

# Through the Gates of Gold

An Article by William Q. Judge

*“Secreted and hidden in the heart of the world and in the heart of man is the light which can illumine all life, the future and the past. Shall we not search for it? Surely some must do so. And then perhaps those will add what is needed to this poor fragment of thought.”*

(Epilogue to “Through The Gates of Gold: A Fragment of Thought” by M. C.)

The most notable book for guidance in Mysticism which has appeared since *Light on the Path* was written has just been published under the significant title of *Through the Gates of Gold*. Though the author’s name is withheld, the occult student will quickly discern that it must proceed from a very high source. In certain respects the book may be regarded as a commentary on *Light on the Path*. The reader would do well to bear this in mind. Many things in that book will be made clear by the reading of this one, and one will be constantly reminded of that work, which has already become a classic in our literature. *Through the Gates of Gold* is a work to be kept constantly at hand for reference and study. It will surely take rank as one of the standard books of Theosophy.

The “Gates of Gold” represent the entrance to that realm of the soul unknowable through the physical perceptions, and the purpose of this work is to indicate some of the steps necessary to reach their threshold. Through its extraordinary beauty of style and the clearness of its statement it will appeal to a wider portion of the public than most works of a Theosophical character. It speaks to the Western World in its own language, and in this fact lies much of its value.

Those of us who have been longing for something “practical” will find it here, while it will probably come into the hands of thousands who know little or nothing of Theosophy, and thus meet wants deeply felt though unexpressed. There are also doubtless many, we fancy, who will be carried far along in its pages by its resistless logic until they encounter something which will give a rude shock to some of their old conceptions, which they have imagined as firmly based as upon a rock – a shock which may cause them to draw back in alarm, but from which they will not find it so easy to recover, and which will be likely to set them thinking seriously.

The titles of the five chapters of the book are, respectively, “The Search for Pleasure,” “The Mystery of the Threshold,” “The Initial Effort,” “The Meaning of Pain,” and “The Secret of Strength.” Instead of speculating upon mysteries that lie at the very end of man’s destiny, and which cannot be approached by any manner of conjecture, the work very sensibly takes up that which lies next at hand, that which constitutes the first step to be taken if we are ever to take a second one, and teaches us its significance. At the outset we must cope with sensation and learn its nature and meaning. An important teaching of *Light on the Path* has been misread by many. We are not enjoined to kill out sensation, but to “kill out *desire* for sensation,” which is something quite different. “Sensation as we obtain it through the physical body, affords us all that induces us to live in that shape,” says this work. The problem is, to extract the meaning which it holds for us. That is what existence is for. “If men will but pause and consider what lessons they have learned from pleasure and pain much might be guessed of that strange thing which causes these effects.”

The question concerning results seemingly unknowable, that concerning the life beyond the Gates, is presented as one that has been asked throughout the ages, coming at the hour “when the flower of civilization had blown to its full, and when its petals are but slackly held together,” the period when man reaches the greatest physical development of his cycle. It is then that in the distance a great

glittering is seen, before which many drop their eyes bewildered and dazzled, though now and then one is found brave enough to gaze fixedly on this glittering, and to decipher something of the shape within it.

**Poets and philosophers, thinkers and teachers, all those who are the “elder brothers of the race” have beheld this sight from time to time, and some among them have recognized in the bewildering glitter the outlines of the Gates of Gold.**

**Those gates admit us to the sanctuary of man’s own nature, to the place whence his life-power comes, and where he is priest of the shrine of life.**

It needs but a strong hand to push them open, we are told.

**The courage to enter them is the courage to search the recesses of one’s own nature without fear and without shame. In the fine part, the essence, the flavor of the man, is found the key which unlocks those great gates.**

The necessity of killing out the sense of separateness is profoundly emphasized as one of the most important factors in this process. We must divest ourselves of the illusions of the material life.

**When we desire to speak with those who have tried the Golden Gates and pushed them open, then it is very necessary, in fact it is essential, to discriminate, and not bring into our life the confusions of our sleep. If we do we are reckoned as madmen and fall back into the darkness where there is no friend but chaos. This chaos has followed every effort of man that is written in history; after civilization has flowered, the flower falls and dies, and winter and darkness destroy it.**

In this last sentence is indicated the purpose of civilization. It is the blossoming of a race, with the purpose of producing a certain spiritual fruit; this fruit having ripened, then the degeneration of the great residuum begins, to be worked over and over again in the grand fermenting processes of reincarnation. Our great civilization is now flowering and in this fact we may read the reason for the extraordinary efforts to sow the seed of the Mystic Teachings wherever the mind of man may be ready to receive it.

In “The Mystery of the Threshold,” we are told that

**only a man who has the potentialities in him both of the voluptuary and the stoic, has any chance of entering the Golden Gates. He must be capable of testing and valuing to its most delicate fraction every joy existence has to give; and he must be capable of denying himself all pleasure, and that without suffering from the denial.**

The fact that the way is different for each individual is finely set forth in “The Initial Effort,” in the words that man “may burst the shell that holds him in darkness, tear the veil that hides him from the eternal, at any moment where it is easiest for him to do so. And most often this point will be where he least expects to find it.” By this we may see the uselessness of laying down arbitrary laws in the matter.

The meaning of those important words, “All steps are necessary to make up the ladder,” finds a wealth of illustration here. These sentences are particularly pregnant:

**Spirit is not a gas created by matter, and we cannot create our future by forcibly using one material agent and leaving out the rest. Spirit is the great life on which matter rests, as does the rocky world on the free and fluid ether; whenever we can break our limitations we find ourselves on that marvelous shore where Wordsworth once saw the gleam of the gold.**

Virtue, being of the material life, man has not the power to carry it with him, “yet the aroma of his good deeds is a far sweeter sacrifice than the odor of crime and cruelty.”

**To the one who has lifted the golden latch the spring of sweet waters, the fountain itself whence all softness arises, is opened and becomes part of his heritage.**

**But before this, a heavy weight has to be lifted from the heart, an iron bar which holds it down and prevents it from arising in its strength.**

The author here wishes to show that there is sweetness and light in occultism, and not merely a wide dry level of dreadful Karma, such as some Theosophists are prone to dwell on. And this sweetness and light may be reached when we discover the iron bar and raising it shall permit the heart to be free. This iron bar is what the Hindus call “the knot of the heart”! In their scriptures they talk of unloosing this knot, and say that when that is accomplished freedom is near. But what is the iron bar and the knot? is the question we must answer. It is the astringent power of self – of egotism – of the idea of separateness. This idea has many strongholds. It holds its most secret court and deepest counsels near the far removed depths and the center of the heart. But it manifests itself first, in that place which is nearest to our ignorant perceptions, where we see it first after beginning the search. When we assault and conquer it there it disappears. It has only retreated to the next row of outworks where for a time it appears not to our sight, and we imagine it killed, while it is laughing at our imaginary conquests and security. Soon again we find it and conquer again, only to have it again retreat. So we must follow it up if we wish to grasp it at last in its final stand just near the “kernel of the heart.” There it has become an iron bar that holds down the heart, and there only can the fight be really won. That disciple is fortunate who is able to sink past all the pretended outer citadels and seize at once this *personal* devil who holds the bar of iron, and there wage the battle. If won there, it is easy to return to the outermost places and take them by capitulation. This is very difficult, for many reasons. It is not a mere juggle of words to speak of this trial. It is a living tangible thing that can be met by any real student. The great difficulty of rushing at once to the center lies in the unimaginable terrors which assault the soul on its short journey there. This being so it is better to begin the battle on the outside in just the way pointed out in this book and *Light on the Path*, by testing experience and learning from it.

In the lines quoted the author attempts to direct the eyes of a very materialistic age to the fact which is an accepted one by all true students of occultism, that the true heart of a man – which is visibly represented by the muscular heart – is the focus point for spirit, for knowledge, for power; and that from that point the converged rays begin to spread out fan-like, until they embrace the Universe. So it is the Gate. And it is just at that neutral spot of concentration that the pillars and the doors are fixed. It is beyond it that the glorious golden light burns, and throws up a “burnished glow.” We find in this the same teachings as in the Upanishads. The latter speaks of “the ether which is within the heart,” and also says that we must pass across that ether.

“The Meaning of Pain” is considered in a way which throws a great light on the existence of that which for ages has puzzled many learned men.

**Pain arouses, softens, breaks, and destroys. Regarded from a sufficiently removed standpoint, it appears as medicine, as a knife, as a weapon, as a poison, in turn. It is an implement, a thing which is used, evidently. What we desire to discover is who is the user; what part of ourselves is it that demands the presence of this thing so hateful to the rest?**

The task is, to rise above both pain and pleasure and unite them to our service.

**Pain and pleasure stand apart and separate as do the two sexes; and it is in the merging, the making the two into one, that joy and deep sensation and profound peace are obtained; where there is neither male nor female, neither pain nor pleasure, there is the god in man dominant, and then is life real.**

The following passage can hardly fail to startle many good people:

**Destiny – the inevitable – does indeed exist for the race and for the individual. But who can ordain this, save the man himself? There is no clue in heaven or earth to the existence of any ordainer other than the man who suffers or enjoys that which is ordained.**

But can any earnest student of Theosophy deny, or object to this? Is it not a pure statement of the law of Karma? Does it not agree perfectly with the teaching of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*? There is surely no power which sits apart like a judge in court, and fines us or rewards us for this misstep or that merit; it is we who shape, or ordain, our own future.

God is not denied. The seeming paradox that a God exists within each man is made clear when we perceive that our separate existence is an illusion; the physical, which makes us separate individuals, must eventually fall away, leaving each man one with all men, and with God, who is the Infinite.

And the passage which will surely be widely misunderstood is that in “The Secret of Strength.”

**Religion holds a man back from the path, prevents his stepping forward, for various very plain reasons. First it makes the vital mistake of distinguishing between good and evil. Nature knows no such distinction.**

Religion is always man-made. It cannot therefore be the whole truth. It is a good thing for the ordinary and outside man, but surely it will never bring him to the Gates of Gold. If religion be of God, how is it that we find that same God in his own works and acts violating the precepts of religion? He kills each man once in life; every day the fierce elements and strange circumstances which he is said to be the author of, bring on famine, cold and innumerable untimely deaths; where then, in The True, can there be any room for such distinctions as right and wrong? The disciple, must as he walks on the path, abide by law and order, but if he pins his faith on any religion whatever he will stop at once, and it makes no matter whether he sets up Mahatmas, Gods, Kṛishṇa, Vedas or mysterious acts of grace, each of these will stop him and throw him into a rut from which even heavenly death will not release him. Religion can only teach morals and ethics. It cannot answer the question “what am I?” The Buddhist ascetic holds a fan before his eyes to keep away the sight of objects condemned by his religion. But he thereby gains no knowledge, for that part of him which is affected by the improper sights has to be known by the man himself, and it is by experience alone that the knowledge can be possessed and assimilated.

The book closes gloriously, with some hints that have been much needed. Too many, even of the sincerest students of occultism, have sought to ignore that one-half of their nature, which is here taught to be necessary. Instead of crushing out the animal nature, we have here the high and wise teaching that we must learn to fully understand the animal and subordinate it to the spiritual. “The god in man, degraded, is a thing unspeakable in its infamous power of production. The animal in man, elevated, is a thing unimaginable in its great powers of service and of strength,” and we are told that our animal self is a great force, the secret of the old-world magicians, and of the coming race which Lord Bulwer-Lytton foreshadowed. “But this power can only be attained by giving the god the sovereignty. Make your animal ruler over yourself, and he will never rule others.”

This teaching will be seen to be identical with that of the closing words of *The Idyll of the White Lotus*: “He will learn how to expound spiritual truths, and to enter into the life of his highest self, and

he can learn also how to hold within him the glory of that higher self, and yet to retain life upon this planet so long as it shall last, if need be; to retain life in the vigor of manhood, till his entire work is completed, and he has taught the three truths to all who look for light.”

There are three sentences in the book which ought to be imprinted in the reader’s mind, and we present them inversely:

**Secreted and hidden in the heart of the world and the heart of man is the light which can illumine all life – the future and the past.**

**On the mental steps of a million men Buddha passed through the Gates of Gold; and because a great crowd pressed about the threshold he was able to leave behind him words which prove that those gates will open.**

**This is one of the most important factors in the development of man, the recognition – profound and complete recognition – of the law of universal unity and coherence.**

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“When the strong man has crossed the threshold he speaks no more to those at the other (this) side. And even the words he utters when he is outside are so full of mystery, so veiled and profound, that only those who follow in his steps can see the light within them.” – *Through the Gates of Gold*, ch. 1, III

He fails to speak *when* he has crossed, because, if he did, they would neither hear nor understand him. All the language he can use when on this side is language based upon experience gained outside the Gates, and when he uses that language, it calls up in the minds of his hearers only the ideas corresponding to the plane they are on and experience they have undergone; for if he speaks of that kind of idea and experience which he has found on the other side, his hearers do not know what is beneath his words, and therefore his utterances seem profound. They are not veiled and profound because he wishes to be a mystic whose words no one can expound, but solely because of the necessities of the case. He is willing and anxious to tell all who wish to know, but cannot convey what he desires, and he is sometimes accused of being unnecessarily vague and misleading.

But there are some who pretend to have passed through these Gates and who utter mere nothings, mere juggles of words that cannot be understood because there is nothing behind them rooted in experience. Then the question arises, “How are we to distinguish between these two?”

There are two ways.

1. By having an immense erudition, a profound knowledge of the various and numberless utterances of those known Masters throughout the ages whose words are full of power. But this is obviously an immense and difficult task, one which involves years devoted to reading and a rarely found retentiveness of memory. So it cannot be the one most useful to us. It is the path of mere book-knowledge.

2. The other mode is by testing those utterances by our intuition. There is scarcely any one who has not got an internal voice – a silent monitor – who, so to say, strikes within us the bell that corresponds to truth, just as a piano’s wires each report the vibrations peculiar to it, but not due to striking the wire itself. It is just as if we had within us a series of wires whose vibrations are all true, but which will not be vibrated except by those words and propositions which are in themselves true. So that false and pretending individual, who speaks in veiled language only mere nothingness, will never vibrate within us those wires which correspond to truth. But when one who has been to and through those Gates speaks ordinary words really veiling grand ideas, then all the invisible wires within immediately vibrate in unison. The inner monitor has struck them, and we feel that he has said

what is true, and whether we understand him or not we feel the power of the vibration and the value of the words we have heard.

Many persons are inclined to doubt the existence in themselves of this intuition, who in fact possess it. It is a common heritage of man, and only needs unselfish effort to develop it. Many selfish men have it in their selfish lives; many a great financier and manager has it and exercises it. This is merely its lowest use and expression.

By constantly referring mentally all propositions to it and thus giving it an opportunity for growth, it will grow and speak soon with no uncertain tones. This is what is meant in old Hindu books by the expression, “a knowledge of the real meaning of sacred books.” It ought to be cultivated because it is one of the first steps in knowing ourselves and understanding others. In this civilization especially we are inclined to look outside instead of inside ourselves. Nearly all our progress is material and thus superficial. Spirit is neglected or forgotten, while that which is not spirit is enshrined as such. The intuitions of the little child are stifled until at last they are almost lost, leaving the many at the mercy of judgments based upon exterior reason. How, then, can one who has been near the Golden Gates – much more he who passed through them – be other than silent in surroundings where the golden refulgence is unknown or denied. Obligated to use the words of his fellow travelers, he gives them a meaning unknown to them, or detaches them from their accustomed relation. Hence he is sometimes vague, often misleading, seldom properly understood. But not lost are any of these words, for they sound through the ages, and in future eras they will turn themselves into sentences of gold in the hearts of disciples yet to come.

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