

HOME.

BY REV. W. B. HINSON.
John xiv. 2.

In his last delirium, an American statesman murmured,—

"Now I lay me down to sleep;
I pray the Lord my soul to keep;
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take."

In those closing moments of life his mind strayed back to the prayer he had learned in his youth; to his childhood, his home, and his mother.

My conception of heaven is inseparably associated with my childhood's days. For my first distinct dream of the other world was occasioned by some verses my mother taught me, in those hallowed hours when the falling twilight found me by her side. The verses were those of Mrs. Hemans, called "The Better Land,"—that simple song that holds its charm in spite of the rushing years and the more matured thought of growing life.

"I hear thee tell of a Better Land,
Thou callest its children a happy band;
Mother, oh where is that radiant shore?
Shall we not seek it and weep no more?
Is it where the flower of the orange blows,
And the fire-flies glance through the myrtle boughs?"
"Not there, not there, my child."

"Is it where the feathery palm trees rise,
And the date grows ripe under sunny skies?
Or midst the green islands of glittering seas,
Where fragrant forests perfume the breeze,
And strange, bright birds on their starry wings,
Bear the rich hues of all glorious things?"
"Not there, not there, my child."

"Is it far away in some region old,
Where the rivers wander o'er sands of gold?
Where the burning rays of the ruby shine,
And the diamond lights up the secret mine,
And the pearl gleams forth from the coral strand—
Is it there, sweet mother, that better land?"
"Not there, not there, my child."

Ah, no! The radiant shores and springing flowers, the gleam of fire-fly and the fronded palm, the perfume of forests, and the wealth and shine of precious things, will not secure us from the assaults of sorrow, or bar the heart's door against the approach of grief. For circumstances and surroundings cannot insure happiness, and perfect joy is a flower that blooms—

"Not here, not there, not where the sparkling waters
Fade into mocking sands as we draw near."

The undisturbed repose and the fullness of joy, the great glory and unalloyed happiness foretold by Christ, is a prize for which he seeks too low who seeks beneath the skies. For as the song goes on to say—

"Eye hath not seen it, my gentle boy;
Ear half not heard its deep songs of joy;
Dreams cannot picture a world so fair,
Sorrow and death may not enter there;
Time does not breathe on its fadeless bloom,
For beyond the clouds, and beyond the tomb—
'Tis there, 'tis there, my child."

We are certainly warranted in supposing that heaven as a place will be eminently beautiful. We are acquainted with one world of God's making; and, albeit *she* has sought to spoil God's handiwork, the glorious autograph of its Maker has never been erased from the fair earth. The writer of Genesis has told us that after God had spoken the world into existence, after decking the sky with a million stars, and carpeting the earth with a flowery sod, God looked upon creation's face, and He, the all-wise and all-glorious, pronounced it "very good." And doubtless there have been times in the experience of us all, when we—albeit our knowledge is so limited and our sight so dim—have realized that we, too, could feel the truthfulness of the Creator's speech concerning the earth.

And it ever remains true, that if we have no conception of the beautiful, it is not on account of the natural surroundings in which God has placed us; for verily the earth is full of thought, and full of beauty, too. And, not only for the presence of the lovely in nature, but also for our realization of that loveliness, we should adore our Maker. For, as Festus said, "some souls are redeemable by the love of beauty;" and it is certain the world without will grant fuller revelations of goodness and beauty to those who love it and appreciate its fairness, than to those who with the eye of ecstasy, have never seen the flowers beneath, or the bright blue sky above. From Nature up to nature's God, is where we should all be led. When we consider God's heaven—and no less God's earth—we gratefully acknowledge that all His works praise Him, and in our adoration swell creation's psalm; thus mingling our voices with the song of birds, the murmur of the wind, the roar of the sea, the roll of the thunder, and the music of the ever rushing spheres.

For O, but the world is fair, is fair,
And O, but the world is sweet;
And out in the gold of the blossoming mould,
We can sit at the Master's feet.

And then again, we are within the bounds in supposing

the heaven of God's building to be very magnificent and glorious. When we consider the boundless resources of our God, when we ponder the fact that not only the gold and silver of earth are His, but also the massive grandeur of all the worlds; that in addition to all created material He has the boundless resources of His own infinite Nature, and the innumerable possibilities of His omnipotence; then are we sure indeed that the world above must be most fair and glorious. And as the idolatrous temple of Diana was so bright and dazzling, that the door-keeper cried out always to those who entered, "Take heed to your eyes," so I have sometimes thought that our faculties of vision must be greatly strengthened ere we can behold the pearly palaces of heaven. O, that city of the King, that home of the redeemed, that fair country where the unfading flowers bloom, and the unending song is sung; "What must it be to be there." To see—as John saw—the Holy Jerusalem possessing the glory of Jehovah, with a brilliancy like that of precious stones, with its walls of jasper and streets of gold, with its pearly fountains and glittering gates, with its crystal river and trees of life, to behold its scenery, bathe in its light, and participate in its glory—"What must it be to be there."

"O, the earth is flecked w' flowers, many, many, tinted, fresh an' gay,
The birdies warble blithely, for my Father made them see;
But these sights and these sou's will as naething be to me,
When I hear the angels singin' in my ain countrie."
And blessed be God, this heaven so beautiful and grand is a large place. In my father's house are many mansions, and they will be all filled; not one unoccupied mansion in all heaven.

Nineteen centuries ago, when the beloved disciple saw paradise, he beheld a great multitude that no man could number; and ever since then the number has been increasing, while

"E'en now to their eternal home,
Some happy spirits fly."

For the Good Shepherd has not only a large fold, but a large flock also; the great Father has many children; and as Jesus told us, many shall come from the east, and west, and north, and south, and until the number of the fallen leaves of all the ages, and of the sand dust of all the seas, or the drops of all the floods have been counted; it will be impossible to tell how great that throng will be, who escape all evil by being sheltered in glory with Jesus.

And if it is allowable to judge of a poem by the poet; of a building by the builder; of a house by the architect; what boundless suggestion is open to our view as we realize that Christ is the maker and builder of Heaven. This being so, I am sure the Home of the soul, the Paradise of Christ's preparing, will be a sure defence; secure against all time's ravages, or sin's assaults. For on the sure foundation, even the Rock of Ages, the great Lord will be a mansion that shall enter nothing that defileth; no disturbing doubt, no sombre foreboding, no darkening temptation. For the Great Shepherd who so loved his sheep that he died for their redemption; who sought them patiently, earnestly and long; who sought them o'er mountains thunder riven, and through the deep valleys where there was loneliness and pain; surely he will house those sheep in a fold of perfect security and peace.

And thank God we shall then be absolutely sinless.

"Then we shall see his face,
And never, never sin."

Vea "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him" as He is." His name will be written on our foreheads, and we who have trusted in His mercy and worn His righteousness below, shall then be robed by Him in the beauty of perfect holiness and spotless purity.

But from what we might reasonably expect Heaven to be, we now turn to what Christ in the text declares it certainly is.

If in talking to me, my brother in the flesh should speak and say, "My Father's house;" I should understand his language to be a reference to my Home—to our home. And so when Jesus, who is the elder brother of those who believe, speaks of "My Father's house" are we not justified in saying he is speaking of Heaven as our Home. What a wonderful word is the word Home.

O, home, my home,
O, river in the valley of my home,

cried an American boy, who lay dying far away from the place of his birth. "Dying, you say, then carry me home to die;" so murmured an English lad to whom death approached on the shores of Africa. Verily there's no place like home.

For the best friends are there. We make friends along the highway of life, and the friendship of these fellow pilgrims is a sweet and fragrant thing; but the home friends are the truest after all. For when all the world is cold and repellent, there's a refuge at home. When the citizens in the far off country have no pity, there's a welcome at the old home. Ah lads and lasses listening to my words, remember what I tell you concerning these home friends. Oh forsake not the mother whose hair is white and whose eye is dim through watching for you; forsake not the father whose hand is hard through toiling for you; for wherever you wander, whatever you do, however wide the circle that knows you, or however numerous the friends that surround you, there will be no love offered so noble, and so unselfish, so pure, and tender, so all forgiving, undying, and strong, as the love of the dear ones at home. O you young people who have left your country homes and are dwelling in this city; you who sometimes smile at the simple ways and natural speech of the old father and mother, I beseech you let

your smile be very tender and kindly; remember the home friends with a warmness about your heart; write to them often; see that their way to the grave is made smooth as possible; for girls, you may in the days to come prove many a friendship and find it wanting in worth, but your mother's love will be as gold no fire can destroy; for boys, you may drift into seas where sympathy and kindness are unknown, but even then remember that your old father loves you in your waywardness and will welcome you home again. Ah friends I would once more repeat this simple unadorned sentence; that of all the loves there is none like the home love.

And what a place of confidence is home. In the world we are cautious and reserved; for he who bears his heart upon his sleeve will be sore wounded and distressed. But at home; ah at home no one will accuse us of egotism, and no one deem us foolish; there we lay bare our hearts and appear as we really are. Thrice happy is the man, though bearded and bronzed, though possessor of great gifts and ringing renown, who at vacation time can go home, and tell mother and father what the busy years have done for him; what he has gained, and what he has lost; what he hopes for, and what he fears most. For in the home there is perfect sympathy. "Carry me home," is not only the cry of the dying; but it is the cry of all those whose cup of existence is filled with misrepresentation, scorn and sorrow. "Carry me home," is the cry of the wounded, weeping, sinning, sorrowing ones, the wide world over. For at home the hands are gentle, and the hearts are kind; at home no word of reproach will be spoken; and there if anywhere the damning thought of the far off country may be lost, and the soiled soul made clean.

There is rest at home. O brother whose early life was spent in the country, can you rest anywhere under the sun as you can in the old accustomed places, where the very fences are familiar, and the streams talk to you as though they were glad to see you again. Or you whose home was by the sea! Is there anything can soothe your troubled mind or cool your heated brow, like the sound of the waves that have murmured on those well known sands for many a hundred years. "Take him home," said a hospital nurse speaking of a man whose listlessness betrayed his indifference to life. "Take him home, if aught will rouse him, that will." True, O friend, quite true! For to ears that care not for the world's praise, the brooks will be welcome; and eyes that no eulogy can make bright, may kindle with interest at the sight of an old time flower, with its old-fashioned naue, and its modest look.

But dear friends while these earthly homes may furnish relief for many a pang, and balm for many a wound; we have to sadly acknowledge that life brings to us some woes that even the dearest friends of earth can neither mitigate nor relieve. And for our comfort while pondering this fact, we should be careful to remember how into the home above, there shall enter nothing that could sadden or disturb the soul's peace. For there the inhabitants are no more sick; they hunger no more; they thirst no more; they are never weary; they never sin; but God wipes away all tears from their faces, and they

From the rivers of His grace
Drink endless pleasures in.

I have read how, when the invalid soldiers of the Crimea were carried aboard the troopship, the bands upon the shore played the old hymn "Home Sweet Home;" and as the wounded warriors heard the pathetic strains, they—the strong men who had dared the fury of the battle and the cold—wept, while they remembered their comrades dead on Crimean soil, for whom there was no return home; and also pondered the possibility of some of their number dying on the voyage, and instead of sleeping under old England's daisies, becoming the prey of the waves. But brethren beloved, we have no such cause for sorrow. All who fight in this fight are sure of a crown. All those who sleep in Jesus are safe. And when the general roll is called we shall all be there. You remember the time far back in the past, when in the falling twilight your mother used to stand in your boy-hood home and call you to shelter for the night. Ah friends, the days will be but short and few, ere God will send for you the messenger who shall conduct you home. Or you recollect the day when by your father's side you wandered far out into the country; and as you wearily walked homeward, father comforted you by saying, "Child you are getting nearer home." Even so, brothers, we are getting home. And every heart throb and pulse beat, every waning moon and setting sun, finds us nearer the end. The Father's hand holds us, and the Father's voice cheers us. We shall soon be home.

"O, that home of the soul, in my visions and dreams
Its bright jasper walls I can see;
'Till I fancy but thinly the veil intervenes
Between the fair city and me.

That unchangeable home is for you and for me,
Where Jesus of Nazareth stands;
The King of all kingdoms forever is He,
And He holdeth our crowns in His hands."

I read some lines long weeks ago that have been in my mind during this whole service. Lines that have almost escaped my lip several times already. They express the yearning of an exile for the place of childhood's pleasures. I have felt their power frequently in the past, as I feel it now.

"Oh, to be home again, home again, home again,
Down by the meadow, and down by the mill;
Father is calling me, mother is calling me,
Calling me, calling me, calling me still.
Oh, to be wandering, wandering, wandering,
Through the green meadows, and over the hill;
Sisters are calling me, brothers are calling me,
Calling me, calling me, calling me still."

Oh, once again to be home again, home again,
Dark grows the night, and the evening is chill;
Do you not hear how the voices are calling me,
Calling me, calling me, calling me still."

Ah, do you not hear how the voices are calling, calling, calling—thank God—still!

The

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