

for us the fountains of all knowledge discovered too the secrets of perpetual youth ! Alas, no ! As yet we are upon the threshold of physical mystery ; we know not what an atom is, whilst human history and human fate are, to our speculation, a hopeless tangle. No ! but hope that holds our modern life together was breathed into it from the mouth of Jesus Christ. The first Adam was a living soul, but the second Adam was a quickening spirit. Could these hopes be lost, could this vision of coming peace and knowledge fade out from men's mind, there would fall upon this earth a darkness as black as any night that ever nursed wild chaos in its lap. But, said St. Paul, if in this life only we have hope in Christ then are we of all men the most miserable. Without Christ there would be little hope even for this world. Surely without Him there is none whatever for the next. Now, here again contrast the feeling of the older civilization with our own. There was a yearning after immortality among the Greeks and Romans, intense and passionate among a few, but, you may argue from this yearning, to nothing more than a dread of death among the more intelligent, not to the existence of a widespread hope. Listen to these lines about death written by Lucretius : " Now no more shall thy house admit thee with glad welcome, nor a most virtuous wife and sweet children run to be the first to snatch kisses and touch thy heart with silent joy. No more mayest thou be prosperous in thy doings ; a safeguard to thy beloved. One disastrous day has taken from thee, luckless man, in luckless fashion all the prizes of life." This do men say, but add not thereto : " And now no longer does any craving for these things beset thee withal. Thou, even as now thou art, shalt continue so to be in all time to come, freed from all distressing pains ; but we with a sorrow that would not be sated, wept for thee when close by thou didst turn to an ashen hue on thy appalling funeral pile, and no length of days shall pluck from our hearts our ever-enduring grief." Such I do not hesitate to say, whatever might be the desire, was the conviction of all to whom the poet spoke. Now listen to this invocation of Robert Browning to his sainted wife :

Can thy soul know change ?

Hail, then, and hearken from the realms of help.

Never may I commence my song, my due

To God who best taught song by gift of thee,

Except with bent head and beseeching hand

That still, despite the distance and the dark,

What was, again may be ; some interchange

Of grace, some splendour once thy very thought,

Some benediction anciently thy smile

Never conclude, but raising hand and head

Thither where eyes that cannot reach, yet yearn

For all hope, all sustainment, all reward

Their upmost up and on. So blessing back

In those thy realms of help, that heaven thy home,

Some whiteness which I judge thy face makes proud

Some wanness when I think, thy foot may fall.

The chasm that lies between Lucretius and Robert Browning is filled up with the empty sepulchre of Jesus Christ—not empty quite, for the angels are in it yet if men had only eyes to see. But the greatest of all is Charity, saith St. Paul ; greatest because without it neither Faith nor Hope could live. Fear kills faith, but perfect love casteth out fear. Fear kills hope, kills it, to use Milton's phrase, in the very eye ; but perfect love casteth out fear. Charity is greatest as God is greater than the ladder up which we climb to reach Him ; for God is love. With justice might the ancient poet speak of that religion which thrust its face from out the skies and darkened human life with its dread visage ; but no such religion can ever again hold sway over the minds of men. The love of God in Christ Jesus we are no more going to surrender than we are going to surrender sunshine by putting out our eyes. Were this love a mere proclamation, it might in time lose somewhat of its