

**THE LIGHT OF DAY;  
RELIGIOUS DISCUSSIONS AND  
CRITICISMS FROM THE  
NATURALIST'S POINT OF VIEW**

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The Light of Day; Religious Discussions and Criticisms from the Naturalist's Point of View by  
John Burroughs

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# THE LIGHT OF DAY

*RELIGIOUS DISCUSSIONS AND CRITICISMS  
FROM THE NATURALIST'S  
POINT OF VIEW*

BY

JOHN BURROUGHS



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## WAITING

*Serene, I fold my hands and wait,  
Nor care for wind, or tide, or sea ;  
I rave no more 'gainst Time or Fate,  
For lo ! my own shall come to me.*

*I stay my haste, I make delays,  
For what avails this eager pace ?  
I stand amid the eternal ways,  
And what is mine shall know my face.*

*Asleep, awake, by night or day,  
The friends I seek are seeking me ;  
No wind can drive my bark astray,  
Nor change the tide of destiny.*

*What matter if I stand alone ?  
I wait with joy the coming years ;  
My heart shall reap where it hath sown,  
And garner up its fruits of tears.*

*The waters know their own, and draw  
The brook that springs in yonder heights ;  
So flows the good with equal law  
Unto the soul of pure delights.*

*The stars come nightly to the sky ;  
The tidal wave unto the sea ;  
Nor time, nor space, nor deep, nor high,  
Can keep my own away from me.*



## PREFACE

IN Central Asia, near the river Oxus, there is said to be a famous rock, called the Lamp Rock, from a strange light that seems to issue from a cavern far up on the side of the mountain. The natives have a superstitious fear of the rock, and ascribe the light to some dragon or demon that lives in the cave. Recently a bold English traveler climbed up and investigated the phenomenon. The light was found, after all, to be only the light of common day. The cave proved to be a tunnel, and the mysterious light came through the rock from the other side, making a strong glow or nimbus at the mouth of the dark cavern.

This incident, so typical of much that has taken place and is still taking place in the world, especially in the religious experience of mankind, has suggested the title to this volume of essays, in which I have urged the sufficiency and the universality of natural law, and that most of the mysterious lights with which our fears, our ignorance, or our superstitions have invested the subject of religion, when brought to the test of reason, either vanish entirely or give place to the light of common day.

The essays for the most part were written twelve or fifteen years ago, when the author's mind was

more under the spell of these and kindred subjects than it is at present. They are reprinted now under the belief that they have sufficient merit, literary and other, to warrant such a course.

Written at different times and for different occasions, it is perhaps inevitable that they should show more or less repetition. Certain channels were, so to speak, worn in my mind by the consideration of these matters, and that a like experience may not befall the reader I advise him to read no more than one chapter at a single sitting.

My polemic, so far as it is such, will be found, I hope, aimed more at theology than at religion. Theology passes; religion, as a sentiment or feeling of awe and reverence in the presence of the vastness and mystery of the universe, remains. The old theology had few if any fast colors, and it has become very faded and worn under the fierce light and intense activity of our day. Let it go; it is outgrown and outworn. What mankind will finally clothe themselves with to protect them from the chill of the great void, or whether or not they will clothe themselves at all, but become toughened and indifferent, is more than I can pretend to say. For my own part, the longer I live the less I feel the need of any sort of theological belief, and the more I am content to let the unseen powers go their own way with me and mine without question or distrust. They brought me here, and I have found it well to be here; in due time they will take me hence, and I have no doubt that will be well for me too.

We are like figures which some great demonstrator draws upon the blackboard of Time. A problem is to be solved, without doubt; what the problem is, we, the figures, cannot know and do not need to know; all we know is that sooner or later we shall be sponged off the board and other figures take our places, and the demonstration go on.

That we have served a purpose, that we have positively appeared, that something has been fulfilled in us — is not that enough? To have played a part with other figures, and to leave the board clear for other forms that are to embody higher results and more far-reaching conclusions — is not that enough?

APRIL, 1900.