

OUR "LIGHT OF THE WORLD" WINDOW

WILLIAM HOLMAN HUNT was one of three artists in London (Hunt, Rossetti, and Millars) who inaugurated a movement in art known as the pre-Raphaelites, the aim of which was to improve the art then being produced, by studying nature itself and by taking as a model the work of painters who preceded Raphael, endeavouring to follow the idealism of design and execution that marks the work of these old masters.

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock: If any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." This is the Scripture visualised in Holman Hunt's great masterpiece, "The Light of the World," of which there are two originals, one in Keble College, Oxford, England, and one in St. Paul's Cathedral in London. Both are indeed marvellous paintings done with exquisite colouring and minute attention to detail.

There is in this picture a mystery of colour and a blending of light and shade that move the soul to devotion and worship. It is evangelistic in its appeal. It portrays the moment when human destiny hangs in the balance, when Divine Love patiently waits upon human reluctance. Here is the perpetual issue between heaven and earth - *choice*. Here is the continual challenge of Christ to men. Here we see the ever-present appeal of love to lethargy. It is a *call to decision* done in oil and colour.

On his canvas Holman Hunt portrayed the door of the human heart, barred with nails and hinges rusty. It is knitted and bound to the stanchions by creeping ivy. A bat, a creature of the night, hovers near. The threshold is overgrown with brambles and wild grass. Jesus approaches in the night-time. He is garbed as a prophet, priest, and king. The white robe denotes His prophetic office, the breast-plate His

priesthood, and the crown of gold intertwined with thorns proclaims His royalty.

He brings a twofold light. The lantern in His hand represents the light of conscience. It reveals sin. Its fire is red and fierce. Within its radiance fall the door, the weeds, an apple - a symbol of man's first sin. The other light is from Christ's face. It proclaims the hope of salvation. It is an illumination both subdued and sublime. His expression is as appealing as the tenderness of God.

Thus He stands at the door of each and every one's heart, asking admittance.

*Oh Jesus, Thou art standing
Outside the fast-closed door;
In lowly patience waiting
To pass the threshold o'er:
Shame on us, Christian brethren,
His name and sign we bear,
Oh, shame, thrice shame upon us
To keep Him standing there.*

And even today, as in the long ago, when Jesus enters into human life something wonderful happens. He has power to sanctify each room, to beautify each activity, to glorify each duty, and to turn the water of our commonplace experiences into the wine of spiritual refreshment and enjoyment.

The message of this wonderful painting is-

*There's a stranger at the door.
Let Him in.
He has been there oft before.
Let Him in.
Let Him in ere He is gone,
Let Him in, the Holy One.
Jesus Christ, the Father's Son,
Let Him in.*

- *Christ and the Fine Arts*
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