

25 November 1936.

Past Masters' Night.
Godson Lodge No. 2385.
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"Light"

There are many dictionary meanings set against the word "light"; but a few only are needed for our purpose to-night :-

That which gives light - as the sun,- a candle etc.

That which is bright - brilliant - or shines.

The agent by which objects are rendered visible.

The power of vision. Day - dawn of day.

We use the word daily in some such sense as indicated; but we have many other uses for the word in a figurative sense. Beyond that, we shall also agree that there is a deeper, more hidden, and let us say spiritual or correspondential meaning. It will not take us long to run through examples under each heading.

Used in a figurative sense, the dictionary gives us :-

Mental or spiritual illumination.

Enlightenment. Knowledge.

Point of view.

A conspicuous person. (we may refer to a man as "a shining light").

First, let us deal with the word in its natural sense. To do so, it will be helpful to have in mind the opposite to light, and that is darkness, or the absence of light. Between the two there are many shades, and actually we owe our very existence to that fact. (Darkness inspires fear, uncertainty, caution, care, and a general feeling of insecurity.) We could not exist in utter darkness and without the tempered heat and light of the sun; neither could we live under its direct rays of light and heat.

Both must be, and are, tempered by intervening atmospheres and clouds. If because of physical defects we cannot see the light, we still receive the benefits of it. Blind people are never so foolish as to say "Because I cannot see the light, it does not exist". Their one desire is to see the light.

This is dealing very briefly with the source of light - the sun; and we have bare time to mention the development from natural to artificial light, produced originally, may be, by friction; perhaps by rubbing together two pieces of wood; or by striking one hard substance upon another, such as steel upon flint; thence per tinder to match; a cotton or other wick in a vessel of oil; rush candles; improved oil lamps; machine-made tandles; gas (in many forms); and electricity, also in many varieties. A wonderful march of discovery, invention, and consequent progress through the ages.

How difficult it is for us to fully comprehend the speed at which light travels - 186,000 miles per second. That means more than seven times round the earth in a second. Sound, through air, travels 1,200 feet per second, or say more than ten times the speed of an express train - and it appears to stand still as light flashes by. The fact that light takes time to travel was discovered in 1676 by a Danish astronomer; but it was not until 1849 (less than 100 years ago) that a French professor found a method of measuring the speed. When we see the flash of gun-fire, it appears to register with us instantaneously, and we can calculate our distance from the weapon by recording both flash and report, because of the interval of time between the two. Perhaps a more common illustration would be the flash of lightning followed by the sound of thunder, which indicates

to us our distance from the storm centre. We can appreciate quite easily the speed at which sound travels; but to comprehend the speed of light is almost impossible; and we are told that all stars ~~and planets~~ are not yet visible to us; that some stars recently sighted for the first time commenced to give forth their light ages ago. It takes the light of the sun eight minutes to reach us, the distance being only 93 million miles. Light from the nearest fixed stars takes more than four years to reach us. Many stars are so distant that the light we saw last night started towards us hundreds of years ago. This illustrates the fact that light, some natural light, comes to us gradually, and that we have not yet seen all. In like manner truth, (and light corresponds to truth,) is still reaching us a little at a time; although it has existed unchanged throughout the ages.

What does light mean to us? Life itself, in all its beauty, and in all its drabness. Where can we start, and where finish, in dealing with the word? If we awake at break of day, and watch the wonderful colors develop in the east, we must needs be a poet or an artist to be able to record in words or picture "the ~~revelation~~ of early dawn, the brightness of the day, ^{and} the ~~revelation~~ of the sunset sky". Even so, we have but a filmy representation of the glories we have sensed. We endeavour to secure records with the camera, but do not obtain those wonderful colors that make the picture, all of which depend upon the light of the sun.

Again, successful photography depends upon light, and although the amateur uses only $1/25\text{th}$ or perhaps ^{during} $1/100\text{th}$ of a second for

the exposure of his plate or film through the medium of a specially fashioned piece of glass, he secures a perfect record of a beauty spot or of an interesting event. He may only borrow 1/1,000th part of a second of light and secure a permanent record of a horse jumping a fence or of an athlete clearing an obstacle. Science takes us still further, however, and by the concentration of light we may study the changing forms of a drop of liquid, such as milk, as it falls through space, and also as it reaches any prepared position; or we can observe the changes in shape of a golf ball when it is struck by a club, or of a football when it is kicked. The marvels of our modern cinemas are produced by the scientific harnessing of light. Take a bowl of water - place a straight stick in it - one end lying on the bottom and the other resting on the side. At the surface of the water the stick will appear to be bent; and here we have a "trick" of light called "refraction". Similarly, this same refraction causes us to see the sun after it has actually "set". The sun also bends the rays of light from a star, thus showing us the star in a position where it is not. If natural laws play us such tricks with natural light, is it surprising that we often fail to see and appreciate the truth; but accept instead a spurious truth or a verisimilitude?

The uses of light are far too numerous to attempt to catalogue; and in counting our many blessings one by one, it is quite easily possible to overlook plenty of them, and to take them for granted because they are so common. What more common than sun-light, but what a wonderful power for good if we expose our body to it as directly as possible; or failing that, if we use

a sunlight ray lamp in the privacy of our homes.

We use the word "light" every day of our lives without necessarily meaning natural light; and we ask our friends "Do you see?" without reference to their eyesight. There is the well-known party game that calls for the declaration "My light shines", when no reference is intended to candle or lamp nor even to natural sight. We are referring to our mental vision. In our ceremonies, one of our officers is instructed to "see" that we are properly tiled. He "sees" to this by hand and ear, and not by his eyes; (although to meet the wishes of some of our P.M.'s it is now a custom to "look see" in addition to making other movements).

Let us now see further how we use the word every day in a figurative sense, and know exactly what is meant :-

In the light of all that has been said and done.
To stand in another's light (or in our own).
To come to light.

Old and new lights - old and new doctrines.

Thackery^a - He did his best. He worked according
to his light.

add (Z) on p. 7.

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(caps.) "light"

Let me make brief reference to the use of the word in the V.S.L, and in a spiritual sense.

Very early in the book of Genesis, we read "Darkness was upon the face of the deep, and God said 'Let there be light'; and there was light". Here was produced the first necessity for the use of all peoples throughout all ages. *add A. p. 13.*

Next, I will refer you to the prayers, "Brighten our darkness" and "Send forth Thy light and Thy truth; let them lead me".

Obviously, material light is not referred to here. Throughout all ages, light has been the symbol of truth; just as to-day upon our roads is shewn a torch, the torch of learning, to indicate to us ^{as} motorists that we are approaching a school, and must be on the look-out for children. ~~After~~ *both learning, knowledge, and* looking up our facts and figures, and after obtaining new information, we pass these on to others and say that we are "throwing fresh light on the subject". *To p. 6.* The V S L sets the seal on the "correspondence" or symbolism that *→ New para. here.* exists, by the words "Send forth Thy light and Thy truth: let them lead me". ^{life} As in the natural world, ~~light~~ without light is impossible, so in the spiritual world, spiritual life without truth could not exist. If people deny the truth by not wishing to see it; or by inability to acknowledge the truth cannot see it; they still receive the benefit of it. In other words, we can deny the truth of the words "The Lord is my Shepherd"; or we might be unable to see the truth in those words; but that does not mean that we are not guarded, guided and cared for by the Good Shepherd. And so we pray, "Send forth Thy light and Thy truth; let them lead me".

Then let me call to mind the command "Let your light so

"shine before men". Clearly no physical flame or light is here intended; but you will remember that the point was illustrated by reference to a lighted candle, which no man put under a bushel, but in a candlestick that it might give light to all. ^{add} p.13 (34) (p.14)

And finally, may I remind you of the statement "That was the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world".

At this point, I wish to quote from an old friend who has joined the great majority, and who, although not of our order, held the fraternity in great respect :-

As in nature the sun is the universal source of light: so in religion, "the Lord God is a sun". As the Spiritual sun, God is the light of the world, and he not only gives light to us today, but he gave it to man in the remotest ages of antiquity. It is also a fact, that God not only gives light to us in the Christian Church, but he is the source of light to all nations scattered over the entire globe. All nations see as they are able. In some cases they see very little, and in other cases much; but whether they enjoy the full truth of the Gospel, or only see in the obscurity of Mohammedanism, yet the light descends from one and the same centre.

Of course, you will expect me to say something about Masonic light. There is much to be said: and perhaps we ought to put ourselves in the position of the candidate. His knowledge of our order is practically nil. A little glimmering ray of light may have filtered through to him: but for all practical purposes

he is in a state of complete ignorance. How proper, therefore, that he should be in a state of physical blindness, representative of the darkness of ignorance, when he makes his call upon our door. Again, I would ask you to observe that he comes to us at the N.W. corner (the darkest part of our L. and always the darkest part of the earth); and after satisfactorily answering certain questions, he progresses along the E. side, then E. S. and W, always on the outside edge or fringe, and having the barest possible touch with us through the medium of his conductor. (Out of darkness to dawn and sunrise; through the full day; pausing at noon - high twelve - and back towards sunset). What are his thoughts if he is not mentally repeating the words appropriate to the music played during the perambulation ?

The H.W. may have been applied for various good and proper natural reasons, both in this country and abroad, and these we can easily imagine: but it is equally certain that our masonic ancestors knew a great deal about symbols and correspondences. In Egypt and elsewhere, the candidate spent considerable time in dark chambers where no light could possibly penetrate; and he was allowed to progress very slowly indeed towards his desired end. The general plan or scheme was much the same as now, but time in ancient days was not so precious as with us, so that the lesson was longer and more impressive. Man ever was and still is the child of ignorance and error; but let us remember that God said "Let there be light"; and there was light.

And so with our candidate. He is invited to ask for the blessing of light, which is restored to him, physically at first; and almost immediately, he obtains his first view of the three great

lights in masonry - next, the three lesser lights - and then perhaps that which he most desires as a human being, the light of the countenance of his friends and brethren.

I want you, please, to notice this transition of the candidate from darkness to light.

1. His natural eyes are opened, and he becomes conscious of material light.
2. His first sight is of material things; just plain paper and metal, but representative or symbolical of our three great lights - the V.S.L, the S. and the C; and their light is made to shine by an explanation of the symbolism. We must make actual use of these materials, study them, learn how to handle them, before we can appreciate them, and before we can make our light to shine before men in the full sense intended. The sun is good for our bodies, but that good will not reach us unless we lay ourselves out to receive it and enjoy it. It is just the same with our three great lights, which we must study and put to use if these are not to become mere ornaments or adornments in our lodge.
3. The animate three lesser lights, our lodge rulers, claim his next attention, and they are to be his teachers to light his masonic paths, and this they each in turn proceed to do.

And that, to my mind, is how the candidate is admitted to the light of our order. Natural birth is from darkness to light.

Figuratively, in masonry, there is re-birth for us; and spiritually also, we are re-born from the darkness of ignorance to the light of the truth. We become apprentices, and as such our predecessors were remunerated by corn, wine and oil. X

In our next stage, we work in the full light of day; and our labors are now easy and the time fairly short. The wages are said to have been paid in ~~specie~~^{specie}, indicating confidence in the craftsman to spend wisely.

What a change confronts us in the third stage of our existence. Our day is done - our light has failed, or so it seems - and we pass out before a glimmering ray. But the music, solemn at the outset, finishes on a note of triumph; and now we realise why, following our three steps which form the cross of Calvary, typical of our ~~early~~^{earthly} trials and troubles, we were permitted to make others boldly as though marching; and faith, following hope, tells us that there is something for us beyond the grave: light, eternal light, of which our present sun is but feebly representative.

Some of us, however, are not fully satisfied. We have gained only the S.S. ~~For~~, the light has shone for us, and we have learned much; but there are too many clouds between ourselves and the sun: too many veils hiding from us the fuller light towards which we would progress. The clear unclouded sun, neither physically nor spiritually, can be ours on this side of the grave, simply because we are not made to receive it: but we certainly want more light, having gone so far. S.S. are not sufficient for us: and so we ask to be exalted into the R.A., when the sun is at its meridian and in all its splendour shews us all that we could wish for: and once

more we have a vision of light, more beautiful than before, ineffable, that will live with us all our days.

Let me exhort you not to be content with the bare candle-light of masonry, pure as it may be; but to progress a little further into the light of the sun. The one is but a substitute, and a really good substitute, full of symbolism: but the other approaches reality, and the finite comes as close as possible to the infinite. You will have no regrets, unless it be that you have delayed your progress for so long. Complete your masonic education just as soon as you may and your circumstances permit. You have been exhorted and have undertaken, without neglecting the duties of your ordinary station in life, to endeavour to make a daily advancement in masonic knowledge: and here is your opportunity.

Let me conclude ~~my prayer~~ with these few lines. While it is true that we can obtain benefit from light without seeing it: and benefit from truth without acknowledging it; the greatest benefits must follow when light and truth are seen, acknowledged and used.

See p. 14 - not given at Godson Lodge.

non. Look up and copy hymn number 327.

Isaiah, Chapter 60.

A

- 1. Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.
- 2. For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.
- 3. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.
- 19. The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.
- 20. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.

Matthew, Chapter 5.

B

- 14. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.
- 15. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.
- 16. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

See also p. 14.

Revelation, Chapter 22.

C

- 5. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

Not given at Godson Lodge.

Lord of all being : through
Thy glory flames from sun to moon,
Thy power and soul of every sphere,
Preach as you walk.

Sun of our life : Thy quickening ray
Guids on our path the glaze of day,
Star of our hope : Thy softened light

The story is told of St. Francis of Assisi that he once stepped down into the cloisters of his monastery, and laying his hand on the shoulder of a young monk, said, "Brother, let us go down into the town and preach". The venerable father and the young monk set out together, conversing as they went. They wandered down the principal streets, and wound their way through alleys and lanes, and even to the outskirts of the town and the village beyond, until they found themselves back at the monastery again. Then enquired the young monk, "Father, when shall we begin to preach?" And the father looked kindly down upon his son and said, "My child, we have been preaching; we were preaching while we were walking. We have been seen - looked at; our behaviour has been remarked, and so we have delivered a morning sermon. Ah! my son, it is of no use that we walk anywhere to preach, unless we preach as we walk".

Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven". "Ye are the light of the world". "Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you".

Sewdenberg says that to walk signifies to live according to truths.