

THE Widow's Mites

A New Presentation of
the Subject of Giving.

BY

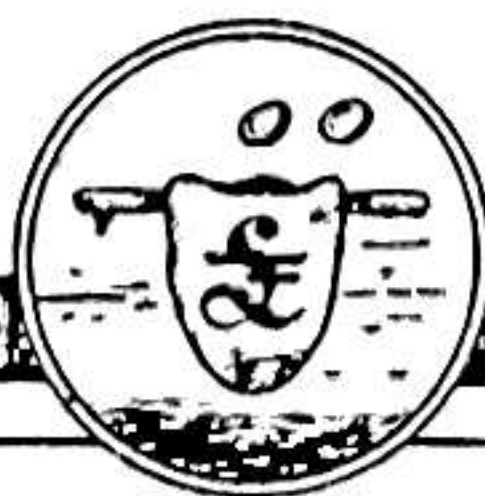
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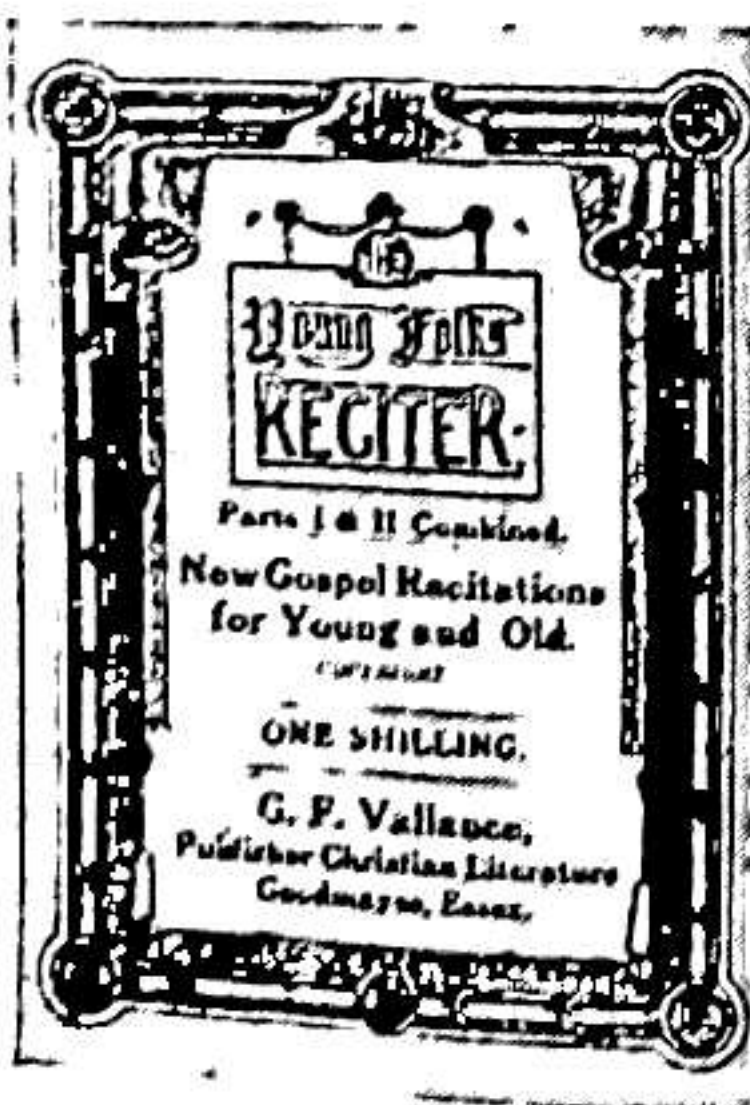
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THE WIDOW'S MITES.

MARK 12. 41-44.

THE widow's mite" is a phrase very often upon the lips of the people of God, but like many other expressions we use so thoughtlessly, and oftentimes flippantly, it is quite an unscriptural one. **Nowhere in the Bible do we read of "the Widow's Mite."**

We wish to draw attention to an incident in the life of our Lord from which this phrase has doubtless been culled, but before looking in detail at Mark 12. 41-44, we would preface our message with a preliminary word on the subject of GIVING.

One often overhears, from young Christians especially, such remarks as these: **"What is really expected of me as a child of God and servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the matter of giving?"** or again, **"Is a tenth of my income the correct proportion to render to the Lord as His portion?"** and similar enquiries. One has every sympathy with such enquirers, for there is oftentimes behind the question an honest heart, which really and truly desires to please his or her Lord. If such problems have troubled the reader, may our study of this most interesting and helpful portion of God's Word answer your difficulties clearly and definitely. Please open your Bible and read Mark 12. 41-44. The opening verse (v. 41) gives us an important key on the matter of giving, at the very outset.

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“AND JESUS SAT OVER AGAINST THE TREASURY.”

Beloved Christian friend, never forget whose eye is over

THE TREASURY.

It may be that one Lord's Day morning as you were preparing to select your offering for the Lord you caught the eye of an elder brother or sister which seemed to you to be watching your very action, and the small silver coin (or perhaps the copper) was hastily put back; and another of greater value was selected and with an element of pride you allowed it to fall heavily into the bag. Had that eye not been seen you would have been quite content to have given the Lord less than you did! This may be true of my reader, or it may not, but one fears it is often true in Christian experience to-day. If the eye of man causes such exercise of conscience, what should be our feelings when we remember that the omniscient eye of God is ever watching? Let us remember that it is none other than the Lord Himself who

SITS OVER AGAINST THE TREASURY.

For remember, He does not NEED our puny gifts. He is Lord and Heir of all things. He is Creator and Sustainer of all things. The cattle upon a thousand hills are His, and all things were created by Him and for Him. The Lord that sits over against the Treasury is the greatest Giver in the universe and the wonder of wonders is, not that He **requires** our gifts, BUT RATHER that He deigns to accept our puny offerings at all.

Shall we remind ourselves right here, that this Divine Observer of the Treasury is none other than He whom God gave for the salvation of the World?

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None other than He, whom Jehovah SPARED NOT but delivered up for us all. Delivered, you will remember, into the hands of wicked men, by the DETERMINATE COUNSEL AND FOREKNOWLEDGE OF GOD to that awful, shameful, costly death of the Cross, and this is the very One who loved me and GAVE HIMSELF for me (Galatians 2. 20). He, this blessed One, my Lord and my God, my Redeemer, Saviour, Friend—my all, He is the One whose omniscient piercing eye ever beholds what I place in His treasury. If the eye of a fellow believer causes reflection of mind and exercise of heart in my giving—say: what shall the thought of **His** eye being ever upon me accomplish? In the light of such a fact as this—and fact it verily is, can I say “Lord how **MUCH** do you **EXPECT** me to give you?” or “Lord, that is the very best I can **spare**”? His wounds and His scars of love look down upon us as they speak with deliberate and absolute love “I gave Myself for thee; what canst thou give for Me?”

Then again, beneath the shadow of His gaze shall we remind ourselves that **ALL we have and all we are, are but the result of His giving**, for “every good and perfect gift cometh down from above”? Material good of every kind; food, raiment, health, faculty of mind and body, are all His gifts and He giveth abundantly and liberally and yet—ah, how true it is—and yet we ask so carefully, “What am I to give Him?” He has given us His Word, His Spirit, His Joy, His Peace, His Presence, yea His all, for He that spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also **FREELY GIVE US ALL THINGS?** (Romans 8. 32).

It was His portion down here to be denied; at Sychar's Well He asked for a drink and was refused. On the Cross He said, “I thirst” and they gave Him a sponge full of vinegar, and throughout His entire

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life down here He, the Son of God, was hated **without a cause.** Oh, what sorrow must have filled His heart as He, the giver of all good, received such rebuffs at the hands of His creatures. He was denied by Peter, betrayed by Judas, forsaken by all and crucified at last. All because **He loved me.**

He who sat over against the treasury

behold **HOW** the people cast money into the
Treasury.

It is very probable that **WHAT** our Lord did, and still does, is of more surprise to you than the first wonderful fact, that He is ever observing our gifts.

Mark this unalterable law of Divine truth both in your Bible and in your heart:

THE LORD NEVER LOOKS AT WHAT WE GIVE.

This is a truth sadly overlooked to-day. If only believers would keep this before them the whole system of giving, the whole of our offerings to the Lord would be revolutionized. As the Lord of glory sat over against the treasury that day He beheld

HOW they cast, not **WHAT** they cast,

and He is the same Lord to-day.

If His sole purpose in looking at those offerings had been to see **WHAT** they gave, the record here given would never have been written.

Scripture never says, "The Lord loveth a **GREAT** giver," but it does say, "The Lord loveth a **CHEERFUL** giver," and again, "He that giveth let him do it with simplicity" (Romans 12. 8).

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“Every man, according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly or of necessity” (2 Corinthians 9. 7). We all know the story of the woman which was a sinner who stood at the feet of Jesus in the house of Simon the Pharisee; and how with that alabaster box of ointment, she anointed the feet of her Lord, washing them with her tears, kissing them and wiping them with the hairs of her head. Simon had doubtless invited the Lord to this feast. He had prepared and given Him this meal, but here again the Lord saw not **WHAT** was given, but **HOW** it was given.

THOU GAVEST ME

SHE HATH

No water:

Washed My feet with tears
and wiped them with the
hairs of her head:

No kiss.

NOT CEASED to kiss My
feet.

No oil for My head.

Anointed My feet with oint-
ment.

It was **HOW** that dear woman treated the Lord that so commended itself to Him. She revered Him, bowing down at His feet, not ceasing to kiss them, she cast her very glory (her hair) at His feet. (Dear Sister, how could you have done this if you are shorn of your hair which is your glory?). That was **HOW** SHE gave, but Simon gave no water (the usual Eastern greeting to any visitor), no kiss, no oil. In other words he was treating the Lord Jesus as he would not have treated any ordinary guest. Shall this not speak to our own hearts? We have friends, those we love and who are oft times our guests. We treat them with respect, and delight to give them that which will please, but how do we correspondingly treat the One who is our **BEST FRIEND**, our most faithful Companion? It is very possible that my reader has

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one particular friend for whom he or she would do almost anything—even die if needs be. Maybe a loving daughter who would die for her parents, a mother who would give her all for her child, a husband for his wife or vice versa, yet all these natural affections are as nothing compared with the **love of our Lord**. And how do we treat Him—In His presence do we bow in reverence, or do we just sit in any attitude we please? To His meetings (Prayer and Ministry) do we delight to come? Do His desires concern us—are they studied in so far as they affect our pleasures? Remember, He is observing always **HOW** we render to Him, not only our monetary gifts but our faithful allegiance.

He desires OURSELVES far more than our Gifts.

May each heart be exercised before Him in the light of such solemn thoughts.

We are next privileged to know the Saviour's own commentary on **HOW** the people cast into the treasury. He saw many that were rich cast in much. **It does not say HOW much.**

He also saw a certain poor widow cast in **TWO MITES** which make a farthing. What comfort this should give to the very poorest of God's family; He who takes notice of the falling of a sparrow which could then be bought for **LESS THAN ONE MITE**, observes the meagre (as we should call it) gift of a poor widow. What is the Lord's comment?

"THIS POOR WIDOW HATH CAST MORE IN THAN ALL THEY WHICH HAVE CAST INTO THE TREASURY." These divine words are full with teaching. We observed earlier that the Lord did not sit and observe **WHAT** was put in, but **HOW**. Some may be thinking that this statement is not really correct after all. One would venture to say that not only is that statement absolutely correct but **THESE WORDS PROVE IT SO.** For two

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reasons: First, had the Lord based His remark on **WHAT** was given, He could not have said that the widow had given more. For many that were rich gave much. She only gave two mites. But because He was looking at the motive of the heart, and not at **WHAT** they gave, He could of a truth say she had given more than they all, which brings us to the second reason why these words prove the statement referred to, to be correct.

The Lord does not consider **WHAT** we give, nor does He measure our gift by the amount offered, **BUT**

HE DOES LOOK AT WHAT WE KEEP BACK,

and our gifts are valued and weighed in the Divine Sanctuary, **by what we do not give.**

“There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty” (Proverbs 11. 24).

What a strange procedure, you think. So it may seem to us, but God's thoughts are not our thoughts remember, and we have really cause for thanksgiving here; for were it not so, how few of us would have “the opportunity” of rendering to the Lord at all! If the principle were reversed and God **did** measure by the amount we gave, the rich would have the matter entirely in their hands and the poor would be swamped out; but as it is, rich and poor have equal opportunities, for the Lord who sits over against the Treasury takes note of **what we have left after we have given to Him.** Behold the Lord on this day. Into the scales of the Sanctuary He places the capital left, of all those rich givers, but it does not weigh in their favour. It certainly goes down and that heavily, but that is against them. Then He weighs the capital that that dear widow had left, and up fly the scales. After she had given just two mites to the Lord,

SHE HAD NOTHING LEFT

says the Saviour. **THEY** did cast in of their abundance, but **SHE OF HER WANT** did cast in **ALL THAT SHE HAD**, even all her living. He measured, as He always does, by what she had left, and that was **NOTHING**. I am perfectly sure that, like the widow of 2 Kings 4. who poured out her cruse of oil, which was all she had, and found there was a never ending supply, so this widow woman found a rich provision for her need by the One to whom she gave all. God is no man's debtor and we never give to Him a mite, but what He repays a hundredfold.

In Psalm 84. 11 we see the same Divine principle applied to God Himself. There we read, "The Lord will give grace and glory, **no good thing will He WITHHOLD** from them that walk uprightly." God's gifts to us are measured by what He withholds, and that is absolutely nothing. He giveth us **ALL THINGS RICHLY TO ENJOY.**

In drawing our study to a close, may I refer to our opening words, that nowhere in Scripture do we read of "The Widow's Mite"? Possibly you can now see the reason for the comment. By referring to the widow's mite we rob that dear woman of half her sacrifice. She gave two mites—all that she had. The widow's mite is usually referred to as applying to some meagre offering, whereas "the widow's mites" are intended to represent "the whole estate given to God."

Finally, let us make two practical comments upon our study. The first is this: (1)

Do not PRETEND to sacrifice more to the Lord than you actually do!

Such a course is hypocrisy and abominable in the sight of the Lord. The case of Ananias and Sapphira should be sufficient for any who practise such

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things in any monetary sense (see Acts 5). God dealt in swift judgment then, and whilst He may not do the same now, yet His abhorrence of it is just as great and at the Judgment Seat of Christ He will verily deal as severely with it. But we are living in a day of much hypocrisy. Reality in Christian living is a rarity. Sham and false profession abound and even among those who are really the Lord's own blood bought children, hypocrisy is found. May I lovingly appeal through this message for sincerity of heart? How much of so-called piety and professed holy living is genuine? One fears a very small proportion. Does my reader say, "Well, so and so never speaks to me at all. I am slighted by this one and that one and I now keep myself aloof." Have you ever thought on this wise, that if the saints knew as much about you as you know yourself, they would have even less to do with you than they do? This should lead us to true humility. We are, after all, poor miserable failing specimens and there is not a single one of us that can boast of anything.

Therefore let us be frank about the matter, strip off all our cloaks of hypocrisy and treat one another as we really are, and then rapid strides in divine things will be made. Another form of hypocrisy and one which bears very heavily upon the writer is the flippant and glib way many of our most beautiful hymns are sung. Let me give you one, "When I survey the wondrous Cross." There is only one verse of that hymn I can ever sing and that is the third,

"See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?"

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How can I sing,

“My richest gain I count but loss
And pour contempt on all my pride.”

Do I? Do you? I ask you solemnly at this moment: Can you truthfully, as before the Lord, say, your pour contempt on **ALL** your pride? If so, how is it you have never spoken to that brother or sister? Only pride keeps up such barriers. What hypocrites we are to be sure! Again,

“**All** the vain things that charm me most
I sacrifice them to His blood.”

Look at our persons. Is there a ring there on that finger, a bangle or a bracelet or pearl necklace? Look at that home—**VAIN THINGS**. Yes, if we are honest. Are they wrong? One would not say that, but it is the hypocrisy of saying we do these things, when we do not. **If we do not sacrifice all the vain things, then may we be preserved from claiming that we do**, but if we can truthfully sing the words and do them, thank God for sincere hearts.

The last verse has often been commented on,

“Were the whole realm of nature mine
That were an offering far too small,
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my heart, my life, my all.”

And how this affects our present topic you will readily see. Remember these comments when singing, “All to Jesus I surrender,” or, “Take my life and let it be,” etc., etc.

Our second practical comment is this, (2) **Do NOT give to God MORE than belongs to you personally.** In other words,

THE WIDOW'S MITES.

Do not give MORE than you have.

The widow did not give **three** mites; she only had two and two she gave. This may seem strange but what I mean is just this.

Suppose a son, the only boy of a widowed mother, is her only support and stay. He is a good Christian lad and one who desires to give the Lord both His place and portion. His mother is a good mother, one who has done her best for him and who lives a splendid life, but he really does not think she is a child of God. He has been earning £4 a week, of which he gives his mother £3 and out of the 20s. left he has been giving the Lord 2s. 6d. But under exercise of the Spirit of God he feels he ought to give the Lord more and decides to give 10s. a week and his mother 5s. less. One would affirm most solemnly that such a course is wrong. The £3 was his mother's and he has no right to rob her, for such it would be. If he desires to give God 10s. then he must take it from his 20s., otherwise 5s. must suffice. This may seem strange, but we cannot give to God at another's expense. That is hypocrisy.

Again, a husband and wife who have hitherto never given much to the Lord, but have rather been indulging in pleasures and luxuries, feel that as a result of a word from the Lord they should give Him more of their weekly income, but at the moment they have not sufficient to meet their accounts. They have overspent their income and at present the butcher and baker, etc., have bills against them. What should they do? Pay the accounts first or double the Lord's portion first? There is only one answer—the bills must first be paid. We cannot honour God with our substance if our gifts are debts owing to others. **Do not give God another 6d. until your debts are paid.** Then double the Lord's por-

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tion if you will, and reduce your private expenditure accordingly. We cannot go in for a full reward if such practices are to be found in our daily life.

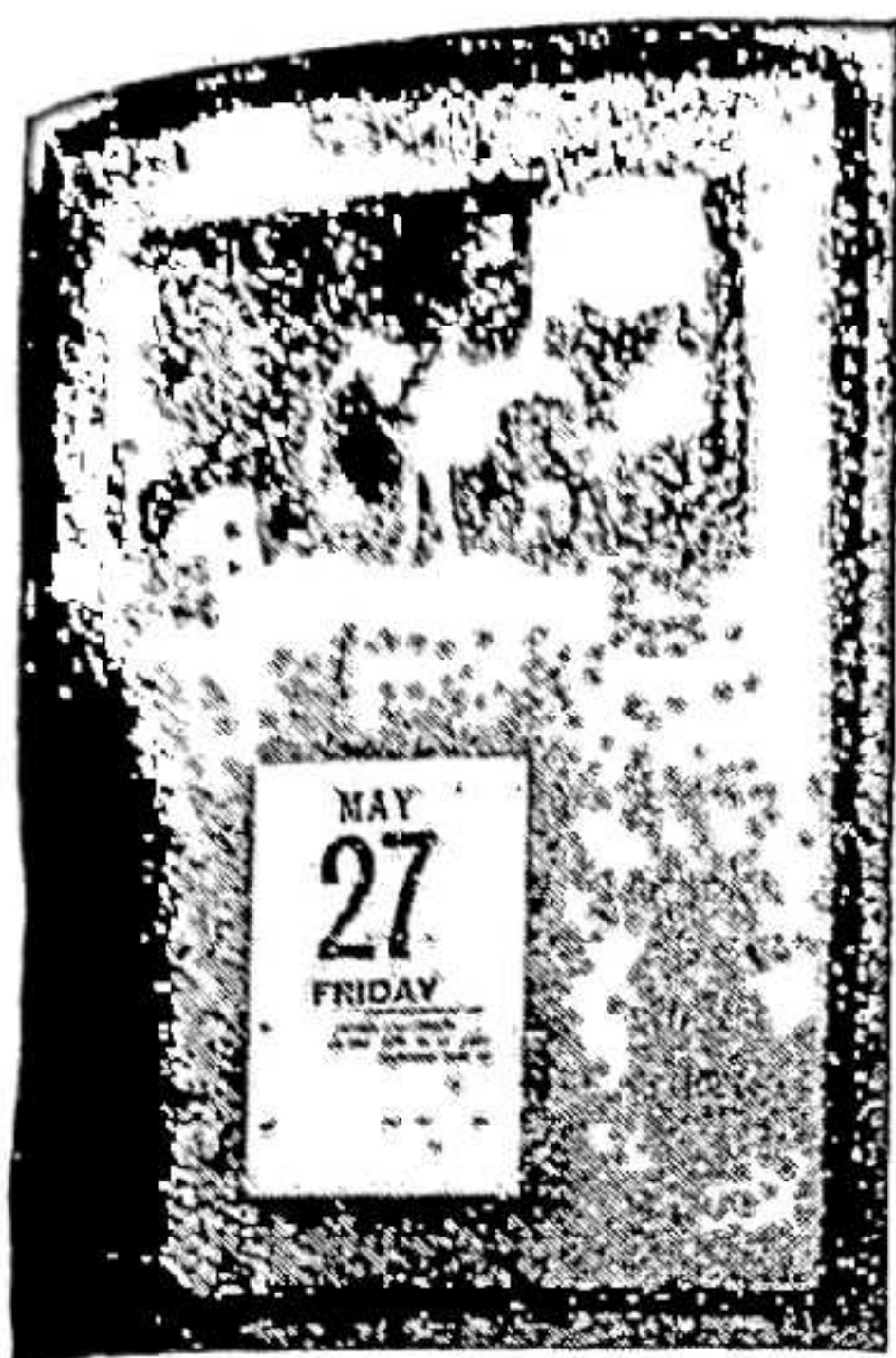
One other item in this connection and one which I believe few Christians think of seriously. I refer to the

Hire Purchase System

which one sorrowfully observes is rapidly gaining ground, even among the Lord's people. My dear friend, have you in your home something on this wretched principle? If you cannot afford that which you desire, do not have it until you can afford it. Apart from Hire Purchase things being dearer than any cash article, it is entirely contrary to the will of God for any child of His to be thus encumbered. Do you say that you can pay for it weekly out of income? Yes, but suppose your income stops, what then? Suppose the Lord were to come, what then? Nay—all you need and can pay for, have—what you cannot afford wait until you can. How can a Christian encumbered with Hire Purchase payments increase his offerings to the Lord even should he so desire? His debts are fixed practically irrespective of the Lord's claims, and to give the Lord more would be to default in his monthly payments. Ah, dear friends, have nothing to do with this Satanic system, but be the Lord's free man and if He constrains you to give Him **ALL** you possess, even **both your mites**, be free to give them to Him.

G. F. VALLANCE.

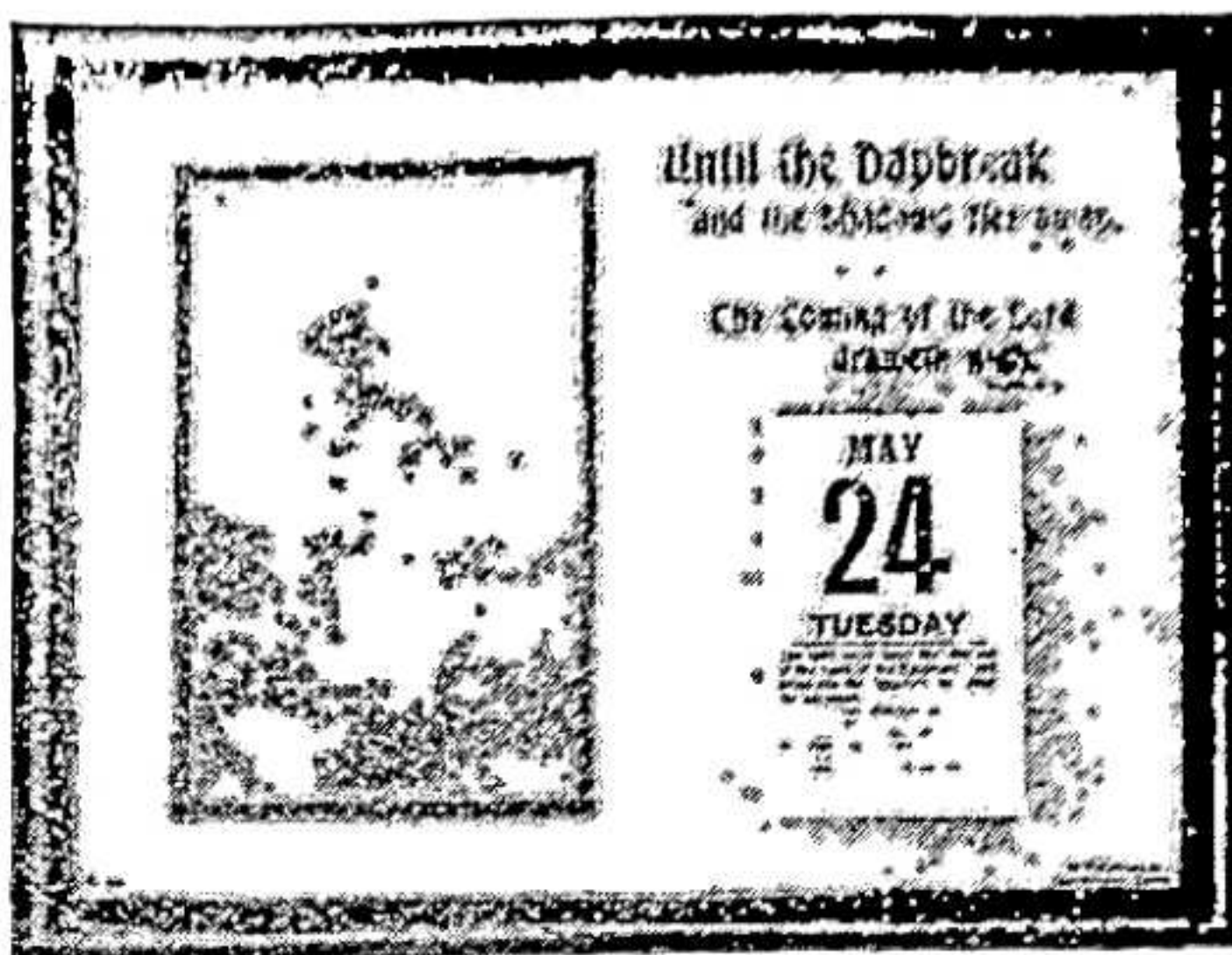
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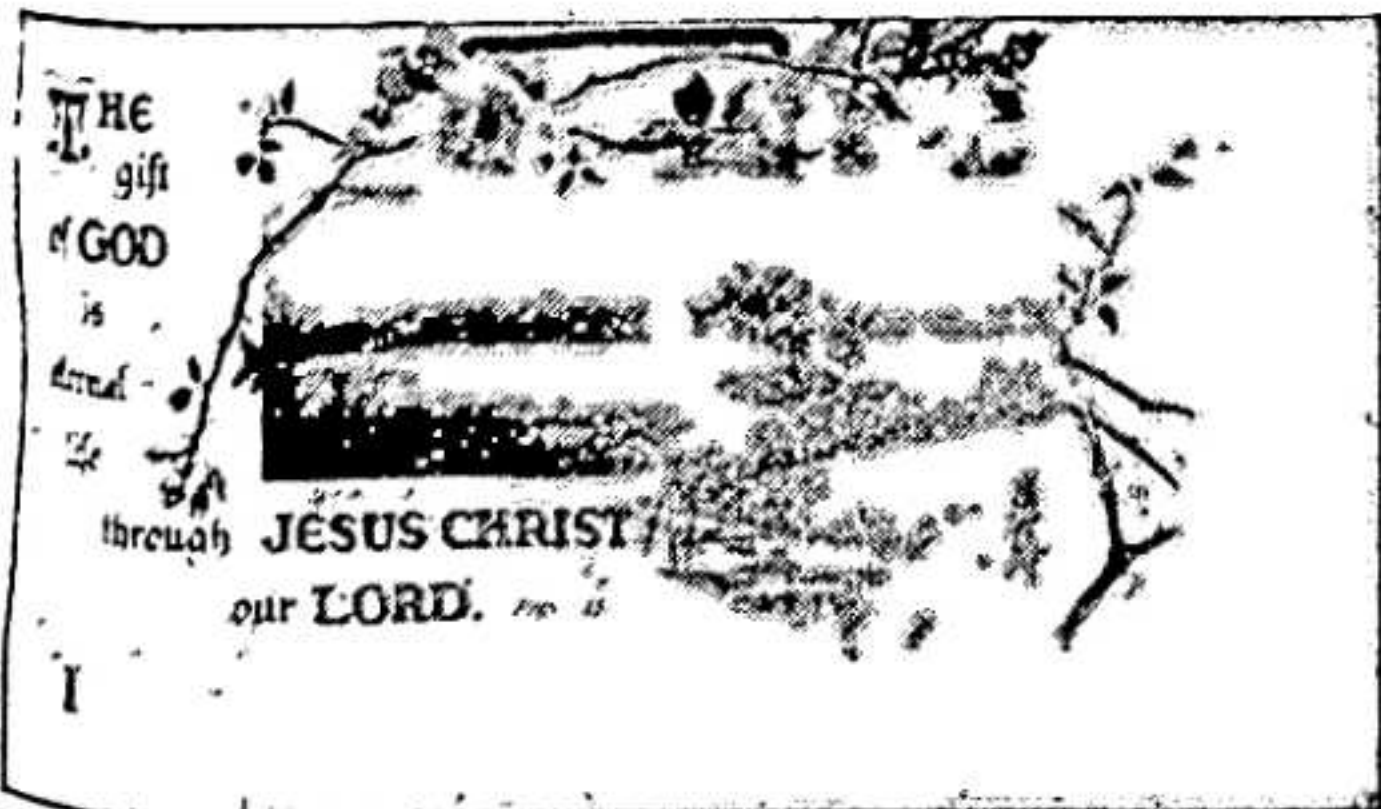
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