

Life's December.

ECCLES. 12; 2 TIM. 4:7.

"THESE are days of little pleasure,
When the moon and stars are darkened,
And the clouds are still returning,
Though the rain has ceased to fall.
These are days when all the keepers
Of the house grow weak and tremble,
And we look on life through windows,
And the mist is o'er it all.

"Where is now the strong endeavor
Of the buoyant youthful spirit,
That was ne'er afraid and quailed not
At the duties that were high?
Now the almond tree shall flourish,
And the small thing be a burden,
And desire itself shall fail us,
And there's nothing but to die!"

So the melancholy chorus
Of world-weary, aged singers,
Come to me through fog and darkness,
On the cold, December air;
Like the passionless responses
Of the mournful winds of winter,
As they search for things of beauty
In the forests that are bare.

But across my saddened senses,
As I thought upon the mourners,
When the golden bowl is broken,
And they go about the street,
Came a song of matchless triumph
From another aged singer,
Who had lived, and toiled, and suffered,
But had never known defeat.

"I am ready to be offered,
And the time of my departure,
From the scene of all my conflict
To my rest is now at hand.
I have fought a good fight ever,
And my course is almost finished;
I have kept the faith of Jesus,
And am waiting his command.

"There are laid up for his soldiers
Crowns of righteousness and glory,
Which the righteous Judge shall give me,
Not alone indeed to me,
Every servant that is faithful
And who loves his Lord's appearing,
Shall receive the Master's blessing—
And the hope remains to thee."

So I put away my sadness,
And I did not listen longer
To the other trembling voices,
For this singer made me bold.
If the spirit may keep cheery
And the faith remains unailing,
Is there any need to trouble,
Though the body should grow old?

I will fight in a good battle
And will run the race to heaven,
And will keep the faith of Jesus,
By His help and in His sight.
And although the dark clouds gather,
And the years have passed to winter,
Night shall not last forever,
And the Lord will give me light.

—Marianne Farningham, in *Christian World*.

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