



THE WORD

VOL. 16.

DECEMBER, 1912.

No. 3.

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CHRISTMAS LIGHT.

IT is dawn of the winter solstice. Light-beams in the southern east drive away the army of night and tell of the rising lord of the day. Clouds gather as the day wears on and cast the longest shadows of the year. The trees are bare, the sap is low, and frost-darts pierce the barren ground.

Evening comes; clouds change the sky into a dome of lead. The winds moan low a dirge of death; on a little space above the earth-line of the southern west, the gray sky lifts as from a stage. The dying king of heaven, a fire-globe robed in a purple shroud, sinks into trembling space, beyond the valley running through the distant hills. Colors fade; lead-clouds close above him; the winds die down; the earth is cold; and all is wrapt in gloom.

Time's tragedy of its last year is done. Thinking man looks on, and in it sees symbolized life's tragedy—and the forecast of his own. He sees the uselessness of effort in the endless round of life and death, and sadness falls over him. Fain would he lay down the weight of years and pass into the forgetfulness of dreamless sleep unawaking. But he cannot. The dire woe-cry of humankind breaks the gloom of sadness; and he hears. Up rise the frailties of man: Lost faiths, broken friendships, ingratitude, hypocrisy, deceit, are seen. In his heart there is no room for these. He feels the sorrows of a world in throe and throbs with the aching heart of man. In himself man hears the cry of man for power to see, to hear, to speak. Lives of the past and lives to come find voice within him, and these speak in silence.

The sun's path symbols the life of man: as sure to rise—and whether the sky be bright, or overcast—sure to sink into the dark. This has been the course throughout countless aeons and may go on for aeons unknown. Man's whole life is but a puff of air, a flash in time. It is a streak of light, enfleshed, costumed, that falls and for a few moments plays upon the stage; then trembles, vanishes, and is seen no more. He comes—he knows not whence. He passes—where? Is man born to weep, to laugh, to suffer and enjoy, to love, only that he should die? Shall man's fate always be death? Nature's laws are the same for all. There is method in the growing grass blade. But the grass blade is a grass blade. Man is man. The grass

blade flourishes and withers; it questions not the sunlight nor the frost. Man questions while he suffers, loves, and dies. If he shall not be answered, why should he question? Men have questioned through the ages. Still, there is no more answer than there is echo to the grass blade's rustle. Nature gives birth to man, then compels him to commit offences which she repays with hardship and death. Must kind nature ever be made to tempt and to destroy? Teachers speak of good and bad, of right and wrong. But what is good? what bad? what right? what wrong?—who knows? There must be wisdom in this universe of law. Will questioning man ever remain unanswered? If the end of all is death, why this joy and agony of life? If death does not end all for man, how or when shall he know his immortality?

There is silence. As the twilight deepens, snow flakes come from the north. They cover the frozen fields and hide the grave of the sun in the west. They hide the barrenness of the earth and protect its future life. And out of the silence comes reply to queries of man.

O, wretched earth! O weary earth! playhouse of the games, and blood-stained theatre of countless crimes! O poor, unhappy man, player of the games, maker of the parts you act! Another year has passed, another comes. Who dies? Who lives? Who laughs? Who cries? Who wins? Who loses, in the act just ended? What were the parts? Cruel tyrant, and poor oppressed, saint, sinner, dolt, and sage, are parts you play. The costumes you wear, change with the shifting scenes in each succeeding act of life's continuous show, but you remain the actor—few actors play well, and fewer know their parts. Ever must you, poor actor, hidden from yourself and others, in the costumes of your part, come on the stage and play, until you have paid and received pay for each deed in the parts you play, until you have served your time and earned freedom from the play. Poor man! too eager or unwilling actor! unhappy because you do not know, because you will not learn your part—and within it remain separate.

Man tells the world he seeks the truth, but he holds on to and will not turn from falsehood. Man calls aloud for light, but slinks away when light comes to lead him out of darkness. Man shuts his eyes, and cries out that he cannot see.

When man will look and let things come to light, the light will show the good and the bad. What is for him, what he should do, that is good, is right, is best. All else, for him, is bad, is wrong, not-best. It should be let be.

He who wills to see will see, and he will understand. His light will show him: "No," "Let be," "That is not-best." When man heeds the "no" and would know the "yes," his light will show him: "Yes," "Do this," "This is best." The light itself may not be seen, but it will show things as they are. The way is clear, when man wills to see it—and follow.

Man is blind, deaf, dumb; yet he would see and hear and speak. Man is blind and, fearing light, he looks into darkness. He is deaf because, listening to his senses, he trains his ear to discord. He is dumb because he is blind and deaf. He speaks of phantoms and disharmonies and remains inarticulate.

All things show what they are, to the one who sees. Unseeing man cannot tell the semblance from the real. All things proclaim their natures and names, to the one who hears; unhearing man cannot distinguish sounds.

Man will learn to see, if he will look into the light; he will learn to hear, if he will listen for the true; he will have the power to articulate speech, when he sees and hears. When man sees and hears and speaks with the harmlessness of power, his light will not fail and will let him know immortality.



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A Non-Profit Organization Established in 1950
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