

**LIGHT IN DARKNESS;
OR, RECORDS OF A
VILLAGE RECTORY**

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Light in Darkness; Or, Records of a Village Rectory by Anonymous

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ANONYMOUS

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A VILLAGE RECTORY.

Happy the man that sees a God employed
In all the good and ill that chequer life.—Cowper.

LONDON:

JOHN W. PARKER, WEST STRAND.

M.DCCC.XXXV.

324.

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LIGHT IN DARKNESS.

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

THE situation of a village clergyman is one which affords most peculiar opportunities of observing the movements of human minds and the agitations of human feelings. The active resident in bustling towns and commercial cities, if led by pleasure or business to journey awhile from home, looks upon the small and apparently placid villages, through which he passes, with a feeling of admiration and envy of the still and uncareful life which their inhabitants seem to lead; but he who dwells among them and cultivates a moral intimacy with them, he who looks upon them, not merely as figures in a pageant or shadows upon a wall, but as beings in whose hearts he has an interest, and for whose souls he feels a deep responsibility, finds that the life of the humblest villager is as full of interest and emotion as the life of the most distinguished of those whose names are on the world's tongue, and whose persons are busily before its eye; for the cares of a cottage can fill the heart

as completely as the cares of an empire. But not only does the village pastor discern a multitude of emotions beneath the apparently placid surface of rural life, he discovers what is of infinitely greater importance, full and beautiful manifestations of the Divine wisdom and goodness, by which it may be discerned that the same wisdom which rules the universe, guides also the movements of individual hearts. And as when we examine by means of the microscope the leaf of a flower, we find therein a texture of surprising skill and delicacy, as though the efforts of an almighty art had been exclusively directed and devoted to that work alone,—so when by the moral microscope of a close and faithful attention we inquire into the history of some of God's humblest creatures, we find a divine power and care watching over them and shaping the events of their lives, as though Omnipotence had no other care than the one individual whose life we thus contemplate. I wonder not that the unenlightened but reflecting heathen, seeing around him wherever he moved such manifestations of the presence of Deity, and unable to raise his mind to the immense conception of one omnipresent God, should form the idea of a god present in every grove, in every stream, in every field; nor do I wonder at the delusion of the philosopher Socrates, who feeling his life to be under the ordering of a power transcending

humanity, and finding that this power was with him every moment and in every movement, imagined himself to be the peculiar care of some spiritual being whom he called his demon. And this arose not so much from the extraordinary circumstances of the life of Socrates, as from the attention which he paid to the events of life, and the reflection which enabled him to see that all those events were well and wisely ordered. Now there is watching over the life of every individual the same spiritual and Almighty Being who watched over the life of Socrates, and there is the same spiritual monitor speaking to every man's conscience.

I have often thought that men go too much out of themselves to seek for the evidence of Christian truth, and that they would receive a far more satisfactory solution of many doubts and difficulties, if they would give a closer attention to their own thoughts and experience; for inasmuch as the actual globe on which we live, and the visible and tangible objects by which we are surrounded, being subjected to the immediate action of our senses, speak more directly to our understandings concerning God's being and providence than the remote and mighty movements of the distant planets; so if we would give attention to that which passes within, and would read the evidences of Christianity there, we should find our faith