vouchsafed to us, none is more precious than the power of speech, the faculty of expressing our wishes, hopes, and fears, our thoughts and aims, our joy and our grief, our doubts, our faith, and our love. Yet how dangerous may these powers become, how easily do we pervert them, and turn the sweetness of the tongue into gall, the honey of the lips into wormwood, the word which should soothe and heal, or cheer and encourage, into the sting of the venomous insect, into the wounding steel or poisonous arrow or lacerating thorn! O God of infinite beneficence, guard us, we implore Thee, from evilspeaking, not only from every utterance of anger in times of provocation, but also from the peril of raising false reports. However vague and trifling these may be, they can yet cause grievous harm and intense pain. As a mere cobweb, or thistle-film, or even the softest down plucked from the wing of the swan, is able to produce blinding inflammation when carelessly wafted into the eye, so an incautious word, a sound, a breath of slander, may kindle terrible suffering, and deprive the innocent of joy, and rest, and happiness.



21.

“ The Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers ; let Him not leave us nor forsake us.”—(1 *Kings* viii. 57.)

THE Almighty, who saved our fathers from famine and pestilence, from the sword of the enemy and the fire of persecution, the same Omnipotent King will remain with us now as our shield and buckler. He will support our weakness, and stay with us in the hour of danger, if we but remember His commandments, and revere and obey His will. The oblivion or neglect of His eternally beautiful Law, must lead us into the rayless abyss of despair.—Who shall sustain, who comfort, heal and save us, if we stray from Thy temples and Thy altars, Beneficent God of infinite power and unbounded mercy? When all human help is as nought, when we are alone in the wide, wide world with our sorrow and our misery, when blind and deaf and dumb to all around, and stricken with overwhelming anguish or paralyzing disease, we may yet lay our bleeding hearts open before Thee, and Thou wilt see our nameless suffering, and hear our inarticulate prayer, and Thou wilt not forsake us, our Father and our Preserver!



22.

“Thou shalt neither vex the stranger nor oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.”—(*Exodus* xxii. 21.)

O GRACIOUS FATHER in heaven, Thou whose children we are, whose mercy protects us, whose blessing gives us happiness, whose love is equally extended to all those called into life by Thy Divine will, Thou whom we adore in ardent thankfulness, hast commanded that we shall not vex and oppress the stranger. These words of Thy eternal justice and wisdom, though pronounced in dark and remote ages, have come down to our time with undiminished force, and demand the widest application from the understanding now matured by the lore and experience of centuries, and from minds that have more guiding lights and see more clearly, and from all hearts that may have throbbed, and loved, and suffered. How could we distress or persecute the stranger? The infliction of tyranny has ceased to exist, it can never be practised any more by those who know Thee, Lord God Almighty, and revere Thy holy beneficence. But the stranger may be one who does not share our faith, whose creed differs widely from our own, who harbours perhaps many prejudices against us, in an unreasoning, possibly an unconquerable spirit of enmity, because our worship deviates from his, because the form in which we adore Thy goodness and greatness is not similar to his. Let us vanquish the feeling which such bitterness might foster, and, believing in universal brotherhood, love the

stranger in faith and creed, as we love those nearest to us in belief, while we remember that all are Thy children, all equally dear to Thy Heavenly solicitude, all able to reverence Thee, and to accomplish Thy holy will.

23.

“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”—(*Leviticus* xix. 18.)

GRANT us the power, O Gracious Lord, to carry out the sacred behests that have been made known to us by Thy beneficence. Even the most humble-minded, those who think least of themselves during their pilgrimage through the world, the most unselfish who truly believe that they devote more time and care to the service of others than to their own enjoyment of life, would be surprised to know how many hours of their existence belong unwittingly to themselves. Sleep after a long day of toil; rest after anxious labour; leisure after long-protracted struggles; repose for ardent thanksgivings at Thy holy shrine, our Divine Lord; recreation, to contemplate the marvellous and beautiful works of Thy omnipotence; the light of sunshine; the sweet air of heaven in the bright summer season; health, to value and enjoy the protecting roof; the warming glow of the hearth during the inclement months of the year; bread to appease our hunger, water to quench our thirst, and not bread alone, but celestial food for the mind, not merely water from the fountain, but streams of refreshment for the heart; beaming smiles and laughing voices; the glance and word, the deed and proof of affection;

these gifts and blessings are all ours, and as we seek and prize them ourselves, so should we seek benefits and treasures for others, and give them ungrudgingly to the neighbour, whom Thou, our Lord and Almighty Benefactor, hast commanded us to love, pardoning his offences, as we unconsciously, and only too readily, ignore and forget our own, and as we hope and trust and pray that our sins may be mercifully forgiven by Thy Divine indulgence.



24.

“When Pharaoh saw that the rain and hail and thunder had ceased, he continued to sin and hardened his heart.”—(*Exodus ix. 34.*)

GOD of eternal justice, hear my cry! I lift up my hands unto Thee, and with them my trembling heart; and, from the depth of my grievous anxiety, I implore Thy heavenly mercy to shield me from impending sorrow, to drive away by Thy all-powerful will and to chase back the terrors and afflictions which seem, like grim phantoms, to draw near unto me. Similar to the rain and hail and thunder, which affrighted the Egyptian ruler, calamities are overwhelming waters of bitterness and missiles of destruction. Disperse the clouds of adversity by Thy omnipotent breath, save and heal my loved ones, restore them to me in health and brightness, I beseech Thee, Father of infinite beneficence. Every evil thought and every sinful feeling, which I should blush to confess in Thy holy presence, shall for ever die out of my soul. Renewed tranquillity and peace cannot make me forgetful of my vow; and if I

pray to Thee at night and morn, Lord God Almighty, to bless my endeavours, firmness and perseverance will not forsake me, and the temptation to err in word or deed can hardly assail me, while the sunshine of returning happiness will soften and not harden my heart.



25.

“And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good.”—(*Genesis* i. 31.)

LET us prostrate ourselves in humble gratitude before the Lord and thank Him for all the blessings mercifully vouchsafed to us, while we feel the deep truth and beauty of the Divine words He spoke when He had completed the marvellous works of creation which we are privileged to behold. We may watch the sun rising in brilliant loveliness, and waking the earth and all its tenants from their slumbers; we may follow the luminous orb throughout the day, and see how it gives light and warmth to each fleeting hour. The earliest moments are devoted to the outpouring of gratitude for the renewal of active life after the repose and refreshment of sleep. As thanksgivings ascend from cottage and castle, from city and hamlet, from the hearts of the poor and the rich, from the hopeful voices of the young and the trembling lips of the aged, from the innocence of childhood and the knowledge of the great and wise, let us unite with the worshippers, while from wood and field and garden winged minstrels join the universal chorus of adoration, which floats through the realms of

space to the throne of Almighty God. Those world-pervading hymns of gratitude teach us thankfulness to all, thankfulness to those who, upon earth, minister to our wants and needs—to loving father, and tender mother, and affectionate sister, to devoted friend or kind stranger, who surround and accompany or meet us on the chequered road of life. After prayer comes the labour of the day—the ploughing and sowing in early spring, when the wind blows keen and cold, or the reaping and gleaning, when the dazzling sun burns fiercely from cloudless skies, the toil and moil in the factory, the work in the forge, the lesson in the school, where children obtain the elements of knowledge, those diamond keys which unlock the great treasuries of human lore, the lectures in college and hospital, which unravel the past, penetrate into surrounding secrets, and seem to rend the mysterious veil of nature.

Light and sunshine pervade the working hours, they tint the rose with crimson, they lend the brilliancy of the emerald to the expanding leaf, the bloom to the peach, the amber or purple glow to the grape, they warm the cold furrow, and call forth from it the golden grain. Without those beneficent rays there would be no warmth, no joy, no brightness. How beautiful, how goodly they are, and how cheering! Incline Thy ear unto us, God of all mercies, and grant that our hearts may become the light and sunshine of all around, that they may afford comfort to the afflicted, and warmth to those upon whom the dark shadow of adversity has fallen! In the course of a long day the sun may disappear behind black clouds, when all seems dim and dreary, but soon the gloom is changed into descending showers, to cleanse

and bathe and fertilize the land, and remove all dust and blight and stains. Oh! may our eyes weep like the heavens, and may nought fall from their darkened lids but tears of regret and contrition, when we have faltered and failed in the accomplishment of duty, or tears of compassion for those who suffer, and tears of sympathy for all who need the encouragement of fellow-feeling. Yet soft, warm showers are not always sufficient to purify the hot and oppressive atmosphere, which causes the leaves to wither and dry, the flowers to droop and fade, the grass to turn yellow, the pasture to become scorched and burnt, the wings of the birds to wax heavy, the flocks and herds to thirst and grow languid under the leaden weight of the air. Then distant, low-muttering thunder heralds the approach of the storm. It draws nearer and nearer, and rolls and roars and crashes along the vault of heaven. The skies are rent by vivid flashes of lightning so terrible, and accompanied by hail-stones so destructive, by torrents so violent and threatening to tree and house, and man and beast, that the stoutest bosom quails, and the trembling heart prays for mercy. But soon the strife of angry elements is lulled, the lurid vapours pass away, the bow of hope spans the horizon; it gleams over mountain and woodland, and towers into clearest ether; under its jewelled arch the earth lies beautifully fresh and smiling; the birds dry their ruffled plumage in the sun, and sing their joyous carols, the insects buzz and dance in its golden beam, the wild flowers of the valley and the trained blossoms of the garden lift their rain-steeped heads, on every leaf there is a diamond, clusters of gems sparkle on every rose, every blade of grass is bright in its

renewed verdure, and every breath of air comes laden with sweetest perfume. And as on outward nature, so on the human soul there may fall a nameless oppression, to weigh down our spirits and our energies; and then our brain is dull, our heart inert; we seem blind and deaf and dumb; a weight closes our eyes; we do not see or heed the work ready to our hands; stone walls separate our ears from the surrounding calls and cries, our lips are shut, bound by languor and listlessness, until perhaps some sorrow or suffering loosens the fetters that held captive mind and heart. We writhe in bodily anguish or in the torture of moral anxiety, and are indeed bowed to the ground by overwhelming burdens. But when, with the gracious help of Almighty God, the sore sickness has passed away, we prize ten-thousand-fold the recovered gift of health, and we labour strenuously to make its treasures blessings to all around. Thus everything that God has called into existence is good—rain and sunshine, summer and winter, leaf, fruit and flower, bird and insect, light and darkness, smile and tear, hope, fear and regret, joy and sorrow, happiness, trial and adversity, life and death. Each is a mercy, though we may fail to understand its precious value; each is a lesson, though we are perhaps unable to read and learn its precepts. Heavenly Father of all compassion, direct our way by the illuminating torch of Thy eternal wisdom and truth, that we may see Thy works, and behold how marvellous they are! Amen.



26.

“With my soul I desire Thee in the night ; yea, with my spirit within me I seek Thee early.”—(*Isaiah* xxvi. 9.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, when all outward sounds of labour are hushed, and our loved ones have gone to rest, when lights and fires have ceased to burn, and the voices of the night alone are heard, when the wind sighs through the waving branches of the trees at our door, and the earth lies asleep, curtained by silvery mists, through which the light of the moon shines but dimly, and the star-bright eyes that keep watch above are faintly seen, then my prayer rises to Thee, Heavenly Father, and I humbly thank Thee, with a heart full of deepest gratitude, that the day has rolled by, and left my own dearly cherished circle in happy and joyous possession of health and vigour. I thank Thee that by Thy grace my endeavours to accomplish all duties have not been entirely fruitless, and I implore Thee, O Merciful Lord, to sustain my strength and increase my zeal, that improvement may mark each hour of my life, and fill it with more works of usefulness and better deeds of devotion. And when the world awakes, and with it wake all energies, then again I seek Thee, my Bountiful Redeemer, and pray that Thou mayest teach me the difficult task of dealing kindly and gently with all around, of removing obstacles and softening asperities ; and I also beseech Thee to let me learn the beautiful, though far easier, lesson of giving largely and forgiving generously ! Amen.

27.

“The Lord God is merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.”—(*Exodus* xxxiv. 6.)

ALMIGHTY FATHER in heaven, from Thy celestial throne Thou lookest down upon Thy erring children; Thy Divine spirit is merciful to their failings and blemishes, to their faults, infirmities, and offences. Were it otherwise we could not live, not even for one short day. How insufficient are our labours, how imperfect our works! Too often weariness marks our attempts at improvement, impatience interrupts our zeal, irritation or selfishness impedes the value of our endeavours. How ludicrous is the vanity that fills our heart, how great is the folly of our pride! And yet Thy Divine indulgence allows us to enjoy the blessings of life and health, the gifts and treasures of heaven and earth. Thou art indeed abundant in beneficence, Omnipotent Lord, and Thy horn of plenty surrounds us with enchantments. To be long-suffering is to forgive much—yet not all. The mind that is wilfully blind to the lessons of Thy eternal truth, the ear that is obstinately deaf to Thy warnings, the heart that turns from Thy holy precepts and commandments, the soul that stubbornly refuses to obey Thy sacred Law, and to worship Thy unbounded goodness, our Gracious Benefactor, cannot be always and perpetually pardoned. Punishment overtakes the obdurate, and those who trespass and transgress. May we ever recollect that, however unceasing Thy mercy, however great Thy compassion, there are sins and offences which Thou hast

wisely decreed shall bring their own chastisement. Keep us aloof from these, Eternal Protector, we beseech Thee, support our weakness and our hopes, that our eyes may see the light of Thy wisdom, and that, walking in its brilliant rays, we may serve Thee with humility and faithfulness! Amen.



28.

“Thou shalt surely reprove thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.”
(*Leviticus* xix. 17.)

To be sincere with words of praise is delightful, but Thou hast also pointed out to us, Lord God Almighty, duties not so easily accomplished, and hast commanded that we shall be equally frank, when called upon to utter words of blame, to express censure, and reprimand our neighbour, who may, in stubborn deafness, in weakness, in ignorance, or in utter forgetfulness of Thy holy laws and precepts, have strayed from the path of virtue and justice, and fallen into guilt and sin. Enlighten us, our Heavenly Father, that a bright beam of Thy eternal wisdom may irradiate our understanding, and teach us to deal leniently, yet firmly, with the offender; that Thy celestial light may chase away the shadows of timid doubt from our minds, give warmth and softness to our speech, and cause it to sink gently into the heart of the waverer, Make him listen to the voice of affection, even when it chides, and encourage him to gain knowledge and turn from peril and evil, and learn humbly to obey Thee and in ardent thankfulness to bless Thy holy name! Amen.

MARCH.



1.

“ Let not mercy and truth forsake thee ; bind them about thy neck, write them upon the table of thy heart.”—(*Proverbs* iii. 3.)

THOU, our Heavenly Father, the fountain of all beneficence and all blessing, hast bidden us to forgive and to forget, and show mercy, which is indulgence, pardon, charity, and oblivion of offences. To bind mercy like a precious jewel around our neck, is to make it visible to all eyes, so that the sinful and the erring, who have wandered far away from the path of righteousness and strayed from the fold, and who yet grieve and repent, but cannot find the right road amid obstacles and perils, may be brought home again, and may all feel confidence and hope, and trust in our willingness to help and serve them. For Thou hast made us, our Gracious Lord, the humble instruments of Thy Divine will and of Thy celestial forgiveness. We rejoice in being the agents of Thy bounty, the faithful servants that are allowed to carry the messages of peace and comfort to our brethren. And we ardently pray, Almighty God, to be strengthened

by Thee with the flame of truth in soul, heart, and mind, so that mists and shadows may not cloud our judgment in the endeavour to see a fault or discover a wound, nor craven fears restrain us from acquiring knowledge, and dealing truthfully with others or with ourselves in the anxious and zealous fulfilment of duty. Amen.



2.

“He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that rules his spirit than he that taketh a city.”—(*Proverbs* xvi. 32.)

How few are there among us, Omnipotent Lord, who can be called mighty and powerful, and upon whom Thy Divine will has bestowed the task of reigning over countless multitudes, of swaying the destinies of many by the vastness of hereditary lands, and the greatness of thrones and crowns, by the might of irresistible armies, by the force of intellect, or by the splendour and brilliancy of genius! But there are conquests which all—even the youngest, and humblest, and most weak and feeble—may hope to achieve, conquests which challenge our patience and perseverance, our watchfulness and our firmness, though power of limb and sinew are not required to accomplish them, and the treasures of wealth and of talent are not needed to command success. They are victories which no regret can ever cloud; they cost neither blood nor tears; bronze and marble do not record them; they are not emblazoned on time-honoured banners, nor inscribed

in the undying pages of history. And still they are precious and valuable, even in Thy sight, Almighty God, for Thou knowest that the torch of anger burns fiercely, and may consume our own happiness, and with it any gift graciously vouchsafed to us by Thy Divine hand, and intended to render the lives of others bright and happy. We implore Thee, therefore, our Merciful God, to support our endeavours when we strive not merely to check hasty words of displeasure, and outward signs of irritation, the murmurs of a rebellious spirit, and violent outbursts of passion, but also to subdue inward rancour, and dispel hidden feelings of bitterness, in order that these concealed foes, which assail us so insidiously, may not poison our looks, our smiles, or our speech, our well-meant works and labours, and pervert our best intentions, so as to become destructive of real goodness and purity. Only Thy help, Almighty God, which we anxiously invoke, can protect us from weakness; grant it, we beseech Thee, to our earnest and anxious supplication! Amen.

3.

“I will be as the dew unto Israel, he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.”—(*Hosea* xiv. 5.)

AMONG Thy works, our Gracious Lord, all admirable and beautiful, Thou hast permitted every dew-drop that glistens on leaf or grass-blade, petal or flower-cup, to reflect the blue expanse of heaven, the bright rainbow-hues in all their loveliness, the sparkling rays of the sun

when it rises at early morn, and its glowing beams ere it vanishes in the west. And Thou, Almighty God, hast promised to be unto us as the dew ; through Thy Divine mercy the clearness of heaven will shine down into our heart of hearts, and its purity will rest upon our brow, bringing refreshment for the soul and light for the mind. Oh make us ever worthy of the soothing and reviving balm of Thy beneficence ! And then Thy blessing will cause us to grow as the lily in uprightness and snow-white innocence. As it holds gleaming seeds of gold in a calyx of silver, thus may our stainless life, our spotless outward garment, harbour rich treasures of goodness, precious seeds for still better works in future years and for bright and vivid examples. And as the cedar casts forth imperishable roots, and defies the rude blasts that shake, and the tempests that shatter its branches, so may the assailing storms that bend us low, leave us yet firmly rooted in the affections of our loved ones, secure in the confidence of wider circles, unchangeable in hope and faith, and calmly trusting, Almighty Lord, in the infinite mercy of Thy blessings. Amen.

4.

“ Hear Thou in heaven, Thy dwelling-place, and forgive, and grant to every man according to his ways, for Thou, Thou alone knowest the hearts of all the children of men.”—(1 *Kings* viii. 39.)

THOU hast graciously decreed, Almighty God, that the fate of man shall in a great measure be the result of his aims and actions ; as he cultivates the

tree of life, so shall it bring forth leaves and blossoms, yielding germs of promise and their bright fulfilment to his strenuous endeavours and indefatigable exertions, and happily realising his anxious wishes and glowing hopes. But as the most skilful and zealous gardener cannot cause a tree to grow, and thrive, and produce lovely flowers and sweet clusters of fruit, without the sunshine that warms it into luxuriance and develops its treasures, without the fertilizing rain, which causes it to grow upwards into the blue fields of air from the earth where its roots lie cradled in darkness, and without the refreshing dew at eventide after the hot breath of the day : so man feels his inability to do good and practise virtue, and earn prosperity and happiness, without the light of Thy countenance and the sunshine of Thy blessing, without the refreshing dew of Thy mercy and forgiveness. We beseech Thee, Almighty God, who knowest our weakness and our shortcomings, our faults and failings, to look down from Thy throne of glory upon our lowliness, and extend to us Thy pity and compassion, and grant us the cordial of Thy inexhaustible beneficence, which heals and revives, that it may strengthen our hands for all labours and trials.

5.

“ The humble people Thou wilt save, but Thy eyes are upon the haughty, that Thou mayest bring them down.”—(2 *Samuel* xxii. 28)

GOD of all mercies, uphold and assist us, we implore Thee, that we may not be dazzled by the gifts of Thy bounty, or bewildered by the boons and treasures

which Thou hast showered down around us, and vouchsafed to our hands; that our delight in these possessions, be they youth and beauty, or vigour and wealth of talent, the cultivated perfection of all the limbs and senses, friends, power and fame, love and happiness, or silver and gold, vineyards and cornfields, and emerald pasture lands, may not blind us to our own littleness and insignificance, and sow the seed of pride in our heart of hearts. For pride is a weed of evil growth, that springs up rapidly and spreads fearfully, strangling within its coils all gentleness and forbearance. The proud forget that their origin is dust, and that to dust they must return ere long. With haughtiness on their brow and arrogance on their lips, with vainglory in their breast and disdain in their looks, conceit in their dealings and self-sufficiency in all their words, how can they distinguish right from wrong, how can they do otherwise than err and fall? But humility looks up from its lowliness, sees its faults and failings, strives to mend them, and when it has wandered and strayed from weakness into folly, retraces its steps, seeks by the light of repentance Thy paths of truth and brightness, and is thus graciously rescued by Thee, Almighty God. But Thou canst change the stony heart of the stubborn, and transform pride into meekness, our Omnipotent Father, and Thou wilt do so that all Thy children may bask in the warm sunshine of Thy blessing and forgiveness, and for ever and ever praise and extol Thy holy name. Amen.



6.

“Thou wilt show me the path of life: in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”—(*Psalm* xvi. 11.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, Thy wisdom has decreed that none shall know the brightness of contentment, nor walk along the sunny paths of happiness, who have not taken to heart Thy eternally beautiful Law, and humbly tried to carry out Thy Divine precepts; that none shall truly prosper who have failed to make Thy holy will the rule of their lives, and have omitted to aid in all works of usefulness and charity. For Thou alone, our Heavenly Father, art the Omnipotent Dispenser of all mercies and blessings, without which peace and tranquillity must remain unknown to Thy children. Help us, our Gracious Lord, that we may not only hope and wish and strive to obey Thy celestial will, but that our anxious and earnest labours may be rewarded by well-earned success, which alone pervades the heart with gratitude and gladness. Amen.



7.

“For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind.”

(*Hosea* viii. 7)

AMONG Thy admirable works, our Gracious Lord, none are more beautiful than the golden cornfields ripening under the light of heaven. A few seeds

dropped into the dark furrows of the earth, first changed to green blades of brightness, are transformed, ere long, into those undulating ears of wheat, rich and heavy with the food of thousands. When the sickle has laid low the yellow harvest, and the luxuriant sheaves have been bound and garnered, then the gleaner's heart rejoices, for the land has not been left quite bare and poor. And when women and children have filled their eager hands, even then there is still plenty for the hungry little birds of the air who come and feast, and receive their share of the great autumnal banquet. But faster than the precious seed of nourishment grows the noxious weed. When not uprooted it spreads and travels, usurps both space and light, robs the fairest flowers and goodliest trees of rain and dew, of warmth and sunshine, and strangles shrub and blossom in the deadly grasp of its poisonous embrace.

Like the beneficent crops of the fields are the harvests that spring from pure and loving hearts. The golden seeds of piety and benevolence grow into countless good works and noble examples for the benefit and happiness of ever increasing circles, and even of unborn generations, while the unchecked fault grows like the weed, which stifles the richest germs of excellence, and quickly overshadows and withers all blossoms of radiance and sweetness. Almighty Lord, I implore thee, to let Thy Divine blessing rest on my humble efforts, that they may suffice to pluck out from my bosom all evil growth, and tend to foster and develop the seeds of promise which I know and trust Thy Divine grace has implanted in my soul. Amen.

8.

“Blessed is the man that trusteth in Him.”—(*Psalms* xxxiv. 8.)

THOU, Almighty Protector, art a God of infinite goodness and mercy, and in Thee we place our hope, our trust, our faith. Thou givest and forgivest, Thou castest down and upraisest, Thou allowest surrounding calamities to warn us, sickness and suffering to humble us, and misfortune to try our courage. We bow down to Thee in anxious prayer, and we ardently praise Thy holy name. Hear us, Almighty Lord, give us strength, yet meekness and humility—for without Thy gracious aid we are utterly helpless, we can neither achieve any good, nor wage war against evil; but with Thy help, with Thy blessing on our endeavours, we may look forward to days of usefulness even after affliction has smitten us; we may hope to serve others and to cheer them even when our own breast is still aching with sorrow; and so long as Thy beneficence does not withdraw from us the power of labour and successful exertions, we cannot be utterly wretched.

9.

“And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and the house of the God of Jacob, and He will teach us His ways, and we will walk in His paths; for the Law shall go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.”

(*Micah* iv. 2)

HOW glorious and sublime is Thy mountain, Almighty God! It glows with crimson and gold and the full radiance of the sun, and connects the valleys of this

earth with the dazzling brightness of heaven. And Thy house is so vast, so warm, and so light, that countless myriads may find protection therein from the storms and the darkness of the outer world. Thy ways are so perfect and so beautiful, and Thy paths lead so truly to peace and happiness, that we, who treasure Thy Divine word in heart and soul, anxiously hope that all human beings whom Thy holy will has called into life, will be led to Thee, to become worshippers in Thy temples, to study and learn Thy sacred Law, and fulfil Thy Divine commandments. Only those, our Gracious Lord, who obey Thy behests, and walk in the radiance of Thy countenance, enjoy the wonders and the treasures with which Thou hast embellished the universe, and can be worthy of Thy beneficence. Thy shrines are innumerable, they are everywhere, Almighty God, on sea and on land, in the desert and the oasis, in the vineyard and the forest, amidst the sheaves of yellow corn, among the icebergs of polar seas and in the gloomy depths of the mine, in our sheltering homes and under the star-spangled skies; wherever we tread they may be found as surely as in the Holy of Holies of old. All may seek them, and approach Thee, and bow down before Thee, and at the foot of Thy throne lay bare their bleeding wounds and their suffering hearts, or their eager hopes and anxious wishes; and to the faithful soul Thou wilt surely extend Thy blessings and Thy mercies, Almighty Lord, always and everywhere! Amen.



10.

“ Above all things requiring watchfulness, be diligently watchful over thy heart ; for out of it are the ways of life.”—(*Proverbs* iv. 23.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, in this great world, where order is the rule, and where Thy Omnipotence has laid down regulations for the germ and growth and development of all produce and all treasures in every kingdom of nature, Thy Divine will has graciously appointed us the guardians of the multitude of Thy beautiful works spread over the whole expanse of the earth. Thou hast given them into our keeping, entrusted them to our watchful care and attention. From the time when the seed is dropped into the earth—indeed, before we confide it to the furrow—is not the land carefully cleansed of weeds and stones, ploughed and tilled and fertilized? And when the green blade shoots up, and, later, when the ears of corn swell and ripen, do we not chase and keep away from the golden promise of plenty the pilfering birds of the air, the feet and hands of human trespassers? And orchard, vineyard, and flower-bed, are they not the objects of our constant solicitude? Are we not indefatigably intent upon removing blight and mildew, the creeping worm and the voracious insect, from tender leaflets, blossoms of loveliness, or mellow clusters of fruit? Yet in the realms of outward nature our best endeavours often prove as nought. Cold winds blow over the snow-white beauty and luxuriance of the orchard, and destroy the brightest hopes of summer; hail-storms fling to the ground whole branches heavy with autumnal fruit.

Drought and flood parch and burn, or sweep away vintage and harvest, and leave the labourer cast down and impoverished. But Thou hast decreed, O Gracious Lord, that in the field and garden of the heart no labour shall be useless, and none ever lost. The heart which Thou hast placed in our bosom as one of the most precious gifts of Thy bounty, stands in far greater need of zealous and diligent cultivation than either corn-field or pasture. With its glowing impulses and warm yearnings, it is more valuable by far than all our worldly possessions; for with Thy blessing upon its ways, Almighty God, the inborn goodness may become inexhaustibly rich and fertile in the best seeds of love and unrepining devotion. Let us, then, be anxiously watchful over the heart, that it may not be hardened by adversity, chilled by ingratitude, incurably wounded by unmerited malice or hatred, or overshadowed by faults, which, though trifling in themselves, may grow like rank and noxious weeds, taint the purity, and even check the stream of kindness and devotion.

11.

“Oh, all ye fowls of the air, bless ye the Lord.”

(Song of the Three Holy Children, ver. 58.)

THERE is no bird in the groves and bowers, in the woods or forests of earth—no bird hovering over lakes and seas, or floating into the highest regions of air, that does not praise and bless Thee, Almighty God of unbounded beneficence—that does not add life and

beauty, mirth and sweetness to this world, which Thy Divine will has graciously called into existence. At all seasons of the year Thou hast allowed joyous birds to gladden the face of the earth. When the snow melts, and the land wakes from wintry slumbers, and decks itself with all the bright and fragrant garlands of spring, the crystal notes of the cuckoo announce the return of warmth and sunshine far and wide, and all the winged songsters echo the sounds of gladness ; field and garden, croft and hedge-row become musical ; thrush, blackbird, and linnet unite in jubilant chorus ; and, hidden by leafy branches, the dove adds her soft and tender expression of happiness, and the lark carries the joyful strains of gratitude through clear blue skies to the foot of Thy throne, Almighty God. From distant realms, legions of silken swallows hurry back to place their nests under the protection of our eaves, the halcyon builds her home near the diamond mirror of the unruffled lake ; among reeds and sedges the water-fowl swim, dive, and plunge, and then rise refreshed and with glittering plumage into the air ; near rocks and cliffs the sea-mews wheel and circle, and the golden eagle wings his flight over mountain peaks : far, far away, in the lands of the sun, the birds shine and sparkle like jewels, they travel and carry seeds and flowers, and near home the nightingale pours out her melodious songs. And we, too, Thy children, our Heavenly Benefactor, enjoy this earth, which Thy Divine goodness has made so enchanting. With thankful hearts, we wish to join the universal hymn of adoration. Allow our thoughts to rise to Thee like the wings of the gleeful birds, and our lips to praise Thee, and our words to be soft and gentle, clear and penetrating, like music, that

they may cause harmony to reign around us everywhere—under our own roof and abroad—as Thy beneficence has willed that it shall reign throughout nature.

12.

“Lord, who shall abide in Thy Tabernacle? who shall dwell in Thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.”—(*Psalm xv. 1, 2.*)

ALMIGHTY GOD of eternal truth, we beseech Thee to shed the effulgence of Thy heavenly light over our days, to keep deceiving dimness from our steps, to remove fitful shadows from our path, and to dispel confusing darkness when obstacles lie in our way, when difficulties crowd around us, when the road of life leads us into sombre labyrinths and chasms far away from the beaten track of daily obligations. Allow us, by the blessing of Thy Divine and all-illuminating truth, to look steadfastly into the farthest depths of the mind which Thy goodness has made in Thy own image, to search the heart which Thou hast caused to throb in unison with the hearts of our brethren, that we may harbour no error or delusion with regard to our own aims and wishes, that all duties may lie before us clear and well-defined, to be prized among the best and highest treasures of our existence, and that their eager and zealous accomplishment may adorn our days, and shine more brightly than all the sparkling gems of the earth and all the gleaming pearls of the sea, an example to our loved ones and to all those who form our circle. With

truth in our breast and truth on our lips, the work of our hands must be productive of good, and must lead to earnest and zealous efforts for the fulfilment of Thy holy will and Thy sacred commandments.



13.

“If thou meet thy enemy’s ox or his ass erring about, thou shalt surely bring it back to him.”—(*Exodus* xxiii. 4.)

THOU hast ordained, Eternal God of pity and of love, that we shall not merely forgive our enemy and forget the offence which has grieved us, but that we shall feel sympathy with him in time of trial and suffering, that our hand shall lighten his sorrows, and strive to restore to him that which he has lost—his prosperity, his peace, and his happiness. Even while we are smarting under the injury he has caused, would the knowledge of his misfortune lessen our pain or would the sight of his joy increase our trouble? But to have obeyed Thy sacred Law and understood our duty, to have endeavoured to accomplish it, and to have rooted out anger and resentment from our breast, to have struggled, and wrestled, and conquered, these are indeed great triumphs, and we implore Thee, Almighty God, to give us strength and perseverance for their successful achievement.



14.

“He who planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see?”—(*Psalm xciv. 9.*)

FOR Thee, Almighty Lord, there are no mysteries and no secrets, no mazes and no labyrinths, no walls and no dungeons, no inaccessible mountain-heights, no unfathomed depths, no unexplored mines. The whole universe, the glorious work of Thy Divine will, lies unveiled before Thee, and we whom Thy beneficence has placed on this earth, how can we hide our anxious hopes and harassing fears, our wishes and aims, our thoughts and feelings from Thy sight? We may keep watch over our lips, and guard our tongue from guile, and close the avenues of our heart, and lock the doors of our house, and, in evil hours, remain aloof from the circle of our neighbours, unseen and unknown. We may be unpitied and unloved, we may fly far away to the lonely seashore, or live in the darkness of tangled forests, or cross the ocean to distant lands, and, forsaken by our brethren and forgotten by them, fade out of their existence, even out of their memory. Yet, however humble and lowly, however small and insignificant our lot, we shall feel that we are near Thy protection, our Gracious Lord, even in our utter helplessness, and, if guilty, we shall tremble and fall in Thy awe-inspiring presence. We have sinned, perhaps, in concealing faults and transgressions from those around us; before Thee, Almighty God, they are all revealed. Visible punishment may fail to overtake us, the sun of prosperity may continue to shine upon our

home, and apparent happiness abide with us, but true contentment cannot be ours. Friendship does not charm nor affection delight us, when we have ceased to merit regard and attachment; mirth and gladness cannot flow from the tongue, nor can the joy of others wake echoes in the bosom that is full of envy or hatred, malice or remorse. Hopes bright and high-soaring, wishes pure and noble, which we venture to lay before Thee, will perhaps not always receive fulfilment at Thy hands; yet in Thy holy presence we may cherish every good impulse; whereas the thoughts, feelings, and intentions, which shrink from Thy all-penetrating eye, must become scourges to us far more terrible than sickness, pestilence, or famine.



15.

“And all the trees of the field shall know that I, the Lord, have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have withered the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish. I, the Lord, have spoken, and have done it.”—(*Ezekiel* xvii. 24.)

WITH Thy blessing, Almighty Lord, upon its branches, the cedar of Lebanon grows in strength and in beauty, defying tempests and resisting the destructive power of centuries, which annihilates whole nations. Under the golden skies of the tropics, the palm-tree lifts high into the crystal purity of the air its slender shaft crowned with emerald capitals of gleaming leaves and richly clustering fruit; on Alpine slopes the sombre fir, erect and forbidding, stands firmly rooted among eternal snows; while in the sandy waste, under the hot breath of the deadly simoom, shrubs

and grass-blades lie parched and burnt. Yet Thy arm, Almighty God, when raised in its omnipotence, breaks the proudest cedar ; at Thy bidding the whirlwind hurls the tallest shaft of the palm to the ground, and the avalanche flings the towering fir from its mountain fastness into the deep chasm below. But when in torrid zones Thy Divine hand unlocks the waters of lakes and streams, and they flow over barren lands dried and hardened by relentless drought, the withered plants and trees become bright and beautiful, and blessed with rich buds of promise. Thus also, our Heavenly Father, the mightiest and strongest, as well as the fairest and loveliest, and the most feeble and struggling of Thy children, exist only by Thy power and Thy sacred will—a breath may destroy or revive them. Therefore, we approach Thee and implore Thy beneficence, Almighty God, to keep the knowledge of our weakness and of Thy Divine strength constantly before our eyes, that it may humble us to the dust in the hour of vain-glorious exultation, and in the time of despondency raise us from fear and gloom to the sunny heights of hope and faith ! Amen.

16.

“Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it ;
except the Lord guard the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.”

(*Psalm cxxvii.* 1.)

THOU art the great architect, Omnipotent God, of this beautiful and marvellous universe. Thy celestial hand has constructed the sapphire dome of heaven, and

adorned it with the countless worlds which, for ever and ever, circle in adoration around Thee. The earth is but one of Thy temples. The snow-clad or oak-covered mountains are Thy altars, lighted with the fires of the sun, or gleaming with the subdued radiance of the moon; the wild flowers of the field and the fragrant blossoms of the garden enamel and perfume the carpets of Thy sanctuaries; the orange and the myrtle, the stems of the palm-tree and the garlands of the vine adorn Thy tabernacles. The lark, from the first dawn of day, floats into the blue expanse with jubilant song of praise, and the nightingale, watchful until the latest hour of night, fills Thy shrines with her sweetest melodies. All glories and wonders and beauties are Thy work, and yet, our Gracious Lord, Thou dost not disdain to bind the poorest thatch. Our tired limbs would find no shelter, unless Thy holy will drew the curtains of slumber around us; neither bolt nor bar, nor lock nor key would save us, unless Thy all-seeing eye watched over our helpless sleep. We feel the protection of Thy mercies, we bow down in fervid gratitude before Thee, and anxiously pray, that Thy heavenly blessing which rests upon our roof, may never be withdrawn. We know that the most powerful and the lowliest of Thy worshippers are all equal in Thy sight, Almighty God, and that, as Thou guardest the palaces of the great, so wilt Thou guard from harm our humble homes. For ever blessed and praised be the celestial beneficence that watches at our doors!



17.

“Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean, put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes ; cease to do evil.”—(*Isaiah* i. 16.)

AS the mountain stream rushes down, carrying along in its turbid and impetuous course, roots and stones and branches, and yet becomes clear and bright, pure and calm, when absorbed by the mighty ocean : so the floods of contrition, those waters of repentance that fall from the eyes of the sorrowful, cleanse many spots, and wash away many stains, until the afflicted sinner, free from dark and evil thoughts, yet still laden with self-reproaches and tortured with remorse, loses his heavy burden in the all-embracing sea of Thy gracious forgiveness, and having bowed to Thy holy will and accomplished Thy behests, Almighty God, stands acquitted and purified in Thy Divine and merciful presence.



18.

“The righteous shall flourish like a palm-tree ; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.”—(*Psalms* xcii. 12.)

O LORD, our God, we have Thy promise of protection ; we know that Thy Divine blessing will rest upon those that keep Thy admirable commandments, and humbly strive to obey Thy Law ; and with hopeful hearts we pray that our beloved may be permitted to grow

and thrive as the palm-tree, which rises in stately grace and uprightness, surrounded by the purest light of heaven, and bathed in the most glowing rays of the sun; we entreat Thee that they may be like the tree whose leaves afford shadow and shelter, while its fruit quenches thirst and satisfies hunger, and yields the milk that nourishes, the wine that gladdens, and the oil that dispels darkness. We pray that our children may be thus blessed so as to dispense benefits around them, that their hands may be strengthened to do good, opened to all who need relief, and held out to those who crave support. We also implore Thy heavenly mercy, Almighty Lord, to allow our loved ones to be like the cedar of Lebanon, resisting the fury of blighting storms and safe amidst the blasts of destructive tempests. Amen.

19.

“He that refuseth instruction, bringeth himself into contempt, but he that heareth rebuke, obtaineth an understanding heart.”—(*Proverbs* xv. 32.)

THE more we know, Almighty God, the more clearly we see, and the more keenly we feel how vast and immeasurably deep are the precious mines of lore which even a life extending through centuries would not allow us to fathom, how numberless are the fields of beauty and loveliness which even the most indefatigable can never hope to explore, and how small and insignificant is the learning and how limited the experience which we have acquired. Why, then, should we turn away from the sparkling fountains of purity and of refreshment, from the fruits of sweetness and the golden harvests of sustenance, from the balm and the cordial, the light and warmth

of knowledge, close our eyes to the wonders and enchantments, or our ears to the melodies and harmonies of the world, and withdraw our hands from the labours and duties of love which await us everywhere? But alas! there are likewise around us sighs of sorrow and scenes of woe, looks of displeasure and words of rebuke and sounds of anger, which we cannot possibly ignore or keep aloof from. Yet even these we must not attempt to shut out, even to them we must not oppose deafness, blindness, and stubborn irritation. Surely we stand in need of advice when we have only a vague and confused notion of our own shortcomings, we may require reproof when we have erred in ignorance or in apathy, our senses perhaps want quickening, we must have the circle of our obligations well-defined and vividly traced. We may not be aware of the claims of the less prosperous and the less happy on our time and care, on our watchfulness, sympathy, and devotion. Our duties must be diligently pointed out to us, for they are not all, and not always, engraven on the tablets of our mind or in the depths of our heart; but Thou, Heavenly Father, hast permitted that they shall be easier to acquire than skill or perfection in art or science, and on Thy help, Almighty God, we rely to give us knowledge and to teach us Thy holy will. Amen.

20.

“The Lord is in His holy Temple, the Lord’s throne is in heaven: His eyes behold, His eyelids try, the children of men.”—(*Psalms* xi. 4.)

THE immutable and wonderful laws which rule the universe, the paths of the planets, the rotation of

the earth, the change of the seasons, seed-time and harvest-time, the bud, the blossom, and the fruit, which come and bloom and ripen in their appointed months, all obey Thee, and nothing is allowed to deviate from the marvellous statutes which Thou, Almighty God, hast laid down to govern the world. Thousands added to thousands of events are mere grains of sand or drops of water when viewed from Thy boundless realms of eternity, and myriads of years are as one instant in Thy sight. How small are we, our Gracious Father of all mercies, how far removed from the holiness of Thy sanctuary in heaven! And yet we feel that not the most lowly among us is unseen and unheeded by Thee, that our most secret thoughts lie revealed before Thy greatness, and the innermost chambers of our conscience are unlocked before Thee. Thy Divine will tries us, Thy justice punishes our aims and actions when we are too blind to recognise the beauty of Thy ways, when we fail to bow down in humility before Thy chastening arm, or omit to receive with a sense of fervent gratitude the blessings of Thy bounty. Our God of infinite love, cause the belief in Thy watchfulness to uphold us in dim and troubled times, to sustain us when we falter, when our courage for attempting good deeds gives way, and when our dread of evil increases; and then the knowledge that Thy protecting hand is extended over us, will transform our weakness into strength, even when we are trembling on the brink of the grave. Amen.



21.

“Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me, I will render to the man according to his work.”—(*Proverbs* xxiv. 29.)

A PROFOUND Hebrew sage condensed the whole Law and the teaching of the prophets in the following maxim: “Do to others as thou wouldst wish to be done by.” And most wisely have later codes of morality and other expressions of religious faith adopted that principle as the corner-stone of their systems. Let us take to heart the essence of this creed and philosophy; let us ignore whatever wounds and hurts us in the conduct of others, and not seek in pernicious examples an excuse for yielding to our own weakness and irritation; vengeance is noble and dignified only when it takes the form of generosity, and thus tends to diminish the sufferings of those who have injured us; for our actions should not be swayed by blind passion, but we should faithfully endeavour to carry into practice our highest principles and convictions. Yet, Almighty God, what are the best and most anxious resolves of frail and erring humanity without Thy Divine help, without Thy merciful protection, without Thy blessing upon our poor endeavours? Strengthen us, we implore Thee, when we falter, aid us, and save us from wrong-doing, our Heavenly and Beneficent Father! But not alone from wrong-doing should we shrink; we must shun also the vain belief, that reward is in our power, that we can measure and weigh the sum of benefits bestowed upon us, and that, having learnt the value of the advantages received and of the exertions made on our behalf, we

can recompense all benefactors in accordance with their merit. Gratitude should have no bounds, as labours of true love, of devotion, and self-denial can never be repaid. Reward is in Thy hands alone, Almighty God. What can we give beyond the unlimited service of the heart?

22.

“With Thee is the fountain of life; in Thy light shall we see light.”
(*Psalm xxxvi. 9.*)

HOW cool and delicious are the waters of revival and refreshment to the weary wanderer in the desert, surrounded by burning sands and blinded by stifling dust-clouds! The waters of the clear pool in the oasis restore the fainting pilgrim, for they cleanse and they heal. And grateful as are the crystal streams to us, Thy children, so are the waters of heaven to all the lands of the earth. At earliest morning hour they set with gleaming pearls of dew every tree and blossom, the emerald pasture and the golden cornfield, the grape of the vineyard and the fruit of the orchard, and at eventide they hang their glistening gems on leaflet and grass-blade; they wreath the trees with sparkling jewels, and spread their diamond nets over fields and gardens. The moisture of the valley rises again to form silver mists and vapours; they are condensed into clouds and changed into fertilising showers for all the produce of the earth. Without them the wheat would not spring from the furrow, and the grape would not swell to maturity, the rose would wither, and the fruit die on the

branch. But what are lakes and rivers and seas, what all the waters of this world compared to the Divine fountain of eternal life! What are the brightest and most beneficent sunbeams to the source of unwavering and undying light which Thou hast permitted, Almighty God, to irradiate our path, and which lead us to Thee and the realms of immortality!



23.

“Thou shalt not steal.”—(*Exodus* xx. 15.)

IN humble and almost instinctive obedience to Thy holy Law, our Heavenly Ruler, we turn away from theft, and the poorest and most sorely tried and pressed of our brethren cry out unto Thee from the depths of their misery, the pangs of which are perhaps increased a thousandfold by the want and hunger of their loved ones, to guard them from the frightful temptation of stealing. Yet, are there not some who, far removed from need and distress, would not touch with unlawful hand their neighbour's bread or gold, and would yet not scruple to take from him that which is far more precious than all the tangible treasures of the earth—his fair name, his fame, possibly his reputation for knowledge and talent, for honesty and honour? Protect us, our Heavenly Father, that we may never sin thus grievously, either knowingly or ignorantly, that we may never, by a careless word, which, travelling far and rapidly, may, like the rolling avalanche, gather power for evil, deprive others of the position they value, of the respect and

regard they cherish, of the rewards they deserve and have toiled for, and of the happiness they are privileged to enjoy.

24.

“ And now, Israel, what doth the Lord, thy God, require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him?”
(Deuteronomy x. 12.)

ALMIGHTY Protector of mankind, Thy infinite goodness has showered down upon us myriads of blessings and treasures, enjoyments and delights! How can we show our gratitude for Thy beneficence, how can we prove our heartfelt thankfulness, and evince, however faintly, that we prize Thy gifts and Thy mercies, that we yearn to make good and noble use of them? Thy Divine indulgence does not ask much of our poor abilities, only that we shall fear Thee—not fear Thy power, which, though omnipotent and able to crush us, we know to be merciful to our weakness; not fear Thy penetrating eye, which, though seeing all our failings and sorrows, still pardons and protects us; not fear Thy holy presence, which indeed fills, and hallows, and glorifies the whole world: but dread to displease Thee, God of compassion and forgiveness, as a child dreads to grieve and pain and offend a loving parent. We are to walk in Thy ways: how bright and beautiful they are, how excellent and admirable, yet not always easily discerned by mortal ken, or if distinctly seen, difficult to follow! Chase away the clouds, our Gracious Lord,

which obscure our view, and cause us to seek and find the paths of truth and rectitude, of justice and virtue, which alone lead to Thee and to Thy service. We are permitted and enjoined to love Thee; and the worship of Thy holiness and of Thy infinite mercy glows warmly and for ever in our heart of hearts, O God of unceasing kindness. But does the same feeling pervade our lives? The ardent adoration of Thy beneficence means kindness to all around us, unwearied charity of hand and mind, devotion ever watchful and gentle, the entire absence of all selfish thoughts and aims, obedience to the call of duty, and even un murmuring sacrifice at its shrine. Allow us, Almighty God, to love Thee thus, with every thought and word and action of our existence, with every expression of our lips, with the soul which Thou hast breathed into us, so that our zealous and anxious endeavours may always be worthy of Thy Divine blessing! Amen.

25.

“In all places where I shall let My name be mentioned, I will come to thee, and bless thee.”—(*Exodus* xx. 24.)

ALMIGHTY LORD, we bow down before Thee in deep reverence and fervent adoration, wherever we may chance to be, at home and abroad, under the humble roof of our own dwelling or at the foot of the shrine that has been dedicated to Thy glory. We worship Thee, while travelling along unknown roads or passing through burning deserts, while crossing the high seas,

surrounded by storms and dangers; we pray in the dark and sleepless night, when watching by the bed of suffering, or at the earliest hour of radiance and freshness, when daylight has returned, and the gloom of despondency may have passed away. There is no nook on the whole surface of the earth, however dim and remote, whence we may not implore Thee and be sure that Thou wilt hear us; there is no distance that can separate us from the merciful exercise of Thy beneficence. No mist, no cloud, no veil can conceal us and our faults and our sufferings from Thy view, no howling blast, no crushing thunder can drown our imploring voices. Wherever we invoke Thy holy name, Thou wilt listen to our supplication and bless us. The whole universe is Thy temple; the sun and moon and stars worship Thee with their floods of light and brilliancy; the flowers offer up their incense on all Thy altars, in the depth of the valley and on the brow of the hill; the birds fill the realms of space with their Hallelujahs; and we lay our hearts bare before Thee, and let them speak even when our lips remain closed, and our sorrow is unutterable, or our gratitude boundless and struggling for words. For Thou hast graciously declared, Lord God Almighty, "In all places where I shall let My name be mentioned, I will come to thee and bless thee."



26.

“Of all that Thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto Thee.”
(*Genesis* xxviii. 22.)

O MY GOD, the earth is Thine and the fulness thereof, and, flaming and shining by day and night, the lights of heaven, those distant and incomprehensible worlds, and the seas and lakes and streams with their living tenants and their forests of coral and caves of pearl, and the animals of the land, and the mines and quarries beneath, and the birds of the air, and the harvests and vineyards, the clustering fruit in its sweetness, and the flowers in their fragrant beauty, the winds and clouds and dew-gems, and all that is precious and lovely, and every unknown and untold treasure, and life and hope and joy, mirth and happiness: all is Thine. Thou givest every blessing, but what can we give in return to Thee? Surely nothing to Thee, who art the Lord of all possessions, King of kings and of the whole universe! But when we are moved with pity towards the poor and the suffering, when we consider the afflicted and the ignorant, when we share with them the gifts of Thy inexhaustible bounty—gold and silver, meat and drink, raiment and fuel, when we teach and comfort, and cherish and serve others; we may be said to lay the fulfilment of our duties on Thy altars, and to place the accomplishment of our obligations at the foot of Thy throne. Sovereign of the world and all its wealth, be graciously pleased to remind us of Thy Divine will, enable us to keep our humble promises, to give

abundantly to all around us, and thus to worship Thee by offering our anxious and devoted deeds on Thy holy shrine.

27.

“ Children’s children are the crown of old men, and the glory of children are their fathers.”—(*Proverbs* xvii. 6.)

AS the keen winds of autumn sweep over the land and shake the bright foliage of the trees, leaving them cold and bare in the dreary winter season, so do the mighty wings of time fly relentlessly over the whole earth, for Thou hast ordained, Almighty God, that they shall touch and change all the works in creation, bend the aged to the ground, take away from them strength and energy and power, perhaps health with many of its boons and blessings. But like the sweet violet, blooming at the foot of leafless trees, even when these are bereft of summer’s warmth and glow, children’s children surround old men, and weave crowns and garlands out of the dew-bright freshness of their own happy youth, and encircle the hoary head with looks of love and smiles of gladness. In the blithe presence of childhood, the shadows of old age seem to vanish, and the earliest years of life return with their fairest scenes of mirth and joy, and with their wistful glances into some radiant future. Thus has Thy beneficence, Almighty God, linked us—even when we are chained by the frost of many winters, and even when we are afflicted—with all that is lovely and blissful, with all the buds and blossoms of beauty and

hope. Make us grateful for these blessings, and grant us, we beseech Thee, the sunshine of Thy heavenly aid, our Gracious Lord, that we may live in righteousness and perfect devotion, so that our waning life may indeed become a glory, and encircle the paths of our children with a halo of light and purity! Amen.

28.

“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee.”—(*Isaiah* xxvi. 3.)

WHILE endeavouring to banish error, to shun sin, and keep aloof from vain and frivolous aims, we bow down before Thee, Almighty God, and crave from Thy beneficence mercies and blessings for which the heart pants with intense and fondest yearning; and when these gifts are vouchsafed to us by Thy wondrous bounty, then the sunshine of joy and the radiance of happiness with the light and warmth of affection are indeed ours. Yet when Thy mysterious decrees withdraw these precious boons from our roof, leaving us in tears and in mourning, the darkness of bereavement falls with agonizing weight on the sorrow-stricken soul. But among the treasures of Thy goodness there is one which we may keep and hold fast until the last moment of our existence—the lamp of faith! We beseech Thee, our Almighty Father, to kindle that Divine flame within us, that it may shed its unwavering light over the gloom of our misery, and warm our energies when suffering has numbed, or anguish frozen them, dispel the shadows and doubts that surround our path, and even cheer the road

from which the sweetest flowers of beauty have faded, and the echoes of love and gladness have died away. Only the unflickering ray of faith can guard us from despair and give us peace!

29.

“God created man in His own image.”—(*Genesis* i. 27.)

WHEN at dawn we bow down and pray for heavenly blessings on the labours of the day, when we try to strengthen ourselves for its aims and duties, our supplications become more fervent, our hopes more glowing, as we remember the Divine words,—“God created man in His own image.” But the Beneficent Creator is not corporeal. Therefore, if we resemble Him, it is only by the Divine spirit with which He has endowed us, by the immortal soul which He has breathed into our bodily form. Though our health be robust, our limbs swift and vigorous, our senses keen and acute, and however useful, nay admirably adapted all these gifts may be to show and teach us the beauties and splendours of nature, to serve our manifold needs, and obey the behests of the mind, we hold them—though our endowments may be higher, more perfect, and more complete—in common with other animated beings, with the tribes which inhabit the crystal depths of lake and stream, with the animals that people field and forest, and with the blithe birds of the air. The camel of the desert endures hunger and thirst and fatigue and carries heavy burdens more easily than the strongest and most patient man. The swallow passes more rapidly and more unharmed over land and sea than the most indefatigable wayfarer travels

over the earth, or guides the swiftest vessel over the ocean; it flies from burning zones and seeks temperate climes with an unerring quickness which few human beings possess, and in obedience to which still fewer can act. The dove, which, after the Deluge, bore the olive branch of peace to the ark, floats along, even now, with missives which no human messenger could deliver more faithfully. The vulture descries his prey from a distance utterly inaccessible to human eyes. No rocky ledge is too steep for the climbing goat, no Alpine height towers too dizzily for the chamois, no snowy pinnacle is too lofty to defy the soaring wing of the eagle, and in the green valleys below, not the most sure-footed Indian could run a race with the timid hare or the proudly careering horse. The dwelling of the beaver might be a model to many savage tribes, and no workman, however skilled, could execute more marvellous tunnelling than the ant, or construct harder walls than the adamant reefs which the coral insect builds under the rushing waters of the ocean. What loom is there fine enough, what fingers are there sufficiently delicate, to weave nets so transparent as the spider's, and where is the chymist who could distil purer sweetness from fragrant herb and perfumed flower than the honeyed treasure obtained from the pearly store-houses of the bee? And do not wren and robin hang in the highest branches of forest trees aerial cradles as soft and as perfect for their little occupants as the fondest mother could desire for her new-born child? But bee, and ant, and bird, and beaver, and tiny coral-architect obey the voice of instinct, and work and succeed now as they worked and succeeded thousands and thousands of years ago,

when the earliest generations had hardly achieved their first triumphs over nature, whereas the labours of man are capable of improvement, and constantly receive it at his hands; for he has reason and memory, reason to reflect and compare, memory to gather the lessons of the past and the teaching of experience; he has higher intelligence to shape out new plans and projects for the future, imagination to make inventions and discoveries, and faith to soar far away beyond time and space into the bright regions of eternity. Man may attempt to give form and beauty to every glowing thought that crosses his mind, to every sentiment that fills his heart. And, above all, he has the gift of speech, that great power which implores, soothes, and heals, persuades and convinces, conquers, instructs, and delights. If he has the will, he has the strength to resist temptation; he can practise kindness and charity—all that is called virtue—and accomplish sacrifices on the shrine of duty. He works for others, he loves with all the energies of his heart and soul, and he bows down in humble adoration before the Almighty. It is true that he may halt and totter, and hesitate between good and evil, and fall; but though weak of purpose, and often frail when the necessity for exertion occurs, he can yet rise to greatness, to heroism, to the performance of sublime deeds. And thus it is, when he vanquishes the human or imperfect element of his nature, that he is upheld by the words of Holy Writ,—“God created man in His own image.” O that we may acquire that inward and spiritual resemblance to the Eternal, the development of which secures to us the power of thoughtful and sustained exertion and the merit which alone can win the entrance to heaven!

30.

“ Be strong and of good courage.”—(*Joshua* i. 6.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, terror shall not cloud my mind, nor fear enter my heart, nor alarm cause my limbs to tremble, for I believe in Thee, O Heavenly Protector, and Thy blessing will make me strong. Thou wilt give me courage and self-confidence. I shall learn to do my duty, however arduous and painful and trying it may be. I shall learn to suffer without a murmur and without grieving others by my lamentations. I shall succeed in bearing the heaviest burden of care and woe without flinching, and strive to keep trouble and sorrow locked up in my own breast, that I may not cause sadness to most dearly cherished friends, nor fling dark shadows over the existence of those around me. If I cannot scatter happiness along the paths of my loved ones, and am unable to lighten their misfortune, I will not allow my own affliction to deepen the gloom of others, nor will I dim the light, and freeze the warmth of sunshine, nor silence the voices of mirth and joy. And if any selfishness remains in my bosom, it shall be no other than my ardent, zealous, and indefatigable effort to become strong in bearing all unavoidable evils with silent humility. Support me, I implore Thee, O Merciful God, that I may have the courage of tranquil endurance, the energy and firmness that conquer—if not grief and pain—yet the weakness that might sadden and wound by giving expression to sorrow.



31.

“Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give, when thou hast it by thee.”—(*Proverbs* iii. 28.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, Thou hast implanted all good germs in the heart of man; allow them to grow and expand into the gentlest and warmest feelings of love and charity, and to yield the best fruits of comfort and of sustenance, to yield kindness which supports the afflicted in their trials, softens the harshest pain, and sweetens the bitterest cup. But who shall describe kindness and all its gentle deeds? Thou hast permitted, our Gracious Lord, that it shall be an ever-flowing fountain, a spring of refreshment and revival; and we humbly hope and pray that neither anger and passion may ever dry up, nor coldness freeze its beneficent course. Would not the bread of nourishment suffocate us, the ripest fruit turn to ashes on our lips, the clear water from purest mountain streams be changed into gall and wormwood, would not the softest garments tighten around our limbs like the coils of a snake, and the fire on the hearth scorch and burn us, the very beams of the sheltering roof threaten to crush us with their weight, if we could avert our eyes from sights of misery, shut our ears to the wail of distress, close our hands, and promise with reluctant lips to give later, as if the morrowing day, or even the next minute were ours, and not Thine, Almighty God, to reward and to punish, to bid us live, or cut us off from the joys and sufferings and duties of this world.

APRIL.



1.

“Man doth not live by bread only.”—(*Deuteronomy* viii. 3.)

EVERY gift of Thy goodness is truly excellent, our Gracious Benefactor. May we and our loved ones be allowed to partake of the blessings of Thy mercy, and while we enjoy them in their fulness, with deep and humble gratitude, may we ever extol Thy celestial hand for having showered them upon us. It is true that our days could not be prolonged on earth, were we not permitted to reap luxuriant harvests, were we bereft of our daily bread, the nourishment which gives us bodily strength for the duties of life. Though we should languish and die without the food which Thou, our bountiful Father, hast vouchsafed for our maintenance, we do not live by bread alone. As manna dropped from heaven to feed the hungering multitudes in the desert, so dost Thou feed us even now with celestial sweetness, with the cordial of faith that gives us power, with the wine of gladness that is vouchsafed to our labours in

Thy vineyards, with the milk of kindness that supports man under heavy trials, with the soothing balm that comforts, and the honey of Thy Divine promises, which robs the cup of sorrow of its bitterness. What would be our lot without these wondrous gifts of Thy beneficence? Grant them to us, our Gracious Lord, we beseech Thee, for without them we should never know rest nor peace nor happiness !



2.

“Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge.”—(*Leviticus* xix. 18.)

HOW could vengeance be ours, Almighty God, and the power of that terrible punishment belong to us, who are unable to fathom the temptations, the hidden faults, the secret sufferings and trials which may have led to hatred and violence, to evil-speaking and evil-doing! We see the outburst, we feel the offence, we are hurt by the affront, and the pain inflicted is often intense; but Thou art merciful, our Gracious Lord, and Thou hast willed that pain and sorrow shall pass away on this earth, and hast beneficently decreed that time shall drop the healing balm into the agonized heart. Thou hast commanded that we shall forgive and endeavour to forget, and thus cause the bitterness of our anguish to vanish and die away. Strengthen us, O Heavenly Father, that we may not allow resentment to usurp the place of better feelings, that we may not yearn after the punishment of the offender, and desire to see him humbled to the dust. We should only

envenom our own wound, and turn it into the everlasting sore of irritation and enmity. May Thy holy words, which bid us to love our neighbour, be faithfully treasured and carried into daily practice ! Let us cover with the mantle of love all false dealing, however keenly it may have hurt ; permit us to hide the remembrance of it, and may the tears which we have shed in humiliation and anguish, fall upon our heart like dew to soften it, and open its furthest depths to every good and gentle feeling, to charity and indulgence, to kindness and devotion ; and then the wish for vengeance will die out, or if the word should still linger in our ears, it will warn us to recoil throughout life from the fatal and sinful reality.



3.

“Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands ;
Thou hast put all things under his feet.”—(*Psalm* viii. 6.)

HOW munificent are Thy gifts, Almighty and Bountiful Lord ; how great the power with which Thou hast invested the children of man ! The earth and the fulness thereof Thou hast vouchsafed unto our keeping. Thou allowest us to rule over its expanse, and makest the hidden depths of land and sea reveal their secrets. The rocks supply granite and marble for our dwellings and their adornment ; the mines yield precious metals, iron and copper to our manifold wants. We cross the mighty ocean to distant climes, sailing over the abyss which no plummet has sounded ; we transform the wilderness into bright pastures and fruitful lands waving with golden

harvests. We plant the vineyard, we cultivate the orchard, and summer and autumn pour their treasures into our lap; the tenants of air, and field, and garden, even the myriads that dwell beneath, in the cool chambers of lake and sea, are ours. Thy bounty has made man the master of all that surrounds him. While we thank Thee, our Beneficent Lord, who hast granted so many benefits with a lavish hand, our lips implore Thee to make us keensighted and strong-minded, that we may not be dazzled and confused by the dominion we wield; and cause us to be warm-hearted and devoted, that the fulfilment of our obligations may always be gentle and kind, that we may never forget—no, not during one single moment of our existence—how completely we owe every blessing to Thy Divine mercy; and we supplicate Thee to teach us the fullest appreciation of the duties of life, that they may become our first thought and constant care, and that to them may be given our most strenuous efforts, our most zealous and indefatigable labours. Then, Almighty and Gracious Lord, we shall become worthy of the great trust confided to us, and prove upright and conscientious servants of Thy will, and faithful stewards of Thy infinite bounty.



4.

“My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up.”—(*Psalm* v. 3.)

ALMIGHTY GOD of infinite compassion, however weak my voice among the myriads of voices that rise in all parts of the earth from the lips of Thy children, to

thank Thee with humble adoration for the comfort and rest of soothing slumbers vouchsafed to them in a peaceful night ; my feeble words will reach Thy Divine ear, and bring before Thee the most ardent thanksgiving and the fervent prayer for help and strength, that my daily endeavours and the fulfilment of my duties may be worthy of Thy service. However incomplete and inefficient the work of the previous day, however great the sense of discouragement with which I closed my eyes, sleep has lulled, if not quieted my disappointment, and Thy mercy has permitted hope and energy to revive in my heart and mind. I no longer despond, and, as I look up to the bright blue of heaven, floods of light and sunshine stream down and warm my breast with an all-pervading glow of faith, and with the flame of zeal which will enable me, O Gracious Lord, to obey Thy behests and accomplish the obligations of my life. Amen.



5.

“ How long wilt Thou forget me, O Lord ?—for ever? How long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me ? ”—(*Psalm* xiii. 1.)

O GOD, our Creator, our Protector, our Judge, Thou art shrouded from our sight when sufferings torture us, when we are encompassed by afflictions, when anxiety oppresses our mind and anguish fills our heart, when we have no strength left for action, when the wings of hope droop and fall to the ground, when our ears seem closed to the voice of solace, when light and sunshine have faded

out of our horizon, when all warmth has been chilled and all brightness has vanished from our path, when the flowers that charmed us are withered, when the buds of promise that surrounded us with hope and happiness have been nipped, when all has become dark and cold, and loved ones and friends are far away : then, yes then, Almighty God, we are forsaken and forgotten by Thee. But the awe of deepest gloom precedes the rosy clearness of morning, and, as death leads to renewed life, so, even on earth, the shadows of night are dispelled by the brilliancy of day. Yet if all the joys and blessings of this world should pass from our trembling grasp, Thou wilt not let us perish, we shall not die in darkness. The radiance of Thy Divine face will make our death-bed luminous, and Thy celestial hand will rekindle for our dim and tearful eyes the torch of faith to guide us on our weary road. Amen.

6.

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”—(*Deuteronomy* vi. 5.)

OUR Gracious and ever Merciful Father, Thou, who art love and beneficence and the source of all celestial warmth which calls forth treasures of beauty and prosperity, joy and mirth, sweetness and felicity—Thou, our Creator and Benefactor, art not to be adored with a self-concentrated heart that only thinks of the pain it suffers and the bliss it enjoys, and prays for gifts and favours, and utters grateful thanksgivings. The

heart that loves Thee truly, will feel for all—for neighbours and friends, for the rich and the poor, for all the children of mankind, feel for them with gentle sympathy, cherish them, turn towards them in their helplessness with soft and tender words of solace and comfort, support them in times of suffering and trial, share their smiles and re-echo the ringing voice of their gladness, when blessings encircle their hearth, and the sunshine of happiness embellishes their homes. The soul that loves Thee, Almighty Lord, must worship Thee with unshaken faith in Thy perfect goodness, with unfaltering belief in Thy Divine justice, with strictest obedience to Thy holy Law, with deepest reverence for Thy mysterious decrees, however terrible they may appear to our limited view, with un murmuring submission in thought and word and deed to Thy sacred will, which blesses us with health and happiness, and may afflict us with fearful anxieties and overwhelming sorrows.

The soul that loves Thee must soar on the pinions of hope both from the calamities of this earth and from its delights, and seek the foot of Thy throne in the realms of eternal peace, and there pray for power and strength, energy, courage and fortitude, yet also for resignation and humility. The heart that loves Thee with all its might, must use most zealously the gifts and blessings of Thy bounty, use them with the activity of the brain and of the limbs, with every aspiration of the mind, with every expression of the lips, and at every hour of the day, that the life which Thou hast given may not be a barren waste, a half cultivated wilderness, a desert which perhaps has its oasis of freshness and verdure, yet remains unproductive of real benefits; but a field teeming

with goodly harvests, a sunny land where all may find warmth and comfort, a garden wreathed with flowers of loveliness, bearing the best fruit, and yielding abundance of useful seed for future generations. Teach us, our Gracious Lord, to love Thee thus with zealous devotion and earnest faith, with clearness of knowledge and ardour of indefatigable service, and then we shall indeed be blessed, and find true happiness in obeying Thy sacred commandments.

7.

“He bringeth them out of darkness and the shadow of death.”

(*Psalm* cvii. 14.)

O MY GOD, on bended knees I thank Thee that the black cloud which surrounded my hopes, and prevented them from soaring into light and brightness, has passed away ; I thank Thee, Almighty Lord, that Thy unbounded goodness has fulfilled the wishes of my heart, that the cold eclipse which veiled all warmth and sunshine from my eyes has disappeared, and that I am once more able to believe in the possibility of happiness. I bow down at the foot of Thy throne in grateful adoration, Almighty God, for having safely led my loved ones through pangs and anguish, through weakness and danger, and renewed to them the blessings of health ; I thank Thee, Omnipotent Protector, for having shielded my children from harm, for having graciously vouchsafed to them the mercy of fresh joys. Make them thankful, O Gracious Lord, that they may never fail to worship Thee in reverence, and never cease to praise Thy holy name !

8.

“I am the Lord thy God, who have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.”—(*Exodus* xx. 2.)

OUR Heavenly and Beneficent Preserver, the whole earth which Thou hast created is glorious and beautiful, and teeming with the marvellous gifts of Thy bounty. Yet the sinful ways of man may turn the fairest lands into prisons and abodes of torture and persecution. Thus the kingdom of Egypt, with its grandeur, magnificence, and fertility, with its gorgeous temples, splendid palaces, and mysterious pyramids, the country fertilised by the Nile, that wonderful river which spreads life and health and plenty around, was the jail of our ancestors, and would have become their grave, had not Thy Divine power delivered them from bondage, and led them through many perils by land and sea, far away from all enemies and their weapons, to the favoured realms of abundance and luxury, destined to be made radiant with the light of Thy truth and the revelation of Thy holy self. Thousands of years have rolled by, since man first bowed down in pious adoration before Thee, since he first learnt that there is but One God. Thou art our Creator, and we are Thy children. How could we have another Father in heaven to warn and teach and protect, to save and to bless us? May the knowledge of Thy greatness be ever present in our thoughts, and may we be allowed, O Gracious Lord, to cherish the faith in Thy omnipotence and goodness during all the hours of our earthly existence, and to feel that Thou alone art mighty,

and that, without Thy aid and protection, without the blessing of Thy Divine spirit, our most anxious endeavours and our best and noblest works would crumble into dust and be as nought.

9.

“That which hath come out of thy lips thou shalt keep and perform.”
(*Deuteronomy* xxiii. 23.)

OUR Gracious Lord, without Thy help we should indeed be helpless; without Thy strength, we could not be otherwise than weak; without the firmness vouchsafed by Thee, we should waver and vacillate between good and evil. When our heart is touched, and our feelings are softened into pity or warmed into zeal, when love or sorrow, sympathy or gratitude lends the glow of enthusiasm to our words, we are apt to utter promises of unfailing aid and active devotion and life-long support, of unselfish labour, true amendment, and complete forgiveness. Enable us, our Heavenly Father, to redeem our pledges, to make our words sun-bright truths, to fulfil the hopes we have raised, to prevent disappointment, and to avert loss of trust in us, and of confidence in our wishes, aims and powers of usefulness. Yet allow us to feel and remember, Lord God Almighty, that if our speech may be likened to the silver coin of daily utility, silence frequently represents the more precious treasure—gold. May it serve us to mature our thoughts into convictions clear and firm, to ripen our best resolves into well defined plans of good

service, and may it bridle and chain the eager lips which would fain utter words that might never be kept, and foster illusions that would never become realities.

10.

“Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.”
(*Psalm cxli. 3.*)

O LORD our God, Thou who hast bestowed the gift of song on the birds of the air, and hast allowed them to fill copse and garden, field and forest, with their tuneful notes, who hast permitted the sweetness of the linnet and the joyous voice of the lark to diffuse gladness everywhere, the cuckoo to herald the brightness of spring, and the nightingale to add the enchantment of her music to the loveliness of summer, what has Thy beneficence not done by vouchsafing to us, Thy children, the power of speech? And if the winged minstrels fill earth and sky with their jubilant hymns, how great should be the strength of our lips, the might of our tongue? Should not our words be softer and gentler and more penetrating by far than all other sounds in creation? Should they not bring comfort and solace to the distressed and the sorrowful, courage and cheerfulness to the desponding and the faint-hearted, good counsel to the wayward and the wavering, golden lessons of love and hope to the brethren and neighbours who surround us, to the stranger at our door, and even to the enemy that turns in wrath against us? And,

therefore, Almighty God, while we bow down in humble thankfulness before Thy heavenly throne, we beseech Thee, to bless us with prudence and discretion, that the words of our mouth be never thoughtless nor unmindful of the feelings of others, and never spoken in haste or in anger, that they may not wound, nor irritate, nor kindle strife, nor inflict pain or humiliation, but that, with Thy beneficent aid, they may indeed cause harmony to reign under our own roof, and wherever Thou hast graciously permitted the sway of our speech to extend.

11.

“One thing have I continually desired of the Lord that I will earnestly seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to be in attendance in His temple.”—(*Psalm xxvii. 4.*)

THE whole world in its splendour and magnificence, in its beauty and loveliness, is Thy Temple, Almighty Lord. Teach us, our Heavenly Father, to worship Thee throughout its expanse, to recognize Thy unbounded goodness and Thy omnipotence in all the marvellous works of creation, in the ever-flowing and unfathomed seas, in the eternal and untrodden rocks, in every flower that blooms, in every fruit that ripens, in every grass-blade that rises from the land, in every seed that is dropped into the furrow, in the greatest treasures and blessings of the earth, and in its smallest embellishments. We implore Thee, our Gracious Lord, to make the adoration of Thy beneficence and holiness the chief

task of our lives, and then truth and purity will surround us ; the deeds and labours of our hands will become songs of praise and of thankfulness ; our thoughts will be hallowed into prayer, and will hold the germs of noble and pious aims and of zealous activity. Let Thy Divine presence be with us everywhere, our Merciful God, and purify our hearts to serve Thee in humility, yet in earnestness and in ardent love, that our actions and our indefatigable endeavours to obey Thy sacred will may be successful among our brethren, and win favour in Thy all-penetrating sight ! Amen.

12.

“ And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth its fruit in its season ; the leaf also shall not wither.”

(*Psalm i. 3.*)

HOW beautiful are the trees that stand rooted near flowing waters ! They raise their crowns heavenward into the pure sapphire of the skies, their leafy branches are sought by the birds of the air for shade and shelter, and their loveliness is reflected in the rippling wavelets, the thousand mirrors of the stream. Perpetual freshness surrounds them ; they bear blossom and fruit ; their brightness and fragrance and their waving foliage attract the young and the old, men and women, and young maidens and little children. The lambkin of the field comes and drinks from the crystal river under the green canopy, and the brown-eyed gazelle reposes beneath its soft shadow ; the bee gathers her honey from the open-

ing buds, and the insect, poised on the sun-warmed flowers, fans their blushing petals with its jewelled wing. Thus Thou hast decreed, our Almighty and Beneficent Father, that, like the trees that never wither, those also shall grow and thrive and prosper in the light of heaven, who anxiously endeavour to obey Thy commandments and to carry out Thy holy will. Thy blessing rests upon the righteous like dew, neighbours and friends seek their presence, and they are able to give peace and shelter, comfort and refreshment, the food that nourishes, the waters that quench the thirst of the lips, the clear fountains of knowledge to invigorate the mind, the fruit of enjoyment, and the sweetness of the fairest roses that embellish life. It is even a greater happiness to give largely than to possess much, but he is doubly blessed, Almighty God, who is graciously allowed to dispense far and wide the admirable gifts and excellent treasures of Thy heavenly bounty.

13.

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.”

(*Psalm xxxii. 1.*)

ALMIGHTY GOD, Thy mercies are infinite; may they be graciously vouchsafed to us, and to all who are of a contrite spirit, who repent in the most secret chambers of the heart, who pray and hope and yearn for Thy pardon, and anxiously trust that their faults may be blotted out from Thy sight, and the heavy burden lifted from their conscience. Our Beneficent Lord, we stand before Thee full of shame and confusion; cleanse

us, we implore Thee, that all stains may be washed away, and leave us as white as snow in Thy holy presence. Remove our sins, we beseech Thee, and let us bury them, yet not in oblivion. But as the dews of heaven and the fertilizing showers descend upon the bare earth to call forth the freshest verdure and the sweetest flowers, so let us cover with the sighs of our anguish all faults and transgressions; and may the tears of our repentance fall upon them, and bring forth from the darkness of our woe and from the depth of our remorse, the best germs and promises of amendment, and with Thy heavenly blessing, Almighty God, the brightest fulfilment of good and noble deeds! Amen.



14.

“In the path of righteousness is life, and it leadeth to immortality.”
(*Proverbs* xii. 28.)

ALMIGHTY LORD, our Gracious Benefactor, the mercies which Thy infinite goodness has vouchsafed to us on earth, and the still greater blessings which thou hast promised as a fulfilment of our most ardent hopes beyond the confines of the grave, pervade us with a deep and overwhelming sense of thankfulness. But our limited view and our imperfect comprehension cannot reach the glorious and beautiful realms of eternity, which lie beyond the darkness and mystery of death in the sunshine of heaven. While we anxiously pray, that Thy celestial arm, O Lord, may lead us to those blessed lands of uninterrupted peace, we feel that immortality exists even on earth, and can be won by us. Life,

which we hold from Thy bounty, O Merciful God, does not deserve the full beauty of its name unless it means the active use of all our powers and faculties, the possession of which we merit only when they are exerted to produce labours of love and benevolence, of charity and devotion. And such labours are undying not merely when the patriot or hero, the benefactor or devoted sufferer that wrought them, lives, crowned with laurel, in the unfading annals of history, but even when the mind and heart that achieved the good and great works are forgotten, or were perhaps never known. Noble deeds and the triumphs of earnestness and zeal, are undying, they are carried on and on by those who come after us, to be handed down as heirlooms to unborn generations. Almighty Lord, we beseech Thee, to bless our aims and efforts along the road of duty, that we may leave no service unfulfilled, and that with Thy celestial help, we may be allowed to sow golden seeds for imperishable harvests! Amen.

15.

“Thus speaketh the Lord of Hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and show mercy and compassion, every man to his brother.”

(Zechariah vii. 9.)

O GOD of all beneficence, tenderness, and pardon, Thou hast commanded us to be just and merciful, and Thy Divine laws are so admirable and perfect, that we may well study them from early morn till darkling eve, and never cease to find new beauties in the wonderful code. Justice could not exist without mercy; it

would soon degenerate into harshness and severity, and even change ere long into cruelty and injustice. To punish every fault, to visit every sin with chastisement, might cause those to suffer doubly and more acutely, who have perhaps erred from ignorance, succumbed to unknown dangers, and yielded to deluding temptation, because no warning voice was near, because no shielding arm, no guiding hand, no experienced and loving friend helped to avert the false step, to point out the snare, and show the evil lurking among flowers. We cannot execute judgment without knowing the entire truth, which shows the fault and its root, the remorse and the penitence that follow, the greatness of the peril, the weakness of the sinner. But who can hope to fathom the depth of heart and mind, and to rend the veils that shroud the inner life? The knowledge of the best and wisest is imperfect, the eye of the most clear-sighted is but dim. Thou alone, Almighty God, art omniscient, and if Thy mercy is extended to the erring, shall not we, whose powers are so limited, we, who hesitate so often between right and wrong—finally perhaps to choose the latter—shall we not weigh most carefully the deeds and words of our brethren in the balance of good and evil, and in humblest imitation of Thy infinite beneficence, show compassion and extend forgiveness to all our fellow-pilgrims along the road of life? Our indulgence to the sinful may not be true justice, but if we pray to Thee for guidance, Thou wilt enlighten us, our Heavenly Father, and cause our judgment to become clear and penetrating, and yet to lose all wounding harshness. Amen.

16.

“Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.”—(*Isaiah* v. 20.)

OUR Almighty Lord of infinite beneficence, Thou, who hast given us eyes to see the wonders of the world, ears to hear its beauteous harmonies, and alas! its sad cries and wailings of sorrow and despair, a tongue to shape our thoughts and feelings into words, the powers of the mind to understand good and evil, the heart to thrill with hope and love and faith, and the voice of conscience to direct and reprove us, complete, we beseech Thee, Thy gifts in our favour: kindle Thy illuminating torch of truth, and cause it to shine so steadfastly before us, that no shadow, veil, or film shall conceal it from our view; that it may dispel darkness and doubt, and show us the most perfect honesty, uprightness, and devotion, the whole circle of our duties and their fulfilment, patience and forbearance, indulgence, charity, and forgiveness, gentleness and kindness. And then we will anxiously strive to become impressed with all bright realities of virtue, and not to defraud ourselves by mistaking poison for honey, sullen silence for meek endurance; we shall not believe that we are generous when we give way to extravagance, longsuffering when we have merely glided into indifference; that we are merciful when careless, just when harsh and severe, thrifty when niggardly, watchful when suspicious, eager, anxious, and zealous when only irritable, restless, and hasty.

Nor must we deem it a slight offence to adopt softness and blandness of manner when our breast is full of guile, for hypocrisy defaces the diamond mirror of truth, and leads from falsehood into the abyss of sin.



17.

“If one man sin against another, the judge will judge him: but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?”—(1 *Samuel* ii. 25.)

THOU, our Unerring and Almighty Legislator, hast laid down eternal rules, by which the judges of the earth are guided throughout all centuries. The sins, which in moments of blinding anger or in hours of cold and deliberate hatred, we commit against our neighbour, are seen at once, are known or discovered ere long by our fellow beings, and speedily judged and punished—the crime by the law in its unbending severity, the more venial offence by the scorn and contempt of the world. But if we sin against Thee, our Heavenly Benefactor, who shall plead our cause, who shall entreat Thy forgiveness, who shall weigh our fault in the presence of the Supreme Judge? Before Thy throne no human advocate can stand, no jury may approach Thy court! We are alone before Thee with the crushing load of our ingratitude, which is violation of Thy beautiful precepts, which is wickedness and iniquity. But no! Thy mercy, Almighty God, is infinite, Thy goodness is unbounded; we are never alone, not for one minute during our pilgrimage over the heights and through the valleys of life, not in the brilliant sunshine of prosperity, nor

during the bewildering night of peril, not among clouds and shadows, and rocks and precipices. Conscience is ever nigh to lead, instruct, or reprove us. Let us turn a willing, an eager, an attentive ear to its incessant teaching, that not the faintest whisper of it may escape our vigilance! With so perfect a leader, with so unequalled an umpire of our actions and intentions, of our thoughts and feelings, we should not err, we should not sin. Our Beneficent Lord, we beseech Thee, let the soft and gentle voice of conscience be a cordial to our breast, and an invulnerable shield when the dangers of sin approach us! Let the thought of having attempted the fulfilment of our duty sink like balm into our heart of hearts, and heal even the deepest wounds inflicted by the darts of enmity!



18.

“Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart.”—(*Leviticus* xix. 17.)

WE bow down before Thy wisdom and goodness, our Gracious Lord, and we understand Thy commandment to mean that it is not enough to abstain from evil deeds and harsh words, from looks of anger, enmity, or scorn; not enough to leave those around us unharmed by the scorching breath of slander, by the cold air of indifference, or the dead calm of neglect; not enough to bridle our tongue, to close our lips, to avoid giving pain or offence, to refrain from wounding the mind or from grieving the soul; but our innermost heart must be free from hatred. That frightful canker robs all other

feelings of their purity and sweetness, it imperils their very existence. Guard us mercifully from it, our Omnipotent Father in heaven, and enable us to remove the first poison spot, that it may not grow and spread, and devour the best treasures and enjoyments of our life !



19.

“ Turn not to the right hand nor to the left ; remove thy foot from evil.”
(*Proverbs* iv. 27.)

ALMIGHTY LORD, we implore Thee to strengthen our firmness and prudence, and to keep our steps on the broad highroad of rectitude ; for along its course, under the blue expanse, and in the daylight of heaven, are our duties, and there, with Thy Divine blessing on our humble but earnest endeavours, we shall find the means of fulfilling them. Cause us, Almighty God, to be keen-sighted, that we may not overlook any of the obligations of life, nor any of the difficulties which surround them. More attractive perhaps than the highroads are the by-ways with their fragrance of wild herbs and blossoms, with their hedgerows on which the untrained may-rose hangs her blushing buds, and where in glowing autumn season, the bramble flings the rich profusion of its dark tassels, the hazel shakes its clusters of brown nuts, and jewelled butterflies and melodious birds are bright and sweet. But we may tarry too long among sunshine and light, soft shadows, music and flowers, and emerge from the enjoyment of pleasure to find that the day is spent, and that we have failed to

accomplish our appointed task. Keep us also, we implore Thee, Almighty Lord, from untried paths that seem to lead to towering and dazzling summits, or down into alluring valleys of fair promise; giddiness may assail us on the heights, unseen and unsuspected dangers may lie hidden under the beckoning enchantment of the distant and smiling plain. And assist us, we beseech Thee, O Gracious Lord, to devote all our energies to works of beneficence and labours of love; and then we shall know true peace and gladness, for Thy Divine bounty has placed all real happiness near the zealous fulfilment of duty.



20.

“Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge.”
(*Psalm* xix. 2.)

OUR Heavenly Father of omniscience, we implore Thee to allow the light of each day, so inexhaustible in precious lessons and examples, to shine into our heart of hearts, and teach us Thy wonders and Thy goodness, that each picture showing the abundance of Thy earthly gifts and heavenly blessings, may be treasured in our minds, and that we may praise Thee for the waving harvests of the land, and the ripening fruit of the branch, for the pasture and the vineyard, for the oil of the olive and the honey of the bee, for the refreshing dew and the fertilizing rain, the fanning breeze and warming sun-beam. Allow us, too, in lowliest and humblest imitation of Thy infinite greatness and beneficence, to be as reviving dew to those whose loving sympathy has been exhausted and

parched by the winds of adversity, as the sunshine of gladness to the neighbours whose smiles have been banished by care and sorrow, as a cordial to the drooping spirit, as a ray of warmth in the abodes of poverty and suffering, there to cheer and comfort those who weep and mourn. And as the luminous eyes of the dark-blue empyrean seem to keep silent vigil over the slumbering world beneath, so permit us, our Heavenly Father, to watch in the stillness of the night, near the bed of sickness, near all who, in their trouble and anguish, have been confided to our care, and who ought not to be deserted in the time of sore trial and helplessness. Thus the radiance of the day and the glamour of the star-bright firmament will have taught us lessons never to be forgotten, lessons which must lead to unselfish usefulness, and to devoted service among the family of man.

21.

“And Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days for the love he bore to her.”—(*Genesis* xxix. 20.)

GOD of boundless and inexhaustible beneficence, who hast graciously created us in Thy Divine image, and hast blessed us with numberless gifts and treasures for the happiness and enjoyment of life, be pleased to grant us the most precious boon of Thy heavenly grace; permit that our hearts be pervaded by an everflowing source of love, by that feeling which purifies and hallows all others, and bestows the greatest felicity upon those who harbour it, and upon the recipients of its

countless words and unceasing deeds of devotion. Love is pity and mercy, charity and forgiveness, kindness and generosity, self-denial and self-sacrifice, patience, perseverance, and humility,. If we love our fellow-beings, how can we do otherwise than share their sufferings by the power of sympathy, aid them to carry the burden of their woes, and thus lighten even the heaviest load of care? If we love our neighbours, how can we fail to be merciful to their faults and shortcomings? How can we neglect to chide the offenders gently and softly, or omit to advise and teach them, and by the force of example show them straighter and smoother and better paths, pointing out the roads which lead to goodness and success? If we love our companions and brethren, we must be ready to give them all they need from the stores of our wealth, or even from the scanty provisions of our poverty, we must devote to them the labours of our hands and minds, and learn to give and pardon and forget. If we love them, we must yearn to be kind and generous, and strive to embellish their days with every charm and every joy that the utmost tenderness can yield; we must deny ourselves all indulgence, and silence egotism and all selfish ambition, that no personal aim may impede our usefulness, our power of good service, our faculty of diffusing contentment and happiness around us. If we love truly, we shall be patient and endure much for the sake of the dearly beloved, we shall learn to persevere, and, with Thy blessing, Almighty God, win the goal—as Jacob laboured patiently during long years of servitude, and was rewarded with the invaluable guerdon of affection. Love banishes all evil sentiments—pride and envy, malice and resentment, and

the craving for revenge. It develops all good feelings, quickens industry, adds perseverance to energy, and warmth to zeal, gives wings to our activity, and the strength of the lion to our courage, so that we may hope to overcome all obstacles, conquer all dangers, and obtain every blessing for our beloved. That universal sympathy, like celestial manna, descends from heaven; it comes from Thee, Lord God Almighty, for the refreshment and sustenance of mind and heart. May it enter our inmost soul, and remain there for ever the well-spring of all goodness and happiness, yet, similar to reviving and healing waters, spread its gifts and mercies far and wide!



22.

“Stand in awe, and sin not; commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.”—(*Psalm* iv. 4.)

O LORD, our God, the best among us are not free from blame, the strongest are but feeble, and the eyes of the most clearsighted are often dim; therefore we err or vacillate, and stray from Thy paths, and fall heedlessly into guilt and affliction. Yet may we not hope to keep aloof from sin if, with Thy blessing upon our thoughts, we take frequent counsel of our own heart, especially in the peace and silence of the night, when all outward sounds have died away, when all disturbing strife is hushed, when the whole world slumbers around us, when we are removed from the influence of friends and foes, when temptations and dangers are alike shrouded in obscurity, when darkness spreads its wings

over us, and seems to arrest the step of time, and give to our troubles and uncertainties long and useful hours for meditation, for searching looks into the past and into the most hidden depths of our breast, opportunity for earnest attention to the faintest whisperings of conscience: then, if our soul awakens, and thrills with the knowledge of our faults and our weakness, and shakes off the trammels of old failings, the fetters of debility, and the chains of habit, it may be purified by sorrow and repentance, and, thus supported by hope and faith, rise towards Thee, Almighty God, whose mercy will preserve it from the oft-recurring stains of earth.

23.

“Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay Thy vows unto the Most High.”
(*Psalm* l. 14.)

ALMIGHTY LORD, were my words as innumerable as the grains of sand glittering in the light of the sun, when the waves of the ocean have ebbed from the beach, were they as countless as the drops of water that form its unmeasured depths, they would still be insufficient to lay on the steps of Thy throne all the glowing gratitude of my heart. I was downcast and desponding, full of fear and anxiety, trouble and sorrow; the colours of hope were fading fast from my eye-sight, and dark and heavy clouds hid their shifting yet brilliant gleams; my bosom quivered with anguish, my hands were powerless, my lips parched and closed, my feet rooted to the ground in helplessness and despair. But Thy holy and beneficent will has changed my apprehensions into glad-

ness and rejoicing. The dearly beloved has been saved from sickness and danger, and upon the couch from which suffering and sadness are flying, Thy heavenly blessings of health and strength have been abundantly showered. Accept, Almighty Lord, the unutterable thankfulness of my soul; my trembling lips are unable to shape it into words.



24.

“Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and intelligent in their own sight.”—(*Isaiah* v. 21.)

OUR wisdom, Almighty God, is indeed mere delusion and blindness. How can it be otherwise than imperfect! How can our sight be aught but dim and feeble, when Thou hast mercifully decreed that the future and its changes shall be hidden from our view; when we ourselves so perversely and so frequently close the great book of the past, which lies open before us, and thus shut our eyes to the invaluable lessons of experience! With the knowledge of our shortcomings and of the film that so often obscures our vision, we must trust to the eternal light of Thy omniscience to dispel the deep shadows which would otherwise encompass our life, and pray for Thy guidance on our path, which Thy celestial hand alone can irradiate: we must tear down relentlessly the veils of folly and conceit, the mists of vanity and pride, those bewildering shadows that separate us from the heavenly torches of truth, lest these become fainter and fainter, and be entirely lost to us at last.

What is our intelligence? One of the numerous gifts of Thy goodness, held by us during Thy gracious will and pleasure; a ray of brightness indeed, yet how often weakened and overcast, how soon extinguished! Our merciful God, may all precious treasures of Thy bounty, so beautiful yet so fragile and evanescent, be valued by us as true blessings and favours, but used in humble submission to Thy Law, in trembling uncertainty as to our own powers, but in the fullest reliance upon the rules and precepts, which Thou, our Gracious Lord, hast laid down for the guidance of Thy children.



25.

“God will guard the feet of the pious, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for not by strength shall man prevail.”—(1 *Samuel* ii. 9.)

OUR Merciful Father, who can deserve to be called pious in Thy hearing? Who can worship Thee, or adore Thy goodness and greatness sufficiently, who can comprehend Thy ineffable and everlasting glory in heaven and upon earth? And the prayers and supplications of our lips, the glowing words and fervid thanksgivings of grateful hearts—expressions and symbols of piety—can they merit Thy Divine favour, our Gracious Lord? Surely not they alone. We may be proud among our neighbours, haughty in mien and speech, arrogant in thought and conduct, and yet how can we be otherwise than lowly at the foot of Thy throne, O King of Kings! True piety is meekness that does not obtrude, but hides its worth and its labours; it is

the gentle practice of unostentatious virtues, not paraded in the glare of the world, but laid silently upon Thy shrines; it is the humility of every day of our existence, which collects its most arduous works and exertions for Thy altars, and binds them in heavy sheaves, to be desecrated only by Thy all-seeing eye, and graciously blessed by the justice of Thy Divine approbation.

26.

“Honour the Lord with thy wealth and with the first of thy fruits.”
(*Proverbs* iii. 9.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, the universe is Thine; the skies with their flaming worlds, and the earth with its beauties and treasures belong to Thee. What then is the wealth we are enjoined by the Law to lay before Thee, and what are the firstfruits that our hands may place on Thy altars? Pearls and diamonds gleam and shine less brilliantly than the myriads of dew-drops which early and late adorn Thy green valleys; the rays of the midday sun are more glowing, and the beams of the moon purer and brighter, than gold and silver. Shall we surround Thy tabernacles with the scarlet pomegranate, and the fragrant citron, or gather the fruit of the palm-groves and the clusters of the grape-vine to wreath Thy sanctuaries? All these treasures may be far beyond our reach. Let us, however, recollect, that even the poorest owns in his heart of hearts an inexhaustible mine of wealth, which must be transformed into good deeds and works of usefulness, into labours of

love and of charity, ere it can find favour in Thy all-seeing eye, Almighty God; let us remember that we may possess and cultivate in the realms of the soul a garden of Eden, where the germ of gentle thoughts may grow into noble aims, and the golden seeds of hope become developed into lofty aspirations, where earnest convictions, when deeply rooted, spring up into trees of knowledge, and yield fruits of sweetness and of excellence. In youth, when through the mercy of Thy Divine grace, health and strength, firmness and energy are ours, and can aid zeal to give the best proofs of devotion, to fulfil all duties of unrepining self-denial, and to work indefatigably for the welfare of our brethren, we should in all humility lay the fruits of our anxious endeavours on Thy sacred shrines. Later, we probably have the will, but we may perhaps no longer possess the power of exertion. We implore Thee, Almighty Lord, to bless our strenuous efforts and constant watchfulness, thus causing the produce of our garden to be both goodly and plentiful, and worthy of Thy gracious acceptance!

27.

“In the Lord put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?”—(*Psalm xi. 1.*)

AS the fowler spreads the meshes of his net over the coral berries of the hedge-row, and across the dew-bright treasures of the pasture-land, to cage the joyous lark and warbling linnæus; as the poacher lays his snares in field and forest for the swift-winged partridge, and timid hare, and brilliant pheasant; so do

our worst, perhaps, our only, enemies—our faults—lay traps and nets for our freedom and our rest. Thus they entangle our peace of mind in endless struggles, and slay our mirth and happiness, and with the bow of their strength, and the poisoned and barbed arrow of swift-ness, aim at our heart of hearts. But as the bird flies far away from the perils of earth to the high mountain fastness, where it is safe and secure, so flies our soul to Thee, our Gracious Lord, on the high-soaring wings of hope and faith, and finds rest on the steps of Thy throne, which is built in heaven above clouds and shadows, far beyond all dangers and sufferings.



28.

“More to be desired are the judgments of the Lord than gold, yea, than much fine gold : sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb.”

(*Psalm* xix. 10.)

WHAT are the riches of inexhaustible mines, their precious metals and sparkling jewels? what the gems of the deep, coral sprays and gleaming pearls, and wealth of clearest amber? What all the treasures of the earth, the blushing rose with fragrant breath, the bloom on the sun-kissed peach, the sweetness of the grape, the song of birds, the freshness of the fountain, the light of day, the sapphire sky, the star-bright glory of the night—what are they all to the sinful heart and troubled soul? Ever brilliant and beautiful, enjoyable and enchanting are the gifts of Thy beneficence, Almighty Lord, to those who obey Thy behests, but they remain as nought to the mind tortured by self-reproach.

O gracious Father of all mercies, guard us from temptation, we implore Thee, and give us the will and the power to keep Thy Divine commandments. Grant us the possession of those unequalled gifts, which, more valuable than gold, are indeed sweeter than the store of the bee—a tranquil breast which harbours no evil, a clear conscience which no wrong-doing ever obscures. Help us, support us, Almighty God, and we shall remain aloof from danger and sin, and from the agonizing sufferings wrought by a guilty mind and a guilty life.

29.

“The Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces.”—(*Isaiah* xxv. 8.)

ALMIGHTY FATHER, Thy mercy will not allow us to despair: we may stagger under the burden of our woes, sickness may lay us low, and cause us not merely to be useless and helpless, but to add a heavy weight of care to the struggles and labours of others. Or ours may be the more agonizing trials of seeing those we love best—the light of our eyes, and of our whole existence—fade away and sink into the grave; and still we live on with lacerated breast, with a sorrow that on earth cannot die out of our heart of hearts; but from the depth of our anguish, we look towards Thee, O Lord, our God and feel that our weeping will cease, and that Thy celestial hand, in tenderness and compassion, will dry all tears—yes, all—in Thy own good time. We trust in Thee, and hope, and pray for the fulfilment of Thy Divine promise. Amen.

30.

“Dishonour not a man in his old age.”—(*Sirach* viii. 6.)

LORD God Almighty, we humbly obey Thy gracious commandments. How can we allow our eyes to rest upon our aged brethren without feelings of awe! Must we not recognise in them pictures of the past, full of lessons and of warnings, trace in every line of the furrowed brow evidence of care and anxiety, of labour and struggle, and note and watch the smile of tranquil contentment so different from the joyous beams that shine with the brightness of hope and anticipation, when they play round the lips of the young! And while looking, as it were, into the great mirror of time gone by, and of time to come for ourselves and our loved ones, and thus gathering the golden precepts of experience, can we fail to see the useless endeavours, the unfulfilled aims, the dead joys and the vanishing sorrows, the disappointment that has lost its bitterness, the vanities that have proved snares, the glittering temptations that have been resisted! All, all have now well-nigh faded away. Of the heart burning and the heart breaking, of the hungering and thirsting after love and happiness, after wealth and fame, nothing remains. The glowing fires are reduced to ashes, but Thy infinite mercy, Almighty Lord, has permitted the torch of faith to remain lighted in the path of the old man. Who would not turn reverently towards the living lesson, more precious than even the best and greatest book, and more anxiously to be studied and cherished!

MAY.

1.

“Cease from anger and forsake wrath, fret not thyself in any way to do evil.”—(*Psalm xxxvii. 8.*)

THE meek and gentle who know not the meaning of anger, cannot understand the misery which thoughtless haste and impulsive passion cause us to endure and to inflict upon others; yet they are human beings like ourselves, perhaps better and more strongminded, but hardly able to comprehend our sudden temptation, our remorse and punishment, they do not follow the spark that falls upon the most vulnerable spot of the heart, upon the most inflammable part of the mind, there to be fanned ere long into all the scorching fires of fierce passion; they, the calmest and most tranquil of our friends, cannot help us in our distress. But Thou, Almighty God, whose perfection is manifest throughout the universe, Thou, our Beneficent Lord, who art enthroned in the glory of heaven, far removed from all earthly weakness and folly and sin, Thou art yet ever near to us, and Thou alone, our Divine Protector, canst give strength and hope to

the trembling sinner, and Thee we implore to let the tears of our penitence become quenching waters, and extinguish the flames of wrath, ere they consume our happiness, and reduce it to ashes. Strengthen our resolve, Omnipotent Lord, we beseech Thee, that vanity and sensitiveness may not stir the smouldering embers of irritation, that our own neglected and disregarded faults may not rise against us to be our most dangerous and most powerful enemies, and annihilate the good germs within us. Help us, we implore Thee, our Heavenly Father, to resist evil and to conquer it! Amen.



2.

“If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink.”—(*Proverbs* xxv. 21.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, Thy commandments are indeed admirable, leading us gently, and far oftener along flowery than thorny paths, to peace and happiness. How could we enjoy repose or ever recover tranquillity, if during our earthly pilgrimage we turned away from the starveling, be he neighbour, stranger, or foe, and withheld from his needs the bread of sustenance, or refused to share with the hungry the last loaf of our stores—if we refrained from supporting those who faint, and from holding to parched lips the cup of refreshment? But bread and water serve only as types in the holy behest; they are the first necessities of our existence, and while bidding us to offer them even to our enemy, Thou hast enjoined us, O Gracious Lord, to divide the treasures

and blessings of Thy beneficence with those around us. We should give, and give readily, the balm of consolation, the cordial of strength under trials, the wine of joy and gladness, the shadow, the shelter, the best fruits of the tree of knowledge, the milk of kindness that nourishes and sustains, and the ever-flowing stream of compassion and mercy that helps to cleanse and purify from the darkest faults. If with Thy Divine aid, we can thus accomplish our task, the enemies will vanish and be changed into friends, for as we pardon we shall be pardoned even in this world, our road will indeed be sunny and bright, and though our duties may be numerous, yet in the radiance of Thy countenance, Almighty Lord, their fulfilment must be easy and rich in blessings.

3.

“He maketh me to lie down in green pastures : He leadeth me beside the still waters.”—(*Psalms* xxiii. 2.)

WHEREVER Thou leadest our steps, Almighty God, Thy Divine beneficence allows us to find refreshment and repose. Whatever place Thou hast assigned to us must be the best for our happiness. The vineyard, the forest, and the corn-field, the quarry, the mine, the ocean, and the camp, the city, the palace, and the throne, the crown of gold or of laurel, are all in Thy gift, all in Thy celestial hand, to be divided by Thee among Thy children. Thou knowest our capacity, and from Thee alone do we receive every boon. Our Gracious Lord, keep us aloof from envy and jealousy,

we implore Thee, teach us to be satisfied with our lot, be it lowly or exalted, thankful for our daily bread, for the water that allays our thirst, for the tranquillity of mind which may be ours, whether we remain aloof from the paths of ambition, or tread the heights of worldly splendour and greatness. A lonely and quiet life, while it brings comparative freedom from care, does not exclude us from the highest enjoyments of this world. We may be poor and humble, and yet richly blessed by Thee. Cause us to recognize Thy favours and Thy mercies, our Bountiful Father, and let our thanksgivings rise for ever and ever to Thy sanctuary in heaven from the depths of faithful and loving hearts! Amen.

4.

“There is no God like Thee, who keepest covenant and mercy with Thy servants that walk before Thee with all their heart.”—(1 *Kings* viii. 23.)

OUR Almighty Father in heaven, Thou art a God of love; every hour vouchsafed to us is replete with Thy gifts and favours, every minute of our existence is a blessing. The light that shines around us, the rays of the sun that stream down to warm the fields of earth, the blue smile from above that meets our upraised look towards the bright morning sky from which the blush of dawn is just subsiding, the eye itself which sees all the wonders and beauties of creation, the ear that hears and learns, the heart that hopes and loves, and trusts in Thee, the hands for work, the lips for prayer, are they not all treasures of Thy bounty, graciously lavished

upon us? In the course of the day and of life, the golden beams may become obscured, hidden by gloomy clouds, and our own eyes grow dim, and our ears listen, perhaps, to more sounds of woe than notes of gladness, and sufferings may torture our limbs, and sickness weaken our body, and our breast be full of sorrow and anxiety. But Thou art a Merciful God, and if we humbly obey Thy behests, and devoutly strive to carry out the mission of kindness confided to our care, if we seek, in pious imitation of Thee, our great Benefactor, to do good, and kindle joy, and foster happiness, then the vicissitudes of our career cannot overwhelm us, and Thou wilt rescue and comfort Thy children in all hardships and trials. Amen.

5.

“Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept Thy word.”
(*Psalm cxix. 67.*)

ALMIGHTY FATHER, we are dazzled by our happiness, for Thou hast showered down upon us the best and greatest blessings of Thy beneficence. Life might be acknowledged as a paradise, pervaded by sights and sounds of loveliness and of sweetness, bright with clear waters that sparkle in the soft radiance of heaven with all the colours of hope; it might be prized as a garden full of roses of beauty and fragrance, of fruit fresh and mellow, of waving trees, delightfully musical with the melodies of blithe birds; as a garden beaming with the fair faces and happy smiles of our beloved, and ringing with

their voices of gladness ; it might be gratefully enjoyed as an abode made precious by the treasures of health, the devotion of friends, and the affection of dear children. But weak and erring, we seem to resent even the slightest disappointment, the least cloudlet that sails over our horizon darkens our prospects, the least check to our enjoyments changes serenity into ingratitude, and causes anger to fill the heart and overshadow the mind, that should bow down before Thee, Almighty God, in fervent thankfulness and adoration. Yet, the stroke of affliction rends all veils, and discloses the innermost depths of the soul. The bleeding bosom, the sorrowing heart, the agonized life, that feel and bear the heavy weight of grief and the shroud of mourning, must turn for ever from passion and strife, envy and enmity, malice and hatred, and not from these alone, but also from irritation and harshness and all bitterness of speech, from pride, arrogance, and vanity. O let me turn to Thee, Almighty God, ere the thunder-bolt of calamity falls; let me forsake evil and guile and folly, and try to labour with indefatigable hands and do good, and be patient, and hope to earn Thy heavenly mercies! Amen.

6.

“Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.”—(1 *Samuel*, xvi. 7.)

WE are able to conceal much from our neighbours, but what can we place before Thee, O Gracious Lord, to hide our sins? The friends who form our circle see the beaming or the tearful eye, or the countenance

full of anguish, the light step or the halting gait ; they notice the soft speech and the harsh word, the deed of kindness, or what they deem the coldness of neglect. Yet how little do they know of the artful mind, the proud heart, or the aspiring soul ! They may think well of us, and our thoughts may yet be evil ; perhaps they lavish praise on our actions, when we have not deserved their favour, or they blame us when our aim has been pure and noble, though its fulfilment lay beyond our power. Though the unmerited praise or unjust censure, may abide while we are on earth, in heaven the reign of light and truth is eternal. Our God of everlasting mercy, help us, protect, and strengthen us for all good purposes, that the soul, upon which Thou lookest in pity and beneficence, may not have to shrink with shame and confusion from Thy all-penetrating gaze, that it may be unveiled before Thee with its anxious endeavours, its zealous efforts, with the faults it is ever trying to combat, and the qualities it strives to develop for faithful devotion to all around, and for humble service at the foot of Thy altars, our Lord, our King, our Father!



7.

“ Pardon, O Lord, our transgression and our sin ! ”—(*Exodus xxxiv. 9.*)

OUR Gracious Father, forgive, we beseech Thee, our offences and trespasses, and allow us to feel Thy merciful pardon ; allow remorse to die out of our soul, and self-reproaches to cease from tormenting us ; for however deep our sorrows and afflictions, however great

the calamities and punishments that may overtake us, there can be no agony so terrible as that which follows in the wake of wrong-doing. When we have trespassed ; when we have sinned by our words or acts, and unlawfully invaded that which ought to have been sacred in our eyes—the peace and joy and happiness of others ; when we have forgotten Thy holy commandments ; suffering so keen and harrowing overcomes us in heart and mind, that the power of usefulness and of exertion is suspended. Grant, Almighty God, that this power may return strengthened by experience and by the sad and solemn lessons of the past ; and thus cause Thy Divine hand to strike off the maiming and paralyzing fetters of sin ! Then, with Thy heavenly blessing upon our anxious efforts, we may hope to rise again to the full performance of duty, which Thy holy will has ordained to be the truest and best source of happiness.



8.

“ Both young men and maidens, old men and children, let them praise the name of the Lord, for His name alone is excellent ; His glory is above the earth and heaven.”—(*Psalms* cxlviii. 12, 13.)

COME and bow down before the Lord, our Heavenly Benefactor ! He is, and has been, and ever will be, merciful to us all. His Divine beneficence has treasures for every season of life. His celestial hand has wreathed childhood with thousands of blossoms bright and sweet, He has vouchsafed to it laughing mirth and the enjoyment

of the fleeting hour ; to youth, His paternal love gives fond wishes and glowing hopes ; to manhood, energies and powers for the attainment and possession of happiness ; to old age, tranquillity after long years of toil, and rich stores of knowledge and experience. May we, Almighty Lord, be allowed in gleeful childhood to strew with flowers the otherwise cold and sombre paths of the aged, and cause their silent homes to ring with the echoes of glad voices ; and may our youth, animated by pure aims and noble thoughts, become the joy and pride of loving parents ! Help us, shield us, we implore Thee, O Gracious Lord, that the time of our trials and labours, of our struggles and our wrestling, may be productive of good and useful deeds. Teach the child to brighten the paternal roof with sunny smiles and words of affection, permit the old to yield wise and gentle counsel, the young to be obedient and devoted, the middle-aged to bear all burdens with courage and patience, to curb anger, check irritation, forget and forgive, and to instil golden lessons by the force of example ; yet above all let us unite in fervid praise of Thy holiness, Almighty Lord, and in ardent thanksgivings, for to Thee we owe every precious gift—youth and health and strength, life and joy and happiness, hope and faith and peace. Amen.



9.

“The Lord shall fight for you, and you shall keep yourselves quiet.”
(*Exodus* xiv. 14.)

THOU alone art mighty, Thou alone art omnipotent ; all victories, all triumphs are Thine, O Gracious Lord. Thou hast commanded us to be tranquil, and not to harbour angry thoughts, which cause the weak to rush into strife ; not to nourish resentment, which urges the reckless on to battle-fields where no honour is to be gained. Thou hast forbidden us to hunger and thirst after revenge, for punishment is in Thy Divine hand, and its weapons will defend us against all danger. Enable us, our Loving Father in heaven, to overcome every feeling of enmity and hatred, to check and stifle every outburst of passion, to remain calm under injury and provocation, and to rely upon Thy arm and Thy shield to keep all perils and all foes far aloof !

10.

“In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried to my God, and He heard my voice from His sanctuary, and my cry reached His ears.”—
(2 *Samuel* xxii. 7.)

WHEN the shadows of peril encircle us, when daylight has disappeared from our horizon, when the storms of hatred and passion threaten our happiness

and our peace, or when sickness lays us on the bed of suffering and helplessness, there are no friends, however true and devoted they may be, who can save and shield us from the approaching doom, or who are able to calm our terrors, to rend the encompassing darkness, disperse the towering cloud, and show us the bright hope beyond. In times of fear and anguish, when bent low under the weight of affliction and harassed by lacerating doubt, in times of sorrow and of direst need, we turn for help neither to the loving father, nor to the watchful mother, nor to the children whom we cherish with every drop of our life-blood, nor to the affectionate brother and sister who have ever been our dearest companions, not to earthly guides or patrons who may have constantly encouraged us, but to Thee alone, our Heavenly Preserver and Benefactor, and the prayer which we utter to Thy greatness and goodness is never disdained by Thy unfailing mercy; the cry of the lowliest is heard by Thee, and not heard in vain. Thousands and myriads may pray with broken hearts and trembling lips, yet not the faintest wail escapes Thy ear. Hear me, Almighty God, when I bend down before Thee in eager supplication; give me Thy blessing, which will be my panoply; and allow me to walk unscathed through all the dangers of this world. Amen.



11.

“Thou shalt rise before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God.”—(*Leviticus xix. 32.*)

THE silvery head which Thou hast commanded us to honour, our Gracious Lord, is one of the great teachers of life, vouchsafed by Thy heavenly beneficence, the living witness of that pilgrimage from the cradle to the tomb, which Thy holy will has checkered with brightness and shadows, with the dreary frost of winter and the warmth of sunshine, with sparkling light, and gloom and darkness, with joy and sorrow, cares, trials, and struggles, but also with the echoes of mirth and songs of gladness and treasures of happiness. We bow before the ripe experience of the white-haired pilgrim; we trace in his countenance the deep furrows left by anxiety, the mark of bodily suffering and mental anguish, the wounds scarred but not healed. The smile of his features is one of resignation and of trust, but the light of his eye is growing dim, and the flowers are fading away from his path. In rising up before the old man, we seem to tender unspoken pity and reverence, to offer gently but earnestly the help of our strength, and to lend as a staff our faithful devotion if it be needed. In gazing upon the hoary head we seem, in the dew-fresh days of our youth, to realise our whole existence, and to learn a lesson which perhaps all the loveliness and blessings of heaven and earth could not impart to us. As we prize the lesson and take it to heart, so may we learn to honour the teacher, and, in

obedience to Thy Divine Law, O Lord our God, rise to the height of great duties, among which not the least is that of serving and comforting the aged whom Thou hast commanded us to venerate.



12.

“Remove the strange gods that are among you, and purify yourselves.”
(*Genesis xxxv. 2.*)

OUR All-merciful and All-wise Creator, Thou hast commanded us in by-gone times to put away from our homes and hearths all foreign idols, that the senseless blocks of wood and stone, the figures of clay and of hard metal may not taint and corrupt our dwellings. Thy beneficent laws were promulgated many centuries ago, when strange gods were worshipped, and Thy greatness, goodness, and truth had not been revealed; but Thy Divine words ring through all ages, and apply to all times and all the nations of the globe. The strange divinities wrought out of the mines and quarries of the earth, have disappeared from our altars, but idols as senseless and dangerous fill the sanctuary of the soul, which should be devoted to the adoration of Thy holiness and to the fulfilment of Thy Law. May we be strengthened to obey Thy will, Lord God Almighty, so that the waters of repentance and the reviving dew-drops of hope may cleanse us from vanity and pride, envy and covetousness, from all evil thoughts, longings and passions, which prey upon our vitals, poison or drink

our life-blood, and tarnish the soul which was created in Thy Divine image, and should remain pure and spotless, and worthy of heaven, whither we fondly and anxiously hope it may return.

13.

“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork.”—(*Psalm* xix. 1.)

O LORD our God, how small are we, how utterly incapable of rendering due thanks for Thy inexhaustible goodness, for the myriads of benefits with which Thou hast embellished our life, for the countless gifts and treasures, mercies and blessings, which Thy celestial hand has so lavishly strewn along our path. We receive and prize and enjoy them, and in our hope and trust, we expect them daily from Thy infinite bounty, Almighty Lord, forgetful perhaps, while partaking of Thy constant favours, that the bread which nourishes us, and the water which allays our thirst, the clothing that covers, the roof that protects, and the fuel that warms us, as well as the limbs and senses which minister to our wants and enjoyments, the mind that reveres, and the heart that loves Thee in truth—all loudly proclaim Thy paternal beneficence. How can we praise Thee sufficiently, our Gracious Lord, who dwellest on high, far removed above our insignificance and littleness, yet near enough to hear the faintest cry of the helpless, and to see the tear of the sorrow-stricken trembling in the uplifted eye that seeks Thee in the distant heavens,

in the blue expanse which seems to encompass the whole creation—that wonder of wonders whose eternal and ineffable eloquence praises Thee night and day with the glowing beams of unnumbered suns, with the diamond rays of countless stars, with the brilliancy of untold meteors, all shining down upon this earth that joins incessantly in the great chorus of Hallelujahs with the jubilant voices of blithe birds, and the melodies and harmonies of winds and streams and waves. And Thy children also, O Gracious Lord, bow down in adoration before Thee; our lips may be feeble, our words faint and inadequate, yet accept our humble worship, our thankfulness at the footstool of Thy throne, our poor labours and earnest service in emerald valleys, or on bleak heights, and wherever Thy Divine wisdom has placed us.



14.

“Lo, this is our God, we have trusted in Him, and He will save us: we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.”—(*Isaiah* xxv. 9.)

ALMIGHTY LORD, I am heavily afflicted; Thy inscrutable will has laid me low on a bed of sickness, and my sufferings are great; acute pain tries my submission, restlessness tosses my fevered and aching limbs, weakness and exhaustion plunge me into vague uncertainty, fear and trembling; and still I fix my tear-dimmed eye, my fluttering heart, and my struggling thought on Thee. The tongue that cleaves to my palate would fain utter words of faith and trust, but my feeble hands remain clasped in mute supplication to Thy good-

ness. The illness is long, the agony keen, but Thy mercy will sustain me through all troubles. Thy blessing will rest on my soul, Thy balm will heal, Thy cordial will restore me, and I shall rise again from the dark and weary time of torture—rise in health and strength to bend the knee before Thee, O my Merciful Protector, in humblest and most grateful adoration. Amen.

15.

“Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.”—(*Psalm xx. 7.*)

ALL our life is a struggle and a combat, for Thou hast willed, Almighty God, that there shall be weakness and peril and temptation in this world—ignorance, darkness, and sin; but that the weapons which Thy mercy has graciously vouchsafed to us, shall help us to conquer the enemy. Even in the bright morning of life, we may have to wrestle with indolence and numbing apathy, which throw heavy and binding chains around us, and make us unfit for the duties of our earthly existence, and incapable of enjoyment and happiness. We may have to wage war against our worst enemies, our faults, be they hidden and lurking in ambush, or visible and alarming to our most anxious well-wishers; and then no worldly strength can avail us; the aid must come from Thee, our Gracious Lord. Thy beneficence we implore, and on Thy Divine assistance we rely, and Thou wilt protect us, if we fight for a great and good cause; if ours is a high and noble aim, we shall win the crowns and

laurels of victory ; truth will be our buckler, and the glories of truth must be triumphant. We need no outward might and power—so often tainted by selfishness and injustice—but we must pray to Thee, our Gracious Benefactor, and worship before Thy throne, and invoke Thee for humility and purity of heart, that nought may find room in our breast but earnest and pious resolves, to be wrought, by Thy celestial blessing, into the best deeds of usefulness and devotion. Amen.



16.

“ Honour thy father and thy mother.”—(*Exodus* xx. 12.)

OF all the feelings which Thy Divine will, Lord God Almighty, has graciously implanted in our breast, there to grow and bud and bloom, and bear sweet and goodly fruit, love is the best and holiest. It is the earliest of all, awakened by the first smile which greets us from a mother's lips, fostered by her looks of affection, those looks which fondly rest upon our cradle, and hover around us, and would fain follow us throughout life ; it grows with our growth, and is strengthened with our strength, as we feel the guiding hand of a father, the devotion deep and warm and unchangeable of both parents, ever anxious for our happiness, ready and eager to minister to it, to bestow upon us their time and thought and care, to give us all, even the last drops of their life-blood. And if our love is thus called forth by their utmost kindness and tenderness, shall we not, O Gracious Lord, learn to carry out Thy will, and rejoice in obeying

Thy commandments, and thank Thee with glowing fervour for having preserved to us the dearly cherished parents whom it is our privilege and our delight to honour? To possess them is a blessing, to live long on earth is a mercy, to be allowed to embellish the existence of father and mother is an unspeakable joy. For all these gifts, for these favours and treasures of Thy celestial beneficence, be Thou, our Heavenly Father, humbly thanked and praised by every worshipper on earth. Amen.



17.

“ I laid me down and slept, I awaked, for the Lord sustained me.”
(*Psalm* iii. 5.)

ALMIGHTY and Gracious Lord, whenever we close our eyes in sleep, we bid farewell to the light of day with its labours and duties, to life with its joys and struggles, and we enter through mysterious portals into realms of darkness, but we enter them fearlessly, for we know that there is no obscurity which Thy Divine breath does not dispel, no gloom which Thy holy spirit does not irradiate. We feel that Thy arm is extended over us, and wards off all peril from our slumbers, that Thy hand will rend the black curtains that surround our senses, that it will loosen the chains which bind our limbs, and that supported by Thee, our Heavenly Father, we shall awake to bask in the light of a new morning. Sleep is but the symbol and herald of death, appearing at eventide to remind us of the deep slumbers

from which we do not wake on earth. Allow us, our Beneficent Lord, to think of that last sleep, not in fear and trembling, not in anguish and dread of the unknown bourn, but calmly and hopefully; and strengthen us, we beseech Thee, in our last earthly trial, that, when we sink to rest, we may lie down pillowed on faith in Thy Divine goodness, trusting in Thy holy mercies, and looking beyond the shadows of the grave towards the radiance of an everlasting day!

18.

“Rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God.”—(*Jerl* ii. 13.)

ALMIGHTY LORD, Heavenly Father of forgiveness, to Thee we may always turn in the anguish of our repentance, under the overwhelming shafts of self-reproach, when the arrows of remorse have entered deeply into our heart of hearts, when shame and confusion have laid us low, and covered us with humiliation. Is not Thy Divine mercy the fountain of all purity, the source of refreshment and revival to all Thy suffering and erring children? Will it not cleanse us from our stains, and heal our wounds, and strengthen us with the blessing of Thy pardon, that we may go forth again and do penance with the words of our lips? To acknowledge our faults in the broad light of day and in the face of the world, is right, and to crave indulgence or acquittal at the hands of those whom we may have offended, is needful and just. Support us yet further,

Almighty Lord, that we may be enabled to do penance more truly, more anxiously, and more constantly, so as to atone for our trespasses with the works of every day and hour which we are permitted to live on earth, that each may be marked with endeavours of usefulness, with works of true service, with actions of piety, and with labours of unselfish love. Outward contrition alone is worse than useless, it deepens the blackness of internal sin, for it adds to it the hideous mask of hypocrisy. Help us, All-merciful God, that our penitence may not be barren, but earnest and ardent, ever fruitful of good resolves and of still better deeds. Amen.



19.

“When Thou hast eaten and art satisfied, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God.”—(*Deuteronomy* viii. 10.)

WE may well fear not to be grateful enough for the gifts of Thy goodness, which we enjoy at all hours of the day. We partake of them, not in ignorance of the Divine hand that has showered them upon our path, not in oblivion of the powerful arm that has shielded our harvests from devouring locusts, and our vineyards from blight—that has protected our lands from the desolating sickness which sweeps flocks and herds away, not in forgetfulness of the holy will that has caused the dews and rains of heaven to rest upon our fields, and the clearest waters to flow from the hidden depths of the earth in order to cleanse and refresh us. Yet how helpless should we be if only one of the universal sources of sustenance and enjoyment failed us!

May we, our Bountiful Father, bless Thy holy name, not indeed for every one of the myriads of benefits which Thou hast bestowed upon us—that would be impossible—but for Thy unceasing goodness and Thy infinite mercies. Enable us to make the best use of Thy gifts, that as they are plenteously vouchsafed to our wants, they may be generously shared with the needy, and used for the well-being of the poor who, according to Thy sacred will, shall never cease out of the land.

20.

“The Lord is on my side, I will not fear; what can man do unto me?”
(*Psalm* cxviii. 6.) •

To have Thee, Almighty God, with us, is to be pure in mind and heart, and free from taint in all our endeavours and yearnings; to be supported by Thy Divine grace, is to feel undaunted in the fulfilment of the most arduous duties; to be calm in the sunshine of happiness and in the night of misery, is to be innocent of sinful aims and evil deeds. Though we may suffer oppression and persecution, though for a time slander and calumny may blacken our name, a clear conscience is all-powerful in the end. The wish, the will, and the energy to obey Thy holy commandments and keep Thy sacred Law, must lead us safely through all danger. Almighty God, we anxiously implore Thee, to teach and to guide us, to lighten our darkness, to strengthen us with Thy word and inspiration, that we may never stray from Thy path, never leave the protection of Thy mighty arm, nor the high and brightly shining road of righteousness, where no lasting harm can befall us!

21.

“And he said, Lo, it is yet high day.”—(*Genesis* xxix. 7.)

WE do not know the number of our days upon earth, nor how many hours of health and strength may yet be allotted to us by Thy mercy, Lord God Almighty. Therefore, our Gracious Father in heaven, vouchsafe to us the will and the power to make good and noble use of every moment of our life. If we remember the rapid wing of time, we shall deem each flying instant, each grain of sand in the hour-glass more precious than silver or gold; we shall strive to give value to every portion of the day; we shall remember, that we also have flocks to tend, which have been confided to our care as a holy trust. We must guide them to the clearest rills, to the most purifying and refreshing waters, we must lead them to green pastures, where they may find the best nourishment under the sunshine of heaven. Is not each of us a shepherd and through Thy grace, O Lord, appointed to watch over many loved ones, to guard them from harm, from the fangs of the prowling wolf, from the glistening but poisonous berries of the deadly nightshade? Are we not chosen to feed and strengthen them in mind and heart and soul, with the knowledge of Thy Divine goodness and greatness, with the knowledge of their duties? While it is yet high day, let us remain at our post, and not fold our hands and rest, so long as we see in the whole sphere of our duties any tasks which have been left unperformed, and then, with Thy blessing, Lord God Almighty, we shall be able to attempt labours of love, and accomplish works of usefulness.

22.

“I bore you on eagles’ wings, and brought you to myself.”

(*Exodus* xix. 4.)

As the eagle soars over rock and mountain, over chasm and precipice, over the beetling cliff and the fathomless ocean, the gloom of dense forests, the glare of burning deserts, and the false security of the treacherous morass, above icebergs and snow-fields and hail-storms and thunder-clouds; as he wings his flight above famine and fever, and the battle ground with its havoc and horrors; as he rises over scenes of sunshine and brightness, over flocks and herds grazing and basking in rich pasture lands, over smiling gardens and beauteous valleys golden with waving corn-fields and sweet with lovely flowers; as he floats above the lights and shadows of the earth: so hast Thou, Lord God Almighty, enabled us to rise over the heights of folly and rocks of pride, over perils greater than those of the yawning cleft and the black abyss, over the darkness of ignorance and the whirlpool of passion, and all the seas of error and uncertainty, where rudder and compass, and sails and sounding-line are of no avail, over the parching heat and numbing cold, the veering winds of favour and fortune, the tempests and calamities, the sickness and the sorrows, the sufferings and the tears of this world. And also over its joys and delights, its allurements and fascinations hast Thou guided us, and brought us to Thyself, to the knowledge of Thy infinite greatness, of Thy holy beneficence, of Thy unbounded mercies and blessings.

Give us, our Omnipotent Father, the strength and the power in troubled hours to rend the mists and veils of this earth, and, in heart and spirit, to soar as on eagles' wings away from the uncertainties of this world, and seek the realms of safety, where Thou abidest in eternal glory! Amen.

23.

“Praise ye the Lord; praise God in His sanctuary, praise Him in the firmament of His power.”—(*Psalms* cl. I.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, our Gracious Benefactor, Thou hast allowed us to join the universal chorus, and to bow down before Thee with words of ardent thanksgiving, and as we approach Thee in prayerful adoration, so the heavens praise Thee with the effulgence of their light, and the brilliancy of their mysterious depths of sapphire blue; the towering heights transform themselves into altars, and glow and shine with myriads of flames of beauty when touched by the first ray of the morning, or by the last beam of the waning day; the sun praises Thee when it warms the fields of earth, and causes them to teem with goodly harvests, and the moon, while dispelling darkness, and tracing silvery paths over the trackless sea for patient fisherman and adventurous mariner; and the distant stars praise Thee, our Beneficent Lord, through the lips of philosophers and the writings of men of science. The snow that shrouds the dreary nakedness of winter, the vapours and dews that rise and fall, and veil and fertilize the land, the fire that cleanses and welds and cements ores and metals

won out of deepest mines; the winds, Thy messengers, which on mighty pinions obey Thy heavenly behests, the mountains, ice-crowned and forest-robed, the hills with their draperies of vines, the incense-breathing cedars of Lebanon, the fruit-trees bending low under the weight of luxuriant treasures, the herds and flocks of the green pasture, the blithe birds of the air, and the swift-footed animals of the woodland, the aged and the youthful, men, maidens, and children, all praise Thee, our Heavenly Father, the Creator of the whole universe, the Giver of all blessings, to be adored for ever and evermore. Accept our ardent worship, we implore Thee, and look down mercifully upon us. Amen.

24.

“And he dreamed, and behold, a ladder set up on the earth and the top of it reached to heaven, and behold the angels of God ascending and descending upon it.”—(*Genesis* xxviii. 12.)

GRANT us, O Lord, we beseech Thee, not merely the power to understand and obey Thy holy will, not only the anxious desire to live in obedience to the Divine laws graciously framed by Thy wisdom, and humbly and devoutly to execute Thy commandments, but let Thy Heavenly spirit of beneficence penetrate into the inmost depths of our minds, into every remote nook and recess of our hearts, that the purest aspirations and noblest aims, that wishes and hopes soaring on bright wings into the wide realms of time, may fill our waking hours, from the moment when daylight falls

upon our opening eyelids, till we close them in prayer and thanksgiving at night ; but not even then, after the struggles and disappointments of the day, let our good resolves forsake us, but may they abide with us in our slumbers, and fill our dreams like the radiant forms on the patriarch's ladder, pointing heavenward as the ascending angels, or bringing balm and cordial and comfort, similar to the celestial messengers that travelled from the star-spangled skies down to the hard stone which was Jacob's pillow and resting place. While we are working or sleeping, cause, O Lord, Thy spirit of holiness to surround us, shedding light everywhere before our footsteps, and diffusing a light still more brilliant through the heart that loves Thee, and the mind and soul that worship Thy eternal greatness and infinite mercy. Amen.



25.

“For Thy help I hope, O Lord.”—(*Genesis* xlix. 18.)

MY GOD in heaven, let not despair close around me, nor my strength be overpowered by misfortune, my courage broken by the weight of affliction, my mind quite darkened by the black shadows of grief and mourning, my heart changed into a desolate wilderness and arid waste by the anguish of bereavement, nor my horizon be enveloped in dense clouds, the light of day extinguished before my eyes, the warmth of summer turned into everlasting cold and night, my soul racked and torn by anxiety, even the most precious of my earthly possessions, my faith,

shaken, if not shattered, by the thunderbolt of calamity. Hear me, Omnipotent Father in heaven, save me out of the rayless abyss of despondency, and enable me to say, in the fullest reliance upon Thy mercy, "For Thy aid I pray, and in it I trust and believe!"

26.

"Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us? Why then should one man deal wickedly against his brother, and annul the parental covenant?"—(*Malachi* ii. 10.)

O LORD of lords, O King of kings, Thou art all-seeing and all-powerful, Thou art everywhere; we know and feel Thy might without understanding it; we are convinced that nothing remains concealed from Thy searching eye, we are comforted by the thought that Thou art always near, that Thy hand leads us, that Thy goodness protects and Thy beneficence endows us; we feel that to Thee we owe life and its blessings, that Thy holy will has created us, that the same holy will, in accordance with inscrutable wisdom, severs in due time the thread of our earthly existence, and thus we become fully conscious of our humble duty towards Thee, our Gracious and Merciful God! But should not the knowledge that all men have the same Heavenly Father, that we are all Thy children, point out to us the obligation of love and forgiveness, and teach us to look upon all mankind as brethren? Should it not banish indifference, and for ever subdue envy and malice, hatred and evil-doing towards those around us? Grant, we implore Thee,

Almighty God, that the contemplation of Thy infinite beneficence may make us tolerant towards those whom Thou hast placed in this world to enjoy the innumerable gifts of Thy bounty, and to obey Thy sacred behests ! Let, we beseech Thee, the thankful survey of Thy goodness impress upon us the best lessons, and make us eager, anxious, and zealous in the performance of every duty to friends and foes, neighbours and strangers, fellow-sufferers and fellow-worshippers, and to those who may differ from us most widely, but who are still our brethren and Thy children, Almighty God !

27.

“ Sing, O heaven, and be joyful, O earth, and break forth into singing, O mountains ; for the Lord hath comforted His people, and will have mercy on His afflicted.”—(*Isaiah* xlix. 13.)

MOURNFUL winter has passed away, its winding-sheet of frozen snow has vanished from the earth, and the grey and leaden canopy above has disappeared. All is light and warmth ; the birds wing their flight upwards, they travel further and further, and soar higher and higher, and draw nearer and nearer to the crystal clearness of heaven, till their jubilant hymns seem to fill the skies with melodious thanksgivings for all the treasures of brightness and sunshine graciously vouchsafed by Thee, Almighty Lord. The earth is robed in shining green, and crowned with the young roses of spring ; there are fresh flowers everywhere on the hem of the emerald garment, silver daisies and blue violets,

and the tiny pearl bells of the lily of the valley—bright buds and blossoms for all who seek them. The winds sigh gently through the new-born foliage of the trees; rills and streams, fountains and cascades, released from icy thralldom, are softly musical. On the mountain-side white lambkins graze and play, kids frisk and clamber fearlessly in search of dew-gemmed thyme, and the wild dove coos hidden in her nest. The whole world rejoices in a renewal of the gifts and blessings of life. And we too, Almighty God, the children of Thy bounty, shall we not be cheered after the dreary winter of anguish, after that overwhelming darkness of sorrow, which excludes all sunshine from the heart, after the depth of grief which shrouds from our eyes all sights of beauty and happiness, and makes our ears deaf to the music of gladness? Yes, our Heavenly Father, Thou wilt comfort us, if not now, later; if not during our existence here, surely when we shall have accomplished our earthly pilgrimage; for Thy tender pity and Thy great mercy are boundless and eternal!

28.

“From falsehood thou shalt keep aloof.”—(*Exodus* xxiii. 7.)

ALMIGHTY LORD, grant that we may walk along the road of life in the clear ray of Thy eternal truth, and seek and prize it, and turn towards its brightness, and bask in its sunshine, and revel in its unwavering light, and never move away from its effulgence, or veil it from the eyes of others or from our own. We are too often

tempted to conceal it, and many causes lead us astray from its purity into confusion, darkness, and error. Gracious Lord, we beseech Thee, banish these perils from our path! How frequently, alas! are we misled into falsehood by weakness, by the fear of incurring blame, of submitting ourselves to censure, or of exposing others to reproof and rebuke, and even by our reluctance of sacrificing our own ease and rest to the necessity of effort and labour! How often do we shrink from truth, lest it should inflict pain upon those we love and honour! How often is careless falsehood the result of an unfaithful memory, of infirmity of purpose, or insufficient reverence for the Divine law of truth, of callous disregard of surrounding circumstances, of indifference to a perfect standard of moral rectitude and of an unsound opinion as to the judgment and penetration of others, perhaps of a low estimate of our duties. Let us hope that the wish to deceive is seldom paramount in the mind of the deceiver, and that falsehood is often a mere habit; yet—whether it be unconscious, unpremeditated, and therefore excusable, and wrung from the lips by fear or shame or hope, a weed of evil growth, or the carefully trained and developed plant of hypocrisy—it is always poisonous. Keep us aloof from it, Almighty Lord, we implore Thee, and mercifully preserve us from its tainting and destructive venom!



29.

“The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.”—(*Psalm xviii. 2.*)

OUR Heavenly Father, we trust in Thee, and need not fear or tremble. There is nought on earth that can harm us when we are aided by Thee; there is no bulwark constructed by engineering art and science so impregnable as the rampart built around our weakness by Thy love, Almighty God. Those who know and worship and obey Thee, feel safe behind its walls. There are no granite-rocks so firm, there is no iron so hard, no adamant so impenetrable; the sharpest steel, the raging fire, the devastating flood cannot touch it. We dwell in the fortress of Thy faith, and there we are secure, protected by Thee, Almighty God, screened from all danger, guarded against the incursion of all enemies. Thou alone canst deliver us out of the hands of our foes, Thou alone canst enable us to overcome those that lurk in hidden corners, and lie in secret ambush. Thou art indeed the mighty shield against which all arrows are powerless, Thou art the horn of our salvation. Whenever we implore Thee, Thy helping voice is heard in reply; it sounds in the depths of night and darkness; it tells us that our prayer has not remained unheeded, that we shall see light and find solace and comiort; Thou art the tower of our strength; near Thee, with Thee, O Gracious Lord and Heavenly Father, we are far removed above the strife and struggle, above the shadows and difficulties of this world!

30.

“Man is like to vanity, his days are as a shadow that passeth away.”
(*Psalm cxliv. 4.*)

VANITY is weakness, sometimes pleased and elated oftener disappointed and wounded; and shadows frequently darken the earth, obscuring beauty and brightness; nevertheless they must be held useful and necessary, since in Thy eternal wisdom, Almighty God, Thou hast permitted them to exist. And though we pass from this world as vanities and mere cobwebs, or glittering film and gossamer, shining baubles and rainbow illusions, and although we vanish like the shadow from the sea and from the land, from the house and from the city, Thou hast taught us to believe, Almighty God, that only our human frame can disappear and crumble into dust. The soul that has been formed in Thy Divine image, is immortal. When troubles surround our steps, when the weight of suffering falls upon us, we fondly cherish the conviction that sorrows are fleeting and cannot last, that, ere long, we shall be released and at rest. Almighty Lord and Benefactor, let not any veil or doubt conceal that blessed hope from our tear-dimmed eyes; but may it shine as our beacon through all the mazes and struggles of life! Amen.



31.

“The Lord bless thee, and guard thee; the Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace.”—(*Numbers* vi. 24—26.)

LIKE the dew which drops from heaven upon the flowers of the earth, even so the blessing of God descends upon His children. The scorching sun and its glare, the parching winds and droughts may have passed over the loveliness of the rose, and touched with a hot breath the white purity of the lily, or robbed the violet of its sweet fragrance; but when the drooping blossoms are gently bathed in the liquid crystals of dew, they gain a renewed freshness and beauty; and thus the blessing of Thy celestial hand, Almighty God, falls upon our fevered brow. The bewildering light, the burning atmosphere of the world, may have wearied us and bent us low, and overwhelmed us with languor; but Thy blessing, O Lord, revives and restores our strength, and Thy arm protects us, that our sleep may be undisturbed by suffering and anxiety, that our waking moments may be free from care, and dangers be kept aloof from our dwelling and from our life. When Thy face shines upon us, and Thou art gracious unto us, Almighty God, we are fortified and enabled to labour with zeal and earnestness and success in Thy fields and in Thy vineyards, to reap goodly harvests, and share with our brethren the rich fruits of Thy beneficence, and work ardently and indefatigably in Thy holy service, so that we need

not tremble and redden with shame and confusion at the thought of appearing idle and empty-handed in Thy presence. And Thou wilt sanctify our endeavours, and give us peace, for without that healing and softening balm, without Thy blessing, Almighty God, we should soon faint and wither, and become exhausted.



J U N E.



1.

“The deaf shall hear the words of the Book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and of darkness.”—(*Isaiah* xxix. 18.)

OF all the gifts of Thy beneficence, Almighty God, none seem more admirable and excellent than the clearness of the eye that reflects in its bright mirror the marvellous beauties of the universe, and the quickness of the ear that allows us to delight in the enchanting harmonies of earth, sea, and sky; none more precious than these powers that permit us to look on, entranced by sights of imperishable or ever-renewed loveliness, and listen, spell-bound, to notes of thrilling music, or words of benevolence and love. Yet how often does dire disease shut our eyes to all the glories of daylight! How frequently do increasing infirmities close our ears to all sounds of gladness, to the songs of birds and winds and waves, to the voices of our beloved! And those who cluster around us in devoted affection, are grieved to the heart's core; they see us left in darkness and in

silence, and know how weak they are, and how powerless to remove the impenetrable curtains of gloom from around our helplessness. But there is a light warmer and more brilliant than the brightest sunshine that ever kissed the valleys of earth, more unwavering than the most radiant beams that gild mountain and greensward, softer than the silver glamour of the moon, purer than the diamond sparkle of myriads of stars—the light that irradiates the pages of Thy holy Book, and shines into our breast, and fills it with gladness and all the rainbow hues of hope, and the brightness and warmth of faith. When to our darkened and benumbed senses all the outward world has become dim and chill, and when human sounds no longer strike our ear, we hear Thy voice, our Gracious Father; it comes to us out of the highest heavens, and makes the chords of our soul vibrate with thankful adoration of Thy Divine goodness.



2.

“Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee.”

(1 *Kings* viii. 27.)

THOU art everywhere, Almighty God—where the vine grows and the corn ripens and the pomegranate scatters its rubies, where the palm tree waves its foliage, and the orchis, in its loveliness, climbs heavenward, and the humming-bird gleams more brilliantly than the precious gem won from the mine. Thou art among the burning sands of the desert, amidst the never-melting

snows of Alpine summits, in darkest forests, on the eternal ice-fields of the north pole, on the threatening billows of the ocean, in the whirlwind and in the thunderstorm, on earth beneath and in the skies above. Thou dwellest in the glowing beam of the sun, in the silver light of the moon, in the lustre of distant planets, in the splendour of dazzling meteors, in the mysterious worlds of the unmeasured universe : Thou art hallowed everywhere, Almighty God, and yet the empyrean cannot contain Thee! But the soul which Thou hast breathed into mortal man, adores Thy power and Thy holiness, and the heart which Thou hast placed in our breast, feels Thy celestial goodness. We, Thy children, worship Thee, while wrapt in adoration of Thy beautiful works—emanations of Thy beneficence, treasures and blessings, gifts and mercies graciously vouchsafed for our enjoyment. Grant, our Divine Lord, our Heavenly Benefactor, that we may use for high and noble purposes the boons which Thou hast showered down upon our path ; enable us to read and learn the glorious lessons which they teach, and to prove by pious and zealous endeavours our deep reverence for Thy sacred power and wisdom.



3.

“ The Lord is nigh unto all that call upon Him in truth.”

(*Psalm* cxlv. 18.)

AS the vapours of morn or of twilight conceal from our view the deep lake and the swift stream, the sombre wood and the yellow cornfield, the menacing

rock and the yawning chasm, brilliancy and loveliness, and peril, and as they vanish from heaven and earth when dissolved by the warm breath of the sun, or chased away by the pinions of the wind, so, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, let Thy holy spirit rend the veils that surround us, and cause the mists of doubt, which darken the mind, to fall, that all the beauty and brightness of purity and of truth may be disclosed to us. Show us, we implore Thee, O Lord, the depth of our faults, the extent of our failings, the weakness and vacillation of which we are not aware, and point out to us the remedy, the ways of amendment, the recovery from our blindness, the cure for the evil. Let no cloud intervene between our sin and Thy mercy, between our repentance and Thy forgiveness, Gracious and Almighty God; show us our guilt, yet permit us humbly to atone for it at the foot of Thy altars and in the light of Thy Divine countenance! Amen.



4.

“ Who hath made man’s mouth? or who maketh dumb or deaf, or seeing or blind? Do not I, the Lord?”—(*Exodus* iv. 11.)

THOU hast graciously bestowed upon us all our possessions, Lord God of the Universe, and hast endowed us with them for good and noble purposes. Be pleased, Almighty Creator, to bless us still further, and cause the mouth which Thou hast formed, to utter none but words of peace and goodwill, of kindness and sympathy, of solace and comfort. Against every evil

feeling of anger and passion, slander, falsehood, and uncharitableness struggling for expression, may our lips be ever closed and sealed; may they move only to teach and advise, to instil gentle lessons and noble truths, to smile and to cheer, or to breathe humble prayers, anxious supplications, and ardent thanksgivings to Thee, our Heavenly Benefactor. The mouth that speaks and the ear that listens are among the greatest blessings of Thy bounty. May the ear hearken, and, through it, the mind be imbued with the highest knowledge and the deepest wisdom! May it never turn away in coldness and apathy from tales of sorrow and suffering and poverty! May the glad voices of gratitude, of joy, and of love, more soft and sweet and enchanting by far than the music of thousands of bells, or harps and psalteries, or even than the clear and beautiful voices of the birds of the air, delight and reward us for having listened patiently, perhaps to rebuke and reproach, to precept and lesson often difficult to learn; for having listened and submitted in silence and meekness to unmerited harshness, and attended with ever warm and tender sympathy to sigh and wail and lamentation. But of all the mercies of Thy gracious bounty, O Lord, none can be deemed more precious than the power of seeing; the eye is that wondrous glass which shows us the glories and beauties of the world, which brings nigh unto the crowned and sceptred monarch on his throne, and to the peasant under his thatched roof, all the splendours of creation, and which enables us to realise the loveliness of flowers and foliage, the brilliancy of sunshine, the witchery of the moon, the radiance of heaven and earth, the forms and features of our loved

ones. To see is to know, and to feel, and to enjoy life. Lord God Almighty, withdraw not from us the floods of light and the pictures they disclose, the sounds and echoes with the lessons they teach, nor the power of our lips with their faculty of daily and varied usefulness ; but enable mouth and ear and eye to do earnest and faithful service among our fellow beings and in Thy temples, at the foot of Thy altars and wherever Thy holy name may be sanctified and worshipped ! Amen.

5.

“Thou art a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a sheltering shadow from the heat.”—(*Isaiah* xxv. 4.)

OUR Heavenly Father of all mercies and all blessings, human eyes are too weak to pierce the mysteries with which Thy throne is surrounded, and while we humbly bow to Thy Divine decrees, we are unable to fathom them. We know not why, among Thy children, though all are lovingly cared for, some have received riches from Thy bountiful hand, and others live and die in poverty. Yet we feel that Thou art a rock to the poor, and that, in hunger and thirst, they can hopefully turn to Thee, that Thou art the staff on which they may lean in their weakness and exhaustion, that faith in Thy goodness is their harbour of safety, and that, while protected by the shield of Thy strength, cold cannot chill, nor heat scorch those who believe in Thee. And we feel also that there are treasures greater than wealth, and that by far the most precious gifts of Thy beneficence have been

vouchsafed to all. Our Gracious Lord, we beseech Thee to strengthen our sense of grateful contentment, that, whatever be our destiny, we may truly appreciate Thy Divine bounty ; and teach us, we implore Thee, to keep in mind that health, vigour, and long life, joy, mirth, and happiness, love and devotion, affectionate parents, dearly cherished sons and daughters, and friends kind and true—the highest blessings of Thy goodness and mercy—may and do brighten our existence, though our lot be cast among the poorest and most struggling of the land.

6.

“And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth and upon the fishes of the sea ; into your hand are they delivered.”—(*Genesis ix. 2.*)

HOW great is the responsibility which Thy gracious words, O Lord, have laid upon us ! How strong must we be notwithstanding our bodily weakness, how energetic in spite of our feeble limbs, in order to control by the mere force of our will and of our knowledge, and by our spirit of fairness and justice, the animals of the earth, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, that could maim or destroy us by one single movement of their whim or fury ! It is not only the lion, the mighty king of burning deserts, the blood-thirsty tiger of the jungle, the elephant under whose tread dense forests of trees become wastes, the soaring eagle who, with one fell swoop of his mighty wing, may bring us low, even

unto death, the serpent with its suffocating coil or poisonous fang, the ponderous whale whose weight crushes ships, and hurls their luckless crew against icebergs or granite rocks : it is not alone these, the fiercest tenants of earth and sky and watery deep, that seem ever ready to annihilate us. Even the herds and flocks grazing peacefully upon the pasture lands near our own door, the horse which obeys our slightest behest, the dog, so faithful a companion and so devoted a friend, might turn against us, and strike us to the ground. We tame the animals which surround us, we tame them by uninterrupted patience, we rule them by gentleness, we subjugate them by unwearied perseverance. They yield to our wishes : the cow gives to our daily wants the nourishing streams of her milk, the oxen plough our fields, that the husbandman may drop future harvests into the mysterious furrow, the swift horse carries us through space, and the dog rewards us with his attachment. If our sway, when mild and gentle, is thus readily obeyed by the unreasoning and often ferocious inhabitants of the earth, what may it not become when exercised over human beings, and how unlimited may not be our power for good ! Almighty Father of all blessings, give us the will and the strength to banish from our heart and from our existence all harshness and bitterness, so that we may influence our brethren by the force of brightest example, the eloquence of noble deeds, and by a life of benevolence and kindness !



7.

“ We spend our days as a tale that is told.”—(*Psalms* xc. 9.)

I CARRIED flowers to her grave this morning, such as she prized in life; they were fresh and sweet, as she was when Thy mysterious decree, Almighty God, recalled her from among us; the fair, white blossoms not purer than her thoughts, the red roses not brighter than her radiant smiles. She liked to cull roses, and never grew weary of gathering them for the friends of her youth, for the sister and brothers, for the father and mother, whom she cherished so fondly; the buds and blossoms of fragrance were emblems of the brightness and sweetness with which she delighted to embellish the path of her dear ones. And now my poor offering lies unheeded on the hard, grey stone, and all that was mortal of the much-beloved is hidden beneath. Her days were few; but how precious, how indescribably beautiful! all light, and warmth and sunshine, full of gentle words, and good deeds, and loving devotion; and her hours were hymns of gladness joyously sung on earth and preceding her to heaven. Her life, though brief, was a tale that can never be forgotten, a lesson of love and piety, a brilliancy of happiness, the after-glow of which must irradiate the darkest and coldest hours of the survivors, an example so perfect and so charming that it will dwell in their memory, surrounded by the halo of undying acts of kindness.

8.

“Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.”—(*Psalms* cxxxiii. 1.)

THE blessings of Thy goodness are admirable, Almighty Lord, vouchsafed not only to embellish our days, and to fill them with enchantments, but intended to wean us from the temptations of a life of indolence, from apathy and coldness, from self-love and self-seeking. Thou hast placed us among the conflicting wishes and aims, hopes and fears, of our fellow-pilgrims, and though we find numerous affinities, Thou hast allowed and ordained infinite differences of character, of disposition, and of taste, and numberless diversities of mind and heart to exist among those whom Thy Divine will has created. It is indeed often a difficult task not to be chilled or offended, irritated or wounded, by so many varieties of thought and feeling, of speech and action, which often contrast painfully with our own and with our most deeply-cherished convictions; but Thy power, our Almighty Benefactor, aids us with most valuable gifts. Among these there is none more precious than sympathy, which speaks, indeed, a universal language, soft and penetrating and easily known. It may be likened to the influence of the sun, which shines on the palace and the cottage, warming the earth for all Thy children, Almighty Lord; it may be compared to the blessing of the golden harvests, which grow and ripen for rich and poor; to the blue arch of heaven above, towards which all eyes may turn, and all hands are lifted in joy or in sorrow, in earnest supplica-

tion or in ardent gratitude to Thee, our Gracious Lord ; it is like the beneficent waters of refreshment that flow and sparkle, like the flowers that bloom, like the lark and linnet, thrush and nightingale, that sing for everyone ; and, above all, it is Thy language, our Omnipotent Father, whose mercies extend throughout the universe, and whose compassion embraces everything which Thou hast called into existence. If sun, and moon, and stars, rivers and seas, the trees and their foliage, the juice of the vine, the fruit of the olive, and the blossoms of the earth, obey Thy sacred will, and minister to our happiness, our solace, and our comfort, what should not we strive to do for each other in humble obedience to Thy sacred behest ? We must forget and forgive, help, serve, and fondly cherish our brethren, through light and through shadows, through joy and through pain, to the last days of our life.

9.

“ My flesh and my heart may fail, but yet is God the strength of my soul and my portion for ever.”—(*Psalm lxxiii. 26.*)

HOW manifest is our weakness, Almighty God, both in health and in sickness ! We are indeed feeble and helpless in mind and in heart, painfully tried by disease, and easily laid low by bodily suffering. We are prone to innumerable ailments which cripple our usefulness, numb our energies, destroy our powers, and transform activity into inertness, the freshest buoyancy into the leaden weight of prostration, the wings of zeal that enable us to soar over time, and space, and diffi-

culity, into broken sails, bruising and wounding us. And the mind, once filled with bright visions, borne on the pinions of hope, and travelling far and wide into realms of beauty—how often does it become clouded with doubts and fears, obscured by shadows and terrors; and the breast, how frequently is it tortured with agonising anxiety, lacerated with sorrow, torn, bleeding, and shrouded in the gloom of mourning! And still Thou art our sheltering rock and our Protector, Almighty God, and in the darkest hours Thou wilt save us from perdition and from despair, and steer our bark to heavenly shores. Amen.



10.

“Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”

(*Psalms xxx. 5.*)

ALMIGHTY GOD, Thou who hast created us in Thy Divine image, hast graciously decreed that we shall not mourn for ever; but that, ere long—though, perhaps, after intense bodily suffering, or overwhelming heart-anguish and the gloom of separation—we shall look up from the numbing darkness of grief, and feel soothed by the loveliness of creation, warmed, after the chill of sorrow, by the rays of the sun, and calmed, if not cheered, by all surrounding sights and sounds of beauty and sweetness. At first, the softest and most penetrating influence is but transient, and pain soon re-asserts its oppressive sway; gradually, however, eye and ear become aware that life has still many duties in store for us; that

our career of usefulness is not closed ; that we may still labour successfully, and be so fortunate as to serve and help others ; that we may comfort and support those that suffer, and wipe away their tears, and, with Thy blessing, Almighty God, upon our eager and anxious efforts, bid the smile of gladness and of gratitude return to care-worn faces. Surely the contemplation of Thy Divine beneficence, the consciousness that we may still work and do some good, and the sympathy of our brethren, will cause fresh flowers to spring up around the grave of our joys. Thus we are sustained in this world, and between earth and eternity Thy heavenly mercies have extended a veil, impenetrable, it is true, yet radiant with all the most glowing colours of hope and faith.



11.

‘ Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken Thou me in Thy way.’—(*Psalms* cxix. 37.)

O MY GOD, help me, support me, enlighten my understanding, clear away, with merciful hand, the glittering illusions from my sight ; place graciously before me a career of usefulness, that, whatever position Thy Divine beneficence has appointed for me, I may fill it zealously, with works and labours of love and benevolence for my brethren, and of unremitting service, my Gracious Lord, in Thy holy temples, which are wherever Thy sacred name is invoked, Thy heavenly Law is humbly and diligently studied,

and Thy commandments are thankfully obeyed. Thy way, Almighty God, is the way of truth and righteousness, and of unceasing efforts and endeavours for the accomplishment of the manifold duties of our existence. Thou hast bidden us to work six days, that we may earn the blessed repose of the seventh, the tranquil time, when earnest thought ripens into firm conviction ; when, more than at any other period, we implore Thy blessing on our ardent resolves of amendment and improvement ; when we feel that a waste or misuse of time is indeed a profanation of life, and nought but vanity.



12.

“ Listen to the prayer of Thy servant and to his supplication, O Lord, my God, and hearken to the prayer which Thy servant poureth out before Thee this day.”—(1 *Kings* viii. 28)

WHEN we venture to approach Thee, Almighty God, and to invoke Thy holy name, it is not merely a supplication that we humbly lay on Thy shrine in the early hours of the awakening day, and also when the shadows of evening close around us, or, indeed at all times of our existence ; though we may well implore Thy Divine blessing, since without it we could not live, and could not know one moment of success or happiness. Still we are not always craving favours of Thy bounty, nor asking to be remembered by Thy beneficence, and entreating for our loved ones and ourselves the gifts and treasures of Thy celestial hand. We feel that to draw near unto Thy sanctuary in heart and spirit, is to leave for awhile

the struggles and perplexities of our daily life, the turmoil of the world, the mists and uncertainties, the difficulties and obstacles which beset the wayfarer's path, to shut our eyes alike to the pleasures and to the hardships of the valley of earth, to fly from doubt and weakness, from vanity and all frivolous aims, and, in the radiant light of Thy presence, to seek undisturbed peace, Almighty God, that we may express our ardent thanks, and raise, purify, and hallow ourselves in communion with Thee. Incline Thy ear, our Heavenly Father, when we pour out our soul in contrition before Thee ; cleanse our heart from secret faults, cleanse it, strengthen and adorn it for this life and the next ! Amen.



13.

“Thou shalt not bow down thyself before them nor serve them: for I, the Lord thy God, am a zealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations of them that hate Me, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me and keep My commandments.”—(*Exodus* xx. 5, 6.)

THOU hast graciously commanded, Almighty Lord, that we shall have no other gods in Thy Divine presence, and Thy sacred laws have come down to us through thousands of years, and will remain unaltered and unalterable until the end of time. The glorious sun, the moon in its loveliness, the brilliancy of myriads of stars, are the works of Thy will ; the fairest flowers on earth, and all the flocks and herds that graze on its wide expanse, and every bird that flits through its bowers, and the countless tenants of lake and stream and sea, are all

created by Thy power. Thou hast permitted us to enjoy the warmth and brightness of all these, to delight in their beauty and sweetness, to bask in the sunshine of noon, to revel in the freshness of spring, to make good and noble use of the manifold gifts with which Thou hast beneficently adorned the world; and while we thus live in obedience to Thy behest, we bow down before Thee, and reverence and adore Thy holy name and Thy unbounded goodness, and Thee alone, the Divine Author of the whole universe, do we worship. Surely there is no greater happiness than to keep Thy commandments. Those of our brethren who are so unfortunate as to transgress, forget, or disregard them, to turn away from the purity enjoined by Thee, our Heavenly Creator, and thus go astray, are grievously punished, and transmit punishment alas! to their children. Parents who forget their own duties, cannot instil good precepts, and the sons and daughters under their roof must inevitably suffer—for deeds speak more plainly and more powerfully than words. In this manner, the iniquity of the father is surely visited upon the children. On the other hand, those are doubly blessed, both in themselves and in their offspring, who revere Thee, Lord God Almighty, and live in pious obedience to Thy Law. May we be allowed to feel Thy mercies throughout life, and by Thy infinite goodness obtain the still greater blessing of handing them down to our children, not only undimmed by weakness and failings, but strengthened by the power of zealous example!

14.

“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in choice settings of silver.”
(*Proverbs* xxv. 11.)

GOLDEN apples, suspended from luxuriant branches and surrounded by leaves of silver, glistening and shining, pure and beautiful in their brightness, are indeed most precious. Gold passes in undiminished value through all lands, climes and ages, and silver, only second in worth, may always be transmuted into the necessities of life, and thus minister to the needs and wants of those who hunger and thirst and yearn for nourishment and for knowledge. But a word of kindness and justice, of truth and wisdom, is still more precious than the golden fruit and its silver foliage. It travels through centuries and is enshrined in many books, embalmed in many minds, engraved on many tablets, and greeted as a friend by thousands of anxiously or painfully throbbing hearts, whenever it brings consolation and encouragement, hope and comfort. Almighty God, whose gracious will has vouchsafed to us the power of speech, allow us to exercise it for all good and noble purposes, so that blessed and strengthened by Thee, our Heavenly Father, it may ever help to carry gentle pardon, or joy and happiness, to the homes of many of Thy children! Amen.

15.

“My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, neither be weary of His correction, for whom the Lord loveth, He correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.”—(*Proverbs* iii. 11, 12.)

ALL Thy works, our Gracious Lord, are beautiful, all Thy laws are admirable and perfect, all Thy decrees wise and just, though our eyes may fail to recognise their imperishable or ever renewed beauty, and our minds be unable to understand their wonderful beneficence and perfection, and though even the keenest search cannot hope to fathom Thy mysterious dispensations. But Thou hast given us the torch of faith to cast its light and glow into the depths of soul and heart. By the radiance of that heaven-born flame, we know that even sickness and suffering and sorrow are for the best, although when trials encompass us, we do not feel them to be blessings. As storms clear the oppressive air, and sweeping winds cleanse the atmosphere, as they dry the land, or as rains fertilize it, and even scourges that fall upon the earth, as drought and famine, flood and pestilence, though terrible visitations, are mercifully allowed to pass away, and give rise to increased labours of industry, energy, and zeal, to enlarged works of usefulness, to wide-spread studies, and ever augmenting care and prudence; so ought the chastisement which strikes us so painfully and bends us so low, to strengthen our ability for renewed exertion, for more persevering endeavours, for greater efforts, and more complete success in the fulfilment of duty. Storms are silenced,

and when their fury is spent, and the sun smiles down again out of the cloudless blue of the sky, the flowers of field and garden, refreshed and sweetened, are doubly fragrant and lovely, the song of the no longer frightened birds is doubly melodious, and the quickened ears of corn rise and gleam in the light of heaven. Almighty God, we implore Thee to protect and assist us against our own weakness, that anguish may not consume the source of our activity, that bitter tears of life-long grief may not poison the stream of kindness in our breast, nor affliction paralyse our power of utility; but let our hands and hearts, we beseech Thee, still aim at the best deeds, and zealously accomplish them in accordance with Thy holy will! Amen.



16.

“Yea, though I wander through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.”—(*Psalm* xxiii. 4.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, our Heavenly Benefactor, Thou who hast made this world so radiant and so beautiful for the enjoyment and happiness of Thy children, hast also implanted the love of life in our hearts, and taught us to prize our earthly home with its beauties and enchantments, and allowed us to cling to these, notwithstanding the clouds and storms that often obscure the brightness of our days, the blight that falls upon our fairest gardens, the drought that parches and burns all freshness around us, and the floods that devastate our

possessions. Yet every suffering we endure and every enjoyment we taste must bring us nearer to our mysterious goal. We may be travelling along flowery paths, or skirting ravines and perilous clefts, still our journey leads us through the land of tombs, and the black shadows of death hover near us. But why should we fear, Almighty Lord, why should dread seize the soul, and rayless night encompass our steps? The Divine hand which has adorned our existence with so many blessings, will graciously shield us from lasting evil; the celestial beneficence which has made even this earth bright with so much loveliness and felicity, will lead us gently and in mercy across the deep and unknown chasm that separates this world from the next.—Almighty Lord, I implore Thee, vouchsafe to me the staff of Thy strength, that my weakness may lean upon it, and be supported, and aid me with Thy rod to keep aloof from the perils and temptations that lie in wait for the trembling pilgrim who has not sought the shield of Thy heavenly assistance! Amen.

17.

“Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee.”
(*Psalm cxix. 11.*)

ALMIGHTY GOD of all beneficence, Thy Law is perfect, Thy commandments are beautiful, and we anxiously pray that Thy blessing may strengthen us to keep them in truth and reverence, and to spend our days in humble obedience to Thy holy will. But it is not enough

to praise Thee, our Gracious Lord, with the thanksgivings of our lips, or even with the zealous works of our hands, with earnest lessons and examples to all around us, with labours of duty and unrepining devotion. Thy sacred word must pervade our breast, that no hidden transgression may darken and taint the fountain of our life-stream, but that ardent and inmost adoration of Thee, Almighty Lord, may give clearness to all our aims, and warmth and purity to our actions. The best human works are cold without the glow of faith to sanctify them, and zeal for the noblest objects amid the sameness of ever recurring obligations grows weary and becomes chilled without the bright flame that points and rises heavenward. Therefore let us, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, prize and treasure Thy Divine behests! Let our hearts become altars, where we may worship Thy wondrous power and admirable goodness, from the first awakening blush of morning and thrill of conscious life until the last descending veil of night which closes our weary eyes in sleep or in death! Amen.

18.

“Thou shalt not kill.”—(*Exodus* xx. 13)

THOU hast shown us the sanctity of life, All-merciful Creator and Protector of the living, and hast taught us, that to lay violent hands upon those whom Thou hast graciously called into existence and formed in Thy Divine image, is a heinous crime. We shrink in dismay

from the horror and wickedness of all frightful deeds of bloodshed ; in fear and trembling our thoughts recoil from them. But are we always careful enough in regard to the wounds which may be inflicted, not with murderous weapon or subtle poison or heavy hand, but with the tongue that stings, and whose dart enters like iron into the soul? God Almighty, we implore Thee to help us when we endeavour to stay the angry or scornful word that maims and withers and burns, that kills joy and hope and happiness, that lays waste the garden of the heart, and changes it into a dreary desert. Thy aid alone will enable us to transform gall into honey, bitterness into balm, and all passion and violence into the cordial of strength and comfort. Oh grant us that Divine assistance, we beseech Thee, our Loving Father in heaven! Amen.

19.

“Ye that love the Lord, hate evil.”—(*Psalms* xcvii. 10.)

To love Thee, Almighty Lord, in humble and thankful adoration, is to dedicate the gifts and mercies which we have received from Thy Divine hand to truth and to righteousness, and to works of piety and benevolence; to love Thee with heart and mind and soul is to glow with fervid enthusiasm for all deeds of kindness and beneficence, for noble aims and zealous labours of usefulness, is to be indefatigable in the fulfilment of duty, ready and eager to make any sacrifice that may help and serve or save others. And if we thus bow reverently

before Thee, in humblest imitation of Thy goodness, how can we be otherwise than averse to evil-thinking and wrong-doing? And is it wicked, Almighty Lord, to turn in hatred and anger from vice and sin? Surely, it cannot be wrong, if, while hating evil and striving to uproot it, we yet pity the evil-doer, if we make every effort to reclaim him, if we endeavour to blot out his transgressions, and try to render their recurrence impossible. Give us the strength and the power, Almighty Benefactor, to love thus; kindle in us all the fires of hatred for the destruction of sin; permit us to teach, to guide, and advise, yet never to punish; and in this way let us become worthy of bowing down in fervent worship at the foot of Thy heavenly throne! Amen.



20.

“The rich and poor meet together, the Lord is the Maker of them all.”
(*Proverbs* xxii. 2.)

O LORD, our God, Thou hast graciously called us into life; Thou hast formed us according to Thy will and placed us on this earth, to earn the enjoyment of its beauties and treasures by dutiful labours and by zealous obedience to Thy holy behests. We are Thy children, all equally cared for by Thee, our Heavenly Father, though for some reasons beyond our knowledge and power of understanding, not all placed in the same position of affluence and wealth. But what are gold and silver, chariots and horses, lands and castles, diamonds and pearls—what are all the dazzling gifts of fortune?

Surely they are not the brightest enchantments that even this world can afford, and not to be prized with the highest blessings that may be ours now, but will be ours, we anxiously hope and trust and believe, in eternity! Is not the swiftness of our feet to be valued more than the pace of the fleetest horses? And the strength of our arms and the dexterity of our hands are these not admirable and precious, and do not the poor possess supple limbs of usefulness as well as the rich? Is not the cold brilliancy of the diamond surpassed by the speaking brightness of the eye? Gold does not shine so radiantly or so beneficently as the light of the sun, nor do pearls from the ocean cave gleam like tears of joy or gratitude that flow from the heart. Silver may buy luxuries, but it cannot buy health, nor mirth, nor love, nor happiness; and for all the heaviest ingots from the mine who would exchange dearly cherished living treasures? Hunger and thirst, sickness and suffering, affliction and mourning, are known alike to rich and poor, and so are disappointment and vexation of spirit, strife and peace, fears and their banishment, hope and its fulfilment. Everywhere and always the needy and the wealthy must meet. The rags of poverty and the splendours of wealth are not sufficient to part those whose Creator is the Lord, that has formed every immortal soul in His Divine image. This we know and feel, and we implore Thee, Almighty God, to let us ever meet in compassion and kindness, in devotion and loving service, as children of one Heavenly and All-beneficent Father.

21.

“ My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, my horn is exalted in the Lord . . . because I rejoice in Thy salvation.”—(1 *Samuel* ii. 1.)

GOD of unlimited power and boundless mercy, Thou hast sorely troubled my heart and calmed it ; Thou hast afflicted my son with sore disease, and filled my trembling soul with anguish ; but Thy will has permitted the heavy sickness to pass quickly away, and the load of anxiety to vanish, which bowed me to the ground. Thy all-powerful hand has extinguished the fire that consumed the fever-stricken, and has dispelled the alternating restlessness and languor ; the parched lips have recovered their freshness, the sunken eye shines again with the light of health, and sparkles with the joy of gratitude, and strength and energy are returning. How can my poor words thank Thee enough, Omnipotent Lord, who hast graciously vouchsafed salvation to my child, who hast led him unscathed through all his suffering and peril, and caused him to become more deeply conscious of the high value and the great blessings of health ? My whole life shall be a thank-offering to Thee, O Beneficent Creator and Preserver ; yet how faint are even my warmest aspirations, how feeble my most earnest resolves and efforts, how insufficient my best deeds ! What are they all—the sigh of unspeakable relief, after days and nights of anxiety, the breath of deep thankfulness, the smile or tear of gratitude ? What are even the purest thoughts or the most ardent feelings which pervade the human breast, and the most fervid prayers which my tongue can

utter? Yet Thy goodness is infinite and eternal ; oh accept my ever-present and unvarying will and my strenuous endeavour, instead of the imperfect or impossible accomplishment of my labours and duties !



22.

“Them that honour Me, I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be slighted.”—(1 *Samuel* ii. 30.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, we feel that kindness of heart expressed in words, shown in zealous deeds, and manifested even by looks of pity and encouragement, that unbounded charity of thought and hand, eager devotion to duty, unrepining sacrifice of time and rest, of peace and comfort, un murmuring patience under trials, and a thankful spirit even amidst troubles and cares, are the bright and glowing flowers, the unfading garlands, with which Thou hast permitted us, Almighty God, to wreath Thy altars, they are the undying roses which we may scatter at the foot of Thy throne. Thou wilt accept our labours and offerings, and give us Thy mercies and blessings. But how can those be happy who forget Thy holy commandments, who reject Thy beautiful precepts, and transgress Thy Divine Law ! They must be blind and deaf and hard and cold, or sick and feeble ! Open their eyes, we implore Thee, Almighty Father, unlock their ears, melt the frost that chills their hearts, soften and heal and strengthen them, that they too may worship in Thy

holy sanctuary, kneel in humble adoration before Thee, labour in Thy vineyards, and receive the precious gifts of tranquillity and contentment from Thy celestial hand!

23.

“It is well for man that he in patience and silence awaiteth the salvation of the Eternal.”—(*Lamentations* iii. 26.)

O GOD of infinite mercy, I call upon Thee in the deepest affliction of my irreparable loss, in the agonising grief of my life-long bereavement, to support the weakness of my heart, that I may learn to bear all trials and sufferings which human forethought cannot avert, and human efforts, even the most strenuous and persevering, cannot overcome. And Thou wilt give me the priceless boon of uncomplaining patience and of silent fortitude, so that sorrow may not overwhelm me, but that, out of surrounding darkness, out of the gloom that oppresses my soul, I may descry the dawning light of that glorious sun of hope and faith, which rises on earth and shines through all eternity. I know, Almighty Lord, that Thou hast beneficently permitted anguish to be slowly and gently assuaged, if not healed, by the soothing influence of time, and therefore I will not murmur against the mysterious decree that has crushed my joy and happiness, but I will bow down daily and hourly in fervent prayer before Thee, and trust to Thy heavenly mercy for help, that I may gather strength for renewed exertions and for labours of love and devotion, as the power of accomplishing them is indeed among the greatest blessings of Thy Divine grace and compassion.

24.

“You shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”

(*Exodus* xix. 6.)

THY commandments, our Heavenly Ruler and Beneficent Legislator, are all supremely good and beautiful ; yet to our limited powers they cannot appear otherwise than difficult to obey, and none of them rises before us in sterner grandeur than the injunction which bids us to be a kingdom of priests. To worship Thee at all hours of the day and at all times of our life, in joy and in grief, in happiness and in adversity, to adore Thy greatness and power, to implore Thy mercy and forgiveness, is indeed a glorious privilege graciously vouchsafed to Thy children. But to serve Thy altars, to labour in Thy temples, to proclaim Thy truths, to inculcate Thy laws, to teach Thy rules of conduct by precept and example, to burn incense in Thy sacred fanes, to lay sacrifices on Thy shrines, and become ministers in Thy sanctuary which is the whole earth in its glory—these are tasks of overwhelming magnitude, which may indeed make us tremble in Thy awe-inspiring presence. We have ceased to bring into Thy Temple the fruits of the land, the yellow sheaf of nourishment and the oil and wine of gladness, and we no longer adorn Thy Tabernacle with clusters of dates and figs and pomegranates in their sweetness and brightness ; but we are allowed to worship and adore Thee by sharing the excellent gifts of Thy bounty with our brethren. These are the sacrifices we are now called upon to bring, instead of meat and burnt-

offerings. To be holy, we must place at Thy feet all evil thoughts and feelings, every long-cherished prejudice and dislike, that all may be burnt and entirely consumed in the flames of contrition and repentance.

25.

“Justice, justice thou shalt pursue, that thou mayest live.”
(*Deuteronomy* xvi. 20.)

HOW beautiful is Thy command, Lord of perfect and eternal truth, yet how difficult to obey! Who among Thy children can hope to be entirely just, to pierce with unerring eye the clouds which often surround even the brightest truth, to rend the thick veils behind which modest worth is concealed, or to sweep away the glittering gossamer which gives a delusive charm to imposture? Who can hope that no curtain of darkness or wall of separation, no error of judgment and no falsehood, will ever intervene between him and the truth? Who can always be sure to remove from his own view and his own understanding the obscuring film or the distorting lens of prejudice? Who can presume to hold the balance of justice with an unflinching hand? Who, having measured or weighed good and evil, and the words and deeds which partake of both, can feel certain to have been quite just? It is this great, yet not unconquerable difficulty which Thy precepts, Almighty God, bring before our thoughts. Give us, our Gracious Lord, one ray of Thy enlightening wisdom, that we may ever strive to be just to others, to friends and foes, and the

stranger at our gate, to those who are near and to those far away, and just also to ourselves, that we may not believe others to be wrong when they are right, nor consider our own paths straight when they are crooked. And then we shall live; for who could enjoy life and the manifold treasures and mercies of Thy goodness, with the heavy load of injustice upon his mind, with the burden of it upon his heart, and with the painful sense of having ignored truth, preferred dimness to light, and turned a deaf ear to the advising and reproving voice of conscience!

26.

“Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from sin?”
(*Proverbs* xx. 9.)

ALMIGHTY LORD, throughout the universe everything that Thou hast created is clear and pure, bright and transparent, in the heavens above and on the earth beneath; the glorious sun in its effulgence, the moon's paler radiance, the myriads of diamond stars that spangle the deep sapphire mantle of the sky, all fill the world with light and brilliancy; the jewels of dew at rosy dawn and soft evening glow, the silver mists that veil the face of the earth at early morn, and the haze that surrounds it with a luminous halo at eventide, the flakes of dazzling snow, the icicles on the everlasting green of the mountain fir, the emerald and ruby zones of the bow of promise, the foam of the cascade, the pearly fringe of the ocean, the mirror of the lake, the golden waves of ripening corn, and the freshness of the rose—all, all are steeped

in light. And we, Thy children, shall we not labour and pray and yearn to be pure in mind and soul, in heart and life, in thought and aim? Shall we not try with anxious will and zealous effort, to make our path one of brightness, that the purity of our words and deeds may yield the best precepts to the loved ones who watch our lives and follow our examples, and to the friends who observe our "foot-prints on the sands of time," so that our undeviating course of rectitude, traced in all clearness through the mazes of our earthly journey, may be a guide and a beacon to our own sons and daughters, and to our fellow-pilgrims? But as the destructive blight falls on the full ears of wheat in the ripening harvest field, as the blackness of the cloud darkens the firmament, and the worm preys on the fairest rose, so do faults, deepening into sin, overshadow the mind, obscure the heart, and spread their poisonous webs over the soul. Help us, we implore Thee, Almighty God, that through Thy mercy the tears of sorrow and of remorse, the waters of repentance and of atonement may cleanse us from all stains, and purify us from the devouring canker of evil thoughts and inclinations! Let Thy Divine fountain flow over the dark spots and errors of our days, and may Thy heavenly forgiveness efface them for ever! Amen.



27.

“ He that covereth a transgression, seeketh love.”—(*Proverbs* xvii. 9.)

ALMIGHTY LORD, Thou art all goodness, compassion, and mercy ; may Thy lovingkindness penetrate deeply into the hearts of Thy children, and the universal rule of tenderness, which prevails throughout the world, bind us, and guide our thoughts and feelings, our wishes and our actions. Hatred is like the approaching storm which causes gloom and oppression to fall on the fairest scenes ; and strife is similar to the storm in its violence, when the black clouds have gathered and met, and are torn asunder by flashes of lurid lightning and by howling winds, and transformed into devastating floods. But love which sheds its halo over the greatest injuries, resembles the sun ; it brings light, warmth, and brightness. Under its gentle influence all gloom vanishes, all mists disappear. It dries the tears of the sorrowful, silences the wailing of those that suffer, heals all wounds, changes sighs into smiles, spans with the rain-bow colours of hope the horizon of the desponding and the remorseful, and rekindles the expiring flame of faith. To be truly beloved on earth with the devotion of unselfishness and compassion, is to be forgiven and graciously remembered by Thee, Almighty Lord, in whose Divine hand are joy and affliction, punishment and reward, life and death, and glorious immortality beyond the confines of this world.



28.

“ O every shower and dew, bless ye the Lord.”—(*Song of the Three Holy Children*, ver. 42.)

WHEN the earth is hard and parched, and the blossoms are drooping and fading; when the trees are motionless, and appear heavy with the weight of their inert foliage, and the fields are losing their brightness; when the hedges, those green ribbons woven with buds and flowers, look dust-stained and almost colourless; when herds and flocks, birds and bees, thirst and languish—Thy beneficence, Almighty God, ordains clouds to be formed and dissolved. Then the arid land drinks eagerly the waters of heaven, the pasture recovers the emerald gleam of tender grasses, the scented clover, white and crimson, shoots up to tempt kine and lambkin, the leaves on hedge and tree glisten and sparkle, refreshed and strengthened, the roses lift their heads, and glow more brilliantly, and at their feet cushions of bright blue violets send forth sweeter fragrance, and high above them lark and blackbird shake their humid feathers, and sing joyful carols. The countless myriads of raindrops that cause the corn to grow, the grape to ripen, and the golden orange to swell, and which replenish stream and fountain and reed-edged pool, and every gem of dew, hastening the birth of bud and blossom, every liquid diamond in the cup of the lily, and every chaplet of pearls with which the breath of early morning wreathes field and bower, and the silvery veils that cover the drowsy face of earth when the hours of sleep and rest draw near—

one and all praise and bless and glorify Thy infinite goodness, Almighty God. Grant us to be, our Heavenly Father, as the shower and the dew, that we may thus bless Thy holy name. Strengthen and inspire us, we beseech Thee, that our words may become streams of refreshment to the sufferers who thirst and languish around us, that our good deeds may be pure as clustering dew-drops, and revive the waning energies of those who have laboured and struggled, and who return from the daily toil and moil of life, wearied and dust-stained and disheartened. Thus let us serve Thee, Almighty Lord, by serving our brethren! Amen.



29.

“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.”—(*Psalm* xxiii. 1.)

AS the shepherd leads his flocks far away from the fangs of the hungry wolf and from the talons of the birds of prey, to the sun-warmed pastures of nourishment, to the crimson clover-fields for repose, and to the clear waters of the brook for refreshment; as in the glare of the scorching summer heat, he conducts his lambkins under the shadow of leaf-crowned trees, or when the north-wind howls, and the snow falls heavily, seeks for them the protection of the sheltering rock—so dost Thou, Almighty God, lead us, Thy children, and Thy Divine care is indeed unceasing. Yet not at every moment of our existence are we able to realise that constant watchfulness of Thy beneficence, and to

feel how lovingly Thy arm supports our steps, and guides us through difficulties and perils. All help, all gifts and enjoyments, all mercies and blessings come from Thee, our Heavenly Father; and flowing from Thee, the fountain of perfect goodness, they will never fail us, and we need never despair. And though we may well pray for the snow-white innocence of the lambkin, we are human beings endowed with reason and responsible for our own acts: to earn or merit, in some slight degree, Thy celestial favour, we must be humbly self-reliant, and forget neither our daily duties of active industry and zealous service, nor the bountiful power which allows us to make diligent use of the opportunities vouchsafed to us in life. Our Gracious Father, we implore Thee, to increase our confidence in the energies which we hold for useful exertion and indefatigable labour, and also to strengthen our faith in Thy unfailing aid, which will bless our unremitting endeavours, if we learn to work and to pray, to hope in Thee, and to hold fast the happy belief that, however long and arduous the way, however great the obstacles and dangers which may beset our road, Thou art our Divine shepherd, and wilt guide us gently and mercifully to fields of eternal brightness.



30.

“Say not thou, I will render evil for evil: wait on the Lord, and He shall save thee.”—(*Proverbs* xx. 22.)

ALMIGHTY LORD, I humbly implore Thy gracious help against myself, against my own sinful inclinations, that the wrong under which I suffer may not lead me to become guilty of an equal, or perhaps a greater wrong, by seeking to wound the hand that smote me. Retribution is ever doubtful, while the effect of generous forgiveness is soothing, if not always to the evil-doers themselves, assuredly to those whom they have injured. All vengeance resembles more or less the deed of the blind Samson, who certainly destroyed his enemies, but buried himself under the ruins which became their graves; whereas our anger is assuaged by the pardon which we are able to extend to the offender, and with Thy blessing, our Beneficent Lord, we may be so fortunate as to change enemies into friends. The correction of the former is not among our duties. Thou, Almighty God, art the only avenger; Thou hast ordained that the pangs of conscience shall chastise evil-doers, and before Thy tribunal of unerring justice, our Heavenly Lord, no fault remains unpunished. Vouchsafe to us, we humbly implore Thee, the power of extending to others complete forgiveness, that anger and irritation may be speedily extinguished in our heart of hearts! Amen.



JULY.



1.

“Teach the wonders of the Lord to thy children and thy children’s children.”—(*Deuteronomy* iv. 9.)

WE do not need any learning, Almighty Lord of this marvellous world, to obey Thy holy will, and point out to the children at our knees the wonders which Thou hast called into existence. We are surrounded by them from dewy morn to darkling eve and throughout the starry night. The tiller of the land who drives his plough along, the gardener busy among the beauty and fragrance of the earth, the miner delving below its surface, the fisherman and the shepherd, the woodman and the hunter, all are daily and hourly witnesses of Thy omnipotent beneficence. The sun which Thy Divine arm has placed in the vault of heaven, shines down upon the work of the labouring man, and its glowing beams warm, ripen, and gild the grain of the furrow, among the waving luxuriance of which the lark and her young ones nestle. They rise in the clear ether, shaking the dew-drops from their wings, and singing their early songs

of gladness as they float in the breeze far, far above all human ills, above the hedges where the bind-weed hangs its bells of transparent pearl, and twines its emerald tendrils; over the flower-beds where the rose is born in loveliness, and the bee sucks its nectar, and the jewelled insect roams and flutters in the warmth of the day; above orchard and vineyard where the grape glistens and grows heavy, and the fruit of the tree turns mellow and sweet. The fisherman who spreads his net in lake and stream, and sails far out on the wide sea, descries countless wonders under the mirror of the waters, and discovers beneath the mighty waves unnumbered and unnamed myriads of living beings, and bowers of weeds, and ocean flowers, and opal shells, all gleaming with the hues of the rainbow; the shepherd who tends his flocks on meads soft and fresh, and lives in the brightness of heaven, and the woodman resting upon his axe among the tall shafts of the beech, the aged boughs of the oak, the moss-grown branches of the elm, musical with the song of birds above, or disturbed in their stillness beneath by timid hare and bounding squirrel, and all the shy and playful tenants of the forest; and the eager hunter who tracks and watches and snares his prey even by moon-lustre and star-gleam: these labourers and wayfarers do not require the science of the botanist, the lore of the astronomer, the learning of the geologist, to bow down, Lord God Almighty, in admiring gratitude before Thee, the Divine Architect of the whole universe, which Thou hast lighted with the radiance of the sun and the brilliancy of the stars, which Thou hast filled with fair buds of promise and blooms of sweetness, with all delights and all enchantments, with all joys and all

happiness. Thy bounty has assigned to us these treasures with the gifts that enable us to hear and see and prize Thy wonders, and teach them to our children, and to adore with deepest gratitude the celestial hand that has so beneficently wrought them.

2.

“Behold, I shall rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather every day what is sufficient for the day.”—(*Exodus* xvi. 4.)

LORD GOD of eternal and unbounded beneficence, we anxiously pray to be strengthened in our hopes, we implore Thee to increase our faithful reliance upon the gifts of Thy mercy, that we may never be haunted by the fear of hungering and thirsting without relief, by the dread of languishing or dying, or by the still more harrowing terror of seeing our much-beloved, the dearly cherished, whom Thou hast given into our keeping, droop for want of food. In remote ages bread rained from heaven for the people of God, and the Hebrews went out, and gathered every morning what was sufficient for the day. Surely this was a Divine promise for all times, and Thou who feedest the ravens of the air, wilt not let Thy children lack nourishment, neither sustenance for the body nor support for the mind. But as our forefathers sallied forth into the desert, so must we go out and earn our daily bread, so must we labour with the activity of our limbs, with our powers of thought and feeling, to earn the celestial manna of Thy inexhaustible bounty,

and be refreshed by Thy life-giving waters of knowledge. Oh bless us with Thy blessing, that the daily bread, the heavenly nourishment, the purifying draught of refreshment for body and soul, may be ours now and for evermore! Amen.



3.

“ And the dove came unto him in the evening ; and, behold, in her mouth, was a fresh olive-leaf.”—(*Genesis* viii. 11.)

CLOUDS of darkness may have hung round my mind, endless fears and forebodings may have assailed my heart, overwhelming storms swept across my soul, and deluged my days and nights with tears of sorrow and agony : but as the dove floated into the ark at eventide, bearing an olive-leaf—the first token that the waters of destruction were subsiding — so let me hope and pray, and believe that my grievous afflictions will pass away. Let me place my trust in heavenly comfort, and cherish the thought that after the most bitter trials shall have tortured me, and the heaviest losses have rent my breast, when the beauty of my garden has been destroyed, when the brightness of it has vanished, and sweetness has been followed by desolation, that even then the blessed feeling of tranquillity may yet return. It will come late, perhaps towards the evening of my youth, of my strength and activity, or towards the evening of my whole existence, but surely it will glide towards me on the wings of time, the healer, and bring the oil of gladness to my bruised spirit, so

that I may joyfully quit this abode for the celestial realms of eternity, where I hope to find again all that I have prized and loved and lost on earth.

4.

“As a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord chasteneth Thee.”—
(*Deuteronomy* viii. 5.)

THE father who reproveth his child, utters words of blame, not merely in sorrow for the past, but in his deep anxiety that faults may be rooted out, and that the future may yield noble qualities, deeds of kindness and devotion, flowers of beauty and fruits of excellence, where noxious weeds have sprung up in rank and unheeded luxuriance, strangling with the coils of their tendrils gentle and tender growths, and hanging their poisonous, though brightly glistening berries where useful seeds should have ripened. But alas! the voice of warning is too often misunderstood; we turn a deaf ear to words of regret and reproach, or if we listen, we soon forget them; still the force of punishment, perhaps shown in some kindness or enjoyment withheld from us by wise friends, opens our eyes, causes us to look steadily into the inmost depths of heart and mind, and to deplore the fault or the transgression, which may have obliged those who love us most fondly, to punish us most severely. And thus Thy hand, our Heavenly Father, chastises us, not in anger, not in wrath, but in pity and in love. Though our limited knowledge cannot fathom the justice of Thy mysterious decrees, and though our eyes

fail to see and to feel the extent of Thy mercy and beneficence, though the affliction sent by Thee, our Gracious Lord, may pierce our hearts, and cause our wounds to bleed, and our tears to flow, and the agonized soul to tremble and to mourn, the terrible sufferings sent by Thee, our Divine Protector, help to pluck sin and vanity, and folly and selfishness from our breast and from our life, to detach us from the idle pursuits of this world, and prepare us for the realms of unbroken tranquillity. Our Almighty Deliverer and Redeemer, while Thy holy will is accomplished in heaven and upon earth, we can but submit to it in prayerful humility, and in undiminished hope trust to Thy eternal goodness, mercy, and compassion.



5.

“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain ; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain.”

(*Exodus* xx. 7.)

THE name of names is Thine, our Heavenly Father ; let it be engraven on the tablets of our mind, indelibly written in our breast, and stamped on our heart and soul, to guide and protect and warn us, to shield our helplessness from approaching danger, to become our beacon in troubled times, our star at night, our sunbeam in the broad light of day, pervading us with the warmth of zeal for all good works, and illuminating our path, so that all labours of mercy and devotion may be apparent to our otherwise limited view. How

can we, Lord God Almighty, take Thy holy name in vain? We will cherish and reverence it on the altar of the mind, and in the shrine of the heart, that it may be a symbol to us of the purest love of truth, of the sacredness of every promise, of the faithful accomplishment of duty, an encouragement to every act of self-denial and self-sacrifice. How can we tarnish its sanctity by letting it dwell on lips steeped in guile and falsehood, by invoking it to serve fraud and hypocrisy, by calling in its aid to uphold artifice and countenance deception or dishonesty, and how could we sin thus grievously, and be guiltless, and remain unpunished? Thy Divine name is our greatest treasure on earth and in heaven, and as we pray to Thee alone, we place our hope and faith and trust in Thee, our Merciful God, both in joy and in sorrow, in health and in sickness, while living and when we tremble on the brink of eternity.



6.

“When the poor and the needy seek water and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I, the Lord, will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.”—(*Isaiah* xli. 17.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, Thou hast placed in the bosom of every human being graciously created in Thy own image, some germ of that inexhaustible love which has made even this world so beautiful, and which holds infinite mercies in store for all Thy children. Allow us, we beseech Thee, to treasure this precious germ, that it

may grow and thrive, and fill the heart with tenderness and compassion, so that we may be ready to help, and as faithful and zealous stewards of Thy infinite bounty to dispense far and wide the best gifts that have been confided to our care. There are no impossibilities for Thee, Almighty God, but the era of miracles is past ; manna no longer rains from heaven, and the hard, barren rock does not open suddenly, to pour forth its crystal waters of refreshment at the bidding of man. Thou hast appointed us to accomplish Thy holy will towards the poor and the needy. Thou hast commanded us to give aid with generous hands, that in time we may hope to see distress and poverty vanish from the face of the land, and wide-spread activity cause the teeming earth to produce golden harvests in richest abundance for all mankind. Therefore, let us give bread and raiment, fuel and shelter, yet not these alone, but also our gentlest care, our anxious watchfulness, our time, our rest, and our leisure, if they be wanted ; our earnest service, our unflinching zeal, and dutiful efforts, our best possessions and our best works ; and then, Almighty Lord, Thou wilt vouchsafe to us the highest rewards ; all duties will be changed into pleasures, all labours into enjoyments, all service into delight, all devotion into happiness ; for we shall feel that we have shared our most valued treasures with the needy, and thus humbly endeavoured to obey Thy heavenly behests. Amen.



7.

“The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that tottered are girded with strength. . . . He raiseth up the poor from the ground, and lifeth the needy from the dust.”—(1 *Samuel* ii. 4, 8.)

AS night and day, and sun and moon alternate in heaven and upon earth, so are the fortunes and the reverses, the delights and the affections of the great and the lowly, the powerful and the poverty-stricken exposed to innumerable changes, and all these fluctuations are wrought by the mere breath of Thy will, Almighty God. Permit us, we beseech Thee, not to lose sight of the lessons thus read to us by every occurrence of life, so that, on the giddy heights of prosperity and in the glad possession of happiness, we may not feel presumptuously elated, oblivious of our duties and our prayers, foolishly secure in our imaginary superiority, from which, alas! a few short days of sickness may fling us to the ground, wresting from us, perhaps for ever, the much prized treasures. Strengthen us also when we are laid low by sorrow and misery, so that the aching heart, even when pierced with many wounds, may not falter, nor the tortured mind cease to hope; for there is no suffering which Thy celestial hand cannot heal, there is no depth of anguish from which Thy powerful arm cannot and does not raise us up, even unto the brightest pinnacles of joy and delight.



8.

“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.”
(*Exodus xx. 16.*)

LORD of eternal and perfect truth, strengthen and protect us, that we may, throughout life, keep Thy holy and most admirable commandments, that we may be truthful in thought and speech and action, and seek truth and love it, and take it to heart, and teach it to those around us in all its purity, and never conceal or distort it, or permit any veil to dim its brightness. Whatever is untrue, is wrong and dangerous, and may become sinful and wicked and criminal. But of all the errors and sins and offences into which untruth misleads us, none can be more iniquitous, none more black and heinous than that of bearing false witness against our neighbour, our brother, our fellow-pilgrim, whom Thou hast enjoined us, Lord God Almighty, to help and to cherish through evil and through good report.

9.

“The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, but the habitation of the righteous He blesseth.”—(*Proverbs iii. 33*)

OUR Gracious Redeemer, Thy works are works of excellence and beneficence, Thy compassion is inexhaustible, Thy blessings are numberless, and Thy mercies without end; still the words of the inspired king, Thy servant, are true and irrefutable. None can

know the serenity of contentment, the brightness of joy, the sunny warmth of happiness, unless they obey Thy sacred Law and keep Thy Divine commandments. Mirth and gladness forsake the home of the wicked; and even the gifts of prosperity, balm and cordial, sweetness and refreshment, are changed into gall and venom under the roof of the sinful. But when the erring repent, and in deepest contrition turn from iniquity, and atone for neglect of duty by its eager and zealous fulfilment, then, Almighty Lord, Thou wilt forgive, and, by Thy Divine grace, peace will come back to the penitent sinner, and Thou wilt permit him to labour wherever arduous exertion may be needed; blessings will again abound in his dwelling, and Thy heavenly mercy will, after all the anguish of remorse and self-reproach, vouchsafe to the contrite heart the best reward of internal rest and tranquillity. Amen.



10.

“I am too little for all the mercies, and for all the truth which Thou hast shown to Thy servant.”—(*Genesis xxxii. 10.*)

GOD of ineffable goodness, Thy mercies are so great and manifold, they are so constant and infinite, that we are unable fully to prize their magnitude, to know and understand them all, to feel how completely they surround us, how every look of our eyes, every word of our lips, every movement of our limbs and thought of our minds, every conviction of our breast and pulsation of our heart, entirely flow from Thy Divine bounty, to

be prized as the gifts of Thy heavenly beneficence lavished upon us by Thy love, and guarded and protected by Thy paternal care. The wonders and beauties and delights revealed by the brightness of day, the blue skies above, the cherished flowers of our garden, the golden sunshine in heaven and upon earth, the smiles of our children, the laughter-loving voices of the young, our hopes and joys, our health and happiness, our power of prayer and of action, all our possessions, all our treasures come from Thee, our Gracious Benefactor; they are mercies dispensed by Thy celestial hand. And are we not indeed little in comparison with the greatness of Thy boons, slow to comprehend all the truth which Thou hast shown to us, yet not humble and thankful enough; not sufficiently aware that every moment of our existence is a blessing, and should be used in grateful appreciation of Thy sacred will, and for the zealous service of Thy altars! The more highly we value the precious gifts bountifully vouchsafed to us, the more earnestly we shall strive to do our duty. We speak of the countless grains of sand on the beach, and of the innumerable drops of water in the fringe of the ocean—but are not the rays and beams of Thy truth, the mercies and blessings of Thy goodness more numerous still? And what are we, the recipients of these favours? Unworthy and small indeed! Oh make us deeply thankful for them, Lord Almighty, that, as we live we may labour and endeavour to merit them in some slight degree, and thus prove devoted and zealous stewards of Thy bounty, and faithful servants in Thy temples! Amen.



11.

“And God said, Let there be light, and there was light.”

(*Genesis* i. 3.)

ON opening our eyes at early morn, let us look from the darkness of our chamber into the outward world. The stars have vanished, the disk of the moon is scarcely visible, the heavy mists are rolling away, the black curtain has been rent, the uncertainties of the glimmering dawn are dispelled by an all-powerful breath, and the splendour of day replaces night. The gloomy shadows have fled from the earth, the enveloping mystery, the weariness, the languor, the silence, are gone. All the voices of creation awake and sing their jubilant hymns; the flowers in their fresh morning attire, decked with sparkling gems of dew, offer their incense to heaven. And we, who are permitted to gaze on all this beauty and brightness, on the blue sky blushing in the first rays of the sun, on the waving trees and the ripening corn, on the fluttering birds and gleaming insects, on the tranquil lake which reflects in its diamond mirror the rosy splendour of the skies; we thank Thee in our heart of hearts, Lord God Almighty, that Thy Divine goodness has vouchsafed to us this glorious light. Oh! that we may always walk in its radiance, and that, as in nature, so it may shine within us, in mind and soul, banishing all obscuring and confusing shadows, unveiling to us our most secret faults, the blemishes which lie hidden in the deepest nooks and the most distant corners

of our breast, that they may be speedily removed and destroyed. And let the same torch, we beseech Thee, irradiate our path, point out the road of virtue, and disclose to us the duties of life, and the ways as well as difficulties of their accomplishment! When the earth appeared void and without form, it was light that changed chaos into a world of loveliness and order; it was light which the Divine majesty allowed to stream through the infinite realms of space. Its beams illuminate our path with joy and happiness. In every tongue, in all lands and climes, light means the highest and holiest of treasures; it is truth and knowledge and power; it is the glowing emanation of heavenly Omnipotence. And wonderful as the brilliant ether which pervades and animates the world, and fills it with radiance, so also is the organ by which we are permitted to enjoy it, the eye—that ever powerful theme of inspiration to the poet, that still unsolved enigma to the man of science, that inexhaustible fountain of lore to the philosopher, that clear glass which shows so unerringly both love and hate, betrays the secret emotions of the soul, discloses the workings of the mind, and speaks a touching and eloquent language of its own. And yet, what is the human eye? A mere sparkle of the light of the universe. And what is the whole empyrean itself, but one ray of the eternal source of light which created heaven and earth? And should we not enjoy with deepest gratitude the effulgent beauty which surrounds us? Should we not bow down in true humility and reverence before the wondrous and unbounded beneficence and greatness which every scintillation reveals and teaches to the spell-bound eye? May light and knowledge enter our minds, and

with them warmth and love penetrate into our hearts, and fill them with true piety and adoration ! And while gazing on the enchanting beauty of nature, is it possible not to think with pitying sorrow of the poor sufferers who are doomed to spend their whole existence in gloom and night ? Is their life quite dreary, and must it remain completely joyless ? May not the more fortunate, the more blessed among their brethren, become eye and light to them ? Surely Divine mercy holds out great consolations to the afflicted ; for among the most marvellously gifted, among the most brilliant ornaments, among the most renowned teachers of mankind, whose immortal strains will ring and sound, and thrill and echo through all centuries until the end of time, there are some who wrote and sang when blindness had closed their eyelids, and they had ceased to bask and revel in the light of day. Let us ever seek truth and virtue, seek light in thought and deed, and join our hands in hopeful prayer, that with the blessing of Almighty God, we may live and die in its purest and clearest ray !

12.

“ A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger.”
(*Proverbs* xv. 1.)

WHEN the sky is dim, and the earth beneath lies grey and quiet, how often does the rising wind drive black clouds and vapours together, and sweep over the land, touching with icy breath tree and corn-

field and flower! Then the leaves shiver, the branches seem to moan, the ripening fruit falls to the ground, the roses droop, the insects fold their gauzy wings, the sweet notes of lark and linnet are suddenly hushed, and the fairest landscape looks dreary. But when the storm-wind is lulled, and out of blue skies the sun shines forth again, its soft warm rays brighten hill and valley, and disclose all the shrouded loveliness; the blossoms raise their heads, the birds warble their gleeful songs, and the green earth glows, sparkles, and rejoices in the gentle beam of renewed light. This is Thy behest, Almighty Lord, and as in outward nature, so it is in the world of the soul. Harsh words collect and stir all the black clouds of anger, rouse tempestuous violence, and fill mind and heart with gloom and darkness. But the tender voice of sympathy penetrates into the deepest chambers of the breast, dispels wrath and suspicion, calms anger, soothes irritation, and causes joy and happiness, confidence and kindly feeling to return. Oh bless us with Thy Holy Spirit, Almighty God, that ours may ever be words of peace and comfort, eager to chase away anger and to bring back mirth and gladness!



13.

“O ye heavens, bless ye the Lord; praise and exalt Him above all for ever.”—(*Song of the Three Holy Children*, ver. 36.)

WHAT is there in creation, our Gracious Lord, that does not bless and praise and glorify Thy holy name? Boundless space is pervaded by Thy power

and greatness, and the skies are full of Thy wonders and Thy mercies. We look up and are entranced by the marvels of the celestial expanse. How beautiful are the heavens in their infinite variety! how appalling when curtained with black or lurid clouds which quench the light of day! how awful when the heavy draperies are torn asunder by the blinding flash, when thunder rolls and crashes, waking the echoes of valleys and mountains, and stifling all the sounds and voices of earth! Yet how lovely is the empyrean after the black and threatening masses have been dissolved, after the waters have descended on the thirsty land, and when the arch of hope spans the horizon with its jewelled zones! Relieved from a sense of overwhelming terror and oppression, we raise our eyes to the smiling blue above, and remain lost in admiration, unable to pierce the mysteries of the universe. The earth is fair and beautiful, yet how pale and faint are its most dazzling tints compared with the colours of the skies! How majestic is the sunrise amid rosy brightness, or the sun as it vanishes amid floods of crimson and gold; how marvellous are those wonderful hues, more brilliant than precious gems, which seem to steep the whole world in loveliness, those transparent vapours fringed with amber and silver, those fantastic and ever shifting pearl-white clouds sailing and vanishing through seas of air; and at night the myriads of distant yet glistening stars, that come out of the darkness, and adorn it with countless diamonds of beauty! They all praise and exalt Thee, Almighty God, their and our All-wise Creator and Protector, and we, Thy children, bend down to revere and adore Thee, and the poorest among us, who

live and toil in narrow homes, shut out perhaps from many of the beauties of earth, uplift thankful looks to Thee, our Merciful Father, and feel that the glories and splendours of heaven, far outshining the radiance of earthly gardens, and the remote, yet all-surrounding, all-embracing loveliness, belong to them also, and are among the numberless gifts of Thy unbounded goodness.



14.

“Why art thou cast down, my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance.”—(*Psalm* xlii. 5.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, Thou hast mercifully permitted my violent anguish to subside and to be softened into abiding sadness, into that sorrow which indeed flings its veils over all radiance, but renders the snares of vanity, its illusions and temptations impossible, which causes all minor annoyances to remain unheeded, the nettles, thorns, and stones in my daily path to be unfelt, even the black clouds on the horizon to be unnoticed. There has fallen upon my heart a shadow so dark that it has quenched the brightness of my life, but Thy beneficence, O Gracious Lord, never fails! Though with the trouble of smaller vexations and disappointments, the sense of enjoyment has also passed away, and mirth and gladness neither stay with me nor can ever come again, Thou wilt mercifully allow the power of usefulness to return to me with the blessed feeling, that I may yet be sufficiently restored to do some good among my

brethren. Thou wilt uphold me, and give me strength and courage, Thou wilt help me to fulfil all duties zealously and lovingly, and thus, thus only, my wounds will be healed, and I shall humbly praise Thee and thank Thee ardently, Almighty God, for not having cut me off from Thy Divine service. Amen.



15.

“He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets; therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.”—(*Proverbs* xx. 19.)

MERCIFUL LORD, we implore Thee, to keep us aloof alike from drifting into flattery and from straying into harshness. Those who forsake sincerity to lavish unmerited praise, are alas! quite as easily led to desert truth when blame suits their purpose. Any swerving from the path of rectitude is dangerous. No excess of kindness should prompt us to the bestowal of applause when it is not deserved, and no sense of justice should harden to unbending rigour, and thus, perhaps, become exaggerated into iron severity. Permit us, Almighty Father, to exercise the best and gentlest influence on the conduct of our brethren. We shall hear nought but the truth from their lips, when we can prove to them that we are able to bear it, and the weapons of calumniators will fall to the ground when our actions need not shun the light of day, when we have nothing to conceal, when there are no mysteries in our life, no secrets in our heart, no subterfuges in our mind: and when the reality is bright and pure, no praise

can heighten its beauty, and flattery then becomes impossible.



16.

“I am a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off. . . . Do not I fill heaven and earth?”—(*Jeremiah* xxiii. 23, 24.)

ANXIETY often falls upon us with unexpected swiftness. Like the black point in a brightly blue sky, it grows suddenly into an overwhelming cloud, shutting out the light of day, till impenetrable gloom seems to surround us, when our own labours and exertions and the aid of our best friends are as nought. But the torch of Thy presence, Almighty God, is everywhere; even when the sunshine of our life seems well nigh extinguished, when storms encompass and dangers threaten us, Thou art not far off, for Thy greatness fills the whole universe, Thy beneficence pervades the glorious vault above and the valleys of earth beneath. Thy infinite mercy upholds us, and Thy Divine omnipotence will rend the menacing clouds; Thy hand calms the storm, Thy arm banishes all danger, and shields us from calamity. We may indeed cease to sigh and to tremble, to weep and to fear; but can we ever cease to bow down before Thee with ardent thanksgivings and to lay our grateful and adoring hearts at the foot of Thy heavenly throne? Can we ever cease to believe, to hope, and to trust in Thee, our Merciful Lord?



17.

“And the bow shall be in the cloud, and I shall look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.”—(*Genesis ix. 16.*)

BLACK clouds are rent into shreds by flashes of heavenly fire. Descending floods mingle with the swift mountain stream and the wild torrent, and are engulfed by the angry waves of the sea, and lashed into fury by the mad winds. Trees are uprooted, felled to the ground by the fierce blast, and fair harvests are laid low by the flail of the mighty storm. Yet we must not fear; let us thank God for all His mercies; He has made a covenant with every living creature that is on this globe: the tumult of the elements passes away, the gloomy clouds vanish, and behold, the heavenly bow spans the scene of appalling strife. It rises in calm beauty and brilliancy, woven of light and sunshine; it glows with the fairest tints of earth and sky; the crimson hues of the rose, the emerald splendour of field and foliage, the golden and purple glories of vineyard and orchard are reflected in its expanse. Like an aërial bridge, it towers in loveliness over the half-quelled confusion, over the subsiding din beneath. The turbid waters become clearer and clearer; the birds, no longer affrighted, float into the pure soft air, and warble their joyous hymns at heaven's gate; the flowers waft their aroma through the valleys of the earth; and man breathes a prayer of thankfulness.

Like to the arch of radiance, similar to the bow of brightness in the outward world, which shines after rain and storm, heralding light and peace, is the bridge of religion and fervent hope built over the clefts and chasms of our existence here, over the tears and sorrows and dangers of this life, and promising repose to the weary and storm-tossed soul. It is the covenant of God with His creatures, uniting earth and heaven. O Eternal God of forgiveness and infinite bounty, may we in troubled hours, when all is dark around, and heavy afflictions fall upon us, leaving our hearts sorely wounded and bleeding, may we by the help of Thy Divine blessing be enabled to descry the heavenly sign, the covenant, the arch of hope and faith, which alone can carry us in safety to the land of uninterrupted rest!



18.

“When wisdom entereth deep into thy heart, and knowledge becomes pleasant to thy soul, then will discretion guard thee, and understanding protect thee.”—(*Proverbs* ii. 10, 11.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, we implore Thy heavenly protection that our eager and anxious studies may lead us not to the spurious lore which feeds the cravings of vanity and develops the follies of conceit, but to the knowledge which enriches the mind, purifies the heart, and ennobles the soul by raising us to the worship of Thy Divine goodness and greatness. Such knowledge alone can lead to happiness and salvation, for it includes wisdom, which is modest and humble and

truthful, and does not conceal blemishes and shortcomings from the most enthusiastic and the most hopeful. There is no better and more trustworthy guide through the mazes of life than wisdom, none smooths difficult paths so well, nor brings success so near, and yet none teaches us so irrefutably how much must remain unknown, unfathomed and unrevealed even to the most ardent and most untiring researches. However, as the traveller does not grow weary and dissatisfied because he feels that he cannot explore the whole extent of the earth, and as the voyager does not forsake the ocean because he is unable to sail over the entire kingdom of the seas, so let us, Almighty God, who seek after truth, dwell near the waters of knowledge and wisdom, near those streams that cleanse and strengthen and refresh, though we may never hope to learn whence they spring nor whither they flow.

19.

“O ye sun and moon, bless ye the Lord, praise and exalt Him above all for ever.”—(*Song of the Three Holy Children*, ver. 40.)

How sombre and dreary would be this earth, how cold and barren, without the sun which Thou hast caused to shine down upon it, Almighty God, and to reveal Thy infinite goodness by every ray of warmth and brilliancy! It touches the trees of forest and garden, and a thousand lights appear on their branches, the leaves twinkle and glisten like emeralds and gold; the dawn wakes the birds out of their shadowy conceal-

ment, and they call to one another with clear notes of gladness; the squirrel flies from bough to bough, the cony frisks over the dew-steeped moss, the soft-eyed deer raise their heads from behind the feathery fern, the grass and all wild flowers grow for kine and lambkin and honey-gathering bee; the hedges are bright with snow-white and rosy-red blossoms, the harvest ripens, the orchard bends under the weight of clustering fruit, the sun gives colour and fragrance to the flower, bloom and sweetness to the peach and plum and grape, cheerfulness to the heart and mind of man, and scatters prosperity far and wide. Thus the sun praises Thee, Almighty Lord, and is the faithful messenger and servant of Thy infinite bounty. And the moon also exalts Thee for ever and ever. We could not bear eternal sunshine, neither we, nor our fields, nor our flowers. After the dazzling and scorching heat of the day, how lovely is the moon when it makes night luminous and sheds calm rays of purity over the broad pastures, where our herds and flocks sleep beneath the vault of heaven, or when it lights the lonely seas, across which the ship with its great human freight ploughs its weary way to distant and unknown lands, or when it beguiles the dark hours of the poor fisherman, who flings his nets into the waters that his children may have bread on the morrow-ing day! If sun and moon thus praise Thee, Almighty God, with their warmth and their light, let us praise Thee also, not merely with the words of the tongue, the thoughts of the mind, and the feelings of the heart, but with the indefatigable work of our hands, with good deeds among our brethren, all wrought in Thy holy service! Amen.

20.

"He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth; but he that is gracious to the afflicted, happy is he."—(*Proverbs* xiv. 21.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, we daily implore Thy Divine help and blessing to show us the whole circle of our duties, and give us the power as well as the wish to fulfil them. To-day we beseech Thee to remove from before our eyes the deluding gossamer of vanity, that we may not look upon ourselves and our deeds as perfect and admirable, wrought to excite wonder and call forth applause, and to throw into the shade everything around us—our brethren and their actions, their whole life and career.

We may be peculiarly fortunate and favoured by Thy Divine grace, Almighty God, personally removed from want, darkness, and ignorance, from vice and sin, from sorrow and suffering; but should not immunity from such shortcomings and trials and the possession of bright happiness soften the heart towards the afflicted, and cause it to thrill with gentle pity and with the ardent desire to help the distressed, to shield and uphold the feeble? Should it not make us beware lest we give scant attention to tales of misery, and fling from the coffer of wealth contemptuous alms to the needy, lest we turn away with utter scorn from sights and sounds of sadness? Render us, Almighty Lord, incapable of such cruel wrong-doing; enable us to know and remember during each moment of our existence, that

we too are liable to adversity, and that nothing keeps it from us but Thy heavenly grace! One single instant may deprive us of all treasures and blessings; but while we enjoy them through Thy infinite goodness, our Merciful Lord, permit us to share them with the needy and to spread them far and wide! Amen.

21.

“O ye nights and days, bless ye the Lord.”

(Song of the Three Holy Children, ver. 47.)

How lovely is the night with its soothing stillness after all the toil of the busy hours, when human voices are hushed, when lark and blackbird, thrush and linnet, are silent, when herds and flocks have ceased to low and bleat, when the buzzing insect is at rest cradled in the fragrant calyx of the flower, when the star-spangled curtains are drawn around the slumbering earth and the weary children of Thy bounty, Almighty God! The breeze may sigh—it fans the sleepers; the fountains and the cascades flow and rush—they cool the air and sing the softest lullaby to all that seek repose after the pleasures and labours of the day. Thus the night blesses Thee, Almighty Lord, for causing it to waft peace and tranquillity to the careworn, and to renew the strength of the feeble. Yet how much more beautiful is the morning! The stars grow pale and dim in its rays; the lamp of the moon is extinguished by the glorious effulgence of daylight, which comes gently and gradually, and preceded by all

the fair bright roses of dawn ! It touches the eyelids of the sleepers ; the whole earth awakes ; the water lily opens its snow-white petals, the lark sings jubilant hymns, the bee fills her storehouse with honey, and Thy children, Almighty God, refreshed and sustained, breathe thanksgivings to Thy Divine beneficence. Every hour has its own charm and beauty, brings its own labours, its own task for busy hands, and eager minds, and willing hearts. In town and country, in rural hamlet and seagirt fishing village, in field and garden, orchard and vineyard, in forge and factory, school and college, industry and study are diligently and zealously carried on. Thus the day blesses Thee, Almighty God, by shedding light and knowledge over the earth, by diffusing plenty and prosperity everywhere. Allow us, we beseech Thee, our Gracious Lord, to earn the calm tranquillity and peace of night by active labours anxiously and conscientiously attempted and performed in the light of day, and in the Divine radiance of Thy merciful countenance ! Amen.



22.

“ O sing unto the Lord a new song, sing unto the Lord all the earth.”—
(*Psalm xcvi. 1.*)

How lovely is this earth which Thou hast called into existence, Almighty God ; how brilliant in its summer garb ! How can our feeble lips thank Thee and bless Thy holy name sufficiently for having placed

us here to enjoy the wonders and treasures of creation, and worship Thy beneficence, our Divine Protector, among the marvels and tokens of Thy power and Thy goodness? When the breeze passes over the emerald meadow and the golden corn-field, the twinkling grasses and the heavy corn-spikes all bow down before Thee; and from field and hedge-row, from garden and rose-bower, all buds and blossoms send up their incense to Thee, Almighty God. Every tree is a temple; from waving branches myriads of birds uplift their jubilant voices. Torrents and mountain-streams, and the billows of the sea, and the softly flowing rills, and all the travelling winds that sweep loudly through wood and forest, or sigh gently at eventide when every other sound is hushed, sing unto Thee, Almighty Lord; and we, Thy children, add our hymns of praise and thanksgiving, and from the whole land rises a chorus of adoration full and deep and clear. The valleys rejoice at their renewed freshness and beauty; the mountain peaks gleam and glow in sun and moonlight; the herds and flocks, with tinkling bells, browse, knee-deep, in fragrant pastures; the bee, laden with sweets, is buzzing home through the balmy air. How enchanting is the world in its vernal loveliness, decked with fresh and ever-renewed charms and attractions! Almighty God, though our gratitude cannot change nor hardly be increased, yet vouchsafe to it, we beseech Thee, a life-long activity that may show itself every day and at all hours in deeds of love, and zeal, and true devotion! Amen.

23.

“O ye mountains and hills, bless ye the Lord : praise and exalt Him above all for ever.”—(*Song of the Three Holy Children*, ver. 53.)

O GOD of all gifts and all mercies, how can we ever thank Thee enough for the treasures and charms with which Thy Divine hand has so lavishly adorned this world, that all Thy children may find enjoyment and happiness ! The whole earth praises Thee, Almighty Lord, for widely-extended and infinite blessings. The mountains and hills exalt Thee, as they rise with their wealth and loveliness towards the bright yet mysterious blue of the skies. Thou hast decked them with beauty and excellence, from the carpets at their feet, woven of moss and thyme and violets, to the primeval forests which crown their summits. On the sun-warmed slopes they bear the fruit of the olive and the fragrant stars of the myrtle, the pale or dark gold of citron and orange, the garlands of the wild rose, and the festoons of the vine ; and higher up, elm and beech, ash and poplar, oak and birch, grow in splendour and luxuriance ; further still, and nearer to eternal snows, the dark pines and firs spread ever-green and unchanging branches. Life teems everywhere. There are bees, and butterflies, and beetles gleaming like jewels, cooing doves and singing birds in the waving boughs of the trees, and conies burrowing among the scented herbs, and squirrels bounding, and rills trickling down among the wild fruits and the wild flowers, and the untamed denizens of the woods ; there are in the air

above, wheeling and circling kites, and hawks, and buzzards; and all around is the light of heaven, and Thy celestial protection, Almighty Lord, rests upon the whole universe. And beneath the robes of life and beauty which clothe Thy hills and mountains, Thou, our Heavenly Benefactor, hast placed deep in the bosom of the earth numberless gifts and boons, mines and quarries, precious gems and metals, for which we must dive and delve ere they can be won to embellish our homes. By Thy Divine hand, the depths of our heart of hearts have also been endowed with unknown treasures, which indefatigable exertions may free from overlying dross, and transform into purest gold and brightest jewels for the use and adornment of life.



24.

“He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.”

(*Psalm cxxvi.* 6.)

ALMIGHTY GOD of gentlest mercy, it seems as if in this world, where by Thy gracious permission so many wonders have been revealed to us, and where with Thy celestial aid so much knowledge may be disclosed to patient endeavours and earnest studies, there are yet great problems and mysteries, which must remain unsolved and unfathomed by human ken. Thus we know not why the brightest progress, the clearest gain, the noblest benefit, the highest and most precious advantage, must often be preceded and won by sadness and sorrow

and painful sacrifice ; why tears, similar to the dews of heaven, must flow to foster into beauty and luxuriance the sweetest flowers, the blossoms of love and charity. Such tears, we are told, are dried by Thy Divine hand, by Thy heavenly will, our Gracious Lord, and even changed into smiles, for Thou permittest the good work to last and to prosper when the weary worker, sustained by hope and faith, has been gathered to his rest !

25.

“ Bless the Lord, O my soul ; and all that is within me bless His holy name.”—(*Psalm* ciii. 1.)

I THANK Thee, Almighty God, for the innumerable mercies of Thy beneficence ; for the eye, which Thou hast vouchsafed to me to see and enjoy the glorious wonders and enchanting beauties of creation ; for the ear, which Thou hast permitted to listen to the grandest harmonies of wind and flood, to the softest melodies of feathered songsters, and, better still, to the voices of Thy children, Almighty Lord—of my brethren and my loved ones. I thank Thee for the power which enables me to inhale the incense of the rose, the fragrance of the new-mown hay, the aroma from wood and forest, brought to me by the wing of the travelling breeze. I thank Thee for the swiftness of my limbs ; for the strength of my hands, that may become skilful to labour in Thy service ; for the tongue, which Thou hast placed in my mouth to speak words of kindness to all

around, and pray to Thee, Almighty God, and praise Thee for Thy infinite beneficence. I thank Thee for Thy laws and commandments so admirable in their unvarying justice ; I thank Thee for the mind that strives to understand them, and for the heart which Thou hast placed in my bosom to adore and obey Thee, and to thrill with all good feelings. Bless these gifts still further, Almighty Father in heaven, that they may help me to become rich in gentle deeds, in works of charity and usefulness ! Amen

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26.

“My days are like a shadow that declineth.”—(*Psalm cii. 11.*)

WE beseech Thee, Almighty God, to vouchsafe to us Thy Divine help and blessing, that we may take to heart the Psalmist's words so full of truth and sadness, and cause them to influence every effort and endeavour of our existence. The shadow of our days increases and lengthens as we travel along the daily road, yet it should not fall on barren and desolate places, but rest on blooming garden and teeming harvest-land, on sunny house or smiling cottage, that it may give evidence of indefatigable exertions, and leave as heir-looms on earth the example of our industry, our zeal, and devotion, and of their best reward, success. Life is fleeting and vanishes like a shadow ; but it need not, like the shadow, be cold and empty, it need not be a vague and hollow dream. We humbly pray that, with Thy gracious help and support, our Heavenly Father, it may become a great and noble and beneficent reality ! Amen.

27.

“He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.”—(*Psalms* xci. 11, 12.)

O LORD of all goodness and compassion, of all beneficence and mercy, Thou, who dwellest in the highest heaven of heavens, and lookest down upon the human beings whom Thy gracious will has called into life, Thou, who hast lavished upon us innumerable gifts and treasures, hast still enhanced the greatest blessings of Thy bounty by placing guardian angels at our side to keep us in all righteous ways. Among these angels none are more zealous and more faithful than the fond mother and father who watch over our cradle and guide us gently and tenderly along the paths of childhood, and surround us with loving arms when perils and temptations threaten our youth, and with indefatigable hands pluck away all lacerating briars and thorns, leaving for our enjoyment only the brightest blossoms, the sweetest and most glowing roses; none are more loving than our parents, whose affection teaches us the law and happiness of life, and whose memory lingers around us when they have passed away to that eternal home where sharp thistles and wounding thorns are alike unknown.



28.

“The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand for ever.”—(*Isaiah* xl. 8.)

ALL earthly treasures, however precious and delightful, are evanescent; youth fades and vanishes with its joys and hopes and bright visions of happiness, beauty and its enchantments disappear; health, the greatest of all blessings, forsakes us, strength and energy decline, all our most valued possessions, even love and friendship, pass away, and life is extinguished by death. Nothing is indestructible and unchangeable, nothing is everlasting in this world, except the good which has been wrought with Thy Divine help, Almighty God, and in humble, yet anxious obedience to Thy holy word, which alone remains unimpaired. To the pilgrims who come after us it is a beacon in hours of darkness; it cannot fail to lead those who labour indefatigably in Thy fields and vineyards and gardens, our Gracious Lord, to fresh beauties, to new and increased treasures, to purer happiness, to brighter hopes, and more radiant faith.

29.

“The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats, and the rocks for the conies.”—(*Psalms* civ. 18.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, our Beneficent Father, there is nothing useless in this great world which Thy sacred

will has called into existence. We speak of the barren waste, the sandy desert, and the howling wilderness, through which lies the path of many of our brethren—and we forget that even there Thy bounty has placed the smiling oasis with glassy pool, and waving palms, and the gift of date-bearing trees, to afford rest, sustenance, and refreshment. Hills cold and bleak, bare and inaccessible, on which man cannot plant his foot, rocks hard and inhospitable, are yet sheltering homes for the wild animals of the earth when pursued by the weapons of the huntsman or surrounded by his nets and snares. The goats bound from ledge to ledge, and climb higher and higher, till they take a defiant stand far beyond the reach of murderous shaft; the dark rocks are honey-combed into cells where the shy conies hide themselves, and remain shielded from the attacks of all enemies. The thyme-covered slopes and the soft moss-grown valleys are pleasanter for goat and cony, but the high hills are their refuge, and pitying to their helplessness is the hard rock. And for us, the children of Thy bounty, Almighty God, there are stony roads and thorny paths and high mountains, over which we travel during our earthly journey, and they too are refuges from the brighter and more alluring but more dangerous ways of the world. Thus everything is good which Thou hast created, our Heavenly Father, the sterile plain and the luxuriant harvest field, the thistle and the rose, the briar and the grape vine; all is wisely ordained, suffering and enjoyment, wealth and poverty, life and death. And we reverently bow down before Thee, and say: "Thine is the world and the fulness thereof."

30.

“He shall feed His flock like a shepherd, He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead them.”
(*Isaiah* xl. 11.)

I HAVE watched the faithful shepherd, I have listened to him as he called his scattered flock, and followed him in his pursuit after the wayward sheep, which strayed into dusty roads and struggled along thorny hedges, to leave there the wealth and whiteness of its soft wool; I have seen him lead the panting truant back to the safety of bright pastures, to the honeyed clover of the meadow, to the clear waters of the gently flowing rill; he held the wounded in his arms and laved its bleeding feet; he quieted the trembling and affrighted lambkin, for it had wandered far away among strangers; and it was rescued from the fangs of the wolf and brought back to the fold. But Thou, our God, art the Shepherd of shepherds, and we are Thy flock. Thou feedest us not only with the waving harvests of the earth and with the fruit of the orchard, Thou hast vouchsafed to our needs not only the bread that nourishes, the crystal coolness of the fountain, the strengthening juice of the grape, but Thou hast given us also the wine of gladness, and the Divine waters of life that refresh and cleanse and purify mind and soul. Among the mazes of this world Thy heavenly arm is our guide and our shield when dangers threaten; faith in Thee, our Celestial Father, is the flame that dispels all darkness and causes all cold mists around us to vanish;

and led by Thy gracious and merciful hand, we shall indeed move on gently from the cradle to the grave. Only those who walk with Thee are safe. Oh hold us fast, lest we stray from Thy paths, and leave the white garments of our innocence to be torn by the briars and stained by the poisonous fruit of sin.



31.

“Every wise woman buildeth her house, but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands”—(*Proverbs* xiv. 1.)

THE laws, Almighty God, which Thou hast laid down, are as universal and immutable as they are sacred. They are honoured and obeyed in all lands and throughout all times. Thou hast willed that man shall be the bread-winner of the family. He goes out into the world to accomplish his mission. Even in early youth he carries on his studies or enters upon his apprenticeship far away from the domestic hearth. He is a sailor, a soldier, a lawyer, or a physician, a huntsman or a tiller of the ground, he works in mines and quarries, in forges and factories, he becomes an explorer among the icebergs of the polar seas or a pioneer amidst African deserts. But in Thy eternal wisdom and goodness, Thou hast assigned to woman the sanctuary of home, where, far removed from the perils and temptations of life, she also may labour zealously in accordance with Thy holy will, and rear for those who surround her a building of strength and comfort, a shelter and a refuge, and above all raise a shrine in every heart to

adore Thee, Almighty God, and breathe thanksgivings unto Thy heavenly name. Every woman imbued with the knowledge and spirit of Thy holy Law, is the light and sunshine of her house. She dispels cold and gloom and ignorance, she diffuses cheerfulness and calms angry strife, she is gentle and full of compassion, vigilant, thoughtful, and devoted. She chides seldom and softly, but she guides, advises, and teaches always with looks and words of affection, and bright examples of indefatigable industry, and unmurmuring self-denial. Make me aware, Almighty Lord, of the extent of my duties; give me the power, I beseech Thee, to lay in my dwelling the foundation of all virtues; permit the torch of faith to be kindled among my loved ones, and may it never be extinguished or even obscured! Let the breath of heaven enter my doors, Thy arm sustain my roof, and Thy celestial hand shield the structure raised by me, a feeble woman: then it will defy all storms, and neither wind, nor fire, nor flood will be able to destroy it, for righteousness and courage will fill the abode, and conquer all earthly trials and vicissitudes. Amen.



AUGUST.



1.

“O, ye fire and heat, bless ye the Lord.”

(Song of the Three Holy Children, ver. 44.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, our Great and Beneficent Ruler, Creator of alarming and overwhelming forces, we may well bow down and bless Thee for these powers, even while we dread them and fail to understand their full strength and important uses in the vast economy of the world; for we feel that they also are precious gifts of Thy bounty. Grand and fearful as they appear, mysterious and incomprehensible as some have remained to the present hour even to the searching lore of profound thinkers, they are, according to Thy Divine will, fit subjects of investigation, and, diligently studied by men of genius, they will surely become more clearly known and revealed to us. The many millions of miles which separate this earth from the sun, have not made the study of that glorious orb an impossibility. We feel the warmth that fosters into beauty

and brilliancy, into sweetness, luxuriance, and excellence, the productions of the land, the golden harvest-fields, and the smiling rose-gardens ; and we also feel the fierceness of the heat when it devours the green pastures, and dries up the rushing mountain-stream no less than the brooklet of the meadow. We even know the metals and gases of which the dazzling luminary is composed. Without the sun, what would our planet be, left in coldness and in darkness? And the devastating fire that burns up the heather of the moorland, the prairie and its vegetation, the woods and sombre pine forests, and, threatening human life, sweeps away houses and whole villages ; is it not terrible, whether fed by coal, or gas, or oil, or kindled by the blinding spark from the cloud? And still it blesses Thee, O Lord! In frosty winter season, replacing the rays of the sun, it burns brightly on the hearth, and diffuses cheerfulness all around ; it helps man to prepare the food needed for his sustenance, enables him to weld and fashion iron and copper, lead and tin, that dwellings may be erected and ships built, and all the arts of civilization made productive and useful for the advancement and happiness of Thy children. Thus fire and heat bless Thee, and, while warmed by their glow and cheered by their brightness, we incline our hearts before Thee, Almighty and Bountiful Father, in ever-increasing adoration of Thy beneficence.



2.

“Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be laid low ; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain.”—(*Isaiah* xl. 4.)

To Thy omnipotence, our Gracious Lord, nothing is impossible. We look around us and observe, we read and know that the sea once flowed and ebbed where high and rugged mountains now rear their proud crests ; that flocks and herds, grazing over rich pastures, now browse in safety where in former eras stood lakes treacherously deep ; and that the hard, black coals of the hidden and rayless pit are the petrified remains of a rich vegetation of beautiful herbs and trees, which grew and waved numberless centuries ago in the light and sunshine of heaven. And among us human beings changes as great are wrought in our own life-time by Thy Divine and inscrutable will. Yet equality reigns in a far higher degree, even in this world, than our short-sightedness is apt to see or admit. And should this fail to be apparent immediately, or should it be invisible to the superficial observer, it is, nevertheless, true and certain that all really good aims and deeds must obtain appreciation in the end, as their influence is perceived and their ennobling sway is felt. Accidental circumstances may cause insignificance in the garb of arrogant conceit to shine for a while, as soap-bubbles gleam with the brightness of jewels, and fire-works glitter and sparkle, to leave nothing behind ; while all that is really bad and wicked or noxious, becomes dissolved

and vanishes, without even a trace in the immense ocean of time, yet not without having previously served as an example to be shunned and as a warning to be heeded. Therefore, Almighty God, we implore Thee to bless our earnest endeavours, that, with the encouragement of Thy Divine mercy, we may persevere, and succeed in making our strenuous efforts worthy of Thy service! Amen.

3.

“Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways, and be wise.”

(*Proverbs* vi. 6.)

ALMIGHTY LORD, how marvellous are the ways of the innumerable beings called into life by Thy Divine will! We study the habits of the smallest insects, which a mere touch from a child's finger can brush away, and are amazed at the wonders revealed by the untiring activity of the diminutive workers; we look with astonishment at the craft of the spider, the indefatigable industry of the bee, and the apparent forethought of the ant. We read of the stupendous works wrought by the coral animalculæ, which build up reefs and islands in the unfathomed seas. However delicate the web of the spider, surpassing in transparency the finest laces; however surprising the rocky fastnesses constructed by the coral engineers, the wax palaces of the bee and their treasuries of sweet honey, or the silken threads spun by the worm for velvets and brocades and the mantles of royalty: we know that these labours of busy and constant zeal are not better,

stronger, or more perfect now than they were thousands of years ago. They are the result of that great, but, to us, incomprehensible faculty—instinct—with which Thy bounty, Almighty Lord, has endowed even the smallest of created beings. And if such extraordinary labours are accomplished mechanically by bee and worm, ant and coral-insect, what has Thy beneficence not enabled us to do, who possess varied gifts and powers of mind, and the yearning of the heart to prompt us, conscience to advise and rebuke us, and Thy holy commandments to guide our steps? What are we not enabled to do, who can advance and grow in knowledge and wisdom, in gentleness and benevolence—who can profit by the experience of our predecessors, and yet leave endless and unexplored fields to those who come after us?

4.

“How forcible are right words.”—(*Job* vi. 25.)

RIGHT words are irresistible; their effect is great and beautiful, like that of the first rosy light of day, when the hoar frost vanishes under the glowing fingers of morn. The power of such words melts the coldness of the hardhearted, covers the stubborn and wrong-headed, the obdurate and guilty sinner, with the burning blushes of shame, and leads him to repentance. It teaches the ignorant, and dispels the mists that surround him. It encourages the timid and the wavering, and may even transform him into a hero. Right words

are true words ; they flow from the depth of the mind, from the inmost source of life, from the fountain of all noble and unselfish thoughts and feelings. Almighty God, we beseech Thee to make us eager and attentive listeners to such words, wherever and whenever they may be spoken. They cannot be superfluous ; they must retain their value, their sway, and their freshness ; they live for ever and can never grow old. They are good and true and righteous only, because Thou hast inspired them, our Gracious Lord ; for all light and warmth, beneficence and happiness come from Thee !

5.

“ Praise ye the Lord : sing unto the Lord a new song.”—(*Psalm cxxix. 1.*)

ALMIGHTY GOD, we praise Thee in affliction, and we praise Thee in health and happiness. Thou alone art our consolation in sorrow, and the worship of Thy sacred name is our greatest joy in times of prosperity. To adore Thee is to rejoice ; and we adore Thee most truly with the serenity of the mind and the gladness of the heart, with the delight of gratitude and with every word of thanksgiving, as our forefathers of old adored Thee with the loud-sounding timbrel and the golden harp of the sanctuary, and with all those instruments of soft and sweet, or deep and penetrating tone, which, touched by pious hands or glowing lips, united in melodious praise of Thy Divine beneficence. To be imbued with unwavering faith in Thee, Almighty God, is to possess the greatest treasure and a true feeling of religion,

zealous and profound ; it is to be bright and hopeful and smiling, not sad and stern and severe. There is more light and sunshine on earth and in heaven than gloom and darkness ; the days are really longer than the nights ; the sweet promise of spring, the ample fulfilment of summer, the rich harvesting of autumn, commence early with the violets and crocus-bells that peep through winter's snowy mantles, and extend far into the year with the vintage, and the nut-gathering, and the oranges that turn to amber and gold, and the pomegranates that become filled with glowing rubies. There are more dew-drops than storm-showers ; there is far more happiness than misery. Oh let us, Almighty God, be privileged to worship Thee with more smiles than tears ! Amen.

6.

“Oh, all ye beasts and cattle, bless ye the Lord.”

(Song of the Three Holy Children, ver. 59.)

O LORD, our God, how great and manifold are Thy works, how excellent is everything Thou hast created, how richly hast Thou supplied all lands and all climes with beauty, utility, and wealth ! Around us the broad pastures teem with life ; countless flocks graze among the honeyed herbs of our meadows ; the lambkins frisk and frolic, half hidden amid the crimson clover ; their white wool bears the owner's mark ; but they need no shepherds to lead or to tend them, for the wolves have disappeared from among us, and the great birds of prey

have been banished ; the eagle no longer rushes down to carry off a snowy prize to the eyrie of his young, and the cattle browse lazily on our fertile lands, which Thou, Almighty God, hast made to flow with milk and honey. But not in our zones alone hast Thou placed flocks and herds on soft green downs or on darker moors blooming with purple heather, in sheltering depths of emerald valleys or on sun-bright slopes of hills and mountains or widely-spreading plains. In the sheep-walks of Australia, hundreds of thousands, nay, millions of lambskins, are born every year, and their soft fleece is meant to clothe half the world. The pampas of America hold among their silver grasses countless herds of cattle ; on the table-lands of South Africa roam numberless troops of antelopes ; the chamois bounds along the Alpine peaks ; seen through veils of Highland mist, the antlered stags of the forest form pictures of beauty ; and in colder and less favoured climes, living on fields of snow and ice, dogs and reindeer replace the mule of Spanish sierras, the camel of the desert, the noble steed of more fortunate regions, and the humbler animals that minister to the wants of man. Thus Thy inexhaustible beneficence has adapted the whole world to all the animated beings that dwell thereon. There is enjoyment for all in the light of heaven—there is harmony everywhere ; and for us, the children of Thy bounty, Almighty God, there is a lesson in every dumb creature that treads this earth. Everything thou hast formed blesses Thee, and becomes a blessing. Amen.

7.

“How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?”—(*Proverbs* vi. 9.)

O LORD, I implore Thee to give me the will and the power, the zeal and the firmness, to labour indefatigably, so as to make industry the rule of my existence, good service the law of my days, the performance of duty the aim and reward of my life. There is so much work everywhere for busy hands, that I beseech Thee, Almighty God, to cause mine to be skilful and active; there are so many improvements needed around me and in myself, that I must be diligent at all times, and prayerful too, so that, through Thy goodness, my Heavenly Father, I may be enlightened to understand my obligations. The more I look and think, strive and observe, the wider will be the field of my labour, the greater will be the necessity for constant exertion, and every effort of the mind and heart. If I lead a life of unprofitable idleness; if I rise, and quench my thirst, and satisfy my hunger, and then lie down again to close my eyes in undeserved sleep; if I yield to habits of apathy and listlessness: how great and humiliating will be the contempt of my neighbours, how infinitely greater and harder to bear, and more crushing, will be my self-reproaches; how wounding the stings of conscience; how painfully shall I despise myself for having squandered and lost the precious gift of life! O my God, I humbly and anxiously pray Thee to help me, that I may fling

off the fetters of languor, the binding chains of weariness, the heavy shackles that cripple and impede my movements. Make me free to work, and thus to worship Thee in accordance with Thy holy will! Amen.

8.

“My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: for they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.”—(*Proverbs* i. 8, 9.)

THE precepts with which parents strive to guide their children, are always good and pure; they flow from the clearest and brightest, from the most vivifying source of all gentle and tender feelings, they spring from the deep and unselfish love which Thou, Almighty Lord, hast placed in the human heart, from that love which is ever willing and ready to give and forgive, to yield all treasures without repining, and relinquish every boon without a murmur, from that fondness which never grows weary of sacrificing the best enjoyments in order to gladden the existence of others. And should we not feel that it is so? If the instinct of the pelican nourishes the unfledged nestling with its own life-blood, what will not human parents attempt and achieve for their children, those most precious blessings of Thy bounty, whom Thou, our Gracious Lord, hast vouchsafed to their care? As love covers a multitude of errors, so affection on the part of anxious and watchful parents compensates for many of their shortcomings, and seldom or never errs in its advice or in the guidance

of children. The father and mother may not be learned, but if they strive to understand that much higher wisdom, Thy Divine will, Almighty God, and obey Thy holy commandments, the source of love in their heart of hearts will remain a fountain of refreshment to their sons and daughters, who shall return to it again and again from the toil and struggles of the world to be purified and strengthened. Dutiful children will, in the consciousness of having given every proof of ready and gentle obedience, always find joy and happiness; they will feel that, by honouring their parents, they fulfil one of the highest obligations of life, and transmit the best examples to those who come after them, and endeavour to walk in their footsteps.



9.

“Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird.”

(*Proverbs i. 17.*)

ALMIGHTY GOD, our Gracious Benefactor, Thou hast adorned this world with manifest and enchanting beauties, and it is Thy Divine will that we shall enjoy its treasures and delights. But when tasted otherwise than in moderation, they become dangerous, and in our frailty and imperfection we are apt to change healthful use into perilous abuse. The sunshine in which we love to bask, may cause us, not so much to be absorbed by ennobling contemplation, as to glide into habits of apathy, and perhaps to spend listless days, during which the fleetfooted hours rush by, and with

them passes away a portion—possibly the best portion—of our life. Green hills and flowery vales, the flying bird and the running stream, charm and attract us. If unchecked, we eagerly follow the delights they hold out, and come back weary and unfit for useful labour, which is the law of life. Thus, movement or repose, travelling by land and sea, and all the pleasures of the chase, solitude or society, though harmless in themselves, may be fraught with temptation and lead to indolence, restlessness, and an insatiable longing after change and variety, may cause indifference to the wants and tastes of others, egotism, and a self-concentrated existence without aim or purpose. Alas! snares covered with bright flowers, woven with silk, clasped with gold, and glittering with jewels, exist and meet us at every age and in every condition of life. We are chiefly guarded and protected by the knowledge and consciousness that with Thy aid we can elude them. Therefore, let us be constantly watchful, lest we give way to dangerous feelings of security, and forget to look to Thee, our Gracious Lord, for the help of Thy Divine guidance, to aid and quicken our intelligence, and to sharpen all our senses, so that we may speedily discover and shun what can mislead us, and be endowed by Thy heavenly blessing with the power of conquering all temptation. Then we shall feel strong, and triumph constantly and completely, and though victory will give us happiness, we shall not lose the sense of humility, but bow down before Thee in grateful adoration, and acknowledge with heart and soul that Thou, our Beneficent Father, art the Merciful Dispenser of all that is good!

10.

“A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is His delight.”—(*Proverbs* xi. 1.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, without Thy help we are powerless, and our best resolves are as nought; therefore, we implore Thee in daily, most ardent, and most anxious prayer, to strengthen us, and dispel all obscuring or deluding mists from before our eyes, that we may be freed from prejudice, and learn to be strictly just in our estimate and judgment of others. Grant that this spirit of justice may yield, not merely a true and generous appreciation of the qualities and talents of all around us, but also a knowledge, yet no undue disclosure, of their faults. We should notice these with the utmost care and attention, so as not to drift into similar errors ourselves, and to prevent the sense of good and evil from becoming vague and confused in us; we should observe them, further, with the earnest hope to cause them to vanish, either by gentle and persuasive advice, or, better still, by vivid and powerful example. Make us clear-sighted, we beseech Thee, Almighty Lord; let no blemish or short-coming of our brethren dim the brightness or efface the value of their great and noble qualities; cause us to remember how frail and imperfect we all are, how much alloy there is in the purest gold, how much dross covers the finest diamonds. The goldsmith shapes the glittering metal into beautiful forms; the lapidary polishes precious gems, that they may acquire a thousand sparkles. Thus, our

Heavenly Benefactor, we implore Thee to let the lessons, trials, and vicissitudes of life, cleanse and purify us in heart and mind, and make us worthy of Thyself, our Divine Creator! Amen.

11.

“Riches profit not in the day of wrath; but righteousness delivereth from death.”—(*Proverbs* xi. 4.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, all Thy ways are admirable and perfect; all Thy gifts are precious and invaluable. Through the agency of wealth, which men prize, we are often able to spread around us solace and comfort, joy and happiness. Yet at the time of overwhelming affliction which bows the heart to the ground, and threatens almost to crush it, riches are utterly powerless to help us, or to assuage the poignancy of grief. Between our greatest worldly possessions and our inmost soul, there is no link, no bond, nor is there any connecting thread between them and our own bodily wants and infirmities. All the gold of the Indies will not save us from the horrors of shipwreck and of a watery grave, from the maiming or fatal flash of lightning, or from the trials and agonies of sickness. But our sufferings are soothed by time, our wounds cease to bleed and are closed, and gradually we become conscious that our mission on earth is not yet accomplished, that we may still be useful and do good during our pilgrimage. And then the constant and indefatigable

endeavours to leave no duty unperformed, and to redeem the pledges which misfortune or sorrow prevented us from fulfilling, will remove the heavy chains of apathy which have been welded by past trials, and free us from their deadening weight.

12.

“ If sinners entice thee, consent thou not.”—(*Proverbs* i. 10.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, our Heavenly Guardian and Benefactor, our whole life is a battle, and may find us encompassed by tempters and temptations, our worst and most insidious foes. We, therefore, humbly approach Thee, and implore Thy mercy, our Heavenly Lord, to enlighten us, that we may recognise and grasp the best weapons for defence, that we may stand on the rock of faith and place piety as a fortress around us, wear devotion as an impenetrable coat of mail, and hold up the shield of love between us and the enemy, and wield the spear and sword of thought and knowledge, not for attack, but for safety and help. Surely we shall be able to resist perilous allurements if we keep constantly in view some good and great aim, if, in order to attain it, we labour indefatigably with zeal and courage, energy and firmness : for then we shall be blind to all sights, and deaf to all voices but those of duty ; the poisoned shafts of envy, and the arrows of hatred and of malice will be powerless to harm us. There will be no cankering wounds in our breast, no sores in our heart. We shall look up to Thee, Almighty Lord, who art perfection and holiness ; we shall remember that

Thou hast formed us in Thy Divine image, and during our small span, and in our limited sphere, we shall humbly yet anxiously hope and strive to follow the sublime example of Thy Divine perfection. Amen.



13.

“He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down : he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.”—(*Job* xiv. 2.)

THE hot breath of summer scorches the green pastures and causes them to lose freshness, colour, and substance ; and when the kine and the lambkins seek nourishment, they find nothing but dust. The loveliness of the flower perishes, the wind scatters the petals of the rose, the rain washes away its brilliancy, the burning rays of the sun dim and destroy it, and leave no brightness and sweetness for bee and butterfly. The hardy labourer who works with iron sinews in fields or mines, the weather-beaten and storm-tossed fisherman, the foot-sore yet persevering wanderer, and the young beauty cradled in luxury, delicately nurtured, lovingly and carefully sheltered from harm—all, all must alike pass away ! Strength is soon broken or paralysed ; who can explain it ? Loveliness fades and vanishes, or is nipped in the bud ; who understands or fathoms the cause of the decay ? But should the evanescent nature of all earthly gifts make them appear less precious ? Surely, such is not Thy will, Almighty God. Thou hast been lavish of blessings, our Gracious Lord, and we ought to make noble and zealous use of the treasures of Thy bene-

ficence ; and Thou wilt enable the healthy and energetic to labour, so that each hour may be one of profit and advantage to themselves and others ; while those upon whom Thy bounty has showered the wealth of intellectual gifts will exert themselves none the less because Thy sacred law has limited both talent and life ; they must use the brilliancy of their mental power to embellish and ennoble their earthly path ; and to beautify their road really and truly, is to add to it the highest grace and charm — that of goodness. And Thou wilt teach us, Almighty God, to look to the end without fear or trembling ; and we shall be tranquil and resigned when we remember that it is Thy breath which blows upon grass and flower, and that Thy Divine Spirit is a Spirit of eternal wisdom and love.



14

“O all ye winds, bless ye the Lord.”

(Song of the Three Holy Children, ver. 43.)

ALL the voices of creation bless Thee, Almighty God, and none more so than the winds of heaven, which Thou hast permitted to cleanse the atmosphere. They sweep along the mysterious vault above, and chase the light-footed clouds, and their breath drives away even the darkest and heaviest, leaving the azure skies radiantly blue on high, and the green earth fairer and brighter beneath. Through woods and forests, over fields and gardens, blows the wind, gently opening the rose-buds, cooling the fountain, stirring into diamond ripples the

motionless lake, wafting refreshment to the labourer who toils in the heat of day, and to the sufferer on his sick bed. We open the casement of the fever-haunted room, and soft winds float lightly in ; they seem to bring a renewal of strength and life to the patient ; and with gently-fanning wings they dispel gloom and heaviness. Let the winds praise Thy holy name, Almighty God, and let all bless and exalt Thee that have been graciously permitted and privileged to give refreshing balm and cordial to the aching brow, the burning hand, and the oppressed heart ! Amen.

15.

“Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day, nor for the pestilence that watcheth in darkness, nor for the destruction that wasteth at noon-day.”—(*Psalms* xci. 5, 6.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, in firmest reliance upon Thy heavenly beneficence, we shall never feel alarmed, not even when recollecting that all misfortunes and calamities are possible, and that we are exposed to them at every period of our life, at every moment of our existence—when wrapt in soundest sleep, when awake to the duties of precaution, and during the time of greatest vigilance and activity ; they encompass us as much in helpless infancy, when we are guided by the tender watchfulness of loving parents, as in joyous childhood, in early and impulsive youth, and in maturer years, when slowly-acquired prudence and discretion direct our steps ; we know that destruction may lurk and lie in ambush for us at home

and abroad, when we are quietly resting under our own roof, when ploughing the ocean and weathering the storm, in peace and in war ; it may threaten us through flood and through fire, through famine and plague, through mental anguish and bodily agony. We shall not tremble at the gloomy thought or at the vivid picture of the sorrows and afflictions which are the dark shadows of this sun-bright earth, when we remember that Thou, our Gracious Lord, canst shield us from them all, that Thy inexhaustible pity will save us, pour balm into our bleeding wounds, and heal them, and vouchsafe strength and comfort to the bruised spirit and grieving soul, here or hereafter. Amen.

16.

“And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us ; and establish Thou the work of our hands upon us ; yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it.”—(*Psalm xc. 17.*)

ALMIGHTY GOD, Thou who hast graciously created us in Thy own image, grant that our hearts may be vividly conscious that the aim of the greatest human efforts, of the most strenuous endeavours, and most zealous labours, should be the ardent appreciation of Thy heavenly beneficence. To praise and acknowledge Thy infinite goodness, is to feel it, is to aid in banishing evil and strife from the face of the earth, and help in establishing around us, as far as our influence may reach, the reign of gentleness, the sway of kind words and kinder deeds of charity, of tender devotion, and true self-denial.

Art and science are beautiful, and the fountain of knowledge is invaluable and ever refreshing ; but far beyond all their beauties and wonders and treasures, are unpretending good works, however lowly and humble they may seem ; nor will they ever appear small and trifling, if we remember that Thou, our Almighty Ruler, art not merely a God of perfect wisdom and power, but also a God of merciful and eternal love. Cause us, we beseech Thee, our Heavenly Creator, to live so completely in obedience to Thy Divine behests, as to make each of our actions worthy of Thy service. And as the smallest drop of water reflects the radiant beams of the sun, so may every exertion of our days be privileged to reflect a ray of Thy glorious excellence! Amen.



17.

“My son, keep thy father’s commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother ; . . . when thou goest they shall lead thee, when thou sleepest they shall keep thee, and when thou awakest they shall talk with thee.”—(*Proverbs* vi. 20, 22.)

OUR Beneficent and Gracious Lord in heaven, we bow down before Thee, and implore Thy Divine aid in the daily performance of our duties towards the parents whom Thy merciful blessing has given us. We are often thoughtless and wilful, and apt to forget both the obedience and the gratitude which we owe to the loving mother, in whose cradling arms the first helpless years of our existence found a shelter, and where, nourished by the milk of her bosom, and soothed by the gentle

lullaby of her lips, we softly closed our eyes, and opened them again to sun and star, and fruit and flower. Later, she guided our feeble steps, and taught us to shape our earliest prayer to Thee, Almighty God. And to our father the thankfulness of our hearts is equally due. He supported us with the work of his hands, and watched over our home with the energy of his mind. And, later, when infancy merged into childhood, we stood in still greater need of the thought, and care, and vigilance of affectionate parents. Were they not, and are they not ever ready and eager to give advice and guidance from the rich treasury of their experience? And should we not submit cheerfully to the will and wishes of our father and mother—the most faithful and constant, the most truthful and conscientious, the most devoted and self-denying of our friends? And yet without Thy celestial help, Almighty Lord, we often falter and fail in the appreciation of our parents, we mistake the exercise of firmness for severity, a timely rebuke for undeserved harshness, well-merited blame for injustice or even cruelty, and wise counsel for irritating interference. Therefore, we implore Thee, Almighty God, to strengthen our best intentions, that we may learn to obey Thy holy Law, and fulfil with loving zeal all filial obligations, which are among the most solemn duties of our existence! Amen.



18.

“Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other : truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven.”—(*Psalm lxxxv. 10, 11.*)

ALMIGHTY LORD, our Gracious Benefactor, Thy bounty, which has vouchsafed to us so many precious gifts, has generally allowed clearness of thought and perfection of judgment to be united with depth and generosity of feeling. When the mind's eye pierces the closest veils, and tears asunder concealing shadows and deluding mists, it can hardly fail to see the path of duty and righteousness gleam brightly before its penetrating glances ; and if the heart is full of kindness and compassion, does it not thrill with sympathy when the joyful rejoice, and ache and tremble when the sorrowing weep and suffer ? To see vividly what is just and right, to feel warmly the duty of love, charity, and forgiveness, is to possess the links of the golden chain that binds mercy and truth together. But film or glittering gossamer, the illusions of daily life, may yet gather before our sight, and obscure our vision. Therefore, our Divine Lord, we implore Thee to strengthen our endeavours ; and enable us to dispel the clouds of superstition by increased knowledge, by the eager and earnest study of Thy holy word and sacred will. Help us also, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, to uproot the weeds of indifference and neglect, which, growing up rapidly and unperceived, may stifle benevolence. Cause us to remember that good deeds and labours of love

cannot be accomplished unless prompted by ardent zeal and devotion, and supported by un murmuring self-denial. Let truth and love co-exist around us; they are the pillars of the world and of mankind. Both are great treasures; the earth and all that dwell thereon may assist in teaching us truth, but the chief blessings of it and of love are showered down upon us from heaven, Almighty Lord, by Thy ever bountiful hand.

19.

“Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets; she crieth in the openings of the gates.”—(*Proverbs* i. 20, 21.)

ALMIGHTY LORD, our Heavenly Protector, in this wonderful world which Thou hast graciously created, and throughout the earth given by Thy beneficence into the keeping of man, who cultivates the land, and covers its expanse with the works of his industry, there is knowledge everywhere for the eye that makes good use of the blessings of sight, there are rich treasures of lore for all observant minds. There is no street, no house, be it cottage or palace, there is no busy market-place, no quiet fishing village, or secluded country home, that does not speak of progress and civilization steadily wrought during thousands and thousands of years. Whole fleets of ships steam and sail round our globe, freighted with the produce of all zones, and of the art, science, and skill of mankind. Roads have been cut along granite rocks, and through the rayless darkness of huge mountains, or made to extend their way over

towering pinnacles of Alpine chains. There are countless inventions bespeaking the rapid development of profound studies ; discoveries, which we owe to fearless voyagers and courageous travellers; great schools of thought and assemblies of learned men, where eloquence sways multitudes of listeners. For those who have the earnest will it is not difficult to learn in all places and at all hours of the day, and to collect leaves from the great tree of knowledge that grows and spreads everywhere. Thus we may seek instruction and find it, and the more successful we are, the more truly shall we learn to obey Thy Divine commandments, Almighty God, and to adore Thy infinite goodness, for Thou art the eternal source of all wisdom.

20.

“The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”—(*Proverbs* iv. 18.)

THE example of the high-minded and noble-hearted whose aims and actions are good and pure, zealous and ardent, is a brilliant torch to light the slippery and dangerous path of wanderers or waverers. It dispels darkness and ignorance, kindles the flame of enthusiasm, and, like the sun itself, causes a thousand dormant germs to be unfolded into brightness and beauty. It animates the sluggish and torpid, warms and encourages the indolent into active life, and becomes its own excellent reward to those who have humbly and earnestly practised virtue and righteousness. And even

when death lays its freezing hand on the exertions of diligent labourers, the mysterious doom does not end the usefulness of their career. Memory keeps a vivid and faithful record of all great services, and on earth complete, though often tardy, justice is done to those who have worked indefatigably with heart, and soul, and mind, and prayed to Thee, Almighty God, and obtained guidance and support in this chequered world, which is Thine no less than the next, where Thy Divine beneficence has promised to Thy children eternal rest and uninterrupted peace. Amen.



21.

“Let the heavens rejoice, and the earth be glad; let the sea roar and the fulness thereof: let the field be joyful, and all that is therein; then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice.”—(*Psalm xcvi. 11, 12.*)

LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, Thy beneficence has made the world beautiful at all times, but this is truly the season of gladness; both the valleys of earth and the fields of heaven are seen in their utmost radiance and loveliness. Myriads of stars illumine the night, and many distant flames shoot across the dark blue skies, marvellous and inexplicable in their flight; the moon hangs her silver veil gently over greensward and flower bed; her witchery lends mysterious beauty to land and water; the waves of the sea ripple and dance in her glamour, or rush and thunder along, and then murmur and go to rest on the shore, while the nightin-

gale sings her plaintive ditties through the tranquil hours of darkness. The lark wakes at daybreak, and then the fields and orchards and vineyards look gloriously bright with ripening promises of plenty. The ears of corn undulate like golden billows in the sunshine, the vines are heavy with clustering grapes, the bloom is on the plum, the down on the peach, and beyond fragrant gardens and fruitful fields, the woods are resplendent with the red shafts of the fir and the grey pillars of the beech, forming temples larger and grander by far than the most wonderful fanes raised to Thy honour and worship, Almighty God, by numberless and indefatigable human hands. How small are we, our Gracious Lord, in comparison with Thy works, which through all lands and throughout all centuries both mutely and audibly praise and bless and glorify Thy holy name! Grant us, we beseech Thee, our Merciful Father, the courage and the strength to praise Thee by resisting all temptations, and by fulfilling all our duties; thus permit us to rejoice; and then the voice of conscience will whisper that we have endeavoured to obey Thy eternal commandments by diffusing warmth and light, nourishment and brightness, and by striving to serve and help and cheer our brethren to the full extent of our abilities! Amen.



22.

“Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands in sleep: so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.”—(*Proverbs* vi. 10, 11.)

NEGLIGENCE, indolence, apathy, idleness, such are the creeping weeds that spread their network to strangle our powers of activity in tight and heavy meshes. When diligence and industry cease, the faculty of exertion is imperilled or destroyed, and though time may rush onward with relentless wing, our own progress is arrested: and as immobility is impossible on earth, those who do not advance must inevitably glide back. When we fold our hands in listlessness, even worldly advantages forsake us, and we are left out in the cold shadow instead of enjoying the sunshine of prosperity, and causing others to partake of it by our labours and endeavours; but much greater is the poverty of mind which is wrought by habits of sloth—the torpor which seizes the heart, and the dreary emptiness that pervades it. For Thou hast decreed, Almighty God, that like the garden which produces the brightest flowers, and the field that teems with golden harvests, the human heart and mind must be carefully cultivated, if they are not to shrink and wither and become barren instead of yielding the loveliness of glowing blossoms and the sweetness of luxuriant fruit. Yet the beauties and treasures of spring and summer around us are not everlasting, though Thy inexhaustible beneficence allows them to be constantly renewed: autumn and winter

sweep away the petals of the rose and the green leaves of the oak. Thus vanishing years cause our joys and sympathies to disappear ; but Thy bounty is infinite, Almighty God, and, provided we are earnest and zealous, Thy blessing will not forsake us, but will vouchsafe to us increased fervour of thought and depth of feeling, greater vigour of action, and warmth of devotion to promote the happiness of others.



23.

“Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.”—(*Proverbs* xx. 11.)

ERE we speak soft and pleasing words that kindle hope and joy, ere we accomplish deeds of kindness and generosity, the wish that gives utterance to sympathy, and the anxious intention of establishing good works far and wide must have been formed and have taken root in mind and heart. Yet it is the fulfilment alone that in the eyes of the world and in reality has any merit, and can be instrumental in rendering valuable service. The aim may be excellent, the aspiration most noble, the soul's desire fervent and incessant ; but unless we exert sufficient activity and energy to carry out our plans, and cause our views and principles to take visible shape, unless we act in accordance with duty and justice, and refrain from keeping our treasury of useful purposes locked up in our brain and bosom ; the opinions and convictions, the emotions and feelings which we fail to express by good and useful deeds, are

as nought ; they are indeed worse than worthless ; they will rise against us as so many accusers ; like hope deferred, they will make the heart sick, and fill it with unavailing regret and stinging self-reproaches. Our Gracious Lord, we implore Thee, to strengthen and support us that we may be upheld and blessed to make our spoken and written words, the labour of our hands and all the actions of our life worthy of the mission which Thy Divine beneficence has assigned to us ! Amen.

24.

“Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is: for he shall be as the tree that is planted by the river, and that spreadeth out its roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but its leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.”

(Jeremiah xvii. 7, 8.)

ALL that Thou hast created, Almighty God, is lovely to look upon, and nothing is more beautiful than the tree which stands in its luxuriance by the clear lake or the rushing stream. The roots have taken strong and deep hold of the earth, the branches wave and shine in the light of heaven, and are reflected in the bright mirror beneath. The pearly dews of evening and of morning fall gently upon the foliage, the fierceness of a hundred summers cannot scorch its leaves, nor drink the sap of its boughs. In the spring, it is brilliantly white with the sweet snow of early blossoms, from which myriads of bees collect honeyed treasures, to fill their wondrous

cells. Later, the weight of splendid fruit replaces the vanishing buds. Lying at the foot, or leaning against the trunk of the goodly tree, the wayfarer finds rest, and is sheltered by its trellised roof from the rays of the sun, while the birds of the air make the green dome their trysting-place, and, half hidden among the wealth of verdure, sing their joyous carols. Gold-fish and speckled trout swim undisturbed in the waters beneath, the silver swan glides over the pure crystal, from afar the wild fowl comes to bathe in the cool river, and glittering insects, with wings like sails of gauze, skim over the glossy surface. And so the man who has unwavering faith in Thy Divine goodness, Almighty Lord, who reveres Thy sacred Law, and is guided throughout life by Thy holy commandments, stands firmly among his brethren ; he is upright and strong. The sun of prosperity shines upon his head, and casts radiant beams around him ; but he is not dazzled or harmed by the glow and brightness. Far from it ; happiness unfolds all his generous and noble qualities. In youth, he is rich in fair promises, and, as years roll on, the promises ripen into fruits of excellence. Near him, the heart-sore find solace, shelter, and protection ; under his roof, the hungry are sure of food and refreshment, the poor and needy of many precious gifts gladly dispensed by him, but all vouchsafed, Almighty and Gracious Lord, by Thy inexhaustible beneficence.



25.

“O ye spirits and souls of the righteous, bless ye the Lord.”

(Song of the Three Holy Children, ver. 64.)

ALMIGHTY GOD of unbounded goodness, when we kneel in Thy holy Temple, to offer our humblest supplication, and implore Thee to bless our anxious endeavours, we may well feel encouraged and strengthened in our fervent prayer by the memory of the just and righteous that have preceded us to immortality. There is a lesson in every hour and in every deed of their existence. The pious and virtuous whom Thou hast recalled from earth and gathered to their rest, proclaimed Thy glory and beneficence in this world. They reflected truly, though feebly and with human incompleteness, Thy infinite bounty, Thy tender compassion and mercy, Thy wisdom, Thy heavenly and all-embracing love; they caused us, by the purity and beauty of gentlest example, to feel the radiance of eternal truth, the glow of unwavering faith; and if such are the precepts they taught while still on earth, how much more powerful do these lessons become when the lips and hands of those that imparted them have crumbled into dust, when we forget their infirmities, and recollect nothing but their noble qualities! We see the good and the great free from all veils and shadows; we see them by the light of memory; we honour and cherish them, and we earnestly pray to be allowed to follow in their footsteps. Amen.

26.

“ Break up your fallow land, and sow not among thorns.”

(*Jeremiah iv. 3.*)

I HAVE stood by the road-side, and looked on while the farmer laboured in the fields, and have seen him collect stones, uproot thistles and noxious weeds, and plough the ground deeply, that light, warmth, and sunshine, fresh air, bright dews, and soft showers might sink into the dark furrows, ere he confided to them the precious seeds of future harvests ; and I have felt that the human heart and mind cannot yield noble thoughts and deeds of kindness and of true devotion, unless their inmost depths be cleared from numbing apathy and from coldness, vanity and pride, envy and jealousy ; for these are baneful mushroom growths, wounding thorns, and rank weeds, that produce the poison of sin, while they stifle all excellent germs, wither all flowers of beauty, and overshadow all fruits of sweetness. O my God, Thou from whom no faults are hidden, aid me, I beseech Thee, to vanquish mine, that my soul may be humble and full of gratitude and contentment ; and give me energy and strength, that I may be thus privileged to carry out all good resolves, and transform them into numberless actions of true charity and humble service, for the benefit of those of my brethren who may stand in need of help ! Amen.

27.

“The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool ; where is the house that you build unto Me ?—(*Isaiah* lxvi. 1.)

How beautiful, Almighty God, is Thy throne in the skies above — more radiantly blue than the purest sapphires, and dazzling with the splendour of myriads of suns and planets, revolving round Thy Divine Omnipotence ! And how lovely is the earth, Thy foot-stool, carpeted with golden harvests, wreathed with the brightest roses, and festooned with the amber and purple clusters of the vine ! And yet, our Gracious Lord, the house which Thy children raise to Thy name is brighter still, and we trust that it will ever be worthy of Thy Divine countenance. In it, all knees bend unto Thee, all hands are lifted up in thankfulness to Thy beneficence, all lips adore Thee, all tongues bless Thee, all hearts beat and thrill with devotion in humblest service to Thee, all thoughts seek Thee, all wishes and aims soar on the wings of ardent prayer to Thy Divine ear, hope and faith are centred in Thee, and the world with its wonders is eclipsed by the contemplation of Thy glory and holiness. Oh may the constant worship of Thy celestial beneficence be our guide in the mazes of life, and help us to bear the trials and sorrows, and to overcome the dangers, that constantly beset our path! Amen.



28.

“Every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of his labour; it is the gift of God.”—(*Ecclesiastes* iii. 13.)

ALMIGHTY LORD of unbounded beneficence, Thou hast adorned this world with treasures of beauty and excellence, and hast decreed that man shall win them by his labour, and having made them his own by Thy gracious permission and his zealous obedience to Thy Divine behest, it is Thy will that he shall enjoy the nourishing milk and the fragrant honey, the sweetness of fig and date, the juice of the orange or pomegranate, and drink the brimming cup wreathed with bright flowers, all prizes and rewards of his unwearied industry. But can anyone hope to partake of the great banquet of the earth, if he has failed to look around him and to aid those who are stricken with poverty and suffering, and bent by the trials of old age and infirmity, or calamity and sorrow? On the tongue of the niggardly the finest wheaten bread turns to stone; on the lips of the callous, snow-white milk loses its purity; to the avaricious the mellow sweetness of fig and date becomes hardened, honey is changed to bitterness, and the most luxuriant fruit to ashes. O Lord, our God, enable us not only to work indefatigably with the strength and skill of our hands, with the power of our mind, and the words of our mouth, but give us also a heart to feel warmly and tenderly for others, and to relieve them with the best and gentlest deeds of sympathy and lovingkindness! Amen.

29.

“If thou seekest wisdom as silver, and searchest for it as for hidden treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.”—(*Proverbs* ii. 4, 5.)

WHAT mines are there either known to us, or as yet undiscovered—should they even be found to underlie every portion of the globe, and to yield palaces, nay, whole cities of silver—that can compare with the radiance of wisdom, which is Divine truth? What hidden treasures are there, be they diamonds in the depths of the land sufficiently numerous to hang on all the trees of the earth, like frost-jewels in winter, or pearls beneath the waves of the sea abundant enough to gleam in the light of day on every grass-blade like gems of dew, that can approach in value the precious knowledge which teaches us, Almighty God, the beauty and perfection of Thy heavenly laws and holy commandments? Not as a crown of brilliancy, not as mere ornaments of life, or as luxuries and enjoyments, ought we to accumulate the precepts of art and science, although, perhaps, more than any other possessions, they tend to embellish our earthly existence. Let us recollect that the pursuit of wisdom, the love of celestial truth, as applied to our daily thoughts and actions, to the time of labour and to the period of rest, is the chief aim of a useful career, of a God-fearing and God-loving heart. To fear Thee, Almighty Lord, is to fear lest we be misled into the mazes of error and sin; to love Thee, is to reverence truth, to strive after the fulfilment of duty, and zealously to practise charity and forgiveness. May we be privileged to fear and love Thee thus, our Heavenly Father!

30.

“Open thy mouth for the dumb.”—(*Proverbs xxxi. 8*)

LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, all gifts and blessings come from Thee; all earthly treasures, all worldly knowledge, and the precious lore contained in Thy holy commandments, are vouchsafed to us by Thy beneficent hand. But would not these boons cease to minister to our happiness, were we to use them selfishly, or confine and divide the enjoyment of Thy Divine benevolence merely among our loved ones and the friends attached to us by every tie of affection? Ought not all who suffer and stand in need of assistance be near to us and our sympathy? Should they not claim our best endeavours and our most patient labours? Should not their helplessness, their weary silence, their dumb appeals, plead for them even more eloquently than clear and vivid words? If they know the bitterness of their own heart, perhaps they know not the remedy that, with Thy gracious aid, Almighty God, counteracts gall and wormwood, and assuages pain, the cordial that warms and comforts the aching bosom, and strengthens the careworn mind. O Merciful Lord, give us, we beseech Thee, the will and the power to act for them, to sustain their drooping hopes, to support their waning courage, to teach them from the countless and ever-varying leaves of the book of nature, and lay before them the precious lessons contained in Holy Writ, which never changes, and is yet applicable to all human vicissitudes in every land and throughout all centuries.

31.

“Is there anything whereof it may be said, See this is new? It hath been already of old time, which was before us.”—(*Ecclesiastes* i. 10.)

IN the countless worlds, which are Thy handiwork, Almighty God, and the creations of Thy infinite beneficence, immobility is not possible. Men of science and deep research tell us how myriads of planets pursue their unchecked course around numberless and dazzling suns; they have measured the journeys of the stars in heaven; they have calculated how far and how fast moons, and comets, and meteors travel along the aerial paths of the skies. And those who watch and try to understand only the ways and conditions of this earth, see that they are ruled by laws of unceasing change, which are laws of progress. We are aware that no transformation occurs, be it early or late, slow or rapid, gradual or sudden, be it the labour of ages or the work of minutes, without leaving deep and indelible lessons behind. These treasures of knowledge, handed down to us from by-gone centuries, are a most precious inheritance. The lore accumulated by sages and philosophers, the learning enshrined in the most ancient scrolls, the poetry and history of thousands of years, and, above all, the wisdom that shines in the inspired pages of the Book of Books, should be studied by us earnestly and zealously, with heart, and mind, and soul. Every day is closely linked to that which came before, and in its turn influences the chain of succeeding days. Thus the present is bound to the past and to the future, and by

blending the precepts of former eras with the experience of our own time, the conviction arises that, although nothing is new, yet nothing loses its vitality, freshness, or beauty, and that from the earlier germs much may be developed into still greater luxuriance and perfection. Enable us, we beseech Thee, our Gracious Lord, to take a share, however humble, in all good works of improvement! The will of one may be feeble, and the power of each but small, yet permit even the youngest and lowliest among us to add a bud or a leaflet to the garlands of loveliness which surround the altars of Thy glory! Amen



SEPTEMBER.

I.

“All things are full of labour, man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing.”—(*Ecclesiastes* i. 8.)

ALMIGHTY LORD, although Thy beneficence to us is infinite and inexhaustible, we speak in all humility and perfect truth of our limited faculties; for we know and are often painfully aware that the accomplishment of our labour, be it in art or science, in the acquirement of knowledge and in the diffusion of it, or in the less shining paths of industry, falls lamentably short of that which is expected from us, and still more so of our own aim and ideal of perfection. We should, indeed, strive to banish from the depths of our mind and from the shallows of our external life, the glittering illusions of vanity, the confusing and blinding veils of conceit, that we may not float along the stream of time with the

inflated sails of vain-glory and self-sufficiency. Yet help and strengthen us, we implore Thee, our Gracious Lord, that we may never forget how lavishly Thy bounty has endowed us with wonderful powers and gifts, and with the marvellous blessings of eye, and ear, and speech, in order that these, if wisely applied, may lead us to earnest study, to the performance of good works, and the acquirement of knowledge, and may cause us to impart to others the best treasures of that lore which is more precious than rubies. The face of nature beams with such loveliness, it has attractions so innumerable in every feature, beauties so radiant in every aspect, mysteries so profound and inscrutable, both in its smiles and frowns, that the whole world, in the skies above, on the earth beneath, and in the surrounding waters, offers a boundless and seemingly ever-increasing expanse for study. Support us, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we may not flinch from indefatigable exertions and zealous endeavours ; for labour is the condition of a righteous and happy life ; and, surely, we cannot know the measure of our own endowments and the good of which we are capable, unless our activity is uninterrupted, our energy constant, and our application intense. For such efforts we require time, health, vigour, freedom from care, and, like all other blessings, these are gifts of Thy Divine and merciful hand.



2.

“The stork in the heaven knows her appointed times, and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow.”—(*Jeremiah* viii. 7.)

ALMIGHTY LORD of the whole universe, we look around us and find admirable lessons in everything which Thy Divine goodness has created. The entire world tells of Thy infinite wisdom and beneficence. There is no bird in the blue fields of air, obeying the strange and mysterious dictates of instinct, which does not teach immutable laws and suggest excellent precepts and rules of conduct. When winter has passed away, and spring comes with generous gifts, and spreads out over our meadows those bright carpets, all woven with silver daisies and golden anemones, decks the glossy paths of wood and forest with the sweet blooms of the violet and the pearly bells of the lily, and with soft finger opens the snowy and crimson blossoms of the hawthorn, and embroiders with innumerable wild roses the leafy tapestry of the hedge-row; then, when the sky is clear and the air balmy, the birds come from afar to our northern climes. The silken swallows are, perhaps, the first to arrive. They travel not alone, or one by one, or in couples, but whole legions land on our coast and seek our houses, and build dwellings for themselves and their little ones near our windows, under our eaves, in any nook or corner that promises warmth and safety. The wild doves also fly to our shores on swift and unerring wings; but they are more shy of cities and villages; they seek the green twilight of summer

woods, or the shelter of grand old forests, where the waving branches rock the cradles of their young, and gentle breezes sing to them their ever-varying lullabies. The storks shun our English isle, but are, in the early part of the year, seen alighting among the homesteads of Holland and in the valleys of Germany, and, still further north, on the house-tops of Scandinavian towns, where, among leafless twigs and branches, the young storks are born on the highest chimneys. But when winter approaches, swallow, turtle, and stork depart for warmer regions, and return to the banks of the Nile, where, screened by reeds and rushes, live the white ibis and the red flamingo, and the crocodile basks on the sandy fringe of the mighty river. If the birds of the air thus know the signs of heaven and obey the seasons, avoiding alike the scorching African heat and the northern snows and icicles, should we, whom Thou, Almighty God and Benefactor, hast endowed with reason and judgment, not study nature, Thy marvelously beautiful work, and adapt ourselves and our needs to the land in which Thou hast placed us? Should we not fear and shun that which we may easily know to be hurtful, and diligently search after those benefits and advantages which Thy bounty has allowed to gleam within reach of all who will strive and work to obtain them? The birds are not solitary when they span oceans, and wing their flight over continents; so let us human beings refrain from egotism, when we seek comfort and prosperity, joy and happiness. Strengthen us in our earnest resolves, Almighty Lord, we implore Thee; allow us to share with others the blessings which Thy unbounded goodness has showered down

upon our path, and to let our brethren partake of the sun-light that cheers, of the fire that warms, of the bread that nourishes us, and of the water that quenches our thirst. Yet not of these alone, but also of the fruit that refreshes our lips, of the honey that sweetens our cup, of the flowers that delight the eye, may our fellow-pilgrims enjoy their share ; and, above all, enable them to possess, as we do, the greatest and highest of treasures—faith in Thee, our Heavenly Father, and in Thy tender mercy and unfailing forgiveness ! Amen.



3.

“There the weary are at rest, there the prisoners rest together, they hear not the voice of the oppressor, the small and the great are there, and the servant is free from his master.”—(*Job* iii. 17-19.)

O GOD, our Almighty and All-merciful Creator and Preserver, Thou, who hast given us life and hast decreed that it shall cease after a short pilgrimage, strengthen us in heart and mind, we implore Thee, that we may not cling too fondly to the enchantments of this world, nor shrink too painfully from the thought of death, and be too sadly appalled by the mysterious darkness of the tomb. It is Thy Divine hand, that has implanted in us the love of the great boon of life, and whenever Thou recallest the gift, it is because we can no longer use it for our own happiness and that of others, nor for Thy Divine glory. Cause us, therefore, we beseech Thee, Almighty Lord, to remember, even

amidst a career of earnest labour and real usefulness, that when we leave our earthly home with its duties and delights, the former are generally accomplished, and the latter have usually vanished, and that we may lay down this fleeting existence to find repose after toil, and tranquillity after din and noise, to exchange strife and struggle for the holiness of peace, and exhausting labour for uninterrupted rest. Let us feel, our Heavenly Father, that on the brink of the grave the keenest rivalries must end, and the most bitter enmities be assuaged, that there the shafts of envy and malice fall to the ground, and all the fires of jealousy are quenched. Then the body will no longer be tortured, nor the soul humiliated, tyranny and slavery will disappear, and the spirit which Thou hast given us, Almighty Lord, freed from its earthly trammels, will return to Thee. Amen.

4.

“Is not My word like a fire, saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?”—(*Jeremiah* xxiii. 29.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, everything which Thou hast ordained and allowed to exist, has its great uses. Fire is good and invaluable, nay, indispensable for our needs and comforts, but when unfettered and unguarded it is appalling and devastating, and leaves nothing behind but ruins and ashes. It is welcome and precious when, burning brightly on the hearth, it dispels the gloom of winter, the sharp cold, or the frost that numbs and kills, when it changes the rough ore into copper or iron, silver or gold, when it glows in the

forge and in mighty furnaces near the bleak and barren moor, when it cheers the hospital and the sick-room, the cottage and the palace. But it has destroyed temples and whole cities, its flames have consumed the golden sheaves of the harvest field, devoured the purple grapes of the vineyard and the mighty trees of the forest, laying waste and bare the loveliest and most luxuriant valleys of the earth. And the hammer wielded by the strong hand of man or the still more powerful arm of machinery cleaves granite and adamant. Yet what are all the powers and forces of nature, Almighty God, compared with Thy omnipotence, which has created them, and sways them by Thy mere will and word? Thy breath destroys, as it calls into life. It shatters the proud vessel and causes it to sink with all its freight into the watery abyss beneath; it unchains the lightning which descends from heaven to strike the oak, and with it, whole herds and flocks that sought refuge under its branches; it wakes the tornado and the cyclone which uproot trees and unroof houses, and demolish all the works of industry. At the bidding of Thy voice, O King of Kings and Ruler of the elements, the waves rise mountain-high, the fiery craters pour forth floods of hot lava, the earth rocks and opens and engulfs thousands of human beings. We see or know it, and quail and shudder, and stand in awe, not comprehending the purport of these dreadful visitations. We feel how weak and helpless we are, but if Thy terrible and unbounded power at times overwhelms us with fear and trembling, Thy Divine goodness, Almighty God, surrounds us always, and ever fills us with hope and faith, and unshaken reliance upon Thy compassion and Thy mercy!

5.

“To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.”—(*Ecclesiastes* iii. 1.)

ALL seasons which Thy beneficent wisdom, Almighty God, has caused to revolve round the year, bring us fresh joys, and as we appreciate them more truly, the sounds and sights of beauty which they disclose to eye and ear, seem more numerous and more admirable. When the earth throws off the ermine of its winter garment, the awakening loveliness of spring comes forth to enamel its green robes with silver snow-drops and with the amber brightness of the early crocus, while blue violets, closely veiled and almost hidden, scent the air with their fragrant breath, and all the trees put on the first tender leaflets of their new foliage. Then comes summer, radiant with sunshine, crowned with roses, musical with the song of birds, and rich with promises of plenty in corn-field, vineyard, and orchard. Gradually the landscape changes ; autumn appears, and with it the harvest feast. How beautiful are the golden sheaves of grain, the gleaming clusters of the grape, and the luxuriant treasures of fruit, which bend the parent tree to the ground ! When the barns and granaries, the wine and oil presses, are filled, and the land has yielded its gifts and rewards to the industry of man, when the poor have gleaned, and the birds of the air have had their share of the great banquet ; then the shrill winds begin to blow, the flowers vanish, and the trees shiver, bereft of their leaves. Ere long the snow falls heavily, and the frost

binds the flowing waters with chains of ice. But every division of time brings to the diligent labourer its duties and pleasures, demands earnest endeavours, and yields ample recompense. The most admirable rules and laws pervade the whole world, which Thy beneficence has created, our Gracious Lord, and which Thy Divine mercy protects. There is a lesson in every floweret that blooms, in every apple that ripens, in every spider that spins her web, in every bee that travels to collect sweets, and returns home to distil honey. There are warnings to be studied at every hour and minute of the day ; and, however short the period of life, however uneventful the course of our existence, however few our opportunities, if we look, and listen, and observe, we shall find much work for active hands, and also the fitting time and season to achieve it. Almighty Lord, we implore Thy heavenly blessing upon our earnest efforts and exertions, that they may be fruitful of good deeds, and worthy of Thy Divine mercy! Amen.

6.

“So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain ; it taketh away the life of those who thirst for it.”—(*Proverbs* i. 19.)

LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, Thou who art our Merciful Protector, guard us, we beseech Thee, from the entanglements of folly ; and what folly can be greater and more pernicious than that of covetousness? It destroys even that external comfort and pleasure which the blessings of Thy Divine beneficence, if enjoyed in innocence and

moderation, ought to yield, and which they are sure to afford to the thankful and contented spirit. The mind which is always longing for new advantages, thirsting for new benefits, and hungering for additional boons, must be perpetually restless ; it cannot know the tranquillity of satisfaction, the peaceful feeling of gratitude. Such constant yearning after the unattainable must be productive both of painful excitement and of numbing weariness. It would be quite as impossible to make all the so-called gifts of fortune our own, as to derive any real delight from their possession, if we could succeed in obtaining them. Thou hast decreed, Almighty God, that the most precious of treasures can be neither bought nor sold. The affection of dearly cherished brothers and sisters, or of sons and daughters, nearer and dearer still, and held more closely and fondly to our heart of hearts ; health for diligent labour, balmy sleep, bright youth, iron strength, talent, fame, mirth and happiness, and devoted friends to share with us all blessings—these are infinitely more valuable than all the gold of the earth and all the gems of the sea. But greater than the folly is the sinfulness of greed. It diverts our best thoughts, our energy and activity, from all useful exertions ; draws them away from the higher aims and nobler aspirations of our existence, consumes our whole life, and leaves neither time nor space for good and zealous deeds. The folly and sin of covetousness lead to great dangers ; they imperil truth, fidelity, uprightness, and cut us off from a career of earnest piety. Almighty Lord, we anxiously invoke Thy aid, that we may never be dazzled by the splendours of this world, nor misled into error by greed and avarice ; but that,

while prizing wealth for the good service it may enable us to perform, we may not be induced to look upon it as the pre-eminently desirable object of our existence !

7.

“The sleep of a labouring man is sweet.”—(*Ecclesiastes* v. 12.)

OUR Heavenly Father, Thou hast decreed in Thy infinite wisdom and beneficence, that all human beings who have received the precious boon of life shall make zealous use of it, by working earnestly and indefatigably, and in accordance with the means and powers which Thy Divine goodness has placed at their disposal. Those whom health and strength have privileged to obey Thy behest are indeed happy, and, after conscientious work, their pillow is soft, and their slumbers are peaceful. Bodily fatigue may have caused their limbs to ache, or the more trying exertions of the mind have, perhaps, occasioned, not mere weariness, but depression ; the heart may feel sad and sore, yet when it has shown great courage, and has performed, without flinching, the most arduous labours of love ; when the words of the mouth have proved words of kindness, of solace, and of gentle counsel : then the sleep that comes at the end of the day brings perfect rest, which makes lassitude, care, fear, and anxiety, vanish during the night, and causes the following morning to dawn with the glow of hope, the light of confidence, the warmth of zeal and energy, and with a prayerful invocation to

Thee, Almighty God, for that celestial aid, which alone enables us to transform our anxious wishes into good and useful deeds.

8.

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.”—(*Proverbs* i. 7.)

THOU, Almighty God, art the Divine Donor of all blessings, the Beneficent Creator of the whole universe with its incomprehensible wonders and enchanting beauties. How can we, Thy children, whom Thou hast so mercifully endowed with reason and feeling, be said to fear Thee? We may fear to displease Thee, and to be deemed weak and vacillating in Thy unerring sight; we may hesitate to lay bare our crooked and tortuous ways to Thy all-seeing eye, and be unwilling to appear cold and callous in spite of the warm sunshine of Thy benevolence, or hard and harsh, severe and unbending, ungrateful and unjust in our bearing towards the world; and we may thus feel utterly unworthy of the place which Thy bounty has assigned to us upon earth. It is this fear which teaches us to look around for lessons in all Thy glorious world, in sun and moon and stars that are Thy handiwork, in every shower, in every rainbow and dewdrop, in every flower that blooms and wafts its incense, in every bird that flies and sings its adoring hymn to Thee. But not alone in the manifestations of nature, but in the immutable laws and commandments of Holy Writ, in every thought that fills and raises the mind, in every emotion that thrills

the heart—in all these Thy greatness and beneficence are revealed. To love Thee, Almighty Lord, is to possess the best knowledge, is to worship all that is good and sacred, and to strive humbly, yet earnestly, to live in faithful obedience to Thy Divine behests.

9.

“Like a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him.”—(*Psalm* ciii. 13.)

O LORD, how inexhaustible is the indulgence of the loving father whom Thy Divine goodness has placed at our side as our ever-watchful guardian! How great, alas! is the weakness that stands in need of his gentlest and most encouraging words, of his soothing and strengthening help! Our promises of amendment are often broken, our resolves of improvement are rarely carried out, our pledges of self-reform remain unredeemed in our eyes and those of others; we hope to cover ourselves with honour and glory, and we cover ourselves with shame and confusion; failure meets us where we had expected success; when disappointed we cannot accuse adverse circumstances, nor unfriendly counsels and want of helpful sympathy, but must blame ourselves. Perhaps we were dilatory, undecided, and indolent at times, when the combined efforts of energy and vigilance were required to win the object of our ambition. Then the world may frown, or sneer, or condemn us; but a kind and devoted father is unceasing in

his pity, which takes every form ; it seems to shield us from the missiles of hatred, of envy, and uncharitableness. Yet the power of our father on earth is limited, and his span of life is short, but Thy power, our Gracious Lord, is omnipotence, and Thou art the Eternal. Forsake us not in our need, when we fail and falter, when shadows dim our view, when clouds encompass our steps, when storms break overhead and threaten to engulf us in ruin ! We are feeble and erring, not wilfully wicked, nor deaf to the voice of duty and righteousness, which is Thy heavenly voice ! Oh pity and save us, Almighty God !



10.

“Give not sleep to thy eyes, nor slumber to thy eyelids.”—(*Proverbs* vi. 4.)

WHILE there is work to be done, strengthen me, my Heavenly Father, that I may endeavour to labour without allowing weariness or apathy to overcome my power of exertion ! I am resolved to employ all the means which Thy beneficence has placed at my disposal, in the faithful accomplishment of duty, yet I feel my weakness, Almighty God. Aid and support me, I implore Thee, that self-indulgence may not crave for rest while I can fulfil any obligation, and while I may hope to do good service ! Give me clearness of sight, I beseech Thee, O Gracious Lord, and strength of mind, and earnestness of will, that I may look around me, and see and know what is needed and what is right, and strive incessantly with heart and soul, and thought

and word, and untiring hands, to worship Thee, my Gracious Benefactor, by obeying Thy commandments and fulfilling every duty of life !



11.

“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.”—(*Ecclesiastes* xii. 1.)

To remember Thee, Almighty God, in the time of unclouded sunshine, of youth and health, of mirth and happiness, is not merely to bow down before Thee at early morn and again when the day closes, with ardent thanksgivings for the treasures of Thy Divine grace, and with fervid supplications for a continuance of Thy blessings. It is, to feel that the freshness and vigour of youth were given to us by Thy sacred will, not only that we might revel in the spring of life with its joys and pleasures, its bright hopes and golden promises, but also for great and wise purposes, for study and diligent labour, for devoted service, for works of charity, efforts of pardon and deeds of self-denial, for the exercise of justice tempered by indulgence, and for gentle sympathy with our brethren, be they rich or poor, beaming with felicity or tear-stained and suffering. And if we thus take our share of dutiful activity in the toil of this world, while we rejoice in the bloom of health, and while youth glows within us, kindling all its fires of generous enthusiasm in heart and mind, and lending wings to all thoughts and aims, then, oh then, we need

not fear the evil days of infirmity and old age, for they will not be embittered by self-reproaches, nor tortured by pangs of remorse, but will be brightened and cheered by the good actions which Thy Divine support, Almighty Lord, may have enabled us to accomplish.

12.

“Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.”—(*Proverbs* xxvii. 1.)

ALMIGHTY Father in heaven, we bow down before Thy Divine beneficence, and implore Thee to vouchsafe to us from the realms of help, the strength, the energy, the firmness, and perseverance needed to fulfil all duties as they shape themselves around us, so that we may never be led to defer—not even for one short hour—the accomplishment of an obligation, the performance of a promise or vow made to others or to ourselves. It is true that Thou hast mercifully permitted bright and buoyant hope to pervade the existence of Thy children. Without it we could not live, without it our days would indeed be dull and dreary, mere gloomy prisons bounded by iron walls. The least imaginative among us live much more in the future than in the present, and look wistfully towards the morrowing day. We cannot perhaps prevent our thoughts, yearnings, and wishes from travelling constantly forward and onward, but we can surely govern our actions. Aid us to do so, Almighty Lord, we beseech Thee! Cause us to be reminded from dawn until twilight, and far into

the night, that we cannot boast of anything as our own, yet that every flying moment during which Thy infinite beneficence shields and supports us, may become, by the work of our hands, or the words of our lips, a gleaming pearl, a precious gem, a flower of sweetness, not only to enrich and adorn our earthly career, however short that may be, but to retain its value, or to linger like fragrance in the air, long after we shall have been called away by Thy sacred will.

13.

“O all ye that worship the Lord, bless the God of gods.”
(*Song of the Three Holy Children*, ver. 68.)

THERE is not one among us of all that have learnt to adore Thee, Almighty God, from the youngest child at its mother's knee to the oldest man tottering towards the grave, that does not owe to Thy unceasing goodness all the treasures, enjoyments, and mercies of life. Vouchsafe to us, we implore Thee, our Heavenly Benefactor, another blessing in addition to those which Thou hast showered down upon our path, by making us humbly yet ardently thankful, by causing us to feel that every day of our existence is a gift of Thy bounty, that every hour is a precious boon, and should be valued and made to yield the best service. Thou sendest mirth and gladness, Thou sendest also anxiety, sickness, and sorrow; bodily suffering, more than any other trial, teaches even the impatient spirit a prayerful and anxious reliance upon Thee; and when anguish rends

the heart, the torch of faith shines more brightly, and its flame rises toward heaven, where alone there is consolation for the mourner. Almighty Lord, Thy arm lifts us up when we fall, supports us when we falter, and shields us from snares and perils innumerable. We cannot cross the ocean without feeling that we owe our preservation to Thee ; at home and abroad, on sea and on land, Thou art our guide and our pilot ; among the snow and ice and dreariness of polar regions, among the fever and poisonous marshes of torrid lands, Thou guardest us. We bless Thee with the lisping tongue of infancy ; we bless Thee also in the vigour of our life, and with the faint and trembling voice of old age.



14.

“The fear of the Lord is to hate evil ; pride and arrogance, and the evil way, and the froward mouth do I hate.”—(*Proverbs* viii. 13.)

TEACH us, Almighty Lord, we implore Thee, to act in accordance with Thy Divine behests, zealously to obey Thy commandments, and to love and serve our brethren with heart and soul ; yet enable us, not merely to shun evil, but to hate it, and while abhorring every branch and fruit of the poisonous growth, let us apply the axe to the root of the upas tree of sin, wherever we find it, that with Thy heavenly aid it may be destroyed and disappear from among us. Vanity and pride, which seem mere varieties of the same senseless folly, are dangerous evils, the one by its inordinate yearning to shine and to dazzle at the expense of every considera-

tion but self; the other, by its cold, haughty, and insolent contempt for all things and all men, with the exception of self. Passion and violence are wasting fires, rancour is a cankering sore, malice a hissing serpent, envy a gnawing worm, falsehood a bane, treachery the most insidious venom, arrogance a coarse and wounding missile, slander a weapon base and double-edged; and all are the produce or the offshoot of the fatal tree of evil, or born and nurtured under its wide-spreading boughs. But we beseech Thee, Almighty God, to let the hatred of wrong be the only hatred in our heart of hearts; then we shall know and love all that is good and pure, beautiful and holy, and bow down before Thee, strengthened in every resolve for the zealous fulfilment of duty.



15.

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”—(*Psalm cxi. 10.*)

THE fear of falling into sin and its entanglements is awakened by the deep love of Thy holiness, Almighty God, and strengthened by the dread of disobeying Thy sacred commandments. These inborn feelings give purity of heart and serenity of mind; and when heart and mind are free and clear, and not weighed down by self-reproach, or fettered by remorse, the eye looks up thankfully to heaven, and gazes around upon the wonders and beauties of creation; the winged thought soars unrestrained, the bosom thrills with

noble aims and aspires to great deeds, the tongue becomes eloquent with judicious counsel, and the hands labour incessantly, doing active service, and abounding in works of benevolence and charity. A succession of days replete with noble thoughts, with gentle advice kindly administered, with every good impulse, and with many generous actions, is not merely the beginning of wisdom, but is wisdom itself. Yet not without Thy beneficent help, Almighty God, can we hope to lead so bright a life—a life that shall bring sunshine and gladness to those among whom Thy Divine Providence has placed us. To carry out Thy sacred laws and our anxious wishes, we need eager watchfulness and strict self-control, untiring perseverance and iron firmness. Oh may Thy bountiful hand endow us with these needful and priceless qualities! Amen.

16.

“O Israel, bless ye the Lord.”—(*Song of the Three Holy Children*, ver. 61.)

IF all mankind bow down before Thee, Almighty God, in adoration of Thy infinite beneficence, shall not Israel bend the knee in Thy Temples, and worship Thee for Thy great mercies with feelings of unwavering and intense gratitude? Is not the history of our people marked with countless tokens of Thy heavenly favour? The tenderness of Thy Divine love and compassion embraces all Thy children equally; Thy pity and Thy goodness extend to all whom Thou hast created; but Thou didst

rescue our forefathers from the cruelty of the Egyptian Pharaoh, from death in the waves of the Red Sea, and from famine in the desert, sustaining them by celestial manna till they reached the land of promise. On Mount Sinai, Thy eternally beautiful commandments were vouchsafed to our ancestors, and, through them, to the other nations of the earth, wherever civilization extends. No code of laws can ever efface or supersede that inscribed on tables of stone thousands of years ago. Wherever the light of Thy holy revelation shines, Thy sacred behests are reverently obeyed; the Book of Books, inspired by Thy Divine wisdom, Almighty God, is read and taken to heart in every land; the Psalms, which were prompted by the profound delight, or wrung from the deep agony of the minstrel king, sound and echo through all centuries to calm the aching breast and suffering mind, to soothe all mourners in their affliction, to dispel doubts and shadows, and fill the soul with the radiance of hope and faith, or to make joy and gladness pour forth their gratitude, and lay the blissful expression of human happiness at the foot of Thy throne. Cause us, O Gracious Lord, to keep the history of our people in vivid remembrance; let each of us remain faithful to the destiny of our nation, and help to proclaim, far and wide, that Thy beneficence is as unbounded as Thy greatness, that Thou art the King of Kings, the only God of heaven and earth!



17.

“They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; they have ears, but they hear not; . . . they have hands, but they handle not; feet, but they walk not.”—(*Psalms* cxv. 5, 7.)

SINCE Thy glorious revelation has been vouchsafed to us, Almighty Lord, we no longer pay homage to false gods wrought out of clay or metal; yet, in our weakness and folly, we still worship idols fashioned by ourselves; we are still attracted to altars of mere worldly pomp and glitter, that seem placed on the road to happiness, and are surrounded by empty show and pageant; we are swayed by vanity and pride, by undue ambition and mere love of power—idols incapable of guiding to truth, knowledge, and wisdom, but misleading us into fearful errors. These divinities of our own making may appear to carry us rapidly to honour and fame; but can we follow their dictates and yet hope for real progress and improvement, or retain the serenity of mind and heart that belong to us by Thy grace, Almighty God, when we have laboured humbly and zealously in the vineyard of duty? Guard us, support us, strengthen us, our Heavenly Father; make us clear-sighted, we implore Thee, that we may never be ruled and deluded by our faults, and become their servants and their slaves. Keep us, we beseech Thee, at the foot-stool of Thy throne, and permit us to accomplish works of love and usefulness, and to praise Thy holy name with every word of our lips and every action of our earthly existence! Amen.

18.

“Hatred stirreth up strife, but love covereth all sins.”—(*Proverbs* x. 12.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, Thou, who hast formed man in accordance with the most perfect and admirable wisdom, hast beneficently decreed that numerous varieties of character and disposition shall exist, but also that many affinities, gifts, and qualities, shall be held in common by all Thy children ; for Thou art a Bountiful and Gracious Father. The resemblance among men can never be complete ; nor does it seem requisite that it should be so. Love seeks and sees only kind and gentle feelings, zeal and devotion, generosity and charity, and finds that these qualities spread the greatest charm among our fellow-beings ; while hatred searches for every weakness and shortcoming, for faults and blemishes, offences and stains, and not only discovers them and places them in the most glaring light, but, by perversion and the force of ill-will, unconsciously exaggerates all wrongs, and is easily misled into the belief that they exist where they are not. Thus malice fans the flame of enmity, anger, and all evil passions ; while love, which is sympathy, develops kindness, and causes minor differences to disappear, many errors of judgment, or even of word and deed, to become harmless, and shadows that arise between neighbours to vanish, quickly chased away by the warm breath of returning cordiality. Almighty Lord, we implore Thee to let our heart of hearts be pervaded by the spirit of love, so that we may

willingly recognise around us all that is good, and great, and noble, and delight in its radiance, while, far from ignoring the mists of error, we may be privileged to assist in dispersing them by the glowing energy of zeal!



19.

“ Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let Thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth.”—(*Ecclesiastes* xi. 9.)

ALMIGHTY and Beneficent God, Thou hast scattered beauty and sweetness over the whole globe, Thou hast filled the heavens with light and splendour, but Thy most precious gifts have been vouchsafed to the early hours of day, to the birth of spring, to youth and its brightness. How enchanting is the balmy breath of dawn when it dispels the gloom and the cold, the perplexing darkness, the dangers, and the terrors of mysterious night! Earth and water and the sky above appear to gleam with the radiance of countless roses; jewels of dew hang upon every herb and blade of grass, and sparkle in every flower-cup. The birds come out of their leafy homes and sing joyous carols, and seem to unite with the awakening voices of Thy children, our Gracious Lord, to carry hymns of ardent gratitude to the foot of Thy throne. And how lovely is spring, when the snow mantles of winter vanish, when the hard ice of lake and stream is dissolved, and the waters ripple and dance in the sunshine, and laugh with glee at their release from torpor; when meadows and gardens, woods

and hedge-rows, vie with each other in freshness and fragrance ; when the flowers of the crimson and snow-white hawthorn send forth their perfume on the wings of the travelling breeze, and hidden violets scent the soft, clear air ; when the pale gold of the primrose and the shining silver of the daisy embroider the green carpets of the valley and the hill-side, and the orchard glistens and blushes with myriads of sweet promises of plenty ! Yet how much more radiant than the dew-bright morning, with its chorus of bird minstrels, is the morning of life ! How much richer in goodly promises than the blossoming orchard is youth with its blessings of health, and unwearied strength, and clearness of mind, over which no shadows of the past, no fears for the future, have ever cast their veils — youth, with its vivid dreams and glowing visions, buoyant hopes and glad realities of happiness ! We pray to Thee, Almighty Lord, with all the fervour of deep thankfulness, that none of these treasures may be wasted by the young around us, but that Thy heavenly aid may support and enlighten them to make the wisest and noblest use of the precious favours of Thy beneficence, and to sow in the golden sunshine of youth the best seeds for a career of uprightness, benevolence, and unwavering devotion ! Amen.



20.

“Where no counsel is, the people fall ; but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.”—(*Proverbs* xi. 14.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, Thou hast wisely ordained that conceit, which proudly and madly looks upon itself as the concentration and fulness of all excellence, shall be replete with peril to the mind that harbours so baneful a fault, so dangerous an enemy. It vitiates the understanding, while it darkens and injures the present and the future, whether the conceited be little children already vain of their quickness and success, or youths and maidens proud of brilliant abilities and easy triumphs, or men and women regarding their experience as unrivalled and most precious, or scholars who deem book-knowledge superior to every other lore, or the ignorant who think that sound sense and natural clearness of judgment outshine all acquirements of education. Almighty Lord, we implore Thee to strengthen us, that the chilling and confusing shadows of conceit may not fall upon the brightness of our thoughts or the warmth of our feelings. Cause us, we beseech Thee, our Gracious Lord, to remember vividly that there is no human being who may not teach or advise us by the force of words or deeds, by examples, just or sinful, examples to be followed or shunned ! All can guide and reprove us, though not in a similar way nor in the same degree, yet all effectually and usefully, if we look and observe, compare, listen, and obey. To hearken to all voices patiently, to lend an attentive ear to intelligent counsel, must develop our

powers of thought, extend our experience, deepen and enlarge our sympathies, and, with Thy Divine blessing, cause us to become both better and wiser. Gracious and All-merciful Lord, we anxiously pray that, when we are surrounded by true and devoted friends, humility may never forsake us, but enable us to turn to them for suggestion in the hour of difficulty, and for sincere advice in times of doubt !



21.

“There is that scattereth and yet increaseth ; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.”

(*Proverbs xi. 24.*)

THOU, Almighty God, hast showered down upon this earth and our own path inexhaustible treasures of beauty and beneficence ; yet Thy mysterious decrees have not bestowed them in equal portions among all Thy children. Some have health and strength, and can work with untiring limbs to win a competence ; others possess gifts great and rare. With their pen, or pencil, or chisel, they earn fame and prosperity, enjoyment and happiness ; they excel in song, or they glow with poetical genius, or the brilliancy of their intellect and the force of their character combine to influence the destinies of mankind, and they rise to eminence and renown. But how many, alas ! from lack of talent or vigour, energy or health, fall into painful struggles, dreary want, and hopeless poverty ! Not all can possess great and dazzling powers, nor are the more gifted able to bestow

upon others a share of such abilities and acquirements as may have been graciously vouchsafed to them ; but there is much that they can give, not only food and fuel, raiment and shelter, warmth and light, but also gentle pity, tender compassion, depth of sympathy, soothing and encouraging words, faithful, not fitful friendship, and devoted and unfailing service. The more they thus give, the more they will possess, for they will gain well-wishers to help them in all good works ; they may gain gratitude and attachment ; their yearnings and aspirations will become more intense and ardent, yet purer and more free from the alloy of selfishness, their aims more steadfast and resolute, higher and nobler, and their faith stronger ; for they will know and feel that they are endeavouring to obey Thy Divine commandments. Almighty God, we beseech Thee, help all zealous workers, that they may never be tempted to yield themselves up to egotism, which narrows, hardens, and impoverishes heart and mind and life, but that they may always be privileged to labour in Thy vineyard, and to surround Thy altars with the zealous works of their hands !

22.

“In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.”—(*Ecclesiastes* xi. 6.)

ALMIGHTY Lord, Thy bounty has showered down upon me innumerable gifts and blessings. What can I do to prove that I am not an unworthy recipient

of Thy treasures, not unworthy to stand in Thy presence, and to live in the sunshine of Thy Divine countenance? Strengthen me, O Merciful God, that I may strive, by all the means with which Thy heavenly grace has endowed me, to obey Thy holy commandments, and accomplish Thy sacred will. I am weak, ignorant, and inexperienced; but if I read by the light of Thy revelation, if I study with unwearied zeal, if I listen to the advice of sincere friends, and hearken to reproof, I may hope to gain the knowledge that dispels many clouds and shadows; and then my endeavours shall be unremitting to fulfil the duties that lie around me, and to do good service from the earliest to the latest hour of the day. My activity shall be indefatigable; I will try to work with my mind, my heart, and my hands; and if I thus labour incessantly with unflagging energy, and if, though not heedless of failure, I am not discouraged or cast down by disappointment, my efforts will not altogether be futile; and then, surely, my existence will not be useless and worthless; some of my attempts will succeed, and though among the seeds I scatter over the garden of life in which Thy beneficence has placed me, thousands may be lost and leave no trace, yet some will grow, and thrive, and bloom, and bear goodly fruit. Amen.

23.

“He that is void of wisdom despiseth his neighbour, but a man of understanding holdeth his peace.”—(*Proverbs xi. 12.*)

OUR Beneficent and Merciful Creator, whose Divine grace has formed all mankind in accordance with eternal wisdom, justice, and tenderness, Thou hast bestowed the most precious gifts of Thy bounty upon all Thy children. That which we value most truly, which no gold can buy, and no effort on our part can win, has been vouchsafed by Thee alike to rich and poor, to the lowly and the great, to the humble and the powerful. The eye, which allows us to see and to reflect the beauties and the wonders of the universe; the ear, that is open to the enchanting harmonies of nature, that listens to the music of winds, and waves, and streams, to the jubilant song of birds, and, better still, to the voices of our beloved; the faculty of speech, which enables us to advise and reprove, to praise and encourage, soothe and comfort, and to give utterance to every lesson of forbearance and forgiveness; the strength and swiftness of the limbs that minister to duty and pleasure; the hands with which we labour; the blessings of health and vigour; the heart which thrills with love, and joy, and happiness: all these are priceless boons, which our brethren hold in common with us. Why should we, how could we, despise our neighbours, who are, like ourselves, the children of our Heavenly Father? Thy inscrutable will, Almighty God, has

established varieties of position and degrees of prosperity, success, talent, and knowledge; ye these are not essential differences, they are but minor shades. If those around us suffer, we must strive to alleviate their pain; if they weep, we must endeavour to dry their tears; if they require help, we must give it; and if they are really dear to us, their anguish becomes ours. There is no room for contempt in our existence; in the history of every career we find a lesson, an example, a guide, or a warning; and if the chronicles of the dead speak powerfully to the mind, how much more vivid is the admonition uttered by the living! Almighty God, we implore Thee to let us be humble of heart, so that, amidst the enjoyments and advantages which Thy goodness has lavished upon us, we may never look down haughtily upon the less fortunate, and assume in our fancy a superiority which does not really exist.

24.

“The heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger doth not intermeddle with its joy.”—(*Proverbs* xiv. 10.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, whose Heavenly guidance we invoke, it seems impossible for us—nor are we called upon—to dive into the secrets of every heart that thrills with joy or trembles with woe, or to fathom the mysteries of every life that is spent around us in bright sunshine or in menacing gloom. Therefore, it becomes an imperative duty to exercise the utmost care in passing judgment on the actions of others. The anxious wish

and the firm resolve to weigh all circumstances in the fairest balance, and give the benefit of all doubts to those whose horizon is clouded, will guard us from much injustice, harshness, and error. Let us remember that we alone know the full extent of our own weakness, the depth of our aching and bleeding wounds. This knowledge is the result of varied and painful experience; this sad, though useful consciousness teaches us that many failings and sufferings are partly caused by a natural predisposition, and partly by circumstances which cannot be controlled. Again, we alone are fully aware of the source of our purest happiness and most rapturous joys. It is not easy for strangers, perhaps not for our best friends, however sincere their attachment for us may be, always to understand either our sorrow or our delight, much less to share these feelings and emotions. Therefore, let us not expect too much from others, either in our trials or in our prosperity, but strengthen us, we beseech Thee, Almighty Father, not only to feel for our neighbours with deepest and most glowing sympathy, but never to relinquish the hope and the duty of helping them in their distress !



25.

“The evil bow before the good, and the wicked at the gates of the righteous.”—(*Proverbs* xiv. 19.)

ALMIGHTY LORD, Thy commandments are so excellent, Thy laws so admirably beautiful, and the behests which Thou hast graciously vouchsafed to us by

the inspired lips of Thy prophets so perfect, that even the erring, who are unfortunate enough to disobey Thy precepts and to lead a sinful life, respect and esteem those who practise justice and virtue, while they draw the darkest veil around their own evil thoughts and deeds. And this should not be called fraud or falsehood, dishonesty or duplicity, but the spontaneous homage which vice has long been said to pay to virtue. And is not this instinctive reverence a proof that we need never despair of winning back the guilty from the slippery ways of wickedness? Mystery and even danger may have allured them; their will was feeble, their feet vacillated between right and wrong, but they have never closed their eyes to the shining paths of truth. Oh, may we be privileged to lead them back, penitent yet hopeful, to the road of uprightness and to the foot of Thy altar, our Gracious and Merciful God! And when we, too, have faltered, and failed, and disobeyed Thy sacred commandments, Almighty Lord, do not, we beseech Thee, turn Thy Divine countenance away; do not shroud the light of faith from us, but pardon our sins, and permit us once more humbly to work, and zealously to fulfil the best and highest duties of life! Amen.



26.

“The heart is deceitful above all things ; who can know it ?”

(*Jeremiah* xvii. 9.)

ALL lessons which the faculties graciously vouchsafed to us by Thee, Almighty God, enable us to learn, must be held precious, and none should be heedlessly neglected, or left unsought and untreasured. Yet, while the aspiring, the ambitious, and the richly gifted among our brethren may expect to attain and to grasp the highest branches of the tree of knowledge, the fruit of which is said by the wise king to be more precious than rubies, many of us can never hope to win the gleaming gems. But there is one species of lore more important, more interesting, and more valuable by far than the most luxuriant clusters hanging from the boughs of the marvellous tree with the countless leaves. This is self-knowledge. Genius and talent are not required to seek and win the priceless possession. It is, however, surrounded by mazes so intricate and bewildering, hidden by veils so confusing, covered as they are with brilliant illusions, that it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to obtain it. And, therefore, we bow down before Thee, Almighty Lord, and implore Thy Divine help, when we endeavour to sound the inmost depths of our heart of hearts, and when we strive to look into its remotest and darkest corners. Aid us, we beseech Thee, with the light of truth and faith ! These alone can dispel the shifting mists of vanity, which mislead us completely, the obscuring vapours of conceit, the clouds which we fringe

with gold and silver, and span with bright rainbow tints, fondly believing that our darkest faults are more than compensated by the brilliancy of good, and great, and even noble qualities—nay, deluding ourselves into the conviction that our failings are advantages. Thus we fancy that irritation is caused by the finest sensibility, or we often imagine that anger and passion are nought but warmth and intensity of feeling ; that pride, which we should stigmatise as folly, is dignity of character, and the anxious wish to act in accordance with a high standard of worth ; that to be stern, unbending, and even harsh, is to practise righteousness and justice ; or to be severe and unforgiving, is to prize and honour virtue ; that, when we exact the unremitting services, the full time, the constant care, and undeviating attention of our loved ones, at the cost of all their own pursuits, at the sacrifice of their own inclinations, we are truly and tenderly affectionate, and not unpardonably selfish, not heedless of their wishes, not reckless of the amount of trouble and weariness we inflict, not regardless of the innocent pleasures we thus crush and banish, of the spirit we embitter, and of the dumb rebellion of thought and feeling we foster. Almighty God, we fervently invoke Thy merciful assistance, that it may become to us a shining lamp in the labyrinth of that unknown and often unsuspected darkness of the heart, produced by our own weakness or neglect. The torch of Thy beneficence will show us stains and shadows, and enable us to erase and dispel them. Our Divine Protector, we bow down before Thee, and pray that Thou wilt let the heavenly flame of purity guide us through the shadows of life to our eternal home of light and peace !

27.

“The Lord is my strength, and He will make my feet like the hinds’ feet, and He will make me walk upon high places.”—(*Habakkuk* iii. 19.)

HOW beautiful is the hind in her graceful gentleness, when resting half concealed beneath the waving plumes of her fern bed, or standing under the wide-spreading oak tree, and gathering the ripe acorn from green branches, or grazing quietly with down-bent head, undisturbed by the approach of man! Thy Divine Providence, which has created and blessed the whole universe, Almighty God, has gifted the wild animals of moor and forest and mountain-side with a marvellous clearness of eye, quickness of ear, and instinctive knowledge of danger; at the slightest sound or merest suspicion or sight of even distant peril, the hind bounds far away through woods and valleys, and over high hills, till, shrouded among veiling mists, the fugitive escapes from all pursuers. Thus, Almighty God, Thou wilt guard and protect me. Thy heavenly beneficence will endow me with swiftness to fly from threatening evils, and will enable me to stand in Thy presence, far away from temptations and allurements, those most relentless foes of man, that lead him to sin and suffering.



28.

“Even the sparrow findeth a house, and the swallow hath a nest for herself, where she may lay her young.”—(*Psalm lxxxiv.* 3.)

THE sparrow does not contribute to the enjoyment of man by the brightness of its plumage or the sweetness of its song, it does not embellish woods and gardens, or enliven our homes by thrilling notes of gladness, or, similar to the nightingale, harmonise with our feelings of sorrow and suffering by pouring out sad and plaintive notes that sound like fond and gentle sympathy through the stillness of dark hours, when all other voices are silent and sleepbound. Nor does the swallow adorn our roof when, flying from the hot breath of the Egyptian summer, she arrives with weary wings to build her nest under our eaves. Yet Thy infinite beneficence, Almighty God, has vouchsafed a house to the sparrow, and a resting place to the swallow where her little ones may be cradled in safety, and sheltered from harm, until their feathers grow strong, and they can in due season sail through the blue expanse of air, over lands and seas, to the reed-edged banks of the Nile. And if Thy goodness has thus provided for every bird that flies, from the condors and eagles on towering mountain crests, to the brown sparrows on the house-top, Thy mercy will not forsake the smallest and lowliest of us, Thy children, nor allow us to starve and perish. Our feet will seek a resting place, our head a pillow in this world; and endowed with an immortal soul, we shall find a home hereafter through Thy mercy, O Heavenly Father, near the throne of Thy glory. Amen.

29.

“As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God.”—(*Psalms* xlii. 1.)

THE pursuit is often long and unbroken, the chase is unchecked, the pursuers are unwearied and relentless; the steps of the huntsmen follow only too rapidly in the track left by the bounding feet of the hart, their arrows are flying around the fugitive, the strength of the poor wanderer is well-nigh exhausted, his breath is burning and his tongue parched, as he rushes wildly away over rustling fern and heather, over wounding boulders and rocks. But near the edge of the pitiless stones gleams a crystal pool; there the hart quenches his thirst, laves his bleeding wounds, and joyfully escapes from the enemy and his powerless missiles. As the trembling hart, when in danger, pants after the coolness of the saving water-brooks, thus my soul longs for Thy Divine help, Almighty God, when the perils of this world encompass me, be they snares spread around me in the great toil and battle of life, in the struggle for prosperity and happiness, or temptations placed before me by my own folly and weakness. Oh cleanse me, heal me, strengthen me with the waters of Thy Divine forgiveness, Almighty God! Save me from all evils, be they wrought by others or by myself! Thy mercy alone is the everlasting and ever-flowing fountain of salvation.



30.

“The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their food in summer.”
(*Proverbs xxx. 25.*)

BODILY strength is valuable, and intellectual greatness still more precious, but Thou hast decreed, Almighty God, in Thy perfect wisdom and infinite beneficence, that the lowly and feeble may not only live but prosper if they will exert the means and faculties placed at their disposal for the fulfilment of the obligations of life. I pray to Thee, my Gracious Lord, to endow me with the twin qualities of patience and perseverance, that I may learn to emulate the ant. I am but small and feeble, but Thy Divine goodness has vouchsafed to me health and activity of limbs with clearness of eye and quickness of ear, that I may work from day to day, and learn from hour to hour, and thus lay by goodly stores of knowledge and experience in summer, which means the time of light and warmth and glowing sunshine, ere my sight becomes dimmed and my hearing is dulled, ere winter or old age slackens my steps or numbs my hands, ere the brightness of my buoyant hopes is overcast and clouded by the cold shadows of time. Then I shall not fear to be helpless in the dreary season, for with Thy blessing, Almighty God, I shall have laboured diligently and successfully, I shall have garnered and prepared for mind and body the food of sustenance, and Thy heavenly mercy will give me the joy and happiness of sharing it with others.

OCTOBER.



1.

“O ye fountains, bless ye the Lord.”—(*Song of the Three Holy Children*, ver. 55.)

ALMIGHTY and Gracious Lord, when the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness, and with parched and trembling lips, cried for water, Thy infinite mercy caused the cooling fountain to rush from the hard rock and quench the burning thirst of the weary and footsore pilgrims; and the water blessed Thee, our Divine Benefactor, as the rivers and seas, lakes and streams in the wide world bless Thy holy name; for they are treasures to the whole earth in its expanse, to the highest as well as the lowliest among animated beings; to gardens and orchards, flowers and fruits, to halcyon, coot, and heron, to the clouds of travelling birds, which dive and seek refreshment ere they wing back their flight to other zones; to herds and flocks in fields and meadows, to the fisherman and the landsman, to the mariner and the merchant, to the sick and the healthy; to childhood

and old age, and bright youth in its strength and gladness. The fountains, Almighty God, which Thou hast permitted to flow in all parts of the globe, and sparkle in the light of heaven, that they may revive those who faint, lave all sores, remove all spots, and cleanse the dust-stained wanderer, are indeed emblems of the waters of purity, in which Thy unbounded mercy has allowed sinners to free themselves from iniquity, in order to efface the dark shadows of wrong-doing, and to re-appear in Thy holy presence as white as snow, invigorated by deep and complete repentance to walk in Thy ways, O Gracious God, and humbly but zealously to attempt the fulfilment of duty.

2.

“She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.”
(*Proverbs xxxi. 19.*)

ALMIGHTY LORD, Thou who hast created all human beings in accordance with Thy immutable laws of perfect beneficence and eternal wisdom, hast decreed that woman's principal sphere of action and usefulness shall be her home. However great her quickness of apprehension and clearness of judgment, however rare her gifts or varied and precious her talents and accomplishments, they can never secure exemption from the fulfilment of household duties. It is as a daughter and a sister, a wife and a mother, that she is pre-eminently blessed in her ministrations, and graciously permitted by Thee, Almighty God, to become

a loving companion and devoted friend, a judicious adviser and faithful guide, a guardian angel in early youth, in the glowing mid-day of life, and in the calm serenity of old age. Privileged in seasons of joy to give her gentlest and warmest sympathy, and thus to heighten gladness with a thousand smiles, and in times of sorrow to soften grief with the solace of her resignation and fortitude, she need not yearn after the brilliant distinction of shining on the great stage of the world. Almighty Lord, cause me, I beseech Thee, to be satisfied with my lot, and grateful for the obligations which Thou hast assigned to me, and extend Thy merciful protection, I implore Thee, to my earnest endeavours, that they may indeed become works of usefulness to all around me! Amen.



3.

“God giveth to a man that is good in His sight, wisdom and knowledge and joy.”—(*Ecclesiastes* ii. 26.)

OUR Heavenly and Bountiful Father, Thou hast taught us that knowledge is light. If we possess it, we shall see and feel what is fair and true and just, we shall fly from darkness and ignorance, which harbour perils that may lead to vice and deepen into sin, and shall turn as constantly towards true wisdom as the flower turns towards the sun for more glowing brilliancy and sweeter fragrance. Thou hast taught us, Almighty God, that wisdom is the perfection of the soundest judgment, and to be endowed with it is the power of saying and doing

that which comforts and cheers, it is to be righteous and beneficent in word and deed. We feel joy and delight in acquiring and extending knowledge, in doing honorable service, and establishing works of usefulness far and wide. Almighty Lord, may we find favour in Thy all-seeing eyes, and being deemed good before Thy unerring yet merciful justice, receive through the blessing of Thy Divine hand the priceless gems of knowledge and understanding, that by their light we may not only rejoice in all the marvellous beauties and gifts which adorn this world, but cause ever-widening circles to appreciate their splendour and excellence !

4.

“The locusts have no king, yet they go forth all of them by bands.”
(*Proverbs xxx. 27*).

How often, Almighty God, when we are wavering and helpless, uncertain and troubled in thought, and unwise in conduct, do we look around for a guide of unquestioned authority, who by his eminence has distanced all competition and silenced all envy, and who may lead us through the mazes of life ! But are we always prompted by a genuine feeling of humility ? Is it not too often vanity or pride that misleads us ? Are we conscious of our own feebleness and our own shortcomings ? Is our self-respect really so low, or is not our estimation of our brethren too small and slender ? If we could think more highly of our neighbours, and

banish self-conceit, how often might we not be strengthened by advice, concord, and unity, and go forth with our fellow-pilgrims, not like the devastating locusts, but labouring diligently and anxiously, and thus cause prosperity and happiness to prevail around us! Incline our hearts, Almighty God, to love and serve one another; so shall we be stronger and more powerful for all good actions, for all deeds of usefulness, than if we merely look for assistance to the few, who, by the grace of Thy Providence, our Heavenly Father, may have been placed in a higher sphere of intellectual distinction or worldly greatness!



5.

“The heart of the righteous studieth to answer.”—(*Proverbs* xv. 28.)

As reviving dew descends gently from the skies, and rests on the parched bosom of the earth after the glare and sultry heat and stifling breath of the mid-day sun have well nigh robbed the foliage of its freshness, and caused buds and flowers to droop, languish, and thirst; so we implore Thee, Almighty God, to let words of gentleness flow from our lips, and fall softly on the ear of the irate, that they may find a sure way to the angered heart, and there quench the smouldering fire of wrath, ere it burst into the flames of passion. We all know, our Heavenly Father, that hard and cutting expressions have the power to wound more keenly and deeply than sword or dagger,

that harsh and cruel answers deal blows which sound and echo through heart and brain, and, by turning all sweetness of thought and feeling into gall, may poison the purest life-blood. Strengthen and aid us, Almighty Lord, we beseech Thee, that we may never yield to anger and passion, but may always overcome irritation, and be privileged to give clear and soothing utterance to pity and indulgence, forgiveness, and sympathy! Amen.



6.

“Do not turn thy face from any poor, and the face of God shall not be turned away from thee.”—(*Tobit* iv. 7.)

IN this world, Almighty God, which Thy beneficence has filled with countless treasures, the fields wave with golden harvests, and the hill-sides are covered with vineyards wreathed with heavy clusters of purple or amber fruit, many lands flow with milk and honey, woods and forests yield wild animals to the skill of the hunter, and the travelling birds of the air fall into the snares of the fowler, lakes and streams and the mighty sea swarm with innumerable shoals of fish, and fountains flow and sparkle even in the sandy and burning desert; and it seems indeed strange and sad that the poor and helpless should abound. Thy mysterious decrees, our Gracious Lord, remain unfathomed, but Thy holy commandments are as clear as daylight. Thou hast permitted us to see and know that, notwithstanding the apparent and alarming increase of poverty, all men are provided by Thy inexhaustible bounty with

the necessaries of life, with healing and refreshing waters, and with the bread of sustenance and nourishment, while few are debarred from all the pleasures and enjoyments of this earth. It is painfully true that misery and wretchedness are wide-spread; but, by the blessing of Thy Divine hand, love and faith, charity and devotion are to be found everywhere. They pervade the hearts of Thy children, and these, touched by Thy holy will, melt with pity, and glow with warmth and tenderness towards the needy and suffering, to whom they are privileged to yield ready help and unfailing sympathy. Almighty Lord, we implore Thee to strengthen us, so that our activity may remain unimpaired, our zeal unwearied, and the source of charity in our bosom unchecked and ever flowing, for the benefit and advantage of all around us. Amen.



7.

“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.”

(*Ecclesiastes ix. 10.*)

O GRACIOUS LORD, among the numerous duties which fall to our share, and are brought to us by every dawning day, some seem to call clearly and loudly for fulfilment, or appeal with gentle yet irresistible force to the understanding, while others, by their warm and earnest pleading, enlist the pitying sympathy of the heart, and thus obtain ready accomplishment at our hands. But there is much work to be done in this world—work that lies obviously near and around us,

from which we yet shrink, or turn away after full deliberation, because it is harder and heavier, and more difficult of performance, than that which commands our willing service. Perhaps it is less self-rewarding and more monotonous; it may entail more bodily fatigue, mental weariness and exhaustion, or demand greater patience and perseverance, stronger self-denial and self-control; it may oblige us to relinquish more enjoyments, and to be ready for new sacrifices: yet if it belongs to the circle of our duties, we should make the labour our own, and devote to it our best energies. But, Almighty and Beneficent God, what are we, what can we accomplish, without Thy aid? We, therefore, humbly approach the foot of Thy throne, and invoke Thy heavenly assistance, that we may not only see distinctly the whole circle of our duties, but be vividly impressed with their importance, and feel that they form the main object of our existence, and were intended by Thy Divine wisdom to be the chief condition of life. Help us, we implore Thee, our Merciful Lord, to recognise our mission, so that we may not narrow its scope, nor cultivate only certain promising fields, but on the contrary extend to all good works the support of our zeal and faithful devotion! Amen.

8.

“Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and the needy.”—(*Proverbs xxxi. 9.*)

ALMIGHTY LORD, Thou whose wisdom is so admirable and perfect, and whose beneficence is so inexhaustible, aid and strengthen us, we implore Thee, with the light of Thy Divine countenance, to be fair and just in every expression of opinion with regard to the words and deeds of others, so that the constant aim of our thought and speech may be the establishment of truth! A clear and complete knowledge of facts, and the unprejudiced estimate of trials and temptations, must form the surest basis for the exercise of indulgence and forgiveness, of kindness and charity. Love and zeal, benevolence and sympathy, those gently ministering angels that wipe away tears and revive hope, are unavailing where darkness reigns; among clouds and shadows and illusions, they cannot restore confidence, cause smiles to return, nor fill the heart with joy, the home with sunshine, and life with felicity. There must be light, the light of truth and the light of faith, ere they can step in to comfort and encourage, to soothe and to heal, and, with Thy heavenly blessing, Almighty Father, to bring back peace and happiness.



9.

“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”—(*Proverbs* xxii. 6.)

AS a blue and cloudless sky, golden sunshine, and soft balmy air, the fragrance of roses and the song of birds, are bright and delightful, and preferable in nature to wind and rain, to cold and snow and ice, so the happy smiles of gladness, the echoes of joy and mirth, the encouraging looks of contentment, and the gentle words of love and tender sympathy, are pleasanter and more welcome in the world of the heart and the mind than frowns, and tears, and expressions of rebuke, than blame and severity. But showers fertilise the land, preventing drought and scarcity, and the winds of heaven clear and purify the atmosphere, and the cold season gives rest to the earth, while snow warms it with protecting mantles that the young germs in its bosom may not be frozen to death. And in the same manner, reproof when needed, and fearless advice at all times, firmness in exacting careful work and conscientious study, in demanding industry and obedience, the daily performance of duty, and good-will in the attempt to conquer obstacles and overcome difficulties, are obligations which Thy infinite beneficence, Almighty God, has commanded parents to fulfil for the improvement and happiness of their children. Our Gracious Lord, we implore Thee to give us understanding and power that we may train in the paths of right-

eousness those whom Thy bounty has confided to our care, so that they shall learn to do good service in Thy temples, in Thy vineyards, and Thy fields, among the poor and among the rich, amidst the joyous and the sorrowful, for Thou art everywhere, our Merciful and Heavenly Protector!



10.

“Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of mirth is heaviness.”—(*Proverbs* xiv. 13.)

ALL-POWERFUL and Beneficent Lord, we raise our lips in prayer to Thee for renewed blessings, for increased strength and knowledge, for more perfect control, not merely over our aims and actions, but also over our thoughts and feelings. We are dim-sighted, weak, and erring; help us, Almighty God, we beseech Thee, to subdue the burning jealousy that may inflame our bosom, when, bowed down by trials and sufferings, wearied by incessant and unrewarded struggles, and sickening with hope deferred, we see others radiant with the light of gladness, beaming with the smiles of happiness, and causing the echoes around us to vibrate with the sounds of their mirth and joy. Teach us, O Heavenly Father, that the felicity of others may be our solace in days of trouble and a brightness to cheer us, not a sharp thorn to deepen our wounds, making them ache more painfully and bleed more abundantly. Thou art a God of justice, our Divine Creator; Thou lovest all Thy children equally; Thou hast not lavished

upon some the whole wealth and glow of sunshine, and the entire treasure of happiness, while dooming others to weep and shudder in the cold and gloom of anguish and adversity. Alas! even the silver voice of laughter rings too often from the depths of a bosom full of sorrow, to which a few gleams of relief have been graciously vouchsafed, while the greatest and purest joy may, ere long, be quenched in grief. Not only the events of the future are mercifully hidden from us, but also the secrets and mysteries of the present are concealed from our view; therefore we implore Thee, Almighty God, to banish the murmuring spirit of ill-will and bitterness, of envy and discontent, from the hearts and minds of Thy children, and to cause them at all times to be pervaded by the gentlest and warmest sympathy, not only with sufferers in their need, but also with those who bask in the brightest sunshine of felicity! Amen.

11.

“A man has joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it.”—(*Proverbs xv. 23.*)

ALMIGHTY LORD, Thou hast lavished treasures and blessings on our path, and hast decreed that if we use the gifts of Thy beneficence humbly, yet with earnest zeal, we shall derive from them joy and gladness for ourselves and those around us. The power of speech is surely one of the most precious gifts of Thy bounty, graciously vouchsafed to us for all good and great and noble purposes. Earnest words gently spoken penetrate into the depths of the

heart and mind, yield comfort and solace, bring back confidence, and dispel fear and doubt; they cheer and encourage, they kindle hope and fan with warm and loving breath the flickering torch of faith, which, alas! to the eyes of the sorrowful and the unfortunate often burns faintly and dimly. Tender words of forgiveness and compassion drop like refreshing dew on the tortured breast or the afflicted soul; words of affection melt the cold and hardened sufferer or sinner; words of advice, difficult to pronounce, yet so rewarding when kindly received, may turn the ignorant, the inexperienced, the wavering, from evil ways to paths of purity and light. Almighty God, we bow down before Thee, and invoke Thy heavenly aid, that the utterance of our lips may indeed be blessed, and become a source of joy to us by causing the smiles of happiness to beam in our circle, and far beyond it! Amen.

12.

“Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger.”—(*Proverbs* xix. 15.)

ALMIGHTY LORD, we have received all mercies and blessings, all gifts and treasures from Thy Divine beneficence, and while we enjoy them, we feel impelled to raise our hands and voices with thanksgivings, but also with prayers for the gracious continuance of life and health, and with the humble and anxious entreaty to quicken all our energies, so that we may never give way to sloth which becomes a numbing cold and

freezing torpor, leads to temporary indifference and neglect, and by paralysing all activity, tends to destroy the aptitude for exertion, and dry up the very spring of it. At first our thoughts and aims are transformed into mere dreams and visions, similar to those that often flit across the brain in light and early slumbers; gradually, however, even these shadowy images fade away, and soon the mind, as if sunk in profound sleep, lapses into a complete blank, no longer willing, no longer able to frame plans and projects, to mature good intentions, and to think clearly and vividly; then life loses its charm, its value, and its interest. There may still remain a vague and painful craving for work, for enjoyment, and for happiness, a longing and yearning for some sphere of activity, but the power of industry, the warm flame of zeal will have vanished. Our Heavenly Father, we invoke Thy gracious aid to enable us to resist the narcotic spell of indolence, to free ourselves from the binding meshes of sloth, and feel at all hours that to labour is to live. May we thus learn to pass our days in humblest obedience to Thy sacred will!



13.

“Hear counsel and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in the latter end.”—(*Proverbs* xix. 20.)

THY unerring wisdom has graciously decreed, Almighty Lord, that childhood and youth shall be the happy periods of life when knowledge may be

sought and readily acquired. Thy merciful goodness does not allow the minds of children to be oppressed with anxieties, nor their hearts to be troubled by sorrow. Nothing dims the clearness of their sight in scanning the page of golden lore ; they learn with ease ; good words sink deeply into their memory ; and noble thoughts, expressed in beautiful language or in thrilling song, become unconsciously their own. And men and maidens in the zenith of youth, with its radiant hopes and glowing aims, its warm sympathies and flaming zeal, drink daily and deeply of the fountain of knowledge to be refreshed and strengthened by its clear and ever-flowing streams, and they may thus brighten their own labours with the light which shines from the annals of history, and the carefully stored experience of centuries. But opportunities have perhaps been wanting in the early years of our life, or been sadly neglected by us ; shall such disadvantages be irreparable misfortunes, and debar us from the blessings of instruction, of useful lessons, of kindly advice, of judicious guidance, of tardy, yet not on that account superfluous training ? Surely it is never too late to learn. The sweetness of vernal blossoms and the brilliancy of summer roses may not have embellished and gladdened our existence, but there are precious seeds which, though sown late, spring up rapidly, and ripen long ere winter closes in. These may be ours by the grace of Thy beneficence, Almighty God, and teach us to mend our ways, and enrich our path with the accomplishment of many duties, and with goodly works of love and charity ! Amen.

14.

“As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place.”—(*Proverbs* xxvii. 8.)

ALMIGHTY LORD, in this marvellous world so richly and profusely endowed by Thy beneficence, great and unvarying rules govern heaven and earth, and regulate the existence of all in the skies above, on the land beneath, and in the waters that surround it. We have not yet studied all these laws, nor fathomed the great, unerring, and eternal rules which are obeyed by sun and moon and stars, by winds and waves, by herds and flocks, by the birds of the air, the harvests of the field, the trees of the forest, the flowers of the garden, and “last not least” by man from his childhood to the grave. It is quite true that the stork escapes from African summers in search of the cooler regions of Europe, and that the swallow wings her flight far away from the Nile and from Egyptian obelisks to seek the shadow and protection of our eaves; and many among us become voyagers and travellers, pioneers and colonists in distant lands. But these are exceptions which Thou, our Heavenly Father, hast permitted to exist in order to make the rule more clear and firm, the rule that at home, in our own country, we find our mission, our work, and our chief power of doing good, our duty and the full depth of our sympathies. Life is short and our means are limited. Under our own roof, and in ever-spreading and increasing circles around it, we find ample

scope for benevolence and kindness, for charitable feeling, for generosity of heart and mind, for devoted service and utility. Climate, habit, language, an intimate knowledge, dating almost from infancy, of the objects of our care and solicitude, will aid us in the conscientious fulfilment of all obligations, in learning the truth and understanding the needs that are to be met. Away from home we are like a bird that wanders from his nest, cold and helpless, full of fear and trembling.



15.

“He that observeth the wind shall not sow ; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.”—(*Ecclesiastes xi. 4.*)

TIME rushes along so rapidly with its freight of golden opportunities, that we who are unable to arrest or check its flight, should never defer the fulfilment of duty, nor waste one moment, not even one precious grain of sand from the hour-glass of life. The wind is fitful and veers round so quickly and suddenly that it need never interrupt our progress and our labours. Far from it ; but its voice should be a voice of warning, and bid us sow indefatigably while every sound of it continues to reach our ear, while we have strength and health and energy to resist its fury, while we possess the vigour and swiftness of our limbs, the skill of our hands, and ere our sight has become dim, our ear dull, and our frame enfeebled. The clouds, too, are great travellers. Be they light-footed or heavy and lowering, there is little

use in watching them ; they seldom realise our fears, or fulfil our expectations ; the darkest may vanish, whereas one small speck in a brightly blue sky often grows into an overwhelming storm. Therefore, Almighty God, strengthen our activity, and enable us, we beseech Thee, to sow without tardiness, and without fear of the wind that might scatter the grain, and prevent it from sinking into the furrow ; and permit us, our Gracious Lord, to reap ere the rain can descend to destroy the harvest, and ere delay robs us of many treasures, blessings, and enjoyments ! Amen.



16.

“Surely the serpent will bite without enchantment, and a babbler is no better.”—(*Ecclesiastes* x. 11.)

FOR some wise purpose it seems that most things which Thou hast created are beautiful, Almighty Lord, beautiful to embellish the world and delight Thy children, or beautiful to attract their attention and warn them against coming danger. Thou hast made even the serpent fascinating with diamond eyes, and sharply-forked and pliant tongue, with lithe movements and graceful curves of the body ; it is impossible not to be struck by the dangerous reptile, when it darts quickly along and swiftly raises its brilliant head from moss-green pillows under the canopy of the forest tree. The enchanter removes the poisonous fangs ; without his aid and art the serpent would bite—and a babbler is no

better. His words may be attractive ; they shine and sparkle at the expense of others ; and without the help of caution and prudence which enable us to turn a deaf ear to his malignant speeches, or to render them innocuous, his evil tongue would pour forth upon us its venom and inflict perilous wounds. Almighty God, we anxiously implore Thee, to keep our feet aloof from the path of the babblers, or to allow us to disarm him, and rob his words of their bitterness and of their sting !



17.

“The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.”—
(*Jeremiah* viii. 20.)

ALMIGHTY LORD, through Thy Divine grace and goodness the years of my life have not been few, and the works of my hands should have been many. I ought to have devoted every hour of health and of freedom from care, of prosperity and sunshine, peace and tranquillity, to zealous labours in Thy fields and in Thy vineyards, at the foot of Thy altars, my Heavenly Creator, and among my brethren, and I should have tried to render good service at every period of my existence. In early childhood I should have allowed the precepts of kindness and affection, the golden rules of wisdom sedulously uttered by loving lips, to sink deeply into my heart and mind, and to remain there brightly engraven, that they might lead me successfully through the mazes

of this world. But did I act thus? And what is the harvest to which the prophet alludes? If it failed in yielding to me and mine the grain of nourishment, which is bound into luxuriant sheaves, if it was thin and sparse and well nigh unproductive, whose was the fault? Thy beneficence, Almighty God, permitted rain to descend from the clouds, and myriads of refreshing dew-drops to fall, and the warmth of sunlight to gladden the earth. But woefully I neglected these blessings of Thy paternal hand, and thus again much precious seed was carried off and scattered, wasted and destroyed. I did not sow carefully, how could I hope to reap? Each breath of wind, each unforeseen chance seemed to play with my happiness. And now the summer is ended, the winter of my existence is near. But if I am not yet saved, if my days are still dim and poor, and barren of good works and of enjoyment, Thou, O Merciful Father, wilt not punish me by shrouding the evening of my pilgrimage in darkness, for Thy compassion is inexhaustible. Thou wilt pity me, and I shall not find it too late to atone for the sloth and neglect of the past, for all the want of thought and absence of zeal, for the lessons that were forgotten, and the warnings which I left unheeded. The freshness of the morning and the ardour of the mid-day hours have been permitted to pass away uselessly and without profit; but Thou seest my repentance, Almighty God, and I fervently pray that Thou wilt allow the closing days of my life to glow with anxious endeavours for the eager and persevering fulfilment of duty! Amen.

18.

“The memory of the just is blessed..”—(*Proverbs* x. 7.)

ALMIGHTY LORD, from the earliest years of our existence we are taught and made to feel that the memory of the just is blessed; we see tears of deep sorrow in the eyes of our friends, and these find true comfort in the conviction that the loved ones whom they have lost, are angels in heaven: if they have passed away from this earth in the white garments of innocent childhood, without conscious fault or sin, they are believed to return in spotless purity to the realms of eternal peace and rest. But when they leave this world, after their eager lips have tasted, yet not drained, the cup of gladness and of life, and their days have still been rich in goodly promises, and the brief hours of their fleeting summer have wreathed glowing garlands for the nearest and dearest, and brightened the roof of father and mother, brothers and sisters, with the light and warmth of sunshine, and caused the home circle to ring with the echo of mirth and happiness, then the radiant picture dwells in the memory of the survivors, recalls every gentle smile, every word of affection, every look of encouragement, every assurance of obedience and devotion, points clearly to the need for similar ministrations of love around us, enjoins similar duties of zeal, piety, and kindness, and pleads powerfully for their fulfilment. The longer a righteous life extends, the greater is the harvest of good deeds which it is privileged to

reap, but be the path short or long, the memory of the just is blessed—it is a blessing to those who bear the honoured name, a blessing for the children's children who gather the glorious inheritance, the luxuriant fruit of the seed that was carefully sown, a blessing to those around, as the memory of the charitable and virtuous must appeal with irresistible force to all that is best and noblest in man, kindling enthusiasm and an ardent desire to labour, and be likewise rewarded by the consciousness of having done good service. But useful works survive even the name of the workman; whatever is really good and true remains for ever precious; it may indeed be said to win immortality in this world, the guerdon of those who labour indefatigably for others, with heart and mind and soul, and an ever watchful conscience to guide them. Permit us, our Heavenly Father, we humbly implore Thee, to labour thus, and thus to serve Thy altars in truth and faithfulness! Amen.



19.

“Cast me not off in my old age, forsake me not when my strength faileth.”—(*Psalm* lxxi. 9.)

WONDERFUL in its beauty is the primeval forest of the tropics, where the grand old trees are wreathed with the blooms of dazzling and fragrant orchids; and in our own climes the oak seems to grow more magnificent with the weight of years; its leafy canopy of gleaming green spreads further and wider, and affords more shelter

and shadow to the troop of brown-eyed deer that browse beneath its branches, and to the winged minstrels that seek the protection of its closely woven foliage. And much that is old attracts us by the peculiar charm belonging to antiquity, and by the countless lessons it teaches of centuries gone by. If men and women would look forward to a future on earth similar in radiance to the bright old age of primeval forests, or even to the splendour of our own gnarled oak woods, they would not fear the rapid march of time, nor the approach of the evening of life. But why should we dread the so-called joyless years of increased debility? Art Thou not, Almighty God, the fountain of all mercy and all beneficence, and wilt Thou not sustain and cheer us if we have made good use of the treasures vouchsafed by Thee to our youth? Wilt Thou not prompt those whom we reared and taught and befriended in the time of our strength, not to abandon us in our weakness? Wilt Thou not inspire those whom we tended in their sickness, whom we comforted in their sorrow, whose inexperience we guided, whose courage we upheld, whose failing energy and waning zeal we revived, not to fly from us in our helplessness, nor leave us sad and lonely? Even if they should forsake us—though ingratitude is not the rule but the exception—Thy bounty would support us, Almighty God, and would enable us to look back with a cheerful mind and a tranquil heart to a career of utility and zealous service. Thou, our Heavenly Father, hast clothed the cold and gloomy ruin with the protecting and ever-green mantles of ivy, and the nakedness of the time-worn edifice is gracefully festooned. Thousands of birds fasten the cradles of their

young to the tendrils of the clinging plant; as they build they sing joyous carols; and in the autumn, when the honeyed blossoms appear among the heart-shaped foliage, myriads of bees swarm to collect the abundant sweets. Are our hopes too buoyant and too glowing, if they picture to us in our old age a future on earth similar to that of the tropical forest, the green oak, or the ruin surrounded by sweetness and song, by the bloom and freshness of the young, by the fair forms and enchanting voices of our beloved, by those who may seek us still for advice and protection, who may yet find profitable lessons and guiding examples beneath the shadow of our grey old age?



20.

“Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.”
(*Proverbs xvi. 18.*)

PRIDE is indeed folly; it betrays such weakness of the intellect, so singular a deviation from good and natural impulses that it cannot do otherwise than lead to evil and wrong. The contemplation of Thy Omnipotence, Almighty Lord, the knowledge of Thy beneficence, and the adoring thankfulness that pervades the hearts of Thy children, teach us how utterly weak and helpless we should be without Thy support and without Thy aid, how joyless without the blessings of Thy bounty, how poor without Thy gifts, how fearfully agonised in suffering and in sorrow without the light of hope, without the bright flame of faith, without all

the gracious boons of Thy inexhaustible goodness. Our Heavenly Benefactor, is it possible that we, so small and so feeble, should harbour pride, which grows up like an overwhelming and poisonous weed, and takes possession of the mind, filling it with vain-glory and perilous deceptions? Then the consciousness of our dependence must have vanished, and left us a prey to overweening conceit, aware of nothing but our imaginary superiority, blind to all snares and pitfalls, temptations, and dangers, and thus hurrying on to ruin. Almighty Father of all mercies, we beseech Thee to open our eyes, that we may see our faults, blemishes, and shortcomings; and we implore Thee to teach us humility and prayerful reliance upon Thee alone, and distrust of our fancied greatness and power; but we also invoke Thy aid to show us the whole circle of our duties and their great value, and to enable us to approach the performance of them with zeal and earnestness! Amen.

21.

“I perceive that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his possessions; for that is his portion.”—(*Ecclesiastes* iii. 22.)

THERE is great and untold wealth throughout the world; for Thy bounty, Almighty Lord, has lavished varied and countless gifts everywhere. The mountains and hills of the earth contain silver and gold, marbles and crystals and brilliant jewels; the sea yields gleaming pearls, the land waves with goodly harvests, the vineyards and orchards are heavy with the clusters of

their fruit, and many have received a large share of such treasures, and still they are poor, because they know neither how to enjoy Thy favours, O Lord, nor how to use them for the happiness of others. Yet there are boons less tangible perhaps than these, but even more precious, and they make us rich when we are believed to possess nothing; indeed they are innumerable; they comprise youth and health with all the blessings of strength and activity, quickness of thought and movement, the glow of zeal, the brightness of faith, energy and undaunted courage, the cloudless horizon, the brow without a furrow, the unflinching lip that, without misgiving, speaks words of solace and of hope, the smile over which no silent sorrow throws its veil, the sparkling mirth, the laughter-loving voice of gladness. With all these blessings, our Heavenly Benefactor, Thou hast permitted us to diffuse the charm of happiness over those whom we hold most dear, and embellish their life and our own, while all the mines and gold-fields, all the jewels and gems of the globe, all the castles and palaces and landed possessions, may fail to enrich, when the heart is poor, and the mind is barren, and the bosom is stony, and the ear remains closed, and the eye sees but does not sympathize, and the hand is shut, and not warm and soft and generous, but hard and cold. Our Gracious Lord, we beseech Thee to let gratitude and cheerfulness make us vividly conscious of the mercies vouchsafed by Thy infinite bounty, and we implore thee to brighten our existence still further by allowing us to bring joy and felicity to all our brethren and thankfully to employ in their service the gifts of Thy Divine beneficence!

22.

“Then shall the dust return to the earth whence it came, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”—(*Ecclesiastes* xii. 7.)

ALMIGHTY LORD, we know that our outward form must die, that the limbs of swiftness and utility which carry us through the valleys of this world, and enable us to labour zealously in Thy service, and struggle anxiously for all those confided to our care, must crumble into ashes. However indefatigable the foot, however powerful the arm, and skilful the hand, they are turned ere long into inert clay. The eye which feasts on the beauties and wonders of creation, and reflects them in the brightest of mirrors, and the ear that listens to the enchantments of melody, to the voices of truth and love, to the sounds and wails of sorrow and of pain, become alike dimmed and hardened by the touch of death. All that is earthly is restored to the earth, but the soul, created in Thy Divine image, is undying; and though our future in the realms of eternity must remain closely veiled from us, while we dwell on this side of the grave, we are yet permitted to cherish the belief that whatever is really valuable in our existence here, and is accomplished, Almighty Lord, in humble obedience to Thy behest, will not pass away. Though we ourselves may be forgotten, our aims and efforts will live on in the lives and deeds of those who come after us. Thus the spirit, the most precious of Thy heavenly gifts, God of all beneficence, is everlasting throughout the changes of unnumbered years.

23.

“A good name is better than precious ointment.”—(*Ecclesiastes* vii. 1.)

ALMIGHTY FATHER, in the abundance of Thy mercy Thou hast caused the wild blossoms of the field and the trained flowers of the garden to diffuse delightful fragrance, and hast made the shrubs and trees distil aromatic jewels of gum. The soft white clouds of frankincense, which rose from Thy holy altars, our Gracious Lord, in the days of old, were emblems of the adoring breath of all nature at the foot of Thy sacred throne, beautiful symbols of prayer, pure and sweet, flowing from the fountain of the human heart, and leaving this earth and its shadows to seek Thee in the realms of eternal light. With nard and with precious oil the king and the High-priest were anointed, and both were thus consecrated to Thy Divine service. Yet these were only outward forms, as prayer is merely the expression of hope and faith, of supplication and thanksgiving, the invocation for pardon and mercy, for strength and courage, humility and fortitude. The good works themselves which Thy children are so fortunate as to accomplish with the blessing of Thy Divine aid, Almighty God, are the real treasures, more valuable than all the honey-cups of brightest flowers, than all the perfumed spices of Arabia. What is it that enables us to win the approbation of others, to call forth, if not feelings of friendship and attachment—for these depend upon circumstances, and their power to sever or to unite—

surely sentiments of esteem and regard? It is not external splendour or adornment that earns golden opinions; but noble aims zealously carried out, and righteous deeds performed in a spirit of earnestness and devotion cause our name to be held in honour, it may be silently, but on that account all the more truly. The just fulfilment of the great duties of life commends us to the respect of those around us, and forms many binding links which nothing can tear asunder. Let us endeavour to keep our name pure and spotless; and although we may never be removed from amidst the anxieties of daily toil, and often find ourselves surrounded by difficulties and embarrassments, yet, if we thus guard our reputation from all stains and obscuring or perplexing veils, we shall be able gently to bear or successfully to ward off many of the troubles that assail us, be they blows dealt by the world, or wounds inflicted by hidden sorrows.

24.

“What fellowship has the wolf with the lamb? so the sinner with the godly.”—(*Sirach* xiii. 17.)

THERE is no animal in creation that shows the brand of guilt so plainly as the wolf. Always prowling and devouring, yet ever ravenous, his stealthy tread, lean body, and glaring eyes seem to indicate the evil-doer intent on fresh acts of cruelty. What can the blood-thirsty foe have in common with the white lamb of the meadow, playful among the dew-gemmed clover, browsing in the sunshine, or drinking out of the cool rill

beneath the shadow of waving branches? The wolf seeks the lamb only to injure it; thus the approach of the sinner is dangerous to the righteous. But the shepherd screens the lambkin from the fangs of the destroyer. And Thou, Almighty God, wilt guard us, and strengthen the good and pure in mind and heart, lest their righteousness should suffer; Thou wilt bless them still further, and vouchsafe to them the holiest of all privileges, that of reclaiming those who have erred. Our Heavenly Father, we implore thee to sustain us in Thy own paths of light, and empower us to keep from danger, or to rescue from peril those whose feet may have strayed, and who, though misguided and blinded, are still our fellow-pilgrims and our brethren! Amen.

25.

“Favour is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman that feareth the Lord shall be praised.”—(*Proverbs xxxi. 30.*)

O LORD our God, although there are passing clouds and storms in this world, sunshine and brightness are far more general and constant; indeed Thy Divine beneficence seems to have made every day rich in beauty and enjoyment, full of golden lessons, of encouraging or warning examples, and of opportunities which fly, alas! never to return again. Strengthen us, therefore, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we may try to profit by all, and learn to look upon every moment not as a mere grain of sand in the hour-glass of time, but as a treasure beyond price to be used by us for the diffusion of happiness. Let us not idle away a single instant;

but permit us, we beseech Thee, our Merciful Lord, to improve each moment, and sow precious seed, to be scattered near and far and wide, that it may strike many rootlets, and yield goodly harvests and luxuriant fruit, ere time streaks our head with snow, ere sorrow blanches our cheek, and dims the light of our eye, and ere our brow is furrowed by tears and cares. The possession of health and strength with the freshness of youth, with mirth and joy, and the loveliness that belongs to the morning of life, is indeed excellent and admirable; and to beauty in art and nature, Thy bountiful wisdom, Almighty Lord, has assigned a high and noble mission; Thou hast intended it to cover the rugged and dreary paths of the earth with buds and blossoms of sweetness and brilliancy; Thou hast allowed it to adorn and illumine truth in its many forms. But favour and beauty are vain and deceitful, if we let them fade and vanish without having won from them the best uses for the accomplishment of duty, and the grace and charm that vanquish many difficulties in the performance of our daily obligations.

26.

“O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires; and I will make thy windows of agate, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones.”—(*Isaiah* liv. 11, 12.)

THERE is no dawning day or closing eve, on which we do not invoke Thy holy name, Almighty God, to

accept our thanksgivings, or hearken to our supplications for a continuance of the blessings of Thy Divine bounty and of life ; and in time of trouble and distress, whatever the trials and sufferings that surround us, we look up from the depths of misery, and cry unto Thee, our Merciful Father, for help and solace ; and, however great our anguish and deep our affliction, or dark and threatening the horizon, we know that Thy heavenly countenance, our Gracious Lord, may indeed be hidden, but that it is not withdrawn from us. Only those who have been laid low by sore and heavy disease, or tortured by anxiety, and who have felt the breath of the dearly beloved wax faint, and their existence tremble in the balance, or whose homes have been made desolate by bereavement, who have lost their best joys, and have seen the brightest flowers fade out of their path, only those so tried can realize, after the gloom of storms and tempests, the beauty and radiance of the bow of hope which Thy beneficent hand weaves of dazzling colours for the faithful who trust in Thy eternal and ever loving kindness. Heavenly tints are they which cast brilliancy over the darkened valleys of earth, and cause the humblest gates, leading, it may be, to shattered roofs, to glow with the splendour of carbuncles, nay with the crimson light and freshness of all the roses of happiness. Softening hues they must be indeed to make the rough paths of toil with their rocks and boulders, sharp angles and wounding thorns, seem smooth, and glisten like sapphires in sunny realms of paradise ; and if Thy perfect wisdom has decreed, Almighty God, that through those windows wrought of agate we cannot see the future lie before us in well-defined clearness, Thy mercy, our Heavenly

Lord, has given us hope which points to the blessed abodes of immortality.



27.

“O ye holy and humble men of heart, bless ye the Lord.”

(Song of the Three Holy Children, ver. 65.)

OUR Gracious Lord, Thou art a God of love and of mercy, of tender pity, Divine indulgence and, forgiveness; and therefore Thy unerring wisdom and justice can never judge us, poor sinful mortals, in accordance with Thy own heavenly standard of perfection and beneficence; but Thou judgest us with deep commiseration for our weakness and infirmity of purpose, for our failings, our unredeemed pledges, and broken vows. In the truthfulness of the heart which always produces humility, we acknowledge with profound gratitude and mute adoration Thy great and infinite goodness, Almighty God. Conscience whispers to us at every moment of the day, how feeble and faulty we are, how utterly miserable and helpless we should be without Thy celestial aid. All the circumstances of our existence seem like warnings, and many of them are flashes of lightning that rend asunder the closely-woven veils of our conceit and vanity, of our folly and pride. The more clearly we see, and the more deeply we feel our own nothingness, the more truly shall we learn to worship Thy glory, our Omnipotent Benefactor, and to recognize Thy protecting hand in the escape from every danger to which we and our loved ones are constantly exposed ;

the more distinctly shall we see the shielding arm that rescues us from storm and flood and fire; the more fervently shall we bless the all-powerful hand that saves us from surrounding missiles, from sickness and pestilence; and the more reverently shall we acknowledge the gentle mercy that assuages our sorrows, and pours balm into the grieving soul. It is the still, small, but ever audible voice of conscience that leads to holiness, to purity, and to devoted service. Let us always hearken to that voice, and may it guide us in safety through all perils and trials, to the foot of Thy sacred altars! Amen.

28.

“ Her children arise up and call her blessed, her husband also, and he praiseth her.”—(*Proverbs xxxi. 28.*)

ALMIGHTY GOD, Thou hast taught us that the highest standard of the value of woman is the love and regard in which she is held in her own home, by her family, by those who willingly, and perhaps even unconsciously, obey her voice, and derive instruction from her gentle eloquence, prompted by affection deep and warm, who are ever guided by her advice and swayed by her wishes, encouraged by her smiles and upheld by her fortitude, comforted by her tender sympathy, reared in health, and tended in sickness by her anxious and devoted care. Daily life may be, and no doubt is, frequently composed of trifling circumstances. These trifles, however, become most important; for they

may give joy or inflict pain ; like the tiny dagger of the thorn, the sharp weapons of thistle and nettle, or the barbed and poisoned arrow of the wasp, trifles may burn and sting, wound and lacerate, or like a gleam of light, a ray of sunshine, and a few sweet-scented flowers, they may embellish our existence, and fill the house with radiance and happiness. Thus words, incidents, and actions, small in themselves, become significant ; they reveal the mind, its trials and struggles, they disclose the character in every phase and under every condition, show the workings of the heart in gladness and in sorrow, and form a far surer test of real worth than our bearing towards strangers, and even than the greater deeds accomplished, not necessarily for pomp and show, still on the stage of the world, where they may receive a brilliant guerdon of approbation and reward. Almighty Lord, we anxiously approach the footsteps of Thy throne, and implore Thee to strengthen us with heavenly protection, that in humble fulfilment of Thy sacred will, we may learn to practise the virtues of the hearth, and thus, ministering to the felicity of our loved ones, be so fortunate as to win their confidence and attachment, and to merit Thy Divine blessing.



29.

“O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.”—(*Psalms* xciv. 6.)

OUR Omnipotent Creator and Benefactor, we implore Thee, to let our thanksgivings find favour in Thy pre-

sence, and be graciously accepted, whether they are laid before Thee with the words of our lips or with the gratitude of the heart, whether expressed at rosy dawn or brightest morning hour, in the glowing splendour of noon-day, or when dew-fresh evening draws its soft grey veils around us, or later still, when the wings of night have descended upon earth to protect our sleep. At all times and in all seasons, permit us, Almighty God, to approach Thee with praise and thankfulness, for there is not a single moment in the course of the whole year, when Thy infinite beneficence is not seen and felt throughout the world. Now the flowers have bloomed and faded, the yellow corn has fallen under the sickle of the reaper, the fruit has ripened and been gathered, the vineyard has yielded its glistening clusters, and the summer has painted the foliage of the trees with the most dazzling tints of heaven. Autumnal winds are blowing, and myriads of leaves fly in the clear air, brilliant and light-winged, like the ruby and amber humming-birds of the tropics. The earth is bare, bereft of its wealth and beauty; nought but the winter-berries of yew and holly and mistletoe are left for hungry thrush and black-bird. But the sky is cloudless above, the husbandman prepares the land for future crops, and on the branches of the naked trees next year's leaflets are already visible in the bud. Thus hope and promise are never banished from the earth. We thank Thee, Almighty Lord, for allowing them to abide around us, and we pray that they may always live in our breast, until it shall please Thy Divine goodness to vouchsafe to them complete and perfect fulfilment hereafter.

30.

“Wilt thou not from this time cry unto Me, My Father, Thou art the guide of my youth?”—(*Jeremiah* iii. 4.)

O MY GOD, I have faltered, I have hesitated in thought, and vacillated in my aims between good and evil, I have erred in judgment and sinned in my actions, with coldness and harshness of voice and bitterness of word; my heart has been stubborn and unforgiving; I have remembered offences not to pardon them, but with feelings of resentment; I have suffered, and have been punished, but now I am vanquished; my faults seem crushed and my faith is strengthened; I see more clearly, I feel more deeply, that Thou, my Heavenly Lord, art indeed a Merciful Father and Perfect Ruler, an Unerring Guide and Beneficent Protector, that I cannot stray from the foot of Thy throne and the steps of Thy holy altars without being entangled and ensnared, beset by temptation and peril, and surrounded by pit-falls. Oh, let me look up to Thee, Almighty Lord, from my lowliness, and from the depth of my repentance, and implore Thee for pardon and invoke Thy Divine aid, that I may learn, however tardily, to accomplish Thy sacred will, and obey Thy holy commandments, and become zealously active in the fulfilment of all duties! Amen.



31.

“Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance?”

(*Isaiah* xl. 12.)

ALMIGHTY LORD, we bow down in humble adoration before Thee, and pray for life, and with it for those blessings of health and strength and intelligence, which alone can enable us actively to obey Thy holy commandments. But while we raise our hands in anxious supplication to Thee, and hope to receive from Thy Divine bounty, our Heavenly Protector, the precious gifts without which we should be useless and helpless, we feel how small we are and must remain, even when Thy infinite beneficence has vouchsafed to us the greatest and most valuable boons that we are capable of enjoying, and of using for good and noble purposes. This consciousness of limited power should uproot from the human heart and mind, from speech and look, all pride and arrogance, haughtiness and vain-glory, all self-sufficiency, self-applause, self-admiration, and every variety of conceit, and should yet exalt in us the value and the importance of the duties which Thou, our Gracious Lord, hast privileged us to fulfil in this world of wonderful beauty and incomprehensible vastness. Thou hast allowed the mighty waters—-one single wave of which could overwhelm us, and cause thousands of human beings to sink into the deep and silent tomb beneath—to be crossed by myriads of ships, and to convey number-

less voyagers in safety over the unfathomed expanse of the ocean. Although Thou hast permitted the earth to quake and to open, and to swallow hamlets and cities and their inhabitants, Thou hast yet taught us to till the land, that it may wave with goodly harvests and teem with luxuriant vineyards, and be bright and fragrant with lovely gardens, all for the sustenance and delight of Thy children. Thou hast empowered us to cleave the mountains and hills, and make them reveal their secrets and open their store-houses to our persevering industry, and yield to us the precious marbles, the ores and jewels of mines and quarries. And the heavens in their wonderful glory, so dazzling by day and by night, so marvellous with the glamour of the moon and the brilliancy of unnumbered stars removed from us by many millions of miles, and shining through infinite space, those distant worlds which no traveller can reach, how inexhaustible are they in the sublime eloquence of their lessons! Thou hast permitted us, our Almighty Father, to measure those remote suns, and the learned among us have been enabled to ascertain, not only their movements and voyages through the fields of air, but the elements that compose their luminous orbs. Thus our insignificance and the fragile nature of our being, which a breath can destroy, are abundantly and hourly proved to us, yet we learn at the same time the importance of our manifold tasks. We implore Thee, our Gracious Lord, to strengthen us, that we may never lose sight of our obligations, but anxiously strive to place the earnest fulfilment of duty above all other aims and thoughts! Amen.

NOVEMBER.

1.

“We are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow.”—(*Job* viii. 9.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, every passing minute ought to impress upon our mind and heart the consciousness that we who have been called into existence by Thy sacred will are indeed small in this vast and wonderful universe which Thy Omnipotence has created and adorned with such marvellous beauties and treasures. The more we study and learn, the more zealously we strive to read the past and the present, the more keenly and eagerly we look and observe and listen, the more closely we compare and earnestly we meditate, the more clearly shall we see our ignorance, and discern the limits of our knowledge and understanding. Everything we possess and use is circumscribed, our strength, our time, our power of concentration, our ability; whereas throughout the world which Thou hast formed, all is infinite and boundless, Almighty Lord, in the kingdoms

of nature, and even in the perpetually augmenting realms of human lore. And, therefore, when we approach Thy holy throne, we implore Thee, our Gracious Father, to quicken our activity, that we may make good and noble use of the opportunities of life, and yet cherish humility in our heart of hearts, as we know but too well that the greatest and happiest success leaves us still small and insignificant, leaves us mere fleeting shadows.

2.

“Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord.”
(*Psalm iv. 5.*)

IN former years, Almighty God, the faithful and the pious were commanded to lay their most precious treasures upon Thy altars. The owners of goodly flocks brought the best and purest lambs in their possession, the tiller of the land collected the finest of his golden sheaves, or the snow-white bread yielded by the ripe ears of corn, the gardener gathered the freshest leaves of the palm tree, and mixed them with the myrtle, with the scented fruit of the citron, and the rubies of the pomegranate to wreath Thy sacred shrines; and from distant lands nard and frankincense, the sweetest spices, were offered, and filled Thy Tabernacles with soft white clouds of fragrance. The Temple of old has crumbled into dust, and the smoke of sacrifice no longer rises from its altars; but there is not a day, there is hardly an hour in the course of our existence,

when we are not called upon by a sense of obligation, by feelings deep and warm, or by an irresistible impulse of love and charity to relinquish that which we hold most dear and valuable among our possessions. We give up our favourite pursuits, our labour and our leisure, our sleep, our time, even our health, at the voice of duty. These may be called acts of self-denial, but in truth they imply no sacrifice. Self-indulgence would often prove a punishment, while devotion yields ample reward; it gently whispers the applause of conscience, and in Thy all-seeing eyes, in the light of Thy Divine countenance, good actions humbly yet zealously performed are alone precious. May Thy heavenly blessing, our Gracious Lord, enable us to accomplish many throughout our earthly pilgrimage! Amen.



3.

“The sun shall be no more thy light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give light to thee; but the Lord shall be to thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.”—(*Isaiah* lx. 19.)

EVERY gift vouchsafed by Thee, Almighty God, is most precious, and Thou hast indeed filled this world with numberless treasures. The spring in its green robes richly gemmed with early blossoms is lovely to behold; happy those who, free from the oppression of anxiety, can go forth and enjoy the fragrant breath of the new season after the cold slumbers of winter; who can listen to the mirthful song of the lark, as she rises from dewy meadows to scatter melodious notes into the

fields of air ; fortunate our brothers and sisters when able to bask in the sunshine of life as in the sunshine of nature, where gleaming rays of light pervade the earth with gladness, and cause foliage and flowers to be doubly bright and sweet ; fortunate the wayfarers in distant and unknown lands, or the voyagers over the trackless seas, whose pilgrimage or whose path over the waves is beguiled by the soft glamour of the moon ; whose road, from the cradle to the grave, lies among radiant and enchanting gardens, which Thy Divine Providence has wreathed with beauty for the happiness and delight of mankind. And yet, Almighty Lord, Thou hast permitted the felicity of the truly good and noble, who banish all egotism from their thoughts and feelings and actions, to be quite independent of the external treasures of Thy bounty ; these are intended by Thy heavenly, beneficence to yield happiness and enjoyment, but Thy merciful and compassionate kindness has given us far greater and higher blessings. The earthly journey may be dim and dreary, leading through difficulties and dangers, but those who humbly worship Thy holiness with the best works of unwavering zeal, will find in their ardent faith, in their labours of love, in their fervent devotion, in unrepining self-denial, and in the sacrifice of all selfish wishes, a glowing flame to dispel cold and darkness, a torch to point the way to everlasting light and glory.



4.

“O all ye things that grow on the earth, bless ye the Lord.”

(Song of the Three Holy Children, ver. 54.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, there is not a seed-corn carefully planted in the bosom of the earth by the hand of man, or dropped by travelling bee or bird; there is not a blade of grass that gives sustenance to the young lamb of the meadow, not a tuft of Iceland moss, half concealed by the snow-drift, but eagerly sought by the reindeer; not a sprig of heather on the otherwise bare or barren moor, where the wild grouse builds her nest, that does not bless Thee, our Heavenly Benefactor; there is not a hill-slope softly carpeted with thyme, not a clover field, or hedgerow bright with crimson or snowy hawthorn, that does not send forth to Thee, our Gracious Lord, the thank-offering of sweetest frankincense. Praise rises up to Thee perpetually and at all seasons from dark pine forests and glowing rose gardens, from blue-eyed violets nestling on mossy banks, from new-mown hay freshly cut in the rays of the sun, and lying still uncarried in the paler beams of the moon; from wild flowers and cultivated blossoms; from the orange groves and myrtle bowers of the south; from the honeyed heliotrope of the Andes, and the rhododendron woods of the distant Himalayas. All give their soft and pure breath to the air, and pervade the whole earth, which is one of Thy altars, our Heavenly Father, with their delightful fragrance. But all productions of the land do not bloom at the same period of the

year, nor under the same conditions. Some flourish in torrid zones, while others attain their best development in climes removed alike from both extremes of cold and heat, or thrive in deep and sheltered nooks. Many again need the keen fresh atmosphere of high latitudes to acquire strength and beauty. Nor is the power of fragrance spread equally over every part of the plant. The petals of lily and rose, jasmine and daffodil, exhale exquisite aroma, while mint, rosemary, and lavender give sweetness from their leaves ; perfume is yielded by the wood of the cedar, by the bark of the cinnamon, the pith of the camphor laurel and the root of the iris. Most flowers close their corollas and become scentless when the sun goes down, whereas the night-blowing cereus bestows its richest treasures upon the darkest hours and dies before dawn. Almighty Lord, Thy children resemble the flowers ; some are bright and admirable in mind and heart, and, like lilies and roses, their appearance promises and affords delight ; others possess no radiance, no outward charm, but similar to the dull-coloured leaves of rosemary and lavender, they are endowed with the qualities of inward purity and sweetness. Some may sparkle early like the buds and blossoms that herald the spring ; others shine later in the summer of life, like the flowers that disclose their loveliness to the warmest rays of the sun ; success and prosperity may call forth their highest and noblest aspirations ; or theirs may be modest worth, not seeking the light and blaze of the world, but diffusing brightness in secluded and dim corners. Thy children's gifts and powers, all graciously vouchsafed by Thee, our Heavenly Father, are as varied and innumerable as those which Thou hast bestowed upon

the trees of the forest, the seeds and flowers and harvests of the field, the treasures of the orchard and vineyard ; but if all these bless and worship Thee unconsciously, let us praise and adore Thee, Almighty Lord, with the works of our hands, with every pulsation of grateful hearts, and also with the words of loving and unchangeable thankfulness.

5.

“ Shall horses run upon the rock ? will one plough there with oxen ? ”
(*Amos vi. 12.*)

THOU hast willed, Almighty God, that what is useless cannot be good, but must be deemed a waste of strength, which is power, and of time, which is life. Thou hast graciously ordained that our duties shall surround us and be near at hand, and not offer those insuperable difficulties which try patience and destroy energy, and leave us broken in health and shattered in spirit. And if this decree of Thy Divine wisdom applies to our own individual endeavours, how much more should it be remembered when we expect strenuous efforts and exertions from others, or assign to them heavy tasks and great labours ! Rocky mountains try and exhaust the strength of the fleetest and most vigorous horses, while slow and heavily treading oxen would labour in vain, and could never plough granite or adamant into fruitful furrows. Teach us, Almighty God, we implore Thee, to adhere to the fulfilment of the

obligations that encompass our path, and not to leave them unperformed, while we attempt to accomplish outlying and distant works which are perhaps hedged in by unconquerable obstacles.

6.

“A man to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honour, . . . yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, . . . this is vanity, and a great evil.”—(*Ecclesiastes* vi. 2.)

THERE are many wayfarers among us who, though cradled in the lap of luxury, surrounded by all the fairest gifts of fortune, apparently living in the sunshine of prosperity, and moving among flowery paths, are yet unable to enjoy the most highly prized boons, unable to partake of the great feast of life, and to quaff the cup of gladness, but find themselves debarred from all delight and all happiness, not by their own fault, but by circumstances over which they can have no control. It is, alas! possible to be quite deaf—not figuratively, but in saddest reality—to all sounds of sweetness and words of love; to be blind to all sights of beauty; to be smitten with sore and heavy disease, a prey to agonising and incurable pain. Most of us have witnessed such misfortunes, and our hearts have ached and bled for the poor sufferers. Still, we may thankfully acknowledge that the afflicted are often humbly resigned to Thy mysterious dispensations, O Lord, and cheered by the unflickering light of faith, which Thou hast permitted to burn brightly on their otherwise darkened road; and we anxiously pray that all similarly visited and oppressed, who,

humanly speaking, are left in dreary stillness and impenetrable gloom, may be warmed by the celestial glow of faith, until the time when the angel of death shall bring their release from thralldom, and by Thy Divine grace, our Merciful Father, open to them the portals of heaven. Amen.

7.

“The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart ; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.”—(*Psalms* xix. 8.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, we sincerely believe that Thy Divine statutes fill mind and soul with gladness ; that Thy heavenly Law causes us to become clear-sighted ; and that by its guidance we may learn to walk along the paths of righteousness. All Thy holy behests point to truth and beneficence, and thus bring light and warmth, joy and love and happiness ; for nought but truth and goodness, the gentle and zealous fulfilment of duty, can secure real enjoyment and felicity. Teach us, we implore Thee, Almighty God, faithful obedience to Thy sacred will, and vouchsafe to all the works of our hands the power of utility and of devoted service ! Amen.

8.

“God granteth sound wisdom to the righteous.”—(*Proverbs* ii. 7.)

ALMIGHTY LORD, when we bow down before Thee at early morn in ardent thanksgiving for having vouchsafed

to us sleep and rest during the dark and silent hours of the night, we also breathe an anxious prayer of supplication for Thy Divine blessing on the labours to be accomplished by willing hearts and minds during the brightness of daylight. We feel that Thou alone, our Gracious Father in heaven, canst support and protect us in the performance of duty, and we are aware that talent, though infinitely valuable, is not bestowed upon every one, and that great knowledge, more precious than rubies, cannot be acquired by all Thy children. But we are convinced that, far beyond worldly lore, far higher than the most dazzling intellectual gifts, is that true wisdom which Thy beneficence grants to the humblest and lowliest who work zealously in Thy fields and in Thy vineyards, in Thy temples and among those who adore Thee, among the ignorant and benighted, among the poor and the oppressed, and wherever charity helps and devotion sustains the drooping, or loving-kindness soothes the sad and sorrowful. Oh, give us that wisdom, Almighty God; permit us to understand human nature in its strength and in its weakness, that we may join the devoted band of the vigorous and energetic, and with them try to discover the surest remedies, the softest balm, the most reviving cordial for those who suffer and wax faint in mind and body, and crave help and sympathy from their happier and more prosperous brethren! Amen.

9.

“That which hath been is now, and that which is to be hath already been, and God searcheth that which is past.”—(*Ecclesiastes* iii. 15.)

AN invisible chain of progress, composed of myriads and myriads of links, and wrought, Almighty Lord, by Thy Divine and merciful love, binds the present to the past, and the future to the present time. The occurrence of to-day is to that which has preceded it what the fruit is to the germ, while in relation to the event hidden in the future, it occupies the place of the bud of promise. Thus man does not stand in lonely independence; he is connected by numberless bands and ties with the human beings and with the events that lie in shadowy years long gone by; in his distress, he looks back, and discovers in dim and distant periods the fate of many who were surrounded by similar cares and anxieties; and he may find lessons, examples, and warnings, encouragement or consolation; he casts wistful glances into a brightly-shining future, and recognises the rich fruition of his own aims, the glad fulfilment of his own hopes. And if not too much perplexed, nor too rapidly hurried on by the incidents and changes of a busily-crowded life, he will discern through all centuries and generations the mighty and omnipotent hand of a Divine Ruler, Guide, and Judge. Thine is that wonderful and beneficent power, our Gracious Lord; nothing can remain concealed from Thy all-penetrating sight; before Thee, the past and the present of every living soul lie revealed for punishment or for reward. Oh, let it be for mercy! Amen.

10.

“Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? are not his days like the days of a hireling?”—(*Job* vii. 1.)

WE are aware, Almighty God, that to the afflicted and storm-tossed, time must appear endless, as every minute brings new trials and sufferings; and we also know that to the indolent every hour seems interminable with its pains and penalties for wasting the precious boon of life; but such feelings and sensations are mere exceptions. The flight of time is indeed rapid; and when we approach Thee, our Gracious Lord, with prayers at early morn, we implore Thy beneficence to strengthen our best intentions, so that we may learn the value of each passing hour, learn to make good use of the fleeting moments, and cause them to yield earnest and indefatigable service. The longest life is so brief, and the brightest has so many clouds and shadows, which seem to extinguish sunlight and render work impossible, that, while Thy mercy gives us health and vigour, we should strive to add to the blessings of Thy bounty, courage and firmness, energy and zeal; and, with these qualities—the best implements for the performance of all labours of love—endeavour to fulfil the highest and noblest duties of piety. We are but servants; Thou, our Heavenly Father, art the Great and Omnipotent Master; Thou wilt reward the diligent workman, but the idle and dilatory must suffer for having frittered away the days which should have been devoted to the best purposes of life.

11.

“Better is a handful with quietness than both the hands full of travail and vexation of spirit.”—(*Ecclesiastes* iv. 6.)

ALMIGHTY Father in heaven, for some reason of Divine wisdom, unknown to us, and probably never to be fathomed by our limited power, Thou hast ordained that innumerable varieties of position and much diversity of circumstances shall exist among Thy children ; and still Thy paternal care and lovingkindness are graciously extended to them all. What better proof than this can we have to show that wealth and luxuries are not necessary to give happiness? The greatest and most precious treasures—those which yield inexhaustible joys, youth, health, vigour of mind and body, friendship and kindness of heart, talent and fame, the tenderness of a fond mother, the watchful guidance of a dear father, and the dutiful affection of devoted children—all gifts and blessings of Thy infinite beneficence—are vouchsafed alike to rich and poor ; gold can neither buy nor replace these treasures, nor compensate us for the irreparable loss when they are no longer in our possession. Almighty God, we implore Thee to enlighten our ignorance, that we may learn contentment, learn to be frugal and satisfied, and simple in our tastes ; and teach us to feel that the real enjoyment of life does not depend on herds and flocks, on palaces and thrones, show and pomp, splendour and magnificence. But greed ignores these truths and lessons, and becomes a gnawing canker that devours alike strength and time ; it undermines the former, so as to

render it incapable of healthy exertion, and engrosses the latter so completely as not to leave any room for better thoughts and better deeds ; nor does it even allow the laboriously amassed gain to yield the pleasures of worldly prosperity. A pious and thankful mind derives satisfaction and deep gratitude from all the gifts of Thy Divine Providence, our Gracious Lord, while a discontented and murmuring spirit is full of self-inflicted torments, which change blessings into punishments.

12.

“ Who provideth for the raven his food, when his young ones cry to God and wander for want of nourishment ? ”—(*Job* xxxviii. 41.)

ALMIGHTY LORD, Thy beneficence is everlasting and boundless, and no reverses, however sudden ; no misfortunes, however great ; no trials and struggles, although they may well nigh overwhelm our strength ; no cares and anxieties, though they harass and prostrate us ; not the torture of bodily agony ; not the far greater anguish of affliction ; nor even the deep gloom of mourning and bereavement—should ever cause us to think that Thou, our Heavenly Father, hast forgotten and abandoned Thy suffering children. Even the birds of the air are mercifully remembered by Thee—the birds, that have neither prayers nor words of thanksgiving and supplication to lay at the foot of Thy throne—only songs of gladness and cries of woe ; yet Thy all-seeing eye discovers their wants, and Thy all-embracing Providence watches over them when they stand on high and barren

rocks, or on stony beach by the waves of the sea-shore ; when they flit, with weary wing, across the hot sands of the desert, or float over the wide ocean to fairer or gentler climes, or when, in cold winter season, which covers meadow, garden, and hedgerow with snow and ice, they look in vain for the coral fruit of the holly, the ruby bells of the sombre yew, and the glistening berries and clusters of ivy and laurel, and find that everything has disappeared under the close and dazzling veil. Then, our Bountiful Father, Thou sendest the poor half-frozen and perishing birds to seek food and comfort on our door-steps and window-sills. And as Thou hast pity upon them, so surely wilt Thou have pity upon us Thy children, and rescue us from flood and from fire ; and when storm-tossed and shipwrecked, naked, thirsting, and hungering, we may yet hope to be comforted and to live by the grace of Thy infinite mercy, Almighty God. And if Thou hast decreed, that death shall end our earthly trials and sufferings, we still may look heavenward, and anxiously pray for admission to Thy Divine and all-healing presence. Amen.

13.

“She seeketh wool and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands.”
(*Proverbs xxxi. 13.*)

ALMIGHTY GOD, who inclinest Thy Divine ear to the prayers of Thy children, hearken, I implore Thee, to my earnest supplication, allow me to throw off the heavy chains of weariness, and to unclasp my fettered hands. These have been idle till now, and I have failed

to seek occupation. Yet work abounds in this busy world, where activity is the rule laid down by Thy holy will, and where all whom Thou hast created lead a life of industry, where even the birds of the air travel far and on unflagging wings in search of materials to build the wondrous cradles of their young. The eagle-mother establishes her eyry on rocky mountain crests between earth and heaven, the swallows attach their nests to our eaves, and place their nestlings under the protection of our roofs, and the beaver cuts down trees, raises banks, and constructs habitations on the borders of lake and stream—homes wind- and water-proof for its little ones. And shall I not work, though, unlike the virtuous woman portrayed by the wise king, I may not with lithe fingers wreathe wool or flax round distaff or spindle? Surely I can labour from the earliest to the latest hours, that the home of my loved ones may be warm and bright, the abode of comfort, and cheerfulness, of gentle words and acts of kindness, of ardent thanksgiving and humble prayer to Thee, our Gracious Lord! Oh strengthen and support me, I implore Thee, that I may learn and practise the sacred duties of industry, and strive with active limbs and earnest heart, and with my whole mind and soul, to work and to be useful! Amen.



14.

“Righteousness is immortal.”—(*Wisdom of Solomon*, i. 15.)

ALTHOUGH the harvest graciously vouchsafed by Thee, Almighty God, be thousandfold, some few grains of wheat, among the myriads of seeds placed in the bosom of the earth, may remain inert; but no good action is ever lost; the mind that planned, and the hand that wrought it may perhaps be forgotten and unrewarded in a worldly sense, or even unknown, but the good seed is a germ that grows into golden harvests, spreading far and wide, nourishing thousands with the food of life, and leading on and on to more luxuriant sheaves of sustenance, to more extended valleys of beauty and prosperity, to wider fields of excellence and happiness. And in Thy infinite beneficence, Almighty God, Thou hast permitted even the humblest and lowliest among us to be strengthened for the accomplishment of gentle deeds of love and charity, of usefulness and of devoted service, faithful unto death. Our Heavenly Father, we implore Thee, to bless the labour of our days, and to make it productive of goodly results, so that, whatever our own lot, and be the years of our existence few or many, we may close our eyes and feel that we have not lived in vain.



15.

“He hath made every thing beautiful in its time, also He hath set the world in their heart.”—(*Ecclesiastes* iii. 11.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, the gifts and blessings which Thy beneficence has bestowed upon us, Thy children, are indeed excellent, and admirable, and if we live in faithful obedience to Thy immutable laws and commandments, and learn to accomplish Thy sacred will, we shall be able to prize and enjoy them all in accordance with the great and holy wisdom which gave them for our happiness. When Thy Divine hand formed us, and placed us in this world, it was decreed that our organization should indeed be twofold, composed of heavenly and of terrestrial elements. While we remain on earth, the spiritual portion of our nature is made manifest and obtains expression only through the more perishable part of our being. When the aspirations of our soul float heavenward to Thee, O Gracious Lord, the eye is uplifted to the contemplation of the glorious firmament and almost dazzled by the effulgent rays of the sun at mid-day; the mind is filled with mysterious awe, when by the soft light of the moon myriads of stars shine out of the unfathomed darkness and unmeasured distance; the heart is pervaded with feelings of grateful adoration, but the lips utter thanksgiving and prayer; the noblest thoughts and the best emotions would lose much of their power and perhaps vanish entirely during our earthly pilgrimage, did not the tongue give utterance to them, and allow their aims and promptings to become useful realities and deeds of good service faithfully accomplished

in the radiance and with the blessing of Thy countenance. The union of our spiritual and our human gifts and powers has been designed by Thee, our Merciful Benefactor, to lead us on towards perfection. Thy celestial bounty never intended that we should turn away our eyes from the enchanting loveliness of this world, from the sweetness of spring crowned with all the fairest young blossoms, from the splendour of summer with its glowing roses and golden harvest fields, from the wealth of autumn and its rich gifts, or from the gems and jewels of ice and wreaths of snow, with which the winter season replaces the green foliage of the trees and the enamelled carpets of the earth. Thy infinite goodness has not bidden us close our ears to the song of lark and linnet, to the music of the waters, to the fluttering of the breeze, to the voices of our beloved, to sounds of joy and gladness, nor has it ordered us to fly into darkness and solitude from the sights and scenes of beauty and of felicity with which Thou hast endowed and embellished this world. The attempt to stifle all human cravings and yearnings, all human sources of pleasure and enjoyment, seems a grave error, and can lead only to narrow ideas, morbid feelings, and ungenerous sentiments. Although the humble yet ardent worship of Thy protecting omnipotence be the first thought of consciousness when we wake in the morning, and the last when we seek rest and sleep at night, and though all the hours of labour be devoted by us to works of righteousness, we yet implore Thee to teach and allow us, Almighty God, to adore Thee also by the blameless enjoyment of life, and thus to find happiness and diffuse it all around.

16.

“I have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by perpetual decree that it cannot pass it, and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail.”—(*Jeremiah v. 22.*)

ALMIGHTY LORD, the whole universe obeys Thy Divine behests. Yet to the feeble understanding and the flickering hope and faith of Thy children, Thy decrees remain mysterious and impenetrable, and how often, alas! are they not fraught with dismay and dread, changing joy into gloom, filling the house with mourning, and the heart with pain and sorrow. But the shadows are not everywhere; Thy goodness rends the darkest clouds, and causes warmth and sunshine, light and happiness to return. Our gratitude is deep and vivid for Thy mercies and Thy favours, but we give ourselves up so fondly to the delights and enchantments of life, that although constantly reminded of Thy bounty, we hardly dwell often enough on Thy awe-inspiring Omnipotence. And yet Thy power is manifest on land and on sea, it is heard in the thunder and seen in the lightning, felt in the tempest and feared in the waves that rise and roll and foam and yet die on the sea-girt coast, or rush back to the ocean; for Thou hast willed it so that the waves shall not invade the earth, and that all their fury shall be spent in vain. Almighty God, we implore Thee to keep us equally removed from the vain belief, that happiness can be uninterrupted in this world, and from the numbing gloom of despondency and despair. Nothing is everlasting

and unconquerable except Thy power, nothing is inexhaustible except Thy goodness, nothing is infinite except Thy mercy. Teach us, we implore Thee, to trust in Thee always, and only in Thee, Almighty and Eternal God !

17.

“I will mention the lovingkindness of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed upon us.”—
(*Isaiah* lxiii. 7.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, if our lips could utter myriads and myriads of words and numberless forms of thanksgiving, and if we were able to accomplish countless acts of gratitude, we should yet be incapable of acknowledging all the gifts and treasures which Thy bounty has bestowed upon us, the infinite favours that mark every day of our life, the blessings that surround us, the mercy which Thy Divine grace is constantly vouchsafing to our errors of judgment, and to our shortcomings in the fulfilment of daily duties. Thou art our Creator and Benefactor ; may Thy holy name be praised and exalted for ever and ever ! The winds blow and sweep furiously over land and sea ; the mighty oak, though firmly rooted in the earth, is shattered and hurled to the ground ; but by Thy protection the nutshell boat is privileged to approach the foundering ship, and snatches the crew from the yawning grave beneath the billows. The tempest howls and shrieks at our door, torrents descend from heaven, yet we are safe because Thy hand

shields us, because Thy celestial goodness watches over us; the terrors of fire encompass our dwelling, the flames leap towards the skies and colour them with a lurid glare; but we do not perish, we are rescued from the devouring element, unscathed in health and limb, for Thou, our Gracious Lord, art our fortress, our rock, our panoply. We are in Thy keeping, our Father, and no earthly power can harm us.

18.

“God giveth rain in its season; He reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest.”—(*Jeremiah* v. 24.)

ALMIGHTY LORD, Thy beneficence and lovingkindness are indeed unbounded; they are gloriously evident at every moment of the day, at every hour of the night, and the poor and the rich alike are the grateful recipients of Thy goodness, both tenderly cared for by Thy Divine Providence, though apparently not in the same manner. The young and the old, the ignorant, the inexperienced, and the learned, are all equally warmed and cheered by the radiant sunlight of heaven, fanned by the soft wing of the breeze, nourished by the golden grain of the furrow, and refreshed by the water of the fountain; while the pastures and harvest lands, the vineyards and orchards are fertilized by descending showers from the clouds. But when the rain falls incessantly, and the rivers overflow their banks, and inundation covers the land, there is fear and there is anxiety in many homes, in many hamlets, and even

cities; and when the sky is uninterruptedly blue, and not a drop of moisture is felt, and the verdure withers, and the germs and seeds remain inert, and the blossoms fade, and the buds of beauty decay, and the land is parched, and the fountains are dried up, and vast tracts are threatened with famine, then all hearts are filled with sadness and with terror. But the wise and the learned know that over the surface of the globe the fall of rain and the power of the sunbeams are always the same, though the distribution may vary in different years and climes. And Thou hast decreed, Almighty Lord, that we, Thy children, shall, by prudence and active labour, balance these inequalities, send richly freighted ships to bring the produce of the sheaves to impoverished countries, cause gigantic labours of irrigation to spread over torrid districts, and render the horrors of famine all but impossible, while dikes and other works of protection drain the invading floods from the lands in moister and more temperate regions. Thus the fertilizing streams from heaven and the blessed harvests of the earth are always graciously vouchsafed to mankind. Almighty God, teach us, we implore Thee, ever to understand their value, and to use them for the prosperity and happiness of all!



19.

“O ye dews and storms of snow, bless ye the Lord.”—(*Song of the Three Holy Children*, ver. 46.)

THE summer is gone with all its loveliness and fragrance of flowers, the autumn has celebrated its harvest feasts, the golden grain has ceased to wave, the scythe has passed over the grass of the valleys, the leaves of the vineyard have vanished, swept away by the wind, the amber and purple clusters fill the wine-presses, the trees are leafless, the ground is bare and dreary, and winter is coming with hard and heavy step, with chilling breath and cold grasp; but Thy beneficence, Almighty God, has made even winter beautiful, and the dews and storms of snow bless Thee, O Merciful Lord, and praise and exalt Thee for ever. The cold dews weave nets and veils of silver and jewels for bower and hedgerow that have lost their vernal brightness, and the snow wraps its soft white mantle round the bare earth. How unrivalled is this in its dazzling splendour, concealing the havoc of the seasons, the blight, the worm, the decay, and death of the year! The snow clothes the leafless trees with minute stars and clusters of beauty, and hangs glistening sprays round the stems and branches of the dark firs and pines. It replenishes rills and rivulets, lakes and streams drained by the heat of the summer months, and brings to our doors and our hearts the hungry and the suffering, from the redbreast to the human starveling,

to be fed and warmed, or clad and comforted. The winter with its snow-storms thus thaws and melts the hardness of our inner world ; it shows us privation and misery to be relieved and assuaged, and as the snows bless Thee, so do we, Almighty Lord, for teaching us to keep the cold away from our suffering brethren by folding around them the mantles of love and kindness.



20.

“I form the light and create darkness ; I make peace and create evil : I, the Lord, do all these things.”—(*Isaiah* xlv. 7.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, everything which Thou hast created is so admirable and excellent, that we, Thy children, while bowing down in fervid adoration before the majesty of Thy throne, and raising our hands in prayer and thanksgiving to Thy infinite goodness, have not sufficient power of utterance to praise Thy holy name for all gifts and treasures ; nor are we keensighted enough always to recollect that, whatever Thou hast formed and ordained with respect to all the changes and vicissitudes which pervade the world and the lives of men, is devised with perfect justice and wisdom to lead to universal prosperity and happiness. Even that which, in the shape of evil, fills us with alarm, is fraught with ultimate good ; just as the strife of the elements, the howling tempest, the deadly flash of lightning, the destructive hailstorm, the flood and the drought, all have their mission to fulfil, and lead us to a better

understanding of the immutable laws of nature. Thy mighty arm alone can still the winds, and control the waters, and rob the storm of its devastating power, and cause the gales to sweep through the air and over the earth, and blow away fever and pestilence; but Thou teachest us to study the signs of heaven, and not to rush blindly and madly into danger, nor to expose our best beloved to its horrors. Sometimes the greatest tyrants, the oppressors alike of freemen and slaves, have, by Thy omnipotent will, been allowed to hold sway, that whole nations might be released from thralldom, and raised from the hardships of bondage and the trials of persecution to the clear sunlight of liberty. Thou gavest a column of smoke and a pillar of fire to the Israelites to conduct them in safety out of the land of Egypt, away from the crushing sceptre of Pharaoh, and to guide their wanderings to the land of promise and of plenty. And in Persia, Haman's hatred and malignity, bent upon persecuting and injuring a scattered and helpless race, served to bring our forefathers into prosperity and favour. Thus Thou hast shaped and willed everything for the best, Almighty God, our Gracious Benefactor, and we entreat Thee to open our eyes, that we may always discern the brightness of Thy wisdom through the obscuring mists of worldly troubles and trials! Amen.



21.

“Cast thy bread upon the waters ; for thou shalt find it after many days.”
(*Ecclesiastes* xi. 1.)

OUR Gracious and Divine Benefactor, Thou, from whom we hold all treasures and blessings, hast placed hope, that angel of brightness, on our path, to illumine the darkest windings, to irradiate the most dangerous precipices, to soar with rainbow wings into every green oasis, into peaceful regions and lands of happiness, where we may find the reward of anxious labour, and feel that good works are never useless and never lost. What should we do—poor human beings—without the flame of hope? It rekindles courage, energy, and zeal, and prompts us to labour on and on, undaunted by difficulties, unchecked by obstacles, unsubdued by failure or defeat. Faith points heavenward to the realms of immortality and eternal peace, to the happy land of rest, of freedom from sickness, suffering, and sorrow. But, on earth, hope comforts and consoles us, and bids us shake off doubt and despondency, when our exertions seem fruitless, when our best endeavours appear to elicit no response, when our efforts to render good service are, as it were, thrown away, when we fail to make an impression on ignorance, or to lessen poverty, or to reclaim the erring and sinful. Almighty Lord, we invoke Thy gracious aid, and fervently pray that Thou wilt never allow hope to abandon us, but that Thy mercy will cause it to rebuke and silence our impatience, and assure us that earnestness and activity and the conscientious fulfilment of duty must ever be rich and blessed in precious results.

22.

“And it shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.”—(*Isaiah* lxx. 24.)

OUR Gracious Lord, Thou art indeed a Bountiful Father, Thou seest our needs, our sore and heavy distress, our troubles and anxieties, our sufferings and our sorrows; our trembling lips can lay the anguish of the crushed and bleeding heart before Thee; and then Thy pitying kindness comes to our aid, and pours Divine balm into the deepest wounds. When overwhelmed by exhausting struggles, when surrounded by trials, when oppressed by the gloom of despondency or the utter darkness of despair, we lose, alas! the power of praying; neither with words nor in silence can we invoke Thy holy name; even the pages of the sacred volume fail to afford supplications; yet ere we cry unto Thee, Thy compassionate answer is vouchsafed to our helplessness, and before we can speak, Thy merciful hand is extended to raise us from the depth of utter desolation.—O my God, Thou allowest intense anguish to pass away, and to be replaced by that blessed tranquillity which enables us to live on and to labour in humble yet zealous obedience to Thy holy will. Help me, heal me, I implore Thee, Almighty God, that my days may not be useless and selfishly consumed by grief, but permit me still to work, and let me be privileged to do good and loving service wherever comfort and assistance may be needed! Amen.

23.

“Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself, and discover not a secret to another.”—(*Proverbs* xxv. 9.)

O LORD, our God, Thou hast bestowed upon us many gifts and powers which may all be turned into blessings and sources of happiness and enjoyment, provided we use them with care and moderation, with discretion and kindness. The faculty of speech is among the most precious when it becomes the soft, but penetrating instrument of advice and persuasion, the medium of earnest yet calm discussion, when it finds access to the mind, in order to dispel error and prejudice, or seeks an easy and direct road to the heart, there to awaken sympathy, win forgiveness, restore confidence and tranquillity. But if we make our cause of complaint or the displeasure of our neighbour known to others, we shall incur the risk of widening the breach we are anxious to repair, of deepening and envenoming the wound we wish to heal and to close, and we may perhaps fan smouldering anger into the flame of passion and violence. Strengthen and support us, we beseech Thee, our Heavenly Father, enable us to subdue irritation—our own and that of others—to curb annoyance, check vexation, crush bitterness of spirit and rebellion against inevitable decrees, and let us express our Gracious Lord, only the best thoughts and feelings, those which lead to peace and harmony, to friendship and devoted service; and inspire the words of our lips,

so that with Thy Divine help, Almighty God, we may be privileged to teach fervid zeal for all good works, and the pardon and oblivion of all offences !

24.

“Let the earth praise the Lord.”—(*Song of the Three Holy Children*, ver. 52.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, everything which Thou hast created for the sustenance of Thy children, for their delight and the adornment of the earthly abode which Thou hast graciously assigned to them, praises and blesses Thy holy name, from early dawn till dew-sparkling eve, and during the dim and silent hours of the night. It is not only the bright pasture land with countless herds and flocks, not merely the green meadow, bright and sweet with wild blossoms, musical with the song of the lark and with the soft hum of the honey-bee, not the incense-breathing woods alone, nor the goodly harvest fields waving in the radiance of sunlight, nor the vine and the olive, the palm-tree and the amber fruit of the orange, nor the rivers and seas with the melodies of their waters, that praise Thee, our Heavenly Lord. The henbane and the poppy, the deadly nightshade and many other poisonous plants far too numerous to name, all praise and bless Thee, our Almighty Benefactor ; for everything which Thou hast created has been wrought with a great and wise purpose. The venomous juices of the danger-spreading flowers and leaves, seeds and roots, become powerful remedies in the hands of art and

science, they produce insensibility under otherwise fearful trials, they give freedom from suffering, they bring rest and sleep, they prolong life. And in a similar manner we may extract from the threatening dangers of sickness and sorrow, of pain and anxiety, many great and permanent blessings. Real afflictions and trials dull and deaden and destroy moral diseases, they purify and refine the heart, they cause all daily and minor disappointments and vexations to lose the power of wounding us, and make us feel profoundly grateful, when we might otherwise be indifferent or neglectful, dazzled by prosperity and happiness, and blinded by the enjoyment of such treasures, to dangers and perils innumerable.

25.

“A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.”

(Proverbs xvii. 17.)

ALMIGHTY LORD, Thou, whose tender love pervades the whole universe, hast taught us that it is the feeling of warm and deep sympathy with all our brethren, which causes the fulfilment of duty to lose much of its difficulty, and makes it attractive in our eyes. If, by the power of mind and heart, we learn to share the joys and sorrows of others, it will be a great privilege to bask in the sunshine of the happiest, and to lessen the weight of affliction that oppresses the most unfortunate. Our friends may stand in more urgent need of us when storm-clouds threaten their prosperity, or sickness lays

them low, when suffering tries their patience and courage, when they are tortured by anxiety, or when the anguish of bereavement has made their days dark and desolate. Then, although we may be painfully aware that human words are always feeble and often quite powerless to soothe and to comfort the grieving soul, our time, our care, our anxious thought, and every effort of which we are capable, should be given to those who fear and weep and mourn. With Thy Divine aid, Almighty God, we need not despair to sweeten their cup of life, and even to wreath it with flowers. Adversity should not raise up walls of separation between us and our friends, but, on the contrary, tear asunder all veils and curtains which time and circumstances may have placed athwart the road that leads to their confidence and to our warmest solicitude. And if Thy gracious assistance enables us thus to sympathize with the mourner and the sufferer, the same help, Almighty Lord, will allow us to rejoice with the joyful, and thus to heighten their felicity and our own.



26.

“I have sworn by Myself, the word is gone out of My mouth in truth, and shall not remain unfulfilled; unto Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.”—(*Isaiah* xlv. 23.)

ALMIGHTY LORD, while we bow down before Thee in most fervent adoration, we know that our loved ones, our brethren, and friends also bend in profound worship at the foot of Thy sacred throne, on the steps of Thy

holy altars, and raise their hands and lips and hearts to Thee with supplication and with thanksgiving ; they feel, as we do, that all gifts and all treasures, all mercies and all blessings come from Thee and Thee alone, that Thou art the Divine Creator of heaven and earth, of heaven in its glory, with its floods of light and radiant beams of sunshine by day, and its moonlit beauty and mysterious star-brilliance by night, and of earth in its fulness and teeming life. But we are also convinced that, not only our nearest and dearest, our kindred, our own people, the descendants of those to whom Thy Divine laws and commandments were vouchsafed from the heights of Mount Sinai thousands of years ago, bend in faithful obedience before the majesty of Thy Omnipotence, our Heavenly Lord, but that many millions of human beings in every part of the globe have learnt to know and to adore Thee, and that, ere long, ignorance and darkness will vanish, and the eyes of all mankind will be opened to the flame of truth, that every ear will hear Thy Law, every tongue will bless Thee, every voice join in a jubilant chorus of gratitude to Thee, our Gracious Lord, our Merciful King and Loving Benefactor. Amen.



27.

“Be not hasty in thy tongue, and in thy deeds slack and amiss.”
(*Sirach* iv. 29.)

TRANQUIL thought and restless activity, moderation and eagerness, cold indifference and glowing zeal; all these seem to form glaring contrasts. Ardour belongs to impetuous youth, and quiet contemplation to the experience of old age; while the years that lie between these two periods afford the power of combining the advantages of both. Vivid impressions are received in the morning of our life, and hasty words are often spoken, which it would be well could they be left unsaid; but when ideas have deepened into convictions and ripened into principles, when calm reflection has quelled the flames of bewildering enthusiasm, then, oh then, Almighty God, keep alive in us, we beseech Thee, the firm will and the faculty to accomplish earnest works, and make our good deeds plentiful and unremitting in the service that is pleasing in Thy Divine eyes, and useful to our brethren, who are our fellow pilgrims through the valleys and over the heights of this earth to that unknown world whither we are all travelling.



28.

“In the day when I cried Thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.”—(*Psalm cxxxviii.* 3.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, though the bodily sickness which afflicts us is not among the greatest and heaviest of trials, we need all the courage which Thy Divine hand alone can give to bear the sore visitation. To endure the fever that burns and the pain that tortures, we crave Thy celestial help and support ; yet with Thy merciful blessing upon our anxious endeavours we may teach ourselves to bow and submit to inevitable suffering without a rebellious word or thought, and without a feeling of irritation. What seems overwhelming is the sense of utter helplessness which assails us in sickness, when we lose our independence and our power of action, when we become feeble and useless, when we must rely upon others, and cannot perform any obligations, fulfil any duties, or place any work or labour or service at the disposal of those around us. Nor are even these the most trying hardships of illness ; we feel that we cause trouble and fatigue, that without wishing it, or perhaps even knowing the full extent of the heavy debt which we incur, we exact many sacrifices of occupation and enjoyment, or of leisure, rest, and sleep, from the friends and loved ones whose happiness we cherish more dearly than our own. Almighty God, we cry unto Thee from the depth of our great distress, and we anxiously and ardently pray to be supported with that strength of mind and heart which crushes selfishness, and gives the force of iron to self-control.

29.

“Whatsoever thou takest in hand, remember the end, and thou shalt never do amiss.”—(*Sirach* vii. 36.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, we implore Thee to strengthen us, so that neither pleasure, nor momentary satisfaction, nor self-seeking, nor mere enjoyment may become the aim or guide of our actions! We beseech Thee, O Gracious Lord, to help and sustain us in all unselfish endeavours! Enable our understanding, we implore Thee, to weigh the ultimate effect and influence of words and deeds with regard to the true happiness of others and to our own! Uphold us, our Heavenly Father, that we may not be disheartened and wax faint when the difficulties seem great and the way is long, and the goal is far distant, but allow us to feel, that zealous perseverance aided by Thy Divine blessing must lead to the performance of good works and to the conscientious fulfilment of all duties!



30.

“Woe is me for my hurt! My wound is grievous: but I said, Truly this is a grief, and I must bear it.”—(*Jeremiah* x. 19.)

IRRITATION and a spirit of rebellion increase all evils, be they of the mind or of the body, and therefore, Almighty God, we incessantly implore Thee for that unrepining humility which bows without a murmur under the weight of painful and incomprehensible decrees, and lays down its load of sorrows at the foot of Thy throne, praying for strength to carry the burden without faltering or flinching, until it may please Thee, O Lord, to grant release to the weary and heavily laden. And indeed resignation is often the most perfect wisdom; at first it may bear the semblance of dull and unrelieved gloom; but gradually the absence of all glaring and perhaps misleading light brings undisturbed tranquillity for pious thought and contemplation, and as from the mysterious depths of night, distant stars rise one by one, so gleams of hope penetrate the all-pervading dimness of resignation, and those who have said farewell to many joys and borne many sorrows, learn that their life has not become a complete blank, and that, although it may have lost the brightest charms, its numerous duties remain and call for fulfilment.—O God, our Merciful Father, strengthen us, we beseech Thee, for the performance of all duties, whether happiness smiles upon us, or sorrow weighs us down! Amen.

DECEMBER.

1.

“Gold is tried in the fire, and righteous men in the furnace of adversity.
(*Sirach* ii. 5.)

AS the most precious and most perfect metals pass through the fire unharmed, and as even they require the ordeal of the crucible to be freed from any dross or impurity that may cling to them, so the really good and noble in mind and heart pass through the hot flames of anguish, and emerge from affliction to become still better, and lose much of the weakness and many of the imperfections inherent in human nature, or engendered perhaps by a dazzling tide of prosperity. In this world which Thy beneficence has blessed so abundantly, Almighty God, that happiness greatly predominates over sorrow, we must not think and can never feel that grief and suffering are in themselves desirable, and yet every condition of life, every vicissitude, every change, which Thou, our Heavenly Father, hast permitted to arise, occurs for some reason of supreme

wisdom and justice, and every trial affects our brethren and ourselves variously, and in accordance with the faults and qualities of our organization. The arrogant become humbled, and are suddenly, and often lastingly, impressed with a sense of their own littleness, and their inability to stem the waves of fate, while the modest and lowly bear misfortune as a further proof that pride and haughtiness are nought but vainglory, and with a deeper conviction that health and strength and gladness, like all precious gifts of Thy bounty, are indeed treasures intended for their individual enjoyment, but are also vouchsafed to them by Thy Divine Providence to embellish the path of their loved ones; the active, when in the depths of paralysing grief and bereavement, learn to value still more truly the period of freedom from care which enabled them to study and to work; the indolent feel most keenly, when oppressed by misfortune or anxiety, how many tranquil and peaceful days they have wasted; the compassionate and gentle-hearted become deeply imbued with the necessity of still more tender and more constant watchfulness at the side of the helpless and the afflicted. Almighty Lord, enable us, we beseech Thee, to bend under all trials in a spirit of humility, so that when in Thy own good time the sore troubles shall have passed away, we may be left stronger and better fitted for the accomplishment of duty! Amen.



2.

“Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers : the snare is broken, and we are escaped.”—(*Psalm cxxiv. 7.*)

WE have watched the ripening fruit of the cherry tree, the mellow bloom of the plum, the soft down on the peach, and have seen the poor captive bird cunningly ensnared among these bewildering temptations, and fluttering to break through the meshes which the craft of the fowler has hung around him ; but the bird is not helpless ; with fine claws and sharp beak he can open the prison bars of the closely woven net, and wing his way to air and light, sunshine and liberty. Thus, O thus, Almighty Lord, our soul, enticed by allurements, which are grave perils, struggles anxiously, but not in vain, to win freedom ; it severs all bonds and breaks all ties that hold it captive, rends and destroys the snares of evil, and with deep thankfulness rejoices in its escape. We humbly sink down at the foot of Thy throne, Almighty God, and pray that Thou, who hast graciously vouchsafed to us the power of freeing ourselves from harm, wilt strengthen and bless us still further, so that we may never fall again into temptation, but fly from the meshes of error and from all mazes and confusion to the light of truth which points out the whole circle of our duties, and shows us the road to their complete performance.

3.

“Honourable age is not that which standeth in length of time, nor that which is measured by number of years ; but wisdom is the grey hair to men, and an unspotted life is old age.”—(*Wisdom of Solomon*, iv. 8, 9.)

NOT even the brightest old age, to which in Thy infinite beneficence, Almighty God, Thou hast vouchsafed the unimpaired possession of the faculties of life, can ever rival youth in its career of joy and happiness, of zealous labour and success ; but old age is honourable and even useful in its repose, when it can point with the wisdom of experience to the annals of many years passed in eager study and indefatigable work, and to their reward in the acquisition of treasures of knowledge and research ; it is honourable in having patiently won a true appreciation of noble aims and great deeds, and gained that gentle indulgence which flows from an intimate acquaintance with the difficulties and obstacles that beset the human path from the cradle to the grave. Oh give us that old age, Almighty God, we implore Thee, free from remorse, from self-reproach, and repining, and cause us to prepare it for ourselves by the conscientious and hourly fulfilment of all duties, and the fervent worship of Thy Divine omnipotence !



4.

“The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord.”—(*Job* i. 21.)

ALMIGHTY LORD, Thou hast showered down many blessings upon me, and hast surrounded the path of Thy servant with great mercies, and though sorrow now fills my soul, and can never cease to overshadow my days, I am humbly and deeply thankful for the numerous gifts of Thy Divine goodness. Only a year ago I basked in undimmed light and warmth and sunshine, my home was bright with the smiles of many loving faces, and musical with the voices of mirth and happiness. I looked for still greater joys in the circle of my dear ones, and cherished the glad hope and promise of new life—and death came! Yet the angel's wing was swift, and the hand of the messenger soft and gentle; in one brief moment it gathered my daughter, my young rose in all her freshness and glowing beauty, and Thou, Almighty Lord, hast transplanted my dearly treasured flower from the valley of earth to bloom in the garden of heaven. I thank Thee, Omnipotent God, that my home was ever embellished by her presence, that her sweetness ever pervaded my roof. No lips can tell my loss, no tongue express my life-long anguish, but I will remember her gain and her blissful peace and happiness in the realms of immortality, and will praise Thee, O Lord, and bless Thy

holy name; for Thy decrees, even when awful and mysterious, are decrees of wisdom, all framed for the best ends!

5.

“Wisdom is a loving spirit.”—(*Wisdom of Solomon*, i. 6.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, when Thy heavenly grace permits benevolence to dwell in our heart, we possess one of the most precious gifts of Thy Divine hand, a gift which enables us to spread innumerable blessings far and wide, and teaches our eyes to look wistfully and see clearly, while it makes us feel for others, and sympathize with them, and by Thy celestial help allows us to chase away the numbing cold of despondency, and to replace it by the warmth and glow of hope; it causes us to seek the darkest and most secret corners, and to fill them with radiant brightness, encourages us to dispel ignorance, shame, and sin, and call forth in their stead repentance and humility, thus fostering the knowledge and ardent worship of Thy sacred omnipotence among those who, benighted or steeped in guilt, have extinguished or lost the brilliant torch of faith, or who may perhaps never have been guided by its rays. Surely benevolence is wisdom, the best, the safest, and soundest wisdom—the purest and most brilliant light. The greatest rulers and lawgivers, the most profound thinkers and philosophers, the most gifted and successful statesmen, are those whose writings, whose labours, and whose acts have relieved whole nations from the

pressure of heavy burdens, diffused the boons of civilization, and extended the benefits of prosperity and the treasures of happiness to the largest numbers of human beings—all our brethren, and all Thy children, Almighty Lord. We implore Thee, our Heavenly Father, to show us the noblest and highest aims of benevolence, and to teach us its best works and duties. Amen.

6.

“I, the Lord, search the heart, and try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.”
(*Jeremiah* xvii. 10.)

THOU hast ordained, Almighty God, that nothing shall be lost in this wonderful world which Thy Divine power has created, neither the great forest tree with towering stem and unseen roots, wide-spreading branches and countless leaves, nor the wild flowers of field and moorland, neither the rich clusters of the orchard nor the fruit of the vineyard, neither seed nor grass blade, neither dewdrop nor grain of sand; all have their uses, either in themselves or by their transformation, and none perish. And if Thy heavenly wisdom, our Gracious Protector, has framed these beneficent laws for the productions of earth and sky and sea, can we suppose that in the human heart and mind Thou wilt permit thoughts and principles, wishes and feelings to pass away, and leave no trace behind? Surely no earnest intention, no

zealous effort, no arduous struggle, succeeds or fails without influencing a whole career, and perhaps the existence of many. No hatred and malignity expressed by word or deed, or merely harboured in the chambers of the breast, no harshness or hardness of voice, of character or conduct, not even neglect and apathy remain unpunished; nothing is unheeded or dies without leaving a trace behind. Our labours are not spent in vain; our example and our suffering all become lessons or warnings for the loved ones around us, and perhaps for wider circles, and, according to our works, we feel encouraged, gladdened, and sustained through the mazes of our earthly pilgrimage, or cast down, checked, and discouraged. Thou, Almighty Father, hast willed it so, and Thy sacred wisdom is ever beneficent, though our limited knowledge and imperfect sight often fail to discover how admirably and supremely good are all Thy laws and behests. Cause us, our Gracious Lord, to be always guided by them, and when Thou searchest the hearts of Thy children, mayest Thou ever find therein a faithful trust in Thee and a glowing adoration of Thy holiness! Amen.

7.

“I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and He heard me out of His holy hill.”—(*Psalms* iii. 4.)

How dim was the earth, how gloomy the expanse of clouds that concealed the skies above, how dreary the road to the silent home where the much-beloved has

found a resting place! She left us in her youth and beauty, ere time had touched her waving tresses with the snow of winter, and shaded the purity of her brow with its furrows, ere the light of her eyes had grown faint, and the bloom faded from her sweet and radiant face. She left us without a tear on her cheek, without a sigh on her lips, without a sorrow in her heart, without suffering or regret, without a single pang. She was the life and soul, the light and warmth, the joy and happiness of our home. She walked with God along His gleaming paths of righteousness, gathering the brightest roses to adorn our existence; she was the angel of our hearth, and He, the Bountiful Father, took her to Himself. But our sight is too weak to discern His glorious mansions, and we are sad, and we mourn and weep for the child of our affection. To-day I laid the most fragrant flowers—those she liked so well—on her tomb, and breathed the prayer of my anguish to Almighty God, and He heard my cry; the curtain of shadows vanished, the sun shone brightly out of the sapphire heavens, and in the peaceful garden of the sleepers the birds began to sing their hymn of gladness. I felt that she was happy and blessed in the Divine keeping of the Lord.



8.

“Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there? Why, then, is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?”

(*Jeremiah* viii. 22.)

THERE is balm, and there are cordials and physicians in the land, and Thou hast willed, Almighty God, that they shall be brought to those we love and to ourselves in time of need. It would be wrong and sinful to neglect any human help which could enable the sufferers to obtain relief. Yet in sickness, as in sadness, Thou alone, O Lord, art our comfort and consolation. Oppressive and agonizing trials would completely annihilate us, if faith in Thy Divine beneficence failed to irradiate the darkness of anguish, and if the power of hope, so graciously placed within us by Thy celestial hand, did not enable us to fly from the gloom of present evils to the brightness of future joys. Earnest devotion to increase the happiness of others, the felicity of our loved ones, and the welfare of those who seek and want assistance, and the anxious desire to insure the prosperity of all whom the ministrations of warm zeal and indefatigable service can reach; these are the faculties and feelings that distil soft and healing balsam for bleeding wounds, and they will help to close them, though the scars and traces of past agony may remain.



9.

“Cause me to hear Thy loving-kindness in the morning ; for in Thee do I trust : cause me to know the way wherein I should walk ; for I lift up my soul unto Thee.”—(*Psalm* cxliii. 8.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, we bow down before Thee in gladness and in sorrow, with thanksgivings and with supplications ; we feel that all treasures and blessings come from Thy Divine hand, that Thou alone canst heal our wounds and uphold us in our weakness, and at all times we lay our aims and hopes with the most anxious wishes of the heart on the steps of Thy sacred throne. But when the night has just passed away, wiping out, not the recollection of weariness, but the pressure of heavy work harassing alike to mind and body, when the most gloomy fancies of despondency have vanished among peaceful dreams, and we feel soothed and rested, strengthened and refreshed, then, oh then, Almighty Lord, our thankful adoration rises up in fervent prayer with every word of our lips, and with a thousand feelings of gratitude which struggle for expression. With the light of morning, hope shines and glows radiantly, and wings its flight towards joy and happiness, which Thy beneficence alone, our Heavenly Father, can give, and which Thy loving-kindness has in store for those who keep Thy Law and obey Thy holy commandments ! Amen.

10.

“By the rivers of Babylon there we sat down: . . . we hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.”—(*Psalm cxxxvii. 1, 2.*)

NATURE, which Thy Divine will, Almighty God, has made so beautiful and so admirable, speaks lovingly to Thy children with a thousand clear and gentle voices, and seems to sympathise with them both in joy and in sorrow. When the Israelites in their banishment placed their silent harps on the branches of the willow-trees by the rivers, when their hands ceased to sweep the strings as of old, and their lips to sing hymns of gladness, the sun shone on the glittering harps, and the wind played its wild harmonies upon them, wailing and sighing through the sounding cords, or breathing soft and tremulous accents of hope and promise. And onward flowed the Babylonian streams, mirrors of the outward world and of life, reflecting clouds and storms and the arch of brightness, and all the red roses of early morn, and the warm tints of parting day, and the fair moon and distant stars. When the captives rested by the edge of the waters, there was not a fountain or a brooklet, a tree or a flower, that did not whisper its tale to the exile and the weary wanderer: and as they spoke then, they speak now of Thy goodness and mercy, Almighty Lord, and seem to proclaim that banishment and sorrow and suffering are not everlasting!



11.

“The bee is little among such as fly, but her fruit is the chief of sweet things.”—(*Sirach* xi. 3.)

THOUSANDS of years ago, ere man was permitted by Thy Divine aid and power, Almighty God, to sail across unknown seas, to the distant and dimly pictured lands where the sugar-cane grows, no sweetness was tasted on earth but that gathered by the bee in her flight over bright hedgerows and blooming fields, all radiant with the beautiful flowers and white blossoms which Thy hand, our Gracious Lord, has so lavishly vouchsafed for our delight and the adornment of this world. Clusters of hawthorn and stars of eglantine, white and crimson clover, sprays of thyme and lavender, the pearly bells of the lily of the valley, and the silver cup of the proud lily of the garden, shining in the radiance of heaven, all yield their honey to the indefatigable collector. None are too small and lowly to escape her notice, none too highly placed to refuse their tribute. And if we keep in vivid remembrance the successful labours of the bee, we shall not, however humble and insignificant we may feel, underrate either the gifts which Thy beneficence, O Lord, has bestowed upon ourselves, or the qualities and energies of others. Even if, from a sense of diffidence and modesty, we are inclined to disregard our own means, and from a sentiment of justice often feel indisposed to attach too high a value to the talents and acquirements of others, both estimates may be inaccurate and wrong;

but how infinitely worse, if our depreciation of self arises from apathy and indolence, and our disparagement of our neighbours flows either from our own overweening vanity, or is the more reprehensible result of a base feeling of envy! O Gracious Lord, we implore Thee to make us clear-sighted and strong-minded, so that, while striving to form an estimate of ourselves and of others, we may not yield to the weakness of a listless humility, nor strain justice and truth into harshness, but that throughout life we may cling to the belief that Thou hast vouchsafed great gifts and qualities to our brethren, and also blessed our own life with the means of usefulness and of dutiful service!

12.

“O ye ice and cold, bless ye the Lord.” — (*Song of the Three Holy Children*, ver. 49.)

WE travel far and wide, and mount higher and higher along glaciers more admirable than all the gems of the earth, more brilliant than the gleaming emerald from the mine, more intensely blue than sapphire skies, more dazzling than the brightest jewels in royal diadems, and reflecting the varied hues of light more radiantly than the most perfect opals. We climb over snow-robed and ice-wreathed mountains, and are spell-bound by solitudes and their awful silence, by waters fettered and changed into cold crystals, and by the presence of a sublime and eternal winter. Everything which Thou hast created, Almighty God, is beautiful, but it is good

and beneficent as well, and Thy works bless Thee through all climes, in all generations, and through all centuries. The snows of Alpine torrents feed the great rivers which are the arteries of the earth; the Rhine, the Rhone, and even the Danube flow with streams of dissolved ice, and the great frozen blocks cut out of the towering Swiss and Norwegian mountains, and hewn out of the depth of American lakes, bring coolness in summer-heat to the parched lip, to the fevered brow, to the sick and the suffering; they quench thirst and heal wounds; powerful in skilful hands, they prove heaven-sent medicine in time of need. Thus every congealed drop of water blesses Thee, our Heavenly Father, and becomes a pearl or diamond beyond price.



13.

“Strive for truth unto death, and the Lord shall fight for thee.”—
(*Sirach* iv. 28.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, truth which Thy Divine goodness has permitted us to seek and to love, is light and knowledge, wisdom and piety, the highest aim and deepest search of art and science, the noblest aspiration of ambition, the most cherished pursuit of philosophy, the goal towards which all efforts and endeavours, all thoughts and convictions tend. Truth is heavenly and must ever be triumphant. Even error owes its transient and sometimes apparent—though certainly not real—success to the glimmering of truth allied with it: thus

the element of strength which proved, if not lasting, yet of considerable duration, in the faith of the heathen, was the longing and yearning for Divine truth, and the ardent worship of that which was believed to be true. And we, Almighty God, blessed with Thy sacred revelation, with Thy holy laws and commandments, shall we not endeavour to live in the radiance of purest truth, carrying it into every relation of life by zealous piety and dutiful devotion, by mercy and forgiveness, by warm and gentle sympathy with all around us, and unflinching service to our brethren in the time of need? Shall we not keep it clear and undimmed in our heart of hearts, in our thoughts, on our lips, and in our actions?



14.

“ Like a crane and a swallow I complained ; I mourned as a dove ; my eyes looked upward, fainting : O Lord, I am oppressed, rescue me ! ”

(*Isaiah xxxviii. 14.*)

WHEN the sky looks grey and threatening, and the rain falls in dull showers, or when sharp, cold winds sweep over the plain and rush through the trees with dismal sound, the swallows grow restless ; in their agitation, they flit round and round the house-tops ; they move in rapid circles between sky and land, and graze the earth with quivering wings ; the crane utters faint cries of discomfort and distress, and the dove instinctively pours forth her mournful notes : yet there is no visible danger at hand. And thus, Almighty God, we often

complain and are dissatisfied without knowing what ails us ; we repine without sufficient reason, we sigh and moan without a cause ; if the horizon of our life is not full of light and sunshine, we are downcast ; and when faint at heart, we humbly and anxiously beseech Thy holy blessing, and say, "O Lord, I am oppressed ; rescue me !" Earnest and fervid prayer at the foot of Thy sacred altars gives us strength and courage, clears away all mists, and reveals distinctly the depth of the weak and wayward soul within us. But we must be active as well as prayerful ; and with Thy Divine help given to our zealous exertions, we may soon hope to recover a healthy consciousness of our duties, and a true appreciation of the innumerable gifts and mercies which Thy Divine beneficence has vouchsafed to us.

15.

"Earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord."—(*Jeremiah* xxii. 29.)

THOU hast willed that our duties shall be manifold, Almighty God, and as we endeavour to perform them, the zealous accomplishment of each causes new ones to arise. The longer Thy beneficence allows us to live and to retain and develop our faculties, the more clearly are we enabled to understand the sacred obligation of making truth and knowledge prevail around us, and of teaching that Thy Divine grace has caused the world to be so beautiful and so rich in enchantments for eye and ear, and heart and mind ; that Thy bounty has adorned it with fruit and flowers, with abundant harvests and

sparkling fountains ; and that throughout the expanse of the earth Thou hast vouchsafed the blessings of health and of labour, of rest and of sleep, in order that we, Thy children, may enjoy all these treasures, if we humbly obey Thy eternal laws, and strive to live in thankful submission to Thy sacred behests. We may look upon the gifts of Thy beneficence, Almighty God, as great prizes, and feel that they are forfeited by us when evil thoughts and evil deeds throw their fetters around our feet, and imprison the soul, which should be as free as the blithe birds of the air to rise to heaven's gate in jubilant and ever-grateful adoration of Thy infinite goodness and mercy.

16.

“Reproach not a man that turneth from sin, but remember that we are all worthy of punishment.”—(*Sirach* viii. 5.)

WHEN remorse and repentance show themselves in earnest efforts for improvement, when a pure and good life replaces sinful weakness, let us be gentle and merciful to those who have erred, let us forgive and forget the past, and gladly welcome the reformed sinner, remembering that Thou, our Gracious Father in heaven, art the fountain of all pardon, and that not a day, not an hour elapses during which Thy infinite goodness does not forgive our own thoughts, our words, our feelings, and our actions. Enable us to remember, we implore Thee, Almighty God, that it is easier to walk along the right path than to leave the crooked ways and labyrinths of

evil, and that there is no aid which the really penitent do not deserve, and which generous hands should not hold out to them lovingly, while they draw a veil over days of temptation gone by, and point hopefully to a radiant future.



17.

“Beware of murmuring, which is unprofitable; . . . for there is no word so secret that shall go for nought.”—(*Wisdom of Solomon* i. 11.)

IN early youth, Almighty God, when, through Thy Divine grace, our horizon is clear and sunny; when our path lies among flowery meads and delightful gardens; when blossoms, bright and sweet, seem almost to spring up beneath our footsteps, a cloudlet sailing across the sky, a rough gust of wind, an unsuspected shower, falling between us and the promise of a fine day, a thorn, a sharp pebble, or a stinging insect, gives rise to words of complaint. In those early years, our hopes are so vivid and so infinitely varied, and their visions and pictures of mirth and joy, of never-failing health and ever-smiling happiness, are so glowing and so brilliant, that the slightest check or the shortest interruption to hours of gladness, is felt to be a great and heavy disappointment. Later in life, when the sad and mournful lessons of the sternest, yet most impressive teacher—experience—have been engraved upon heart and mind, we are better able to endure the rebukes of fate and of human lips, and to bear harrowing trials in silence. And yet, Almighty God, we cannot invoke too fervently Thy most merciful aid, that

we may at all times be strengthened to stifle the murmuring of our tongue, and crush the rebellious spirit within us. It will be far easier to endure even an agonising load of care, if we have tutored ourselves to hide the pangs of suffering and to refrain from useless wailing ; resignation and fortitude will not be above our power, but will become blessed realities. Every superfluous word is a sinful waste of strength and time—doubly sinful when it is spoken in a mood of bitterness and irritation ; it cannot do otherwise than envenom and deepen all sores in our breast, perhaps inflict great pain, and cause the wounds of others to ache more grievously. No kindly expression is lost, and “no word, however secret, shall go for nought.” Therefore, Almighty God, we beseech Thee, not to forsake us when we speak ; and seal our lips, we implore Thee, when silence is forbearance and wisdom !

18.

“The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise.”
(*Proverbs xv. 31.*)

ANXIOUS and indulgent parents and teachers, friends and well-wishers, while encouraging our best efforts of improvement, feel that they cannot always guide us, and that with powers so limited and often so undeveloped as ours, with fluctuating health and strength, with senses so imperfect and perhaps so inefficiently trained, and with the purblind inexperience of youth, it is natural we should often hesitate between good and

evil, falter between right and wrong, perhaps pause to reflect, and yet, even then, be misled into sin. Such mistakes are forgiven, Almighty Lord, and wiped out by Thy gracious mercy ; but to be stubborn, and persevere in wrong-doing, is indeed sinful. Therefore, our Heavenly Father, we implore Thy Divine aid to quicken our ear, that we may always listen to the hard and difficult lessons of life, and treasure them patiently and in true humility, strive to imprint them vividly and with indelible colours on the tablet of our mind, and endeavour to learn at every moment, from all circumstances, and, what is perhaps less easy, from all our brethren ; from the unfortunate, whose failures are warnings ; from the more prosperous and successful, whose triumphs are examples ; from the severe and relentless monitors, whose often stern rebuke may cause us to quail ; and from the devoted friends who impart knowledge and give advice in a kindly and loving spirit.

19.

“Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, nor doth trouble spring out of the ground.”—(*Job* v. 6.)

OUR unreasoning weakness often brings vague charges against fate, or hurls more distinct accusations against adverse circumstances, of having caused all our trials and troubles, whereas we constantly forget that the severest trials and heaviest troubles are usually wrought by ourselves. It is true that some sufferings of the body and sorrows of the mind lie far beyond our feeble

means of control, and that the best and wisest of Thy children, Almighty God, find it impossible to avert them. Yet in the most painful hours of sickness, in the most agonizing anxiety, in the most heart-rending grief and bereavement, the deepest anguish is mitigated by the thought that our bleeding wounds are not self-inflicted, that we are innocent of the misery which surrounds us, and that we may turn with a blameless conscience to the ever-flowing fountain that heals and revives—to the eternal source of Thy Divine mercy. Enlighten and strengthen us, we beseech Thee, O Heavenly Lord, that we may learn to avoid snares and pitfalls, withstand temptations, and overcome the obstacles that lie between us and the tranquil enjoyment of life.



20.

“The conies are but a feeble folk, yet they make their houses in the rocks.”—(*Proverbs xxx. 26.*)

THERE are many among us who, free from all peace-destroying feelings of envy and jealousy, and devoid of all covetous longing for the tangible gifts and treasures with which Thy bounty, Almighty Lord, has embellished and enriched this earth, do not yearn for great worldly possessions, and are not ambitious of wielding power and enjoying fame, but who hardly venture to form a wish or a plan, downcast as they are by a painful sense of their own inferiority, and weakness, of their inability to help themselves and

others. Almighty God, we implore Thee to strengthen in us the great support of self-reliance, to develop in our breast the true appreciation of the faculties which Thy Divine beneficence has implanted in us, and to cause the encouraging belief to be firmly held that Thy infinite bounty has given to us all not only means of earning a subsistence for ourselves, but also of being permanently useful to others. In order to achieve this happy result of independence and of devoted service, we must look zealously and with conscientious truthfulness into every corner of our heart and mind, and work indefatigably from dawn till sunset to uproot tares and weeds, and cultivate good germs. None are too weak to overcome difficulties, and in the great book of nature this lesson of widely diffused power and utility, even among the smallest of created beings, is impressively taught at every hour of the day. During many centuries, when the sugar-cane was unknown, the bee alone distilled the sweets used by man; even now the silkworm has not been superseded, and it continues to spin the mantles of royalty; the coral insect constructs whole islands; and the conies, timid and feeble, build their dwellings in the rocks. Amongst human beings the lowliest and humblest are abundantly blessed by Thy Divine hand. May all Thy children be graciously aided to employ for noble ends the gifts of Thy heavenly bounty!



21.

“There is a shame that bringeth sin, and there is a shame that is glory and grace.”—(*Sirach* iv. 21.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, the shame that leads to sin is weakness and vacillation, the reluctance to acknowledge our faults, either to others or before the tribunal of that unerring judge, our own conscience, or to lay the entire confession of them in prayer and contrition at the foot of Thy holy throne ; and thus, being feeble, and shrinking from the survey and avowal of our faults and shortcomings, we drift heedlessly into grave errors, and into sore perils for mind and heart. The feeling of shame that guides us to improvement and to happiness is humility and a modest self-knowledge, that shuns alike the reality and the semblance of pride, of vanity, and all frivolous aims ; it is the unrepining and uncomplaining submission to trials and troubles, cares and sufferings, from which all may hope to emerge, strengthened and purified. Almighty and Merciful Lord, we implore Thee for that humility which seeks and loves and acknowledges truth, and thus teaches real wisdom—benevolence blended with prudence. Amen.



22.

“All the kings of the earth shall praise Thee, O Lord.”

(*Psalm cxxxviii.* 4.)

TO our forefathers, Almighty God, Thy Divine laws were vouchsafed thousands of years ago, and the Israelites rejoiced in the knowledge of Thy beneficence and protection, and praised Thy holy name, while the surrounding nations were still steeped in ignorance and in barbarism; but the sacred words which the prophet heard on Mount Sinai, and which were inscribed on tablets of stone, travelled far and wide throughout the earth and through all centuries. As time rolls on, the eyes of those whom Thou hast created are opened to the beautiful truths of Thy revelation, their ears hearken to the sounds that tell of Thy heavenly goodness and greatness, their thoughts seek Thy mercy and Thy help, their knees bow to Thee, Almighty Lord, their hands are raised in prayer, and their lips unite in jubilant hallelujahs. The great and the lowly join in one universal hymn of praise, and if all are thus taught to love, adore, and bless Thee, our Heavenly Father, and to feel that all are Thy children, however manifold and varied their forms of worship, in accordance with the lights and the knowledge granted to them, should not all feel that there is but one religion of love, pity, and forgiveness, one law of duty and affection, one commandment of mutual help and forbearance?

23.

“Blame not before thou hast examined the truth, understand first and then rebuke.”—(*Sirach xi. 7.*)

THOU, Almighty God, who hast endowed man with those faculties of the mind which enable him to admire the beautiful and appreciate the good, and to feel touched by kindness and gentleness; Thou, O Lord, who hast permitted us to know that well deserved praise is encouraging and prompts mind and heart to fresh efforts and labours, strengthen us still further with Thy Divine grace, we beseech Thee, our Heavenly Lord, and vouchsafe to us the spirit of equity and firmness, which does not allow the understanding to be warped by mere outward circumstances, however crminating they appear, to judge hastily and harshly, or to turn away in unreasoning anger, to rebuke or chastise quickly, perhaps with unrelenting severity. Make us careful and considerate, we implore Thee, in our search after truth, cautious and discreet in our use and application of knowledge, that we may never hurt or wound, and so irritate and weaken, instead of soothing and invigorating, that we may not give rise to evil while striving to do good, and endeavouring to correct and reform! May we never have to repent and bewail our own acts and deeds with regard to others, for the suffering would thus be double—the pain inflicted upon our brethren and the remorse at having caused it!

24.

“The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another.”—(*Genesis xxxi. 40.*)

HOW gladly would I keep all my loved ones around me, and thankfully rejoice at their smiling looks of health in the morning, and again bow down in ardent gratitude before Thee, Almighty God, at eventide, with the sons and daughters whom Thy beneficence, O Gracious Lord, has vouchsafed to my heart and home! But such are not the ways of life; ere long the maidens leave the mother's side for the duties, joys, and cares of their own hearth, and the sons spend youth and manhood far away from the roof of their parents. But when the dearly cherished are absent, when the care and solicitude, the love and tenderness of the fondest father and mother become unavailing, Thou, our Gracious Lord, wilt watch over swift or trembling footsteps lest they stray into danger; Thy Divine hand will uphold the wayfarers, Thy celestial arm will be the shield and buckler of their weakness; Thou wilt draw the curtains of night round their weariness, and keep all evils aloof from their slumbers as well as from their waking hours. Let me pray to Thee in silence and solitude, pray for those, Almighty Lord, who are far distant on the crested waves of stormy seas, or amidst fatigue and peril crossing Alpine passes, not indeed removed from my trembling heart, but from my poor watchfulness, yet ever near to Thy all-seeing eye, and to Thy heavenly and omnipotent protection. Amen.

25.

“Strive not with a man that is full of tongue; and heap not wood upon his fire.”—(*Sirach* viii. 3.)

IN early youth, ere many of the hard but wholesome lessons of experience have been learnt, and often later in life, it is difficult to restrain displeasure, and remain calm and silent when the violence of an unbridled tongue near us pours out a flood of unreasoning anger; yet in the course of a long life we may frequently encounter those whose passions of wrath have been left unchecked, we may even have to live and labour side by side with them, and then it is surely better to learn and practise the virtue of forbearance, which, with Thy blessing, Almighty God, leads to forgiveness and mercy, than to yield to the spirit of irritation, which tends to feed the fires of heart-burning and resentment, and to fan them into blazing flames. If there is difficulty, there is also merit in tranquil endurance; and advice, gently given after the storm of warring emotions has subsided, may ring in the ears of the offenders like the penetrating voice of conscience, or sink into the heart of hearts, as the soft dew of morning and evening drops on the land that has been scorched by fierce heat or hardened by cold blasts. Teach, O Lord, we implore Thee, humility to our heart, and gentleness to our tongue, that we may never disturb the peace of our brethren by angry words, nor destroy our own by angry feelings.



26.

“Enter not into judgment with Thy servant.”—(*Psalms* cxliii. 2).

ALMIGHTY GOD, great and manifold are the duties of life, and my endeavours should indeed be heartfelt and zealous, and incessant my labours for success in the accomplishment of all obligations ; and yet how poor and feeble the result of my efforts and aims, how numerous the failures and shortcomings that mark my days ! How much have I attempted, how little have I performed ! How many works have I left unfinished, how many more have I never ventured to undertake ! I may be standing on the brink of the grave, beyond the power of usefulness in this world, overwhelmed with shame and confusion, for I appear empty-handed before Thee, and have allowed opportunities of improvement, and years that might have been fruitful in deeds of devoted service, to pass by unheeded ; yet enter not into judgment with me, if my strength and energy have not been equal to the task ; my longing to do good has been constant and anxious, my yearning to understand Thy Divine behests ardent and untiring. O Gracious Lord, the sense of my unworthiness is a punishment ; yet through Thy infinite beneficence I may yet live and labour indefatigably, so as to cause my career to be not a warning, but an example to others ! Amen.



27.

“ There is one that laboureth, and taketh pains, and maketh haste, and is so much the more behind ; again there is another that is slow, and hath need of help, yet the eye of the Lord looketh upon him for good.”—(*Sirach* xi. 11, 12).

THE aim which we pursue ennobles our actions, and gives to our poor endeavours the only value and beauty which they can possess ; and upon these — the anxious labours of our hands, the zealous efforts of heart and mind—we invoke Thy blessing, Almighty God, while imploring Thee to keep us far removed from that purposeless activity, and that round of unmeaning occupations which are not sinful, nor perhaps even frivolous, yet vain and empty, which absorb and kill time, and leave behind no lasting work of usefulness, no golden lessons, no stimulating example, no nourishing grain, no blossoms, and no fruit ! When our purpose is great and good, it may indeed be difficult of attainment, and we need strenuous thought and indefatigable exertion, ever renewed vigour, and time also to realise the brightest fulfilment of our hopes. Thy beneficence alone, O Lord, makes us clear-sighted, nerves our limbs, strengthens our health, upholds our courage, and prolongs our existence. How can we pray for Thy blessing, our Heavenly Father, when we trifle away days and years, and seem to forget that life, which Thy bounty has made bright and beautiful with many joys and pleasures, is yet often sad and always earnest, and weighted with duties and obligations not easy to perform, although their accomplishment yields that true happiness which the approving voice of conscience never fails to bestow.

28.

“Thou wilt not leave my soul in the grave ; neither wilt Thou suffer Thy holy one to see corruption.”—(*Psalms* xvi. 10.)

THE soft light of spring has long vanished and been absorbed by the radiant effulgence of summer, which, alas! has also passed away too soon ; nor does the glorious brilliancy of autumn linger any more in woodland and garden ; the sweetest flowers have faded, the sickle has reaped the golden harvests of the fields ; vineyard and orchard have yielded their treasures, the winds have swept away all the gleaming foliage of the trees, and left only the dry and naked branches—cold and shivering skeletons of former luxuriance and beauty. The day is short and dreary ; the chilling presence of winter is felt ; it hardens the earth and freezes the water, and extinguishes the warmth of sunshine. As winter is in nature, so it is in life. The sweet buds and bright promises of our childhood, the glowing roses of youth, the fruits of our labours in manhood, with the powers of exertion, all wane, and fleet, and recede into the past, until we sink into the grave, and mingle our own feeble frame with the dust from which it sprang. Yet very soon the earth wakes out of darkness and icy torpor, and covers itself with new garlands of fragrance and beauty ; the trees shine again with myriads of waving leaves, the fields teem with the wealth of goodly crops, the vine bears purple or amber grapes, and the orchard bends down under the weight of its rich clusters of fruit ;

and as the land revives and recovers its brightness, so do we regain life, though not on earth, not in this world. The soul, created in Thy Divine image, returns to Thee, Almighty God, and dwells in those blessed realms which no human eye has ever seen, and the peaceful happiness of which passes all human understanding.

29.

“In the day of prosperity there is a forgetfulness of affliction, and in the days of affliction there is no more remembrance of prosperity.”

(*Sirach* xi. 25.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, we implore Thee to strengthen our power of memory, and enhance in us the faculty of looking back to bygone years, in order that, amid the radiance of sunshine and happiness, when the echoes of joy and mirth surround us, when they cheer our home, brighten our path, and fill our heart of hearts with gladness, we may remember the gloom of sorrow, the paralyzing weight of sickness, the trials of bodily suffering, and the still greater pain of mental anxiety ; not, indeed, to cause these sombre pictures and realities of the past to obscure the brightness of our present enjoyment, but to make them heighten in us the appreciation of the great blessings of health, and vigour, and freedom from care, enhance the sense of fervent thankfulness to Thee, Almighty God, for all gifts of Thy Divine bounty, and increase our desire to devote the tranquil time of peace and prosperity to the zealous and indefatigable fulfilment of all the duties of life. In grief and in anguish,

or when stretched on a bed of sickness, we cannot labour, we can but pray for Thy heavenly assistance, we can but hope that Thy Divine arm will sustain, that Thy mercy will comfort us, and that the recollection of former days of happiness will irradiate the darkness of affliction with a glowing halo, and with a soothing promise of returning felicity ; for, through Thy beneficence, Almighty God, happiness will come again, if not on earth, surely in heaven. Amen.



30.

“Listen to me, ye pious children, and bud forth as a rose growing by the brook of the field ; and give a sweet odour as frankincense, and flourish as a lily, and spread fragrance.”—(*Sirach* xxxix. 13, 14)

IN this world created by Thy power and mercy, O Lord, there is much real goodness which possesses no outward charm ; yet Thou hast made the earth not only abundantly rich, but most beautiful, and it seems to whisper to us with the lips of every flower that blooms, and the sweetness of every fruit that ripens, with every green leaf that fans the brow, and with the song of every bird—“Strive to embellish your labours of duty and ministrations of charity with all that is bright and sweet, with sunny smiles and gentle words of sympathy, with encouraging looks and with kindness, real and true, and not outwardly cold and measured, but soft and warm.” Oh ! may our children, those whom we cherish so fondly, be blessed by Thy Divine grace,

Almighty Lord, to bloom like the rose, which is welcomed always and everywhere for the brilliancy of its hues and the fragrance of its breath. The eager glances of the youngest are attracted by its glow ; the eyes of the aged rest upon its loveliness ; in hedgerow and garden, in the dwellings of the poor and of the rich, in the sick-room and in the abode of the happy and joyful, the rose diffuses the light and charm of its beauty ; and even to the mind of the sorrow-stricken it may recall the brightness that has faded, the felicity that has passed away, while its gentle perfume soothes the aching breast. To flourish as a lily is to grow in purity and innocence and perfect uprightness—is to be spotless, like gleaming silver and Alpine snow. And more penetrating than the odour of frankincense, more precious than nard and the rarest spices of Arabia, are human words softly spoken ; and, when they whisper pity and love, forgiveness and hope, they sink like balm into the wounded heart to exercise a mysterious spell that none can describe, but which, if blessed, Almighty Lord, by Thy heavenly mercy, is fruitful in the best results.



31.

“Lo, children are the heritage of the Lord: happy is the man that has his quiver full of them.”—(*Psalm cxxvii. 3, 5.*)

ALMIGHTY GOD, our Gracious Benefactor, we bow down before Thee in ardent gratitude for the gifts of Thy beneficence; and while we value them all, we feel that the most precious treasures vouchsafed to us by Thy bountiful hand are the children with whom Thou hast blessed our hearth. We implore Thee, our Heavenly Lord, to support and enlighten us, so that we may lead them along the right path, and carry out with unwearied strength what is best for their happiness. We pray to be allowed to teach them, by the power of word and deed, the most zealous obedience to Thy sacred Law, and imbue their understanding with a deep appreciation of Thy all-embracing beneficence. And while we thus strive to impart to our loved ones the lessons of life, and to store their minds with knowledge that may guide them through the mazes of their earthly pilgrimage; while our devotion to their highest interests becomes hourly and daily more intense, our self-denial greater, and our affection deeper; and while our warm sympathy makes us share their joys and their sorrows; the feelings which our children call forth in us become the means of our own improvement and training, and will be invaluable teachers in our intercourse with others; for the love which is developed under our own roof is a shining

light, which reveals to us the needs and sufferings of our neighbours ; it sheds its softening rays over wider and wider circles ; till at last it permits us to look upon all around us as our own kindred. Almighty God, we implore Thee to grant that our children may indeed become to us shields and bucklers against frivolity and selfishness, and enable us thus to win and to use the great prizes of kindness, devotion, and charity ! Amen.



SABBATH.

“And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He had rested from all His work which He had created and made.”

(*Genesis* ii. 3.)

AS we bow down every morning in humble thanksgiving to Thee, O Lord, for having vouchsafed to our slumbers the shield of Thy Divine protection, and given us renewed vigour and energy, so let us prostrate ourselves before Thee in mind and heart on the holy Sabbath, which Thou didst sanctify to be a day of rest after the labours of the week, when the vast and beauteous works of creation had been completed by Thy sacred will. The busy hum of activity is suspended in garden and field, in factory and market-place, under the great vault of heaven, and in the narrow precincts of our own houses. Yet if our hands are at rest, if our time is unclaimed by worldly pursuits, if our thoughts are no longer yoked to the cares and burdens of daily existence, no longer engrossed by the toil and weariness, the efforts and struggles of life, the Sabbath which has been hallowed by Thee, Almighty God, and which brings with it the entire cessation of work, demands, not listlessness, but undisturbed repose for the contemplation of our duties, and for eager and searching looks into the past fulfilment or neglect of our obligations; it demands ever anxious resolves of amendment and improvement, in order that the future still allotted to us upon earth may be one of usefulness and benevolence. Above all, the sacred day suggests deep and warm and heartfelt prayer to Thee, O

Eternal, that Thy blessing may be upon our endeavours, that it may give fervour to our hopes, power to our aims, and vitality to our wishes; lead us to a perfect knowledge of all that is good, yet also disclose to us the shoals and quicksands, rocks and precipices, which we may have to encounter in the great outer world during the perilous voyage of life; and make us acquainted with the inward dangers, the faults and weaknesses, which lurk in the secret corners and dark recesses of our own breast and our own soul. Let us then supplicate Thee, our Heavenly Father, to bless the day of rest, that it may leave us purified, refreshed, and strengthened for unceasing labours of love and unwearied acts of self-denying charity. Amen.

PASSOVER.

“Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread.”—(*Exodus* xxiii. 15.)

ALMIGHTY GOD, Thou hast graciously commanded, that we shall celebrate the anniversary of the deliverance of the Hebrews from the land of bondage and from the persecution of the Egyptian despot, as indeed Thou hast bidden us to hold sacred all festivals of gladness. The narratives enshrined in the holy Bible teach us great lessons of thankfulness; however, not they alone, by recording Thy infinite mercies to our forefathers in remote ages, point out to us the duties of sincere and ardent appreciation, but every picture treasured by memory shows, every experience of life proclaims, that to Thee, Almighty King, we owe eternal gratitude, yet not

mere lip worship, not only the solemn ceremonies, which are and can be but faint indications of the feelings of the heart within, and of that vivid recollection of help and strength in hours of weakness, doubt, and difficulty, of that glowing remembrance of Thy blessings, which enable us at all times to escape from danger and slavery, even when the waters of peril, like the waves of the Red Sea, threaten to engulf us. Let our gratitude, Almighty God, abound in good deeds, that we may aid, support, and comfort our brethren, whenever they need our assistance in days of sickness, anxiety, or sorrow! Amen.

PENTECOST.

“Thou shalt keep the feast of harvest.”—(*Exodus* xxiii. 16.)

OUR Loving and Gracious God, when the whole earth is bright and warm and sweet with softly waving foliage and golden lights and the fragrance of flowers, when the glad summer, wreathed and crowned with beauty, appears to rejoice under the blue vault of heaven, we feel truly happy in obeying Thy Divine commandments. The blessing of goodly harvests is given by Thy beneficence, Almighty Lord, as a precious reward to those who toil in Thy fields, and through whose industrious hands Thy bounty feeds all mankind. We celebrate with ardent thanksgivings the sunny season set apart for the feast of harvest, as in the favoured land inhabited by our forefathers, the ingathering of the fruits of diligent labours is completed at the time of this festival. But as we humbly thank Thee

for the yellow sheaves of the earth and the nourishment they afford to rich and poor, and for the comfort they yield to the gleaner, even then leaving a rich banquet, spread far and wide, for the birds of the air, so we anxiously yearn, Almighty God, to breathe our deepest gratitude for the Divine laws, which were vouchsafed to our ancestors on Mount Sinai at this period of the year, and for the fruits of the mind and heart, which Thy unbounded mercy has allowed us to cultivate, in order that their sweetness may overcome much that is bitter, and their freshness prove imperishable.

FEAST OF TABERNACLES.

“Thou shalt keep the feast of ingathering at the end of the year.”
(*Exodus* xxiii. 16.)

THOU hast commanded us, our Gracious Benefactor, to celebrate a feast of gratitude for the boons and treasures vouchsafed to us throughout the teeming year. When the earth, in obedience to Thy word, has produced the golden grain of the furrow, the wealth of the orchard, and the gleaming clusters of the vine, and we have reaped and garnered the blessings of Thy bounty, we keep a season of rejoicing, and we thank Thee, our Heavenly Father, for having so lavishly ministered to the wants of Thy children. The last roses of the year, blushing in the glow of autumn, the amber or purple grapes, the willow of the brook, the sweet-scented citron, the sprays of myrtle, and the palm-leaves from distant lands, are gathered and bound and wreathed to adorn the tabernacles in which we bow

down and gratefully breathe our thanksgivings, and they are intended to express how truly we prize the endless variety of the goodly and luxuriant gifts of nature ; yet can we ever thank Thee enough, Lord God Almighty, and should we not keep every day of our existence as a harvest feast in our hearts ? Does not each morning of life bring forth fresh aims and new hopes and wishes ? And is not their fulfilment a blessing of Thy grace, is not every work of our hands, every labour of the mind and soul a green blade of promise, a bud, a blossom, a fruit, which Thy goodness may permit to germinate and grow and ripen ?

NEW YEAR.

“In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a Sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets.”—(*Leviticus* xxiii. 24.)

OUR Gracious Lord, we thank Thee on this day as on all others appointed by Thy sacred will for the blessing of rest graciously vouchsafed to us after anxious labours ; we thank Thee, and we supplicate Thy Divine goodness to inscribe us in the book of life ; and while we are determined to mark every day of our existence by earnest resolves and intentions, zealous attempts and noble aims, strenuous exertions and conscientious endeavours ; we implore Thy heavenly grace and favour to allow our aspirations to ripen into the complete fulfilment of every duty and the performance of every promise, into the redemption of all pledges and the successful achievement of our appointed work. Thus cause us, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, to become

worthy of Thy beneficence, and blessed in being privileged to adore Thy holy name, and to obey Thy eternal commandments! Amen.

DAY OF ATONEMENT.

“On the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement; it shall be a holy convocation to you, you shall afflict your souls.”—(*Leviticus* xxiii. 27.)

OF all the days of the year, which Thy Divine bounty, Lord God Almighty, allows us to pass on earth, not one is more solemn than this; it brings the past vividly and powerfully before us, and, with it, our blemishes, our shortcomings, and the faults that have led us into error and misery, and that may have caused sadness and grief to others, or bereft us of the strength of serving them. What atonement can we make, alas! for our weakness, for having wavered and failed in the fulfilment of duty, drifted into infirmity of purpose, mental lassitude, and moral listlessness, for having been idle and neglectful in the work of self-improvement, for having abandoned labours of usefulness, and allowed rank weeds to luxuriate in heart and mind, which should teem with every flower of sweetness, every generous fruit of charity, and with all good harvests of thought and deed? O God of mercy and of omnipotence, we are truly helpless without Thy Divine aid; forgive us and assist us that we may keep aloof from sin, and learn to live well and usefully in accordance with Thy holy will, and thus earn and merit the precious blessing of life! Amen.

THE END.

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