

The Church Times.

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Calendar.

CALENDAR WITH LESSONS.

Day & date		MORNING.	EVENING.
S. April 17	3 Sun after Easter	Deut. 4:1-14	Deut. 5:1
M. " 18		2 Sam. 8:1-17	2 Sam. 9:1
T. " 19		10:1-16	11:1-3
W. " 20		12:1-17	13:1-4
T. " 21		14:1-19	15:1-6
F. " 22		16:1-19	17:1-2 Peter 1
S. " 23		18:1-20	19:1-2

Poetry.

LINES TO THE AURORA BOREALIS.

BY MARY N. DEARBORN.

YE golden gleams so wondrous bright!
O tell me whence ye come?
And where your gathering beauties light—
Around your native home?

With what a glorious train you ride—
Along the northern sky!
Like morning beams of dawning pride,
Your waving streamers fly!

O tell to me of the radiant spot
That gives your splendor forth
'Mong the sea-circled isles that dot
The oceans of the north!

What mysteries line that frozen coast,
And secrets long untold;
Where "Franklin" led his gallant host,
To brave eternal cold.

Did you direct his trackless way
Amid those polar seas?
And lend to them the light of day?
Where warmer sunbeams freeze?

Say, do your gladdening beams descend,
And greet that fearless band,
As they speak of many a treasured friend,
Of homes and native land?

Or do you light the hidden graves
Of those heroic men;
Locked up within the ice bound caves,
That know no mortal's ken?

Throughout the long and chilly night
Your glowing beauties shine;
But never shall a ray of light
Reveal its secret sign.

Religious Miscellany.

A CALL TO PRAYER.

BY THE REV. J. C. RYLE, B. A., CHRIST CHURCH,
OXFORD, RECTOR OF HELMINGHAM, SUFFOLK.

(Continued.)

In every building the first stone must be laid and the first stroke must be struck. The ark was one hundred and twenty years in building. Yet there was a day when Noah laid his axe to the first tree he cut down to form it. The temple of Solomon was a glorious building. But there was a day when the first huge stone was laid at the foot of Mount Moriah. When does the building of the soul really appear in a man's heart? It begins, so far as we can judge, when he first pours out his heart to God in prayer.

Reader, if you desire salvation, and want to know what to do, I advise you to go this very day to the Lord Jesus Christ, in the first private place you can find, and entreat Him in prayer, to save your soul.

Tell Him that you have heard that He receiveth sinners, and has said, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast him out." Tell him that you are a poor vile sinner, and that you come to Him on the faith of His own invitation. Tell Him you put yourself wholly in His hands—that you feel vile and helpless, and hopeless in yourself—and that except He saves you, you have no hope to be saved at all. Beseech Him to deliver you from the guilt, the power, and the consequences of sin. Beseech Him to pardon you and wash you in His own blood. Beseech Him to give you a new heart, and plant the Holy Spirit in your soul. Beseech Him to give you grace, and faith, and will, and power to be His

disciple from this day forever. Oh! reader, go this very day, and tell these things to the Lord Jesus Christ, if you really are in earnest about your soul.

Tell Him in your own way, and your own words. If a doctor came to see you when sick, you could tell him where you felt pain. If your soul feels its disease indeed, you can surely find something to tell Christ.

Doubt not His willingness to save you, because you are a sinner. It is Christ's office to save sinners. He says Himself, "I come not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Luko v. 32.)

Wait not because you feel unworthy. Wait for nothing. Wait for nobody. Waiting comes from the devil. Just as you are, go to Christ. The worse you are, the more need you have to apply to Him. You will never mend yourself by staying away.

Fear not, because your prayer is stammering, your words feeble, and your language poor. Jesus can understand you. Just as a mother understands the firstblings of her infant, so does the blessed Saviour understand sinners. He can read a sigh, and see a meaning in a groan.

Despair not, because you do not get an answer immediately. While you are speaking, Jesus is listening. If he delays an answer, it is only for wise reasons, and to try if you are in earnest. Pray on and the answer will surely come. Though it tarry, wait for it. It will surely come at last.

Oh! reader, if you have any desire to be saved, remember the advice I have given you this day. Act upon it honestly and heartily, and you shall be saved.

3. Let me speak, lastly, to those who do pray. I trust that some who read this tract know well what prayer is, and have the Spirit of adoption. To all such, I offer a few words of brotherly counsel and exhortation. The incense offered in the tabernacle was ordered to be made in a particular way. Not every kind of incense would do. Let us remember this, and be careful about the matter and manner of your prayers.

Brethren who pray, if I know anything of a Christian's heart, you are often sick of your own prayers. You never enter into the Apostle's words, "When I would do good, evil is present with me," so thoroughly as you sometimes do upon your knees. You can understand David's words, "I hate vain thoughts." You can sympathise with that poor converted Hottentot, who was overheard praying, "Lord, deliver me from all my enemies, and above all, from that bad man myself!" There are few children of God, who do not often find the seasons of prayer a season of conflict. The devil has special wrath against us, when he sees us on our knees. Yet I believe that prayers which cost us no trouble, should be regarded with great suspicion. I believe we are very poor judges of the goodness of our prayers, and that the prayer which pleases us least, often pleases God most. Suffer me then, as a companion in the Christian warfare, to offer you a few words of exhortation: One thing, at least, we all feel—we must pray. We cannot give it up. We must go on.

I commend then to your attention, the importance of reverence and humility in prayer. Let us never forget what we are, and what a solemn thing it is to speak with God. Let us beware of rushing into His presence with carelessness and levity. Let us say to ourselves "I am on holy ground. This is no other than the gate of heaven. If I do not mean what I say, I am trifling with God. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Let us keep in mind the words of Solomon, "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to

utter anything before God; for God is in heaven and thou on earth." (Eccles. v. 2.) When Abraham spoke to God, he said, "I am dust and ashes." When Job, he said, "I am vile." Let us do likewise.

I commend to you, in the next place, the importance of praying *spiritually*. I mean by that, that we should labor always to have the direct help of the Spirit in our prayers, and beware above all things of formality. There is nothing so spiritual, but that it may become a form, and this is specially true of private prayer. We may insensibly get into the habit of using the fittest possible words, and offering the most scriptural petitions, and yet do it all by rote without feeling it, and walk daily round an old beaten path, like a horse in a mill. I desire to touch this point with caution and delicacy. I know that there are certain great things we daily want, and that there is nothing necessarily formal in asking for these things in the same words. The world, the devil, and our own hearts, are daily the same. Of necessity we must daily go over old ground. But this I say, we must be very careful on this point. If the skeleton and outline of our prayers be by habit almost a form, let us strive that the clothing and filling up of our prayers, be as far as possible of the Spirit. As to praying out of a book, it is a habit I cannot praise. If we can tell our doctors the state of our bodies without a book, we ought to be able to tell the state of our souls to God. I have no objections to a man using crutches, when he is first recovering from a broken limb. It is better to use crutches than not to walk at all. But if I saw him all his life on crutches, I should not think it matter for congratulation. I should like to see him strong enough to throw his crutches away.

I commend to you, in the next place, the importance of making prayer a regular business of life. I might say something of the value of regular times in the day for prayer. God is a God of order. The hours for morning and evening sacrifice in the Jewish temple were not fixed as they were without a meaning. Disorder is eminently one of the fruits of sin. But I would not bring any under bondage. This only I say, that it is essential to your soul's health to make praying a part of the business of every 24 hours in your life. Just as you allot time to eating, sleeping, and business, so allot time to prayer. Choose your own hours and seasons. At the very least, speak with God in the morning, before you speak with the world; and speak with God at night, after you have done with the world. But settle it down in your minds, that prayer is one of the great things of every day. Do not drive it into a corner. Do not give it scraps and leavings and parings of your day. Whatever else you make a business of, make a business of prayer.

I commend to you, in the next place, the importance of perseverance in prayer. Once having begun the habit, never give it up. Your heart will sometimes say, "You have had family prayers; what mighty harm if you leave private prayer undone?" Your body will sometimes say, "You are unwell, or sleepy, or weary; you need not pray." Your mind will sometimes say, "You have important business to attend to to-day; cut short your prayers." Look on all such suggestions as coming direct from the devil. They are all as good as saying "neglect your soul." I do not maintain that prayers should always be of the same length;—but I do say, let no excuse make you give up prayer. It is not for nothing that Paul said "continue in prayer" and "pray without ceasing." He did not mean that men should be always on their knees, as an old sect, called the Euchites, supposed. But he did mean that