THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

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MY LORD AND MY GOD!

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BY

HERBERT D. WARD

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"If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light."—JESUS CHRIST.

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THE empty equatorial seemed to expand with expectation. The huge telescopic tube, now ignominiously chained upside down to its brick pier, impatiently awaited its night of glory.

The workshop hummed under its breath. The apprentice, who was mechanically polishing a five-inch lens in wet rouge, cast longing eyes, as he lifted them from his irksome task, at the zinc-covered door. Workmen, when they entered that mysterious apartment, so zealously guarded against fire, did so with hushed steps, and with faces knit with excitement. No loud voices were heard from within; and even the busy master gave his orders with muffled lips, lest a harsh breath should chance to ruin the monument of his life.

Upon a padded disk the huge lens lay. For the last two years no hand but the master's had touched it. And now, with a caress softer than the falling

petal of a rose, Thomas Constant bent over the heart of the largest refractor in the world. If his thumb hovered upon the right spot the gigantic lens would be perfect; if it touched the wrong, the crown of his labors might be ruined. The three assistants watched their chief anxiously; as he bent and peered into the fifty-inch disk, he looked like a mediæval magician searching out all mystery and focusing all light.

For one ray persistently erred from its centre. Where on that majestic surface was the single inequality of contour that years of polishing had left? So limpid, so transparent the lens beneath the master's gaze that it seemed as if it were a section of ether miraculously imprisoned beyond the murky atmosphere of this planet, and crystallized into a permanent form. Where on that exterior, so polished that its surface was more velvety than the finest cut gem, so relucent that it was impossible, except for the expert, to tell where its outline began or ended, was the infinitesimal imparity that puzzled its maker? Thomas Constant swept his hand over the disk. He did not yet touch his handiwork; he was judging it by the feeling of warmth. For so sensitive was the glass beneath his pulses that even such passes caused