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Sunshine

AS we write this article, though by the calendar it is the very middle of winter, not a trace of snow is visible, the air is balmy, and the sun shines brightly. After the mists of the few days just past, the warm and beautiful sunshine is the more welcome and pleasant. We appreciate the sentiment of Solomon when he said, "truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." Everywhere the world of nature without us is fairly reveling in the brilliant sunlight, and we are assured again of abounding life, glowing color, and amazing beauty that shall appear as winter merges into spring. And as early summer comes on apace, garden and orchard, field and forest, shall show forth the unlimited fruitage of the earth as it drinks in the essential sunshine and gives back again in leaf and flower, fruit and grain, for the supply of the natural wants of the whole creation.

Sunshine is vital. It is health. Without it all life, animal and vegetable, would soon be extinct, and the world become a dreary waste, desolate and dead. Live in the sunshine. Let it into your dwellings through every possible opening. Better that it should enter and bring its wholesome, healthful influences within, than that your lace curtains and dainty draperies should look well from without. Prefer health to ornament. Your home should have the unobstructed light of the sun if you would preserve your family in health. No matter how sound and robust you may esteem yourself! at this present hour, if you would continue hearty, vigorous and strong, you must live in the sunshine. It is indispensable to physical well-being.

And in the moral world the same is true. Light is the synonym of knowledge, of safety, of life. Darkness represents ignorance, danger, disease, and death. This is what Christ meant when he said, "I am the light of the world." What the sun is to all created things in the world of nature without us, the Sun of Righteousness is to the world of morals within us. To live in him should not only mean moral health and wholeness, but the fruits of the Spirit as well. Dull, gloomy, unhappy, or dejected Christians are a caricature of true religion. This is bright, sparkling, attractive, beautiful. So the sunshine brings a glad message of life to us all. The sun is a daily courier of universal hope and good cheer. And Christ means life that abounds in sweetness, fragrance, beauty, joy, strength to every soul that abides in him. "The Light of the World is Jesus!"

And in the world of mankind about us the need is the same—Sunshine! The social life of humanity unillumined by the gladness of the Presence of Christ, is dark, sad, pitiful beyond expression. Sorrow, misery, suffering, loss, abound on every side. Everywhere is needed the sunshine of social affection, kindness, sympathy, brotherliness, mutual forbearance, and help, to dispell the pervading gloom. And we think that was the meaning of the Master when he said, "Ye are the light of the world." It is true that he is the world's only Light and Life, but these are manifest through his followers whose supreme duty is to shine for him. Every Christian should diffuse the blessed sunshine of Christly love and service wherever he may go.

"Wherever in the world I am, in whatsoever estate, I have a fellowship with men to keep and cultivate, And a work of lowly love to do for the Lord on whom I wait."

If our personal intercourse with our fellows brings no sunshine into their lives we may well question our Christianity. And no substitute can suffice. As nothing can take the place of the sun so none can supplant Christ. His sympathy will help us understand others as nothing else can. We may know of their needs but not feel for them; but intelligence and love will work together through our influence and agency for their relief, just as light and heat are wrapped together in the same sunbeam. This is true both of the individual and the society, and following it out we may say that the Epworth League might well be the Sunshine parlor of your church. In it should be found the light of the Saviour's spiritual presence ever generating moral health and vigor in every young one, and making each a growing and fruitful organism. From it should radiate brightness and cheer through all the community. No life lived in the sunlight of heavenly communion can be self-contained. We would never try to catch the sunbeams and bottle them up to be labelled "sunshine." He is a poor specimen of a Christian who can be identified only by his badge or uniform or church connection. He who lives in "the light of life" must evidence it by loving deeds such as his Lord habitually performed. Many a burdened soul would be helped to bravely bear its load if the professed disciples of the Master would but try the wholesome contagion of a cheerful smile or hearty handshake. Christianity, like the sunlight, is a diffusive blessing. The essential characteristic of the sun is to shine. So the love of Christ in us cannot be confined to our own hearts, but sheds its glowing brightness over other lives as we touch them in daily personal contact.

Herein is the true and only efficient antidote to the moral poison of our natures and of the world. Christ's rays are purifying, cleansing, clarifying, as nothing else is or can be. The world's moral malady can be cured by no other remedy. As the deadly vapors and dreaded miasmas are scattered by the sun, so the varied ills that harm and destroy men's lives are dispelled by the light of Christ. And in this statement we have the basal truth on which all our Missionary as well as Social work is built.

For the chief trouble with humanity is not external, but internal. Not economics but salvation is the one subject of universal and vital import. To the consideration of this ever pressing need, the human mind instinctively turns, and in procuring a remedy the ingenuity of man has ever been active. There is but one effective Name,—“neither is there salvation in any other,”—and the universal proclamation of that one Name is the supreme business of the Christian—that the Sun of Righteousness may everywhere shine forth with healing to the nations.

If, therefore, the sun is emblem of the Divine Love and Power for life, and health, and fulness of blessing, we may well keep heart and have confidence in God. For Jesus ever lives. And we must ever shine for him. So shall we assuredly see the day when the vision of the prophet shall be fulfilled, and over all the Sun-lit earth the glory of the Lord shall be manifest and "Gentiles shall come to thy light and kings to the brightness of thy rising."

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