

New Lamps for Old
~ by *Rudyard Kipling*



WHEN the flush of the new-born sun fell first on Eden's green and gold,
A Lying Spirit sat under the Tree and sang, 'New Lamps for Old!'
And Adam waked from his mighty sleep, and Eve was at his side,
And the twain had faith in the song that they heard, and knew not the Spirit lied.

They plucked a lamp from the Eden-tree (the ancient legend saith),
And lighted themselves the Path of Toil that runs to the Gate of Death;
They left the lamp for the joy of their sons, and that was a glorious gain,
When the Spirit cried, 'New Lamps for Old!' in the ear of the branded Cain.

So he gat fresh hope, and builded a town, and watched his breed increase,
Till Tubal' lighted the Lamp of War from the flickering Lamp of Peace;
And ever they fought with fire and sword and travailed in hate and fear,
As the Spirit sang, 'New Lamps for Old!' at the change of the changing year.

They sought new lamps in the Morning-red, they sought new lamps in the West,
Till the waters covered the pitiful land and the heart of the world had rest
Had rest with the Rain of the Forty Days, but the Ark rode safe above,
And the Spirit cried, 'New Lamps for Old!' when Noah loosened the Dove.

And some say now that the Eden-tree had never a root on earth;
And some say now from an eyeless elf our Father Adam had birth;
And some say now there was never an Ark and never a God to save;
And some say now that Man is a God, and some say Man is a slave;

And some build altars East and West, and some build North and South;
And some bow down to the Work of the Hand and some to the Word of the Mouth.
But wheresoever a heart may beat or a hand reach forth to hold,
The Spirit comes with the coming year, and cries, 'New Lamps for Old!'

And the sons of Adam leave their toil who are cursed with the Curse of Hope,
And hang the profitless past in a noose of the thundering belfry's rope,
And tear the branch from the laurel-bush with feastings manifold,
When the cry goes up to the scornful stars, 'New Lamps! New Lamps for Old!'

Though all the lamps that ever were lit have winked at the world for years,
The sons of Adam crowd the streets with laughter and sighs and tears;
For they hold that new, strange lamps shall shine to guide their feet aright,And they
turn their eyes to the scornful stars and stretch their arms to the night.

And the Spirit gives them the Lamp of War that burns at the cannonlip,
As it blazed on the point of Tubal's blade and the prow of the battleship;
And the Lamp of Love that was Eve's to snatch from Lilith under the Tree;
And the Lamp of Fame that is old as Strife and dim as Memory;

And the Lamp of Faith that was won from Job, and of Shame that was wrung from
Cain;
And the Lamp of Youth that was Adam's once, and the cold blue Lamp of Pain;
And last is the terrible Lamp of Hope that every man must bear,
Lest he find his peace ere the day of his death by the light of the Lamp Despair.

We know that the Eden Lamp is lost,—if ever were Eden made,
And the ink of the Schools in the Lamp of Faith has sunk a world in the shade;
But ever we look for a light that is new, and ever the Spirit cries,
'New Lamps for Old!' and we take the lamps, and—behold, the Spirit lies!