

THE COMFORT OF THE STARS

IN these days of widespread anxieties with little trust, owing to small belief, anything, any influence which may bring assurance, in whatever degree, should be welcomed. It is fortitude based on confidence that we need, as we face the issues of life seeking how they may emerge, whether to our welfare or our undoing, before all things asking—do we see guidance or is it chaos that confronts us?

It is to the great towns and cities, particularly the industrial and manufacturing, that we would draw attention here, and to London *imprimis*, the World City; our quest—how these influence their indwellers especially their outlook visual and mental; for the business of the thronging multitudes is wont to obscure the sight by interposing a pall of smoke and dust betwixt them and the skies. Nor is this all of obscurity that results from the activities of men, for strange to say their very efforts to illumine the darkness of their thoroughfares by night, do but hide the more effectively the lights of heaven:—in the glare of the street lamp even thy glories, Orion, are extinguished; and thus it comes about that the more brilliant the near light, the more are our eyes blinded for *far-vision*, to our incalculable loss.

It has been said truly—the tragedy of London is that it has no night.

But how should star-gazing profit us? Let Kant tell us, he says:—

Two things I ever contemplate with awe,
The stars at night and man's sense of Law.

Law—and therefore? Therefore a Lawgiver; therefore order, guidance—nothing up there wandering at random, far from it, for purpose shines down upon us, imprints itself, a tiny image upon the retina, whence to the cortex of the brain, where another mystery awaits us; the image has brought a message; upon which there follows a great assurance: All's well—a Goal is in sight!

Again, let another voice be heard—Dante's. The voice

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of one who suffered many and great sorrows; it says—

Hope from many stars cometh this light
(*Speme da molte Stelle vien questa luce*)

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From the window of a small house on the foothills of Hampstead great doings may be witnessed on clear nights and early mornings—the aspect is due south. From this point of vantage, especially in autumn and onwards, to 'January's front severe,' Orion, belted and sword-girt, may be seen in all his glory, the faithful Dog Star to heel. Many stars major and minor, in attendance, mark his stately progress; among them, overhead, if we look intently, the discrete and select little cluster of the Pleiades may be descried, communing, as if 'in high Cabal,'—what intimacies!

From this same point, the phases of the inconstant moon may be viewed and wondered at—constant in the renewal of her inconstancies; probed therefore beneath the surface no true bill of fickleness can be found to dim her placid brightness—fair order only.

Star-gazing then is not a waste of time, even if it begets wonder only, as it must in the more thoughtful, for wonder as it enlarges our vision becomes half a prayer and half a hymn of praise, as the lights of heaven penetrate behind the retina and illumine the soul in its wanderings from star to star through spaces immeasurable.

It was thus that Kant looked up and wondered and wondered and saw order—Law; thus that Dante, on his thorny path through a troubled world, searched the heavens and saw Hope. With Order and Law Kant secured confidence—trust, a great Faith in the guidance of the world; with Hope, which so many stars brought to Dante, somewhat of the peace which passeth all understanding must have gained access to his soul; and so both will have been comforted, for may we not believe that Faith and Hope will have brought a glimpse of Love at the root of all things and so the heavenly Trilogy been made complete?

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