

ERNEST FAITHFUL.

'Twas the soul of Ernest Faithful
Loosed from his home of clay—
Its mission on earth completed,
To the judgment passed away.

'Twas the soul of Ernest Faithful
Stood at the bar above,
Where the deeds of men are passed upon
In justice, but in love.

And an angel questioned Faithful
Of the life just passed on earth:
What could he plead of virtue,
What could he count of worth?

And the soul of Ernest Faithful
Trembled in sore dismay:
And from the judgment angel's gaze
Shuddering turned away.

For memory came and whispered
How worldly was that life:
Unfairly plotting sometimes,
In anger and in strife.

For a selfish end essaying
To treasures win or fame,
And the soul of Ernest covered 'neath
The angel's eye of flame.

Then from a book the angel drew
A leaf with name and date,
A record of this Ernest's life
Wove in the looms of fate.

And said: "O Faithful, answer me,
Here is a midnight scroll.
What didst thou 'neath the stars that night?
Didst linger ore the bowl?"

"Filing the night with revelry
With cards and wine and dice,
And adding music's ecstasy.
To give more charms to vice?"

When the soul of Faithful answered,
"By the bedside of a friend
I watched the long hours through: that night
His life drew near its end."

"Here's another date at midnight,
Where wast thou this night, say?"
"I was waiting by the dust of one
Whose soul had passed that day."

"These dollar marks," the angel said:
"What mean they, Ernest, tell?"
"It was a trifle that I gave
To one whom want befell."

"Here's thine own picture, illy dressed;
What means this scant attire?"
"I know not," answered Faithful, "save
That once midst tempest dire,

"I found a fellow-man benumbed,
And those amidst the storm
And so around him wrapped my vest,
His stiffening limbs to warm."

"Here is a woman's face, a girl's.
O, Ernest is this well?
Knowst thou how often women's arms
Have drawn men's souls to hell?"

Then Ernest answered: "This poor girl
An orphan was. I gave
A trifle of my ample store
The child from want to save."

"Next are some words. What mean they here?"
Then Ernest answered low:
"A fellow-man approached me once
Whose life was full of woe,

"When I had naught to give, except
Some words of hope and trust:
I bade him still have faith, for God
Who rules above is just."

Then the grave angel smiled and moved
Ajar the pearly gate
And said: O, soul! we welcome thee
"Enter! Nor sorrow more is thine,

Unto this new estate.
Nor grief: we know thy creed—
Thou who hast soothed thy fellow-men
In hour of sorest need

"Thou who hast watched thy brother's dust,
When the wrung soul had fled:
And to the stranger gave thy cloak,
And to the orphan, bread.

"And when all else was gone, had still
A word of kindly cheer
For one more wretched than thyself,
Thou, soul, art welcome here.

"Put on the robe thou gav'st away
'Tis stainless now and white:
And all thy words and deeds are gems:
Wear them, it is thy right!"

And then from choir and harp awoke
A joyous, welcome strain,
Which other harps and choirs took up,
In jubilant refrain.

Till all the aisles of Summer Land
Grew resonant, as beat
The measures of that mighty song
Of welcome, full and sweet.

—The Western Knight.

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