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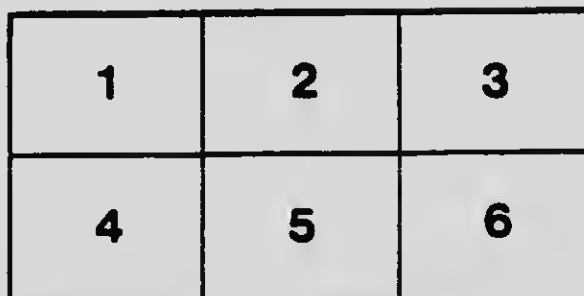
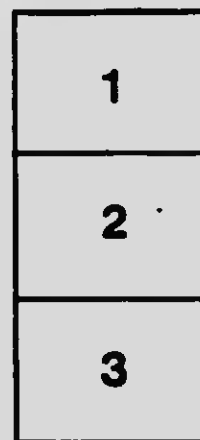
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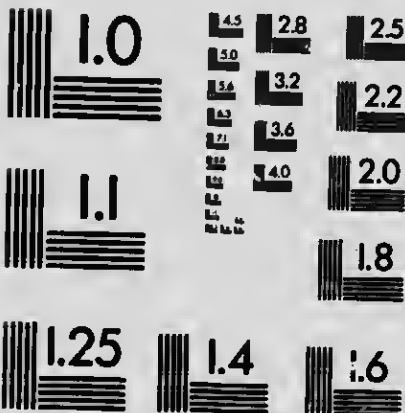
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The Three Kings of Orient



A PARABLE FOR
CHRISTMAS

1910

Allan Pearson Shattford

The
Three Kings of Orient

A Parable for Christmas

With the author's Xmas wishes

BY
Allan Pearson Shatford

JOHN LOVELL & SON, LIMITED, MONTREAL.

LP PS 8537
H28 T4

\$5.00

Mar 1957

Bernard A. +

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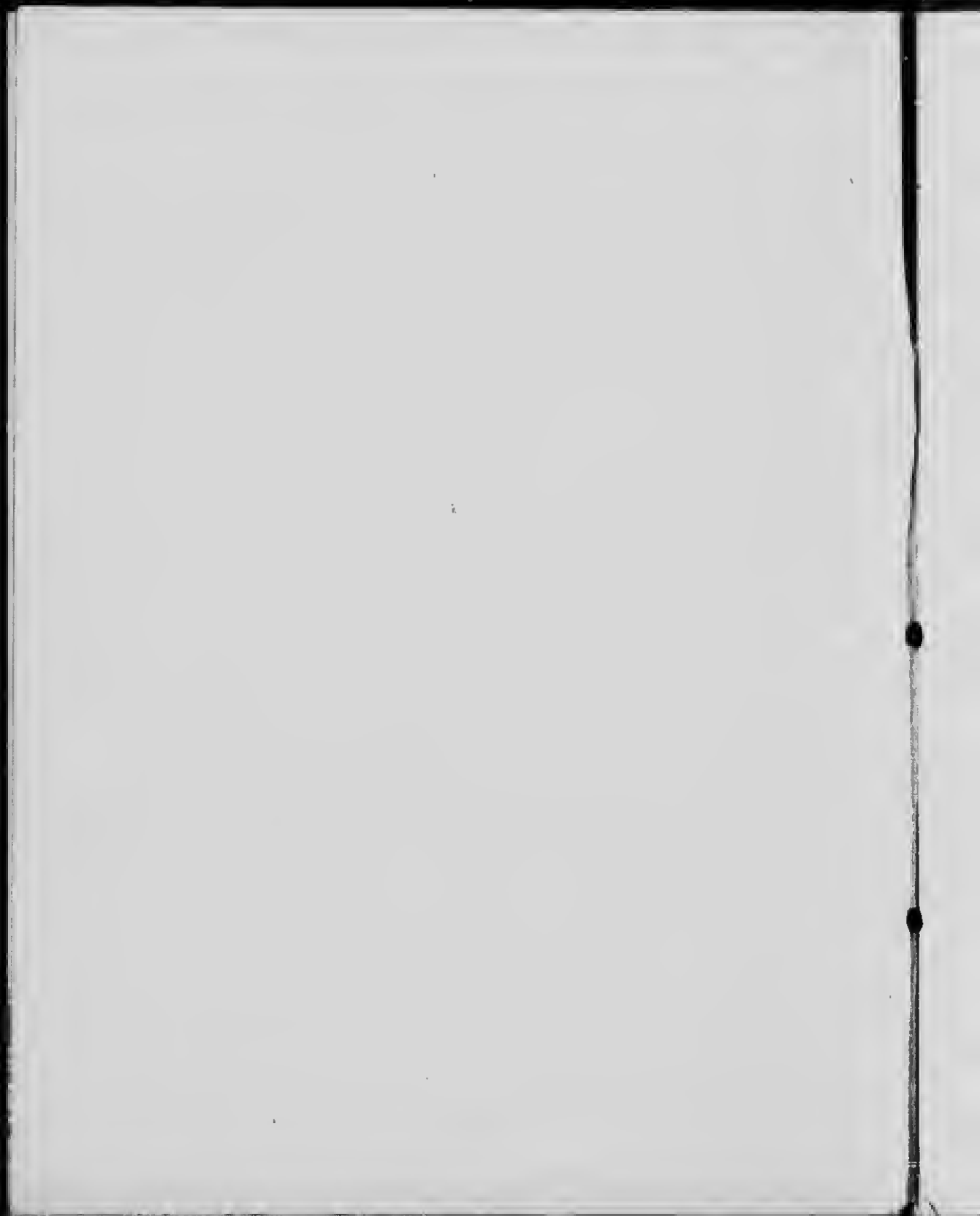
Bernard Antram, May 1967

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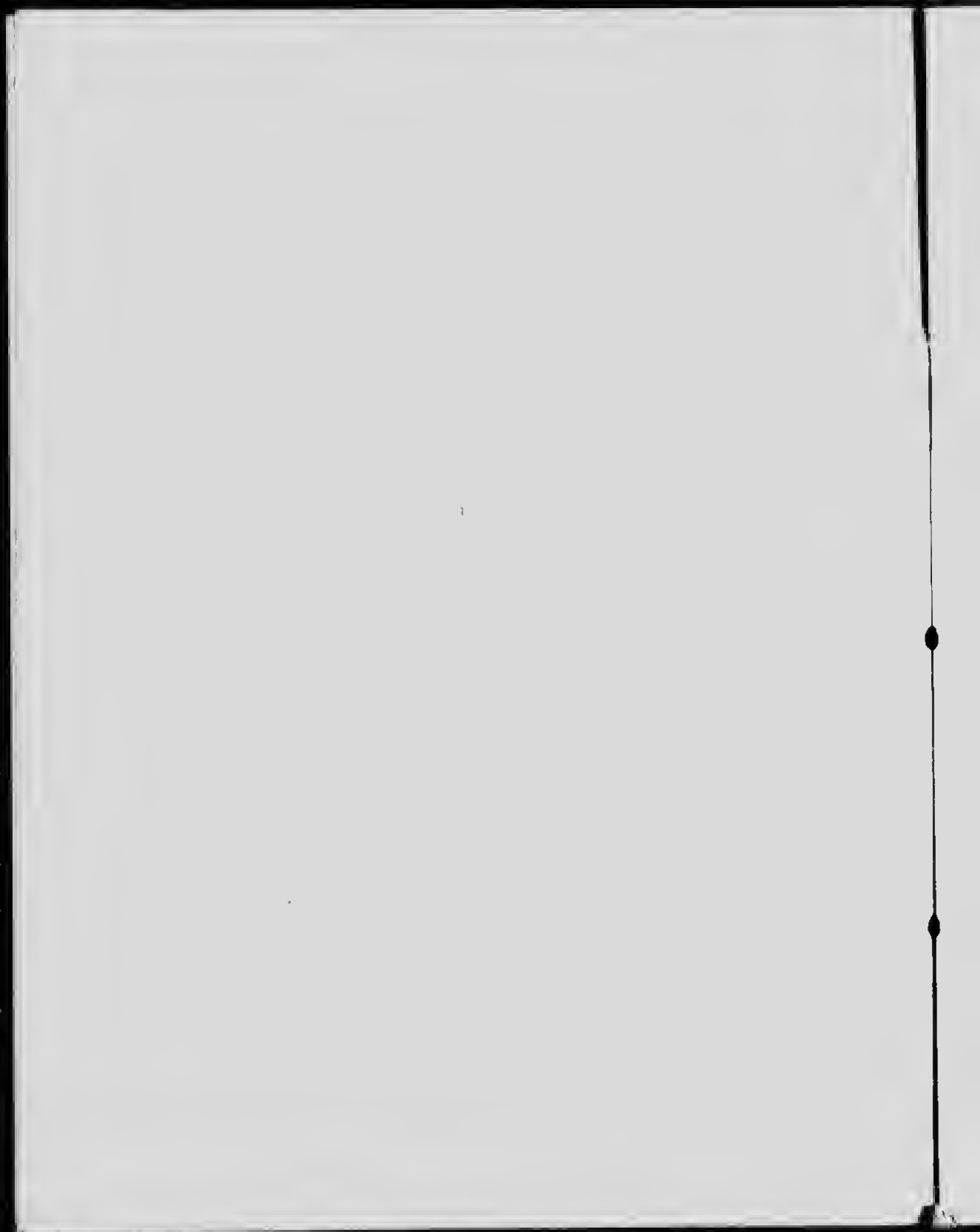
"NOW WHEN JESUS WAS BORN IN BETHLEHEM OF JUDEA IN THE DAYS OF HEROD THE KING, SEVERAL WISE MEN FROM THE EAST CAME TO JERUSALEM, SAYING, WHERE IS HE THAT IS BORN KING OF THE JEWS? FOR WE SAW HIS STAR IN THE EAST AND ARE COME TO WORSHIP HIM.

"AND WHEN HEROD THE KING HEARD IT, HE WAS TROUBLED AND ALL JERUSALEM WITH HIM. . . .

"THEN HEROD PRIVILY CALLED THE WISE MEN AND LEARNED OF THEM CAREFULLY WHAT TIME THE STAR APPEARED. . . .

"AND THEY, HAVING HEARD THE KING, WENT THEIR WAY. . . . AND THEY CAME UNTO THE HOUSE AND SAW THE YOUNG CHILD WITH MARY HIS MOTHER; AND THEY FELL DOWN AND WORSHIPED HIM; AND OPENING THEIR TREASURES THEY OFFERED UNTO HIM GIFTS, GOLD, AND FRANKINCENSE AND MYRRH."

ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL



I.

The Child and the Monarch



CHRISTMAS night was closing in upon the heart of a world-wide empire. The thronging crowds of worshippers had left the peace and gladness of cathedral and abbey services and were gathered about the fireside in their homes. Still the air seemed to quiver with the full-throated notes of the church bells, which all the day long had pealed forth their message of peace and good-will. There was an unaccustomed seriousness upon this myterious and wonderful city. The loud cries and discordant noises that seemed ever to prevail in the streets were hushed into silence, and everywhere men wished to do honour and reverence to the holy and beautiful spirit of Christmas.

The Monarch of this glorious empire sat within the Palace Chambers, absorbed in thought. It was the first Christmas of his reign, and his mind yielded itself to the dominant influence of the day. He had come into an unrivalled heritage. Behind him stretched a long line of noble sovereigns, each contributing something towards the making of the empire. The hearts of all his subjects were still sensitive to the bereavement so recently experienced in the death of the universally loved king, known as "the Peacemaker." The standard set by his immediate ancestors

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was a high one and involved serious responsibilities. They had labored truly and well, and this empire, with its unexampled prosperity and harmony, was the legacy committed to him. Whilst other nations were torn by internal dissension or shattered by implacable foes, this empire was secure, and enjoyed the happiness that comes from prosperity within as well as from respect without.

Was there any relation between this gladdening progress of the nation and the truth of Christmas Day? There could be only one answer to this question. The civilization prevailing in his empire was the direct product of Christianity. The very foundations of government were Christian. For more than a thousand years his ancestors had been crowned in the name of Christ. The principles of the Master were the corner-stones of national development. No matter how imperfectly these principles had been practised by the people, the fact still remained that the empire was a Christian empire and owed its security and success to the influence of the Manger and the Cross. Wherever the ineffable Name was revered in his dominions, there his subjects were loyal, broad, upright, true. Like unto the influence of the fabled Greek goddess whose feet touched the earth and left blossom, beauty and life where before were ugliness, decay and death, so the influence of the Christ-Man had blessed and consecrated the lands where He was known and was worshipped. True, there were older civilizations in other lands outside of Christendom, but what one of them all had done for the nation what Christianity had accomplished for the people of his far-flung empire? How great was the debt owing to the sacred name of Christ!

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These reflections solemnized and humbled the Monarch of the West. He walked to the palace windows and looked up into the star-specked sky. The light from the heavens fell upon the spacious city and the myriad streets sent back their glittering lights in response. Would one star stand out from the rest and offer him guidance, as in the nights long past when the Magi studied the heavens? Suddenly a blazing meteor shot across the sky and sank towards the massive parliament buildings upon the edge of the river. Was there an omen or a prophecy in this sign? His mind was open to the slightest suggestion, and all at once there came to him the light for which he had waited. And in that light he saw the place which he and his people must fill in the world of living men.

Selfishness, he realized, is just as reprehensible in an empire as in an individual. Neither the nation nor the man ought to live for self alone. Truth is the inherent right of all men and those who hold it are guilty of a great neglect if they refuse to impart it to others. A nation is only an aggregate of men and the same demand is made upon the greater that is imposed upon the lesser. If a nation holds a truth that by its very nature is intended for the world, then a solemn obligation rests upon the nation to offer that truth to all men. And the sovereign, as its representative and leader, has his own large responsibility in discharging this obligation.

The truth of Christmas Day is a truth for the world. The monarch remembered that every hymn and prayer his lips had ever uttered proclaimed the universality of Christ. The very oaths he had taken as king declared the same doctrine. Had he no responsibility in the matter? (The flaming sign from the

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sky in its passage towards the seat of government seemed to point the way. If he would be true to the high trust committed to him, must he not officially undertake the declaration of this world-wide evangel? Had a sovereign any missionary obligation. History opened her pages to him and revealed the stains upon the records when the government of this empire had openly and violently opposed the preaching of the gospel to the benighted nations of the earth. That day was forever past, but would the empire and its sovereign be guiltless if mere indifference to this problem of world evangelization marked their attitude? It was not enough to act as an individual—he must act for and with the nation. International love demanded that at least he must create the opportunity for refusal or acceptance by the other nations of the truth which every consideration obliged him to acknowledge as universal.

The Monarch groaned with the burden of this new obligation, and sank upon his knees with a muttered prayer for wisdom. He stretched forth his hands in an appealing gesture and raising his face towards the heavens, implored the Incarnate Son of God for strength and guidance.

A patter of steps behind him and a light hand upon his shoulder thrilled him to the very soul. Perhaps, thought the king, the Child has come to speak the Father's message!

"Father, I came in to ask you a question.

It was the voice of his son. Reaching forth his arms he gathered the little lad to his heart and pressed his face against the nut-brown head. "Why, my boy, what are you doing here at this hour of the night? I thought you were asleep long ago! What is the trouble?"

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The boy lifted his face towards his father's and eagerly watched for encouragement.

"Father, I find it hard to sleep because I cannot get the carol we sang at Children's Service, to-day, out of my head."

"What was the carol, my son?"

"'The three Kings of Orient,' father, and I want to know who they were and where they came from."

"That is a difficult question. Nobody knows. They were evidently great men and great scholars who lived somewhere east of Palestine, and their study of the stars led them to Judea and to Christ, Whose coming God had revealed to them by a sign in the Heavens."

"Were they real, true kings, father?"

Doubtless, they were, my lad. Their nations were very small, probably mere tribes, but at that time they were accounted kings."

The child lingered, as though all his difficulties were not solved, so the king waited patiently for the next question.

"Christ was born in the East, father?"

"Yes, in Palestine."

"And we are called the Western Nations?"

"Yes, my son."

"Doesn't it seem funny, father? Jesus was born in the East, and the Kings came from the East to worship Him. But to-day all the Western nations know Him and the East doesn't?"

"It is our great blessing, laddie, that God has made known His Son to us. It is the secret of our great strength and prosperity."

"Yes, I know, father. But how is the East to know Him? Will the Kings come again to worship Him and then go back and tell their people?"

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"Hardly that, my boy. It is the duty of the West to preach Christ to the East. That is what the missionary societies and churches are doing."

"Thank you, father. Doesn't it seem to take a long time? And can't I help a little?"

"Of course you can. We'll talk it over to-morrow. But now run away to bed."

After the little boy had gone to bed, the king fell to musing. Was it not odd that he and his son should have been thinking about the same things? Some strange fate appeared to be at work to-night. Of course, there might be natural explanations for this coincidence. This was his first Christmas as sovereign and it was to be expected that his thoughts would turn upon Christianity and the Empire. Still, he had the impression that there was something out of the ordinary in the turn of events.

There came a knock upon the door, and the king's secretary entered, nervous and alarmed.

"Pardon me, your majesty, for this unusual interruption, but there are three mysterious strangers without, seeking an audience. I have told them that your majesty cannot possibly grant an audience at this hour of the night, but they will not depart unless a personal refusal comes from your majesty."

The Monarch stood beside the massive table in the centre of the room and for a few moments yielded himself up to the course of the night's thoughts. Could it possibly mean that the hand of God was in the strange order of events? Straightening himself, he gave orders to the secretary.

"You may admit them."

"Shall I summon the guard, your majesty?" asked the anxious secretary.

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"No," replied the king. "These men come on a peaceful visit and I prefer to see them alone."

Upon the retirement of the secretary, silence filled the chamber and a deep sense of mystery and awe fell upon the spirit of the king. He stood with his face turned towards the door, and waited, in an attitude of tense expectation, for the coming of his mysterious visitors.

II

The King who Bore the Trident



tall, stately person stood in the king's presence. He was clothed in rich, loose garments. Upon his feet were soft sandals that gave a strange calmness to his entrance into the room. His face was dark and smooth, except for a thin beard, streaked with gray, that flowed to his breast. There was a pathos and weariness about him that possessed a strange appeal. In his deep-set eyes there glowed the mystery of the ages. His tunic was yellow, and upon the girdle there flashed in interlaced colours many precious stones. Around his head a silken fold was twined and upon his forehead he bore a trident, marked in white against his swarthy skin. Calm and straight he stood and for a brief space looked intensely into the eyes of the king.

"Sire, I have come a long way, bearing a request from the many people of my land."

His voice was softly musical, like that of distant waves creeping up the sands.

"I bid you welcome, noble sir," said the monarch. "You do me signal honor by your visit, and I trust it may be in my power to grant you your request, whatever it may be."

A thin smile crept about the lips of the stranger and his eyes were soft with the light of gratitude.

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"That is most kind of your majesty, and makes me bold to forthwith make known my mission."

Then drawing nearer to the table where the king stood, he took up the burden of his message.

"I am come from a land whose beauty and richness are well known to you, sire, for you are its lawful sovereign. Its millions of people know you only by name, but they are ever mindful of the gracious reign of your grandmother, as well as the recent pacific rule of your father, and they therefore approach you, through me, with a double confidence. Their sympathies are large, though their understanding of your Western customs is small. Their needs are pathetically great, and to whom may they more justly look for help than to their sovereign lord and emperor. If I speak boldly on this sacred night you will remember my love for my people and the greatness of the injustice under which they are made to suffer."

He turned his eyes upon the king as though waiting for some assurance of his patience.

"My lord," replied the monarch, "you have the best title to my calm consideration and unresenting favor, for you represent my own loyal subjects. So be assured that I welcome your frankness."

"For long, long years, my land has been deeply religious. When Moses was writing the law of Israel, my ancestors were chanting their hymns to the gods of the wind and fire and storm. Our prophet was born six centuries before Christ and labored to find a way of escape for the people from the burden of life's woes. Twenty-four centuries of his philosophy have proved how hopelessly inefficient it is for the good of the race. We have studied the heavens anew, and a bright star has broken out of the blue and re-

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vealed to us the only hope of the nation. Our eyes are turned towards the West, for here we find the ideals and civilization that all peoples need. But we are poor and ignorant, and desire light and guidance. The vast multitude of the kingdom only dimly realize their need, but the need is none the less clear. To give us your civilization without the Christ Who made it, is to build a structure without a foundation and makes all the future shadowy and uncertain. I come to crave of you, who hold the gift for mankind, the religion of the Nazarene."

This intelligence was a confirmation of what had already passed in the king's mind. The old story of the Magi, with a new theatre for its action, was to be retold. He was the king to whom the Wise Men should come. Would his answer be the same as the ancient Herod's, or would he make it his gracious privilege to give the seeker as full a measure of truth as God had vouchsafed him?

"My people are in great unrest and peril," continued the Oriental. "For centuries their land has been exploited by the commercial forces of a Christian empire but all the while your nation and government have refused them the Christ. The introduction of Western ideals has opened their eyes to their own potentialities and they have become dissatisfied with their age-long philosophies. It rests with your empire, sire, and particularly with you, as its sovereign, to determine the future of our land. There are shameful things that must hurt your generous heart. Is it right that you should take our gold and material treasures, create discontent with our ancient customs, and yet leave us with nothing more stable and hopeful than the externals of your superior civilization? We need

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to drink deep from the fountain of your religious inspirations! We do not ask for your ecclesiastical Christ, much less for your sad divisions—we want the Christ of the gospels. It will help us greatly if you send us officers who practise the precepts of the religion which they profess. We make no greater demand than the spirit of love and brotherhood, so characteristic of your religion."

There was a deep note of passion in this pleading, and the king was greatly impressed by its justice. He was about to speak his assurances when the voice was lifted again in eloquent appeal.

"Your people here little know the hideous ills that fret our land. They can have no real sense of the iron system of caste that makes black and hopeless the lives of countless thousands. We need the Christ Who preached the essential worth and dignity of every human soul. Your women are not sold into slavery or confined to places where the faces of men are never seen and the sunlight rarely penetrates. Your daughters are not bound with unbreakable chains to duties for which their natures are only half-formed. It might quicken the sympathy of yourself and people if now, as sovereign of the Empire, you would visit our land and witness the burdens under which we groan."

A slight pause in his appeal made opportunity for the king to immediately reply:

"I have been contemplating a visit to my people of the East and your words have served to confirm me in my earnest purpose."

"It rejoices my heart to hear this, your majesty, and I am confident that such a visit will result in much good. It will bind sovereign and people together and make stronger our claim upon your sympathy and

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help. And your wealth is so great, your privileges are so many! It would not mean much for your great empire to furnish us with Christian leaders at this critical time. I tremble for the security of your dominion over us unless our people are educated in those eternal principles of love and righteousness which alone exalt a nation."

The king extended his hand towards the Oriental prince and with trembling voice made answer:

"Sir, you have my strong assurance that your claim and needs will be fully met. And I thank you for so forcibly reminding me of my duty."

The burden of the years seemed to slip off the shoulders of his guest and a buoyant youthfulness leaped into his eyes. Pride of land began to manifest itself in his voice.

"Once, in the long past, kings came to worship the infant Christ and they brought with them treasures for presentation to the lowly King. And I do not come empty handed. There are virtues in our race which your people lack. We possess a patient endurance and calm resignation that are foreign to the active West. There is a spiritual exaltation in the Eastern character that does not often reveal itself in the practical people of your land. The Christian religion will fail of completeness unless to the Western interpretation is added also that of the East. We humbly believe that the full character of the Christ will not be shown to the world until the mystic mind of the Oriental makes its contribution. Jesus was an Eastern prophet, and we make bold to think that there are sides of His life and teaching which will be lost to mankind unless the Eastern nations are brought into the Kingdom. Somewhere in your Scriptures there

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is a prophecy which declares that they 'shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.' Into the great Christian concept of character we dare to hope that we may bring something that you have failed to discover. Humbly, therefore, we lay at the feet of the world's Saviour our poor gifts."

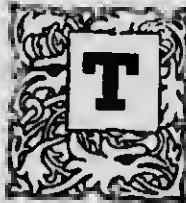
His request was ended. The passion of his own soul had kindled a flame in the heart of the monarch and already he burned with zeal to grant this request. In a speech full of generosity and love he assured the representative of his far distant subjects that a speedy answer would be given to his cry for help.

"In the name of all my brethren I desire to thank your majesty. This morning I bent my knee in worship at your wondrous Abbey service and prayed that the spirit of the Master would fill the heart of the king of this great empire and incline his subjects to yield up to their distressed and hungry brethren the Bread of Life. If the prayer is answered, and your generous assurance fills me with a rich hope that it will be, then the West will receive Christ back again, a more glorious Saviour than He was before."

As the dignified Oriental quietly retreated towards the door, a marvellous transformation passed upon him. The white trident upon his forehead melted away and in its place there came the sign of the cross. He lifted his hands in a gesture of benediction, and upon the palms two red spots glowed like living hearts of flame. The king was transfixed in wonder. Was this the Christ? And had the appeal been really His? His majesty bowed his head in shame for the nation that had so long denied the claim of the Eastern land. When he had courage to lift his eyes the King who bore the Trident was gone, and another stood in his place.

III.

The King of the Middle Kingdom



HERE was a rustle of silk as the new visitant came forward to salute the monarch. His face was wreathed in smiles as he lifted his hands, clasped them together and shook them vigorously before the king. This was the method of his greeting. The loose, spacious sleeves of his garment fell back, revealing the long, carefully guarded finger nails. The skirt of his coat was beautifully embroidered with cunning patterns. A huge dragon of gold completely encircled the border, and two eyes of sapphire sparkled in its head. On the right breast of the coat a crescent of jewels glittered with fascinating brilliancy. He wore upon his head a cone-shaped hat whose several buttons declared his rank. A long plait of raven-black hair ran from the crown of his head to his waist. His skin was like ancient parchment and his eyes looked out of narrow slits into the face of his host. There was a deep guttural note in his voice as he made known his message.

"Most exalted one, I am come on behalf of a numerous people in the hope that you may right a grievous wrong. My story will be unpleasant, but brief, and I crave your royal indulgence."

"I am deeply honored in your visit," replied the king. "The representative of so mighty a nation as

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yours shall receive the courtliest welcome, and if there be any wrong that my hand can right, that hand is at once offered in your service."

A moment's tense silence held the two, as though one was summoning wisdom in which to clothe his grievance and the other searching for patience and justice in which to receive the message and give it a generous answer.

"More than a century ago, Imperial Sire," began the visitor, and his voice was resonant with confident appeal, "your nation began a trade among my people that all the after years proved shameful and criminal. We resisted the traffic from the very outset, but your soldiers forced open our ports, and your men of commerce imported an accursed drug that debauched the lives of countless thousands. Millions of money rolled into your treasury annually through the opium trade with our empire. This is not the sin of private enterprise—it is the crime of a nation. Your government is guilty of the blood of our young men. More than four millions are the slaves of this accursed habit. Is it any wonder that your missionaries have suffered when our people have been offered the Bread of Eternal Life at one moment and the deadly drug in the very next? If by one generous act your empire will stop for all time the importation of opium into our kingdom, and thus prevent the debauchery of our young men and women, the longest step will be taken towards commending to our people the religion which we need, and which you have the privilege and power to give."

This was a strong indictment, but there was too much truth in it for the monarch to resent its presentation.

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"My government has already moved in the matter and declared the business nefarious and a crime against humanity," replied the king.

"True, your majesty," said the Oriental Potentate, "but you cannot convince our people of your sincerity unless you refuse to accept a revenue made up of blood money. I say it with a good deal of pride, that our government is in advance of yours, for we have forbidden the cultivation of the poppy, and fields that were once filled with this plant are now given over to other and more wholesome growths. And the compact made with your government in this matter has been more faithfully kept by us than by you. We have exceeded our obligation—you have been barely keeping yours. We only ask that you lift from our land the blighting curse that was first laid upon it by your empire."

The Western monarch covered his face with his hands and for a time felt unable to give answer to this most shameful accusation.

"I am sorry, most noble sir," said the soft voice of the Eastern King, "to wound your kind heart with harsh charges. But the crisis in our history demands strong words. This is no time for fair speech. Four hundred million people are awake. The fetters of the past have fallen off. The tide of opportunity is at the flood. I believe with all my soul that the Almighty, Who sits above the water-floods and governs the destinies of nations, is calling to your empire to lead our people."

There was a ring of passion in his voice. The monarch never before knew that this race of people was equal to such lofty heights of inspiration and heated ambition. It impressed him with the reality of the

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awakening East. Again, the eager voice of the Eastern sovereign broke in upon the thought of the Imperial host.

"Do you know, Majestic Sire, that our nation, the best element of it, is eagerly adopting your ideals? Hundreds of our young men are being educated in your Western universities. Each year, ambitious youths are turning their faces to the West, and after receiving the inspirations of your schools and colleges are turning back to their own land in order to put their knowledge into practical effect. Without realizing it, our people are waiting for your Christ. There was never a more decisive hour in the world's history. The doors of the East are wide open to you. Send us of your best. Prove to our people that the past has been a grievous wrong and that all your noblest powers will be directed towards the shaping of our character along the high lines of Christian brotherhood. Speak the word to your subjects that will make them too noble to enjoy national prosperity at the cost of human life and human shame. Tell them that the spirit of my kingdom is asking for the same Incarnate Truth that has made their happiness and their peace."

His voice died away until it was lost far up in the vaulted ceiling of the royal chamber. The king was moved by the earnestness of the appeal. But there were serious difficulties to be considered.

"My Lord, your request has moved me greatly. In so far as the crime of my nation against your people is concerned, I shall undertake at once to consult my ministers about it. The wrong has always been a blot upon our national honor, but hitherto considerations that have been more or less weighty have prevented a speedy termination of the difficulty. Now the con-

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science of the nation is fully awake and our duty is manifestly clear. And if your people desire to possess our Christian civilization, the freest opportunity will be provided for them. It is a high privilege to hold the truth for others—it is a noble office to disseminate it.”

The representatives of the two vast empires stood close together and looked long and earnestly at each other. If the one was a suppliant, it did not appear in his attitude. Great forces were behind each of them, great powers were vested in each. It would require something more than human wisdom to declare which personality would represent the greater force in the future. And the nations they represented had much to learn from each other. Each would contribute something to the sum of truth. This the King of Orient seemed anxious to point out.

“Supreme Sir,” he said, “it is much we ask of you—the very best you have. And we are glad to believe that we may offer much in return. Your splendid ideals, your progressive methods, your sense of law and order, your magnanimous spirit, your Christian principles—all these our people greatly need. And we possess a deep love of and attachment to our homes which the West seems in danger of losing. The stability of a nation depends upon the family, and we may be able to restore in all its wondrous power and beauty the love of home and children which seems to be losing its grip upon your people. Then, too, our nation has a deep respect for age. We worship our ancestors, perhaps the habit has its weaknesses and dangers, but there is peril, too, in cutting altogether away from the past and losing the wisdom that can only be gained from experience. There was a time in the history of

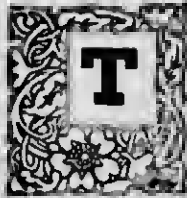
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Israel when disaster came to the nation because the King forsook the old men's counsel, and it appears to us of the East that the West is in some danger of exaggerating the importance of youth. Simplicity of life is a stable characteristic of our nation, and it may not hurt your people to be called back from the complexity of life which is their burden to the simple life so beautifully lived and preached by your great Prophct. In these and other ways, our nation may be able to make broader and deeper the interpretation of the Christ character."

As he finished speaking, a sudden gust of wind shook the palace and penetrated into the room. And then a tongue of golden flame dropped towards the King of the Middle Kingdom. The floor creaked and rocked and a second tongue of fire issued from it and crept up the body of the Oriental. It devoured the dragon upon the skirts of his clothing and licked up all the symbols of superstition. The two flames met upon the crescent which decorated the breast of his coat. Slowly the semi-circle filled out until it became a sphere of liquid light. Its brightness dazzled the eyes of the king and completely concealed the figure of his guest. For a moment it hung in mid-air, glowing and sparkling, then suddenly went out, leaving the chamber in backest darkness. And then the Monarch of the West knew that only the life of God from above and the life of man from the earth, meeting in perfect union in the God-man, Christ Jesus, could fill out and make perfect the partial character of the great people of the East.

IV.

The King of the Sunrise Kingdom



THE events of the night were beginning to have an effect upon the king. He looked pale and weary and his hands twitched with the nervous strain. He was about to seat himself and rest, when he was suddenly made conscious of an unannounced visitor in the room.

He looked towards the door and saw standing there a man of small stature, clothed in all the insignia of royalty. Immediately the king moved forward with that courtly grace and ceremony for which the sovereigns of his line had ever been noted. He recognized the nationality at once, but failed to discover the identity of the man. Most royally he welcomed this representative of the Far East.

The King of the Sunrise Kingdom was clothed in Occidental fashion. His military coat was covered with many orders. A sheathed sword hung at his side, richly ornamented and set with jewels. There was a brightness and vivacity in his face and manner that revealed the progressiveness of his nation.

Silken cords hung from his right shoulder and a broad sash, fringed with gold lace, stretched across his breast and met the seven-barred girdle that ran around his waist. He extended his hand in Western greeting and his erstwhile firm countenance relaxed in gracious smiles.

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"Greetings from the Orient, Imperial brother," he said to the Monarch of the West.

"And welcome from the Occident," replied the king. Accepting the offer of a seat, the Visitor occupied a place at the centre table opposite to that of his host. These two kings were marvelously alike in the circumstances of their royal places. One reigned over an island that stood like a sentinel to guard the Western world. The other ruled upon an isle that fronted the Eastern continent and was the door of the Orient. Each occupied a position of critical importance, one holding the standard for the Western hemisphere, the other setting the pace for the huge, awakening populations of the Eastern hemisphere.

"The matter upon which I come at this unusual hour," began the visiting King, "is of serious import. Our two nations have always lived in harmonious relations and it is the desire of my heart that they should continue to co-operate for their mutual advantage as well as for the civilization of the world."

"The sentiment does you honor," replied the ruler of the Western Isle, "and need I say that it is fully reciprocated by my own heart?"

The two kings squared their chairs, rested their hands upon the table between them and so began the conversation that was destined to make history.

"It is well known to you, royal sir," said the Emperor of the East, and there was a deep note of pride in his voice, "that my country has made great progress in the past quarter of a century."

"Greater progress," replied his brother king, "than any nation ever made in more than half a century at any time of its history."

This pleased the visitor immensely and he waved his hand in eloquent acknowledgement.

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"We are indebted to the West absolutely for all the development that has been made. We are an imitative race, and we have not hesitated to adopt those features of your civilization that make for progress and success. In military matters, in educational policy, in commercial expansion we have followed your lead, and to-day we take our place among the civilized powers. Our young men have gone forth to seek truth in all the world. Travel where you will you cannot avoid the youth of our land. Everywhere they glean principles and methods and then carry them back to adjust them to the needs of our own land. I do not come to seek your civilization—we already have it. But I have come to seek something more."

He leaned forward towards his host and in low, intense words, made the request that the Western Monarch had learned by the experience of the night to expect:

"We need your Christ, my brother!"

"Yes, your Majesty, the whole world seems to need Him. You have not been the first to make the statement before me to-night."

The words astonished the hearer, but as no further explanation was offered, he pressed on with his message.

"The position is more serious than the West can possibly know. You will not deem me arrogant if I say that my country is leading the entire Orient. We have been the first to awake to the superiority of Western ideals, but the others are following. It is a question now of *where* we are leading the East. The introduction of Occidental ideas has broken up our own system, made poor and unsatisfactory our religious beliefs, but what are we getting in place

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thereof? A gross materialism, a body without a soul, a form without spirit, a system that is hardening the character of our people and creating a new immorality. There are six million youths in our schools and these are being trained by teachers who have broken away from their ancient faiths and are drifting towards atheism. The situation is fraught with imminent peril."

He rose from his seat and walked around the table to where the Western monarch sat, and resting his hand lightly upon his shoulder made his passionate appeal:

"The solution of the problem, my lord, is in your hands. You simply must not allow us to take the husk and leave the kernel. To delay will be fatal. In a very short time the crisis will pass, and the whole East may move forward without God and without hope. Things are plastic just now. The hour is big with opportunity. We beg you to send us Christian leaders who will teach us those eternal principles that have made broad and sure the foundations of your own empire. Not only does my land depend upon the fidelity of the Christian nations to the Christ Whom they profess to love and obey—the whole Orient is involved in this matter."

He paused a moment as if to weigh carefully his words. Then he went on:

"It is not my province nor my wish to make accusation to-night. There are grievous sins in my own nation that cause me the deepest shame. It is because I feel them so keenly that I make bold to speak of the failures of your people. When two nations impinge, by some strange fate they seem to call out the worst in each other. And your civilization has not been an

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unmixed blessing. The changing conditions in a nation make her peculiarly sensitive to evil influences. And all the worst vices of the Occident seem to find a fertile soil in my country. I make my appeal to you, noble sire, to see to it that the principles of your religion are so zealously practised at home that none but healthy influences shall ever go abroad. Your commercial men make wealth out of the weaknesses of my subjects. Your vultures feed and batten upon their lusts. I mention these only to show you the burning need of counteracting powers for good. The moral tone of our empire is not what my heart desires to see, and I am convinced that only the holy life and teaching of the Nazarene can save the nation and make her lastingly great. This is my appeal—help us to find the Christ.”

Another cry from out the vast East! The burden laid upon this Christian monarch was becoming oppressively great. No less a responsibility than that of shaping the character of nations! Yes, but no less a privilege than that of lifting the world towards light, and purity and freedom, towards the white Christ. He felt thrilled through and through, and rising from his seat he grasped the hand of his guest and in few but strong words assured him of his sympathy and help.

“The way is open, sire. In no country in the world is Christianity so untrammelled as in my land,” confidently asserted the Eastern King. “And in few countries has it made such splendid gains. These things embolden me to urge larger and more immediate action. You have the resources—it is in your power to make us greater. I hear in this Western land much about ‘the Yellow Peril.’ Believe me, there can never

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be danger from the yellow races if they are educated along Christian lines. It is a matter of common prudence to take up this pressing duty. Without Christianity, the vast Eastern continent with its eight hundred million people, will be a serious menace to the world's peace."

For several hours these two rulers sat and talked over the plans for the world's salvation. In a moment of patriotism, the Oriental spoke of the virtues of his own people, that would make a valuable contribution to the universal faith.

"Open mindedness is our most valuable asset. It is a rare virtue. It seems to me to be an eminently Christian virtue. Love of country, the surrender of individual right in the interests of the common good—these are characteristics of our race, and they seem necessary to your Western civilization, where the individual claim stands before everything else. The riches of all the East may be brought into conjunction with the treasures of the West, and the two spheres of thought will make a complete interpretation of the Divine character which is essential to the world's uplift and salvation."

As the vibrant notes of his voice died away, the Monarch of the West reached forth his hands and clasped the hands of his visitor in a grasp expressive of the deepest feeling. Then his head fell forward on his arms and his whole being was in the grip of conflicting emotions. How was he to face the stupendous duty that seemed clearly marked out for him? If he assumed the task of calling the subjects of his empire to the discharge of this missionary obligation, would he not be accused by the heads of other nations of stepping outside his royal sphere, of interfering with

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international relations, and so involve serious complications. Still, he was a Christian monarch and bound by his oaths to defend and preserve the faith. The call of the East had come in a three-fold claim—he was not imposing a religion upon these nations against their wishes. What mattered the consequences in any event? God had undoubtedly pointed out his duty—might he not leave the issue with Him?

And yet this was such a new and strange thing for a sovereign to do! He trembled at the possible disaster that might follow if he had made a mistake in all the events of the night! But what other interpretation could be put upon them? By sheer force of will he tried to concentrate all his inherited wisdom and judgment upon the matter.

"God of my fathers," he cried, "give me light, more light, that I may see my way!"

His consciousness seemed to slip from him—he sank down into fathomless darkness, the waters roared in his ears, he clutched at the drifting things that whirled about him.

When he found himself again, he remembered his imperial guest, and was shamed by his own forgetfulness and inhospitality. Sweeping his hand across his eyes as though to make clearer his vision he rose hurriedly to his feet with words of apology upon his lips. But his speech was checked by a startling vision.

In front of him there seemed to be a dark wall with a square aperture in it, and set in the opening was a dazzling Figure. It was clothed all in white and its countenance was curiously like that of the King who bore the Trident. He looked more closely and was fascinated to discover that the face was more like that of the King of the Middle Kingdom. And yet

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again it changed, and the calm eyes of his most recent guest looked longingly upon him. The king was rooted to the spot. He gazed helplessly upon the Figure and watched it rise gently towards the top of the wall. Then he was attracted by a ball of fire under the Figure's feet. It rose ever so slowly until it was well in view. It had the appearance of the earth and glowed with such intense heat that the king fancied he could feel it. He rubbed his eyes, to make sure that he was not dreaming, and looked again. And behold! he was gazing through the alcove window of his chamber, straight into the red, rising sun! Was it a mere delusion then? A trick of the mind? Or was there some meaning to the vision? Perhaps the Figure above the ball was a symbol of Christ's dominion over the whole earth! Or the changing faces of the Figure might mean that the Master had been really speaking to him that night in the three visitors, for is not the call of men's needs the call of Jesus Christ? Or yet again, the sunrise might be a prophecy of the new day in the history of the East. His Visitor's Empire was sometimes called the "Sunrise Kingdom," and here was the sign to him that the Sun of Righteousness had risen upon the Oriental lands.

But whatever the vision meant or if it was a mere illusion of the mind mattered little, the chief concern just now was that another day had opened. The sun was up. Grave duties were here before him. He touched a bell that summoned his secretary. And then the Monarch of the West gave orders that the necessary preparations should be made for issuing a Royal Proclamation.

V.

The Marvel of Twelfth Night



THE Royal Proclamation issued by the Monarch on the day after Christmas stirred the heart of the world. Its intense presentation of the needs of the Orient, its clear summons to the immediate duty of missionary obligation, its high call to the empire to realize its sacred function of holding the truth of Christianity for the welfare of the world, its demand upon the people to right the terrible wrongs which had been done,—every sentence and paragraph in it awakened the better nature of the king's loyal subjects and called forth a magnificent response. From end to end of the empire a wave of enthusiasm rolled, sweeping men forward in obedience to the king's wishes. Another Pentecost had come. Men were aflame with zeal. Millennial dawn was sending its growing light over the whole earth.

The government of the Empire, at its first session after the proclamation, passed a law forbidding the cultivation of the poppy within its borders and regulating by the most stringent restrictions the exportation and importation of opium as a drug, declaring all smokers of opium offenders against the state. This action was followed by the great Christian republic of the West introducing a similar law into Congress.

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These two nations worked side by side in a strong effort to restrict foreign trade in liquor, and set their faces like flint against the white slave traffic that so long had cursed the world.

Funds had begun to pour in from every quarter of the globe, until the hope of earnest Christians seemed about to be realized that at last resources in plenty would be at their command for the work of evangelizing the nations. Not only were the church societies alive with throbbing activities and their treasuries bursting with contributions, but great commercial institutions were moved to subscribe to the sovereign cause of missions. Churches that were handsomely endowed, yielded up their endowments *in toto* in order that the gospel might be carried to the heathen. Pathetic sacrifices were made by the poor, luxuries were abandoned by the rich, men of large means were moved to surrender their all and begin life again with hard and unaccustomed toil—the spirit of the Christ possessed the Empire and made professions and practice run parallel.

The offers for service in the foreign field literally embarrassed the churches. In the great universities and in the small colleges men applied by the thousands for enrollment. No call to arms in the time of war had ever been so swiftly answered. The heroic manhood of the nation had been aroused and from every walk in life men came forward for service. Great merchants offered their ships for transportation, titled ladies pleaded to be taken as helpers for their distressed sisters of the East. Churches possessing a staff of clergy surrendered more than half of them for the foreign field. The army of volunteers was growing to such proportions that those in command were beginning to think that a halt must be called.

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And then the other Christian nations began to move. The flame of zeal leaped the seas and kindled a passion in the hearts of Christian sovereigns and rulers everywhere. The world was girdled with missionary enterprise. There was a holy rivalry among the Christian peoples, each emulating the other in acts of unselfishness. The world had become apostolic—the church was at last realizing her Catholic mission.

Perhaps the most pleasing feature of this holy passion was the effect upon the home Christianity. Church members were losing their selfishness and prejudices. They were being lifted out of their denominational partizanship to the mountain-top of catholic grandeur and outlook. The divisions of Christendom were melting away and men were carried out of their sectarian narrowness and bigotry into the wide and inspiring view of a common enterprise. High walls of separation fell flat when the clarion call to united action was sounded. Protestant and Catholic worked together side by side, ignoring the sectarian barriers that had so long kept them apart. Out of this supreme effort to help humanity would come the remedy for the evils of a divided Christianity. The prayer of the Master was about to be realized, "that they all may be one." The fiat of condemnation hitherto so often uttered by churches against other churches was heard no longer, and universal harmony prevailed. It was impossible for the least selfishness to stand against the devouring fire that swept through the world. Everything sordid and mean was burned to ashes. At last, at last, the great idea of the Universal Brotherhood, for so many centuries the hope and goal of all the visionaries and prophets, was becoming a fact.

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The reflex action of this Western movement brought a deep sense of satisfaction. Men turned their attention to the cure of evils at home, and already enterprises were on foot to create a sounder social sentiment. Organizations were formed and plans were adopted for the relief of poverty as well as for the providing of work for the army of the unemployed. Avarice died out of the heart of the capitalist, and bitterness was banished from the soul of the labourer. And all these blessed results followed upon the fact that the Christian Church had awakened to the realization of her essential and primary obligation to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, making disciples of all the nations.

On the Feast of the Epiphany, in the early hours of the night, the Monarch of the West sat within his palace chambers. He was worn with fatigue, his eyes were dark-rimmed with sleepless nights, but in his heart there was a quiet joy and an unbounded peace. The past fortnight had been full of stirring events for him. At times he had been sick with fear and uncertainty. The hours of agonizing suspense that had intervened between his proclamation and the first response of the nation were poignant even in recollection. The continual demands upon his time and thought had robbed him of opportunity for rest and food. His mental energies had been severely drained by the ceaseless inquiries that from all quarters flooded his royal chamber. He insisted upon giving these his personal attention, in opposition to the wishes of his ministers and the orders of his physicians.

But how great was the joy that had come to him through the overflowing sympathy and loyalty of his own people as well as through the action of

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other sovereigns and rulers! Little had he dreamed that the call would meet with such an amazing response. He rebuked himself now for his lack of faith when the leading of the Most High had been so clear!

But now the work was done, and he could surrender himself to rest and quiet thought.

This was Twelfth Night! In the olden days it had been observed with a round of social gaieties, and all the kingdom had rung with the laughter of happy, care-free, boisterous merry-makers. He was running over the days of his own youth and the many joyous occasions when he had joined in the festivities and ancient customs that at such times made his land so sweet and delightful a place in which to live. Tonight, there was a deeper and more sober joy pulsating throughout the empire—the happiness that flows from service to our brother man.

His private secretary entered the room and laid upon the table a bulky document. "Your majesty, I was instructed to leave these papers. The committee of business men, chosen to arrange the results of your majesty's appeal to the kingdom, concluded that no better time than this could be selected for their report. They are unwilling, however, to further tax your majesty's energies at this late hour, so they have provided me with the main facts which I humbly desire to present, if it please your majesty.

The king was all eagerness, and bade the secretary to at once give him the facts.

"The men on this committee represent the great financial corporations of the empire and they have toiled unceasingly so as to finish their work to-night. Your majesty well knows the reason."

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"Yes," replied the king, "this is Epiphany Day. It was generous of the committee to think of it."

The secretary proceeded to read some of the statements:

"Enough men have volunteered to carry the gospel to all the world. Forty thousand have been selected. And there is a reserve force of as many more to call upon if occasion require. Out of compliment to your majesty, the rulers of the Christian nations gave instructions that all rames and monies should be sent to our city. It has been more difficult to report upon the money; but the committee is certain that a sufficient amount has been pledged to carry on the work for at least ten years."

"You will bear my thanks to these noble gentlemen," said the king, "and tell them that when I have leisure and strength to read their full report I will personally express my gratitude to them for their services."

The secretary withdrew, and the king cushioned his head against the pillow of his chair and gave himself up to the joy and satisfaction of accomplished work. He seemed to drift out of the region of time and sense, and to stand upon the borders of another world. Before him an immense plain stretched, a great amphitheatre, until it reached the foot of towering hills. Upon the tops of these hills great flaming fires had been lighted and their leaping blaze was reflected in the crystal floor of the plain below. He heard the shouts of redeemed men, like unto the song of Israel after the dividing of the sea. Unnumbered thousands entered the glorious amphitheatre. In the centre was set a throne, reached by a golden stairway of seven steps. At the right side was a huge,

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circling sphere, with the seas and lands of the earth marked upon it. Upon the left was a crown made all of gold, with many empty settings on its upper rim. The king watched eagerly as one royal personage after another came forward and placed within the settings of the crown a precious stone. He recognized among them the three Kings of Orient who had visited him on Christmas night. At length the last jewel was placed, and the perfected crown shone with an indescribable brilliancy.

The great host was hushed to silence as down the hillside came a majestic Figure, clad in white, his form girt about with a golden girdle. His eyes shone like flames of fire and in his hand were seven stars. The countless multitude fell to its knees as He walked with royal mien up the steps and seated Himself upon the throne. He laid His right hand upon the whirling sphere, as though claiming the whole earth for His dominion. When He looked straight into the eyes of the Western Monarch and beckoned him to the steps of the throne. With holy fear the king went forward and dropped upon his knees, his face to the floor. But he heard a Voice commanding him to rise: and taking the crown he reverently placed it upon the Head of Him who is the King of kings. Then the shout of the ransomed hosts split the air and shook the hills. The king sank slowly to the earth.

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The chiming of the midnight hour in the great hall of the palace recalled the king to his surroundings. He discovered that he was kneeling by the side of his chair. He had seen the vision of the Universal Christ. And this was Twelfth Night, the time when Jesus was manifested to the Gentile nations.

