

## ON DEATH.

An extract from the letter enclosing the following article explains the circumstances under which it was written, and gives it more than ordinary interest.

"I send the accompanying manuscript to know if you would accept it for the *Parish Visitor*. The writer of it, my daughter, has entered upon life eternal. After she was taken from us I found it among her papers. On reading it we understood more fully her calmness in the prospect of death. For as she said shortly before leaving us, 'I am glad to go—I am going home.'"

Bacon says very truly in one of his essays that "men fear death, as children fear to go into a dark room," and as with children this fear is intensified and increased by ghostly tales and vain imaginings, so it is with children of a larger growth in regard to that "dark room" to which death *seems* to lead—I say *seems*, for do we not as Christians believe that it really leads to our Father's home, where await us joy that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man"?

The natural fear of death born in us through our sin, we enhance and magnify, by thinking how dreadful it is to lie in the dark grave, shut out from the air of heaven, fresh blowing, pure and sweet, and of the sad good-bye to all the loved ones, forgetting who has promised "*as thy day, so shall thy strength be;*" we shudder at the thought of the "dark valley," as though forced to grope our way, unaided and unguided, through its heavy shadows.

To the heathen, and to those who

even now are well nigh dead in trespasses and sins, death *may*, nay *must*, be a *terror*—to the former, because through spiritual darkness they cannot discern the light that is beyond the dread portal—and, to the latter, because it will bring the summons to meet a just God." But to the Christian, if he will turn from vain imaginings about the grave, where his body like a garment no more fitting, shall lie, surely death will appear at the Gate of Life, a gate resembling, perchance, that shield we read of which hung from an arch across a certain road. One traveller, approaching, declared it to be of gold, while the horseman spurring towards him, asserted it as positively to be of silver, only to find, when they had done battle for their respective assertions, that each was right, gold or silver, according to the side they stood on. So with this Gate of Life, the massy portals *seem* from *our side* dark, gloomy and forbidding, but to those on the other side, methinks, they shine most gloriously, and great must be the joy in heaven when they swing ajar to let some of the Lord's followers through.

If, as I said, the fear of children is increased by idle tales, equally true is it that it is lessened, if not dissipated, by filling their minds with wiser thoughts, and teaching them about the loving Father to whom the darkness is as the light. Let us, then, seek to lessen our shrinking from the door which must open some day for each one of us, by filling our minds with bright, cheering thoughts.

Our own sweet poet Whittier says death seemeth but

"A covered way  
Which opens into life."