

I HAD AN INTERVIEW WITH DEATH.

The place, a lonely dell, winter-bound,
swathed in spotless snow.

The time, new-risen morn;

The last star paling, as if in fear, retired,
but not extinguished.

A spirit strengthened me to brave the enemy of life,
and gave me courage to upbraid his cruelty.

My speech I do remember well, and death's reply.

Said I, in heightened tone, as if to keep uncertain
courage steadfast and ardent:

"Monster, of thee no man speaks well.

Thy silent tread makes the house tremble,
and thy cold breath all flowers die.

No little child is safe from death's all-withering touch
nor mothers dost thou spare,
nor lovers weaving life's story into colored dream,
nor saints in lowly prayer.

Why not content thyself with warring and succeeding in
gloomy jungle?

Smite the tiger crouching for his prey,

or the lion in his fierceness,

or fly after the panting wolf,

or lodge an arrow in the heart of the proud eagle.

Why devastate our homes?

Why kill our little ones?

Why break our hearts and mock our thirst with the
brine of useless tears?

O death! I would that thou wert dead."

Then death answered me, and filled me with amaze.

"Believe me", said the weird defendant,

"Thy reasoning is false,

thy reproach an unintelligent assault."

His voice was gentle,

and through all his pallor there gleamed
the outline of a smile.

I saw transfigured death.

"I am God's servant. The flock must be brought home.

I go to bring the wanderers to the fold.

The lambs are God's, not yours.

No more revile me. I am a disguised friend."

The dell was then transformed.
The snow gleamed like silver.
The day a cloudless blue.
And suddenly living images filled the translucent space
And then I asked of death if he could tell whence
came they?

And he said:

"These are mine.
A reaper I, as well as shepherd.
I put in the sharp sickle;
I bound the sheaves;
I garnered the precious harvest;
and when I come angels sing, "HARVEST HOME."
(Joseph Parker, D.D.)

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CONCLUSION

1. Man has a spiritual nature which is not wholly explained by chemistry and material facts. We may believe, therefore, that after death the spirit of man will come into closer touch with the Spirit of God.

Rev. 21:3, "God himself will be with them"

I John 3:2, "Beloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

2. Somewhere, sometime the books of life must balance out.

All sorrow and suffering must some way be healed.

Rev. 21:4, "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

3. Man strives for infinite ideals, and therefore, there must be, beyond the frustrations of this life, further opportunity to come closer to those gleaming summits which from here are only glimpsed afar.

Then the life beyond must not be a thing of monotony and stagnation but of continued progress and achievement.

To be sure, rest from labor is a part of our picture of heaven, but perhaps to "lie down for an aeon or two", as Rudyard Kipling put it, will suffice in that regard. But then "the Master of All Good Workmen shall set us to work anew!"

If, beyond these general conclusions, we ask for specific and detailed descriptions of the life everlasting we must confess that this is a matter which lies beyond the bounds of human reason.

In seeking for such descriptions, we turn naturally to the Revelation of John, but even here we notice that when he speaks of heavenly things, he rarely ventures to say that they ARE thus and so, but only that they are LIKE this or that.

He takes the most beautiful things he knows on earth,

the jasper and the emerald,
the rainbow and the sea,
and declares that what he sees in heaven is
"LIKE" these things.

They are the best comparisons he knows to employ
to suggest something which is indescribably wonderful.

In the same spirit Paul looks forward to
"What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the heart of man conceived,
(namely) what God has prepared for those who love him."

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3. Man strives for infinite ideals, and therefore,
there must be, beyond the restrictions of this life,
further opportunity to come closer to these glowing
ideals which from here are only glimpsed afar.

Then the life beyond must not be a thing of monotony
and stagnation but of continued progress and achievement.

To be sure, rest from labor is a part of our picture
of heaven, but perhaps to "lie down for an hour or two,"
as Hubbard is liking but it, will suffice in that regard.

But then "the Master of all good workmen
shall set us to work anew!"

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