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LIFE ETERNAL.

BY WOODS HUTCHINSON, A. M., M. D.

LIFE is the greatest thing in the world; and it is a pleasure to simply exist, to respond to our environment, to absorb the forces of nature, to grow and to help others to grow. What wonder, then, that the darling desire of man's heart in all ages is to secure Life Eternal.

But is it not possible for this instinct, this passion, like any other, to overleap itself? May we not, by unduly exalting its importance, by dwelling upon it to the neglect of other equally God-given impulses and desires, develop it into positively abnormal if not morbid forms? Can we not by cherishing false ideals in connexion with it, fall into serious error, and even so change its tendency as to make it a source of more distress, apprehension, and bitterness, than of joy, confidence, and hope?

It is hardly necessary to answer the question: it not only may be, but it has been done in many a demonology and also in not a few theologies, until at more than one period of the world's history, men have been in the pathetic language of the Great Apostle, "through the fear of death, all their life long, subject to bondage." Like any other instinct unbalanced by counteracting impulses, given a permanent majority in the parliament of tendencies and relieved by ecclesiastical sanction from liability to executive veto, it has too often brought its own punishment with it, and has quadrupled the natural fear of death by the dread of what may follow in the "life beyond." That tragedy of the ages, "Hamlet," is at heart a titanic picture of a noble nature, a courageous soul, a magnificent intellect, palsied, unbalanced, and ultimately all but ruined by too keen an appreciation of the possibilities of the after-world. At every turn his "native hue of resolution is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought"—of this thought—his righteous longing for vengeance upon the skulking assassin, his fierce desire to be the instrument of heaven's retribution, when failing him no other *can* be, are sternly suppressed lest he should "couple Hell" with his mission of justice. This leaves him inspired by absolutely no o'ermastering passion save a sense of the horrors of his father's condition

and the utter hopelessness of relieving them by any effort on his part. What wonder this failed to spur him to action? His constant fear is that the ghost "may be a devil" who "out of my weakness and my melancholy abuses me to damn me." Contrast his attitude with that of that commonplace, but hot-blooded young fellow, Laertes, who bursts into the presence of royalty itself with the furious declaration,

"To bell allegiance.
To this point I stand
That *both the worlds* I give to negligence.
Let come what comes, only I'll be revenged
Most thoroughly for my father."

Which is the nobler attitude, the "natural" or the "celestial" one. He refuses to slay the vile murderer of his father, because forsooth he finds him at his prayers, and dreads that this may bar his punishment in the future world and send him to heaven, which would be "hire and salary, not revenge." He utterly and fatally mistakes the proportion of things in this life by persistently regarding them in the light of a future one. And we have most of us, alas, been personally acquainted with a Hamlet.

The earliest and perhaps most commonly accepted conception of eternal life is, that inasmuch as our life here is in the main happy and desirable, that all that is needed to insure our eternal happiness is an indefinite continuation of our personal existence. It is this childish view which is still largely responsible for the way in which we, even in the nineteenth century, regard death as the "King of Terrors," the chief of evils, and the one great blot upon the face of nature. Theologically it has developed into the theory that death is a punishment for and result of sin, and it is generally assumed to have come into the world at the Fall in the Garden of Eden, although, strangely enough, there is absolutely no foundation for such a conception of death in the narrative of that matchless parable itself, and very little in any other part of Scripture outside the splendid imagery of Paul. Indeed the poem itself implies the contrary, inasmuch as our first parents were turned out of Eden "lest they eat of the tree of life and live forever," cease to be mortal, in fact. In short, this view of death is taught neither by science nor by Scripture, reasonably interpreted. Death is essentially a vital process of

transcendent importance, a blessing instead of a curse, a reward, not a punishment.

Whence then comes this fear of death of which we hear so much and which is so continually appealed to as one of the most overmastering passions of humanity. Is it a natural or manufactured dread? Mainly, the latter.

There is unquestionably a genuine natural basis for it in the instinctive shrinking from the pain of wounds, the weakness and weariness of the sick-bed, the thickening speech, the darkening eye. A natural dread of ceasing to live, to enjoy, to feel, of leaving the sunshine, the music, the loving and fighting behind us. But these are comparatively slight and transient feelings, which shrivel in a moment in the glow of any powerful emotion, such as love, or ambition, even hunger, or revenge. As Bacon quaintly remarks: "It is worth the noting that there is no passion in the mind of man so weak, but it meets and masters the fear of death."

There is also the shudder at the pall, the hearse, Seneca's "array of the death-bed which has more horrors than death itself," the darkness and cold of the tomb, the tooth of the worm, the rain and the storm. But this disappears almost as soon as our attention is called to it, for science assures us at once that the body cannot, and religion that the soul does not, reckon of any of these.

The main and real bitterness of death is the dread of a Future Life.

One of the principal "consolations" of religion consists in allaying the fear which it has itself conjured up. "Men fear death as children fear to go in the dark, and as that natural fear in children is *increased with tales*, so is the other." (Bacon.)

The simplest and most primitive form in which this wide-spread idea of a personal existence after death is found to exist is in the religious beliefs of most savage tribes of a low grade of culture, such as the Tasmanians and Australians.

Here it is simply a vague belief that the souls of men become demons or spirits after their death and evidently owes its origin to the appearance in dreams of the images of ancestors or deceased friends, thus proving to the aboriginal mind that they still exist. These ancestral ghosts, together with the demons of the streams and storms receive a fitful sort of worship, to keep them from injuring the living. There is, of course, no idea whatever of reward or punishment in this "heaven," and the "immortality" conception is not confined to human beings, but extends also to animals and things such as weapons, utensils, and ornaments (which are seen upon or in the hands of the dream-visions aforesaid), which are accordingly buried

or burned with the corpse, that their ghosts may accompany him to the hereafter.

As the tribe rises notch by notch in the scale, these vague and misty fancies assume gradually more and more definite and orderly forms. A sort of order of rank is established among the ancestor ghosts and "forces-of-nature" demons, and from the chief among them are selected patron spirits and deities of the tribe. Thus the gods are born. Corresponding with this increase of dignity comes the necessity of a definite place of residence for beings of such exalted rank and the "hereafter" or "future-world" is assigned to them whither the spirits of the dead resort to become their subjects, and Heaven is invented. This is usually situated on the other side of some impassable mountain-chain, or across the nearest lake or ocean, or at the end of some cavern in the bowels of the earth: anywhere in fact that no member of the tribe has ever penetrated. This conception is gradually developed and embellished until it reaches the familiar "Happy hunting ground" stage, so well exemplified in the legends of our North American Indians. This future life is a frank and obvious copy of the present one, a gilded and rose-colored reproduction and continuation of the joys of earthly existence.

"Heaven but the vision of fulfilled desire,
And Hell the shadow of a soul on fire."

It has been held in identical or strikingly similar forms by almost every tribe or race in the world: in the upper stages of savagery, the lower and middle of barbarism, and even on into well-developed stages of civilisation. It is or was the belief, for instance, of tribes so widely separated in space, in time, and in culture as the South Sea Islanders, the Tartars of Siberia, the Apaches, and the Germans of Tacitus's time, our own ancestors.

Mutatis mutandis the spirits of the dead hunt the spirits of the buffaloes, which never cease to be plentiful, over prairies which are green the year round, upon horses which never tire, and with weapons and garments that never grow old.

One of the most interesting things about this stage of the belief is that as in the former one the immortality is not confined to human beings, but embraces the animals of the chase, horses, dogs, bows and arrows, cooking-utensils, garments, and even articles of food. The buffalo which the spirit of the good Indian pursues over the ever green prairies are the spirits of those which he has killed during his lifetime. The ghost of his favorite horse while on earth bears him in the chase, the soul of his faithful dog keeps him company, the ghost of his former trusty bow is in his hand, the shade of his treasured necklace of bears-claws encircles his phantom neck. Great pains have

been taken and heavy expenses incurred in order to bury all the latter with him : horse, dog, weapons, costly furs, wampum, priceless ornaments, nay, even food and tinder-box so that their spirits may accompany his on his distant journey. This originally kindly and charitable ceremony has developed unfortunately into some of the most hideous and ghastly rites known to history, such as the killing or burning of wives, soldiers, musicians, servants and others upon the grave or pyre in order that the dead man may have the benefit of their company and services. And an obvious survival of this idea still exists in the senseless and at times even ruinous pomp and display of modern funerals with their long and imposing procession of mourners and civic, military, or fraternal organisations. In military funerals a still more obvious remnant is seen in the custom of leading the dead man's horse directly behind the coffin to the grave.

As the tribe grows, expands, and advances, ships are built, wars are waged, voyages and expeditions at discovery undertaken until geography is born and the idea of a future world somewhere upon earth's surface has to be abandoned. Henceforward it is relegated either to the region of the sky, whose name "heaven" is still borne by the most advanced and modern conception of it, or to the bowels of the earth as its other classical modern name the "infernal" ("inferior") regions" still implies. In most cases the belief soon comes to include both localities. The higher as the abode first of the gods and heroes or princes of the highest rank only, who were thought worthy to become "immortals" and later by degrees of the pious and faithful of all ranks. The lower as the destination first, of all the lesser divinities and all ordinary mortals of whatever degree of moral merit, and later gradually changing to a place of exile and punishment for rebellious demons and criminals, unbelievers, libertines, heretics, and offenders of every description.

A well-known illustration of the early form of this stage of the idea is the Greek Olympus-Hades. The "upper" world did not even quite reach the sky, but was on the summit of Mount Olympus and was tenanted solely by the gods and a few nymphs and mortals of such extraordinary merit, beauty, or direct blood-relation to the divinities as to render them worthy of elevation to divine honors. The "lower" world was a cold, comfortless, shadowy region below the earth, where the shades of all mortals save the brilliant exceptions mentioned were condemned to pace out a monotonous existence in the meadows of asphodel. Even such redoubtable heroes as Achilles, Agamemnon, and Hector could not escape it. Although there was no idea whatever of punishment or disgrace connected with it and Pluto was merely an inferior divinity who acted as governor-general of the

colony, yet there was nothing cheerful or attractive about the conception and much that was repulsive.

The shades were represented as being literally "ghosts of their former selves," still hearing and showing the wounds that caused their death, mourning the loss of their joyous earth-life, their friends, their horses and cattle, their wine and gold, their very voices faded to a gibbering squeak. Achilles longs to come up to earth again, even though it were as the meanest slave that toils. The devoutest Greek departed this life with extreme reluctance and nothing but sighs and regrets for the joys he was leaving. He made all he possibly could out of this life, for he expected nothing in the next. And take him altogether he was about the best and most useful citizen the world has ever had and has actually achieved the most glorious immortality. Perhaps on this very account, perhaps not.

Cruder in some particulars and infinitely less artistic, but with a rough justice and fearless manliness about it which lifts it really far above Olympus, was the Valhalla of our fierce Norse ancestors. This has many points of resemblance to the "happy hunting-ground stage," for we find the heroes

"In the halls where Runic Odin howls his war-song to the gale,"

seated around the massive board, loaded with the souls of their favorite meats, drinking mead out of cups which could never be emptied, issuing forth every morning, not only to fight but actually to slay and be slain in furious combat, victors and vanquished alike, however, recovering from their wounds, or coming to life again, in time for the night's carouse. It was a frank copy of the joys of this life writ in large childish characters; its naïveté reminds one of the enthusiasm of a celebrated surgeon who declared that if there were no amputations in heaven he didn't want to go there. It was essentially a fighter's paradise, to which only warriors and their wives, mothers, or daughters could gain admittance. Its passport was death in battle, and the warrior who was luckless enough to die a "straw-death" would have himself scratched with a spear in order that he might come before its gates with Odin's mark. It was far in advance of Olympus in that it was not reserved for the especial favorites of capricious gods, but could be claimed as a right by every warrior (and all men were such in those days) who had reached a certain standard of bravery and truthfulness. The vast majority of the race, however, were forced to content themselves with an abode in chilly, foggy regions in the bowels of the earth, presided over by the earth-goddess Hela, whose name has been modified into our modern "hell." There was no thought of punishment, or even of disgrace, except perhaps such flavor of it as might be implied in failure to reach Valhalla;

'twas simply a dreary, monotonous, colorless existence, a sort of necessary old age after the fierce, loving, fighting youth of this life. If the Norse ideal of heaven was far below the Christian, its hell was a far more humane conception than that fierce and gloomy Oriental idea to which its name has been transferred and which has become by a sad travesty the peculiar possession and pride of the "Gospel of Love."

The Mohammedan Paradise was another conception of the same class, higher in that it recognised broader grounds of admission than simple war-like courage and truthfulness, but infinitely lower in the purely sensual and self-indulgent and almost degenerating character of the rewards offered, the exclusion of woman except in so far as she can gratify man's passions, and the recognition of "faith" as a substitute for "works." Its houris, its palms, its divans, its fountains, its delicious fruits, its gardens, are such obvious and vulgar reproductions of earthly ones, that there is little difficulty in believing the story told by certain historians that Mohammed actually constructed such a "paradise" as the Koran describes in some lovely but inaccessible mountain-valley, to which from time to time certain of his faithful followers would be transported while under the influence of an opiate. After being permitted to remain there a few hours or days their food would again be drugged, and they would be brought back to their tents to testify to others on their return to consciousness that the half had not been told. Like Valhalla, death in battle against the infidel was its surest passport, and the absolute reckless bravery which this belief developed in the two races is, to say the least, a highly suggestive commentary upon our statement that the greatest part of the fear of death is the dread of a future life.

Another great group of beliefs, the Egyptian Mysteries, have so completely succeeded in remaining what their name implied (as indeed they were intended to) that little or no definite idea can be formed of their conception of a future life. All we can catch is occasional glimpses of an ever-shifting and misty group of deities, some in animal, some in human form, Osiris and Amenti, Thoth and Ptah, Anubis and Isis, whose only definite function appears that of a court of inquiry and judgment upon the souls of the dead. They require a strict account of the deeds done in the body, the heart of the dead man is weighed in the scales of Truth, etc. Morality rather than piety seems to be demanded by them, but as to the nature of the rewards granted or punishments inflicted we are left almost entirely in the dark. Simply a dim but majestic vision of a judgment after death in which Virtue is its own reward and Sin its own punishment.

The most singular conception of the Life to come is that held by that religion which in age, dignity, and

number of adherents stands at the head of the great world-religions. At first sight it appears to be the very apotheosis of pessimism and nihilism, and yet it is the most ingenious, philosophic, and logical working-out of the supernatural idea which the world has ever seen. Much of its thought is magnificent; its great fundamental conception that the only thing which is immortal is character (*karma*) and that a million generations have been needed to develop it, that many of its stages are passed in animal form, and that there is an essential, spiritual relationship between men, animals, and even plants, is not only matchless in its poetic beauty, but almost scientific in its truthfulness.

The transmigration of souls is a mystic foreshadowing of Darwinism. It is by far the justest and most sweetly reasonable conception of an individual future life which has ever yet been developed. But like other religions it is weakest at the point of which it boasts itself most loudly. Its scheme of development up to the level of "*Homo integer vitæ*" is superb in its insight, its logic, and its truthfulness. Its view of the past is inspiring, noble, but for the future it has nothing to offer but a wearisome and intolerable repetition of former stages of incarnation, until at last in the very weariness of despair the soul is glad to take refuge in Nirvâna, "neither-consciousness-nor-unconsciousness," "absorption into the soul of the universe," individual annihilation, eternal rest.

The desirableness of Nirvâna has also been justified by some Buddhist sages from the same theological standpoint on the familiar priestly ground that existence is desire and desire is sin! therefore only by destroying existence can sin be destroyed and the *summum bonum* reached. Again, like most religions it is imposing while generalising upon the past, but it fails when it attempts to forecast the future. As a scheme of the past, it is beautiful, fascinating; as a scheme of the future, it is found wanting. And just as elsewhere the prospect of a gloomy after-world has multiplied tenfold the fear of death. But it is a superb allegory. Rid the puny individual of this world-burden of unending existence and eternal responsibility; let the growth of karma be that of the race, and each incarnation a new, glad personality; let the good that was in each, in its influence and its memory become a part of the constitution of the race—immortal in fact, and the Darwinist may declare to the Buddhist as Paul did to the Athenians on Mars Hill, "Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you."

When we attempt to study that view of the future life known as the Christian Heaven, we quickly find that we have to deal with two almost wholly distinct and widely different conceptions. One of these is the popular, orthodox "Heaven" of the prayer-meeting

and Sunday-school, and the other is the "Kingdom of Heaven" of Christ's teachings, two utterly dissimilar regions.

The essential features of the old-fashioned orthodox heaven are briefly, a city of great beauty whose streets are paved with pure gold, whose twelve gates are constructed each of a single pearl, its walls of jasper and its foundations of precious stones. There is no night, and no sea; while through the midst of the city flows a sparkling river with ever-bearing fruit-trees on either bank. Here the redeemed abide forever and ever, clad in white and shining garments, with crowns of gold upon their heads, with harps and palm branches in their hands. They also acquire the power of flying and become "angels." Their entire time is occupied by chanting praises and bowing down before a great white throne; as all mysteries are revealed to them there is no need of mental effort, and as there is neither hunger or thirst or pain of any kind, bodily effort is equally unnecessary. In short, it is as one godly old hymn-writer has expressed it, a place "where congregations ne'er break up, and Sabbaths have no end."

To this wondrous city, souls of all true believers are carried immediately after death by certain winged beings known as angels: to find one of the gates aforesaid either barely "ajar," half shut, or flung widely open for their admittance, according to the degree of their merit. The redeemed all become young and beautiful, yet retain enough of their earthly likeness to be readily recognisable by all their friends who have preceded or who may follow them. They are welcomed at the gate by the former and themselves look eagerly forward to the coming of the latter. This is bad enough, but it is reserved for a very small minority of the race as a special favor.

Not far from the walls of this city, separated from it only by a great gulf which is so narrow as to readily permit recognition to take place across it, is a fiery pit, the abode of the lost. Here nine-tenths of the race are condemned to writhe through all eternity, tortured by blistering heat, by raging thirst, by suffocating sulphur-fumes, and every agony that the ingenuity of devils can devise, so that in clear view of the beautiful city, "the smoke of their torment ascendeth for ever and ever." So close are these poor wretches to the jasper walls that their cries for mercy can be distinctly heard, as in case of Dives and Lazarus. From a mere human standpoint, one would have supposed that this would have somewhat interfered with the peace of mind of the redeemed, especially as they could readily recognise the voices of a majority of their friends and loved ones: but their dispositions have become so spiritual and celestial that they do not mind it at all; indeed, one good Calvinistic divine

has specially dwelt upon the watching of the tortures of the damned and congratulating oneself upon escaping therefrom, as one of the joys of heaven.

Of this whole popular conception, it may simply be said that it is almost absolutely without foundation in the teachings of the Master; that what little part of its imagery is biblical is taken chiefly from the Revelation of John, a book which is now declared by a majority of orthodox critics to be a burning picture of the persecutions under Nero and mystic prophecy of the ultimate triumph of the early Church *without any reference to the future life*. As to its theory that the souls proceed to heaven at once after death, the gospels are so vague that it is impossible to decide whether this passage occurs before or after the Last Judgment; the churches themselves have differed widely on this point, and one large body still holds that souls sleep in the grave with the body until awakened by the Last Trump. Its "recognition" hope is nowhere distinctly stated and barely implied in three passages, while as to its belief, that our souls become angels and that the latter have wings, it has not a word of support in the Scriptures. Its inferior and attendant spirits are taken bodily from the pages of Dante and Milton. In short, it is simply a "Happy Hunting-Ground" rearranged according to saintly and feminine ideas, combined with a Hades which for injustice, atrocity, and savage vindictiveness is unparalleled even in the cannibal islands.

The "Kingdom of Heaven," "Kingdom of God," "Life Everlasting" of the Master's own teachings is a conception of widely different form and temper. Its description consists principally of a noble strain of lofty and fearless prophecy, of the ultimate triumph of Good and defeat of Evil which throbs like an ever-recurring *Leitmottiv* through all of the Four Gospels. Like all true music it is beautiful, entrancing, sweetly mysterious. Its lofty beauty is marred by no childish working-out of trivial details. The great chord is struck by a master-hand, and the quivering over-tones of each responsive heart are left to finish the melody. "Every work of man shall be brought into judgment, whether it be good or whether it be evil." Righteousness and Truth shall and must prevail. Evil and falsehood will certainly both punish and defeat themselves: "the meek shall inherit the earth"; this is the burden of His song. As to the geographical where, and the chronological when, He is divinely silent. It is enough for us to know that it shall be hereafter and that it begins now: nay, that this divine process is actually going on within us, about us, among us, if we will only open our clouded eyes to see it. The Eternal Life of the Master *is* now, and has been from all eternity. "He that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life," His commandment *is* life everlasting.

"The Kingdom of God is within you." "This is life everlasting, that they may know thee, the only true God."

This is no mere endless prolongation of petty individual existence. It is something far nobler and higher than this. Hear Farrar's burning words:

"The use of the word *αἰώνιος*, and of its Hebrew equivalent, *olam*, throughout the whole of Scripture, ought to have been sufficient to prove to every thoughtful and unbiassed student that it altogether transcends the thoroughly vulgar and unmeaning conception of 'endless.' Nothing, perhaps, tends to prove more clearly the difficulty of eradicating an error that has once taken deep and age-long root in the minds of 'theologians,' than the fact that it should still be necessary to prove that the word 'eternal,' far from being a mere equivalent for 'everlasting,' *never* means 'everlasting' at all, except by reflexion from the substantives to which it is joined; that it is only joined to those substantives because it connotes ideas which transcend all time; that to make it mean nothing but time endlessly prolonged, is to degrade it by filling it with a merely relative conception which it is meant to supersede and by emptying it of all the highest conceptions which it properly includes."

As to a continued individual existence after death it is nowhere definitely taught by the Master, and is only even implied on any broad and reasonable principle of interpretation in three of his sayings. This may seem an extreme statement, but I challenge proof to the contrary from the Gospels. The three passages alluded to are the parable of Dives and Lazarus, the decision upon the case of the woman who had had seven husbands, and the promise to the thief on the cross. The first of these is a parable pure and simple, spoken to the scoffing, sneering Pharisees. The story is taken directly and bodily from Rabbinical literature—a weapon from their own armory turned against them with deadliest effect. If it be regarded as anything more than this it is bathos, for it depicts a state of affairs which would be almost more intolerable for the saved than for the lost.

In the second instance the question is squarely asked and an answer distinctly declined. All that the Master vouchsafes in his wisdom is that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are still "living" (of which the whole Jewish nation was bodily proof), but as to the woman in question "in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God." To the dying thief were spoken the thrilling words, "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." And was he not? Yea, verily, in the paradise of the love and sympathy of all Christian hearts through all the ages since and to come. If it is to be taken literally, what are we to make of Christ's saying to Mary, *two days* later in the garden of the sepulchre, "Touch me not, for I am *not yet* ascended unto my Father."

All other references of this sort which have even the appearance of being personal are to a mysterious "second coming," "in the clouds of heaven," which

it is distinctly stated, shall take place within the lifetime of that generation (Matthew xvi., 28; Mark xii., 25; Luke xx., 35, and xxiv., 34), but as to whose occurrence history is silent. All other allusions such as "If a man keep my commandments he shall never taste of death," "In my Father's house are many mansions," are not only as well, but better explained by referring them to the ultimate triumph of Good and the deathlessness of Truth. Why, when Christ distinctly tells us that "the Kingdom of God is within" us, that "to know God is life everlasting" and that He is the Resurrection—the bewilderingly beautiful instance of the Creation of Life out of the dust of the earth—we should obstinately persist in referring and postponing all three to some mysterious future region, "beyond the skies and beyond the tomb," is hard to understand. Even that matchless epitome of the wants and aspirations of the human heart, the Lord's Prayer (Revised Version, Luke), contains not a word of allusion to such a region. The grandly majestic "Last Judgment" is the Verdict of History, and nothing could be more "unorthodox" than its superb criterion, which is neither creed, nor faith, nor even intentional service of God ("Lord, when saw we thee an hungered and fed thee?"), but the broad and noble principle of common humanity, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me."

In short, the "ζωή αἰώνιος" of Christ is literally the "Life of the Ages" of Darwin.

To what conclusion, now, are we led by this review of the type-religions of the world, as to the effect of a belief in a future life upon the fear of death. Only one seems possible, that it increases it five-fold. The happy hunting-ground is reserved only for chiefs and warriors of highest renown, and many are the risks which even these have to run upon their passage thither. Only a few of the most favored of mortals can hope to scale Olympus. The halls of Odin open to none save heroes of high renown or faultless courage. The paradise of Mohammed is reserved for the faithful who have sealed their devotion with their blood, and admits neither women nor children. Nirvâna is a "heaven" of such doubtful attractiveness as to require a good deal of philosophy to enable one to contemplate its attainment with resignation; while as to the orthodox Christian heaven: "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto Life, and few there be that find it." Its most enthusiastic proclaimers do not offer the hope that more than a very small percentage of the race will ever reach it. Indeed, they seem almost inclined to gloat over the prospect of having it all to themselves. None but "desirable" people will be admitted there, they trust. In brief, every conception of an individual future life

condemns the vast majority of men to a state of either cheerless, ghostly gloom, or of absolute torment. Destroy such a belief and you rob death of half its terrors. 'Tis not dying that men dread so much as living again, and "thus conscience doth make cowards of us all."

As to the so-called "restraining influence" of such a belief and the extent to which it supports and enforces morality, the more attentively this is considered the less will be found to be its value. High, noble natures need no such incentive; base ones are but little affected by it. Assure a scoundrel of immunity from punishment in this world, which is unfortunately usually implied in the orthodox view, and he will risk the next one. If he is willing to run the gauntlet of the immediate constable and jail, how much more that of the remote possibilities of hell? The criminal is essentially the man who blindly gluts the craving of to-day, with an utter disregard of to-morrow.

Besides, there is always the chance of a "death-bed repentance" and usually that of buying absolution by devoting part of the spoils to the Church. "Charity covereth a multitude of sins." In Catholic countries it is notorious that the more colossally villainous the brigand the more devout his piety and magnificent his offerings. Indeed, a distinguished English penologist (Havelock Ellis: *The Criminal*) goes so far as to open his chapter on "The Religion of the Criminal" with the horrifying remark, "In all countries religion or superstition is intimately connected with crime." As a check for the well-disposed it is unnecessary; for the ill-disposed, worthless or worse. Furthermore, it must not be overlooked that whatever value it may have in this respect has to be offset by the forturings, human sacrifices, funeral victims, "head-hunting," child-burning, Jesuit massacres, thuggism, "infant-damnation," Mormon polygamy, and other such observances and beliefs which are inspired *by it alone*.

We personally fought at the battle of Hastings and shall in Armageddon. We are a part of all that ever has been or is to come. We have lived from the earliest appearance of life upon this cooling globe and shall live through all eternity in our descendants or in those whose existence ours has helped to make possible. All that is true, all that is good, all that is brave and virtuous, that "makes for righteousness" in us and in our influence *cannot* die, but has become part of the framework of the universe, has been painted in the great picture-gallery of nature to bless and cheer generations yet unborn. This, to my vision, is the true "Eternal Life," or as $\zeta\omega\eta$ $\alpha\iota\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\omicron\varsigma$ is better translated "the life of the æons," "The Life of the Ages." All in us that is base, all that is cowardly, all

that is untrue, falls by its own weight, decays by "the worm that dieth not," is consumed by "the fire that is not quenched."

What wonder that the righteous are described as "saved," and the unrighteous as "lost." The question of salvation becomes, not the selfish one "shall I as an individual live after death in a state of happiness, or misery?" but the nobler, unselfish one "How much of all my work, my character, my influence, my *self* will become part of the progress of the race and of the history of the universe?"

All faiths, all views agree in this one grand, consoling thought, that every brave deed, every noble effort is of itself immortal. That the good *cannot* die, and that every effort, however feeble or apparently unsuccessful to make the world happier for our having lived in it, shall have its reward.

FABLES FROM THE NEW ÆSOP.

BY HUDOR GENONE.

The Great Kite Syndicate.

THREE sticks and a hank of twine and a roll of paper met in jolly good fellowship at a tavern. I have forgotten the name of the country where this happened, but am inclined to think it must have been Cathay, since there—as travellers commonly report—kite-flying is a pastime much in vogue.

All these good fellows fell to talking, as sticks and twine and paper talk, and to gabble about their affairs. They were, as I learned by listening, in business together, and the partnership they had formed was called the Kite Syndicate, by which I understood they had entered into a mercantile alliance to unite each his several functions towards the development and perfection of what should be the finest kite ever seen in that land.

So at the table in the wine room they planned, and afterwards adjourned to a greensward hard by, their purpose being here, without interruption, to perfect their purpose in practice, as previously their plans had been perfected in principle.

Arrived in the field, the paper spread himself out flat, and the sticks stretched themselves, and the string unknotted, and then at once, with one voice, all proclaimed themselves quite ready, all three, to be united in the holy bonds of kithood.

The paper said, "I will cut myself to the desired shape," and the sticks, each for himself, "I will lay myself in the right place and at the right angle," and the cord, "I will twist myself about my brothers, the sticks, and about the edges and folds of my cousin, the paper"; and all together exclaimed, "What a fine kite we shall be!"

But when the paper would have cut himself into

shape, he found it quite impossible, and so when the sticks tried to form the right angles with each other, and the string when he would twist and twine and bind. The paper could change position, but of himself could not alter his form, and though the sticks could writhe and wiggle and lie straight or criss-cross at will, to regulate their proper relations for becoming part of a kite was quite futile; and the string, he too could coil and uncoil, and stretch out and draw in, but the peculiar power and genius that goes to binding, sewing, and tying he found was denied him.

"Woe is us!" they cried in unison, "of what avail is it to be possessed of capacities if capabilities be lacking?"

"Beautifully expressed," said a kite-maker, who chanced to be passing, "and moreover true, which is not always the case with beautiful expressions. Now you keep quiet and let me arrange you."

So saying, the kite-maker took shears and cut the paper, and laid the sticks, and twisted and twined the cord, till after an interval he had made all ready, when he raised the kite, and a brisk breeze blowing, it sailed off and up bravely into the sky, to the satisfaction of its component parts, who, far from honoring the kite-maker or rightly appreciating him, said among themselves, complacently, "How wise we are,—we, the great Kite Syndicate."

A fool heard them and laughed. "Imbeciles," said he, "they ought to know and understand that all their kite was the handiwork of the Almighty Kite-maker, who both builds and sails.

A philosopher passing, heard the fool and saw the kite. He did not stop to argue with the fool (because he was a philosopher), but he pondered within himself somewhat on this wise: Of what avail would even the Almighty Kite-maker's craft be without material, and not even he could raise the kite when constructed, if the breeze did not blow. Therefore, I conclude that to the attainment of a desired end three things are essential: (1) that which is, (2) that which moves, (3) that which arranges.

And therefore he taught these truths as the foundation of philosophy, but he taught them in parables.

NOTES.

Louis Prang, the famous art publisher of Boston, succeeds in offering to the public constantly new designs of the same favorite themes in his beautiful Christmas and Easter-greetings, which latter have just appeared in a novel style and a novel dress. While his cards and booklets are always the best that art can produce, they are peculiarly American, and possess a warmer air than similar European productions. All the flowers of spring find an appreciative consideration. There are entire booklets dedicated exclusively to the passion-flower or the Easter-lily, to the lily of the valley, and violets, and again, for those who love variety there are collections in which all the various blossoms of the spring are represented.

The new style of Japanese imitation will meet the taste of many, for it is fashionable now, and, indeed, it is interesting for a change; but, in the interest of art, we do not believe that the fashion will last. The style imitates certain shortcomings of the Japanese without attaining that delicate flavor of genius which is the secret of the attractiveness of Japanese art.

Bessie Grey illustrated a day's life of the morning-glory from the moment that "beneath Dawn's dainty fingers all the bindweed buds untwist," until the sun goes down. Then

"The closed cups of the blue flower of light,
Bury their secret from the curious night."

Another booklet, *The Message of the Lilies*, is eminently an Easter-greeting, announcing the lesson of the resurrection that takes place in nature, which is summed up in the following lines

"Tis the victor-song of triumph,
The release of all creation;
'Tis the song of resurrection,
Making glad our Easter days.
'Tis the oil of joy for mourning,
And for heaviness 'tis praise.

"Listen, listen, men and women!
For the language is of Heaven,
And to every heart it speaketh
Just the word it needeth best.—
Only this I know,—
To each it bringeth peace and bringeth rest."

Washington's Addresses to the Churches are published as No. 65 of the *Old South Leaflets* and can be had for five cents from "the Directors of the Old South Studies in History, Boston, Mass."

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