

THE LIGHT

One light went out. Nobody noticed it. In that great throng of pleasure-bent people passing under the large electric sign and entering "The Palace," not one person noticed that a light had failed. Yes! there was one. A tall, slim, slightly-stooped man had apparently noticed it. He paused and looked up, but was caught up and borne onwards by the crowd into the theatre.

Fred Marshall was a millionaire and an extremely eccentric man. That day at his club he had expressed his great desire to attend the Opera. Now, with all his fellow members around him, he did not seem the least bit interested. He paid no attention to the performance or to his friends around him. There was a thoughtful look in his deep, greenish gray eyes. His high broad forehead was contracted in a puzzled frown. His stooped shoulders were slightly more stooped than usual. Try as he would, he could not drive from his mind the fact that a light had gone out just as he glanced at the great sign. "I wonder if anybody else noticed it?" he thought, "Why did I notice it? Surely it was a *sign*." He fell into deep reflection. It was not a small light. Alone it would provide sufficient light for an ordinary room. But up there among so many more it would not be noticed, and so its absence would not be perceived. Still thinking in this manner, Marshall excused himself on the plea of sickness and, leaving his friends, made his way to the street. To get a better view he crossed to the other side. Leaning, in the shadows, with his back to the wall, he looked up.

Through the dazzling brilliance of the sign he read the words "The Palace." His eyes traced out the beautiful design in red and white lights. But although he examined it all carefully, he could find no flaw. The light that went out was not missed! Marshall wondered. At midnight he was still standing with his back to the wall.

The thought that his noticing the light was a *sign*, preyed upon the superstitious mind of Frederick Marshall. He compared himself to the light. He was a man of some importance, (so he thought). The light, too, was not a small one. He was financial backer of three enterprises and a member of the board of directors of four

corporations. Up to this time, Marshall thought he would be missed and deeply mourned when he departed. But now—well the light was not missed. "Could it be possible," he concluded, "that I who am so important, who am so wealthy will not be missed? Impossible! But still—still it must have been a *sign*, and what other meaning can I take from it? I'll find out for sure."

Somewhat excitedly he rushed to the offices of the "Tribune."

"Show me to the Editor, quick" he commanded.

"Sorry, Sir, but you cannot see the Editor," replied the clerk.

"Tell him a friend of Fred Marshall wishes to speak to him. It is very important."

A few minutes later he was shown into the office of the Editor. The Editor was a friend of Marshall's father. Later the Editor let Marshall out by a back door. Marshall's hat was pulled down low and his collar turned up thus almost completely hiding his face. Walking quickly, he avoided public places and kept to the quieter and darker streets.

In the morning, the Tribune's heavy headlines announced the death of Frederick Marshall, millionaire, who died suddenly, intestate.

Three men paused before a news-stand. One bought a Tribune while they waited for their car, and began to read it.

"Well! well! Marshall's dead. What do you think of that?" he exclaimed.

"Too much drink, I suppose" said the second.

"No, he didn't drink."

"Wonder who'll get his millions?" mused the third.

"And look here! Cleveland is going to run his new colt this afternoon," broke in the first.

The men boarded their car and did not notice how attentively they had been watched by the news-vendor. Nor did they notice that the stand was a new one, that it had not been there the day before. They did not hear the muttered "Now I'm sure, I was right," as their conversation so quickly changed from Marshall to race horses.

Marshall, for it was he, pulled off his false whiskers, threw away the old crutch he was using, and, leaving the stand to take care of itself, walked wearily away.

Marshall worried, drooped and grew paler every day. His sunken eyes were dull and bloodshot. His stoop was greatly increased, so much so that he used a cane for support. He tried to work, but his frail body broke under the strain. He went to his bank for money, was not recognized, and told that Fred Marshall was dead and forgotten. Something snapped. At that word forgotten he started suddenly. His mind gave way. "The light! the light!" he cried, and muttered something about being dead and forgotten. He turned and went away.

Now he was hungry. He needed food but would not beg. For three days he had not tasted food. He was weak. Before him was an open window. A long time ago he had done it. He would do it again. He tried to get through the window, but the effort was too great and he fell in a faint. A labourer's wife dragged him in and revived him. Just as she finished washing his face and trimming his scraggy beard, her husband came in, and recognized in Marshall, the man who had ruined his father. The man ordered Marshall out, and Marshall went, without even a piece of bread. In despair he turned away. He would go home, he decided. Already he was at the canal. All was dark and nobody was near. There was a dull splash. Nobody heard and nobody cared. The light had gone out.

G. McG. '30

A CHRISTMAS WISH

May the Babe Divine in His mother's arms,
Smile on you Christmas day,
And bless you as only our Saviour can,
Who is Life and Truth and Way.

May the light of His eyes upon your path,
Be sunshine and starlight clear;
May His love be comfort and strength and joy
Each day of the coming year.

F.C. '31