

TO DIE IS GAIN.

For me to to live is Christ, and to die is gain.—Phil. 1: 21.

"Blinded windows, sobs and tear-stained faces,
And a shrouded baby in a bed,
Round the room a tiny maiden paces,
Chanting softly, 'Little brother's dead,
All his pain is gone, so still he sleeps;
Jesus Christ our little baby keeps.'

"In our arms we caught the simple creature,
Bade her hush her song 'for mother sake,'
Tried the tale of death and loss to teach her,
Empty cot, wet eyes, and hearts that ache,
Pretty baby buried in the ground,
Father, mother, sister weeping round.

"And the maiden listened, wide-eyed, paling
In the dreary chill of churchyard lore;
Then she pleaded (the child-faith not failing),
But—he's one of God's own cherubim;
Mayn't I be a little glad for him?"

"Oh, babe-lips, touched lately by the Maker,
How ye shame us poor half-hearted men!
We, who know death makes our dead partaker
Of a joy beyond our farthest ken,
Yet bewail our loss, till faith grows dim—
Can't we be 'a little glad for him?'"

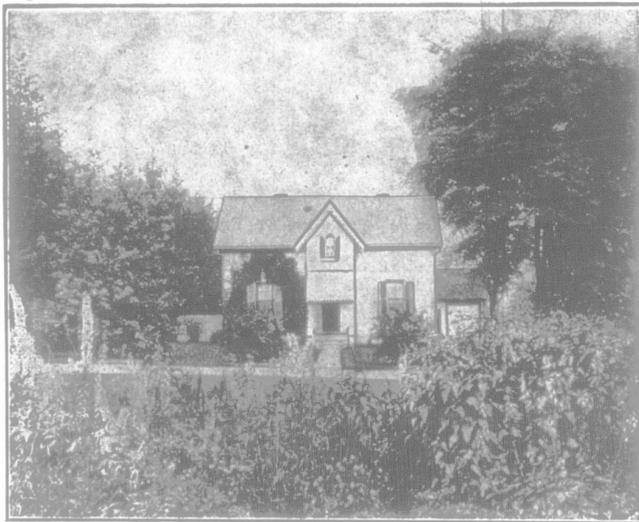
Surely God still teaches wisdom through the baby prattle of little children, and we older disciples of Christ may learn a great deal from their happy confidence. We profess to believe in a new and far more glorious life on the other side of the gate which we call "Death." We say that to die is to be more consciously in the presence of our Lord than here, and, therefore, death must be a great "gain" to those who have walked with Him on earth. Yet, when a loved one passes on to the great gladness of the new life, we are only too apt to mourn as those who have no hope. If the one who has been promoted by our King to higher service is young, we even venture to speak of him pityingly, saying: "How very sad that such a bright young life should be cut off when it gave promise of so much usefulness." If our Christianity is a reality, and not a sham, we must not be false to our own convictions in this fashion. Christ has lighted our flame of faith so that we may be able to show a light to others. Think of the harm it does to those who are in darkness to hear such expressions of pity from professing Christians—pity for glad souls who have just been crowned with the great "gain" of a new life! Pity for those who have been moved up to a higher position in God's school! What good is our faith if it can't make us strong enough to be "a little glad for him!" And death does not divide us from our dear ones; it brings us ever nearer to them if we are true and faithful in our love. I heard the other day of a lady, who, because an only daughter had passed out of her sight, threw open her beautiful home to tired and lonely girls—nurses, shop-girls, etc.—giving them a happy holiday as long as they needed it. What a glad way of keeping in touch with her child that is! Every act of service done to those poor girls is a real reaching out in loving ministry to her own daughter, for the "communion of saints" is not a mere name, but a living reality. I am now visiting my brother, who is continually showing, by acts of considerate tenderness towards his wife and children, his love for the bright young son who a few weeks ago passed out of his keeping. How often we see a father, or mother, act in exactly the opposite fashion, fretting over the one that is said to be "lost," until the other children find home the most gloomy place on earth, and begin to fancy that no one cares for them there. The best way of touching those who are "on the other side of Christ," is to minister to Him through His "brethren" who are still visibly near us. And gloomy service is hardly worth offering or accepting. If you can't realize anything of the joy of

Paradise, if you find it impossible to share in the blessedness of those who are worshipping God face to face, then pray earnestly that your eyes may be opened.

Think what you are missing, if you let slip the golden cord with which God binds heart to heart. Do not say: "I can't see the face I love, therefore I have lost it out of my life," for that is not true. If love is killed by loss of sight, then it is indeed a terrible thing to be blind. If the voice you love is silent that need not be any barrier; for the deaf are not cut off from the fellowship of love. Indeed, death can bind faithful hearts far more closely together, for it removes all the little hindrances to fellowship, all the little faults which irritated us are forgotten, and our souls at their best can reach out and touch those other souls at their highest and best. We can rejoice in their bright, evergrowing beauty, and we can also

the heart grows weak, but where are the fear and dread? A Hand seems to take the attenuated hand within a loving grasp, a Voice to whisper: "Be not afraid! and quietly as a child might be bosomed on its mother's breast, the weary soul is soothed into the restful sleep of death. Nor is the nursing complete even when the angel of death has done its work and retired; for invisible hands seem to rub out each wrinkle of care, and throw a smile so peaceful upon the worn and pallid features, as a parting sunbeam lingers in a dreary landscape. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His Saints. Our fears are mostly in anticipation, and disappear as we draw near to the great reality. Whatever darkness remains is illuminated by the sunlight of Christian Hope. In union with the Lord of life, life comes crowding in upon the soul and death dwindles down to an episode." And just think how short that episode

THE QUIET HOUR



A HOME BEAUTIFIED WITH NATURE'S AID.

learn to rejoice in God's refining pain which will make us daily more beautiful in soul. To be "with Christ" is to grow daily more "like Him"; for, as someone has said: "As the garment whiten in sunlight so the spirit must whiten before the Sun of Righteousness. He will heal and stimulate. We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Think of that joy! Brave and pure and joyful, strong and tender and holy—like JESUS!"

Here we are ever struggling upward, and surely we shall not stop this struggle after perfection when we see Him who is "altogether lovely." Rather, we shall bound forward after Him with new energy, drinking in more and more of His spirit, striving to be perfect, even as our Father in heaven is perfect.

St. Paul says that "to live is Christ"—that is daily joy—and "to die is gain," so that must be still greater joy. Are you looking forward to this joy that lies ahead, or do you dread the hour of death as a horror of great darkness that you can hardly dare to face? Of course, there is a natural shrinking from death, which is an instinct of our nature, and which makes suicide a most unnatural and inhuman act. But that need not prevent us from glad anticipations of the meeting with our Lord, that need not keep us from going forward joyously when the call comes, and stepping with springing tread through "the little golden gate that opens into Paradise."

As Rev. C. H. Strong says: "God often waits upon the dying hours of His saints with a special benediction. The long-dreaded event has come—but where are the gloom and darkness which he anticipated? Can this be death, the king of terrors, who so gently is soothing the weary brain to sleep! Slowly

is! It is like passing through a short tunnel on a railway journey. The soul shivers in the gloomy chill of the darkness, and then it is rejoicing in the burst of sunlight on the other side. Often, very often, the dark gateway between the lower and the higher life is passed unconsciously as one on a train may be asleep when the tunnel is passed, and the new life bursts suddenly on the rapturous soul.

"For 'tis to God I speed so fast,
For in God's breast, my own abode,
Those shoals of dazzling glory passed,
I lay my spirit down at last."
HOPE.

RELIANCE.

Not to the swift, the race;
Not to the strong the fight;
Not to the righteous, perfect grace;
Not to the wise, the light.

But often faltering feet
Come surest to the goal;
And they who walk in darkness meet
The sunrise of the soul.

A thousand times by night
The Syrian hosts have died;
A thousand times the vanquished right
Hath risen glorified.

The truth the wise men sought
Was spoken by a child;
The alabaster box was brought
In trembling hands defiled.

Not from my torch the gleam,
But from the stars above;
Not from my heart life's crystal stream,
But from the depths of love.

HENRY VAN DYKE, in the *Atlantic*.

LAND.

Back to my mother, the Earth,
From that stranger, the Sea;
Deep in the hills to have birth,
In the fields to be free—
Free from the fretting of wave,
From the hissing of foam,
And fears of a lathomless grave;
I am home, I am home.

Peace of the islands once more,
With the scent of the sod,
Dwellings of men on the shore,
And the forests of God;
Safe from the dread of the deep,
From its drunken embrace,
Earth, in your arms I may sleep;
I am back in my place.

—Helen Huntington, in *Harper's*.

* * *

A good conscience is consistent with a bad life. All that conscience tells us is that there is a right and a wrong, and that we ought to do the right and not do the wrong. But what is right and what is wrong, conscience does not tell us. We get that from our moral judgment, and our moral judgment may be uneducated or badly educated or utterly misdirected, or merely stupid and uncritical. So that a man with a good conscience may be unconsciously, and quite contentedly, doing what is harmful and wrong. "Some men," writes an earnest Christian engineer from the Transvaal, troubled by the harmful influence of good men who are doing wrong, "are both spiritual and true. Some are not." It is so in all lands and all religions. People may see clearly and strongly that there is a difference between right and wrong, and yet be greatly mistaken as to where the line is. Some people seem to think that the intensity of their declaration that there is a difference between right and wrong excuses them from drawing the line too carefully. But spiritual people who are not true are the most dangerous kind. Religion suffers more from pious people who are not honest than from any other. They are the foes within the household. A good life on a bad conscience is better than a bad life on a good conscience. Spirituality is brought into contempt by those who are very spiritual, but whose common honesty is excelled by the publicans and harlots. The only useful profession of holiness is a holy life.—*Sunday School Times*.

MY GARDEN.

I have a little Garden
Where many flowers are seen;
Bright lilies bend beside the walks,
And daisies in the green.
There pansies grow and tulips,
And many a lovely flower;
They blossom in my Garden,
And give me joy each hour.

I have another Garden,
That I must tend with care,
And fill with lovely growing things,
Lest weeds should gather there,
May sweetness, kindness, mercy
And joy be in each part;
To grace this other Garden,
The Garden of my heart.

—*Australasian*.

"SING A SONG OF SIXPENCE."

Everybody, of course, is well acquainted with that old nursery rhyme, "Sing a Song of Sixpence," but those who are also familiar with its allegorical significance are perhaps not so numerous.

The four-and-twenty blackbirds represent the twenty-four hours. The bottom of the pie is the world, and the top crust is the sky. The opening of the pie is the dawn of day, when the birds begin to sing (the sight is surely fit for any King). The King is the sun, and the gold pieces that slip through his fingers as he counts are the golden sunshine. The Queen sitting in the dark kitchen is the moon, and the honey with which she regales herself is the moonlight. The maid at work in the garden, before her King, the sun, has risen in the morning twilight, and the clothes she hangs out are the clouds. The bird that brings a tragic end to the song by "nipping off her nose," is the sunset.