

BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

The New Day and the Old Questions

JOHN HESTON WILLEY

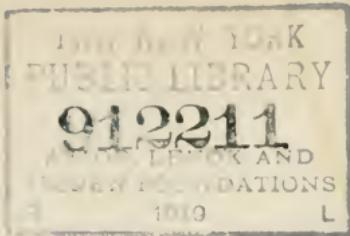


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To
THE MEN WHO WERE NOT AFRAID

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Blow the horn upon Zion;
Sound the alarm on my Holy Mountain!
All the Inhabitants of the land shall tremble,
For the Day of Jehovah cometh!
For it is near!¹

A Day of Darkness and Gloom,
A Day of Clouds and Deep Darkness.
As the Dawn spread upon the Mountains,
A People great and strong.
There hath not ever been the like,
Nor shall be again after it
For years of Generations upon Generations.²

Before Them the Fire devours
And behind Them burns a Flame.
Like the Garden of Eden is the Land before Them,
But a desolate Desert behind Them,
And nothing escapes Them.³

Alas for the Day!
For at hand is the Day of Jehovah
And as an over-powering from the Over-powerer
Shall it come.⁴

And I will show portents in Heaven and on Earth,
Blood and Fire and columns of Smoke.
The Sun shall be turned into Darkness
And the Moon to Blood!

¹ Joel 2: 1.

² Joel 2: 2.

³ Joel 2: 3.

⁴ Joel 1. 15.

Before the Day of Jehovah comes, the Great and the Terrible.⁵

For they are spirits of demons, working signs; which go forth unto the kings of the whole world, to gather them together unto the war of the great day of God, the Almighty. . . . And they gathered them together into the place which is called in Hebrew Har-Magedon.⁶

For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there shall be famines and earthquakes in divers places. But all these things are the beginning of travail.⁷

But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.⁸

Never in the history of the race have these ominous prophecies seemed nearer their fulfilment. Never has there been such anxiety in the hearts of men. We live in the midst of grave and swift happenings. The Great War has come and gone. Nations are seething with unrest. New social postulates and new industrial

⁵ Joel 2: 30, 31.

⁶ Revelation 16: 14, 16.

⁷ Matthew 24: 7, 8.

⁸ Matthew 24: 29, 30.

programs are clamoring for a hearing. Bolshevism in politics, Bolshevism in industry, Bolshevism in religion—these are the grim lions that stand adown the path, and we are yet to learn if they be chained or not. Mighty events are being staged in a mighty arena, and many are asking if this be the fifth act, and if now the drama will close and the curtain will fall.

It is a very serious world. Mr. P. Whitwell Wilson of the *London Daily News* has written a new life of Christ—new in every sense, perhaps because it is from the virgin viewpoint of a layman. In this unforgettable book, which he calls “*The Christ We Forget*,” we read this:

“Before the War it seemed almost unnecessary to find time for the Bible. Many of us were making money; others were busily earning it. . . . We drifted in tens, hundreds of thousands from public worship. We ceased to pray. We quietly laid aside the Bible.

Then—suddenly—we were brought face to face with facts that we had forgotten. One of these facts was Death—another was Pain—another was Hatred—another was National Duty—another was Suspense. We learned that life is not a game, but a grim, heroic combat between good and evil. For this crisis we found ourselves unprepared. Men and women fled for refuge in some cases to spiritualism, crystal-gazing, and fortune telling. . . . Lives that had

been frivolous were consecrated to war work, and there is a growing splendor of national unity and of personal sacrifice."

The newspapers are feeling the solemn beat of the world pulse. The schools catch the same note of anxiety. Professor Ernst Haeckel in one of his latest books, "Eternity, or World-War Thoughts on Life and Death," writes:

"We have been passing through a tragedy of unexampled magnitude and horror. Millions of human beings have already fallen victims to the terrible international slaughter. . . . People on all sides begin to inquire, 'What is the meaning of Life?' 'Is Existence eternal?' 'When the body dies does the soul die too?' "

He says he has received many letters asking for light from students at the front or lying in hospitals. The only advice this celebrated scientist and teacher can offer is that, as students of biology, these young men shall regard death with rational resignation. It is a natural necessity and must come sooner or later under any circumstance. "Try to make your life as good and happy as possible," he writes, "and leave the decision of your fate to that blind chance which rules the universe."

But this does not answer the needs of the

hour. We are not all students of biology; we cannot all and always be philosophers. The wives and mothers whose husbands and sons have not yet returned from across the sea, the broken families whose husbands and sons will never return—these must have something better than the deductions of science or the decrees of blind chance.

And the young men themselves are looking into the dark and asking for clear signals. The trumpet that calls to the charge must give no uncertain sound; neither must the trumpet that calls to the faith.

Said a young lieutenant to a secretary of the Young Men's Christian Association during the late war, "We are finding over here that just a few things count—the Bible, God, Christ, the Soul, and Eternity." Just before the storming of Chateau-Thierry the boys in khaki, who a few months before would have smiled tolerantly at any suggestion of psalm singing or intercession, were saying among themselves, "They're praying for us at home just now, fellows. That's a jolly good thing."

Chaplain Watt of the Gordon Highlanders gives us a glimpse of "The Heart of a Soldier." More than a glimpse indeed—it is a picture, a diary, an excursion into the soul of the men

whose natural aptitudes are for the pen and the plow and the plumb-bob, but who were called from their peaceful craft to "the bloody trial of sharp war." He writes:

"This is a war of vision. . . . Out in the land of war, dogma has become like the kit which a soldier flings away as he enters the stern conflict where death jostles life in closest contest for victory. . . . If you speak to men out there you know you are speaking to the souls that ere a few hours pass will have taken the final step across the Great Divide; and even if they weather the cataclysmic blast that will soon beat upon them they will come back as those who have looked into the well at the world's end and learned something of the mystery of the Beyond. . . . What do you speak of in such an hour of stress? The love of God in Jesus Christ, the splendor of sacrifice for others, the deathlessness of that spirit which animates the clay, and that hope of meeting after the parting here which lights the face of the dying as with a sunburst from the Land of Dawn."

Even before the War there was a certain quickening of the sense of the supernatural, a new emphasis of the unseen and the mystical, as if the world were getting itself ready for its Gethsemane. In Harvard a course of lectures on immortality is being delivered each year, through the generosity of Mr. George G. Inger-

soll, who left a fund for that purpose. A similar course is being given in the Leland Stanford Jr. University of California. These lectures are published; so from the two edges of the continent the best thought of the best thinkers on eternity and on the soul is being poured like a saving reagent into the seething crucible of the national life.

Men of high degree and of keen intellect, like Sir Oliver Lodge of the University of Birmingham, Alfred Russel Wallace the naturalist, Sir Oliver Crookes the chemist, Sir Conan Doyle the novelist, have thought it worth while to study matters of the hereafter.

All these are but signs of the times. We have no further use for materialism as a philosophy and we are beginning to resent materialism as a *zeitgeist*. We are learning that all our powers are not represented by machinery, and that all our hungerings are not to be satisfied with bread. The deeps within are calling to the deeps without. The things invisible are beginning to assert their primacy over the things visible.

Even the swing toward sociology will not be permanent. The New Jerusalem that came down from heaven and established itself on the earth has captured the Church, and our duty

to the world and to the world of men is taking the place of other-worldliness. This is good, but it will not meet all the conditions and it will not last. Narrowed down and localized, it made German *Kultur* and the German war machine; broadened out and unchallenged it will make a world satisfied with itself and oblivious of or antagonistic to any sort of other-world. We must remember and keep on remembering, in the midst of our university settlements and all our civic programs, that in this New Jerusalem down here on the earth we have no abiding habitation.

An English essayist writes: "The old impulse to wonder, which came to the race in its infancy, has to come back and triumph before the morning of the final emancipation of man can dawn." The race has become too sophisticated. It is careful and troubled about many things—even things of its own social uplift and resanitation. It must become again as a little child, and learn again to wonder, and to hope, and to worship.

This little book is sent out in response to these conditions, and in humble hope that it may serve some good purpose. The subjects discussed are such as wise men approach with caution. God did not intend us to know all the facts in the case, or he would have given them to us; or

perhaps he has given them, but we do not understand, "because they are spiritually discerned."

The opinions hereinafter set forth may not agree with the opinions of the reader. Then let us be patient and tolerant with each other. The writer is still a learner, and one of the first things learned is that a man may not agree with him, and yet may know as much about a subject as he does. One of the latest things learned is the very small area of any great subject about which any of us can be positive—hence the constant need for the deepest humility.

All the findings here are based upon Scripture, as the writer understands Scripture, and if this writing shall answer any serious question, or suggest the solution of any hard problem, or help to steady any distressed soul in the whirlwind and chaos of the present crisis, it will have justified its preparation and its author will be satisfied.

And he concludes this rambling prelude in the simple words with which Christina G. Rossetti closes her studies of the Book of the Revelation, which studies she calls "The Face of the Deep": "If I have been overbold in attempting such a work as this, I beg pardon."

THIS WORLD AND THE OTHER

CHAPTER I

THIS WORLD AND THE OTHER

Of what use is the next world to us while we are in this world? Have we standing room for eternity in the swift busy days through which we are passing—any need of its promise and its hope? The vision of a hereafter is good to die with. We face the grave with bolder, steadier nerve when we assume that the grave opens into the light on the further side. We fold the still hands of our home idols on their breasts and leave them in the cemetery, and our hearts are brave when we believe that they shall be ours again in the glad eternal days.

It is good to die with this “hope beyond the shadow of a dream,” but what good is it to live with? Does the prospect of heaven make earth any better? Is this belief in immortality in any way a part of the gospel of morality and larger living? Shelley assures us that

“Life, like a dome of many-colored glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity.”

What we are interested in just now is the stain cast upon life by eternity: the effect upon our

thinking and our doing of the belief that our doing and our thinking will know no pause in the grave.

A Purpose in Life

We are at last convinced that there is a purpose in life, that this increasing purpose runs through the ages in an ever-widening path. We have definitely given up the idea of chance in the creation of the world. The world changes have been followed backward by tireless, inexorable pathfinders, and there has been found a beginning. In all the latest textbooks of the schools—history, geology, astronomy, anthropology—the best science has left a blank space on the first page, and Faith has written in this space the opening words of the Bible, “In the beginning—God.”

God at Hand

We are also repudiating the idea of chance in the world management. We believe in God, but he is not an absentee God. The great Land-lord lives on the premises. He does not need daily reports from the field. He is in the field. He does not drop in occasionally and perform a miracle to show that he is still to be reckoned with; he is performing miracles every moment.

The simplest processes of nature are miracles. If there were but one pond-lily in the world, we would build a cathedral and a shrine about it and make pilgrimages to see it. But thousands of lilies crowning the fen and gladdening our June are no less wonderful than one. If manna had continued to fall until today, it would attract no more attention than the wheatfields or the springtime. If there had been but one sunrise and it had been recorded in the Bible, we would have had our critics gravely discussing the pictorial phraseology of the Oriental witnesses, or the effect of cerebral lesion, as explanation of the mental attitude of these gullible witnesses.

Man created in the Garden of Eden—very well, then there is a God and a purpose in life. Man the result of measureless processes, struggling upward from cave lodgings and skin garments to large and abundant life—here, too, there is purpose.

God in Science

We hear the wise men talk of the Nebular Hypothesis, and the Survival of the Fittest, and the Cosmic Process—and how these terms used to frighten us! How they would shake their gory locks at us, and in a panic we used to

charge them with all manner of devilish designs against the faith. But now comes John Fiske to say that "the ultimate goal of cosmic process is the perfection of human character." Why, that is not so bad. This Cosmic Process must be a blood relation of the Christian religion, for that is what Christianity is set to do. It must be in the pay of the great King, for that is his world program. Mr. Huxley, watching through the microscope the tiny speck of living matter and noticing its transformation, says, "One is almost possessed of the notion that with better vision one might see the hidden artist with his plan before him, striving with skilful manipulation to perfect his work." Ah, but we have the better vision; we have spoken the hidden artist and we know his name. We see his plan outlined large and luminous. Here it is in Paul's letter to the Romans: "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." Here it is in the glowing epistle to the Ephesians: "the perfecting of the saints . . . unto the building up of the body of Christ: till we all attain unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Oh, the divine artist, keen visioned, deft handed, but tender, so tender, and as gentle as the mother whose baby cuddles against her

neck—standing “within the shadow, keeping watch above his own.”

God in History

There is a purpose in human happenings. God was no more certainly at Jerusalem or on the plains of Esdraelon than he is in London or New York. The Acts of the Apostles is a continued story and a new chapter is added at every political convention or missionary meeting. We wonder sometimes if there be any end or aim. Things seem to happen. Look on the screen as the world pictures unfold: China, uncanny old hermit, brooding through the centuries over her ancestral tablets; Egypt, crouching sphinx-like along the banks of her ancient river, and, like the sphinx, watching ever toward the sunrise; Babylon on her sand heaps; Greece with her despoiled temples; Rome, the Goths, the Huns, the Franks, the Anglo-Saxons—what a labyrinth it is where evil triumphs and tyranny is crowned! But there has been a purpose in it all. It is, according to Hegel, “the unfolding of spiritual being in time.” The Goths do not overthrow Rome until Rome has the Cross which may be taken back into the northern forests. Constantinople does not open the gateway into Europe for the Mohammedans

until St. Paul's is builded in London; Columbus does not sail until Luther is nine years old. The Atlantic cable, broken, is not mended until the Civil War is over, and so Europe cannot make capital of our family quarrels. A purpose in it all and some one in charge who "will not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set justice in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law."

What a scheme it is! Out of the mists of prehistoric time the head of the procession moves. Look at the figures in the lead: clothed in skins, fierce of visage, loutish, unwashed they come, and we can but dimly see them through the mists of the years. Then history, and names that mean but little: Nimrod, Sargon, Hammurabi, names that are mildewed and mouldy with the damp of ages. Then more clearly is outlined the procession: Assyria, Persia, Egypt, Israel come into the range of vision, and the Son of God takes his place in the line of march and the Church of God goes forth to the lions—and so we swing into the stride of modern life.

God and the World War

We may even dare to look for a purpose in the tragedy of Europe, the travail of the world which we have but lately passed through. Never has there been such an opportunity for men and

women to make life rich and full. Never the chance to die for such a cause; and that, after all, is the largest life—to suffer, to die if necessary, for the largest cause that comes our way. Young men went into camp and into the trenches and they died, but their death is in the book. There will be nothing thrown as useless rubbish to the void. They will have made more of themselves and have won more from life than if they had lived a thousand years of ordinary days engaged in ordinary pursuits.

Death an Eternal Sleep

What would be the character of life if there were no purpose in life, no tomorrow on the program? Paul glimpses its condition. "If the dead rise not," he writes, "let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." If we have only today, let us squeeze it dry. We have no duty to the world, it is but a passing show; no duty to each other, for humanity is but a herd of animals driven to the abattoir; no duty to ourselves, except to eat the fat and drink the sweet and so go to our long home sated with the good things of life. Omar Khayyam speaks out consistently on this point. He is not able to find any world but this, and not able to find any

purpose in this world, so he sets about making the most of what we have:

“Drink! for you know not whence you came,
 nor why;
Drink! for you know not why you go, nor
 where.”

A highly civilized people once made the experiment. By official order, over every cemetery gate was written, “Here Is Eternal Sleep,” and the French world set out to live without any tomorrow. Thomas Carlyle makes a record of this fact and calls the chapter in which this record is made “Rushing Down.” The next chapter he calls “Death,” and the next he calls “Destruction.” It was the death knell of order and law and safety. The Sabbath was abolished; the churches became stables and taverns; the church services became drinking bouts; homes were discredited and human lives became of no more value than the lives of beasts. This was the effect of leaving Eternity out of Time; of cutting earth off from heaven.

What a narrow life it would be! How meaningless would seem the heroism and the heroes of the past—stage play that faded into darkness when the curtain fell. The mothers who have given their life for the little life in the cradle,

the patriots in the trenches, the martyrs who have fronted lions in the arena—how hollow and dramatic it all appears, unless there is eternal reason for it! What is the good? We die next week. Why sacrifice and suffer soul penance to grow a soul! It will be cut off as the tree falls and where it falls it will lie forever more. Tell the world there is nothing else—and you cut the nerve of morality, make character a farce, and turn loose upon society the wild beasts that lurk in every human breast.

Materialism

So in his poem “*Lucretius*” Tennyson seeks to meet the materialistic teachings that were coming into favor in England and to confront the new *Lucretius*, Professor Tyndall, whose creed was, “given atoms and motion, the universe is the result.”

Consistently the old Roman poet-philosopher says:

“Poor little life that toddles half an hour
Crowned with a flower or two, and there an
end—
And since the nobler pleasure seems to fade,
Why should I, beastlike as I find myself,
Not manlike end myself? . . .
Thus—thus: the soul flies out and dies in the
air.”

Here he drives the knife into his side, and when his wife rushes in and cries out upon herself as having failed in duty to him, he answers,

“Care not thou!

Thy duty? What is duty? Fare thee well!”

Tennyson also gives a hint of the effect of such a creed upon the common people who are not poets or philosophers. A man and his wife, losing faith in God and in the future, agree to drown themselves. The wife succeeds and dies. The husband is rescued against his will and bitterly he laments the rescue. And of the night in which the attempt is made he says:

“The suns of the limitless Universe sparkled
and shone in the sky,
Flashing with fires as of God, but we knew that
their light was a lie—
Bright as with deathless hope—but however
they sparkled and shone,
The dark little worlds running round them
were worlds of woe like our own.”

But now let it be conceded that an eternity is to follow time and at once we feel that life is worth while. What we do now will have an eternal sequence and meaning. Our good deeds, our high and holy habits, our aspirations after the ideal—all this is but part of the training.

We are faithful in a few things that are seen, by and by we shall be made lord of many things that are unseen. Doing well today, we are fitted for doing better and even better in the long and waiting tomorrow.

Eternity Here

There is more than that. Our fathers so often made the mistake of trying in this world to develop a character that would be suited to the next world. There was a constant clash and outcry against the flesh limitations and the law of the lower self, a constant appeal to heavenly standards. This was the sum and substance of their teaching and their ambition:

“In hope of that immortal crown
I now the cross sustain,
And gladly wander up and down,
 And smile at toil and pain.
I suffer out my three-score years
 Till my Deliverer come
And wipe away His servant’s tears
 And take this exile home.”

But we are not exiles. “We are marching through Immanuel’s ground to fairer worlds on high.” Eternity is not a sequel to time, it is a continuation of time. In our earth life we are to develop a character suited to this life.

If that character can be made at home here it will be at home hereafter. If it can be so disciplined and refined that it can live largely and mightily in New York, it will live largely and mightily in heaven.

We do not need to be strangers and sojourners—do not need to take the road in a Pilgrim's Progress away from the world; do not need to seek the caves of the mountains or the dim whitewashed cells of the cloister. In our business we may be learning how to live in the New Jerusalem. In our housekeeping affairs we may be practicing the housekeeping virtues that will ornament and adorn the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Our slightest actions take on a vast and beautiful significance. You sit down to give some child a happy hour—why, you are brightening up eternity! You send your clerk or your housemaid for an afternoon in the country, and you are setting into operation a wave of good and of unselfishness that is part of the eternal sea, and that will break in ripples on unseen and remote shores beyond the thought of man.

Life's Realization Now

This world becomes more than a preparation. It is an initiation, a foretaste. We get the most

out of our present existence by regarding it as but a segment of the complete circle of existence. As Emerson writes, "Each day may be the best day of the year." As the German poet declares, "Every inferior is a higher in the making, every hateful a coming beautiful, every evil a coming good."

We do not need to postpone our good until we get to heaven. The treasure to be laid up there may be appreciated to the full, enjoyed to the limit here. Not so does the world use its children. The business man who toils day and night to acquire a competency hopes that by and by when he possesses that competency he may rest and have life. The scholar who burns the midnight oil and denies himself all recreation and all respite, looks to the day when the world will admire. But the man doing business with God gets the joy of life with each day of life. The student of the mysteries of the Christian faith revels in each new discovery, is glad with each new day, is filled every moment with the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God.

There is no risk here, no hope deferred to make the heart sick. Almost any man, if persistent enough and sleepless enough and selfish enough, may get after a while what as a child

he wanted most, but he must take with him the heart of a child to enjoy it. His highest ambitions, his dearest ideals in life may eventually be realized—but his outworn nature may not respond to them; and his apple, so fair without, may be ashes within. So often we break our idols by going to see them; so often we lose our joys by possessing them. “Galba,” says Tacitus, “would have been an ideal Emperor if he had never been Emperor.” A certain admiral, the idol of the American people, might have become President if he had remained in the Philippines until election day. You remember the cynical little poem of the woman who lost her lover. He did not die, he did not travel into foreign lands, he did not forsake her for fairer charms. She lost him by marrying him. Perhaps she made discoveries, perhaps he made discoveries, perhaps there were mutual discoveries in the fierce light that breaks about the breakfast table. The fair nymph Daphne whom Apollo pursued became a laurel tree in his arms. The squirrel in the fable served the lion long and well for the promise of a barrel of nuts—too long indeed, for when the wager was won the squirrel had lost his teeth and the nuts were impossible.

But there is no danger of powers wasted in

the pursuit of heavenly things, and of powers broken before these things are possessed. The knowledge that today is part of eternity gives us freedom to wear our crown of glory and sing our songs of redemption today. The fruits of this tree of life come every month. Here the plowman overtakes the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth the seed.

“I stand in the great forever,
All things to me are divine;
I eat of the heavenly manna,
I drink of the heavenly wine.”

Life's Idealism

With this outlook there is nothing commonplace in life. How it irks us, this commonplace, this beaten track, this doing over and over the usual, the expected. We do not dare venture into new paths, or launch upon new seas, or attempt new enterprises. The world is ready to call us revolutionists if we are unconventional, and if we depart too far from the conventions they put a strait-jacket on us.

And what a prospect it is for the imagination! To get up at the same hour every morning; to take the same car to the city or to the office; to meet the same frowzy, half-awake people; to

sit at the same office desk; or to move around in the same little domestic circle; attend the same entertainments; utter the same banalities about the weather, the taxes, or the trade, for twenty years, for thirty years, for a lifetime. What a dreary waste, a desert of sand to the sensitive soul: for life is a dead level, kept so by the policeman and by Madame Grundy.

“Forenoon and Afternoon and Night—Forenoon
And Afternoon and Night—Forenoon and—
what?
The empty song repeats itself. No more?”

Dr. Chalmers has said that there are three grand essentials to happiness: “something to do, something to love, and something to hope for.” Here is the hope—the anchor which, with careful definiteness, the writer of Hebrews says lies within the veil, and from which proceeds the golden chain that binds our souls to God.

With this hope there need be nothing commonplace in life. There can be nothing commonplace when you can

“See a world in a grain of sand
And a heaven in a wild flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
And eternity in an hour.”

Maeterlinck illustrates how the soul may be superior to environment in the case of Charlotte Bronté. "Here," he writes, "is the daughter of a country clergyman without social contact or travel to broaden her views of life; with neither husband nor lover to feed her imagination or provide her with ideals. A nervous, shrinking, awkward, homely spinster of thirty, living a pinched and meager life with a dissolute brother and an unapproachable father in a little grim stone parsonage on the bleak moorlands of Yorkshire." Now read her great book "Jane Eyre." The large and wonderful world is there because the young woman was by regal right a citizen of that world—the large world of light and love and splendid heroism. She carried this world in her heart and she lived every day amid its vivid hazards and happenings.

" 'A commonplace life,' we say, and we sigh;
But why should we sigh as we say?
The commonplace sun in the commonplace sky
Makes up the commonplace day.
The moon and the stars are commonplace
things,
And the flower that blooms and the bird that
sings.
But dark were the world and sad were our
lot
If the flowers had failed and the sun shone not;

And God, who studies each commonplace soul,
Out of commonplace things makes his beautiful
whole."

Commonplace—why, the great literary seer says that "All the world's a stage and all the men and women merely players." But he was not original. He was at his borrowing again. Many centuries before another seer had the same idea in mind when he wrote, "We also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight," and let us run with glad and cheerful endurance the race that is set before us.¹ "Glad and cheerful endurance"—I was rejoiced to find all that in the old Greek word which we so calmly and stolidly read "patience."

Life's Arena

And the spectators of this mighty life-Marathon, in which we try our paces, are not our contemporaries for whose benefit we usually pose and strut; the spectators are the champions of the faith of whom the world was not worthy. Can life be commonplace with such a gallery as this? Napoleon in Egypt said to his men, according to the general consent of

¹ Heb. 12: 1.

debating clubs and commencement orations: "Soldiers! forty centuries look down upon you from yonder Pyramids." Not forty centuries, no, nor four hundred centuries, but an eternity that may not be measured by centuries, looks down upon us and waits for us and depends upon us.

That they are spectators and interested in our victory is suggested by the word which is translated "compassed about" in the quotation above, and which means surrounded on all sides. This is in harmony with Paul's declaration that we are made a spectacle, *theatron*, unto the universe, *kosmo*, of men and of angels.²

But these spectators are more than spectators. They are witnesses themselves to the sincerity and the rewards of faith. They are the men who have stood for the best things, even though they had not received the promises. They lived for eternity, though eternity was not yet a definite article of faith. They chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season," for they "had respect unto the recompence of the reward," and they feared not the wrath of kings, but endured, "as seeing him who

² "For we are made a spectacle unto the world" (I Cor. 4: 9).

is invisible." For they were seeking a country, "a better country, that is, a heavenly." And "they were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection." It is all there in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, the Westminster Abbey of the New Testament, the burial-place of the kings of old, who made a good confession and being dead yet speak.

Life's Compensation

So argues Paul: "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." What does he mean? Read the fourth chapter of the same book in which he makes this plaintive cry: "Unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace . . . we are made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things." If there is only this life, what is the use, Paul? Why not give up the struggle? Why not surrender to the inevitable? Life is not worth the price. But the light of the hereafter breaks upon his soul, and he is on his feet again, and his banner is in the breeze, and his trumpet is at his lips for a new charge as he writes: "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor

principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

It was an evolutionist, but an evolutionist with his hand on the Bible and his eye on the Cross and his heart warm with the hope of immortality, who said:

"I have climbed to the snows of Age, and I gaze at a field in the Past,

Where I sank with the body at times in the sloughs of a low desire,

But I hear no yelp of the beast, and the Man is quiet at last,

As he stands on the heights of his life with a glimpse of a height that is higher."

—Alfred Tennyson.

G. Lowes Dickinson, in his Ingersoll lecture, "Is Immortality Desirable?" is ready to say: "The conception that death ends all may not empty life of its worth, but it destroys its most precious element, that which transfigures all the rest; it obliterates the gleam on the snow, the planet in the east; it shuts off the great adventure, the adventure beyond death." Even the cold practical Doctor Osler, late of Johns Hopkins, concedes that a belief in the resurrection

of the dead is the rock of safety to which many of the noblest even of the scientists have clung. He "will acknowledge with gratitude and reverence the service to humanity of the great souls who have departed this life in a sure and certain hope"; and further he admits that "the emotional side to which faith leans makes for all that is bright and joyous in life."

Life's Reality

In fact, the relation between this world and the other world is the relation between the visible and the invisible, the shadow and the substance, the human and the divine. It has long been a creed of poets and philosophers that what we see is but a symbol or outward expression of what we cannot see, that matter is but the garment of spirit. Emerson says that "nature is the incarnation of a thought," and again,

"Spirit that lurks each form within,
Beckons to spirit of its kin."

The editor of *The Outlook* writes that "Beauty is the medicine of God for aching hearts. It is the multitude of fiery chariots."

This seems to be the meaning of Rudolf Eucken, whose philosophy made a large impres-

sion upon the thinking world a few years since, but whose theories were so fiercely challenged by the great war thrust upon the world by his own countrymen. He declares that the thought world and the sense world are “related to one another as reality and appearance, as cause and effect. The divine is not something specific outside of things, but their connection in a living unity. . . . History is only valuable as being the medium through which the Eternal reveals itself.”

Joseph Cook the picturesque does not content himself with glittering generalities. His speech always glitters, but it is not commonplace. He has borrowed the curt periods of Carlyle to better purpose than that; and so, when he desires to write this great truth upon the mind, he makes a few quick strokes with his burin, and this is the etching: “As the green billows that dash at this moment on Boston Harbor bar and cap themselves with foam are one with the Atlantic, so you and I and Shakespeare and Charlemagne and Cæsar and the Seven Stars and Orion are but so many waves in the Divine All.” And the bookish audience of Boston professors and philosophers and scientists applauded his rhetoric, because a great truth was expressed in these flashing sentences, and be-

cause—well, they had gotten accustomed to Joseph Cook.

And so the world takes on a new radiance and a new glory when we are able to find God in the world. And we are forfeit if we do not find him there.

“God is not dumb that he shall speak no more.
If thou hast wanderings in the wilderness
And findest not Sinai—’tis thy soul is poor.”

So Lowell. And Mrs. Browning, in the very opening of her “*Aurora Leigh*,” writes the familiar lines so swift, so crisp, so pregnant that we hasten across this threshold into the poem itself as into a storehouse of treasure trove:

“Ay, and while your common men
Lay telegraphs, gauge railroads, reign, reap,
dine,
And dust the flaunty carpets of the world
For kings to walk on, or our president,
The poet suddenly will catch them up
With his voice like a thunder—‘This is a soul,
This is life, this word is being said in heaven,
Here’s God down on us! what are you about?’ ”

Life’s Glory

“Here is God down on us”—that is the secret

of it all. "When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory." Only let Jesus Christ be manifest, be realized in our daily life, and that life will take on it the radiance of eternity and of God. We shall be part of the eternal scheme; our part in the world will be a feature of the "far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves."

Dr. William V. Kelley gives an illustration of this tremendous conception in Fornarina, the baker's daughter in Rome, whose face has been used by Raphael in one of his exquisite Madonnas. "She was but a simple maiden living in a humble home, but," writes Dr. Kelley, "see he makes her as immortal as himself, he shares with her his glory." This illustration could be multiplied many times. Rubens gave one of the Marys in "The Descent from the Cross" the face of his wife. Paul Veronese painted his mother in "The Marriage Feast in Cana." Browning has made his seventeen-year-old Pompilia of "The Ring and the Book" to live forever. Shelley sent the Skylark singing down through the centuries. Joyce Kilmer has planted a Tree that shall never decay. These beautiful tall souls have manifested themselves to the humble and the obscure, have lifted them

to their own level, and endowed them with their own immortality.

When Christ is manifested in our life, when time takes on the complexion of eternity, when we live in the light of the hereafter, life glows with a new meaning. Just as the sun at even-time, when off down the west making a new day in some far-off land, touches with pink and gold and pearl the mountain peaks about us, so the light shining out of the land which is unseen but toward which our face is turned, will gild with splendor the upper ranges of life; and if we stand high enough we may even see the sun himself, though he has already had his setting for the valley.

THE END OF THE WORLD

CHAPTER II

THE END OF THE WORLD

Camille Flammarion, the lively French astronomer, in his little book, "*La Fin du Monde*," schedules five ways by which the earth may be destroyed:

1. By a change in the axis of revolution which, by well-known laws of inertia, would send the oceans sweeping over the continents and bury the race in a universal deluge.
2. By the failure of the internal fires of the earth and the gradual absorption by the earth of all the water and air on the surface of the globe.
3. By the dying out of the heat of the sun and the inevitable freezing of the earth until it became a ball of ice drifting through the heavens.
4. By the earth's striking a comet and bursting into flames through the collision.
5. By the passing of the earth through the train of a comet and the asphyxiation of all that breathe by the gases evolved through the chemical changes that would ensue.

It would not be difficult to add to this catalogue of post-mortems, if one were inclined to

venture into the field of conjecture. For example, the end might come from a failure of momentum, a slowing down of the speed with which we travel around the sun. Eleven hundred miles a minute is this speed, let us say, so that when we lift our hat to greet a friend on the street we travel many miles bareheaded before our polite impulse has subsided and our hat is replaced. Yet this is just speedy enough to maintain the safe curve of the orbit. To slow down would be to yield to the mighty tug of gravitation and the earth would go smashing into the sun. Again, this law of gravitation might for a season be suspended or the speed of the earth materially increased, in which case the earth would fly off into space and into a temperature four hundred degrees below zero—out of a conservatory of beauty and warmth created by the kindly sun into a Siberian atmosphere that would congeal the oceans to the bottom in the twinkling of an eye and stiffen the race of men into a race of frozen mummies.

Still another possibility may be mentioned—that of internal convulsions: universal earthquakes and volcanic eruptions caused by intense heat and pressure from within, breaking the crust and allowing floods of molten lava to overflow the houses of men. The crust of the

earth is a mere eggshell when compared with the eight thousand miles of liquid fire shut down in its prison. Very easily might the crust break under the enormous pressure of this internal caldron of seething flame—and the end would be swift and tumultuous.

The Death of Worlds

The heavens are written all over with illustrations of these catastrophes. The destruction of a world is the daily pastime of nature. Again and again has the universe been called to witness the passing of a star. The spectroscope gives us regular bulletins of the condition of the suns which we call fixed stars, notes the stages of their development until they reach their prime, and signals the approach of their dissolution. It is the birth and growth and death of worlds. The white stars are at their climax. From white to yellow and from yellow to red they pass; so from the cradle to the grave we follow the doomed star, to lose it finally in the darkling void, conquered by old age and the creeping cold that for centuries has been seeking to quench its fires.

The moon is a frozen world. Once, perhaps, there was atmosphere and there were oceans and green continents. Once, perhaps, intelli-

gent beings ploughed its fields and builded its cities and sailed its seas. But it is now dead and through the long night it floats across the sky—a gigantic monument, a deserted cemetery, a dread and awful tomb in whose bosom lies all that remains of the once active beings who lived and loved and passed away. The planets Mercury and Venus are probably dead worlds. Mars is past his prime, and, if there be life there, it is sustained with ever-increasing difficulty. Jupiter is hastening to his noon, and will be ready in some dim remote future to be the home of intelligence and life.

Even the fixed stars are not fixed. When the Pyramids were built it was not our North Star that enjoyed this distinction; it was another star that occupied the place. The sky is in motion. The Southern Cross in the course of time will fall to pieces, and the Great Dipper be battered out of shape.

A Dread Possibility

All this contains a menace for us. With a mighty sweep the sun, accompanied by his great family of satellites, is plunging away toward that part of the heavens where brawny Hercules lies in wait. At the rate of 600,000 miles a day are we going, and the heavens are comparatively

clear just ahead; but when we reach the new quarters of the skies something may happen at any moment. The North Star, which is among our first acquaintances, is not alone; it has a companion which we do not see. The two are chasing each other around a central point, and together they are scuttling toward the place where we live at the rate of 700,000 miles a day. At that rate they will reach us some day, and a collision will break up all our plans for the future.

Professor Lowell seeks to comfort us by suggesting the high improbability that we will ever collide with a bright star. Some one has said that this would be as improbable as that a shot fired at random into the air would strike a bird. The professor does not promise us immunity from dark stars—the burnt-out suns, the weird and relentless derelicts of the upper seas. We would have no knowledge of the presence of such a body until it was near enough to the sun to borrow some of its light. When first seen by the telescope, it would be perhaps five times as far from the sun as the planet Neptune. Twenty-seven years later it would become visible to the unaided eye. In five years it would be as near as Jupiter and surpass the brilliancy of Venus at her best. In one hundred and forty-

five days more it would come close enough to lay its strong fingers of gravitation upon the earth. Chaos would follow. The earth would be swept from its orbit. It would be dragged irresistibly toward the newcomer, and together —the earth and its new-found affinity—they would drop into the sun. All this, in the event that any one of the great outworn bodies in space should wander within range of the hearth-fires of the sun and should attempt to become one of the happy family that makes up the solar system.

The End Coming

The end will come by some agency some day. The earth is a manufactured article. Once a small sun, an offspring of the central body, it has passed all the stages of luminosity and now shines only by reflection. The end may come at any moment. We are not sure of a single day. Another twenty-four hours may ring down the curtain. There is no guarantee of stability for the next hour. “As a thief in the night” the end is prophesied, “but of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven.”

There are reasons, however, why we do not believe that the end of the world is near at hand.

In the first place, it has taken so long to get the earth ready for human occupancy. All this is wasted energy if the end is so soon to come. The earth is old. Its mountains are wrinkled with age. Its very pebbles were born in an unreckoned past and have been ground and polished by the friction of countless centuries. Thousands of ages has it taken to shape the continents and pour out the seas and send the rivers singing and rejoicing down the green valleys. Why hasten to destroy that which has taken so many years in building? Why grow your century plant and then pluck it up by the roots on the day its first blossom opens?

The Program of God

Moreover, the earth seems to have been prepared with some definite end in view. God was thinking about us as a race before we came into being. Wisely and patiently and carefully he made preparation for our coming. A materialistic science scoffs at the idea that the world was adjusted to our needs. It claims rather that life has adapted itself to world conditions as they exist: that the tiger has grown stripes because he can best hide in the jungle when striped—an early and suggestive case of camouflage; that the tadpole has developed lungs, so

that it can live on the land. This is interesting and it is probably true to a certain degree. But there are so many evidences of love and beneficence in the plan of the world that it will be a long time before we surrender the idea that God planned the world as it is, because as it is it is best for us.

The House Prepared

Man was not permitted to live on the earth until the earth was ready for him. The books tell us of fire tempests and ice deserts and raging floods in the past history of the globe. They also tell us that these occurred before man came. God would not permit his men and women to occupy the house until the house was steady and safe. The mastodon was here, the pterodactyl, the ichthyosaurus—a thousand outlandish creatures with unpronounceable outlandish names, but man was God's favorite and man was withheld until the venture was safe. By means of dread convulsions the waters that covered the earth were settled in their ocean beds; the coal seams and metal lodes were tilted up until they were within easy reach; the rocks were pulverized and converted into fertile soil. Death it meant to the old orders, but life and comfort to the coming man. Ages of preparation—be-

cause in God's opinion the race that was to occupy the earth was worth preparing for.

The Preparation Minute

The Psalmist sings his thanksgiving song to God and says, "He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth . . . and bread which strengtheneth man's heart."¹ There is much in that song which perhaps the Psalmist did not understand. The grass for cattle, the herb producing bread, did not appear on the earth until man was ready to come. In all the manless geologic ages there is no trace of grain-bearing grasses. Just when man was due to arrive did such grasses begin to grow and man found his food ready at hand. But stranger yet, with the coming of man first appeared the flowers that emit an odor. There was no sweetness in the mammoth seaweeds of the Devonian period, or in the dense forests of the carboniferous era, with its giant ferns and club mosses; no clover field to swing its perfumed censers in the summer noon; no June evening intoxication of odor and delight. No Shakespeare could have written of

¹ *Psalm 104: 14, 15.*

“Daffodils

That come before the swallow dares . . . violets
dim
But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes . . .
bold oxlips,
The crown imperial; lilies of all kinds—”

If there were flowers, they were flowers as odorless as the artificial roses that flaunt themselves on my lady's bonnet. It has taken—so say the wise men—50,000,000 years to develop the plant life from its beginnings in the Cambrian strata. Now why give 50,000,000 years to the growth of the oak or the perfection of the orchid and cut man off in his childhood? For however long man may have been on the earth, the days since he has been able to take note of himself and to leave an authentic legible record are few and evil. The horse has had a better chance. The eohippus, or great-grandfather of the horse, was given at least five million years to get himself ready for the blue ribbon on Derby Day, or to carry Sheridan to Winchester when twenty miles away. Yet we are guessing when we say that man has been on the earth 200,000 years, the age of the Neanderthal race, while the years of which there is any safe record are but a handful. If there is purpose in creation, and we find many reasons

to hold that there is, it is not possible to believe that the end of the world will be hastened after so long a period of preparation, and that the race for which all this vast preparation was made will thus be cut off before it reaches its prime. God never breaks his promises.

The Preparation Adequate

Moreover, there is laid up in the sun light and heat for centuries to come. The books tell us that the great furnace yonder in the skies can keep up its present temperature of 7,000 degrees Centigrade for 5,000,000 years; and that by condensation only. We learn that there will be sunshine enough to cause summer to follow spring and fruits to follow blossoms and green grass to grow and golden harvests to ripen and grapes to purple, for a period that dwarfs our time measurements and makes the years through which we have passed seem but a spark in a great conflagration.

The discovery of radium has startlingly modified our thinking on this subject. Heat proceeds from the interior of an atom of this strange substance. When this atom breaks up, electrons, as they are called, fly off at a speed of 100,000 miles a second and with a heat immeasurably greater than the heat from ordinary combus-

tion, and all this with scarcely any diminution of energy. An atom of radium will send out its heat for 2,500 years. These facts and figures are so appalling and revolutionary that scientists were slow in accepting them. At any rate, we have only to concede that there is radium in the sun—and the astronomers say that there are millions of tons there—and at once the duration of its heat may be prolonged for measureless years.

Why, then, destroy the earth, when its expenses are all paid far into the future and the supply of light and heat is stored away for limitless use? This is not God's plan. His machinery wears out. His ships do not go down just beyond the harbor bar, they usually finish their voyage. Before he began to build he sat down first and counted the cost, whether he had sufficient to finish. "Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish."

The Preparation Personal

Of course this line of reasoning presupposes a purpose in the mind of God and an immediate personal interest in the world and its inhabit-

ants. It is difficult sometimes to realize this when wandering far afield. The figures are so vast, the outlook is so appalling, that we are ready to say with the Judean singer on the Judean hills, "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him?"²

The Psalmist would have been much more perturbed if he could have looked through one of our telescopes, or gotten a glimpse of a photograph of the skies. We occupy such a small corner of things. There are spots on the sun—on our familiar, everyday sun—into which the earth and all its ambitions and its armies could be dropped "like a pea in a thimble" and nobody be the wiser.

Milton tells us that Satan set out from Hell to find the earth and after more or less of adventure he discovered it "hanging by a golden chain, in bigness as a star." Rossetti's Blessed Damosel, looking away from the ramparts of Heaven, saw the earth spinning "like a fretful midge." If God were to send a strange angel out from heaven and say to him, "Go find the

² Psalm 8: 3, 4.

earth," it would be like sending a child out upon the prairies to find a certain flower growing among the acres of blossoms; or to send him to find a certain grain of sand lost in the miles of beach along the ocean shore. What, indeed, is man that Thou art mindful of him? "He cometh forth like a flower and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow and continueth not." He forgets to turn off the gas fully at night and in the morning he is dead. He steps on a bit of banana skin and there is crape on the door. A tiny bolt works loose in the flying locomotive and around the next curve of the track a hundred mangled bodies lie beneath the burning wreck. How can we ever reach God, who lives yonder at the far end of the telescope? How can he ever reach us? Does he know we are here? Does he care?

Stars or the Man

But God is not especially impressed by mere size. It is not bigness that appeals to him. He made the Pleiades, but he made also the butterfly's wing that can be broken by a raindrop, and he knows all about it if it should be broken. He pours a bit of liquid sky into the cup of the violet, and Solomon in all his palaces had nowhere a robe of richer color. The planet Jupiter

may be bigger than I; it is also bigger than yonder chattering sparrow; but God says he knows where the sparrow builds its nest, and he notes when it falls. The North Star may seem more important than I, but it is also more important than the crocodile basking upon the banks of the Ganges; yet God takes a whole chapter of the Bible to tell us how much he knows about the crocodile.

And men and women are greater than the stars. These are only lumps of matter. The earth we dig from the cellar—if there were enough of it—would make another star. The child who repeats the old-fashioned nursery ditty, “Twinkle, twinkle, little star, How I wonder what you are,” shows himself greater than the whole winter skies, for these things never wonder. The prophet of Israel in a burst of adoration and amazement said of God that he had weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance. But there is really nothing extraordinary about that. Men are doing more than that in these days. They have suspended the whole solid earth in the air and have found its weight in pounds and ounces. Which is greater, the sun that makes our day and drives away the winter, or the man who runs his surveyor’s chain around the sun, divides it up into

building lots and then can tell you just how much the surface area of the sun would be worth at one hundred dollars per front foot? The comet comes speeding out of the remote, stays with us for a few days, then reverses its helm and disappears down the horizon. Wonderful is that, passing wonderful! Here goes a little round-shouldered, near-sighted man, leaning on his cane and stopping at every corner to catch his breath. Yet he knows just what the comet is made of, knows just how fast it is going, and when it fades out in the far-off blue, he turns to another round-shouldered, pale-faced dyspeptic and says, "It will be back in seventy-five years." Which now is more important to God —the comet that flames through untraveled space, or the man who knows all its habits and can promise its return to the hour, though that return be delayed for a thousand years? One ounce of gray matter in the brain is worth all the stars in the Milky Way. One throb of a loving human heart counts for more with God than all the mountains of the moon, though they were made of solid gold, and all the valleys filled with opals and mother-of-pearl.

Time for Probation

We believe that the human race is important

enough to obtain consideration from God, and that, having made such elaborate, such meticulous preparation for its coming, he will not banish it hence until there has been time for proving.

The end of the world is not yet. The awful throes of the World War that suggested to many the end of the age may have been but the clearing of the field for new and better ventures: the ringing out of the old, the ringing in of the new, and a preparation for nobler modes of life, for sweeter manners, and for purer laws. God has made sundry promises to the universe and to man, and he will keep these promises until every jot and tittle have been fulfilled.

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST



CHAPTER III

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

The Second Coming of Jesus Christ is the battleground of twenty centuries. It is as full of possibilities as the famous apple of Eris, dropped at the marriage feast of Peleus the father of Achilles. To mention it in a religious assembly is to divide the assembly. To attempt to decide it may bring on another Trojan War. From the beginning of the Christian era it has been involved in obscurities and contradictions.

The man who claims to know claims greater knowledge than the angels; for, according to the highest authority, "of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven."¹ Indeed, Jesus himself confessed to ignorance on the mysterious subject. The time of this event seems to be locked in the bosom of God. He alone to whom the grave is naked, and destruction hath no covering, he alone declares "the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done."²

¹ Matt. 24: 36.

² Isa. 46: 10.

Scriptural Ambiguity

It does seem that there is intentional obscurity in scriptural statements, almost amounting to contradiction when this theme is discussed. Words appear to conceal rather than reveal, as Talleyrand urges is the usual and ideal purpose of words.

Take for instance the celebrated passage in Mark 13:1-30. Here we have prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem, strangely involved with prophecies of the coming of the Son of Man. We must accept one of three interpretations:

1. That there is a division to be made in the discourse, a division which does not appear in the textual construction and which would not naturally suggest itself to the hearers.
2. That Jesus was himself mistaken and led his followers to expect the end in that generation, thus contradicting his teachings in regard to the future of his Church, and abandoning his world program.
3. That the prophecies of the second part of this section are to be read in with the first part, and that these prophecies of his coming in power and glory were to be fulfilled at the destruction of Jerusalem; that at this time he

came in the Spirit and has remained until this day.

Each of these interpretations has been advanced and defended by stalwart champions, and the final decision is not yet.

Theories

There are those who teach that the millennium has already begun. Some hold that it is a fixed term of years and will expire at the end of the appointed time; others, that it is an indefinite period and may at any moment and without any warning be terminated, and that Christ will come in person attended by the phenomena described in the gospels and in the Old and New Testament apocalypse. Still others make the whole subject spiritual, regard the prophetical signs and wonders as figures and symbols, look for the end of the world in the orderly processes of nature, and teach that the judgment is the passing of the soul in its chosen pathway upgrade or downgrade—either into new opportunities and larger service, or else into a state of fixed habits of evil, of perverted ethics, and of atrophied moral sense, which is the death in eternity of the highest functions of the soul and which we call eternal death. Each of these

theories is supported by more or less definite statements of Scripture.³

The Creeds

The Church in all ages has believed that Christ will come again. It has been a part of her creeds and her hymns and her prayers. In one of the early declarations, the Apostles' Creed, as we call it, which may be traced back to the fifth century, we read, "He (Jesus) ascended into heaven; and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead." The Nicene Creed, which is even older than the Apostles' Creed, declares, "He ascended into heaven; he cometh to judge the quick and the dead." This creed was adopted at the Council of Nice, 325 A. D. At Constantinople in 381 A. D. this formula was amended to read, "He shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end." Why it was thought necessary to add the phrase "with glory" (*meta doxas*) to the Nicene Creed adopted only a few years before, need not now be discussed;

³ See Holtzman, "*Die Synoptischen Evangelien*," for "an apocalyptic coming at the end of the world, a historical coming at any great crisis, and a dynamical coming in the hearts of believers."

but there is a suggestion of the spectacular, the histrionic, which does not appear in the earlier pronouncement. “The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power” had begun to be felt in the Church—married to the State, the Church had begun to mimic the State.

In all the three great creeds of the Church, the Nicene Creed, the Creed of Constantinople, and the Creed of Athanasius, the coming of Christ is associated with the end of the world and the Day of Judgment. This also is the spirit of the hymns of the Church. Note the great hymn that comes to us out of the heart of the Dark Ages, the “*Dies Irae*.” In this we read:

“Day of Wrath! of days that Day
Earth in flames shall pass away.
Heathen seers and prophets say.
What swift terrors then shall fall,
When descends the Judge of all,
Every action to recall.

Hark! the trump with wondrous tone
Wakes the graves of nations gone,
Forcing all before the throne.”⁴

This “hymn of the giants” sounds the same call that is heard in the hymn credited to

* Translation by Slosson.

Charles Wesley and John Cennick—rather a remarkable partnership, by the way, when we remember Mr. Wesley's opinion of his casual collaborator in this particular production. This is the hymn:

“Lo! He comes with clouds descending,
Once for favored sinners slain;
Thousand thousand saints attending:
Swell the triumph of his train.
Hallelujah!
God appears on earth to reign.”

The Early Church

There was a general impression in the early centuries that the end of the world would not be long delayed. Paul seemed to be of this mind. His letter to the Thessalonians intimates that he expects to be alive at the second appearing of Christ. “For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and

so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."⁵ He even confirms it by the phrase "for this we say unto you by the word of the Lord," as if he claimed divine inspiration as the ground of his belief. In his great chapter to the Corinthians, the chapter in which he builds up step by step the majestic argument for immortality, he again includes himself among those who are to be alive at the great day. "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."⁶ In this same letter to the Corinthians, in the ninth verse of the fourth chapter, he uses a most striking figure: "For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last of all, as men foredoomed to death, seeing that we are become a spectacle (*theatron*) to the intelligent universe." He is alluding to the Isthmian games. The theater is appointed; the spectacle proceeds; the universe gives interested heed; the last act is reached; the audience will soon disperse, and as a closing number on the program the apostles

⁵ I Thess. 4: 15-18.

⁶ I Cor. 15: 51, 52.

are led into the arena. Their sacrificial death is to be the conclusion and the climax of the performance, and then the curtain is to fall. While this may not suggest the expectation that he will live to see the end, it does suggest that in Paul's opinion the world is in its final stage, and the apostolic era is the closing era.

Returning to the letter to the Thessalonians, we note that Paul speaks of the conversion of these his followers as a turning away from idols "to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven." Evidently this was part of his preaching, and he trained the young converts to look for this second coming as an event of the near future.

Paul's Change of Front

Later in life this expectation becomes less assured. He begins to contemplate his own death: absent from the body and present with the Lord.⁷ In his farewell address at Ephesus, just before going up to Jerusalem, he speaks of finishing his course and his ministry: "But I hold not my life of any account as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord

⁷ II Cor. 5: 8.

Jesus.”⁸ And in his closing charge to Timothy, the last of his messages to the Church, looking out through the narrow window of the Mamertine prison and listening for the tread of the executioner whose sword is to end his life, he surrenders the last hope of witnessing in his day the Day of the Lord, and writes his magnificent valedictory to the saints and to the world: “I am now ready to be offered up, and the time has come to loose the tent cords. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith. It remains only that there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous Judge shall award me in that Day; and not only me but unto all men also who have set their love on his appearing.”⁹ He seems to have given up his fond hope of fifteen years ago, that he would be present at the revelation of the Son of God.

So much had happened in that interval. The Church had stripped itself for a long race; the man of lawlessness must first come;¹⁰ and he contents himself with the realization that he has done well on his part, and the time of the loosening of the tent ropes, or the anchor-lifting

⁸ See Acts 20: 24.

⁹ II Tim. 4: 6-8.

¹⁰ II Thess. 2: 3.

—as the words are interpreted—finds him ready to go to his Lord, since his Lord has not seen fit to come to him.

It is possible, however, that instead of changing his mind as to the date of Christ's coming Paul has changed his mind as to the manner of his coming. His conception of the Messiahship has become spiritualized. The kingdom of Christ is more and more realized to be “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”¹¹ It has already begun, perhaps, as those who believe are already delivered “out of the power of darkness” and translated “into the kingdom of the Son of his love.”¹² The *Parousia*, perhaps, was not something that would come in the future, but it was the beginning of the world-wide conquest of Jesus Christ; and so, when the authority of the Jewish system passed away, that conquest had already splendidly begun. Perhaps Paul had reached this conception.

Modified Views

The other apostles seemed to share the same idea, that the end was at hand. The practical James admonishes his brethren to be patient

¹¹ Rom. 14: 17.

¹² Col. 1: 13.

in the midst of their poverty and distress, for "the coming of the Lord is at hand."¹³ Peter, writing to the Christian outlanders, the Jews who were scattered abroad and who were the elect of God, also declares pointblank that "the end of all things is at hand."¹⁴ Later, in the second epistle, if we may grant that it is by the same hand, we see how but a short time has modified the views of the writer. "Where is the promise of his coming? for from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. . . . But forget not this one thing, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."¹⁵ It is as if the writer were trying to say: "Perhaps it is farther away than at first supposed. Perhaps Jesus, like the Psalmist, sometimes used poetical phraseology. Perhaps we must take his words in an accommodated sense. It is not well to be impatient; it is not safe to be dogmatic; and at the same time it is not wise to be unwary."

With such an example as this, we may summon audacity enough to say that the Bible does

¹³ James 5: 8.

¹⁴ I Peter 4: 7.

¹⁵ II Peter 3: 4, 8.

not always mean what it seems to say. It does not always call a spade a spade. It is full of poetry, and we have the word of Macaulay in his great essay on Milton that "no one can be a poet or even enjoy poetry, without a certain unsoundness of mind"; and Plato's "Republic" is responsible for the irreverent statement that "Poets utter great and wise things which they do not themselves understand."

Every day after the ascension of Jesus the disciples looked for the return of their Lord. The two men (Moses and Elijah?) had said to them at that time, "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." And so they returned to Jerusalem with great joy. Every day they listened anxiously for the trump of the archangel and the shout of awakened hosts. Every evening they looked for him who should come as a thief in the night.

Daily Expectation

The Christian martyrs kept up the expectation. They longed for deliverance. They went into the den of evil beasts awaiting the earthquake that should shake the pillars of the moun-

tains and break their iron chains. They looked up through the flames at the stake hoping to see the heavens opened and the Son of Man descending to snatch them out of a still greater conflagration in which the world was to be burned.

This expectation and belief that Jesus would soon come, and come in person, to establish his kingdom was attacked by Augustine, who taught that the Church was the Kingdom of God already established and that the millennium was an accomplished fact. There was, however, a great and general uneasiness at the approach of the year 1000. Again in the thirteenth century the old belief, held all the while by small and fugitive bodies of Christians, came to the front in the teaching of Joachim of Floris, who claimed that there would be a great world change in A. D. 1260. The Pope himself was deeply interested in the findings of this celebrated scholar. At the time of the Reformation the subject was revived, only to be abandoned by the Reformed Church. The year 1666 was especially significant, as not only was it chosen by Christian Pietists as the beginning of the millennium, but Sabbathai Zewi, a Spanish Jew, fired by this expectation, claimed to be the Messiah and planned to abrogate the law, re-

store Palestine, and introduce a new trinity—the Ancient of Days, the Messiah, and the female Shekinah.

The fathers will perhaps remember the excitement of 1844, when all the west was stirred by definite and emphatic prophecies of the immediate coming of Christ, and they will recall the widespread preparation that was made for that event. Sincere and eager Christians throughout the affected territory closed up their earthly business, distributed their earthly possessions to any whose covetousness might be greater than their caution, and prepared for flight. The year 1866 was also designated as the time of the end; then 1870; later 1876; while large publicity was given to the claim of a well-known interpreter of prophecy that the world age would reach its climax in 1914, and Jesus Christ would open his reign on earth. The Great War beginning in that year stirred the prophets to increased zeal, and magazines and newspapers were filled with weird prognostications and vague calculations that sought to find in this conflict the awful war of Armageddon, and the imminent overthrow of the nations.

The Prophecies

All these predictions are the result of calcula-

tions based upon scriptural prophecies. For instance, William Miller, interpreting the statement in Daniel 8:14 that after two thousand and three hundred days—"evenings and mornings"—the sanctuary should be cleansed, or justified, calculates that the end is to come in 1843. This he claims is the meaning of this strange verse. Now herein is a marvelous thing. Did not the angels have access to the prophecies of Daniel? And if this be the interpretation, why could not the angels reach the same conclusion? Then how could it be said some centuries after the prophecies of Daniel were written that the angels do not know what Mr. Miller is so confidently revealing?

Again in Revelation 10 we read of a strong angel whose face was as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire, who stood with his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, and his voice was as the roaring of a lion; this strong angel lifted up his right hand to heaven and swore a great oath that time, or delay, should be no longer. Now Bengel, the celebrated German professor, the father of textual criticism and the author of the "*Gnomon Novi Testamenti*," takes this statement of the angel and by elaborate analysis discovers that the year 1836 is to spell conclusion. Very well,

did not the angel understand the meaning of his own words, or was he selected because he was the only one in heaven who knew the time of the coming of the Son of Man, or had it by this time become general knowledge among the angels?

These questions might be asked in reference to other prophecies just as obscure and other conclusions just as dogmatic. They may sound airy and trivial; but *reductio ad absurdum* cannot always be made to seem reverent, though the cause of reverence may be vastly served sometimes by that process of reasoning.

The Purpose of His Coming

And now, aside from ambiguous prophecies and conflicting interpretations of times and seasons, let us inquire why Jesus is to come. Is it not to establish his kingdom on the earth? And what if that kingdom be already established?

The Pharisees were interested, as are we, to know the time of his coming, and ironically they inquired, "When is the kingdom of which we hear so much to appear?" And Jesus answered, "The kingdom of God is among you,"¹⁶ not, as usually rendered, "The kingdom is within you."

¹⁶ Luke 17: 21.

I think it will not be maintained that there was that within these sneering Pharisees which answered to the new kingdom of Christ, and, as the original will just as easily bear the construction given above, and as this seems indeed the classical usage, it is more rational to give it such interpretation.

The kingdom was not to come with observation. It was not to be attended by any "Lo, here! or lo, there!" It was not to be waited for and watched for and then to break in overwhelming phenomena upon the world. It had already come as the morning comes. It was already working, as leaven works in the measures of meal. The seed was growing silently, surely, growing to the harvest.

At another time, when these same Pharisees muttered among themselves that it was demoniac power by which Jesus was driving out evil spirits, Jesus impaled them upon two horns of a dilemma. If he cast out devils by Beelzebub, then the disciples of the Pharisees, who also cast out devils or claimed the power to do so, were in league with the same uncanny prince. But on the other hand if he by the Spirit of God cast out devils, then the Kingdom of God had come upon them unawares.¹⁷

¹⁷ Matt. 12: 28,

The Constructive Kingdom

Again he declares that he that is least in the Kingdom of God is greater than John the Baptist.¹⁸ This was because the work of construction had begun and it is always greater than the work of destruction. John was a destroyer. He had with fierce invective attacked the evils of the day. He was great as an iconoclast, a surgeon, an executioner; but the humblest builder who builds, the man who brings the tiniest contribution to the enterprise, who makes two blades of grass grow where there has been but one, who brings a wisp of straw for the brickmaking, or sings a song to cheer the drawers of water or the hewers of wood—he means more for the growth of good than all the prophets who have ever merely criticized and castigated the evil. The builders were already building, and the least of them was greater than the Baptist; and the foundations of the Kingdom of God were being laid in the world.

Christ came at the overthrow of Jerusalem, for so he declares: “There be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.”¹⁹ He

¹⁸ Luke 7: 28.

¹⁹ Matt. 16: 28.

is coming in the revelation of the invisible, the uncovering of the unseen. "Gird up the loins of your mind," writes Peter in expectation of "the revelation (unveiling) of Jesus Christ."²⁰

This unveiling has already begun in the material world. More and more are we walking out into the unknown. That which was mystery to the fathers is but commonplace to the children. We have tamed the lightning—once it was the artillery of the gods. We have conquered the great plagues—once they were the scourge of an angered Providence. That which was supernatural a few decades past is writing itself natural. The miracles of the saints in the fifth century are everyday happenings to the sinners of the twentieth century.

The Breadth of the Kingdom

Christ, without whom was not anything made that is made, is unveiling his face. He is coming to us along a thousand highways. He is revealing to us the largeness of his kingdom. Yes, he moves in the midst of his mighty angels of science and discovery and invention—psychology and sociology we call them, and therapeutics and remedial law—but mighty angels

²⁰ I Peter 1: 13.

none the less, and the grave is robbed of its victims, and long standing abuses are corrected, and the evil demons of disease and famine and hopeless poverty are conquered in their strong-holds and cast into outer darkness.

The Triumph of the Invisible

He is coming in the triumph of spirit over matter, the invisible over the visible. It is hard for us to accept the startling declaration of the apostle that the things that are seen are temporal and of little moment. All our instincts and impulses are to reverse this thesis. We build our houses and plant our crops and found our cities upon that which is seen. The mountains yonder, we call them eternal; the stars, we call them fixed. Our landed property we call real estate, as if, whatever may be unreal and may pass away, the earth will be here to the end.

But solid and eternal as may seem this ponderous earth, there is a power that can break it from its moorings. Fixed and majestic as may seem the heavens, a hand shall some day pass across the sky and blot out all its winter splendor. Great as may seem our laws, there is something greater. So we catch sight of a marvelous truth. We glimpse God.

"Through Thee, meseems the very rose is red,
From Thee the violet steals its breath in
May,
From Thee draw life all things that grow
not gray,
And by thy force the happy stars are sped."

The Syrians who came up against Israel were defeated. And they said, "Their gods are gods of the hills . . . but let us fight against them in the plain and surely we shall be stronger than they" (I Kings 20:23). They thought that Israel's God was the God of Israel only, and a God who dwelt in strait places. They found a God who is Lord over all the earth, and who speaks to the sea and it flees away.

Turning and Overturning

It is this God whom we have discovered. This God is coming. He has come. He is already in the world. He is part of history, and maker of new days. If he were to appear tomorrow amid all the overwhelming incidents detailed in the Bible, it would be no greater miracle than the events that are to occur tomorrow or that are the history of yesterday. Note the inrush of Barbarians before which the Roman world went down, and the receding wave that bore the cross and the Bible to the shores of the German

Ocean. This is as tremendous as would be the shaking of Olivet under the tread of the divine feet. Read the absorbing story of the opening one after the other of the doors of the Eastern nations in 1854 or thereabouts, and how the way was prepared for the Gospel to reach 700,000,-000 people in China and Japan and India. This was as great a miracle as the sun in sackcloth and the falling stars of the expected millennium dawn.

See the world in arms, stern, peremptory, uncompromising, the white race and the yellow race and the black race speaking a dozen languages and rallying about a score of flags, all in the same battle line and swearing the same fealty because little helpless peoples have been ravished, and human rights have been threatened by the conspirators of Central Europe. This is as clearly a sign of his presence as the trump of the archangel and the gleaming white throne set up in the midst of the heavens.

The Triumph of the Gospel

The coming of Christ may be seen in the triumph of the gospel agencies. They are saying over and over that the world is growing worse, and that it cannot be saved by present

methods. Dr. Stephen Tyng, Jr., writes: "They are without warrant in the word who are looking for the conversion of the world by the preaching of the cross." Then, what is the cross for and why preach it at all? W. E. Blackstone declares: "There is no hope for the world but in the coming of Christ the King." Of course not, if you let it be assumed that he has ever been absent from the world. Even D. L. Moody taught that the world is hopelessly wrecked, and must be left to perish; and all that we can do is to get as many passengers off as possible before the wreck goes to pieces.

Of course all this discounts the Cross and implies that the dispensation of the Spirit is on the down grade and that the Holy Spirit himself is a failure. We have proof that the world was growing in enlightenment and progress from the days of the cave men up to the brilliant days of Moses in Egypt. We have the best of authority that the law of Moses was the schoolmaster to lead the pre-Christian world to Christ. So there was up grade to Bethlehem; and so all the earlier dispensations have been successful. The Holy Spirit seems to have been the first and the only disappointment. The world of man had a forward look until he, the Spirit of God, was made manifest. His admin-

istration seems to have been a pitiful miscarriage, and he has left the world bankrupt. We do not know what insult to the Holy Spirit—the unpardonable sin—may be, but such an arraignment as this would seem to be dangerously like an insult.

It is further claimed that Jesus did not expect the world to be saved by the preaching of the Gospel. He foresaw the futility of the gospel agencies under the direction of the divine Spirit. He knew that the Spirit could not succeed. He expected to find matters in confusion when he returned in person. This would add to the glory of his appearing. He would then take the reins of government which the Holy Spirit could not manage and bring order out of chaos, and in flaming triumph claim for himself the sovereignty of a world that had successfully rebelled against his appointed representative. He would show the universe that while man's sin was too strong for the third Person in the Trinity and matters were going to the bad, it was not too strong for him. And so again would he get for himself the glory due unto his exalted name. Could we love and honor a Christ with such a program? Is it not unjust to him for us to entertain any such views and their logical sequence and implications?

A Brighter Day

The world is not hopeless. Evil is not stronger than good. Truth may seem at times to be on the scaffold, and wrong may usurp the throne.

“But that scaffold sways the future, and, behind
the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping
watch above his own.”

The Cross of Calvary, the divine machinery of redemption, is all that God promised it to be. The Gospel is still the *dunamis*, the dynamo of God to save.²¹ To say that God intended the Gospel to save a part of the human race only, and now it has been overmatched in the struggle, as God knew it would be overmatched, is Calvinism reenforced by Manichæism. It is fatalism binding the impulses of God, and Jesuitism crediting God with statements that were misleading and that were intended to be misleading.

The world is growing better. The Church has the right of way. The hosts of the great King are marshaling. Figures may be made to prevaricate most flagrantly; still, we must use them when we wish to report the corn crop or to

²¹ Rom. 1: 16.

audit the savings bank. So we may use them, if with caution, in matters spiritual and ecclesiastical.

A Better World

The growth of population in the United States during the last century has been notable. Yet the Church has outstripped the population. This latter multiplied twelve times; the Church multiplied sixty-two times. In 1800 A. D. seven persons in every hundred were Protestant Christians. In 1850 fifteen in every hundred were Christians. In 1870 of every hundred of population seventeen were Christians; in 1880, twenty in every hundred; in 1890, twenty-one in the hundred; in 1900 there were twenty-three communicants of the Protestant Church in each one hundred population—not to mention the Roman Catholic Church, which also made great gain. The figures show well, and there must be some life somewhere back of the figures.

Let us look at the general tone of things, the Nilometer which measures the rise of the waters of good will and brotherly kindness, for which Christianity must always stand. Nearly two thousand years ago an awful calamity befell certain cities clustered about the bay of Naples. The ashes of Mt. Vesuvius buried these cities

and all their people in one great stifling grave. And the world went on and actually forgot their burial place. One bit of literature relating to this catastrophe is preserved : the letter of Pliny to Tacitus. But this letter spends itself in personal matters only. There is no note of sorrow for the dire affliction, no touch of humanity, no suggestion of sympathy for the helpless thousands who went to their doom. It is the dispassionate aloofness of the reporter who has a story to tell and who never mixes sentiment with his story-telling. A few years ago, after the world had been in the tutelage of Christianity for some centuries, another catastrophe came to that same land. Messina, just below Naples, is overwhelmed by an earthquake. And the ground had scarcely ceased rocking, when from all over the world help begins coming. Battleships become breadships. Uniformed soldiers become organized hospital corps, and stranger hearts under far and alien skies beat warm with sympathy for the suffering and the dead. Christianity has come into the temple of the human heart and is driving out the jobbers and the money-changers.

Once upon a time the sea was the highway of the freebooter and ships were highway robbers. No captain ventured outside the harbor without

his armament, and whatever under an alien flag crossed his path was lawful prey. Some years since a great ship struck an iceberg, and from its signal instrument went out the cry of distress. Every ship within reach of that distress call turned aside to help. No captain or crew in such hurry, no freight so perishable, no passenger so impatient to reach home, but all were ready to reverse the helm and hasten with help toward the place of disaster. It was the call of brotherhood, and Jesus Christ has brought the sense of brotherhood into the world.

Recently a great empire of Europe announced its purpose to sink any ship that crossed the path of its submarines, thus turning back the history of the world five hundred years and making the sea again a terror to travelers; and the world answered the challenge by taking up arms to crush this anachronism, this reversion to type, this monstrosity of the primeval days, born out of time and masquerading as a Christian state. That is why Kipling wrote:

“Once there was a People, terror gave it birth.
Once there was a People, and it made a hell of earth.

Earth arose and crushed it—listen O ye slain;
Once there was a People—it shall never be again.”

The late war was a World War because the Christian world will not tolerate the barbarism and the diabolism of the stone age in the twentieth century.

The World War and the End

The war was not a sign that the end is near, but the sign of a new beginning. So long as Central Europe was poisoned by false ideals there was danger to the whole body cosmic. The cancer of autocracy must be cut out before the world could be safe. When the highest authority in Germany, next to the Kaiser,²² declares, "With my interpretation of Christianity I am really endowing their German swords with a German spirit by means of which they can conquer the world to their heart's content"; when seventy-three German professors solemnly sign a paper in which the carnival of butchery and riot in Belgium is said to be a measure of self-defense, legal and right; when a great leader is applauded by a great convention for the following: "We must know neither sentiment nor considerations of humanity, nor compassion"—when all this comes to pass and when the world rises in a body to crush such views, it does look as if the world were alive to its

²² Maximilian of Baden, Chancellor.

own danger and might be trusted to take care of its own interests. It does seem that the Christ who came to bring a sword had appeared at headquarters and that the nations of the earth had rallied at his call.

Not a sign is the World War that the world-end is at hand and that the Son of Man will shortly come with his great angels to bring righteousness into the earth, but a proof that he, the All-Just and All-Terrible, is here, and that he does not need the angels—for men are afield with him to make an end of the last and greatest woe and so inaugurate a better day.

The Landlord and the Tenant together have been giving the House a good spring house-cleaning. This is always hard on parasites and rubbish, but it means a new lease granted by the Landlord and a new obligation on the part of the Tenant to help keep the premises clean.

Jesus Christ is coming every day in all the uplift and philanthropies and altruisms of the age. And if he shall come in person some other day, to usher in a glorious millennium, it will be to bring the crown and climax to the present dispensation, and not to correct the mistakes and atone for the shortcomings of the gracious Spirit of God.

AFTER DEATH—WHAT?

CHAPTER IV

AFTER DEATH—WHAT?

I. Is MAN IMMORTAL?

The man who thinks of immortality, who hopes for immortality, has learned to live in a large world. He has pushed back his horizon beyond the world limits. He is a citizen of the universe. Until this thought comes he has been crouching, Elijah-like, in his cave. And the walls of the cave are his frontiers, and the mouth of the cave is his only outlook. But the idea of immortality is like the wind and the fire and the earthquake that came to the cloistered prophet and sent him forth to anoint kings and to found a new dynasty. Without the outlook into the hereafter life becomes

“A still, salt pool locked in with bars of sand,
Left on the shore; that hears all night
The plunging seas draw backward from the
land
Their moonled waters white.”

And with no hope that the morning tide will bring the plunging seas in flood tide again to deliver the lonely waters of the pool.

Professor Haeckel is consistent. He calls the "dogma of athanatism"—that is, the doctrine of existence after death—"the impregnable citadel of superstition." He claims that it belongs wholly and entirely to the realm of religious poetry; that in truth the human spirit perishes with the destruction of the brain. He therefore calls the world a world of blind chance—"a bungled planet." He advises a dose of morphine or potassium cyanide for infants who are born cripples. He admires the old custom of abandoning the puny infants, which obtained among the Spartans. He is consistent, for if this life be all, and conditions in this life be adverse, and persistently adverse, then it had better be ended at once and done with.

Death

Thoughts of death will come to the young and the old. They come out of a dim and groping past. The dawning of the idea that death is universal and inexorable is claimed by Professor Shaler to mark the passage of man from the lower to the higher stages of existence. In the recent days of unparalleled evil, of battle, murder, and sudden death—days and weeks of suspense when so many waited yet feared to receive news from the trenches and from the

ships—in those dark days we were driven to think much upon death. And with this thought of death always comes the question of the future.

After Death

As soon as the world knew death, there came the hope and the fear of something after death. Men slept and wakened on the next day—then, when men died, the great wonder came to the survivors, if that which lived when the body was still did not live when the body was cold. Death is the great mystery of life, silent, solemn, formidable, full of meaning; not so much for what it is as for what it may imply; not so much on account of the world lost as on account of a possible world found. The yearning of the poet is the unexpressed prayer of so many hearts:

“That it were possible
For one short hour to see
The souls we loved, that they might tell us
What and where they be.”

Here is the way we are all going; here is the door that opens outward; here is the brink upon which we must stand; and if there be any voice or message from the beyond, we strain our very souls to catch the sound.

Body and Soul

It is an old truism that these bodies are not ourselves. They are our property. Indeed, that which we are is more real than that which we see. Men have doubted, or have affected to doubt, the existence of the external world. The trees, the mountains, the stars, the earth itself, have been resolved into ideas of the mind. But only the wildest theorists—the Hegelian school that out-theorizes Hegel himself—have doubted the existence of the mind. We do not know that we have hands or feet or a body. These things we infer from the testimony of our senses, but the existence of the ego, the self, is a direct postulate of the consciousness and does not admit of a doubt.

Our body is the house we live in. At some past time we moved in; at some future time we shall move out. So in simple words writes the poet of the South:

“This body is my house, it is not I.
Herein I sojourn till in some fair sky
I lease a fairer dwelling, built to last
Till all the carpentry of time is past.

What tho’ the rafters break, the stanchions rot;
When earth has dwindled to a glimmering
spot,

When this clay cottage falleth, I'll immerse
My long cramped spirit in the universe."

—Frederick Lawrence Knowles.

The tenant is greater than the house he lives in. The body may be diseased and helpless, but the spirit at the same time may be vivid and alert. The outward man may perish, the inward man be renewed day by day. Chains may be upon the feet and prison walls may shut us in, but the universe belongs to the soul; it can never be made a prisoner. Madame Guyon was in the Bastille. She had incurred the censure of the authorities. They had determined to crush her spirit and to strangle her prayers. But she was still free. The gyves are not yet invented that can manacle the soul. And in the darkness of her cell she is said to have written:

“My cage confines me round,
Abroad I cannot fly,
But tho' my wings are closely bound
My heart's at liberty.
My prison wall cannot control
The flight, the freedom of my soul.”

The body may be asleep in its own bed, while in and out over desert sands, along the shores of distant seas, amid a thousand scenes of memory or imagination, the tireless spirit may

go: the house of the body locked up for the night, the tenant, with latch-key, gone out to range the universe over, to come back in the morning and let itself into its home in time for breakfast. If the body should crumble and fall in the absence of this restless tenant, is it not possible that the spirit will occupy a new and better house?

Body Changes

The fact is, the body is constantly crumbling and as constantly being rebuilt. Every throb of the heart means the tearing down of body substance. The house we live in, the framework of tissue and of bones which we call the body, has been repaired so often that not a vestige of the original is left. But the tenant abides. Who was it left the old home in the country thirty years ago with the mother's good-by blessing warm in the heart? Who was it twenty years ago married your wife? You? But your body has been transformed and you have had a new one again and again. How can the vows taken by your lips be held sacred when the lips that spoke have been exchanged for new ones? How is the contract binding, signed by a hand that long since has disappeared and has had a new one take its place? Ah! But we know that the

lips and the hand are only servants working a master's will, and that the master spirit is there, bound by the contract, though the pen be broken and the hand replaced. If a man commit murder today, ten years hence his new body may be hanged for what the old body did; for, though the earlier body be succeeded by another that had no part in the crime, the soul abides and the soul is responsible. And in the ages that are to be, when the body has mouldered into dust, God may deal with the soul, the soul that came intact and unimpaired through all the transformations of the body, and is responsible for all the good or ill in which the body engaged.

The great question of the olden time, as we are told, was whether the soul was the musical instrument or the musician. Plato stubbornly held that the soul was the performer and the body was only the instrument. The music is affected by the quality of the instrument as well as by the skill of the artist. So the soul sits at the keyboard of the brain and plays: and the great organ of a Demosthenes or a Chrysostom or a Lord Pitt sends the oratorical thunder echoing down the world's centuries; and the choir organ of a Ruskin or a Stevenson or an Irving distills upon the senses and fills human hearts with delight. Then some day comes a

heavy hand fumbling in the dark among the organ pipes, and the keyboard is broken and tossed aside; but the undaunted soul rises from its seat and turns away, to find a new and better instrument in the music halls of eternity.

Body Limitations

There comes a time when the body is outgrown. Should it live a thousand years its growth would be no greater; a thousand years to the soul, with all conditions favorable, and the soul would overleap the Alps. It would then begin to fulfil its promises and grow its pinions of power. Life is apparently long enough for the body. The machine runs as long as its wheels are in good condition. It does not seem planned for longer service. But at the end of three-score years and ten, the soul has only begun to live. Its wings droop not, its eye dims not, its energy abates not; and it goes into the grave, or it seems to go into the grave, or it lays away the now useless body in the grave, in many instances just as it has learned the art of living.

What a mockery of life if this be all of life! To equip the splendid ship of the human intellect with its apparent adaptations to the wide seas of eternity, then to wreck it on the bar at

the mouth of the harbor; to erect the glorious cathedral of human life, gilded and majestic, then to burn it to the ground on the day of dedication—surely this is woeful waste! We protest against such improvidence. We stand in the presence of a Keats and a Shelley and a Chatterton, whose marvelous light went out in the morning; or of a Lord Kelvin, a Carlyle, a Gladstone, who fell in the midst of their greatest victories; and, unless there be a hereafter, we protest against such inefficiency. We charge the Creator with irony and unfaith. Said Victor Hugo: “I feel that I have not said the thousandth part of what is in me. When I go down to the grave I can say, ‘I have finished my day’s work,’ but I cannot say, ‘I have finished my life.’” What a disappointment to the universe not to give him another day somewhere!

It is said that Michael Angelo was kept for days by one of the Medicis at work upon a snow image. We cannot vouch for the story, but it would not be inconsistent with much that is history in the life of the great sculptor and much that is known of his lawless patron. Such folly would be the creation of man if man were anything but immortal: a brilliant promise, a gilded farce, a snow image fashioned with ex-

quisite taste and marvelous finish—the work of a master—to stand today, and tomorrow or the day after to melt and disappear.

The Higher Conception

This conception of a life that passes unharmed through the grave is the only conception worthy of life's importance. Tell a man that there is no other world, that what he does not get here he will never get, and can we blame him if he subscribe to the Epicurean's creed? If the wheels stop at the grave let us put on the pressure and go as far as we can and get as much as we can while the fire burns. Crowd on the sail and steer out into the wide waters and let our hearts be merry and let us taste life, for we will soon go down into the green sea depths and the world will forget us.

But give us immortality, and life is not only important in itself but also important as the threshold of life. What does it matter to the heir of the future if the present be gay or gloomy? His thoughts are large thoughts; his eye is on the invisible; his song in the night is:

“I’m but a stranger here,
Heaven is my home;
Earth is a desert drear,
Heaven is my home;

Danger and sorrow stand
Round me on every hand;
Heaven is my fatherland,
Heaven is my home.”

If losses come and accidents and bereavements —what of that? He is to live forever, and there will be ample time to get back all he has lost. The today of time may be cloudy, but the sun of eternity will shine with undimmed, undying splendor when the glad tomorrow dawns. On the Delaware River it is the custom for the fishermen to go down the bay every spring and build for themselves a hut for shelter during the shad and sturgeon season. The hut is rough and unpainted, but—they have a better house at home. Its beds are hard, its walls are bare, but they do not expect to stay there long.

We have not here a continuing city, and when the earthly house of our bodily frame be dissolved, “we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” We stay here only during the working season, and perhaps the boat will sail and we shall all go home tomorrow.

An Ancient Hope

We do not know how, nor when, this universal

hope and expectation of immortality came into the human heart. John Fiske suggests that it came through dreams in which the dead appeared and seemed to be alive; and that so was born the conception of conscious existence in a hereafter. The records show that the first evidences of such belief appear in the new stone age. In this age we first find tools and weapons and food, left in the tomb of the dead. Evidently the survivors thought there was some sort of life in death and so provision was made for that life. This was perhaps fifty thousand years ago, and shows how old is this hope of a hereafter, and how it has dwelt through the ages in the human breast. In Egypt in 4000 B. C. the body was embalmed, and this was expected in some way to insure immortality. In India immortality implied a series of existences or incarnations, without beginning and without end.

In Greece this hope of the future was more intellectual and was based upon the nature of the soul. Faith was the offspring of argument and reason. Socrates in his well-known address to his judges after his condemnation said, "It is now time to depart, for me to die, for you to live. But which of us is going to a better state is unknown to everyone but God." In his last

conversation with his disciples, as reported by Plato, in "Phædo," he declares:

"Can the soul which is invisible and which goes to another place like itself, excellent, pure, and invisible, to the presence of a good and wise God, can this soul of ours, being of such and such a nature, be immediately dispersed and destroyed as most men assent? Far from it, my dear Cebes and Simmias."

Immortality by Argument

This is the attitude of many thinkers. They would argue themselves into the high belief—prove an eternity by the analogies of time. So writes Carlyle: "What then is man! He endures but for an hour and is crushed before the moth. Yet in the being and in the working of a faithful man is there already a something that pertains not to this wild death-element of Time: that triumphs over Time, and *is* and will be when Time shall be no more." So argues Sir Oliver Lodge: Intellect and will and memory and love shall never "vanish into nothingness nor cease to be. They did not arise with us: they never did spring into being: they are as elemental as the Godhead itself, and in the eternal Being they shall endure forever." So theorizes Emerson: "The implanting of a desire

indicates that the gratification of that desire is in the constitution of the creature that feels it. . . . The Creator keeps his word with us. . . . All I have seen teaches me to trust the Creator for all I have not seen. Will you with vast cost and pains educate your children to produce a masterpiece and then shoot them down?" So argues the versatile Joseph Cook, proving immortality to his own satisfaction and the satisfaction of his audience of Boston business men and scientists, by a long, involved argument from the nerves and instinct and evolution.

Bishop Butler reaches the same conclusion in his ponderous "Analogy"—the *pons asinorum* of the old-time logician, the gymnasium of the intellectual athlete. Here, after an involved and tortuous system of syllogisms, in which he sets out in a dozen different directions, only to prove that each hypothesis is impossible, he finally announces that, "as death does not appear likely to destroy us, it is probable that we shall live on, and the next life may be as natural as this present."

Immortality by Demonstration

Still another attitude is taken by those who look for direct demonstration: they would commune face to face with the departed. We call

them slightlying and carelessly, spiritualists or psychics or clairvoyants. But the day is past when we can dismiss the claims of spiritualism or spiritism with a shrug. It is deserving of sober attention at the least. The attitude of the general public is very fairly given by Stephen Leacock in his "Personal Adventures in the Spirit World." He declares that he found Napoleon unable to understand French—perhaps it was Mr. Leacock's French; and that Aristotle's range of conversation was limited to the wish that everybody might know how happy he was—perhaps there was again confusion of tongues. The great-grandfather of the author, who had been an able English judge, seemed to be feeble-minded, but was happy as feeble-minded people are apt to be. Admiral Nelson, when consulted about the submarine, held that if all the men in the submarines were where he is they would be very happy, which suggests to Mr. Leacock the pressing advisability of sending them there. And so on through the pleasant pages. It is all a joke—but so has spiritualism been in the minds of many who have given it any thought.

When, however, such men as Sir William Crookes, Alfred Russel Wallace, Sir Oliver Lodge, and Sir Conan Doyle are interested in

psychical research; when the last-mentioned is ready to say of five books that appeared last year in the interest of psychical research, "Those five alone would, in my opinion, be sufficient to establish the facts for any reasonable inquirer," then it is time to reconstruct some of our premises and not be quite so positive of our conclusions. At any rate let us give heed to the evidence submitted.

We remember that Galileo met a storm of protest when he set out to unhinge the universe and hang the earth upon nothing. We know what was said of Galvani, who seemed to put new life into the legs of dead frogs by the electric current. We remember the ignorant and superstitious sailors on the river Weser, who are said to have destroyed the steamboat of Denis Papin one hundred years before the Clermont sailed up the Hudson, and how Napoleon said of Fulton that he was a charlatan whose only desire was to make money. We know how Darwin became outlaw and taboo to the entire Christian Church, and ten thousand pulpits pilloried him and tried to turn his great "Origin of Species" into a burlesque. We, therefore, can afford to wait. We may also ponder over the suggestive words of General Drayson: "This world is full of fools and knaves. So is

the next. You need not mix with them there any more than you do in this world.” Alfred Tennyson shows the wisdom of the wise men when he writes:

“Dare I say
No spirit ever broke the band
That stays him from the native land
Where first he walked when claspt in clay?”

And if our personal endeavor fail to pierce the veil and obtain messages from the other side, and if our failure seem to settle our views on the subject, then we may meditate over the further words of Tennyson:

“How pure at heart and sound in head,
With what divine affections bold
Should be the man whose thoughts would
hold
An hour’s communion with the dead.”

Immortality and the Bible

The Bible, however, nowhere teaches that man is naturally immortal. The only place in which immortality is assured unconditionally is in Genesis, where the lie is given to God as the uncanny visitor in the Garden of Eden says, “Ye shall not surely die.”¹ The authority for this categorical statement is not of the best, all

¹ Gen. 3: 4.

things considered. On the other hand, Jesus Christ was the first man who came into the world with a positive knowledge of the future. His attitude in the matter seems to be clear. He said: "My sheep (or the sheep, those that are mine) hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, (or they shall certainly not perish forever) and no one shall snatch them out of my hand."² This does not seem to imply natural immortality, and between the two—the serpent in the garden who affirms that man is inherently immortal and that he shall not die though he sin, and the Son of God who announces unending life as his special gift to his own people—it is not difficult to make choice.

Immortality is an attribute of God. The claim is definitely made that the King of kings and Lord of lords "only hath immortality, dwelling in light, unapproachable; whom no man hath seen, nor can see."³ The word immortality is applied to man only as something to be attained by patient continuance in well doing⁴ or as the condition which arises when

² John 10: 27, 28.

³ I Tim. 6: 16.

⁴ Rom. 2: 7.

the Great Change comes. For this change must come, since flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. And so this corruptible *must* put on incorruption, which is a new condition; and this mortal *must* put on immortality, which is a new estate, vouchsafed to man by the grace of God.

Immortality and Genesis

Does it not seem, from a study of the early chapters of the Bible, that God mercifully spared man immortality as soon as it threatened to be an immortality of evil? The Tree of Life, according to the old story, was in the midst of the Garden, and was, let us say, the guarantee or the symbol of continued existence. But when man sinned, and when continued existence might mean continued sin and continued sorrow, the Lord God sent him forth from the Garden, “lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever.”⁵ And ever since that day the flaming sword has guarded the way that leads to the tree of immortality, and only those who “wash their robes that they may have the right to come to the tree of life”⁶ can ever hope or

⁵ Gen. 3: 22.

⁶ Rev. 22: 14.

dare to pass this sleepless, incorruptible sentinel, and so be assured of an endless future.

Assurances

But we believe that God's people shall live forever. With John Fiske we hold to "the reasonableness of God's work, and the universe would be unreasonable if it should mean the disappointment of our highest and purest hopes." We believe in it with the philosopher Kant, who says: "In view of the splendid endowments of our human nature and the shortness of life, which is so inadequate to its development, I find ground for faith in the future life of the human soul." We believe in it with George Macdonald, who writes: "I came from God and I am going back to God and I won't have any gap of death in the middle of my life." We believe in it with Alfred Tennyson, who in the long sad requiem over his friend writes:

"My own dim life should teach me this,
That life shall live for evermore,
Else earth is darkness at the core,
And dust and ashes all that is."

Then, turning his face toward the strong Son of God, he trustingly whispers:

“Thou wilt not leave us in the dust:
Thou madest man, he knows not why,
He thinks he was not made to die,
And thou hast made him: thou art just.”

But especially do we believe it because He whose return from the grave we celebrate every springtime, declares: “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die.”⁷

II. IS SIN ETERNAL?

What, now, is the future of the finally impenitent? Is sin to be punished and is sin eternal? These questions must be considered, after what has gone before, for if immortality be a condition of righteousness, what is the future of the unrighteous?

A Subject Taboo

These and kindred subjects are not often treated in the modern pulpit—whereat the world wonders. And the world is not slow in saying that the Church is losing definite convictions and that the preachers prefer to prophesy smooth things, and to camouflage the ugly and

⁷ John 11: 25, 26.

disagreeable ones. The explanation, however, lies further back than that. It is in the new social standards and the new religious emphasis. We are nowadays focusing attention upon the here, rather than upon the hereafter. Our eternity is today. Whereas our fathers rang the changes on the streets of gold and the fires that are not to be quenched, their sons in the ministry are more concerned with the pavements of our earth cities and the sanitation of the slums. These later preachers deal with men, rather than with angels or devils.

The Tomorrow of Sin

Nothing is more emphatically taught in the Bible than that evil consequences will follow a life of evil deeds. The great struggle of the Book is to make this clear and vital. All other fears are lost in this fear; all other dangers are dwarfed into insignificance in the presence of this danger. There is suppressed agony in the words of Jesus when he considers this question, a melancholy upon his face as if he had looked upon the doom of the impenitent and had never shaken off the impression. He knelt in the garden, and blood drops fell from his brow as he pondered the doom of sin; he laid himself upon the cross and broke his loving heart to

rescue men from this doom. Yes, there is great salvation in the Bible, wide like the wideness of the sea, or like the vast star-sown sky that nightly looks into the depths of the sea; and there is great ruin there, an illimitable desert of woe, sun-smitten and barren and dread.

Is it safe to die, as Nero died, by his own hand and in the midst of his debaucheries? Is it safe to die, as Macbeth died, with blood upon his hands that would incarnadine great Neptune's ocean, and with blasphemies upon his lips? Is it safe for the soul to venture upon the seas of eternity with a wild crew of evil passions and corrupt habits, that may scuttle the ship and sink it in the dark waters?

The Divorce of Sin

Moreover, there must be some separation in eternity even as there is in time. Yonder is a man with a striped suit and a shaven head. He is doomed, and justly doomed, to a life-long imprisonment. He is regarded as unsafe to be at large. Would he not be unsafe on the other side of the grave? Yonder hangs a man to the tree limb or the lamp-post, strung up there because a long-suffering community could not longer tolerate his presence, could not even wait the slow process of the law. Without

apology for these local paroxysms, would you wish this libertine and villain to move within range of your family hereafter any more than you would wish it here?

If we who are so evil ourselves cannot tolerate some forms and degrees of crime, can we wonder if God must draw the line somewhere? If we feel that our homes must be guarded against pollution, may we not understand why the gates of heaven must be closed against some who would bring evil and confusion even into the city of God?

The Penalty of Sin

What that separation means no man knows. Whether penalty will go beyond mere separation, and become the imposition of positive suffering, no man knows. We are not even guessing at it nowadays. We have come a long way from the attitude of Tertullian. He writes:

“How shall I admire, how laugh, how rejoice, how exult when I behold so many proud monarchs groaning in the lowest abyss of darkness; so many magistrates who persecuted the name of the Lord, liquefying in fiercer fires than they ever kindled against Christians; so many sage philosophers blushing in red hot flame with their deluded scholars.”

This is almost too horrible to repeat in this century. Jonathan Edwards is just as vivid, though there is graciously lacking the element of personal satisfaction. "The world," he announces, "will probably be converted into a great lake, or liquid globe, of fire, in which the wicked shall be overwhelmed. Their heads, their eyes, their tongues, their vitals shall forever be full of glowing, melting fire, hot enough to melt the very rocks." This reads like a page of Uncle Remus. The colored mammies would use the same jargon to frighten their wide-eyed pickaninnies into shivering subjection. A long, long way have we come from all this to the attitude of Conan Doyle, who quotes Julia Ames with approval when she writes, "The greatest joy of Heaven is emptying Hell." A long, long way to the statement of G. Lowe Dickinson that "most good men would prefer to resign heaven, if they could have it only on condition that others are enduring hell."

Complications

To manufacture a future out of the picturesque language of the Bible is the work of the primary class. The fire of the unquenchable lake prepared for the devil and his angels is not more real and can be no more threatening

than the sea of glass mingled with fire on which the saints are to stand. Burning glass might prove as disquieting as burning brimstone. The streets of heaven are not likely to be paved with gold—cheap, common gold.

God most likely has better materials than gold and pearls and crystal glass for those who obey his law. He manufactures his diamonds out of the black carbon that smolders at the heart of the world; his pearls out of the tears of the wounded oyster; his sapphires out of the yellow clay that the cattle trample under foot; and his opals, with a heart like the sunrise on the snow peaks, out of the sand blown along the seabeach. Somewhere in the laboratories of the sky, with the star-dust for his raw material, and the northern Aurora and the flaming suns as his furnace fires, he may produce that which will put to shame our diamonds, and make our whitest pearls seem plebeian pebbles. He is not driven to use such crude material as the precious stones of earth out of which to build the mansions for the saints; he does not need to use such crude material as earthly fire as a means of punishment for the impenitent sinner. The Bible does not tell all the story. It does not try. In our present stage of development the whole story cannot be told.

Going Down

Now as to the duration of this place and state of evil. Is sin eternal? Are impenitent sinners forever to suffer the conscious results of their impenitence? Sin is on the down grade in this world; it will be on the down grade in the world that comes after this; and some time it must reach the bottom. It is the disuse of the faculties of the soul, and faculties disused sooner or later become atrophied. The island birds of the Pacific once had strong wings. There were no enemies and so there was no occasion to use their wings. They have become practically wingless. The fish in the Mammoth Cave once had eyes. They have never used them and they have lost them.

Suppose the soul, which can live only in the light of God, persist in rejecting God. He is the breath of the human spirit; what if the spirit refuse to breathe? For years going away from God; for ages starving for God; for ages stifled for the breath of God—will not death come, and will not that death mean extinction?

Still Going Down

Natural death is a gradual process. We do not die all at once. First, the sight fails and the

light grows dim; then the taste is blunted; then the sense of smell, then the sense of hearing, and finally the sense of touch; then the spirit goes away. In that awful eternity may it not be possible that one by one the faculties of the soul—of love, of fear, of hope, of faith, of spiritual desire—will pass away from disuse, until some time in the ages the last power is gone and the soul fades away, sinks like an abandoned ship in the dark stormy waters of that mysterious unexplored sea? This would be eternal death, that is, death in eternity—death begun with the first sin, the first cutting of the cables of the soul, and completed amid the ghastly shadows of a dread hereafter, with no one to know save the great God, whose loving heart continued to the very end to yearn over the wreck that had been made.

The undying worm and the unquenchable fire are both emblems or images of utter destruction. The highest penalty in human law is the death penalty, which ends forever the relation of the criminal to the realm in which the sentence is passed. Why claim that the worm, which utterly destroys, shall continue indefinitely its work of destruction? Why believe that the death penalty once executed is repeated through an endless series of deaths?

A Definite Theory

Instead of being mitigated, the punishment for sin is intensified and brought within reasonable human comprehension. Instead of a vague and indefinite penalty for wrongdoing—gruesome, grotesque, inconceivable, a natural target for lampoons, dismissed by the thinking mind as a moral monstrosity—instead of this, here is a tremendous fact, an awful, intelligible result of sin: the loss of existence; a black chasm into which the sinner shall fall; a disappointment of the dearest instinct of the soul, the instinct of continuity. This the preacher can proclaim without reservation, and this the people can hear without a smile.

“There is a death whose pang
Outlasts the fleeting breath;
O what eternal horrors hang
Around that second death.

Then, God of wrath and grace,
Teach us that death to shun,
Lest we be banished from Thy face,
For evermore undone.”

This is death not by act of God, but by act of the soul; not punishment, but suicide. And down through the years comes the voice of the

Son of God, the Almighty Saviour of men, the voice that out-thundered the storm on the Galilean lake, and that called Lazarus alive from the dead: “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life.”

THE GREAT ADVENTURE

CHAPTER V

THE GREAT ADVENTURE

I. Is THERE ANYTHING IN DEATH TO FEAR?

Men and women at their best do not fear death. It is but a part of the scheme of things, an inevitable something that comes somewhere along in life and means much or little as the case may be. The fathers talked often of dying grace and offered it as a precious guerdon of the Christian religion, a heritage of the saints.

“Dying Grace”

But dying grace, in the form of calmness and courage in the face of death, is not a peculiar property of the saints. Any high or heroic emotion may serve as well as the Christian religion. At any rate, other emotions have produced a like effect. The wife of the Roman officer sentenced to die by his own hands, who, when her husband's courage failed, plunged the dagger into her own heart and died with a smile on her face as she said, “It does not hurt, O my husband,” was not drawing on the resources of religion. It was love for her doomed husband and shame at his craven spirit that nerved her for the crisis.

Dr. Johnson lived all his life under the shadow of a great fear. He would not allow the subject of death to be discussed in his presence. He claimed that the whole of life is but keeping away the thought of death. And yet he died without fear. He even refused to be drugged in his last moments. He chose to meet the end with brain unclouded, and walked down into the shadows without a tremor. It would be hard to prove that the Christian faith was the source of the calmness with which this great scholar faced the unknown. Perhaps it might be admitted in the case of Charles Wesley, if there were no other explanation. He, too, lived in fear of death. His was the natural melancholy of the poetic temperament, aggravated by the overstudy of his college days. He prayed daily and anxiously that God would grant him patience and an easy death. His last hymn is a rehearsal of his going:

“In age and feebleness extreme
Who shall a sinful worm redeem?
Jesus, my only hope Thou art,
Strength of my failing flesh and heart.
Oh, could I catch a smile from Thee
And drop into eternity.”

And in the end he was smiled into eternity.

The World War and Modern Degeneracy

Perhaps never before has this heroic passion that girds the soul for special strain been seen more clearly than in the Great War. The world was not an imposing world when the War broke. There was a general impression of moral deterioration. There was a suspicion of lack of stamina, of the softness of self-indulgence.

England was degenerate—this was the current persuasion. Prince Lichnowsky, the German Ambassador to England, whose revelations within recent months have shaken Central Europe, sent word to the home office at Berlin that the English would not fight on any account. They were rich and their chief desire was to enjoy luxury and comfort. They were so weak and relaxed that they allowed women—the suffragettes—to intimidate them. This, of course, disposes of the maudlin statement of the Kaiser that the sword was forced into his hands, but it shows how England was regarded in 1914.

Kipling puts it in keen-edged phrases in “The Islanders”:

“Fenced by your careful fathers, ringed by
your leaden seas,
Long did ye wake in quiet and long lie down
at ease;

. . . flanneled fools at the wicket and muddied oafs at the goal.

But ye say, ‘It will mar our comfort’; ye say, ‘It will diminish our trade.’

Do you wait for the spattered shrapnel ere ye learn how a gun is laid?”

It is a vivid picture, somewhat Kiplingesque, but it is what the world thought of England and Englishmen before the War.

And France—well, everybody thought Paris was France, and that the Moulin Rouge or Montmartre or the Latin Quarter was Paris, until Frenchmen at Verdun in the presence of overwhelming odds said, “They shall not pass,” and calmly died to block the way with their bodies. And everybody thought French women were playthings, until the young French wife whose husband was in the trenches was asked if she did not grieve over his absence, and she answered, “Why, monsieur, I am only his wife—France is his mother.” Shakespeare saw the France that was to be when in “King John” he wrote:

“France, whose armour conscience buckled on,
Whom zeal and charity brought to the field
As God’s own soldier.”

And America—well, James M. Beck says

America is the Hamlet among the nations and quotes the Queen Mother in corroboration: "He is fat and scant of breath." We were a nation of shopkeepers—so the world said, adapting Napoleon's sneer at England; we were dollar-worshipers. Our old men were dying of dry rot and our young men were honeycombed with ease, drunken in the trough of Circe, invertebrate loafers and spenders. This is what the world thought.

The World War and the Great Emotions

But the War came like the trump of the archangel—and all the world was changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. Men who were men proved their manhood, and men became men who had never been men before. Two chaplains were standing in the trenches after an attack and they heard the cry of a wounded man out in No Man's Land—the land where the pestilence walketh in darkness and destruction wasteth at noonday. They were admonished not to venture out, but one of them went and was immediately shot down. The ranking officer ordered the other chaplain to stay in the trench, but he said, "I have higher orders, sir," and out he went to die. And the men said, "Our

sky pilots are ready to ‘go west’ at any time to show the fellows the way.” A young American, telling the story of a raid, said: “I’ve sure got to hand it to those men with the Red Cross on their sleeve. They worked like mad in that hell out there. They seemed to have but one idea: to do their duty, and they did not give a continental for their lives while doing it. Take it from me, they were game right to the core.”

After a German charge had been repelled and the raiders had collected their wounded, it was noticed that they had missed one. Half-way between the trenches he lay and his cries for help could be heard by friend and foe. Then a British officer was seen to clamber out of the trench. At once the Germans fired. On he went, badly hit and staggering, until he reached the wounded enemy. Picking him up, to the amazement of both armies he carried him straight to the German lines, laid him at the feet of a German officer, saluted, and started to return. The German officer, recovering from his stupefaction, hastened to overtake the Englishman, unpinched the Iron Cross from his own breast, and fastened it to the breast of his enemy, while both trenches shook with cheers that went up from thrilled and softened hearts. The records abound in such deeds. They were the common-

places of war. They were the unconscious expression of the day.

Coningsby Dawson writes of the hospital in his book of verse "The Glory of the Trenches":

"Hushed and happy whiteness,
Miles on miles of cots,
The glad, contented brightness
Where sunlight falls in spots.

Sisters swift and saintly
Seem to tread on grass;
Like flowers stirring faintly,
Heads turn to watch them pass.

Beauty, blood, and sorrow,
Blending in a trance—
Eternity's to-morrow
In this half-way house of France.

Sounds of whispered talking,
Laboured, indrawn breath;
Then like a young girl walking,
The dear familiar Death."

How serenely moves the picture of the poet! Like the sisters who "seem to tread on grass" his pen glides through the gruesome scenes of blood and surgery. And how naturally and easily he brings the dread climax—the climax so immense and so sinister in our day-by-day thinking!

The Death of Death

Said a young American soldier in France to Dr. Newell Dwight Hillis: "I want you to know that fear in me is dead. I have put it to the test. I front these dangers of death with a physical shrinking because one does not like pain; but as to dying and death—they are beneath my heel. I want you to know that when you go home you have left a soldier for whom death is dead."

In a letter to his mother, one of these young men, whose business it was to meet death face to face, wrote that he was placed in a safe position, as mayor, indeed, of a small French town. But he was not happy. He did not believe that mother and father would be happy to know that he was "trying to camouflage" himself behind the lines. He asked for a place at the front, and he continues: "No matter what happens to me I have the satisfaction of knowing that I will see you sooner or later; and if it is my turn to go into that wonderful new world dear old Wallie will be standing there with his hand stretched out and a cheery 'Well, old Bill, how's everything?'" "Wallie" was his cousin, killed some months before in an air battle.

This was the way of the War, and this is the

way of the world when the world is in its high moments. Is there anything in death to fear? Not when the heart is fired by a passion that is greater than any fear. The mother who goes down to the gates of death that a new life may be brought into the world, the doctors and nurses in the midst of a plague or epidemic, the martyr who is ready to make good confession, the patriot whose only regret is that he has but one life to give for his country—these do not tremble at the approach of death, do not turn their backs upon danger, do not stop to make terms. Perfect love casteth out all fear.

No Pain in Death

And why should death itself be feared? It is not to be blamed for any distress or pain that comes before, nor for any condition that may follow. In death itself, according to overwhelming testimony, there is usually no pain—no more pain than in falling asleep. Even the convulsions and harrowing struggles that precede death in most cases mean nothing to the dying, who is usually unconscious; and even these struggles cease in the time of passing. How many times the invalid has become quiet again, after paroxysms that were heart-rending

to the loving friends, totally oblivious of anything through which he has passed, and then, with a smile and a gentle word of farewell, has gone into the next world.

“Life is sweet, though all that makes it sweet
Lessens like sound of friends’ departing feet;
And Death is beautiful as feet of friend
Coming with welcome at our journey’s end.”

No Terror in Death

We have been schooled to believe in the terrors of death. We have listened to Milton, who tainted all our views of heaven and hell and the angels, and created for us a Satan more to be admired than feared or frowned upon. Here is death according to the gospel of Milton:

“Black it stood as night,
Fierce as ten Furies, terrible as Hell. . . .
The monster moving onward came as fast
With horrid strides: Hell trembled as he
strode. . . .
So spake the grisly Terror, and in shape
So speaking and so threatening, grew tenfold
More dreadful and deform.”

Even Thomas Hood knows better than this. With keen discernment and exquisite sweetness he writes:

“We watched her breathing through the night,
 Her breathing soft and low,
As in her breast the wave of life
 Kept heaving to and fro. . . .

Our very hopes belied our fears,
 Our fears our hopes belied;
We thought her dying when she slept,
 And sleeping when she died.”

Doctor William Hunter, student of theology, Professor of Anatomy in the Royal Academy, Physician Extraordinary to Queen Charlotte, whispers to a friend leaning over to hear his last words: “If I had strength to hold a pen I could write how easy and how pleasant it is to die.”

Arthur Christopher Benson in “The Child of the Dawn” draws an imaginary picture of his own death. He writes:

“I fell suddenly out of the sound and scent and pain into the most incredible and blessed peace and silence. It would have been like a sleep, but I was still perfectly conscious, with a sense of unutterable and blissful fatigue. I felt as I had once felt as a child awakened early in the little old house among the orchards on a spring morning, and had seen the cool morning quicken into light among the dewy apple-blossoms.”

Mr. Benson is a poet, and poets are seers and see things unrevealed to common eyes. Keats was a poet, and in his "Ode to A Nightingale," the bird sings to him:

"The self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for
home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn."

Now he, sick for home and filled with leaden-eyed despair and with a drowsy numbness that pained the sense, writes:

"Darkling I listen; and for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!"

The song of a nightingale taking away the fear of death! The tides of poetic ecstasy, stirred by this "light-winged Dryad of the trees," so flooding the soul of this youthful dreamer that they have swept away all the darkness and terror of the grave! Can the religion of Jesus Christ do less than this? And need the true-hearted fear the coming of the end?

II. AFTER DEATH, THEN—

Where now are the souls of those who have passed away? What lies beyond the border? Our hearts beat faster as we stoop to lift the curtain, for the dearest treasures of the household have passed beyond. It is a perfectly legitimate desire to know all we can of these things. Alfred Tennyson wrote a poem in 1834 in which were the lines which we have already quoted:

“Ah Christ, that it were possible
For one short hour to see
The souls we loved, that they might tell us,
What and where they be.”

Twenty years later, these lines having made such an impression, he was asked to put a story around them, and “Maud” was the result. The entire poem was not highly regarded by critics, but the world has never recovered from the spell and the longing of the lines about which the poem was made to grow.

Heaven?

If we listened to the voice of the average pulpit and of the hymnal we should say that our departed friends are in heaven. Under this impression we sing:

“Jerusalem my happy home,
Name ever dear to me!
When shall my labors have an end
In joy and peace in thee?”

And so a score of hymns, with the heavenly land just across the river of death. Yet Jesus said that no man hath ascended into heaven.¹ And, as if to confirm this and to particularize, Peter declares that “David ascended not into the heavens.”² If the ideal king, the singer of sweet songs, was not in heaven, then it was not possible to believe that any one was there.

The Sleep of the Soul?

Then are these souls asleep—resting unconscious and undisturbed, waiting for the call of the archangel. To be sure, the Bible uses this expression in speaking of the dead. David “slept with his fathers”; Stephen “fell asleep” under the cruel stoning outside the city gates. And Homer uses the same terms. Struck down by the hands of Atrides,

“Stretched in the dust the unhappy warrior dies—
And sleep eternal seals his swooning eyes.”

¹ John 3: 13.

² Acts 2: 34.

But these sleeping warriors must have vivid dreams, for this same Homer sends Odysseus into the nether world, and the dead Achilles

“Still a master ghost, the rest he awed,
And all adored him towering as he trod.”

Of the great poet himself Lucretius writes,

“Homer, the prince of all,
Sleeps the same forgotten sleep,”

while Laertes declares that Homer is suspended in a tree and tormented by serpents, in punishment of the irreverent manner in which he wrote of the gods. And again I say that these are rather lively proceedings, and all this is rather heroic treatment, for men who are asleep.

When Moses and Elijah met Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, they showed themselves to be very wide awake. Whatever may be said of Elijah, we are sure that Moses was dead, for the Book says so—yet he was so tremendously awake and so fully posted in regard to the happenings on earth, so alive and companionable, that Peter was ready to build a tent for him and stay with him forever.

Another Alternative

Now if these disembodied spirits are not in

heaven and are not asleep—what then? The Bible gives us warrant for yet another alternative. A place intermediate, a middle ground between the earth life and the heaven life—this seems to be the reading of the word. Such a place is mentioned again and again, but the meaning of these references has been obscured by an inexcusable blunder in the King James Version. The word hell seems to have confused the translators. It is, to be sure, not regarded as a polite word for modern ears. It has gone sadly out of style, and many very good people miss and mourn for the delicious horror and thrill they used to feel when the old-time preacher held his hypnotized audiences “hair-hung and breeze-shaken over torment.” But the fact is that this aggressive word, so out of favor in the modern pulpit, is not used at all in the Revised Version of the Old Testament, and but very rarely in the New Testament. Hell, in this later version of the Old Testament, has become *Sheol*, or the state of the dead.

In the King James Version of the New Testament no word has been so grotesquely and absurdly mismanaged as this word hell. Eleven times it refers to the condition or abode of lost souls, ten times it refers to the intermediate state as understood by the Hebrew, and once to

that state as conceived by the Greeks. No wonder the ideas of the Church are at sea, and so many of us are ready to cry heresy at those who do not happen to agree with our confused belief.

Paul's Adventures

But there are direct statements that simplify the matter. In II Corinthians we find an account of two remarkable incidents. Paul is writing of his own experience and he says: "I know a man in Christ fourteen years ago . . . caught up even to the third heaven."³ This is Paul's way of describing the highest heaven. According to his conception, this is the great throne city. This is the home of the mighty angels, the principalities and seraphim. Paul was a stranger there. It was immeasurably remote from his life. He was overawed, stunned, not able to sense such overwhelming conditions. There was no one with whom he could come into correspondence. He was not at home. He did not know the speech nor the manners of the awful beings that moved in this sublimated sphere. And he maintains a signifi-

³ II Cor. 12: 2.

cant, bewildered silence; he has no comments to make. He is stricken dumb.

A little further along he says, "I know such a man . . . how that he was caught up into Paradise"⁴—ah! now, and here, he is more at home. Here were many whom he knew—Stephen perhaps, against whom he gave his vote, and James the brother of John, whom Herod killed with a sword. Here he came into touch with matters more on his level and he understood the language. To be sure there were words which it was not lawful, or rather not possible for a man to utter, but he understood the speech and was thrilled to the soul by the revelations. A lower plane it was than the third heaven, but so much grander than the earth that earthly thought grew dazed and earthly speech fell panting and helpless as he attempted to tell his experiences. Two places or conditions in the beyond, and the favored apostle, just now bowed down with the memory of the evils of his life and eager to justify his gospel, was permitted to see them both, and so take courage.

A Word from the Cross

Look now at another incident. It is a dark, awful day. On the hilltop are three crosses and

⁴ II Cor 12: 3, 4.

on two of these crosses are two strong men. The shadow of death is on the face of each. One of them, turning to the other and noting the kingliness of the bleeding brow, the fearlessness in the steady eyes, feels the stirring of strange impulses within his heart, and he cries out, "Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom,"⁵ and the answer comes quick and thrilling, "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Before the sun had set the dying Lord and the robber chieftain had passed on into the unknown. Jesus used the word Paradise in the sense attached to it in his day, and we know that it meant to every Jew the intermediate state between death and the resurrection. Assuredly Jesus did not mean heaven, as the word he used did not carry any such significance to the man to whom he spoke. Then be it remembered that three days later he declared to Mary that he had not yet ascended to the Father. He had gone away from the earth; he had met his companion of the cross in Paradise, yet he had not yet ascended to the Father.

The Lesser Glory

Are we disappointed at this conclusion? Does

* Luke 23: 42.

it seem to fall short of lifelong expectations? Did we hope to pass at once into the glorious city of God? No, rather let it lift us on the wings of a larger hope. That which immediately follows this life is not the best God has for us. It is a place of beauty and of bliss and opportunity. Jesus made an engagement to meet in no mean and shabby place the first sinner saved by a perfected salvation. It was fitted up for the coming of the King. The good and the truly great of all ages are there. Spirit communes with spirit, and the loved and lost are found again and walk together in fadeless fields, and sit by the side of crystal rivers. There are no temptations, no false friends, no misunderstandings; the best things of this life are intensified, the evil things driven away.

Into this place Jacob got a glimpse when he said of his sky-roofed bed, "This is the gate of heaven." Moses came from this realm on the day of the Transfiguration in robes of such insufferable splendor that the disciples were not able to look upon him. Saul saw flashes of its glory on the road to Damascus and went blind under the strain. This is for the servant of God when death comes; then, by and by, a greater glory shall be revealed when in some degree we shall have become prepared for it, for God

never forces the growth of the soul, and never bestows all his favors at once.

III. Is HEAVEN INTELLIGIBLE?

With what bodies shall we meet the new life? We cannot conceive of existence without some sort of body—or something to take the place of the body. In this life we are in touch with our surroundings by means of the body. The golden gates of the morning, the purple shadows along the dimpled hills, the welcome smile of the friend—all this is the story of the eyes. The majestic organ peal, the crash of July thunder, the rippling laugh of the child—these are because of our bodily sense of hearing. We depend upon our bodies, we love them and adorn them; we know they shall go into decay, but we also feel that this is not the last word. “There is a natural body and there is also a spiritual body,” and that which is sown a natural body is raised a spiritual body. We are sure that God, who gave us this natural body correlated with things of earth, can also give us a body which will be fitted for the new conditions into which we shall be introduced when the shadows of time shall be driven back before the day-dawn of eternity.

The material of which this present body is

composed will pass into other forms. Indeed, most probably it already has been a part of other human bodies, for since the world began no atom of matter has been lost nor added to the sum of being. These atoms have changed their form again and again, but they are here and they will be here unto the end.

“The Course of Time,” a pious, grandiloquent poem much in vogue with our grandmothers, pictures a strange scene. It is the day of the general resurrection. Each grain of dust that has ever formed part of the human body hastens to join its fellow grains, and cities and mountains and forests melt away. All these have once been the bodies of men, and now nothing remains except the crowded ranks of humanity watching for the blaze of eternity.

Resurrection of the Body

Of course this implies the resurrection of the dead body, and not resurrection from the dead, and involves various and sundry delicate questions of ownership. Some of us who have come late in the world history, will have serious trouble in establishing a clear title to the bodies we now inhabit. The original owner will naturally have the first claim. Many a grain of dust will have more than one owner, and the

several claimants must make some sort of compromise that will materially affect the symmetry of the resurrection body.

There is a story of a man of science who said with jocular intent to an old-time saint, "Talk about the resurrection! Why, the human body cannot get on without phosphorus, and there is not enough phosphorus in existence to supply the bodies of those already dead, not to mention those who are yet to die." "I don't know anything about phosphorus," was the satisfied rejoinder, "but I do know that the Bible says the saints shall rise first. Then we'll get all the phosphorus and the rest of you will do the best you can."

The Body Glorious

We are told that our bodies are to be like the body of Christ. So writes Paul in one of his high moments: "For our citizenship is in heaven, whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subject all things unto himself"⁶—and in far-off and feeble echo the hymn writer exclaims:

⁶ Phil. 3: 21.

“My flesh shall slumber in the ground
Till the last trumpet’s joyful sound;
Then burst the chains with sweet surprise
And in my Saviour’s image rise.”

What a body that will be! On the night of the Transfiguration it did shine as the snow on Mount Hermon. In the midst of the seven golden candlesticks that glorified body was seen, and the eyes were like flames of fire and the face was like the sun shining in its strength. What a body that will be and what far-ranging fields will open for the play of its potentialities! The driver of the old-fashioned stage coach, up and down the hills and past the country homes, makes pretty fair speed and will reach his destination some time in the day after tomorrow. But put him in the cab of the Twentieth Century Express, or at the wheel of the Daimler or the Rolls-Royce and the old speed will seem a dog trot, and the old distance but a journey across the dooryard. Commodore Farragut, in the rigging of the old wooden flagship *Hartford*, at Mobile, was one of the heroic figures of the century and his deeds are glorious. Admiral Dewey, on the bridge of the *Olympia* in Manila Bay, was no greater, no more heroic, but he held in hand a magnificent fighting machine,

and in a single day he changed the history of the Pacific Ocean.

When this mortal shall have put on immortality—when this tireless, unconquerable soul shall have been put in control of a new, modern, matchless body-machine, what measureless journeys we shall adventure, what marvelous discoveries we shall make in the universe of God!

“Passage, immediate passage, the blood burns
in my veins,

Away, O soul, hoist instantly the anchor;
Cut the hawsers—haul out—shake out every sail.

Sail forth—steer for the dark waters only.

Reckless, O soul, exploring, I with thee and thou with me.

For we are bound where mariner has not yet dared to go,

And we will risk the ship, ourselves, and all.

O my brave soul!

O farther, farther sail!

O daring joy but safe! are they not all the seas of God?

O farther, farther sail!” —Walt Whitman.

A Far Outlook

Now let us go far afield. This is a big subject and we must have seven-leagued boots or the wings of an archangel to compass it.

What a great, busy, curious world it is—this

world in which we live! We want to know things. The real man is never satisfied, so long as there is anything worth knowing which he does not know. This instinct of inquiry takes us in the cradle. A child is never still and is never unemployed. He drags the dishes from the table, he tears the pictures from the books, he disjoins his toys, and smashes everything in sight. He is studying things, getting his bearings, trying to locate himself—and his ambition is just as laudable as the ambition of Amundsen, who seeks the South Pole, or Hugh Miller, who analyzes the old red sandstone, or Burbank, who tries to develop a blue rose—just as laudable is his ambition, and his methods are more original than the methods of the best of them. We are born with a thousand questions on our lips and we die before a single question is adequately answered. But there will be a larger time beyond.

And what opportunities there will be! A French astronomer once wrote a pretty romance of the heavens called, "Stories of Infinity." A man dies. His death is described, the emancipation of the soul from the body; its flight to the star Capella, a distance of 170,392,000,000,-000 leagues. Here he finds a group of men absorbed in contemplating events passing upon

the earth. They are watching the city of Paris. It is not long before the newcomer discovers that it is the Revolution of 1789 this group is studying. That series of events, including the beheading of Louis XVI, which happened seventy-two years before, had just reached their eyes, located as they were on this remote star. The meaning of this is easy. We see an object by means of the light waves that come to the eye from that object. An action which takes place across the street or across a river is seen in the instant of its performance, because of the swiftness of the light ray. But light requires eight minutes to come from the sun. If we could see the happenings on the sun we would see them eight minutes afterward. The flaming up of the fires beyond the photosphere, the solar eclipse—these things are eight minutes old before we see them. There are stars so remote that light is a thousand years in making the passage to the earth, and if these stars were blotted out today their light would shine upon us for a thousand years.

The Vision Splendid

Now suppose we have the vision of God and of the angels when we go into eternity. For

we shall see—whatever be the organs of sight and however immaterial our bodies. Suppose we stand so far from the earth that the light will require two or three thousand years to reach us, do you not understand that we shall see events that happened two thousand or three thousand years ago? That, if we journeyed far enough away, we could see lived over again the history of the world? That it would all come to us, the mighty panorama unfolding before our eyes? All the battles and marches, the confusion at Babel, the building of the pyramids, the eastward sweep of the Crusades, the timid venture of the little ships of Columbus, the sailing of the *Mayflower*, Yorktown, Look-out Mountain, Gettysburg, the World War—all these would be enacted before us in overwhelming detail. Like Thomas Constant, the undevout astronomer in Herbert Ward's "The Light of the World," we may even become eye-witnesses of the Crucifixion and see for ourselves the world's Redeemer die to save a world of sin. For light is an eternal traveler and carries with it forever a perpetual series of instantaneous photographs thrown off at its source.

These things are overwhelming, but they are scientific and they are perfectly reasonable—

“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”

No Castle of Indolence

This heaven toward which we look will not be a place of idleness. God has no place for drones, even out here in the provinces; he will not be likely to tolerate them in his capital city. The man or woman who wants to do nothing will not be at home in the hereafter.

It will not be an eternity of church-going and psalm-singing. The church poet may sing of Heaven as a place “where congregations ne’er break up and Sabbaths have no end,” but he does not give us any correct conception of the heavenly state. Eternity will be time intensified —life filled with larger meaning and grander pursuits, and with gateways opening into broader and richer fields.

We shall rest—not because we shall be idle, but because we shall be tireless; we shall rest, not by folding the hands in somnolent inactivity, but because these hands shall never grow weary. There will be no fatigue of the body to oppress the body, no anxiety for the morrow to distress the mind; we shall renew our strength, shall

mount up as on wings of the eagle, we shall run and not be weary, we shall walk and not faint.

The City at Last

It is noticeable that the orthodox Heaven is a city. In tremendous metonymy we see this city coming down out of the skies from God. The city is pure gold and its foundations are constructed of precious stones—amethyst and emerald and sapphire—and the gates are single pearls, and the great central square, the community center, is paved with the transparent gold of which the houses are builded. What magnificence, what overwhelming glory to the Orientals—how fantastic and how grotesque to the Western, the modern mind! Gold and pearls and precious stones in Heaven do not make any appeal today. They do not stand for what they did in the days of St. John and his beatific vision.

But John was struggling with a great idea. The world had begun in felicity in a garden, it was to end in like felicity in a city. The beatific vision was in harmony with the normal migration from the country to the town; the climax of the world-old evolution from the nomad state, through the hunter, the agriculturist, to the

dwellers in the city. It is an ethnic passion and bent as old as the patriarchs, who dwelt in tabernacles or tents with Isaac and Jacob, but who looked for a city which hath permanent foundations. And now when this evolution has been realized and the city has been attained and the saints have all become city-dwellers, John proceeds to ornament this new home to the limit of his ability and fancy.

The City—and Beyond

But the modern saint does not want to live forever in a city, even though he dwell in houses of gold and pass in and out through gates of pearl that would ransom kingdoms. He believes in an evolution that does not stop even in the New Jerusalem. The city which lieth four square, which measures according to the canonical reed one thousand, three hundred and seventy-eight miles about its walls—even this is not great enough to satisfy his soul or stay his wandering feet that would go still further.

And so we turn to the words of Christ. He is making his farewell address to the disciples. He is giving them a chart of the life here and hereafter. He acknowledges the belief of his followers in God. “Ye believe in God,” he says,

and this settles all questions of the present world management and the affairs of the near future. Now he continues: "Believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions. . . . I go to prepare a place for you."⁷ It is not too much to say that the word translated "mansions" never has that meaning elsewhere, and almost certainly is mistranslated here. According to high authority it means a stopping place or a station on a journey. The verse then may read, "In my Father's house"—that is, in the universe—"there are many stopping places," and this earth is one of the stopping places. The earth is part of the Father's house. It belongs to the sisterhood of the stars. It is walking arm in arm with the sparkling thousands that move through the upper skies.

The Grand Pilgrimage

We then, citizens of the now, are on a great pilgrimage and this is the first stop. We are not at the end, but at the beginning. We are related to this life as a traveler from the west is related to New York City, when, starting for Europe, he stops for the night in that city, then takes passage on the first ship that leaves the

⁷ John 14: 2.

port. We have come from somewhere; we are making our first stop; by and by we shall move on again. In eastern lands when a caravan starts on a journey the first stage is but a few miles. A stop is then made for the night, as in the case of Joseph and Mary, who, homeward bent, had left Jesus behind in the city. This stop is in order that it may be seen if anything has been forgotten; then the next morning the caravan stretches away over the plains. Thus sings the old song,

“I’m a pilgrim and I’m a stranger,
I can tarry, I can tarry but a night.”

We have stopped here to take inventory of our belongings; to see if we are fully equipped for the journey; to look over our company and learn if all our friends are in marching trim; then away we shall go, when the signal is given, toward the city that hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, for the glory of the Lord doth lighten it.

But even this is but another station in the long pilgrimage. For, stretching out ahead of us, is a vast eternity in which we shall grow and learn more and more of God, and become more and more like him, and more and more useful to him, as the countless centuries roll.

Room! Room!!

The teacher of reincarnation expects to come back into life in this world unconscious and transformed, and so plod on the weary, dreary round until the consummation. But God's universe is big enough for all his children. There is no need to traverse the old fields—new fields will ever open, and new heights be ever attained, for "end there is none to the universe of God."⁸

⁸ Jean Paul Richter.

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