

THE LOSS OF FRIENDS.

J. M'D. O.B. vi. x. maccexcliv.

"I am distressed for thee, my brother,
very pleasant hast thou been unto me;
thy love to me was wonderful, passing
the love of women."

The measure of sanity with which men face death or the prospect of it, has been accepted in all times as a standard of the value of their religion or philosophy or other theory of life, and the inexperienced conceive that it is impossible for one to die in peace in any faith but theirs. But were the ability to die happy in it to be the test of any faith, then all faiths are true, for in all have men passed away in peace, and even suffered martyrdom for their belief.

In these days when every family on a street professes a different creed, and each member of a family holds private views of his own, heterodoxy is not locked upon as in the narrower days when men of another faith dwelt in another land. Our charity has grown with our knowledge, and such an exceptional scene as lately occurred at the grave of the murdered Jessie Keith only serves to remind us of the dark ages from which we have emerged.

But a better test than the facing of inevitable death for ourselves, is the bearing of those who through unforeseen and untimely bereavement, sustain the loss of friends or kindred. The Mohammedans, among the signs of the last day, class along with the decay of faith among men, great distress in the world, so that a man when he passes by another's grave shall say "Would to God I were in his place." This is not the spirit of those who may endure to the end; it is not the spirit of the possessors of a living faith.

The writer of these lines has recently lost his most intimate friend, a comrade of fourteen years, one who lived well, liked well, labored well, and loved well. Strong and good in heart and mind and soul, well approved in all life's relations, in a meridian hour, and suddenly, he was called away. His influence has been for goodness, on the side of things true, honorable, just, pure, lovely and of good report, and when he comes again his reward shall be rendered to him according to his work.

"What Adonais is, why should I fear to be?" asks Shelley. "No harm can be-

fall a good man," says Socrates. And Whittier tells us—

"No harm can come from Him to me
On ocean or on shore,
I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air,
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care."

In words that may well apply to himself my friend once wrote of another, who also was called away in youth and hope: "He was such a genial soul, and so utterly good a fellow that we all loved him dearly. I don't know whether rigid evangelicals would have called him a Christian. I daresay many would have had grave doubts of his state, but if he is not in some happier world than this, and if he will not be rewarded for many a severe trial in his brief life here I do not want to believe in Mercy or Love Infinite at all. . . . A few weeks after his death I came across a little poem by James Whitcomb Riley which seemed to me just to fit him"

"I cannot say, and I will not say
That he is dead—he is just away!"

With a cheery smile and a wave of the hand
He has wandered into an unknown land,

And left us dreaming how very fair
It needs must be, since he lingers there.

And you—oh you, who the wildest yearn
For the old-time step and the glad return—

Think of him faring on, as dear
In the love of There as the love of Here:

Think of him still as the same, I say;
He is not dead, he is just away!"

He is just away; and in God's good time he shall come back, as we all must, and those who desire and deserve it shall come as friends and kin once more, and they shall be together again, even as of old. The interrupted tasks will be finished, the incomplete lives and aims will be carried forward in "that new life which is the old," and we will learn somewhat more of the fulness of existence and the triumph of Love.

And down the long stretch of five thousand years come the solemn, holy words of the CHRIST, to lift up our lives to a larger life than we know, for "those who are wise in spiritual things," He says, "grieve neither for the dead nor for the living. I Myself never was not, nor thou, nor all the princes of the earth, nor shall we ever hereafter cease to be. As the lord of this mortal frame experienceth therein infancy, youth, and old age, so in future incarnations will it meet the same. One who is confirmed in this belief is not disturbed by anything that may come to pass."

AMEN