

Our Farm Homes

Signs of Spring

A bird note blown from a bawling
bough
Which the Master will soon with life
endow;
A squeak and a scurry of little feet
In the dry dead grass where the field-
lice meet.
A sheath of green where the alders grow
With feet swathed close in banis of
snow.

A flicker of color, a flutter of wings,
And a blue bird fast to a post-side
clings
In the air, a fresh, sweet woodland
smell,
A spicy tang from a vine-hung dell.
And the secret places of the earth
Prepare for the spring's victorious
birth!

Easter Victory

Whatever the original meaning of the Anglo-Saxon festival of Easter may have been, its essential meaning, as a Christian festival, is victory over death. But does not death seem, at first sight, to conquer all things? The plant thrills in the breezes of a brief summer, then icy fingers curl the edges of its leaves, nip its tender shoots, and soon lay leaf and flower in the dust. Death has conquered life.

Again, the gaily-painted insect dances joyfully over field and meadow, like a winged sunbeam, in the fragrant air, and presently the chill of an endless night strikes through all its members, and it sinks motionless amid the dead twigs, and leaves, its brothers and sisters of the dust; and death is again the victor.

Yonder is a scholar who has almost completed his profound volume on physics, or mathematics. He needs only a month in which to close his great task. It is the effort of his life-time. He tells on. He is determined to finish it. But death comes, and demands a halt; the man's eagerly sought goal is in sight, but he will never reach it. Death conquers him. Death is victor.

So it is with all the world's workers, scholars, statesmen, merchants, day-laborers, artists, mechanics. They lay their plans; they see death approaching, they struggle feebly against him, and they sink defeated. He wins victories on every field. Who can stay his triumphant progress?

To this appealing question, ages old, the message of Jesus Christ, if clearly understood, gives a satisfying answer. The foundation of Christ's life and teaching was—it stated in philosophical terms—His absolute knowledge of the supreme reality of spirit, and the comparative insignificance of what we call "matter." Our Lord came into this knowledge, not as the philosophers, like Berkeley, Kant, Hegel, came, by long processes of reasoning, but by insight and revelation. And the way in which the Great Founder of Christianity gives to man, victory over death, is by showing that man is not made of the kind of substances which death can conquer; by showing that man is spirit, having the power of endless life; and when the grave wins its apparent victory, that victory is not gained over the escaping man himself but only over his investiture. Death clutches at a man, and the man escapes, leaving his garment, as Joseph of old, in the hands of the enemy.

That is the way in which Jesus Christ gives victory over death; and it is a real victory, although those who are enslaved by the power of ma-

terial things will see in these words only the repetition of an old and meaningless phrase. Would that all bereaved hearts in the world could grasp the great truth: for all mourn the loss of near and dear friends; and many timidly wonder whether they shall ever meet and know those friends again. In all hearts there are tender memories, there are echoes of voices which once fell lovingly on the ear; but an echo is not a real voice, and a memory is not a living presence. For all these mourners there is a glad Easter message of victory over death.

Many persons, however, are not able to receive this joyous gospel

The suggestion arises that there is injustice in having so profound an element in Christ's teaching; one which is too subtle, too refined, for everybody to understand; but such injustice is more apparent than real. Spiritual knowledge does not go hand in hand with book knowledge—with the wisdom of the world; the wayfarer man, though foolish in worldly ways, may, if he will, know himself and his loved ones as spiritual beings, who were not born to die. And beyond that, even when a man does not grasp this truth of the Easter victory, he may yet share in it. A man really is spirit, whether he knows he is spirit or not. To illustrate: Here is the element lately discovered in our atmosphere, the substance called argon; now a man breathes that, whether he knows about it or not. So with the immortal destiny of man, as an imperishable spirit; a man shares that destiny even though he may be utterly ignorant of it; and its joys and its responsibilities will both come to him.

While one asserts the supremacy of spirit over matter, he must not ignore, however, the honest doubts which intrude upon so many intelligent earnest minds. To refuse to consider candidly any suggestions which can arise concerning the nature and destiny of man, is to sink oneself into the narrow groove of the dogmatist. Here, for example, is one of the doubts which have great force with many persons. It is suggested plainly in Dr. Holmes' story, "Elsie Venner," where Mr. Bernard, having recovered from a severe concussion of the brain, and from a prolonged

At first sight this theory seems reasonable; but a closer study will show that the unconsciousness is probably an inherent part of the earthly life, and not of the unearthly life. To illustrate, here is a man in an open field, which is surrounded by a dense hedge or thicket. Now suppose that the man tries to pass outside the field. From his cleared place he plunges into the thicket, struggles with it, finds it impassable, and struggles back into the cleared field. Is that man justified in saying, "Outside this cleared space all is dense undergrowth? All the rest of the world is a thicket?" Certainly he is not. He has not reached the "rest of the world." He had not gotten fairly clear from the field; he had only been prevented in its boundary. And that is what is reasonably true of the state of coma; it is the boundary of the earthly life, not the beginning of the life beyond.

Thus we can speculate about the great problem, but the strongest testimony to the reality of the unseen eternal life is not to be obtained, as many mistakenly suppose, from those who are bending under weakness and infirmity, but from the man who is in the fullest possession of life. He it is who is nearest to the life eternal. As Lucy Larcom said, speaking of the so-called preparation for death, "There is no preparation needed; for the change is not a transition from a state or condition called life to one called death, but it is a transition from life to life; it is more life, all ways and forever."

Therefore, let this glorious Easter word of victory bring joy to all. The immortal life is a very real destiny. How dim and shadowy a man's past life seems to him, looking back at the "twenties" from the summit of the "sixties." And how dim and unreal the world of stars and planets seems, as one stands at midday beneath the full glare of the blazing sun. But youth is real, and the stars are real, and immortal life, equally dim, is equally real.

With this thought of the reality of the future life, (which grows upon a man in proportion as he grows in the recognition of the supremacy of spiritual forces), with this should go the growing sense of unending responsibility, of ceaseless duty, reaching through this life, and all life. In a letter written by John Addington Symonds, the brilliant historian of the Italian renaissance, these lines occur: "The great thing for us is to remember that the human soul contains God, on this planet. It becomes a duty for us to preserve the soul, which is God's temple, and God's revelation to the world, and to preserve it inviolate. Later or sooner all of us shall surely meet in God; of that I am persuaded."

Since we are to meet again those dear ones who have passed on into the larger life, since we are destined to come into closer and deeper knowledge of God, since the spiritual life of man, his real life, is to go on, in another world, we must let that life of the spirit take root, and grow, now, and here. The divine forces of hope and faith, and love, and heroic self-sacrifice, must be given a larger place in our earthly life; so that when we stand, one day, on the heavenly shore, we shall enter that fair land, not as aliens but as children coming home from our wandering, to the Father's house, so that we no more out forever.

So this is the Easter victory—the truth of Christ's teaching that man is spirit, indestructible, above the reach of death, and precious in the sight of the Father.



The Beauty of Easter Bloom is Like the Innocence of Children

from Christ; or, if they do take it, it comes to them like a brief message, written in cipher; they have no idea as to how Jesus knew this truth of immortality. And thus they register themselves as spirit, and their friends as spirit; and thus in proportion as they share Christ's sense of the supreme reality and value of spirit over material appearances, they will share His confidence in the verities of the eternal life. A person who does not grasp this knowledge of spiritual realities may be an obedient follower of the Master, but cannot be called an intelligent disciple in spiritual things.

swoon, finds that period of swoon, or coma, an utter blank; and he conjectures whether, if the blow had been severer, and fatal, this consciousness, this state of nothingness, Most thoughtful persons have faced that dark suggestion, as they have themselves experienced unconsciousness, or have seen it in the case of a friend; and the materialist says that it is evident that the human spirit goes out of light into darkness, out of being into non-being, out of the circle which we call life into the encompassing sea of nothingness which surrounds life.