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Star Bath

The sky is peculiarly lovely on frosty night when winter lies thick on the roof and window sills. A night wind has shepherded flocks of woolly clouds to some distant celestial fold so that the blue-black heavens above us are clear. Sparkling in cold brilliance in a high and wide silence above the earth the distant stars look down upon frost-bound, snow-drifted land. A slender sliver of new moon drifts dreamily across the sky.

Such a night is meant for wading in thoughts until the wonderer is beyond his depths. It is good for us to lie back awhile, lazily leaning our weight upon deep mysteries, like stumbling in a deep drift of snow, lying there, relishing it and not caring to rise too soon.

Especially after a day of dealing with small details it is good to take such a star bath. We are so prone to become like what we are attentive to that hours spent on minutiae make us small. Punching a time clock, putting parts together on an assembly line, typing reports, tapping keys on an adding machine, correcting computations, fulfilling assignments, preparing and serving meals - all the little features of daily living have a way of dragging our minds down to their size. To achieve and maintain the full stature of manhood and womanhood we need frequently to focus our minds on bigness.

In Florence Barclay's *The Rosary* a doctor says to his patients, “See a few big things. Go in for big things. You will like to remember when you are bothering about pouring water in and out of teacups that Niagara is still flowing.” When we are tired of accounting for where our money went, or wearied of adding up duties still to be performed before the weekend arrives, or bored with planning how many and what guests we should invite to our next party - then it is restful to step outside and attempt to count the stars in the vastness of the sky. Bigness is the best antidote for littleness.

On a clear night, with the unaided eye, from 5,000 to 7,000 stars can be seen throughout the world, only half of them, however, being visible in our half of the sky. With the help of the 100-inch Mount Wilson telescope approximately 1,500 million can be seen. Look through the two-hundred-inch mirror on the Palomar Mountain telescope and additional billions of stars come into view. Distances to the stars are measured in terms of light years rather than miles. A light year is the distance light will travel in a year's time while speeding at the rate of 186,000 miles per second. In other words, a light year represents a distance of approximately six trillion miles.

The Milky Way, of which our sun and its planets are but a tiny part, is composed of some one hundred billion stars. From our earth to the center of the Milky Way, the distance is about fifty thousand light years. If you could go from Wingate to the far outer edge of the Milky Way on some heavenly steed, galloping along at the rate of 180,000 miles per second, it would take you 100,000 years to make the trip.

Still, beyond the Milky Way there are other galaxies, yet more vast.

Such a star bath for our thoughts cleanses the mind of the transitory, the little, the insignificant.

Plunging one's thoughts into the immensities of our universe does something else for us, too. It can deepen our religious faith and enlarge our reverence for God. Dr. Henry Norris Russell, famed Princeton University astronomer, once gave a lecture in which he talked of the Milky Way and its millions of stars. He told how many of them are far larger than our sun and how the still more distant heavens swarm with stars innumerable. When he finished his address a troubled woman came to him and asked, “Dr. Russell, if our world is so little, and the universe is so great, can we really believe that God pays any attention to us human beings?”

The noted astronomer answered, “That all depends, Madam, on how big a God you believe in.”

The immense magnitude of the universe demands a bigger God than most of us know. Stretch your mind and soul on the stars, and you will make more room there for a greater God.