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COMRADESHIP
IN SORROW

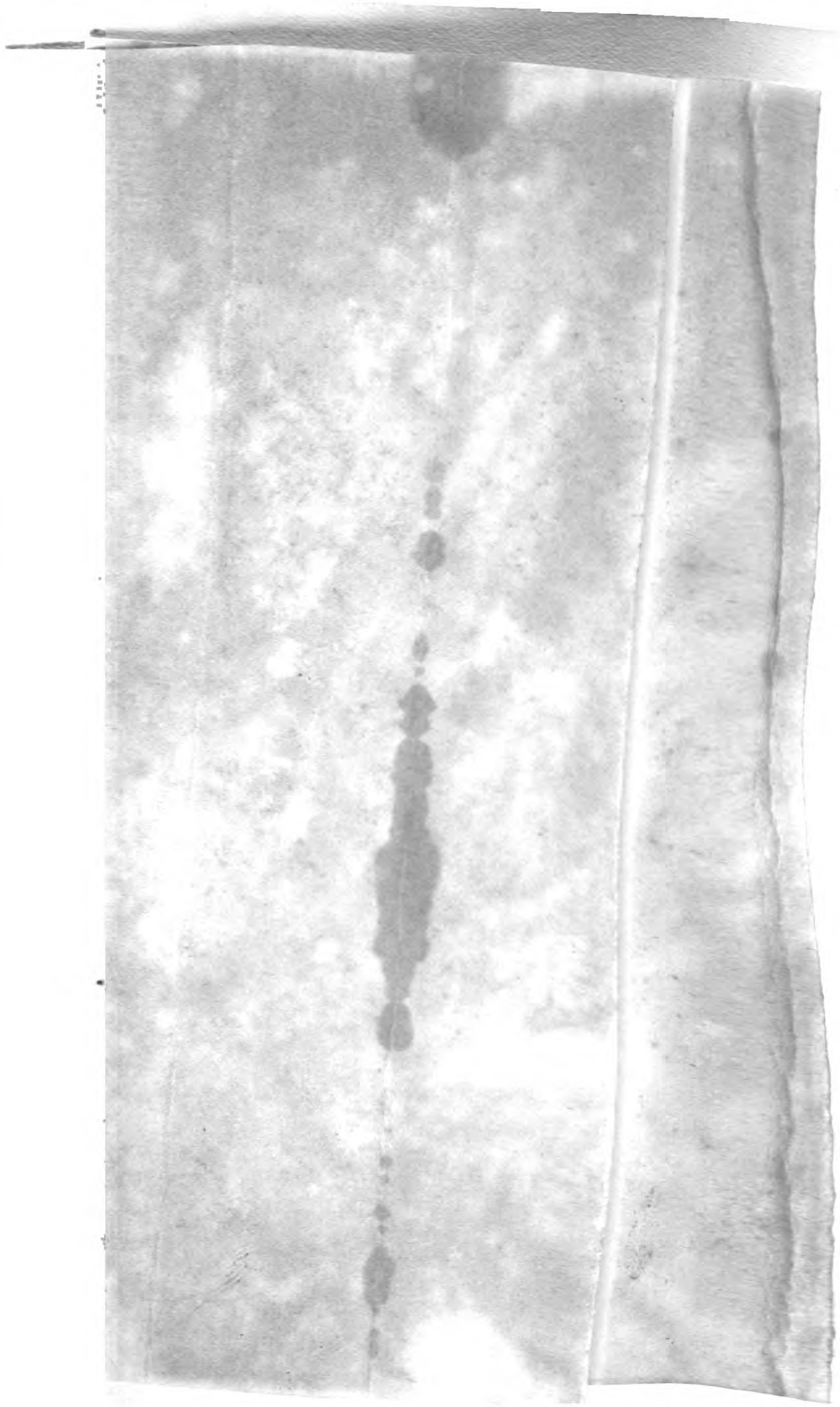
THOUGHTS FOR
THE BEREAVED

JAMES STARK, D.D.

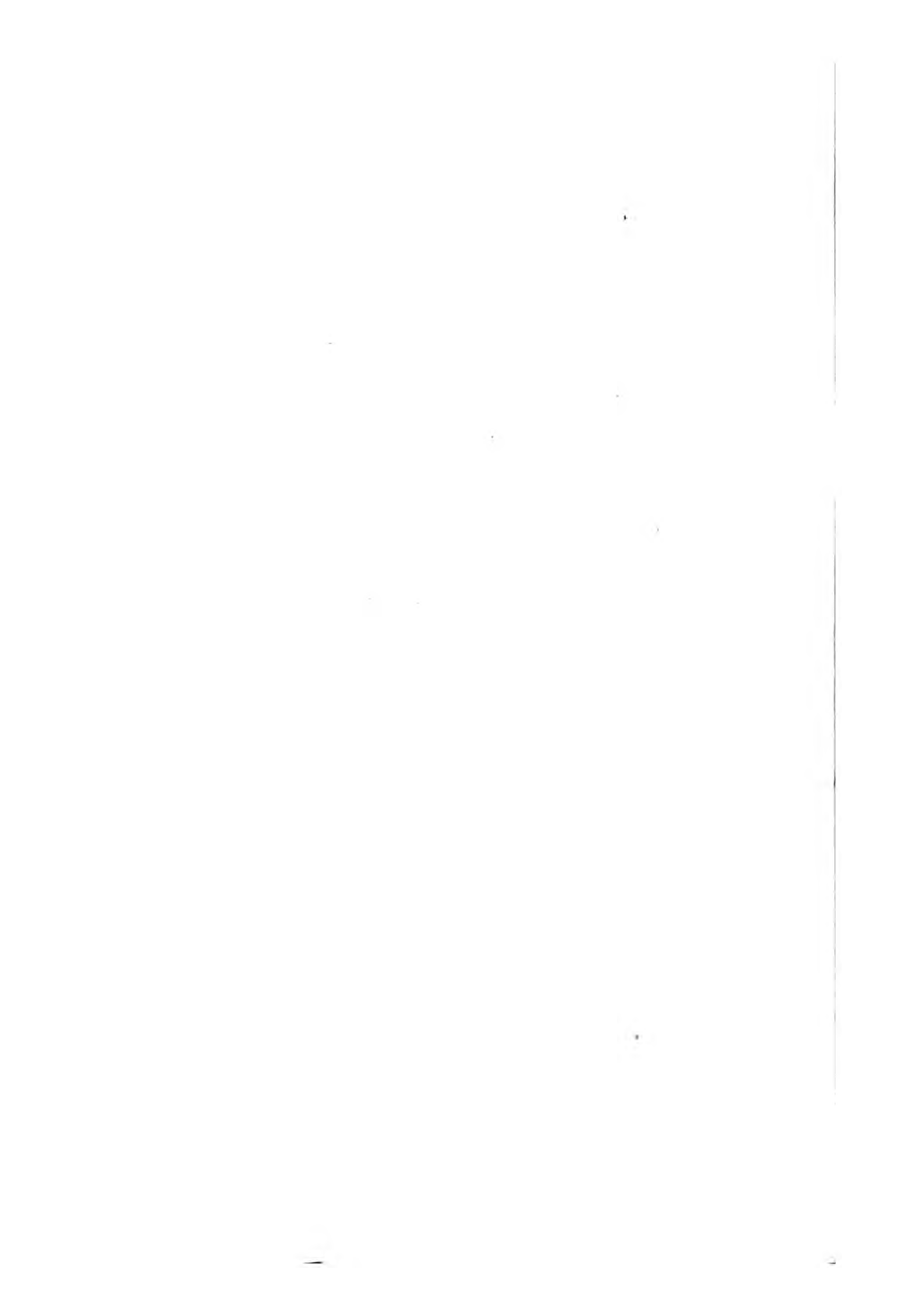


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COMRADESHIP IN SORROW



COMRADESHIP IN SORROW

THOUGHTS FOR THE BEREAVED

BY

JAMES STARK, D.D.

AUTHOR OF
"LIFE'S STAGES," "DR. KIDD, OF ABERDEEN"
ETC. ETC.

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PREFACE.

DEATH is death most of all to those who are on this side of the grave—" 'tis the survivor who dies." "The dead," in consequence, are said "to open the eyes of the living," and the writer of these letters, having come under the appalling power of death, as meaning the quenching of earth's most precious light, is prompted to hold out a hand of sympathy to all who are situated as he is, and to impart whatever help may be derived from a recital of his experience in passing over the ground, where the battle has to be fought between belief and unbelief.

The things which we are to ponder lie close to the human heart, and have afforded matter for wistful enquiry to every succeeding generation of our race. We are so constituted that our thoughts cast them-

selves forward—especially when the present is emptied of much of its earthly interest—without any effort on our part; and, while we may be rightly assured that destiny is safe under the guardianship of duty, yet we do not deem it to be intrusive curiosity to desire to know all that God permits us to know of what lies beside and beyond earth's bourne.

There are some who tell us that the believer at death, who fondly imagines that he is knocking at a gate which opens out to a good land and a large, is only wasting his effort upon a dead, impassable wall, beyond which there is nothing but empty space. If the weight of probability lent itself to such a dismal conclusion, should we be greatly blamed if we joined hands with the pessimist, and declared that death was not such a disaster, seeing it puts an end to life, which was known to be full of delusion and mockery?

But the wisdom of the wisest men, in all ages, has been against that view, as a hideous distortion of reason, and a wilful misinter-

pretation of the facts as known to us—that, I should like to bring out. Little, indeed, that is novel can be said upon a subject with which the master minds of the world have grappled, and of which they have spoken with a forcibleness begotten of intense conviction. But it may be of service to re-echo some of the finest things they have given to us, and, besides, to add the testimony, fresh from the mint of experience, of one of our own time, as to how a bereaved person, plunged into grief, where he is in danger of losing his ground, may reach a sure place of reasoned belief, and a still surer place in Him who is the Resurrection and the Life.

The deep, over-aweing solemnities of impenetrable mystery remain after all is said which can be said, but unsettling doubt and sickening despair need not be added to the pangs of bereavement—that is what the author would like to show. Let us scan the heavenly horizon, and we may find that it widens and becomes clearer as we reverently gaze. Yea, as we quietly weigh and ponder

the great facts of life and revelation, we may be able to rise from the depths of dejection to the heights of praise. Man can bring music out of his sorrow, which no other creature upon the earth can do. A bird, which sings sweetly, has a harsh note when its nest is being robbed, and it can have no other. The old Hebrew Psalter is a magnificent testimony to the fact that the wail and the sob can be changed into heaven's hallelujah, if only God be to our thought and feeling what He desires to be.

“ You call for faith ;
I show you doubt, to prove that faith exists.
The more of doubt, the stronger faith, I say,
If faith o'ercomes doubt.”

—*Browning.*

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COMRADESHIP IN SORROW.

“ Father of heaven above,
Dwelling in light and love,
Ancient of days ;
Light unapproachable,
Love inexpressible,
Thee, the invisible,
Laud we and praise.”

“ He *does* much who loves much.”
—*d Kempis.*

“ But as we meet and touch each day
The many travellers on our way,
Let every such brief contact be
A glorious, helpful ministry.
The contact of the soil and seed,
Each giving to the other's need—
Each helping on the other's best,
And blessing each as well as blest.”
—*Coleridge.*

“ Man is not born to solve the problem of the universe,
but rather to take account of the extent of it—to know
where it begins.”
—*Goethe.*

“ The last step of reason and one of the marks of its
strength is to know that there is an infinity of things
which surpass it.”
—*Pascal.*

I.

COMRADESHIP IN SORROW.

“O wheresoever those may be
Betwixt the slumber of the poles,
To-day they count as kindred souls,
They know me not, but mourn with me.”

—*Tennyson.*

THE man who can say :

“I hear the voices of a tide
Which breaks upon an unknown shore,”

draws so much nearer to every other man who has had the same experience. A person smitten to the heart by bereavement received a large number of letters of condolence. In his desolation he read them over carefully, one by one, and after having done so, he felt it was not difficult to discriminate and divide them into two heaps. There were the well-meant effusions of the kindly feeling of friends who, as yet, stood outside the ex-

perience which had overtaken him; and there were the others, which, through a perceptible poignancy of expression, bore internal evidence of having been written by persons who had stood alongside of him, under the shadow.

With the best intentions in the world you cannot, by a mere act of your own will, put yourself into the position of another. It is only God who, by an act of His will, can so dispose of you, and, even then, yours is only an approximation to your friend's standpoint. The Gaelic proverb hits the mark when it says that, "Every man is blind to another man's corner." The man who is suffering and the man who is condoling, however sincere, are not looking quite at the same thing. "The heart knoweth its own bitterness," and the only thing which can bring effectual relief to the overwhelming loneliness is the presence of Him who enters the heart and comes alongside its sorrow.

Still, there is a fellow-feeling, through experience, which, if it does not take us quite up to the sufferer, brings us within speaking distance of him. "In Memoriam" is so much more real to you when you share in the feeling which inspired the immortal poem.

It is difficult to have patience with it till the dark days come, and, as the author told our late gracious Queen, when she was thanking him for it, he had, in private communications more than in public criticisms, been mocked and derided for this string of pearls, which things, as the Apostle hints in his injunction, sometimes come to the wrong persons.

This is just what might be expected. A man can only see what he has eyes to see. The intellect perceives what is set before it. The imagination pictures from the suggestions of sense or memory, but neither the one nor the other can tell you what death, in its most intensified bitterness, is to those who are left behind, till the bolt from heaven comes upon you and brings the crash. Who could know and tell what night is, till he is in it?

More especially is this true of the great, outstanding, over-shadowing changes caused by death, which mark an epoch in your life. In relation to them it may be truly said that inexperience is ignorance. In the days of youth and health, they are as much out of your ken as are the contents of a remote planet. You know nothing of them till you come up to them and they come unto you—

till the blow is actually struck and you are reeling under it. When two persons have really become one in marriage, which means that through the action of years of mutual confidence the one has become a part of the other in what is deepest and most immutable in life, the wrench caused by the death of one cannot be guessed. It is not the mere dissolution of a legal bond, the end of a social compact: it is dismemberment; it is the living tree cloven, and shorn of its fairest part.

In old maps of the world there was much territory which was marked "unexplored." So might it be written over not a little of the life which is before human beings in this world. Esoteric and exoteric knowledge are terms which mark distinctions in what men stand abreast of in the experience of life, far more real than did the first application of them to disciples of philosophers in ancient times. We all stand in an outer court till something happens, which, like the turning of a key in a lock, and the opening of a door, ushers us into a place that, in some respects, is a new world, and things for the rest of the days are not as they were before. Hence the profound pathos of the proverb,

“The wife dies to her husband.” However wide the circle touched by the event, and however much the family may be shadowed, death, in its concentrated essence, is death only to him.

Do you, who are bereaved, not find it easier now to understand how God keeps the knowledge of another world from us while we are in this one? The contents of certain experiences which are before us now in this world are veiled from our view. To avoid distraction and enforce devotion to immediate duty, it seems to be a law in God’s working on our behalf, mercifully to give us only one thing at a time.

But all God-sent experiences are only the accompaniments of successive stages in our development, and, therefore, bring their compensations with them. One of the gracious effects of a great sorrow is that it softens, broadens, humanizes. What a choice phrase is that which Dr. M’Leod Campbell used—“the *breadthening*” effect of affliction. There is truly a kinship of soul as well as of blood, and there are few things which bring men up to each other more closely than a common experience of that kind of deprivation in which so much of “the life of life is

flown," and this is still more truly the case if they have both sat and learned in the "Interpreter's House" of which Bunyan writes. The late Queen Victoria, after the death of Prince Albert, and the widowed cottar on the Balmoral estate, weeping together at the fireside of the latter, remind us how "One touch of nature makes the whole world kin." The guild of sorrow is so human in its basis, and shows no distinction of rank and circumstance. The difference between you and other stricken ones, whether the richest or the poorest in the land, appears to be so trivial when the heart is empty: like the difference between saloon and steerage passengers when the ship is sinking.

You who are now initiated, having graduated in the school of sorrow, remember what is expected of you. You are to be as you never were before, brothers to all in adversity. God had something in view in dealing with you as He has done. His action is never aimless, nor does He like it to be resultless. He expects you to take your place in the vanguard of the world's helpers. Humanity holds you now by a new link. Be tender-hearted, considerate, ready to succour. "Sorrow understands." Tell the

vision that has come to you. Does not the German mystic put part of it in the words :

“He to whom Time
Is as Eternity,
And Eternity
As Time,
Is delivered
From all strife.”

THE PASSING AWAY.

“ Her joy was duty, and love was law.”

“ Woman has been called the poetry of life because her presence in this lower world expresses for us, as well as calls out those infinite feelings of purity, tenderness, and devotion whose real existence is in our own bosom.”

—*F. W. Robertson, of Brighton.*

“ Better a death when work is done
Than earth's most favoured birth,
Better a child in God's great house
Than the king of all the earth.”

—*George MacDonald.*

“ No spring nor summer beauty has such grace
As I have seen in an autumnal face.”

—*Donne.*

II.

THE PASSING AWAY.

“She saw a hand we could not see,
She heard a voice we could not hear,
It beckoned her away.”

How beautiful the old Scottish custom in pious homes, of bringing in the “Books” and having family worship as soon as the last breath was drawn by a member of the household. When the father of that noble Scot who became Principal Cairns, died, the eldest son was asked to give God thanks for the life that had been lived and the victory which had been won. He was too much affected by what had just happened, to do it, and the heroic mother—in that, incidentally, revealing the secret of “old Scotia’s grandeur” in many of its cottars—poured out her stricken, yet glad as well as sorrowful, heart in gratitude for the precious gift God had lent to her and to the world.

Such a triumphant vindication of the supremacy of the Eternal amidst the wreckage of time does not always come even to

God's people. Nature sometimes gets the upper hand, and in the grief there is a prostration where faith is not lacking. All Christians are not cast in the heroic mould. A saintly spirit like that of the late Dean Church owns, after his son's death, "Nothing that has happened to me in life has been like that moment when we saw no breath come through his lips."

If we were to judge by appearances which come under the eye, it seems then to be "all over" in the fullest significance of the term. There can be no doubt that the evidence of the senses is decidedly against the idea of the continuance of the life which was once in that emaciated and motionless frame. As the last sigh is heaved, and you look upon the tenantless and unresponsive clay after the weary struggle is over, life appears to be entirely gone, like a candle which burns to its socket, flickers for a little, and then goes out. He has breathed his last, and the closing of the eyes is the fit sign of the withdrawal from earth's scenes—the end has come; life was there, but it has vanished.

But are the senses to have the last word at death when they did not have it in life? Is all that is acknowledged to be highest in

human nature, and which rises above the mere tremors of matter, to count for nothing, when we need it most? It is true that, on the physical side of it, the death of the noblest and most richly endowed human being seems to be little different from that of the "beasts that perish." But then the difference between the two, which was all along admitted to be in life, was something which far transcended what the eye could see. Man is as the lower creatures, in having a body which passes away like theirs; but is there proof that what constituted the difference between the two, and of which the senses could take little cognizance, has also passed away? Physical law may well be allowed to exercise lordship over what belongs to its own order and kingdom. What ground have you for assuming that it can go further?

As to what takes place beyond that which is patent to the senses we know nothing. The loved one is carried away as on a silent stream, which passes into a deep, dark, precipitous ravine whither we cannot follow him. We are truly at our "wit's end" at such a solemn crisis. All that our intelligence can do for us is to make us aware of the fact that a

tragedy has just been enacted which we were powerless to avert. Medical skill and the ministries of affection have been of no avail, and we have had to stand aside as mere passive spectators. At the birth of a human being into the world, and at every subsequent stage of experience, the instrumentalities of time take their place, but, at the end, God takes everything into His own hand, and the spirit quits the body without the aid of any creature of the earth. We know there has been a departure, but the departed one is as invisible as God Himself.

I have stood with the friends of those who were on board a fishing vessel as it passed out of the harbour, when there was a belt of vapour upon the sea. Soon were the sails hoisted, the helm grasped, and the prow turned away from us to the great ocean. The spectators followed it intently until it passed into the enveloping mist, and then, as they could see nothing more, they left it to the care of God and returned to their homes. What more can we do when the end comes?

“Does it not seem to be a reproach to philosophy that, after the researches of so many thousand years, all trace of man as a thinking, active being is lost at death, and

that it can utter no decisive voice as to his existence in any sphere beyond?"

But is the philosopher, after all, to be blamed for not seeing what is invisible to the only vision he has? He is powerless without the co-operation of nature, and it utters no voice, gives no sign or clue. Tennyson tells us how little we have to expect from the teaching of nature:

"Thou makest thine appeal to me—
I bring to life, I bring to death.
The spirit does but mean the breath:
I know no more."

But it is also true what Mrs. B. Browning said:

.
"What hope? What help? What music will undo
That silence to your sense? Not friendship's sigh,
Not reason's subtle count; . . .
.
. : nay, none of these.
Speak *Thou*, availing Christ!—and fill this pause."

So it is: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." You cannot bale the darkness out of a room: you must admit the light. It is the "availing" Christ, "the faithful witness, the first begotten of the dead," to whom we have to look when nature is dumb and reason is baffled. Christ hath brought life and im-

mortality to light, *i.e.*, revealed what man, impelled by an inborn impulse, was groping after. Man's nature was built on lines which needed the living God and immortality as its fitting complement, and such is Christ. Our hope for the future, sure and certain, is summed up and staked in the risen Christ. Set Jesus Christ aside, and as sure as a stone thrown up into the air falls back again to the earth, so will the question be anxiously asked, "If a man die, shall he live again?" The supreme excellency of Jesus Christ, which two thousand years have not dimmed, is our security against the discovery ever being made that a belief in immortality is a delusion. The extent, then, to which the Son of Man commands your homage and love is the measure of your confidence and hope for the future.

What a strong tower of hope we can build upon such an assurance as this, given by our Lord—"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." "*If it were not so, I would have told you.*" So much can be taken out of these words, because there was so much put into them by Christ. It was one of the notable

characteristics of our Lord that, along with a tender consideration for the feelings of others, He surrendered Himself absolutely to the truth, however unpalatable it might be, and He went with it wherever it led the way. Current belief, prevailing fashion, fluctuating opinion, were in themselves nothing to Him. He held the mirror up to things as they were in heaven and earth : He bore witness to the truth. When the disciples imagined that the path on which they walked with Him was one that led to worldly promotion, He, in the plainest terms, undeceived them.

But did Jesus ever tell His disciples that a future life was a dream, a mirage, a gleam of the imagination? Seeing that a life beyond the grave was one of the most firmly rooted beliefs in the hearts of His disciples, is it conceivable that He, who was so transparently truthful and kind, should have allowed them to go on bewitched with a lie? Would He not have told them it was a hallucination, if such He deemed a belief in a future life to be? But instead of doing anything to diminish their confidence as heirs of another world, He built His whole teaching upon the personal possession of eternal life, through faith in Himself, which made death to be no

more than a superficial transition, the casting aside of a decayed vesture and the putting on of the robes of a higher life. All that He had to say to them was said on the assumption that here and hereafter in Him are a sublime and blessed unity.

Consequently, were there no future state, Christ's credit would be gone, and the gathered reverence and trust of two thousand years had better never have been. Jesus Christ, in one way or another, is so bound up with immortality that they stand or fall together. If, therefore, rampant materialism were to succeed in driving the doctrine of a future life off the field, a great many more things would have to go with it. The whole fabric of Christianity would totter and fall to pieces if the belief in an imperishable life were taken out of its place in the New Testament. You can no more separate such a belief from Christianity than you can the pith from a living tree.

But while Christianity gives full effect to itself in the experience of the believer, it does not lift him above the ordinary conditions of mortality as a creature of time. It only tells him that death is swallowed up of life. The physical apparatus remains the same after

faith has entered the soul, which a fever may consume or a fall shatter. That apparatus continues to be a brittle, fragile thing, which can easily be put out of relation with its environment. Even should no accident befall, and disease never prey upon it, it becomes unfit as a thing of time from sheer decay and exhaustion.

Scripture is so plaintively eloquent in picturing the frailty and evanescence of the life of the body! "As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more." With a power which brings numbness to the feeling, the old Border ballad sends home to us the utter blankness of the place when a presence has gone from it which we look for and cannot see :

"They sought him East, they sought him West,
They sought him all the forest through ;
They only saw the cloud of night,
They only heard the roar of Yarrow."



IMMORTALITY.

“Begin the web, and God will supply the thread.”

“Life is love, and love is eternity.”

“A faith that occupies the heart
Though the brain halt to bear its part.”

“When on the hills’ majestic height I trod,
And Thy creation smiling round me lay,
The soul reclaimed its likeness unto God,
And spurned its union with the baser clay.”

—*George Bancroft.*

“By such ideals alive, life becomes eternity.”

“Immortality may be only a germ, a possibility, an opportunity, which, according to our life, may grow into a possession.”

—*Greg.*

“I believe that the truth of the future cannot be brought to man’s knowledge by any exertion of his mental powers, however exalted they may be : that it is made known to him by other teaching than his own, and is received through simple belief of testimony given.”

—*Faraday.*

III.

IMMORTALITY.

THE highest argument for the existence of a future state is indirect, general, cumulative, moral as much as intellectual, viz. :—that a belief in it agrees with, and lends itself to, falls and fits in with, all that is most glorious in human conception and achievement. The idea of an endless life associates itself with our higher principles, our purer aspirations, and nobler moods, and prevents them from falling into the category of mere dreams.

Like all great truths, this one is true in more senses than one, and has its lower as well as its higher fitnesses. Besides appealing to the most spiritual ideas and sentiments, this belief in a future life can be justified on the ground that it takes its place among the practical utilities of this present life, as a bulwark of order and a stimulus to exertion. It is a kind of moral salt. It tends to main-

tain freshness of interest in life, and, in spite of the difficulties and reverses we encounter, makes us feel that it is worth while to go on.

The further, too, that man, as he is, goes into himself, and the more he takes out of himself, the more unwilling he is to accept the doctrine of non-immortality. It is the man who skips over the present life, never going deeply into it, who can most easily reconcile himself to the thought that when he dies he not only appears to be, but actually is, as the foam which melts on the shore or the leaf that withers on the stalk. But let him walk in the footsteps of a Newton, who, when he was an old man, said that all his attainments, compared with what remained unexplored in the vast system of things, were as the few pebbles a child gathered on the sea shore, and how he longs for an extension of life that he, by further study, may be able to think more of God's thoughts as they are expressed in His works. Let him love a fellow-creature long and fondly, and the idea of death ending all is hateful to him, for "the longer an affection endures, the more unwilling one becomes to conceive the idea of a time when its object will be no more." Let a man go on praying

to God every day, and he simply cannot believe that the last prayer is offered just before the last breath of the body is drawn. Depth and breadth in life crave a corresponding height and duration.

Our knowledge, too, loses a certain atmosphere and flavour, and is apt to be hard, narrow, and shallow if not possessed by the soul of faith, which sees the temporal all the more clearly in the light of the eternal. It is as the spirit of man, with its divine instincts and wide horizons, holds itself up, refusing to be dragged down and enslaved by the senses, that sight comes to its best, and man, as a creature of time, reaches the noble proportions and full stature of manhood. What can mere knowledge by itself do for him ?

“ For knowledge is the
swallow on the lake,
That sees and stirs the
surface shadows there,
But never yet hath
dipt into the Abysm.”

It is said of the late Henry Sedgwick that he kept strict silence on theology for several years before he died, because, while he could not himself discover adequate rational basis for the Christian hope of immortality, the

general loss of such would, in his estimation, be a great evil in increasing the danger of the dissolution of the existing social order. Now, is it taking an unfair advantage to claim such an admission as so much that can be laid to the credit of a belief in immortality? Is it usual for fancies and delusions to yield better fruit than truth? Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Can we believe that the constitution of things is so framed that a lie is needful to stability? Strange order that—which demands disorder as a buttress! If the acceptance of immortality as a working belief be better for life upon the earth, may that not be taken as presumptive evidence that it is one of the things which God and not man has placed where it is?

As has been admirably pointed out by Romanes, Christian faith is different from all superstitions which ever existed, in this respect, that, while some of them had wholesome moral elements in them, none of them could approach the religion of Jesus as affording what was needful for the moral development and training of the race. While every superstition keeps company with Christianity in calling for belief, they part

company when man demands something to live by which will make him man: for, "nothing worth naming religion," as Romanes says, "can be placed alongside the religion of Jesus" for the amelioration of mankind. "The image of Christ remains the sole basis of all moral culture, and, in the measure in which it succeeds in making the light penetrate, is the moral culture of the nations increased or diminished."

We have only to read the history of ancient civilisations like those of Rome, which turned their backs upon the unseen and moral world, to know what we have to expect if men should ever be so infatuated again as to imagine that wisdom lies in allowing the lower part of their nature to usurp the place and trample upon the authority of the higher. Moral discipline can obtain no effective hold of men when they have gone down so far as to make it their watchword, "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die." It is said in the simple, sublime story of Creation that the other creatures were made "after their kind" but man was made in "the image of God." If the attempt should be made to obliterate that divinely-ordered distinction, it can only end in man becoming

an intellectual animal, more cunning than the beasts of the field. A saint he can never be without watching and prayer, and what motive is there for these if there is no eternal future before him? What ideal and what moral fulcrums are left to you in trying to make the most of man, if his end is to be like that of the moth?

Who can doubt, then, that the doctrine of immortality keeps good company, and draws to itself all that is fairest in the character and history of man? There is nothing which gives me more satisfaction than the thought that all truth and wisdom and nobility of soul come to Christianity as to their native clime. They cannot be kept apart: they belong to each other: they are different manifestations of the same thing. "He that is of the truth heareth My voice," said Christ, and history re-echoes the saying. The whole weight of the moral universe backs up the supernatural communications of the New Testament. "Nothing that is human is foreign to me," said a Christian long ago. Much more may He who said "I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish," claim to have as His attendants and auxiliary forces all that makes for human edification and progress.

Not meeting us with a direct negative, some, who are against what we have been advocating, would palm posthumous influence upon us as a substitute for personal immortality, and a spurious, shadowy thing it is! Only those who have lost the simple robustness of nature can be satisfied with that as taking the place of a real continuance of life. Our work, our memory, the augmentation we have made to the moral capital of the world will live after us, but do you think the men who have done most for the race are content that their individuality should be lost in it? No! It was by being the men they were that they sounded the depths of life, and thereby learned to respect and guard personality as a sacred trust.

Dr. A. B. Davidson says truly, "The individual spirit struggles against the idea of being poured out into the general stream of mankind, or even of the people of God, and claims a place for itself, and this claim will be the more resolutely pressed the more the individual becomes aware of his own worth, and realises the meaning of his personal life."

With all his doubts and negations, Thomas Carlyle had too much distinctive vitality of character to reconcile himself to the idea of

being absorbed by the race as a wave is by the ocean. In writing of his father he thus delivers himself :—“ The possibility, nay, the certainty of perennial existence daily grows plainer to me. The essence of whatever was, or shall be, even now is. Perhaps all that is essential is even now near me.”

The practical question presses : How can we personally and most effectually have the use and benefit of this doctrine of immortality? The theory is by no means the same as the power of an endless life. Much disputation about such a matter as immortality is not the most helpful thing to assurance. Lecky said he was never less sure about the future life than when he leant much upon argument. It is a spiritual rather than an intellectual process that is needed for the confirmation of our faith and hope. If our thought and desire live in the presence of the truth, and we endeavour daily to act accordingly, we are not likely to lose our hold of this grand heritage.

The best service, then, we can render those inborn prepossessions and primitive instincts, which are to the spiritual nature what eyes are to the body, is simply to trust them as we should the law of gravitation. Bring

them the honour which is their due and they will be to you as ministering angels. We find by experience that the native, indestructible intuition we call conscience does not deceive us if we do not tamper with the oracle. It is evidently there to tell us what is right, and the testimony of those most competent to judge, throughout the whole range of human history, is that we do well to follow its dictates.

Why should we be mistrustful of that other disposition of the mind, equally well rooted, which points to existence beyond death? That out-going of our nature—call it primary belief, natural desire or expectation, or a combination of both—in its untainted freshness ministers more than logic to our assurance when it is kept in an atmosphere of love, and is crowned with heart-felt belief in Him who said “that where I am there ye may be also.”

It needs no profound observation of the things of creation to beget in us the conviction that there is an established correspondence between what is implanted in man's nature and what has a place in the objective world. The eye is in man, and there is for this organ the panorama of

nature and the light of the sun with which to see it all. The ear makes it necessary there should be sound, if man and what is about him are to be a cosmos, and so there is the music of bird and sea and stream and the voices of our fellow-creatures. The heart is so much room that has to be filled if life is to have any satisfaction, and so it goes wandering in search of its spiritual kin. The mind needs something outside of itself to work upon, and so the whole realm of knowledge is provided as its sphere of operations. In like manner this innate craving for immortality, as persistent and universal almost as hunger and thirst (except where the race is artificialised and decadent), surely has its objective counterpart in God's great universe. "Shall the swallow be led by a Divine instinct to the south and man's yearnings turn out a lie? Shall the lower creatures find what they seek and not the higher? Is not the attraction to the magnet ground for the belief that the magnet exists?" Even if it should be urged that the idea of immortality is only the offspring of the soul of man, is it not ground for hope that his soul has the power of framing such ideas? So to conceive of eternity is so far to be a partaker of eternity: we share what we see.

The immaturity, the imperfection of things as time leaves them, convinces most thoughtful men that life in this world cannot be the final stage for the human race. The promise is that if we hunger and thirst after righteousness we shall be filled. Do we not need another world besides this one if there is to be any fulfilment worthy of the name? Was not Browning, "the subtlest assertor of the soul in song," right in maintaining that man's own sense of imperfection here was an argument for immortality:—"In a cosmos where incompleteness implies completeness, life as we have it here implies immortality."

There does seem to be such superfluous endowment in man, if all the use that most of the race make of the threescore years and ten is to be taken as an adequate representation of what life should be. One is tempted to ask: "Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?" if the only outcome is such as we generally find it to be. The fable of the mountain in labour and a mouse coming forth fails to set forth the monstrous disproportion between means and ends illustrated in man as he was made, and man as he turns out to be, as a creature of time. You cannot say that of

the other creatures of the earth. They seem to live out their life as it was meant to be. They fulfil their destiny by acting according to the nature given to them. So far as it would appear, there are no latent powers which remain latent to the end, no neglected talents, no undischarged functions. But can that be said of man? Where does the unused power in man go if there is no hereafter? It is lost, and yet one of the most assured discoveries of science is that He who said "Gather up the fragments that nothing be lost" was giving voice to a law which reigns over the whole empire of nature.

An eminent writer thus sums up the argument:—"Looking back at the path that leads up to him, we recognise that man is the complement of Creation, its finishing touch. But looking within himself, and forward to the ends that shape themselves dimly before him, he recognises that he is still inchoate, still germinal, or shall we say unfinished, nay, a maimed torso, whose fine, colossal lines suggest the splendid outline of what would be if he had a vaster theatre than our earth. . . . It does not seem unwarranted to say that man's immanent intelligence transcends unspeakably the organism."

You can scarcely imagine any limit being put to the possibilities of human improvement on its intellectual and moral side, and that fact is brought out most impressively in the illustrious specimens of our race. Could you not think of a man like Gladstone going on for an indefinite period in the mastery of knowledge and of himself? We have just reached the fringe of knowledge and personal holiness when we are called away. The farther advanced we are, the more do we see the path of progress before us, the more impressed are we not with "the petty done, the undone vast?"

"I reach a duty : yet I do it not,
 And, therefore, see no higher ; but, if done,
 My view is brightened, and another spot
 Seen on my moral sun.

For, be the duty high as angel's flight,
 Fulfil it, and a higher will arise
 Even from its ashes. Duty is infinite !
 Receding as the skies !

And thus it is the purest most deplore
 Their want of purity : as fold by fold,
 In duties done, fall from their eyes, the more
 Of duty they behold.

Were it not wisdom, then, to close our eyes
 On duties crowding only to appal?
 No ! Duty is our ladder to the skies,
 And, climbing not, we fall."

Time, also, in its evolutions is opening up to the world's view, and making it part of the world's history, that Jesus Christ is gradually establishing Himself amongst men to be all that He said He was as the author of imperishable life. The highest of His claims may be said to be already acknowledged by the human race. He said He was the light of the world, the moral ideal and leader of mankind. Who is prepared to put a better in His place to-day?

What race under the sun, with any pretension to intelligence, does not admit that a higher moral sovereignty than that which we have in Jesus Christ has not been forthcoming and is not conceivable? Should the history of two thousand years not give us ground to stand upon in maintaining that the Christ, who has already proved Himself to be the spiritual king and pattern of mankind, has only given us an instalment of what He will yet do as the Resurrection and the Life? "Heaven and earth shall pass away," He said, "but My words shall not pass away." The unparalleled boldness of these words is only equalled by their truthfulness, so far as time has had an opportunity of putting that to the proof.

What is the conclusion of the whole matter? "Time is a parenthesis in eternity."

I was standing upon the lonely sea shore, listening to the ceaseless murmur of the advancing tide, when a lark sprang up from an adjacent field, and, as it rose, filled the air with its rapturous melody. I could not but be absorbed and stirred while that gush of song lasted. But soon the interlude was over, and all was still again, except that the slow, regular wash of the waves went on as before.

Eternity is life's deep undertone. Other notes come in during time's brief strain, but the never-absent, always-prevailing one is that which is not of the earth, though it comes into it, bringing quieting solemnity and an awful sense of grandeur. "God created man for incorruption, and made him in the image of His own eternity."



THE BODY OF HUMILIATION.

"A vase of earth, a trembling clod,
Constrained to hold the breath of God."

"O, mean may seem this house of clay,
Yet 'twas the Lord's abode."

"The animal expires : man surrenders his soul to the
Author of his soul." —Amiel.

When a brutal Roman deputy threatened to cut out
the liver of the great Basil, he quietly replied to his
persecutor, "You will do me a favour, as it has
troubled me ever since I remember."

"A palace, when it is that which
it should be,
Leaves growing, and stands such
or else decays :
With him who dwells there
it is not so, for he
Should still urge upward
and his fortune rise.

—Donne.

"Man has that nature, he lives that life, he dies that
death which he has in common with the awful Being who
was born in Bethlehem and is to judge him."

—Dean Church.

IV.

THE BODY OF HUMILIATION.

THE death chamber, in what it presents to view, has a solemn dignity in it that is often strangely suggestive of something like a half-way house between earth and heaven. Notwithstanding the sore struggle which has taken place, and the lifeless body lying there baffled and beaten, through the pinched features shines a serenity which looks like an anticipation of what the other world is to disclose. Surely it has been said to thee, "Well done, good and faithful servant," for the peace of heaven is upon thee, the peace of the Master's presence is with thee, and even the forsaken tenement reflects it.

Noting the sweetly contented, almost victorious look upon the face of a lady who, with truly Christian patience, had come through much suffering and was now awaiting the last mark of respect which earth could give to her, a visitor remarked, "I have

only once before seen in her the same smilingly assured and satisfied expression, and that was many years ago when, after long waiting and some solicitude, she stood alongside the man of her choice on her marriage day."

Yes, there is indeed victory in such a life now ended on its earthly side, which brings a gladness that even death, with all the travail that went before it, cannot conceal; but the marks of the fierce conflict are quite as visible in the worn and emaciated frame. Ours is truly a body of "humiliation," or abasement, as the Revised Version renders it. It is not a "vile body." No more need be said against the use of any disparaging epithet as applied to the body, which is the creature of the great and good God, than that our Lord honoured it by becoming bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, and, moreover, that in its transfigured form He wears it now in heaven.

Still, as it now is, it is unquestionably a body of "humiliation." You never feel the truthfulness and the painful significance of the phrase till you see one whom you love in physical distress. As you look upon the dear one in sore sickness, enduring excruciat-

ing pain which you can do little to alleviate, longing for the morning to break, yet nobly trying to conceal the worst from hearts already wrung with anguish, you see what you never can forget, and which brings a shadow upon earth's brightness that shall remain till the happy morn when all the shadows are to flee away.

There is something within you that is shocked and outraged by such a spectacle. You feel it to be a cruel infliction, and you share in the indignation of our Lord as He stood by the grave of Lazarus. Did you ever make a special study of John xi., 33? "When Jesus, therefore, saw her [Mary] weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he *groaned in the spirit, and was troubled.*" I fear the point in the latter part of the sentence is missed, from the notion that Christ's agitation of feeling had a reference to the supposed hypocrisy of the Jews who were present. The feeling goes deeper down, and was more characteristic of Him who "hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." The words referred to have been literally translated—"He was indignant in the spirit and caused Himself to shudder." Dr. R. W. Dale's comment on the

passage is: "He was moved with indignation in the spirit, with indignation against the miseries of the world, and behind the miseries there was the sin that caused them. All that was deepest and most central in His life resented and revolted against the death of Lazarus and the heart-broken sorrow of Mary. This is not resentment against God. It was holy impatience against sin."

But He who can make the wrath of man to praise Him can bring glory to Himself and honour to the creature through that very bodily disorder and suffering which is part of the havoc due to the entrance of sin. Out of the "humiliation" comes illumination.

"The soul's dark cottage,
Battered and decayed,
Lets in new lights through chinks
Which time hath made."

What an unspeakable relief to those who, on making a haunt of the sick room, have beheld the ravages of disease, to reflect that while the body may be insulted and marred it cannot be dishonoured by that which comes in the providence of God. The bloated face of the drunkard is a reproach to him, as it speaks of an indignity done to that which should have been held in reverence as a

temple of the Holy Ghost. The emaciation which comes with phthisis, or the disfigurement caused by cancer, if taken as from God's hands, is no more than a scar won in honourable battle. There are not a few wearing the world's ribbons and medals who have not shown a tithe of the bravery of some in the sick room, whose heroic endurance is known only to the family circle and to the record in heaven. It brings our Elder Brother so close to those who have witnessed such painful wrestling to remember that His body was torn with the nails and pierced by the spear, and that, with the same body now glorified, He is in heaven with those who have gone before and who now know no pain and no sorrow.

Scripture as well as experience makes it plain that our Maker does not regard the body we now have as something which at all hazards must be safeguarded. It would be strange indeed if He did, when some of the most thrilling passages in human history are due to the fact that patriotic men did not count their lives dear unto them when the liberties of their country and the sanctities of home had to be defended. The sneer of the adversary, "Skin for skin; all that a man

hath will he give for his life," is belied whenever the chivalry of man's soul has its opportunity. To whom do we erect our costliest monuments but to the confessors and heroes who, for a conviction, a cause, an oppressed race, laid down their lives? We have a disdain for the body when it stands between us and our higher ideas and impulses, and the Cross has done much to intensify that feeling.

On the other hand, how precious is the human soul in God's sight! He put forth the whole power of His Divinity for its salvation. He shook heaven and earth to place the Incarnation, the Cross, and the Resurrection between us and the loss of eternal life. But He has not been at such pains to protect our bodily life. He who owns the earth, and has the waters of the sea in the hollow of His hand, does not charge the elements to do His beloved children no harm. It has been said that "to be truly religious a man must lay a basis of security from the very bottom." But such security takes account only of things moral and spiritual. He cannot lay such a basis of security as to include the body as well as the soul. It is not compatible with the present order of

material things, of which we form a part, that this should be done. A drop of poison, a whiff from a pestilential swamp, a stroke of lightning, a hurricane at sea, a thousand forces which we cannot always make provision against, may quench our life as a thing of sense at any moment.

All this proves no more than this, that what we call death must be a comparatively small matter in God's eyes, and that the supreme thing in His regard, is that we should love Him and be like Him, assured that we can never, whether in the body or out of it, be separated from Him. If any other view were possible, it might then indeed be said that every one of us is "walking in a vain show."

It is quite true that Christianity has given an added sacredness to life even as a thing of time. Wherever Christ's name is revered human life is not lightly regarded. Still, is it not evident that it is more on account of the increased preciousness in which the inner life is held that man counts for so much? The whole weight of New Testament teaching is put in the scale against the idea of a tenacious hold being taken of the earthly life. "Fear not them which kill the body but are

not able to kill the soul." With overflowing fulness of emphasis, Scripture promises absolute permanency and security of personality, but no pledge is given of immunity from ill for the body. It is only wild fanaticism that would interpret this to mean that we are to disregard the body and be careless as to our present life. Still, it cannot be denied that the position taken by Scripture could not be deemed as other than extravagant and foolish were the outward and temporal life the whole of life. It can only be justified by the grand assumption, which runs through the whole of the Bible, that in God, the Eternal One, we are sure of life for ever and ever in some form, in some condition or another.

"To me the thought of death is terrible,
Having such hold on life. To thee it is not
So much even as the lifting of a latch :
Only a step into the open air
Out of a tent already luminous
With Light that shines through its
Transparent walls."

As bringing out still more clearly the fact that man is really a spirit who has a body, however precarious may be the tie to his present earthly environment, there is nothing

uncertain or haphazard in the higher life of man. Everything that belongs to that life, which is the life for which all things live, is determined by the working of principles essentially immutable and under man's own choice. A man may break his leg or his neck by accident, or his heart may be broken by misfortune, but the same fate cannot overtake his character. It can be shattered, too, but only by his own act. "There is surely," as Sir Thomas Browne says, "a piece of Divinity in man—something that was before the elements and owes no homage to the sun." It is so! There is in man what is above this transient order of things, and independent of it. He can defy the whole material universe to compel him to break his word, and that power in him can never take its place among the things which are confined.

In giving effect to the same idea, how Scripture exhausts the resources of comparison in setting forth the fragility and evanescence of man as a creature of time! What strength of language and surpassing richness of metaphor in showing what the body is, as contrasted with that which man feels the life within him needs! It is the tabernacle or tent which is pitched at night and

struck in the morning ; it is the earthen vessel, so brittle that it may be broken any moment ; it is the husk of the wheat ; it is as the grass or flowers of the field, which in Palestine flourish in such luxuriance in April, and of which in June nothing is to be seen but withered stalks, on earth baked hard with the pitiless rays of the burning sun.

While, therefore, far removed from that unwholesome asceticism which holds the body to be in itself an evil thing, alien and sinister, Scripture ever regards it as deriving its chief importance from the tenant of higher origin to whom it has been leased. The body is good for the present dispensation as it brings him into fitting relation with his earthly environment. It is therefore no more to be despised than the sun over his head or the ground beneath his feet, but, like them, can only serve a temporary purpose to a being who has kinship with the Eternal God. He goes on, and as he does so, it staggers and falls to its own earth—it is a “body of humiliation.”

You cannot read some of R. L. Stevenson's letters without realising that the body can sometimes be such a clog to the uprising spirit : “For fourteen years I have not had a

day's health. I have wakened sick and gone to bed weary: I have done my work unflinchingly. I have written in bed and written out of it: written torn with coughing, written when my head swam for sickness; few are the days I am not in some physical weakness." Is not such a case as that rather a hard nut for the materialist to crack? Here is a man with a bodily mechanism that is certainly "humiliating" in its weakness, and yet, what strength—yea, what creative force in the spirit to the very end!

With a mind so clear and strong—sometimes up to the very moment of death, when the body in all its functions is utterly dilapidated—who can maintain that material organisation explains all that is in man? Horace Bushnell puts it well when he says, "Observing how long the soul-force goes on to expand after the body-force has reached its maximum, and when disease and age have begun to shatter the frail house it inhabits—how long it braves these bodily decrepitudes, driving on still like a *strong engine in a poorly-timbered vessel*, through seas not too heavy for it but only for the crazy bark it impels—observing this, and making due account of it, we should be the more impressed with a

sense of some inherent everlasting power of growth and progress in its endless life."

Browning says in one of his letters that progress, development, demands that there should be death. "Without death, which is our church-yardy, crape-like word for change, for growth, there would be no prolongation of that which we call life." Death is the only way by which we can reach heaven.

" There is no death ! the stars go down
To rise upon some fairer shore."

What is to some minds the most conclusive proof that the body is one of "humiliation" and a house of bondage is the fact that, notwithstanding all its frailty and brevity of tenure, it takes to itself an importance which belongs only to the higher nature. The sublime aspirations of the soul are often materialised and become the inordinate appetites of the body. The disorder that is in man shows itself in shifting the centre and intensity of interest from the unseen to the seen. The following sentence from Principal Caird's Gifford lecture is as true as it is discerning:—"In the merely animal nature the appetites and passions are simply natural tendencies seeking their own ends, but in a

being made for things infinite and eternal the passions and affections do not remain what they are in the animal: *they draw unto themselves a kind of false boundlessness stolen from the higher nature.*"

BESIDE THE GRAVE.

"There is a budding morrow in midnight.

"A belief in the resurrection of our Lord is not indeed the solution (for that we cannot gain), but the illumination of the mysteries of life."

—Westcott.

"If a truth be once established, objections are nothing, the one being founded on our knowledge, the other on our ignorance."

—Butler.

The wife of Dean Stanley said on her death-bed, **"Everything is gone; I cannot even think." "But you can love." "Yes," she replied, "that is my identity."**

"The man who can say 'My Father' to the Being who rules heaven and earth is thereby raised above heaven and earth, and himself has a value which is higher than all the fabric of the world."

**"Such sweet communion had been ours
I prayed that it might never end.
My prayer is more than answered now,
I have an angel for a friend."**

Whenever Carlyle sat under the open sky his mind inclined to silence.

**"Knowledge is proud that he has learned so much ;
Wisdom is humble that he knows no more."**

—Cowper.

V.

BESIDE THE GRAVE.

A FEW weeks after my last glimpse of the earthly sheath of the blessed dead, I stood at the grave, and as I looked down upon the mould and pondered, I was surprised at my callousness. There was no gush of feeling. I did not shed a tear. I felt that my own chamber was a more congenial trysting place than this lovely spot on a spring morning, with the trees and singing birds, the great sky arching the scene and the stream close by speeding on to the ocean, a fit emblem of time running its course and losing itself in eternity.

Why was I so unmoved when standing beside the very spot underneath the sod of which were the remains of her I loved? Because there lay only the "remains," not the person. "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" Do not the words "He is not here; he is risen" apply in a measure to all who are His? As John Pulsford reminds us,

you are less likely to meet the departed in the graveyard than in your own house as you recall the noble and beautiful character. The place where the dust reposes is sacred from association, but the real sacredness lies with the spirit. "Mouldering relics are not such a source of inspiration as spiritual recollections." Yes; it is true: you will gather more stimulus from the contemplation of the noble example of a hero than from the daily handling of his clothes or of locks of his hair.

"With frequent feet affection haunts
The spot where buried friendship lies,
But my lorn spirit inly pants
For converse that the tomb denies."

Besides, as imagination played upon that parcel of earth in "God's Acre," and what was going on in it, I was glad to think that what was sown in corruption was to be raised in incorruption. As I stood and reflected, a feeling of relief sprang up in my mind that she was now separated from a body which had cost her so much pain. It had been for years what the stake is to the martyr, and I could not but be grateful that she had no further part or lot in it. I could appreciate what one who had suffered much

in the body said as the end came, "Let me pass out!"

So the mother may look tenderly upon the little grave she has decked with flowers, and yet comfort her soul with the thought:

" My baby sleeps,
Not in the churchyard wrapped in sullen mould,
Where rain descends and winds blow harsh and cold,
But gathered in the Gentle Shepherd's fold
My baby sleeps."

To suppose that the decaying material framework which was lowered into the grave is to be raised again is a hideous error, as far removed from common sense as it is from the teaching of God's Word. It is a remarkable fact, which shows how guarded and reliable the statements of Scripture are, that while the phrase "the resurrection of the body" is current enough, it has no place in Holy Writ. Much is said of the resurrection of the dead, but never once do you meet with the words—the resurrection of the body.

Nature and Scripture come from the same source, and God never requires us to honour His Word by outraging facts as we actually find them in the world around us. All that we know of the contents of the crust of the globe constrains us to recoil from the old but

monstrous assumption that the resurrection is to consist in the rearranging and reanimation of the material particles we committed to the grave, dust to dust. There is a horrible grotesqueness in the idea, which has caused perplexity to many simple-minded believers, has given too much occasion for the jibes and scoffs of the infidel, and is directly contradicted by the teaching of science. "The same matter is used over and over again in the sustenance of successive generations of living beings, instead of virgin matter being continually brought from deeper strata of the globe. A certain comparatively small amount of matter circulates again and again through individual after individual."

Besides, the body that is to be raised up again is something very different from what we deposited in the grave, which by a process of nature is dissolved and is mingled with its kindred dust. "First, that which is natural; afterward, that which is spiritual." We go on unto perfection. "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." In other words, when the tent of our mortal flesh is struck, there is a higher and more enduring embodiment awaiting us.

But there will be no destruction of identity nor any interruption of the continuity of life by this change. Our personality does not depend upon sameness of the stuff with which we are enclosed. Science tells us that matter is in perpetual flux, and that we are continually throwing off particles and thus renewing the physical structure while preserving its identity. "We are all changed by slow degrees: all but the basis of the soul." The process has been pictured by a ripple in a stream caused by an intercepting rock, whose appearance remains the same from day to day and, it may be, from year to year though the water is changing every second. "No one bathes in the same river twice." That is true if you think of the material particles constituting the volume of water, but in a much truer sense it is ever the same stream. So there is much in our earthly bodies which will be quite gone from them a few years hence, yet they will practically continue to be the same bodies. Thus the seat of our personality will not be shaken as the outworn garment of mortality is thrown off, and the spiritual body, fitted to another sphere, is put on.

The teaching of Paul on this great subject is that there is in each of us the germ

of the resurrection body, and that it will bear such a relation to the present body as a tree does to its seed. "The spiritual body will be identical with the earthly body in the same way that an oak is identical with an acorn, of which it is the evolution, and to which it is indebted for its being an oak and not a vine or elm."

The apostle does not logically prove that the dead will be raised. He simply shows by analogy how a difficulty advanced is not insuperable. Just as there is not any account given in the gospels of the process of the resurrection of our Lord, but only a declaration of the fact, the recorded manifestation of the risen Christ, so it is not explained how our resurrection is to be brought about. It is a great mystery.

But we need not go beyond the limit of the present life to behold mystery as impenetrable. Listen to the scientific description of the growth of a stalk of wheat—an exposition of the profound text, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit": "The individuality of a seed is originally located in a microscopic atom of matter. The moment that germ begins to develop, it

exchanges its primary particles for others, not merely adding others to itself, but giving away, as it were, its original self piecemeal. By a *process utterly mysterious*, the individualising power is transferred to the new particles, so that, months after the grain of wheat is dead and gone, a blade and stem, taking their character from it, grow green and ripen, and finally produce grain identical with the perished one."

Mystery! We are wrapt in mystery. It marks our limitation, but still more our greatness. It is part of our heritage as persons made in God's image, but who are still only creatures and not God. We are great in perceiving how much there is which belongs to us, but there is more of our greatness shown in the fact that we can vaguely apprehend how much there is which belongs exclusively to God. There are many things of which we are as ignorant as we are of the coming transition from one world to another.

Let us be thankful that there is no mystery about the impartation of that essential, sovereign, eternal life, which contains within itself the constituents of heaven even while we are upon the earth. It is the experimental possession of that life, through faith

in the Lord Jesus Christ, that will carry a man safely through all the changes which are before him, when reason is baffled and nature shrouds him in its darkness. He knows whom he has believed, and is persuaded that He will keep that which has been committed unto Him against that day. He knows, as John Ker has said, that "out of the materials of the universe it is not a gigantic tomb, but a glorious temple for living worshippers that is to be built."

And so, we are assured, the music of life goes on, though all of it, and the best part of it, is not heard on this side of the grave. As in an orchestra, the music does not cease though some of the instruments which we heard with charming effect are silent for a time. They brought their indispensable contribution and will be heard again before the end comes. But, meanwhile, others take up the allotted parts, and the harmony is actually perfected by some of the performers ceasing to play. So, though it is difficult sometimes for the bereaved to feel it, we are bound to believe that the great God maintains "the music of the spheres," which is no fabled sound to those who have ears to hear.

SEEKING A SIGN.

“ God, who *art*, while all things else appear.”

“ Dwell far in the unapparent.”

“ He who keeps his faith, he only cannot be discrowned.”
—*Lowell.*

**“ The true business of life is not in the outside, but in
the heart.”**
—*Dr. Rainy.*

**“ The steps of Faith
Fall on the seeming void, and find
The rock beneath.”**
—*Whittier.*

**“ One, knowing God, could afford to give Him back all
His promises and trust to what He was.”**
—*Erskine of Linlathen.*

Bengel regarded death as “ only a thing by the way.”

VI.

SEEKING A SIGN.

DEATH has so little to say for itself. It comes as a crushing blow, delivered by an unseen hand, and then there is unbroken, agonizing silence. It is the dumbness of the dead that is so trying. It is the stern, fixed reserve of the unseen world that is such a terrible oppression to many hearts. There is an apparently heartless aloofness on the part of the great multitude who people the land on the other side of time.

Death, that "spoiler of life's feast," keeps its secret well. The mystery of the great transition, notwithstanding the efforts of the most penetrating intellects to obtain a footing on the borderland, is just as deep and dark as it was in the time of the patriarchs. We peer anxiously and fondly into the gulf and see nothing.

The widow says:—In former days there could not have been absence from home, even

for a brief period, without some communication arriving from him, to assure her that "the heart untravelled fondly turns to home." But this time he has gone forth and there has been no return, and no message of any kind has come.

Milton wrote thus of a dear departed one :

"Once more I trust to have
Full sight of her in heaven without restraint :
. . . dreamt of her . . .
But oh ! as to embrace me she inclined,
I waked—she fled—and day brought back my night."

What a strange feeling comes over the spirit as you think of one, who was more familiar to you than any creature in the wide world, now less to you as an object of time than the most casual acquaintance—clean gone. The whole situation in life is so totally changed, and you have such difficulty in adjusting yourself to it—as if it were something which did not belong to you—that in certain moods you almost wonder if the past were anything more than a dream.

Days come and go, but there is no break in the silence of the tomb. The world goes on after the earth is heaped upon the buried dust as if nothing had happened. All around you is as calm and orderly as if the great

grief which had darkened your sky were nobody's concern but your own. Nature in her aspects does not attune herself in sympathy with your mood, and may be gaily smiling and singing when your heart is sinking. The heavens and the earth look as if they had their own way whatever yours might be, and you are pitilessly thrown back upon yourself as they do "keep up their terrible composure." You have, as it were, in the course of your wanderings, come up to a high, frowning, precipitous cliff, at the foot of which you can only crouch and cry.

Nay; it is not so: it is the privilege of the child of God that when he cannot go forward, he can mount upward; when sense fails, faith has its opportunity; when he has come to the end of himself, then does he begin with God as he never did before. Limitation thus grows into enlargement as, instead of that which he cannot reach unto, he gets the infinite and eternal God Himself, and, having Him, what can he want? Out of his conscious impotence as a creature tethered and baffled there comes such an immeasurable gain! He inherits the estate he was meant for: he rises to the height of his being, and learns what resources are at his

call. Are not all knowledge and power and assurance comprehended in Him, who is yours by the grasp of faith? What grandeur of philosophy as well as of piety in the Psalmist's confession—it is the very sublimity of faith's abandonment—"My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever!"

It was in the spirit of what has been advanced that Christina Rossetti said, when she heard the following lines recited, "I felt like that once, but now I trust and submit":

"Could I but win you for an hour
From off that starry shore,
The hunger of my soul were stilled;
For death has told you more
Than the melancholy world doth know—
Things beyond all lore."

It is this common craving for a sign which has given spiritualism its opportunity. There are unquestionably marvels covered by the term spiritualism which science has not as yet been able to explain, but "spiritualistic mediums, in their method of communicating and the subject-matter of their communications, are alike repellent to common sense and refined feeling." The search for truth does not consist in "brisk

curiosity, and riddle-guessing," and no good reason can be given for attempting to pick the locks of doors which God has fastened with His own hand, and for which He has provided no keys.

Some years ago, as I was coming out of a hall in London where I had been listening to a lecture on spiritualism, I met an elderly gentleman, and after talking with him on the subject which had just been occupying our attention, he gave me the following chapter from his autobiography. He lost his wife in the prime of his manhood, and it was the great desire of his heart to enter into some sort of communication with her that would assure him of a continued existence beyond the grave. He went from place to place and consulted every professional medium of note in the land, with the result that he spent time and money without any satisfaction. Furthermore, he found that in gaining acquaintance with "spiritualism," he was losing his spirituality. He came back to simple faith in God, and was content to surrender his wife to Him who was well able to keep her, and his testimony was that he had ever since been a happier and better man.

The absence of sensible tokens from the other world should not in the slightest degree weaken our belief in the reality of the existence of those who are dead to us, else how should we know that God Himself exists, who is a Spirit and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth?

And, moreover, what upon reflection should help to reconcile us to the silence of the tomb is the fact that silence is one of God's favourite conditions of work. "Sensationalism," as men have it in the hot-beds of modern civilisation, does not exist in nature. There, most of the forces at work are quiet and unobtrusive. How silent the germination and sprouting of the corn! No sign is forthcoming as brain and heart within us are carrying on their business. As we go away from man and come near to God the din diminishes. Go abroad in the country on a calm, starry night, and as you survey the immense spaces and hear not a sound, you feel that God is given to silence, and that He who made and upholds all things, and our Lord, of whom it was said "His voice was not heard in the street," are one and the same Being.

The scope and use for "signs" is very

limited, and room for the play of faith unbounded even in this present life. Friends we know are often thinking and acting for us though no sound is heard and no evidence whatever is given to the senses that their minds are exercised on our behalf. The mother and children on this side of the Atlantic do not see the head of the household preparing a home for them and making arrangements for their arrival, as they are taking ship for the land of their adoption. Even though letters miscarried and no telegram reached them, they have such faith in his character as to be assured that his mind is working for their benefit.

So far as sensible tokens are concerned, the life of each one of us is very circumscribed. A mile away the dearest friend we have on earth is invisible to us. A conversation may be going on, deeply affecting our interests, and we, who are in another room of the same house where it is taking place, have not heard a word of it. We know as little of what is happening at the present moment in a neighbouring town as if it were in another planet. The whole tendency of modern science, as shown, for example, in that marvellous achievement, the transmission of

thought through the air, gives us ground for the expectation that the world of matter will yet become much more amenable to the action and service of mind, but in a way that is silent, secret, mysterious—more like man's own spirit at work.

What a disdain Christ had for prodigies, spectacles, signs, and what a dependence He put upon moral proof and spiritual vision! "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." But, while declining to gratify the childish liking for a striking phenomenon, an apparition, a portent, He presented Himself as the great sign from heaven, and one that is all-sufficient as a basis for faith. The Incarnation, the historical manifestation of the Godhead, is an accommodation made once for all to this inherent craving of the human heart for a communication from the unseen world. Men saw the Lord, touched and handled Him, and heard His voice. He was the other world coming down to this one to put it in right relation with God. We need no other sign from heaven, for "he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

Take, then, the counsel of the following tender words :—

“ I feel the unutterable longing—
The hunger of the heart is mine—
I reach and grasp for friends in darkness,
My ear grows sharp for voice or sign.

O friend, no proof beyond the yearning,
This outstretch of our hands, we need :
God will not mock this hope He giveth,
No love He prompts shall vainly plead.

Then let us stretch our hands in darkness,
And call our loved ones o'er and o'er,
Some day their arms shall close around us,
And the old voices speak once more.”

To what is deepest in the heart there is often no answering sign upon the surface of life. The unseen world has to content itself with its own unseen possessions, and live as far apart from the world of sense as if they had never touched each other. The very greatness of our personality as sons of God brings an inevitable loneliness. The more depth you have in your nature and experience, the further away you are from all others except God.

Have you ever been far out on the ocean, away from the ordinary track of ships? There is nothing before you and around you

but the wide expanse of water: no sign except that which lies upon the deck of your own vessel and that which is over your head. But you have chart and compass; you have motive power, a haven to reach, and intelligence to bring these together. Is it not so with every human being even when in a great city and people crowd upon him? Each of us has a world within himself, where the spirit of God is at work, where thought flashes, ideals dwell, feeling is kindled, motive impels; and often there the battle of life is lost or won without any sound being heard or sign given. Signs are for the outside of things, not for their hidden depths. The incarnate God—the historical Christ—was no sign to those who had not the spiritual apprehension to perceive the unseen reality which lay behind what appeared to the senses—the “Word made flesh.” When Pompey, who captured Jerusalem, entered the Holy of Holies, he saw nothing in it!

TEARS.

“The thorn survives the rose’s bloom.”

**“To me alone there came a thought of grief :
A timely utterance gave that thought relief,
And I again am strong.”**

“All thought begins in feeling.” —*Lowell.*

“Where the lights are brightest the shadows are deepest.”

“Solitude is the nurse of wisdom.”

**“All idealism without Christ ends in pessimism,
history tells us.”**

**Sir Thomas More said : “Nothing but unpardoned sin
should make us weep for ever.”**

**“No one has any more right to go about unhappy than
he has to go about ill-bred.”**

VII.

TEARS.

Do not be ashamed of your tears! Jesus wept! God cannot do better for His children at certain times than allow them to follow the example of their Elder Brother when He was at the mouth of the sepulchre at Bethany. The opening of the floodgates brings a relief for what might otherwise be overwhelming. The tears come running down your cheeks by God's will as much as His showers from heaven, and are as healthful. Through your bereavement, you have now more sensibility of nature, more subdued, softened feeling: the deeps within you have been opened up: emotion for the rest of your days counts for so much more among the forces of your life. Your tears are not a sign of rebellious feeling, but a token of anguish on account of what has been taken from you. They really reveal your high appreciation of the gift God lent you for a season. They are in a

sense a tribute of gratitude for all that God was to you, in the possession of which you have been bereft. They are the free-will offering of love, and are sometimes the best elegy on the departed. Be assured, God has given you liberty to weep.

And He has given you the power. Did you ever think of the fact that it is as natural to weep as to smile? There was provision in your nature from the very beginning of your life for tears, which sorrow, when it comes, makes inevitable. The tears since childhood may have remained unshed for the greater part of a long lifetime, but there they are in reserve, a hidden part of your natural constitution and a prophecy of the coming experience which will draw them forth. "The Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces" is a promise, the fulfilment of which belongs to our heavenly future.

In that little poem, which is one of the most exquisite of George MacDonald's writings, "Where did you come from, baby dear?" the question is asked and the answer given :

"Where did you get that little tear?
I found it waiting when I got here."

Yes; it is waiting, and there is bigger

occasion for it than during childhood. As life goes on, tragedy comes suddenly and knocks loudly at your door one day. It may look as if you were to be passed over : but, no—a morning comes when the door is burst open and in crashes disaster, and what can you do but sob and be thankful to God when the tears come ?

What mother, who has clasped that child to her bosom as part of herself, can do other than weep till the heart is like to break as she sees the little helpless one in the last throes of death ? What heart with a spark of chivalry in it can be unmoved as what is dearest to him upon the earth is passing alone into the darkness ? He for years has accompanied and shielded her in all the great outgoings of her life, and why should he be debarred from sharing in this the most tragic experience of them all ? He would like to be at her side as usual and see her through it all. Nay ; stand back ! fond but intruding one. What is now before her is no place for thee : thou art not ready yet for the crown she is to wear.

“ Alone—it must be so !
Break, heart, or disentwine ;
The Master calls me and I go—
Rest mine and labour thine.

“ Alone at break of day,
 I am not by thy side,
 The sunny sky is leaden grey,
 The wide world waste as wild.

. . . .

Alone when night steals soft
 Over the weary soul,
 And thoughts of heart-communion oft
 Crowd in beyond control.

. . . .

He calls me to His throne,
 I go with Him to be ;
 And lonely, thou art not alone
 When He abides with thee.”

Many of the Christian poets rebuke what I am venturing to encourage. They tell us :

“ You should have wept her yesterday
 Wasting upon her bed, . . .
 So we who love weep not to-day,
 But crown her royal head.”

“ Would you weep for the bird that hath found its nest ;
 Would you weep for the child on its mother’s breast.”

But our reply is:—The tears are not on account of those who are gone—“ ’tis the survivor who dies.” Better to have tears in secret than that hard, sullen, stubborn, iron-like self-control which calls itself composure. Tears interchange with smiles as you think :

“For my love is sleeping the quiet sleep
That the Shepherd gives to His wearied sheep,
And the world is not what it used to be
Ere its sunlight faded for her and me.”

Can you refrain from weeping as certain visions haunt you which, contrasted with your present situation, make you feel that the best part of your life is gone? You have a house that is no longer a home. You have discovered, by experience which has wrought itself into your own heart, the truthfulness of the Indian proverb, “The hearth is not a stone, but a woman.” You may have a fire in every room in your house, but you have no “fireside.” Never more will the familiar figure stand upon your doorstep and greet you with a welcome smile. A spirit of restlessness has overtaken you as of one in search of something, and there is no settled point for you: no place where you linger at ease as being perfectly at home.

There is no disguising it: you have a sorrow you can never drop or altogether rise above in this world. If you have solitude with your sorrow, you are to be pitied above most mortals. Formerly, your troubles were worst at night: now you have learned there is a sorrow that is more intense in the morning:

“Though the white blossoms are blooming in May,
And the wheat pierces green through the hill,
Underfoot is the curling bracken,
The dead leaves are lingering still.”

You “weep a loss for ever new,” and, while you are not to be intoxicated with grief or with any other passion, you are not to coerce your nature into the belief that it is your duty to suppress it as you would a sinful uprising of feeling. The Stoic is not a model for the Christian. Christianity regulates, it does not trample upon human nature, and, while it discountenances violent outbursts of grief—common among the heathen—and inculcates a sobriety becoming our high vocation and our great hope, it does not insist upon a calmness that is either unnatural or affected.

Be duly affected by things as they come to you, like the Æolian harp, which yields itself up to every wind from heaven and has its fitting response. “Blessed are they that mourn.” Why? Because “they shall be comforted.” That beatitude means no less than this—that God has something for you in your present experience which you miss if you do not deeply feel and realise what has come upon you. If you try to be as though

you had no occasion for mourning, you lose the benefit of your day of visitation. The sorrow unto tears, on the other hand, gives God an opening for a special blessing which He desires to impart. If you take lightly what has come to you in the providence of God, you are as the hard, flinty rock which does not tremble nor take in the sunshine and showers of heaven. God would have you be as the soil which the ploughshare has gone into, that the upturned earth may mix itself with what comes from air and sky, and thereby be the fruitful field or garden of delights.

It is not to be forgotten that Christianity has added a pang to death by so heightening and refining the feeling by which we hold one another, that the rupture of earthly ties gives all the greater shock. Every relationship in life has an added depth and sacredness in consequence of the hallowing touch of Jesus. The Son of Man being so much to us all, we find in each other some of the preciousness of Himself. What can you do but weep when, like Abraham, you bury your dead out of your sight? It seems so cruel and heartless to take what remains of her out of the house which you delighted to

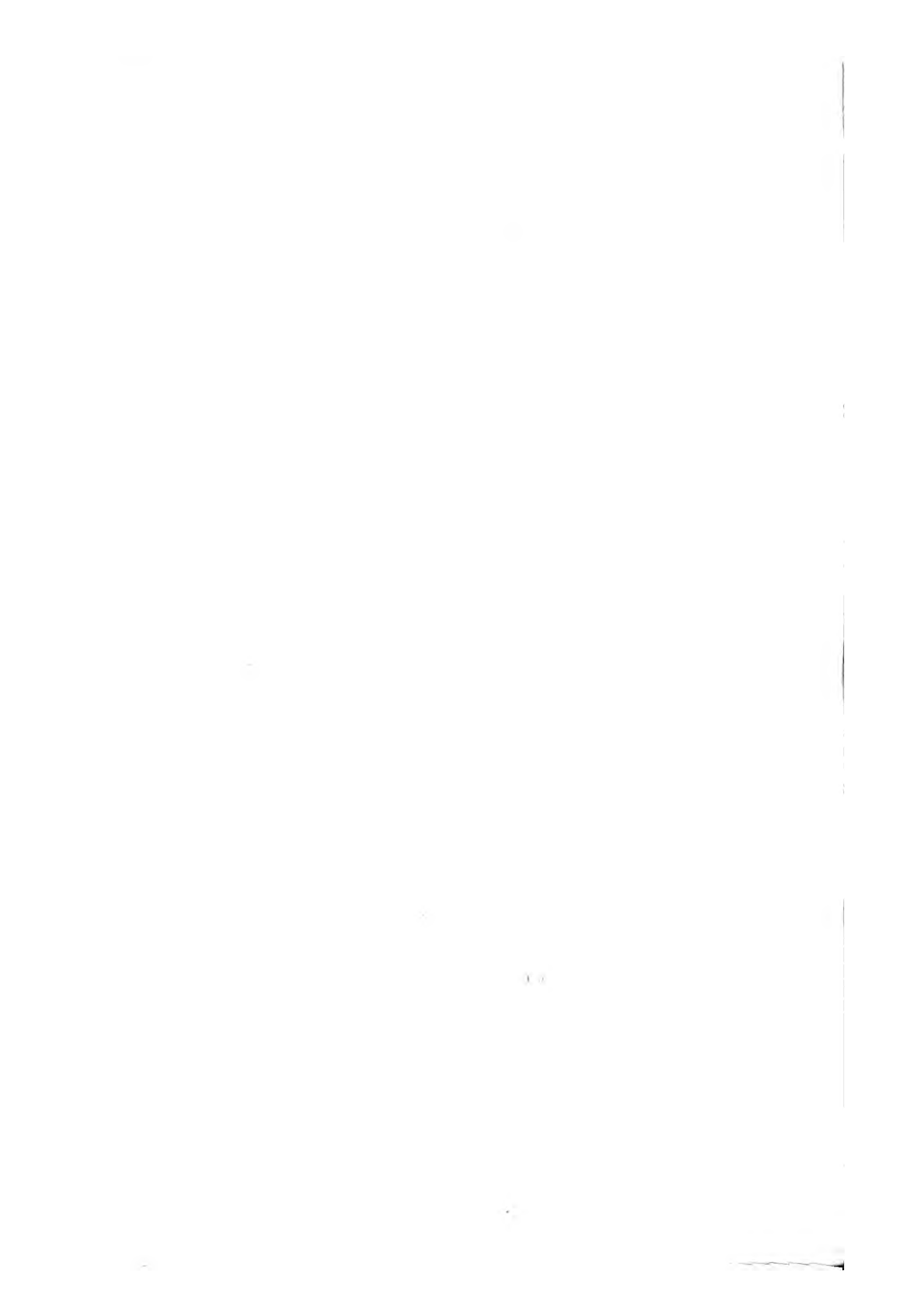
think was her own and put it down into the earth. Do not say there is no occasion for tears.

You must also be prepared to stand almost, if not quite, alone in your sorrow. The stone thrown into the lake makes a perceptible disturbance for a little while, but by and by the surface resumes its placid aspect. To him or her who is the chief mourner the stone is thrown in every day. It is impossible for all your friends, whose lives are crowded with the affairs of this living world, to continue to look at things from your standpoint and keep the past in front of the present. But there are always one or two who can say with Hezekiah, "I shall go softly all my years," and their safety lies in following the example of the disciples of John the Baptist, who, after they had buried their master, "*came and told Jesus.*"

And does He not always remind us that while there is occasion for tears, life does not end with them. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." It is joy to which all things tend if we follow Him in whose heart the Gospel had its birth. Clouds roam to and fro and cast their darkening shadows upon us, but the blue sky

is higher and wider, ready to appear and cheer us with its radiance. The lightning flash which tears and rends is only an occasional visitant. The light, so gentle in its touch, so effective and yet so unobtrusive in its ministries, comes into our homes every morning.

“They have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid Him.” What could Mary do but weep? But is it not true:—“Many a word of lamentation covers what should be, if we know it as Mary afterwards did, wine of deepest joy?”



MEMORY.

“The memory of the just is blessed.”

“He shall bring forth Thy righteousness as the light.”

**“Fallen leaves that keep their green,
The noble letters of the dead.”**

**“God gives us love ;
Something to love
He lends us : but when love is grown
To ripeness, that on which it throve
Falls off and love is left alone.”**

—Tennyson.

“A little row of naphtha lamps with its line of naphtha lights burns clear and holy through the dead night of the past : they who are gone are still here ; though hidden, they are revealed ; though dead, they yet speak.”

—Carlyle.

**“So when a good man dies,
For years beyond our ken
The light he leaves behind him lies
Upon the paths of men.”**

“It is a beautiful superstition in some parts that on the burial of a good man a child should be baptised, that the goodness that was in him should pass into the child, as God would not allow any goodness to pass away from the earth.” The reverent remembrance of the good answers better, and it is no superstition.

VIII.

MEMORY.

UNDER the tension of heightened feeling, which finds but broken utterance for itself in speech and acts of endearment, you part company with him who is about to emigrate to another land. As he passes into the ship and stands upon the deck, he is still visible to you, and more to you than all the world. The vessel is unmoored, the cable is flung back, the crowds left upon the pier are making the air ring with their last words of farewell, but the noise and the stir do not divert your eye from the object on which your heart is placed. As the distance widens and the vessel speeds on its course you cannot discern the loved face, and though you strain your eyes you can only catch a faint glimpse in the far distance of something white fluttering in the breeze, which is waved by a hand you do not see, in token of undying affection. At last, even that is lost to view, and ship and

all sink beneath the horizon. Nothing is before you but the vast space of surging ocean, leaving no link of connection, no sign which sense can give:—All is gone in the meantime but—memory.

How we should thank God for the precious gift of memory, which comes between us and the total loss of all consciousness of the beloved object, and which, in bringing up the scenes and experiences of the past to the forefront of our thought, bids us take these shadowy representations as a pledge that we shall yet come to our own again in the full possession of the living presence. What a marvellous power the mind has of so far perpetuating our hold of things in their essence and spirit, when the physical basis has fallen away from them or is lost to view! When, in the providence of God, we are ejected from a paradise where we loved to be, some of the songs of the birds and the scents of the garden come up to us over the wall; we cannot be the same as if we had never been in Eden.

What is memory? Memory is mind asserting itself as something stable and enduring amidst the perishing things of earth, and the dislocations and confusions of

time. It saves the spiritual from being at the mercy of the material: it refuses to be wrecked with it: it holds its own against the tyranny of the seen and temporal, which would efface everything and have all to pass with them into oblivion. Memory is mind spurning the thought of being dragged—a helpless captive—at the heels of an all-devouring death. It has sorrowfully to admit the terrible power of death, but it wrests so much spoil from the hands of the victor, and takes that as ground for the belief that, through patient endurance, death shall yet be swallowed up of life.

We are not such creatures of sense that we are done with an object because it has passed away from the eye. It is oft-times only then that we enter into full and perfect possession. You do not see a mountain when you are standing at the foot of it, nor a painting when your face is upon the canvas. Time and space have sundered you from the loved one, but there has been no spiritual separation. Instead of absolute separation there is now the enjoyment of full spiritual possession. The departed is now your very own—part of “life’s unalterable good,” at your call to show you how fair and

lovely human life can be, ever witnessing for God, the righteousness of His kingdom, and the beauty of His holiness.

What a strange, mysterious thing is memory! What we meet we never wholly part from again if we have made it our own by choice and desire. Each of us is put into God's great universe and allowed to take a bit of it unto himself. It is the prerogative of mind to go abroad among God's things and lay tribute upon all that it sees and hears, reads, admires, and loves, so that a very important part of what a man has come up to goes into himself, annexed as so much new territory to the empire of his personality. What is unessential and irrelevant passes from us as water through a sieve, but what is homogeneous with our character, and lends helpful interest to our outlook, is retained. Nature and providence are ever with us, and in the experience we have of them we find the materials with which we fashion a world of our own, that to a large extent is our heaven or our hell. Just as a coral island springs up from the depths of the Pacific, breaking the monotonous expanse of water and making a green spot where the foot can

stand sure and the eye can be regaled with the froned palm, so, out of the wide extent of existence, there comes to each of us his little islet of memory on which he has to live for all time to come. God grant that it may indeed be one of "the isles of the blest."

This transmuting process of the temporal into the spiritual that is going on amazes and solemnises me. The permanency of the past, the opportunity of the present, the fact that what has been shall be in a sense for ever, should ever make us feel the appalling responsibility of life and our need of the directing, sustaining, ay, and the forgiving grace of God.

What a solace memory is to the bereaved ! Is not memory, with its secret, its sanctuary, its shrine, a very considerable part of time's estate ? The ancient Egyptians regarded the present existence as no more than a mere prelude to another, and showed their appreciation of the overshadowing importance of the future by the lavish expenditure of art and wealth upon their tombs. But we have a better connecting link between the present and the future than mummies and their costly adornments. We have memories more akin to the world that is to be, than

rotting material relics of any kind. Even portraits and keepsakes, much as we value them, are so paltry compared with those inward pictures which flash across the consciousness and are like gleams of sunshine to us in a dark place. Each of us is a prisoner, shut out by an irreversible decree from much that gave interest to life, but no warder holds the key by which the door of the prison can be locked against the daily entrance of processions of events and incidents which make the heart throb and bring a life and light into the chamber within, such as the casual passer-by cannot see.

“What still is mine seems far, far off to be,
And what has flown becomes reality to me.”

Be thankful for the afterglow which comes with sunset, and rejoice that the afterglow of memory does not melt like that of nature. Be thankful, too, that in its pensive light you have learned that while

“The showy lives its little hour: the true
To after times bears rapture ever new.”

Do not allow the recollection of the summer you have had make you unjust to the winter that is. Only for one-third of the year do we see nature clothed in her most gorgeous

apparel, singing her sweetest song, and providing for her guests her richest provision.

“Bright summer goes ; dark winter comes :
We cannot rule the year.”

For the other two-thirds of the year we can remember with gratitude what we have had, and make it an occasion for hope :

“O wind,
If winter comes, can spring be far away ?”

Yea ; you can go as far as to say :

“Snows may fall and teardrops start,
But the soul that loves for ever
Keepeth summer in the heart.”

It is said that time, one of God's accredited healers, enables you to pass from the stage of acute and overbearing grief, where you think of what you have lost, to the stage of appreciation, where you think of what you have gained. Certainly, one of the amends which death brings is that it allows us free utterance to admiration, which, so long as its object was living, delicacy constrained us so far to suppress. Is it Russell Lowell who sings :

“Now I can love thee truly,
For nothing comes between
The senses and the spirit,
The seen and the Unseen,”

But we are creatures of such varying moods. Is it not that same delightful American writer who says :

“Communion in spirit ! forgive me ;
But I, who am earthly and weak,
Would give all my incomes from dreamland
For a touch of her hand on my cheek.”

Both expressions of feeling are true as representing different phases of the same affection.

Memory, like everything else belonging to you, needs to be kept under control, else it will do you harm. Do not torture yourself by calling to remembrance too frequently what you deem to be your shortcomings in relation to the departed. You think if this or that had been done, life might have been prolonged ; “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” Dismiss such thoughts as doing no good to anyone. The best you could think of was done at the time, and what more would be possible if you had the same thing to do over again ?

You regret, like Thomas Carlyle, that you allowed yourself to be so absorbed in your work as to be unmindful of what was due to her who gave herself up to you. There may be an element of truth in such regrets, but is

there not also an overflowing affection and reverence in the bright, exacting light that makes you to be so hard upon yourself?

The morbid is never far off when you cherish feeling which ends in itself. Try to recall the things which make for life. The dead speak, and speak with eloquence and power denied to them when they were alive, by the testimony of their example and the wise and weighty words they uttered. Thus the dead can take their place yet upon the scene of this world among the forces for good which God owns and blesses; thus memory can be a means of grace, a sacrament every day on which you awake to life.

But make not too much of the tangible memorials of the past. Those old letters locked in secret drawers, which you prize above all your possessions and which bring into your soul the rich aroma of the distant and beautiful past, must not be too frequently perused. There is a fascination in them as they, in their fading lines, tell of the thrill, the vision, and romance of early love, which the prosaic toils and cares of subsequent years did not dispel, much less disown; but are they not opening the wound afresh, and are you not indulging a grief which

Providence is trying to heal? The strain upon your feeling is heavy enough without doing anything of your own initiative to intensify it.

Do not allow the poetry of your life to be like a ghost haunting and groping among the dead things of the past. Make your recollection of your golden age but the hint and suggestion of a transcendently greater experience, which is to be awaiting you and yours in the days that are to come. "He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as He is pure," which just means that our great business in life now as bereaved ones is to acquire fitness for meeting the Lord and those He has taken to be with Himself.

The only way in which it is possible for you to have a sustained and vivid interest in the life that remains for you here, as it is the only way in which you can keep yourself in fittest correspondence with the state and occupations of the spirits of the just, is by continued noble living—ever planting fresh memories which can be transplanted into the soil of the eternal world. "Son, remember," was said by Abraham, in the other world, to one who had made a poor use

of his opportunity in the gardening of the soul, and the memory by which he carried things from one world to another was a curse instead of a blessing.

Time should be as so much wax for the seal of eternity. What a fine signet mark was that of ancient Scottish art—the endless knot. It was carved on stone, engraven on silver and gold, inscribed on illuminated parchment—it was everywhere in the old Celtic Church as an emblem of that eternity under the shadow of which the founders and pioneers of the mother Church of Scotland ever lived. It is as we likewise put eternity into the things of time that the years we spend here can, through remembrance, bring honour to God and pleasure to ourselves: memory can thus be indeed a heaven within our own souls.

“For still we hope that in
A world of larger scope
What was faithfully begun will be
Completed—not undone.”

THE DISCIPLINE OF SORROW.

"The stones which God means to make resplendent
He often has His tools upon."

—*Leighton.*

—
"Misfortune is good for something."

—*French Proverb.*

—
"To repel one's cross is to make it heavier."

—
"Sculptor of souls !
Strike out Thine image sure,
Though joys fall shivered at each blow."

—*Vinet.*

—
"In the providence of God, every evil here is a lesser
evil to prevent a greater."

—
"Nothing is desperate in the condition of a good man."

—
"The path of sorrow and that path alone
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown."

—*Cowper.*

—
"When the shore is won at last,
Who will count the billows past?"

—*Keble.*

—
"One song in a storm is worth ten in sunlight."

IX.

THE DISCIPLINE OF SORROW.

THE bereaved one in looking for relief has too strong a sense of reality in his suffering to be put off with fine sentiments and ingenious phrases. He must have something to comfort which comes home to his heart as much as his sorrow does. "The sovereignty of law," "the procession of fate," "the inevitable course of nature" are high-sounding vocables and nothing more to the man whose heart is crushed. To repeat such empty platitudes in his hearing as an antidote for the ills he has to bear is indeed cold cheer—like holding out stones to a man who is hungry for bread. Bereavement is something real and acute, and what is objected to in your experience must be met by that which lies as close to life. We must be persuaded that there is a holy will at the root of nature and destiny.

The providence of God is a large question, and there may be many reasons for the one event which has brought such desolation to you that are utterly unknown to us, who are creatures of a day, and who see only in part. But revelation has so far unveiled the workings of God as to make it perfectly clear that, whatever were the other motives in the Divine mind, there is one word which covers your case as a sufferer, and that is discipline. "Made perfect through suffering"—that is the principle you are to grasp when you are placed in the furnace which never burns out the gold.

Nothing less than that will suffice. We are so constituted that we cannot accept an explanation of the trying experiences of life which does not point to progress, perfection in the making, a waxing, not a waning life. If we cannot believe in all that happens, that death is swallowed up of life, the doctrine of an orderly universe governed by a beneficent God cannot but be regarded as a delusion and mockery, which tempts us to blaspheme rather than to adore. As the stricken one lies in the field while the battle is raging around him, the only assurance which can bring effectual comfort comes

with the authoritative announcement that he is on the winning side and shall live to share the spoils of victory.

And, that we may be able not only to bear but also to derive the full benefit from what is hidden in every sorrow that comes to us, we must, of course, firmly believe there is a God, that He is omnipotent, and is essentially and eternally good. Those who cannot do so are to be pitied, as they are altogether without sheet-anchor when the storm comes. They are as driftwood upon the waves, and despair is nearer to them than death. "With God, go over the sea; without Him, do not cross the threshold."

But, you say, we do not believe, and we cannot coerce ourselves into such a state of mind. Take care lest your denial of God or His goodness is not due to a "superfluity of naughtiness," a wilful closing of the shutters of your soul against the admission of the light which is streaming from above. Has God not done much to convince you of His existence and of His desire to do you good, notwithstanding this sore bereavement of which you complain? Is there to be a congestion of thought upon the one painful experience and an entire obliviousness of the

many blessed things which have come into your life? Are you going to deny that there is a sun in the heavens because a cloud is passing across your sky?

The cross is indeed the most foolish thing in the whole range of human history if it does not mean that God loves you, and that He would do anything for you short of compromising His own character. Beware lest you allow your own petulant, morbid feeling to come between you and God, as an obscuring, obstructing medium, which brings something worse than the death you bewail. That was a terrible sentence which Young, the austere poet, penned—"When pain does not bless, Heaven quits us in despair." Distrust your own wayward imaginations, for "he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." Be assured it is not venturing beyond facts to affirm that the intelligence, the virtue, the best experience of mankind have come to the conclusion that there is a God, that He is good and ever doeth good. Are you not more likely to be right than wrong in joining their company?

Your faith rooted in the revealed character of God, with whom you have to do, the rest of your way may not be easy and lightsome,

but it is sure to be clear, and the goal is seen, more or less distinctly, in the distance. It is, of course, of the very nature of discipline that it should be a will other than your own that has the entire mastery over you, and which in its action is generally contrary to your expectation and desire. "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous." What child that is being weaned likes the process? What young person could ever look upon chastisement as an advantage, or nauseous medicine as needed provision for the feast of life? The ploughshare tearing up the soil, the pruning-knife mercilessly dismembering the vines, can never be taken as emblems of things in which we delight. If the lump of clay on the potter's wheel could only feel as we sometimes do, it would probably think that it was being wantonly torn to pieces when it was only being shaped, by the unerring skill of the artificer, into most graceful forms. Look at the advancing tide, how it embraces and presses itself upon the whole shore, till not a pebble escapes its living touch. Such is the goodness of God flowing upon you, even when things in your experience appear to be at their very worst. You think He is present only in the gentle

rippings which breathe peace and fill the ear with their music. The good God is with you for good quite as much in the big crested billows which come rolling in with such a threatening aspect, and the heavier their fall as they smite the shore the more are the pebbles rounded and smoothed. It is by friction the finest gems are polished; it is through much tribulation we enter the kingdom.

God being God, you cannot be in His hands without being impressed with the truthfulness of the apostolic injunction—"Ye have need of patience." You cannot see the end now, and how can you judge rightly of the means? You have not studied the architect's plan, and how can you know what is the design of the house when the walls are only half reared and the stones are being hewn to fit into their places. You have not been inside the sculptor's brain, and it is impossible for you to tell, as you hear the chisel at work and see chip following after chip, whether it is a fiend or an angel of mercy that is to be brought out of the block of marble. As you look upon the loom of time and see the incoming threads of various hue, the dark as well as the bright, how can

you know the relation of the various parts and the pattern of the whole as it is to be? It is only the weaver who foresees what the finished web is to be.

But do not be too hard upon yourself because of the occasional doubts and fears which enter your mind. Who is without such temptations? Remember that the faith of the holiest is only "a struggling and fluctuating effort in man to win for himself a valid hold upon things that exist under the conditions of eternity." We all have our moods of depression, when the higher vision of life recedes and becomes dim, and then the idea of a personal consideration for us running through the affairs of time seems to be preposterous. All appears to be swallowed up in the dreadful vortex of nature. There is no play of fatherly pity, only hard, rigid, mechanical process, the system of things being a huge mill which grinds out the same results to all. In such moments, when hell is not far off, instead of the hand of a tender-hearted God being upon us we feel as if we were in the iron grip of rigid necessity, under the crunching tread of relentless law. Even such a man as George Fox, the father of the Quakers, confesses in his

journal that he once had such a woeful experience: "One morning a great cloud came over me and a temptation beset me, and it was said 'all things come by nature,' and the elements and the stars came over me, so that I was in a manner quite clouded with it." But he goes on to tell us how he was released from the paw of this monster doubt: "And as I sat still under it and let it alone, a living hope arose in me, and a true voice, which said, 'There is a living God, who made all things,' and immediately the cloud and temptation vanished away, and life rose over it all, and my heart was glad and I praised the Lord."

So it is: life is determined in us all as it was in Fox, not by wayward mood, but by what is, upon the whole, prevailing belief. Day is day and not night, though the children of the day are sometimes shadowed by black clouds passing over their heads. Is it not the case, too, that the greatest sufferers are usually the strongest believers, showing that doubt and misgiving often belong more to our surface thinking than to what is deepest in our experience?

While Providence is mysterious in its working and utterly beyond our com-

prehension, eluding in many of its parts the scrutiny and analysis of the keenest intellect, we have seen that there is one general principle which it is not presumptuous in us to single out as running through all its working, viz., that in all the sorrow we have to endure, if we endure it patiently, character is being matured, personality enhanced, life established upon a firmer and surer basis. You see that your son who is sensitive and anxious is greatly distressed at the prospect of a coming examination at college upon which much depends. You would gladly save him from the severe ordeal to be followed by torturing suspense, but you dare not efface his personality. In that way must his manhood be made. He must fight his battle though it cost him much, else he would be "spoilt." God does not spoil any of His children. He makes them "perfect through suffering." "The nail that holds the wood must pierce it first."

But how does the growing perfection chiefly show itself? By our increasing godliness. The infliction of sorrow is simply God calling us to Himself, claiming us as His own, that whatever sacrifice may have to be made by the way, we may return to Him.

The governing mind which disposes of us is far-seeing, with a larger outlook and a finer discrimination than is possible to us. He often determines that our present happiness must give way for the sake of our future blessedness—and that mainly to be found in Himself.

“If loving hearts were never lonely,
 If all things wished might ever be,
 Accepting what they looked for only—
 They might be glad, *but not in Thee.*”

We need as much the cross we bear
 As air we breathe, as light we see :
 It draws us to Thy side in prayer,
 It binds us to our *strength in Thee.*

We, in our shallowness, are apt to think that the comfortable, prosperous life is full-orbed and perfect, and the one that is frustrated and shadowed is ruined. Looked at from the teaching and experience of our Lord, is it so? Did He not, for “the joy that was set before Him, endure the cross and despise the shame,” and is it not the case that the darkest part of our life shall come out the brightest, just as the darkest part of our Saviour’s life is that which is most full of revelation and praise?

God, the giver, is sometimes hidden by His

gifts. He should be all the more to us on account of the many good things with which He loads us as His children. But as a matter of fact, we in our weakness often become so engrossed with what is about us that the things which were intended to be so many windows by which we should look into the Eternal are little more than non-conducting and obscuring mediums, and, indeed, separating walls.

But what vigilance there is in love and in God's love. He keeps His hold of us though our hold of Him is slackened, and by His tightening grasp, *which is all that sorrow is*, He prepares us gradually for the supreme act of faith when, at the awful crisis of death, each of us has to commit his spirit to Him who gave it. By one bereavement after another God would accustom and attune our souls to the solemn fact that, when each of us at last comes to what is fundamental and essential in life, there are only two persons in the universe—"myself and God." "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

But what elevation and grandeur come into our life when sorrow opens the gate and ushers us into the large place God ever meant us to occupy—the place of His

presence. What wonders and glories come into view when light has vanished from the earth. "The night brings out the stars of heaven, and perfume from the flowers of earth." Who, in the glare of noonday, could have believed that the skies had such a revelation in store when the sun sinks? The splendour above you was all there before, but you could not see it because of the eclipsing splendour of the earth. How true it is that "the only healthy optimism is a conquered pessimism."

Are you not then prepared, in view of all that, to say from the heart, "He shall choose our inheritance for us?"

"I must come as Lord and Master of thy
Eden if I come.

My pruning knife is keen, My hand is firm ;
Say, shall I linger at the wicket gate
Or enter at thy prayer?

Come in, Lord, come :
Thy pruning knife is keen, Thy hand is firm ;
But, Lord, Thy hand is tremulous with love,
And Thou hast known the bitterness of tears."

Much as you appreciate nature you shudder at the thought of being left alone with it. What a blessed thought that in your sorest suffering you are not battling alone with the

forces which are about you. You have always the One who was crucified for you nearer to you than your suffering. I have stood upon an exposed, bleak, sandy plain, when the east wind blew upon me with its unbroken, unsoftened bitterness. Such is the man with adversity beating upon him without the conscious sympathy of Christ. On the same day I have stood upon the westward side of a sheltering wood that was fragrant with sweet flowers and fresh green leaves. The same blighting east wind was searching me out, but when it found me, how different its effect! It came not alone in its natural harshness. So the Kingdom of Heaven and the Lord Jesus Christ, with all His precious words of promise, are always on the windward side of you if only you believe. As some one has put it, there is such a difference when, exchanging a D for an H, you turn disappointment into His appointment.

And how gloriously free, independent, triumphant you are when, in the direst trouble, you give yourself up to God because you believe in Him. The identification of your will with His, through the confidence you have in His character and purpose, works

such moral miracles! You are no longer a mere creature subject to its vicissitudes. You and God are one in spirit, and you have the full personal benefit of His attributes and perfections. When the heart is broken and the eyes streaming with tears, if you can say, even with a faltering tongue: "It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good," you may well have peace, though happiness is wanting: for you are backed by the stability of Eternity, and you stand upon the immovable Rock of Ages. Then you can say:

"I know the hand that is guiding me
Through the shadow to the light,
And I know that all betiding me
Is meted out aright.

I know that the thorny path I tread
Is ruled by a golden line,
And I know that the darker life's tangled thread
The richer, the deeper design."

In the strength of such a belief you can follow the gracious counsel of George MacDonald:

"Should thy morn with clouds be grey,
Still the sun's behind it;
Be the lark's thine upward way,
Soaring till thou find it."

Sorrow is one of God's most "able-bodied

labourers," not only in putting us right with Him, but also in making us, through a chastened spirit, of more consequence to our fellows. Right with God, we are right, as we never were before, with those who are about us. "It is through suffering we get into our truest inheritance," says one who could speak from experience, "nor do I think," he adds, "that the night in any case is longer than is necessary to us." When taken as from God, does not affliction bring with it a certain depth and tenderness of feeling, an aroma as of mown grass? Is it not a matter of common observation that the life which is evenly prosperous has in it a note of shallowness, if not hardness. We are so content to sun ourselves in the world of external relations and interests, while what is deeper down is allowed to fall asleep. "The end of ethics is not comfort but character," and God's consummation for us, in all His dealings, is wakeful life through all and over all.

God would have all His children, in their innermost thought and feeling, not to be discordant elements, but right fitting parts of the glorious unity, of which He is the controlling centre. When, therefore, in the

deepest trials we feel that God is only making room for Himself and opening up wider avenues for the abundant entrance of His love, we learn what a sublime thing is faith, and how it tends to make the things of God and the things of man all one. He by His over-ruling providence and you by your self-renunciation belong to the same great moral order of the universe, and you share with Him in its blessedness and glory. When you have reached that altitude of faith, you are in a position to discern that the still loftier peak is not inaccessible upon which the foot of the Hebrew prophet stood as he exultingly exclaimed :—“ Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be on the vines : the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat : the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls : yet I will rejoice in the Lord ; I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

THE OTHER WORLD.

**“I will wait Heaven’s perfect hour
Through the immeasurable years.”**

**“From first to last the Bible is one unbroken, persistent
call to hope.”**

—Dean Church.

**“The world is enlarged for us not by new objects but
by finding more affinities and potencies in those we have.”**

—Emerson.

**“Heaven is at present out of sight, but in due time, as
snow melts and discovers what it lies upon, so will the
visible creation fade away before those greater splendours
which are behind it, and on which at present it depends.”**

—Newman.

**“I hear it singing, singing sweetly,
Softly in an undertone ;
Singing as if God had taught it,
It is better further on.**

**Night and day unceasing sings it,
Sings it when I sit alone ;
Sings it so my heart can hear it,
It is better further on.**

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**Further on? But how much further—
Count the milestones one by one?
No : no counting, only trusting,
It is better further on.”**

—Dr Parker.

X.

THE OTHER WORLD.

It is pathetic to read in his biography that when Tennyson was an old man he occasionally visited the cottages not far from his home and conversed with other old men that he might glean some hints and suggestions about death and the other world from simple minds which had been kept close to nature and to God. We are not told that they shed much light upon the hereafter that is shrouded in mystery, but the contemplation of which never ceased to fascinate the late laureate, who was as much to be noted for his simplicity of character and brooding thought upon the problems of life as for the exquisite finish and melody of his poetry.

“In vain our fancy strives to paint” things to come. As Henry Vaughan sings :

“He that hath found some fledged bird’s nest may know
At first sight if the bird be flown ;
But what fair well or grove he sings in now
That is to him unknown.”

I once asked a countryman who knew his Bible well what he thought of the home above. He turned round, as we were seated in his gig, looked half-chidingly in my face, and, after a pause, with a brightened expression, he slowly repeated the words: "Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence there is fulness of joy: at thy right hand there are pleasures for ever more." Can we with our guessing and pondering get much further than that? The presence of the king makes the court. "Heaven is, dear Lord, where'er Thou art." It is "to be with Christ": and the Revised Version makes it emphatic, "which is very far better."

What are all our imaginings worth if there is no basis of knowledge to work upon? What importance could be attached to the dreams of a chrysalis as to what it would be when evolved into a butterfly? Can the child tell what the man is to be? Spring time has its own freshness of interest, but it cannot unfold to us the glories of autumn. If one were born in a lightship anchored far out in the ocean, from which no land was visible, his idea of existence would be limited to what had come within his scope—a wide stretch of water, and ships passing and re-

passing on it, and the winds, and tides, and storms which played upon his floating home. What could he know of green fields, the rich foliage of trees, and fragrant flowers? They belonged to a world outside the one in which he had lived.

But it is noticeable that the men who write most graphically about the future state are those who give proof that they know very little of it. What a wise reticence the writers of the Bible show. The literatures of the other religions of the world have much to say of heaven, but in what they do say there is nothing more than a transference of the ideals, and hopes, and scenes of the earth—a kaleidoscopic projection of things as they are here into the future. A new heaven and a new earth are not portrayed. All that they give us is simply the old things of the earth trumped up again, touched with a little picturesque novelty in the setting. There they are—“the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life,” shooting up their heads again, and palming themselves off as another world.

In Scripture nothing is done to whet our curiosity for the novel, though much is said to encourage us to expect what is really new

as we look into the future. You remember the words of our Lord at the first celebration of the Eucharist—"I will not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine until that day that I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." May that not be taken as a figure of the general newness which is to pervade the other world? Originality is to be expected in our heirship, only, instead of condescending to give us circumstantial details, which would detain our minds upon the surface of things, Scripture contents itself by affirming that all that is to come is wrapt up in the hidden power of an endless life. There are developments awaiting us which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the mind conceived, and, just because they are so far above our present powers of apprehension, they are not described.

No prophets had gifts of imagination more lofty and daring than Jehovah's, but what restraint they put upon themselves as compared with the representatives of other religions in speaking of the future state! Indeed, as has been strikingly pointed out by the well-known Hebrew professor, the late Dr. A. B. Davidson, the question of the future state was not much in the mind of

God's ancient people. "It was overlooked and overshadowed by the full and satisfying consciousness they had of the presence of the Eternal God." It was not possible for them to think of life ever ebbing from them, when it was flowing into them continually through communion with the immutable Jehovah.

Much more is said of the other world after the advent of Him who brought life and immortality to light. It was constantly in the minds and on the lips of the Apostles as Jesus was there, although all that they say of it is clear and definite only as to the fact of its existence and the holiness and blessedness by which it is distinguished.

Much is said in the New Testament about the "glory" that is to be revealed,

"Beyond the verge of that blue sky,
Where God's sublimest secrets lie."

What a weight, a world of meaning and suggestiveness, that little word "glory" has to bear in the New Testament, where it is used so often as descriptive of what awaits us in the other world. It is a very comprehensive term. What holiness is to the character of the saint, "glory" is to his future condition and environment. It is convenient

because of its vagueness, as it covers our ignorance, and yet is suggestive of a super-excellency which we are to expect—"the glory that shall be revealed."

Bernard of Cluny felt the helplessness which is common to us all as we attempt to grasp what lies behind the word "glory":

" I know not, oh, I know not
What joys await us there,
What radiancy of glory,
What bliss beyond compare!"

We are better able to rise to the "glory" that is above us when we turn the eye to the glory that is about us. What a wonderland is creation! All fabled magnificence is outshone, and every tale of enchanted land is tawdry and childish compared with the glorious realities in the world God made to be our present dwelling-place. We stand amazed and awe-stricken at the glories terrestrial and celestial.

And Scripture encourages us to believe that the beauty and splendour of earth's forms have a use other than that which is immediate and transient—to prefigure the coming glory that excelleth. The loveliest of God's creations, which fascinate the eye and stir the imagination, are so many ideas

expressed in terms suited to our present sphere, but which will receive a higher and finer setting forth in the "other room."

"What if earth

Be but the shadow of heaven and things therein;
Each to other like, more than on earth is thought!"

The bloom of the flower, the lustre of the star, the glow and shifting hues of the gorgeous sunset, the guileless eyes and joyous smile of the child, the magic and romance of love—are they not the foreshadowings, faint and imperfect, of the "glory" of the eternal world?

What the old Mosaic economy, with its rude types and fleeting shadows, was to the higher revelation of God in Christ, earth is to the heaven that is to be. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be," and so, instead of precise description, we have to content ourselves with the vague suggestiveness, as of something transcendently grand looming in the distance, of the "glory" that shall be revealed. It is now unutterable. So, well might it be said:

"When in our Father's land
We meet our own once more,
Then shall we scarcely understand
Why we have wept before."

It would make an end of some traditional and sentimental views if we realised sufficiently that the essential constituents of heaven, like the supreme excellency of God, are moral, and that they, through gracious communications from above, have already in large measure come into our world. Thousands of years ago, the God who makes heaven glorious was shown to Moses at his request: "I beseech thee, show me thy glory." The answer was, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee." More than a thousand years afterwards, One came who said He was from the bosom of the Father and who presented the glory that was from above in brief compass by declaring: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," and men saw that He was "meek and lowly, holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners," and yet that He "receiveth sinners."

With unvarying emphasis He who came from above maintained that the Kingdom of God was not to have its advent postponed till another world had been reached, but that it was His mission to announce that it had come in Him, and that the essence of it was the life of God in the soul of man. Many of His contemporaries said, "Lo here,

and Lo there," looking for a spectacular procession of events, a particular order and imposing display of circumstances, an outward and local glorification. But the Lord ever said heaven does not lie in such things.

He made it the staple of His preaching to place the sovereign good of man in the higher life, in the character moulded after the image of God, in the love which is the pearl and crown of the highest excellency that can adorn the nature of man. He went everywhere offering this eternal life to all who would have it—that was indeed "the gift of God." It was called eternal as it was independent of time and place: it was eternal because of its nature and quality—the life God and the angels lived—a timeless and therefore a deathless life.

Our Lord was not at pains to speak much of the other world, with which He was so familiar, because He recognised the fact that there was a far greater difference between godliness and ungodliness than between heaven and earth. Ever practical and wise as well as earnest, this transcendent One brought the force of His thought and persuasiveness to bear upon the point where it was most needed—the surrender of man to God,

that God coming into him, he might become a new creature for a new world.

The Italians have a proverb that "All the world is one country." The whole tenor of the teaching of the New Testament is to make one country of the moral universe—where there is one Father above all, one spirit pervading all, one communion open to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ. He who can call upon "Our Father which art in heaven," and can from the heart pray the rest of the prayer that follows, is of the household of faith and family of heaven, and is the fellow of saints and angels wherever they may be. If that be so, then there is more of heaven in the life and character of Jesus Christ than we shall ever see in another world, apart from that of which He is the embodiment. There is more of heaven in the Sermon on the Mount and on Calvary's cross than in the most ecstatic dreams of saints and poets. John, who drunk in so much of the spirit of his Master and who is never tired telling us that God is love, gives us, I believe, more of heaven in his Gospel than he does in his Apocalypse.

Let me give a parable from history. The men—the Puritan fathers—who stepped from

the Mayflower upon the American shore brought the most of the materials with them by which they were enabled to lay the foundations of a new world—the strong, sacred, moral convictions deeply lodged in their hearts, the unfading visions they had of God and truth and duty, the invincible resolution which put iron into their blood to make themselves of account for the glory of the King of Kings. Wherever they were these were the basis of New England's character and power. The primeval forests, the vast plains, the immense rivers, the majestic Atlantic, whose big, battling billows pounded the shores of their land of refuge—these were all of use for the commonwealth that was to be, but only as giving standing room for the men who made it. So the genius of that place we call heaven will lie in the spirit which pervades its inhabitants, and all who reach it will find it is only the goal to which earth, by its Christ and faith and love and fellowship, was the way. It will be a further development, a higher stage, an ampler sphere, a more peaceful home—no more and no less. "Our conversation"—citizenship—Paul tells, "is" now "in heaven."

Still, the present life of the believer is in-

complete, and is as suggestive of something better as is dawn, spring, childhood. Perhaps heaven would be more alluring as a prospect if writers and speakers upon it did not "improve" away some of the things which give interest to life here, and the absence of which would be inconsistent with the possession of perfect happiness. Perpetual church attendance seems to be the ideal of some as they think of heaven. Does Isaac Taylor use language that is too strong when he says, "It is surely a frivolous notion that the vast and intricate machinery of the universe and the profound scheme of God's government are now to reach a resting place, where nothing more shall remain to active spirits, through all eternity, but recollections of labour and anthems of praise?" There will doubtless be useful activity for us all, according to our bent and aptitude. Oh, what matter for profound thankfulness that life shall no more be sacrificed for the sake of the means of living! God will have many servants but no weary drudges in heaven. Men will no longer be mere "hands." Existence to many here is little more than "the burial place of their faculties." What a resurrection of mind there will be in heaven!

An American patriot hoped that the time was coming when the anvil would be the accident of the blacksmith and no more the blacksmith the accident of the anvil. The time is coming when men will be men, and all that is in them be brought out and into the service of God.

What *unity* there will be in heaven! Here we are a mixed multitude, and fellowship is only possible to a limited extent. We have union upon the earth, mutual toleration for secular and civil purposes. In heaven there will be oneness—"of one accord in one place." What a pleasure to come up to persons with whom we have much in common. We are drawn out by such companionship, and are surprised at what is in ourselves, which we never could have discovered but for the exhilarating effect of their presence. Heaven will yield all that and far more.

When the month of June arrives in the North, after the long buffeting winter and uncordial spring have run their course and we at last stand face to face with the glory and splendour, the grace and tenderness of summer, and our spirits come under the spell of its genial and life-giving influences,

do we not feel as if we had entered a new world? In the presence of the "annual miracle," with its marvellous and cheering changes, we are assured the story of creation is not poetic fancy, nor is the promise of a future heaven too good to be true. God—the infinite and good God—what can He not do, what will He not do for His children? When He does so much for us here, what may we not expect when we come to His house, the place of His presence and glory?

"Thou bounteous Giver of all good,
If thus Thy meaner works are fair:
If thus Thy glories gild the span
Of ruined earth, and sinful man,
How beauteous must the regions be
Where Thy redeemed dwell with Thee."

"Though we may miss the pearl and the gold,
And heaven be other than we deem,
Doubt not the future will unfold
To something better than we deem."

THE SPIRITUAL BODY.

“It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.”
—1 Cor. xv. 44.

“The Lord let the house of a brute to the soul of a man,
And the man said, ‘Am I your debtor’?
And the Lord said, ‘Not yet; but make it as clean as
you can
And then I will let you a better.’”
—Tennyson.

“The final preparation for the inheriting of eternal life must consist in the abandonment of the non-eternal elements. These must be unloosed and dissociated from the higher elements, and this is effected by a closing catastrophe—death.”
—Drummond.

“What the Christian Scriptures specifically affirm is the simple physiological fact of two species of corporeity destined for man: the first, that of our present animal and dissoluble organisation; the second, a future spiritual structure, imperishable, and endowed with higher powers and many desirable prerogatives.”

“Is there not a latent or a half-latent instinct in the mind which speaks of a future liberty of ranging at will through space?”
—Isaac Taylor.

“Every spirit, as it is more pure
And hath in it the more of heavenly light,
So it a fairer body doth procure
To habit in,
For of the soul the body form doth take,
For soul is form and doth the body make.”
—Spenser.

XI.

THE SPIRITUAL BODY.

IF it were possible for the human intellect by the exercise of its own inquisitive and reflective powers to penetrate the darkness which envelopes our dead, John Foster, the famous essayist, would have been the man to do it. His bold, vivid, metaphysical imagination gave him standing room where most men could scarcely get a footing, and his ardent, peering spirit chafed all the more under the restraints which baffled enquiry. But the thought which he could not help expending upon this subject, with an almost painful persistency up to the end of his life, has yielded one striking though quaint and homely simile worthy of being remembered. In comparing the body we lay down at death with the spiritual body which is to be taken up, he says it will be like putting down a worn, tattered bank note and getting back a bright, sparkling sovereign.

We are all permitted to have our speculations and guesses on this matter which lies so close and is yet so strange to us, provided they are reverent and in harmony with the principles and foreshadowings of God's order of things as known to us. We are not to join the company of prophets who "prophecy out of their own hearts." In thinking of what a human being is immediately after death, we are, apart from revelation, like men with their eyes open in the dark.

Moreover, as the Bible is not to be regarded as an encyclopedia of information concerning the universe, but only a practical directory to us while we are in this world, it is not to be expected that much should be said about a phase of ordained developments in the future with which our life and practice for the present have nothing to do.

That there is to be such a "spiritual body" is the one thing of which we are sure. It is impossible for us to think of disembodied spirits, and we are not called upon to do so. We are assured that there is to be something enclosing our personality which is to define and localise our presence and preserve our identity. Some are of opinion that the spiritual body is in us now, a part of our

present nature which is liberated at death, that transition being the real resurrection. "Life never dies: matter dies off and it lives elsewhere."

This we do know, that when the inhabitants of the other world are represented as visiting this one, they always appear in a bodily form. Angels we know nothing of as "pure spirits": when they come amongst us it is in a fashion not unlike our own, only those heavenly visitants have a radiance, a glorified aspect which distinguished them from mortal men. The angels seen at the grave of our Lord are described as "two men in shining garments." Mark tells us "a young man was seen sitting at the right side clothed in a long white garment." Immortal youth is evidently an attribute of the angelic nature. When our Lord ascended to heaven "two men in white apparel" stood by the apostles.

Any glimpses we obtain of the saints in glory are to the same effect. Moses and Elias on the Mount of Transfiguration "appeared in glory" to the disciples. John tells us in the vision he had of the blessed in another world: "I beheld a great multitude which no man could number, clothed with white

robes, and palms in their hands." Our Lord Himself, in His transfiguration, "when his face did shine as the sun and his raiment was white as the light," evidently had an experience by anticipation of the glory that was to be His when His decease was accomplished at Jerusalem.

All the allusions to the future vesture of the spirit point to something which will be sufficient to continue the recognisable presence and yet be greatly different from the present body. Paul contrasts them sharply: "There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body." "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

While it is possible to lay too much stress upon isolated texts and press and strain them to yield information which they were never intended to convey, I do not think we are likely to go far wrong if we take Paul, in his letter to the Philippians (iii. 21), as setting before us as distinct an idea as we can have, while in this world, of the spiritual body that is to be ours. He tells us that Christ is to "change our body of humiliation, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself."

Now, we know in some degree what His glorious body was, at least in its manifestations upon the earth. Let us not forget too that the apostles were told by the angels after the ascension that "this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, in like manner, as ye have seen him go into heaven." That promise comes up again and again in other forms in Scripture: "to them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Now, as all who "love his appearing" are to be "fashioned like unto his glorious body," we are provided with a clue as we carefully and reverently study all that is told us of our Lord's glorious body as it was shown between the period of the resurrection and the ascension.

The marvellous narrative of the forty days, so simple, self-consistent, and yet so mysterious, has not received the exhaustive elucidation it deserves, and perhaps that is not possible. Only a few sentences are given, but these tell us more of what we are to become in God's hands, after death, than is to be found elsewhere in the whole range of human thought and research.

Let us see what took place at our Lord's

resurrection as indirectly conveying to us a hint as to what our being "fashioned like unto his glorious body" really means. "Through the resurrection of Jesus the apostles had their former faith in His spiritual authority requickened, deepened, illuminated. In what other way could this have been done than by the manifestation of a risen Christ, who, though spiritual, still retained the outward form by which they could recognise His identity, and whose presence spoke of an unseen life, in the language of earth and time. The temporary union in Him of two diverse modes of being will not seem strange to us if we realise that only by this means could God assure us that the redemption of Christ was no less the rectification of the material than of the spiritual universe."

It would appear that the body with which our Lord rose from the dead was changed in the very act of rising into a structure which was manifestly exempt from the common conditions of corporeal existence. Unlike Lazarus, who only resumed the mortal life he had lost and came forth in his grave clothes, our Lord, when He rose, left the burial garments behind Him and *lying as*

they were when His body was in them. “He withdrew His body without disturbing the position of the clothes and the napkin, so demonstrating the marvellous qualities of the resurrection body.” The stone at the mouth of the sepulchre was no obstacle to the passage of this spirit-body. We are told afterwards that He passed into a room where His disciples were assembled—the door being shut. He again vanished out of their sight—literally became invisible. It was not that He arose and left the room in which they sat. In a moment there was all the fulness of recognition, and then they saw Him no more.

We must remember, however, in gauging what the spiritual body of the believer is to be from what we, in the Gospels, see of the risen Christ, that our Lord had to undergo a further transformation in entering into the spiritual home. The forty days mark a period of transition between two worlds, and, while they indicate, so far, what the glorified body is, they do not give us an exact idea of what either our Master or His people will be in heaven.

Enough is told to suggest much to the heart of the believer :

“ Oh, how near
We tread the confines of the spiritual world,
How thin the veil that hides it.”

“ There is no death : what seems so is transition.
This life of mortal breath
Is but a suburb of the life Elysian,
Whose portal we call death.”

An old military gentlemen, after recounting some of his exploits and describing the scenes which he had beheld, astonished a company of friends by saying, “ But I expect to see something far more wonderful.” “ When ? ” “ Where ? ” exclaimed his incredulous friends. “ The first five minutes after death ” was the reply. It is true : “ he who wonders not has no mind. The wise man only wonders once in his life, and that is always.” It seems to me that the undreamt-of things which science is unfolding in our own day are a prelude to the wonders which are to come, and those marvellous developments of the seen and temporal should make it easier for us to expect things which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, in the world to come. When we are bewildered at the thought of the coming glory, we must just fall back upon the simple truth :

“ I know not what the future hath
Of marvel or surprise,
Assured alone that life and death
His mercy underlies.”

With that homely, fond, half-humorous familiarity which the old type of Scottish people were able to combine with a profound reverence for sacred things, an old dying woman was asked how she was. "Very weel, sir," she replied; "jist a wee confused wi' the flittin'."

How thankful we should be that more of the marvel and splendour is not given to us here. It would be too much for creatures of flesh and blood. What we need is, not to be dazzled but enlightened. We walk by faith, not by sight.

" Our knowledge of that state is small,
The eye of faith is dim ;
But 'tis enough that He knows all,
And we shall be with Him."

All relating to our future is so strange to us, and there is a natural shrinking from the unfamiliar, which can only be overcome by a loving identification with Jesus Christ, our Elder Brother, who is now in that state to which we are looking forward. It is with mixed feelings we stand between two worlds. How finely Longfellow pictures the conflict of feeling :

" As a fond mother when the day is o'er
Leads by the hand her little child to bed,
Half willing half reluctant to be led,
And leaves his broken playthings on the floor,

Still gazing at them through the open door,
Not wholly reassured and comforted
By promises of others in their stead,
Which, though more splendid,
May not please him more :
So nature deals with us and takes away
Our playthings one by one, and by the hand
Leads us to rest so gently that we go
Scarce knowing if we wish to go or stay,
Being too full of sleep to understand
How far the unknown transcends what we know."

REUNION.

L

“I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.”
—2 *Samuel* xii. 23.

“To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”
—*Luke* xxiii. 43.

. . . “to depart and be with Christ, for it is *very* far better.”
—*Philippians* i. 23. *R.V.*

“We are spirits clad in veils :
Man by man was never seen.”

“In this world we recognise our friends by the face and form of the body. This slowly changes till at death it utterly disappears in the common dust. In the world to come we shall recognise each other by the soul. Even here there are indications of it. That word, that act, was like himself.”
—*John Ker*.

“It's the company, not the charge, which makes the feast.”

“Noo, haud ye leal and true, John,
Your day it's weel near through, John,
And I'll welcome you
To the land o' the leal.

Noo, fare-ye-weel, my ain John,
This world's cares are vain, John,
We'll meet and we'll be fain
In the land o' the leal.”

—*Lady Nairne*.

XII.

REUNION.

I ONCE had a conversation upon life in the other world with a pious lady who belonged to that school of religious thought which has a tendency to regard the due exaltation of the Divine in the heart as involving an absorption of mind which is apt to have a deadening effect upon our interest in the creature. She maintained that in heaven we would be so much under the spell of supernal splendour as to be comparatively oblivious of the attractions of the old earth's memories. The ties and associations of a dispensation which had passed away would be lost in the presence of the glory that excelleth, just as the stars of the sky are outshone by the rising sun. F. R. Havergal truly sings :

“ Death is a hushed and glorious tryst
With Thee, my King, my Saviour Christ.”

That meant, according to the belief of my friend, that when we meet Him we shall, in the most complete sense of the words, forget the things which are behind and begin life anew under the resplendent conditions of heaven.

I cannot accept that view, nor does it spring, in my opinion, from a discriminating understanding of what we owe to our Lord and Master. Does Scripture teach us that supreme devotion to the higher means the utter blotting out of the lesser? I must confess to a stubborn impatience with that kind of spirituality which pits itself against the human, as if spirit and body, eternity and time, heaven and earth had not this much in common at least, that they all proceeded from the same blessed God and, up to their measure, alike reflected His glory. To my mind, it is inconceivable that heaven can bring such a change as will practically destroy our identity and treat as of no importance those instincts and yearnings which our Creator Himself implanted in our bosoms.

Moreover, neither Scripture nor experience gives us any authority for saying that devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ implied a

weakened regard for those about us, to whom we were bound by esteem and love, and if they did not do so here, why should they do so hereafter? Yea, Christ exacts our love for the brother whom we do see as proof of the love for Him we do not see. It is God's own ordinance that His glory should be exhibited in the loving relation which His creatures have with one another. That gospel which was announced with the song, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good will toward men," gives its holy sanction, and intimates that our Maker finds His satisfaction and pleasure, in love for Him which shows itself in love for those who, by His own providential appointments, enter into our life.

It is quite true—our Lord has made it known—that earth's relationships are not to be perpetuated in the other world. Marriage, as it is here, will not be in heaven, "for in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels in heaven." But there is not a word in that declaration against the idea of companionship founded upon spiritual affinity being continued in the other world. All that Christ says is, that life in heaven will not be

a return to life as it is here: "First that which is natural, afterward that which is spiritual." We find it to be an all-pervading principle in the order of things that much which is good for a season is lost in higher developments. Family life as it is upon the earth will not be reproduced in heaven; the redeemed will meet each other, but they shall be "as the angels."

Does Dr. James Morison, in his commentary upon the Gospel of Matthew, not write upon the passage in a way which commends itself to our sense of fitness: "Love, indeed, will continue in the glorified state, but it will be sublimed. Some of the modes in which it manifests itself on the earth will be changed, but in being changed they will only be transfigured into higher modes. Nothing of the sweetness of love will be eliminated or diminished. There will be the most endearing intimacies: heart will be interlinked with heart, affections will intertwine and interblend, love will never lie smitten, bleeding, or despised." Consequently, as true love is as deathless as ourselves, all whom we loved here have only

"Gone before
To that unknown and silent shore:
Shall we not meet as heretofore
Some summer morning?"

Surely he must have been a foolish person who first raised the question : Shall there be recognition of friends in heaven ? As well ask : Is there to be sanity in heaven ? Or, as the old minister put it when questioned on the point : Do you think we shall be more stupid there than we are here ? We are to be our very selves in heaven, and unless we were beside ourselves, how should we fail to know those who had become of the moral essence of that self ? Who does not like to have the sentence ringing in his ear : “ Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named ? ” If your loved ones are members of that family, would it not be a strange thing if you were kept apart from them who, with the exception of the Lord Himself, are more to you than all others ?

The great thinkers and seers of the world, those gifted sons of genius who see visions and dream dreams and are eyes to the rest of mankind, are most emphatic in setting forth the permanency of love or spiritual affinity. Among the most pronounced is Mrs. B. Browning :

“ But love strikes one hour—LOVE ! those *never* loved
Who dream that they loved ONCE.”

Robert Browning thus writes of reunion :

“First a peace out of pain,
Then a light, then thy breast ;
O thou soul of my soul,
I shall clasp thee again
And with God be the rest.”

The following utterance came from the late Dean Stanley, after the death of his beloved wife :—

“Till death us part : Till death us join !
Till death us join !
O voice yet more divine,
That to the broken heart breathes life sublime,
Thro' lonely hours,
And shattered powers,
We still are one, despite of change and time.”

Whittier, the Quaker poet, thus encourages us :

“Yet love will dream and faith will trust
(Since He who knows our need is just),
That somehow, somewhere, meet we must.
Alas ! for him who never sees
The stars shine through his cypress trees ;
Who hath not learned in hours of faith,
The truth to flesh and sense unknown,
That life is ever lord of death,
And love can never lose its own.”

Do not the following lines state the case exactly for the bereaved Christian believer ?—

“Death hides, but it cannot divide ;
 Thou art but on Christ’s other side :
 Thou with Him and He with me,
 And so together still are we.”

It is true that we are creatures “whose spirits live in awful singleness, each in his self-formed sphere of light or gloom.” But it is quite as true that love so enriches the content and enlarges the domain of personality as practically to become a part of it—no less than another room of the same house. Who, therefore, who has come under the power of love, does not say amen to Emerson’s lines?—

“What is excellent,
 As God lives, is permanent ;
 Hearts are dust, heart’s love remains,
 Heart’s love will meet thee again.”

After forty years of wedded life, J. C. Hall could write :

“I look into thy mind and in thy face,
 And only see the angel coming nearer
 To make thee still more beautiful and dearer,
 When from the thrall and soil of earth made free
 Thy prayer is heard for me and mine for thee.”

John G. Lockhart (Sir Walter Scott’s son-in-law) gives with tender but somewhat overstrained feeling his testimony :

“But ’tis an old belief
 That, on some solemn shore
 Beyond the sphere of grief,
 Dear friends shall meet once more ;

“Beyond the sphere of time,
And sin and fate’s control,
Serene in endless prime
Of body and of soul.
That creed I fain would keep,
That hope I’ll not forgo :
Eternal be the sleep
Unless to waken so.”

All who are familiar with the life and writings of Charles Kingsley are aware how impassioned was the language he used in avowing his belief in the eternity of the deepest love. Coleridge wrote of a friend : “Were it but for the remembrance of him alone, the disbelief of a future state would sadden the earth around me and blight the very grass in the field.”

If that be true of friendship, how much more so must it be of that close and sacred intimacy which is used as a figure of the mystical union between the soul and its Lord. When the formal and outward oneness which comes with the marriage relationship deepens into a real moral unity, the one participating in the life of the other and becoming a part of it, it is difficult to see how separation can be possible in a perfect state.

Is there not something, too, in the view

which Stier expresses, that "the difference which pervades the sexes clings to their spiritual nature," and that from the very constitution of male and female there is incompleteness in the one without the other, it being so ordained that the one finds its highest use in ministering to the other.

All that is quite compatible with the position which F. W. Robertson, of Brighton, takes, when he says that "he saw no cause, either in Scripture or reason, for believing that there was likely to be in operation in the future state any universal law of recognition. Spiritual and intellectual affinities would alone determine the relationships of that state." "I shall know and converse," he said, "with men whom I have never seen, but for whom my spirit has profoundest reverence."

It would certainly reduce heaven to the low, commonplace level of the earth, to suppose that our casual acquaintanceships and mere legal relationships here are as such to be taken up again when time has ceased to be. Kinsfolk according to the flesh may not be ours by the "spirit-link," and cannot therefore be ours in heaven. All that is held together by a legal or social tie may

be expected to pass away with this economy. The principle we have to go upon is, that the "love awakened by moral qualities cannot die, for it pertains to the spirit that is part of the eternal."

Swedenborg, in his daring speculations, some of them grotesque enough, gives us some glimpses of truth. He says that in heaven, to intensely desire the presence of another is to have it. That means each one gets his own, what he is able to take :

"Tis the law of bush and stone,
Each one only takes its own."

Life is a grand opportunity for assimilation. In the higher domains of experience it is literally true: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." We get what, by capacity to receive, belongs to us, what comes home to the vital and appropriating centre of our character and being.

What a power we have in being able to go out to the best that is in God's wide universe, and by our choice and desire making it our own. All truth, all wisdom, all beauty, all goodness of soul are waiting for the appreciative and receptive spirit. There is no obstruction, no restraint except in your-

self: everything gives way and opens up to him who truly loves. Love, affinity, fitness is the only passport that is required. It is our sympathies which limit us, not God's restrictions. If we have not the spirit of Christ we are none of His, but if we have that spirit, what is there He can withhold from us? "All things are yours." If your heart has bled with penitence at the cross and been made glad with the love which it reveals, heaven's treasury is open to you, and what you receive is only determined by what you can take.

What an enthralling and stimulating truth it is, that whatever strikes a truly responsive chord in our hearts is ours. We are the brothers, in thought and spirit the contemporaries, of the saints and heroes of whom we read in history whose deeds we admire and whose lives we seek to imitate. We cannot be kept away from the company of Christ and the prophets and apostles unless we are of another spirit. Christian fellowship, therefore, knows no distinction of race, time, place, or circumstance: we are all one in Him.

But God allows the play of natural as well as spiritual affinity. He remembers that we

are creatures with all their limitations, and need personal ties and local centres, and He provides accordingly. The highest friendship is the play of something in each of two persons that makes it morally impossible for them to remain apart. Generally the one comes in as the needed complement of the other. The ideal marriage is man and woman meeting each other and claiming and getting their own.

What a grand thing is human life in such a world as God has made for it! What capacity each of us has: how much to go out to, what possibility of enlargement! The extravagances of imagination in tales of enchantment that tell us of magician's wand, a single stroke of which could put into our possession all that the heart's caprice could wish—such wild inventions are outshone by the realities of God's great universe. Truth is indeed stranger than fiction.

If we will not open out to what is highest in life, then, to be sure, to be carnally minded is death, and the inscription which I saw on a tombstone near Melrose Abbey is only too true :

“ The earth goeth on the earth glistening like gold :
The earth goeth to the earth sooner than it wold :
The earth builds on the earth castles and towers :
The earth says to the earth, all shall be ours !”

But what a different tale is told on the gravestone of Richard Sibbes :

“Of this good man the witness may be said,
Heaven was in him before he was in heaven.”

This worthy did no more than what is possible to us all : he absorbed the essence of heaven and was in closest touch with its inhabitants while he was upon the earth. He claimed it as his own, and by and by it claimed him as one who, by right of character and spirit, could not be kept away from it. We cannot be separated from those who belong to our own spiritual clime and kin : they and we make part of a grand, indissoluble unity.

“It doth not yet appear” what we and those whom we love shall be when we meet. Does the following utterance give us a glimpse of what is to be? “We must not suppose that there is to be any change of the natural form of man in the Kingdom of Heaven, for as the appearance of Christ was not in itself changed, but only illumined (or glorified), so also the just, who will be conformed to His glorious body, will not be changed as to outward form. Their bodies will only receive a certain accession of

splendour and light, which St. Paul calls 'a change,' but the Evangelists 'a transfiguration.'"

REMAINING DAYS UPON THE EARTH.

M

“Grant unto Thy people that they may love the thing
which Thou commandest, and desire that which Thou
dost promise.”
—*Collect.*

It was said of Longfellow :

“Thou wast not robbed of wonder when youth fled ;
But still the bud had promise to thine eyes,
And beauty was not sundered from surprise.”

“The gay, young summer in whites and greens
Is never an end, but is only a means
To that higher end which the autumn brings.”
—*Robertson of Irvine.*

“May you, my dear madam, continue to strengthen
our hope of immortality by showing us how the spirit can
retain its beauty and life, even to the moment when it is
withdrawn from human intercourse.”
—*Channing.*

Lines that were hung over Mr. Gladstone's bed :

“Nor time, nor pain, nor grief can rend
That peace that God Himself doth send.”

Said by Wordsworth in his old age :

“I look abroad upon nature : I think of the best part of
our species : I lean upon my friends : I meditate upon the
Scriptures, especially the Gospel of St. John, and my
creed rises up of itself with the ease of an exhalation, yet
a fabric of adamant.”

“Duty has the virtue of making us feel the reality of a
positive world.”

—*Amiel.*

XIII.

REMAINING DAYS UPON THE EARTH.

“YE men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” The disciples were reminded that the centre of interest in its earthly aspect was now shifted and they must act accordingly. The gentle chiding given by the angels perhaps applies in spirit to you. The love which that withdrawn earthly presence evoked should not be pent up in your bosom or wasted in vain regrets, but diffused, that, by an added grace and tenderness brought into your life, you may perpetuate the influence of the departed one.

Do not lie down upon the spot made vacant by death as if the end of life had been reached. There is something before you yet demanding your attention, else you too would be taken from this scene. The

fact that you are still here means to you continued responsibility as a citizen of the earth, and you must take up its allotted tasks, for life has to be lived in winter as well as in summer, and, while much of the light and charm are gone, such as you are and have are to be freely disposed as God gives the call and opportunity. The disciples were expected to show that they had profited by the adorable presence which was now gone, by addressing themselves with the energy which the Holy Ghost had imparted to them, to the great work their Master had begun. Go thou and do likewise. Take up thy burden, sorrow-stricken one, and go forward in the strength of the Lord.

On coming out of a cheerful, well-lit room in the country on a dark winter night, you are at first bewildered and in danger of stumbling and losing your way. The sudden plunge into darkness has been too much for you, and you feel as if you could not proceed any further. But what was at first overwhelming becomes, as you persevere, endurable. The night continues to be dark for all the rest of the way, with only a glimmering of moon or star, but the eye gradually accustoms itself to the new con-

ditions, and with care and courage you are able to go on. So the rupture of earth's most sacred ties makes you feel at first as if this world were no fit dwelling for you, and you would gladly follow the lost one. But sovereign duty, agreeable companionship, and, above all, the conscious presence of God, will so temper your sorrow as the days go by that you can bear it and go on your way.

Sorrow has come into your life, but life is not to be given up to sorrow. Look up and look abroad. There is an introspective gazing and morbid nursing of grief that is sinful. It is the easiest thing in the world by excessive brooding to make too much of what has befallen you, and then, instead of being medicine as it was meant to be, it becomes deadly poison. The sorrow is intended to be a wholesome ingredient, not a dominating element in the experience, but it can never be that, if the haunting past so bedews the eyes with tears that you do not see clearly the situation which Providence would have you now to occupy. Beware of that which so sucks the energy of your nature to itself that the duty of the hour is robbed of its share. Do not go through the world as if you were a martyr. You should have a

chastened not an injured air. It is inevitable that dark threads should now pass into the web of your life, but, if the warp is truly Christian, what you weave for the rest of your life should be of a prevailingly cheerful pattern.

Before one can use the past aright by making it what it was intended to be, a valuable contribution brought into the present for its enrichment, it is needful he should conquer it. That certainly does not mean that he should destroy or suppress it: it only means he is not to be kept down by it. The past has its rights: so has the present and the future. The past is entitled to be visited: it asks too much when it expects us to dwell in it. "Our past has no other mission than to lift us to the moment at which we are, and there equip us with the needful experience and weapons. If at this precise moment it takes from us and diverts to itself one particle of our energy, then, however glorious it may have been, it still was useless and had better never have been."

Ask God's grace to enable you rightly to observe the times and the seasons, and what belongs to the years gone by will in a sense

be yours as it never was before. Your past is now transfigured, being seen in a light that was not possible before, when your household was complete. When you were in possession of the living, was there not apt to be sometimes a comfortable, easy, rather prosaic and commonplace, feeling in your mind, such as overtakes the prosperous man who has all things according to his mind? There is a nearness that is somewhat obscuring, an assured familiarity which takes somewhat from the edge of your full realisation of the preciousness of what was under your roof. Is there thus not some gain through the great loss? When the place was left vacant, did you not feel that your house was like a sepulchre, and at first you had no desire to be within its desolate walls? But with the healing touch of time your grief is chastened, and what was to you a sepulchre is now a sanctuary, and all the things about you have a kind of heavenly sacredness on account of their association with the blessed dead.

Death assuredly does create a terrible blank, and over-indulged sorrow can easily make a bare, barren desert, a Sahara of the empty space. But sorrow that is placed

under the shadow of the Cross can turn the empty space into a garden of the Lord, where plants of rare delicacy and fruits of exquisite flavour grow. The seed of the Kingdom is always at hand for those God-made voids, and happy is the bereaved one who does not sow it sparingly.

A great part of your life has fallen from you. You are like a tree that has been cloven, and you begin to doubt whether it is worth while remaining where you are. But that is not in your choice. The tempest which tore away the fairest portion has left the roots deep in the soil, and some branches towering toward the sky and others stretching out to afford a grateful shade of greenness to the passer-by. That means there is life and growth and usefulness for you here, else all would have been laid prostrate with the ground.

Be thankful, then, for memory, but do not live in its shades. Keble gives you good advice :

“When sorrow all our heart would ask
 We need not shun our daily task
 And hide ourselves for calm :
 The herbs we seek to heal our woe,
 Familiar by our pathway grow,
 Our common air is balm.

Spenser also reminds us :

“For he whose daies in wilful woe are worne,
The grace of his Creator doth despise :
That will not use his gifts for thankless nigardise.”

“They rightly mourn the dead who live as they desired.” Live, then, while you live, remembering that thine is the duty of being ready to welcome happiness as well as to endure pain. What strength endurance wins by being grateful for small daily joys, such as the rising and setting of the sun, God’s invigorating air, the greeting and grasp of friendship by the way, the scent of the meadow and garden, the laughter of children, the innumerable little mercies and pleasures your Father in heaven showers upon you !

Learn wisdom from that bird you met by the wayside singing its evening song. It, as it were, said to you, “Here I am by God’s will. He has given me as much of the universe as I can occupy, and I am making myself at home. He bids me take all I can see and enjoy, so I bask in the sunshine, eat what is set before me, fly in the pure air of heaven, and sit upon the green bough. He bids me give of my best for the sake of the beauty and pleasure of the whole : so I sing.” If you imitate that little wren you will be

able to understand what a good man said :
“ When I reach heaven the first thing I shall do will be to thank God for the heaven begun upon the earth.”

There is something in us all, when a certain stage in the journey of life is reached, which responds to that story told of Erasmus when he was an old man. He was going over a pile of letters he had received during the course of years from intimate friends, and as he came upon one after another written by persons who were now dead, he said : “ He too is gone,” and added : “ Neither have I any desire to live longer if it please the Lord.”

But was not Paul’s attitude nobler when, regarding himself as a vessel for the Master’s use, he expressed his willingness to continue here if thereby he could further the interests of the Kingdom which had so much warring against its progress ? Work while it is day ! One of the appointed refuges from sorrow is strenuous, absorbing work, and you go against the will of God and place yourself in jeopardy when you do not give a useful outlet to the energy that is in you. If the mill is going and no grain is put into it, it will begin to grind itself, and that is self-destructive as

well as non-productive. The only way in which you can earn a right to a continued place among the living creatures of that God who "worketh hitherto" is to go on giving out what is in you as long as there is anything to give. Incapacity for work is the only valid ground for retiring from it. Dean Church so strikingly reminds us that "there is but one conceivable preparation for the life to come, and that is the discipline and building up of character, the only thing in which we can imagine ourselves under training for what is to be."

And that work should have a distinct reference to the needs of others. If God, blessing your exertions in earlier years, has given you a moderate competency for the "simple life," which is all that the Christian is entitled to live, you should have "a heart at leisure from itself to soothe and sympathise." A better test of the health of your soul on the earthward side of life could not be given than what is found in "In Memoriam":

"The shade by which my life was crost,
Which makes a desert in the mind,
Has made me kindly *with my kind.*"

Let your grief be not a fever which consumes

you and does nobody any good, but a fire at which others can be warmed and gladdened. The heart which has grace in it can transmute all feelings which might become selfish into love that "seeketh not her own."

But while in a sense the earth is more than ever to you as an arena, and to the end will be a garden of delights, you having reached that period in life for which the "first was made," there will be an irresistible going out, a new gravitation of soul to that region where the loved ones are. God will use your hope of reunion as a means of deepening your spirituality. What painful strangeness would be in your life if you thought that death were to pass you by. If the departed ones were to be naturalised in a country you had no expectation of reaching, would you not feel that you were being unjustly treated? The crowning dignity of our life of pilgrimage is that promotion which we call death.

"Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching :"
 . . . "if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants." "The unlit lamp and the ungirt loin are our greatest enemies." But undue anxiety is almost as

bad as carelessness. There is a fine old Puritan phrase expressive of our feeling as it ought to be in relation to the promises of God: "Recumbency": lying down upon God's word.

Bryant, the American poet, saw a wild swan in the twilight migrating southwards, and he was inspired to write these lines to cheer such as you :

" Whither, midst falling dew,
While glow the heavens with the last steps of day,
Far through their rosy depths dost thou pursue
Thy solitary way ?

.
" There is a power whose care
Teaches thy way along that pathless coast,—
The desert and illimitable air—
Lone wandering, but not lost.

.
" He who, from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone
Will lead my steps aright."

You are now like a man who, when the day is far spent, is climbing the upper reaches of a great mountain the summit of which is in cloud. You cannot go up without going away from much which association, with its tendril-like power, makes dear ; but how much more are you going out to, as your

ascent gradually opens up and widens your prospect? In separating yourself, step by step, from the haunts of men, and drawing nearer to the point where heaven and earth seem to meet, the loneliness of life comes upon you but so also does its grandeur. The longer distances and larger magnitudes which you now command from your vantage ground enable the imagination to take a wider sweep, and, by doing so, put the things of the earth with which you have been so long familiar into a truer perspective.

As the horizon stretches out immeasurably and the sublimity of the scene unfolds itself, you are conscious of exhilaration, as of one who is beginning to breathe his native air and is coming to his own. The inborn yearnings, the dim presentiments and haunting visions of the soul, are now vindicating their right to be regarded as the surest of all realities. God is divulging His secret to you as He never did before, and while awe that hushes the spirit is deepening, so also are trust and love which lift up the heart. The meaning of the Cross is dawning upon you and its power grasping you, as if salvation were a thing which could not be perfectly understood till autumn days have come with

their crisp, cool air and falling leaves. Life a failure ! As well speak of failure to the racer whose hand is about to touch the goal, to the weary wanderer whose foot is upon the doorstep of home, to the heir who sees his estate stretched out before him. There can be no failure to the man who craves no more than a freer, fuller expression and a more fitting environment for the life he now lives in Jesus Christ the Son of God.

You are a pilgrim nearing the end of your pilgrimage, and as you enter into the spirit of the situation and give yourself up to the thoughts which it awakens, you cannot but be pensive as you look behind and see all you have left suffused with a softening haze ; but neither can you resist the conclusion, for which the heart is glad, that the things you are going from, and the things you are reaching unto, are harmonious parts of a great and blessed whole, which reflects the glory of Him who is perfect in wisdom and goodness as He is matchless in power.

“ Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Thy name ; and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for Thy name’s sake.”

