

If this the end, better by far in peace
Had mist wreaths slumbered for eternity.

There the whole question hinged, could it be proved
Beyond all cavil and beyond all doubt
There was another life beyond the grave,
The poor could wait with patience their reward.
But if the grave closed all in dreamless sleep,
Fierce pain from birth to death and naught beyond,
The wondrous worlds that people endless space
Are like the damned spirits Dante saw
Whirled onwards by the fiery blasts of hell,
While every pulse beat of the ether bears
To the four corners of the universe,
The wail of some poor soul in mortal pain.

Then with bowed head I wept and prayed aloud
That if behind this veil of darkest night
Lay hid from human eyes, a conscious force,
Working for righteousness, so that all pain
In some mysterious way would meet reward.
I humbly begged for but one gleam of light
To aid me in my earnest search for truth,
And so beneath the pines I fell asleep.

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I stood upon the world when it was young,
In the full heyday of its buoyant youth;
The pathless forests of the west were gone
And in their place a rank luxuriant growth
Of giant tree ferns and of graceful palms,
A tropic vegetation bathed in light;
The tangled wealth that nature only yields
To those fair lands where fiercely burns the sun;
On our cold earth such scenes as these lie hid
In fairy islands of the summer seas.
And as I gazed entranced I humbly knelt
As Linné knelt before the field of gorse
Whose golden blossoms carpeted the wild,
And worshipped at the shrine of nature's God.