

seem to do much in the way of checking them; but surely a Bishop's powers might be so enlarged as to hinder such a perversion. It cannot be right that the legitimate development of the devotional life of the Church should be held in check, because sometimes it assumes abnormal and unhealthy forms. At present, in two-thirds of our parish churches there are no daily prayers. Probably in many of them the practical difficulties are insurmountable; but in others it is otherwise. If so widespread an omission of a definite rule is tolerated by the authorities, might they not well encourage experiments in the direction indicated above? The church should on week-days, as well as Sundays, be the home of the devotions of the common people. At present, it is not.



Jesus at the Door.

BY THE REV. JOHN REID, M.A., INVERNESS.

OF all the pictures which flashed before the mind of the prisoner-seer of Patmos, the most wonderful is that which shews Jesus standing as a suppliant at a door, and that the door of a church (Rev. iii. 20). It was only the other day that I discovered for myself the reason why this is the most wonderful picture in the Apocalypse. Others may have found it out before, but it was only then that I saw that the words in verse 14 (of the third chapter) should be read as an inscription over the door—"The Church of the Laodiceans." I had not thought of that before; the door had been any door to me. And while it was wonderful that Jesus should stand there and knock, His action has all the effect of a surprise, when it is seen that He is standing and knocking at the door of the Church of the Laodiceans, of which He had said, "Because thou art neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth." How shall we indicate the significance of that?

Let us see what was the matter with this Church. It was

not a society of unbelievers or hypocrites. It was not accused of unfaithfulness or of heresy, or of any gross or open sin. It was not even a cold Church. Evidently it was not without some faith or love or obedience. Jesus said it was "lukewarm." It had faith, but it was not strong ; love, but it was not fervent ; obedience, but it was not earnest. Worst of all to our minds is the fact that the Church of the Laodiceans was perfectly content with its condition. To its own mind it was "rich and increased with goods and had need of nothing." But it was not because of that that Jesus regarded it with loathing. It was because it was "neither cold nor hot" that He said "I will spue thee out of My mouth."

What, then, was the cause of this lukewarmness? Our answer is found in the position of Jesus. He is standing at the door—outside. The Church bore His name, and called Him Lord and worshipped Him, but He was not "in the midst" of it. That is enough to account for its spiritual condition. Intensity of devotion is impossible while He remains at the door.

But how shall we interpret as a spiritual fact the position of Jesus relatively to the Church of the Laodiceans? How can Jesus be outside of any Church or heart which has some warmth of feeling towards Him? The answer can only be that when He is at the door, He is not the chief interest. Something else is the supreme desire than the doing of His will or the enjoyment of His fellowship. Love to Christ may be mingled with and subject to the love of the world. It is possible also that this condition may arise when Jesus is regarded as a Messenger who brings good tidings, as a Saviour who secures salvation, as the Dispenser of wonderful blessings, and be valued for His gifts and not for Himself. Love and gratitude may be thus awakened, but they will be weak and lukewarm. They will lack the intensity of the devotion which sees and knows that Jesus is Himself the gift of God, and the true joy of the soul that finds Him.

But what, then, are the feelings with which Jesus regards this Church of the Laodiceans? They are strangely mingled.

At first sight it seems as if they were only those of disgust or intense loathing. He cannot endure their tepid devotion. He would rather have coldness or indifference. His preference amazes us until we see that it is an expression of the intensity of the love of Jesus. The very cry of loathing is a cry of love. If He had loved lightly, little love would have contented Him. It would not have mattered that they were "lukewarm." It is because He loved intensely that He was stirred to loathing by their weak response. Love without limit had been revealed; gifts without measure had been bestowed; the death of the Cross had been endured, and the answer of that Church had been a lukewarm affection! A great love demands a great love in return, and is moved to utter words of rejection in the agony of its disappointment. Jesus wept over Jerusalem because it refused Him; He regarded with loathing the Church which He had redeemed with His blood, because it loved Him slightly. It is love unworthily requited which expresses itself in the awful threat "I will spue thee out of My mouth." *But the threat is not fulfilled.* The love that had been despised humbles itself to seek its desire again. It tries counsel, chastening, and pleading: "I counsel thee to buy of Me gold . . ., that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. *As many as I love,* I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent."

It is in the line of these counsels that we are to read the dreadful threat of rejection. It springs from the jealousy of love; it is inspired by the anger of grief; it expresses the revulsion of feeling which arises when those who are greatly loved prove unresponsive, or answer only with a light and shallow affection. But even then it is still a love that will not let us go! It comes as a suppliant knocking at the door, seeking an entrance into the heart. This is the surprise of the love of Jesus. He represents Himself as standing at the door of the Church of the Laodiceans which loves Him so indifferently, pleading that He may be allowed to enter to enjoy

the full and gladsome intercourse of close and intimate fellowship. The appeal is addressed to the individual, for it is only as Jesus is received into the heart of each that He can come into "the midst" of the Church. Therefore He says: "If any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him and he with Me." The revival of a Church begins with the revival of the individual.

This humility and patience of love are not what we expect. We look for judgment rather than mercy, for indignation rather than forbearance, for wrath rather than any further revelation of love. We expect Him to say: "Behold, I stand at the door for doom and punishment." But the Church of the Laodiceans is still the object of His love. He still asks what had been denied—a welcome within, a place at the table as a friend, where He may talk in gladness, soul with soul. It is the surprise of His grace, the wonder of His love. Too often we quote the words of the Old Testament as if they indicated the methods of Jesus in dealing with lukewarm souls: "I will go and return to My place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek My face: in their affliction they will seek Me early" (Hosea v. 15). We forget that there has been a fuller revelation of love in the New Testament, and the patient pleading of the Saviour at the door of the Church of the Laodiceans is in harmony with it. "When we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." "For His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins, He hath quickened us together with Christ." It is in words like these that the *grace* of the love of God is revealed. The Apostle Paul, in speaking for himself and his fellows, says, "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." That is the method of the Gospel for sinners. But in the picture of Christ at the door of the Church of the Laodiceans, we see that it is also the method of Jesus with regard to those who have been reconciled to Him, when they act unworthily of the love which has been bestowed upon them. Their unworthiness is not overlooked; their sin is not

passed by ; but He who died for them while they were yet sinners, still pleads with them when they love Him unworthily. He seeks the fullest love from those who wound and grieve Him by their lack of warmth. He knows that absence will not make the heart grow fonder as we sometimes foolishly say. Nothing but a full and happy fellowship will secure it—"If any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." Therefore in His wise, patient and wonderful love He stands and knocks and pleads for welcome.

"Behold, I knock ! Methinks if on My face
 Thou wouldst but rest thine eyes,
 Wouldst mark the crown of thorns, the sharp nails trace,
 Thou couldst not Me despise !
 Thee have I yearned for with a love so strong,
 Thee have I sought so earnestly and long ;
 My road led from a cross unto this place ;
 Behold, I knock !"



The heart of Tasso.

BY MARY BRADFORD WHITING.

TO the great majority of English-speaking people, not only the writings, but the personality of Dante, is as familiar as that of our own Shakespeare. The pale, worn face, with the sad eyes and the strenuous mouth, is known to all ; the woes, the wanderings, and the exiled death, are a page of human history with which we are fully as well acquainted as are the great Italian's fellow-countrymen. With Torquato Tasso the case is different. As the author of the "Gerusalemme Liberata," his name is widely known, but comparatively few of those who have thus heard of him know the history of those sorrows, which, in spite of the lavish endowments of his brilliant youth, brought him to his death at the age of fifty-one, a penniless wanderer, broken in health and in fortune.