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THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

This is a dark world. It is true that God hath prepared great lights to shine in the firmament. The sun sheds down on it his flood of radiance, and the moon walks through the heaven in her brightness; but their light cannot reach the soul of sinful man. There, while the outward world is bathed in light, thick darkness and the shadow of death reign; and from its deep caverns are brought forth all those hateful forms of actual iniquity, that revel undisturbed in the wide dominions of heathenism, and abound even in nominally christian lands. The Scriptures often remind us of this inward darkness; but the still more frequently, and in beautiful and varied forms, point out the true and heavenly light, which alone can lighten the moral obscurity. In the Ark of God we see it "shining on all the ways" of the Patriarchs of old, gleaming through the cloud of the Mosaic dispensation, as the "light and salvation" of ancient Israel, and breaking forth from Bethlehem and Calvary, as the "Light of the world," "the Sun of Righteousness."

None of the aspects of this spiritual light is more instructive than the simple declaration of our Saviour to his disciples, "ye are the light of the world." Here we see the treasure put into earthen vessels, the true light shining through the secondary instrumentality of believers. How honorable is the position here assigned to the christian; how grave its duties, how

exalted its privileges. No matter what his station—whether he occupy some prominent position, whence his light may irradiate nations, or be confined to a low and obscure spot, still is he a light in the world, kindled by fire from above, and witnessing against surrounding darkness.

In this view every Christian is a missionary, for light is a thing eminently diffusive. Even the smallest taper must throw forth its beams and fill the space around. Steadily and continuously they flow forth, and with a force which carries them beyond any limits which we can assign. Unless he candle be wilfully put under a bushel, its brightness cannot be concealed. So it is with the true Christian, he bears witness to the light, not only among his more immediate friends and connections, but in the wide world itself; and no man knows how far the light of the good deeds of very lowly men may have penetrated; on how many dark souls it may have shed a blissful radiance, or how many brethren far away may have been cheered and gladdened by it.

"How far this little candle throws its beams."

"So shines a good deed in a naughty world."

Encouragement and responsibility here go together. Can the Christian church enjoy that glorious light and yet conceal it from the eyes of the unbelieving and the heathen. If it do so, it fails in its great mission, and assumi-