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LIFE ETERNAL.

BY WOODS HUTCHINSON, A.M., M.D., OF IOWA UNIVERSITY.

LIFE is the greatest thing in the world. It is a pleasure to simply exist, to respond to our environment, to absorb the forces of nature, to grow and to help others to grow. What wonder, then, that the darling desire of man's heart in all ages is to secure Life Eternal.

But is it not possible for this instinct, this passion, like any other, to overleap itself? May we not, by unduly exalting its importance, by dwelling upon it to the neglect of other equally God-given impulses and desires, develop it into positively abnormal if not morbid forms? Can we not, by cherishing false ideals in connection with it, fall into serious error, and even so change its tendency as to make it a source of more distress, apprehension, and bitterness, than of joy, confidence and hope?

It is hardly necessary to answer the question: it not only may be, but it has been done in many a demonology and also a few theologies, until at more than one period of the world's history, men have been, in the pathetic language of the Great Apostle, "through the fear of death, all their life long, subject to bondage." Like any other instinct unbalanced by counteracting impulses, it has too often brought its own punishment with it, and has multiplied the natural fear of death by the dread of what may follow in the "life beyond." That tragedy of the ages, "Hamlet," is at heart a titanic picture of a noble nature, a courageous soul, a magnificent intellect, palsied, unbalanced, and ultimately all but ruined by too keen an appreciation of the possibilities of the after-world. At every turn his "native hue of resolution is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought"—of this thought, his righteous longing for vengeance upon the skulking assassin, his fierce desire to be the instrument of heaven's retribution, when failing him no other *can* be, are sternly suppressed lest he should "couple Hell" with his mission of justice. This leaves him inspired by absolutely no o'ermastering passion save a sense of the horrors of his father's condition and the utter hopelessness of relieving them by any effort on his part. What wonder this failed to spur him to action? His constant fear is that the ghost "may be a devil" who "out of my weakness and my melancholy abuses me to damn me." Contrast his attitude with that of that commonplace but hot-blooded young fellow, Laertes, who bursts into the presence of royalty itself with the furious declaration,