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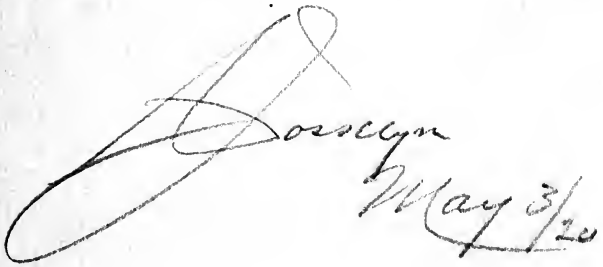
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THE FUTURE LIFE

FOUR SERMONS PREACHED AT ST. JOHN'S NOTTING HILL, IN JUNE, 1915

BY

F. HOMES DUDDEN, D.D.

VICAR OF ST. JOHN'S, NOTTING HILL; EXAMINING CHAPLAIN TO THE BISHOP OF LONDON; FORMERLY FELLOW OF LINCOLN COLLEGE, OXFORD

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In Memoriam
Charles Joselyn

MM

"When earth breaks up and heaven expands,
How will the change strike me and you,
In the house not made with hands?"

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CONTENTS

I

THE ARGUMENT FOR THE FUTURE LIFE

Job xiv. 14. *If a man die, shall he live again?*

In the dreadful time that we are passing through the thoughts of many of us are turning naturally and inevitably to the great and solemn problems of the Future Life. The appalling and horrible slaughter that is being occasioned by the war, the untimely cutting-off of hundreds of thousands of young lives, the loss of some whom we ourselves perhaps have intimately known and dearly loved—all this has brought very near to us the grim fact of death, and has set us meditating with deep and even passionate interest on the problems of the Hereafter. And for this reason I have determined to-day and on the next three Sundays to address you on this topic. You will not, of course, expect, in a short series of four sermons, anything approaching a full or detailed treatment of a theme so vast and complicated. The most that I can attempt is simply to lay before you a few thoughts concerning the possibility and the probable conditions of the future life—a few reasons and considerations, which appeal strongly to me personally,

and which, according to my judgment, have most cogency and value.

Now the question which I invite you to investigate this morning is the fundamental question—Is there a future life at all? Is there anything awaiting us on the other side of the grave? Does death just make an end of us, or does it really introduce us into another state of being? *If a man die, shall he live again?* And you will observe that I am not touching now on the possible nature or character or conditions of a future life: I am dealing simply and solely with the naked possibility of there being a future life. Shall we, when this earthly life is done and over, still continue to exist? Is there another life in store for us? *If a man die, shall he*—no matter where, no matter how, no matter under what circumstances—but shall he really *live again?*

Let us begin by clearing the ground. Let it be stated emphatically once and for all that, however precarious and inconclusive may be the argument for a future life, still no one has ever been able to prove that there is *not* a future life. Unless it can be shown, beyond possibility of contradiction, that man's spirit or mind or soul is identified with his bodily organism; that it belongs to the body, is related to the body as effect to cause, is produced by the body as music, for example, is produced by a musical instrument; and that it cannot exist independently of the body—unless

all this can be shown, it is simply ridiculous to affirm that the destruction of the spirit is necessarily involved in the dissolution of the body. But there is no proof of such a position. And therefore the man who dogmatically asserts that a future life is impossible is talking like a fool. He is making a statement which he cannot back up with adequate and conclusive evidence. It is possible, to say the least, that the soul may exist independently of the material body; and if so, it must also be possible that man may live hereafter.

There are many people, however, who are ready to admit this much, but who are nevertheless unable to achieve the conviction of immortality. They take the attitude of agnosticism. "We do not know," they cry; "we do not know. Maybe there is a future, maybe there is not. There is no proof either way—no absolute, conclusive, satisfactory proof. We do not know. We cannot tell. Perhaps the other world is a reality; perhaps it is a dream—the most wonderful dream that has ever consoled the suffering heart of humanity, but still only a dream. We cannot read the secret."

"Friend, who knows if death indeed have life, or life have death for goal?
Day nor night can tell us, nor may seas declare nor skies unroll
What has been from everlasting, or if aught shall always be;
Silence answering only strikes response reverberate on the soul
From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in all the sea."

Such a temper of mournful doubt is reflected in

much of our literature. Listen, for example, to the authoress of a novel very popular in its day, as she moralises on the death of her brilliant and attractive heroine. "Had she found what she sought for—something to worship? Had she ceased from being? Who shall tell us? There is a veil of terrible mist over the face of the Hereafter." Or listen again to the poet, musing half-fearfully and half-hopefully on the ultimate issue of the mysterious "stream of life."

"O end to which our currents tend,
Inevitable sea,
To which we flow, what do we know,
What shall we guess of thee?

A roar we hear upon thy shore,
As we our course fulfil;
Scarce we divine a sun will shine
And be above us still."

Now what are we to say to these people? What answer can we make to this persistent cry, "We do not know—We would believe, if we could—We should like to believe—But we do not know—we do not know"?

Well, I think that we must frankly acknowledge at the outset that we cannot prove a future life. We cannot demonstrate immortality like a problem of Euclid. We cannot reduce it to a formal syllogism. We cannot establish our belief by irrefutable processes of logic. But exactly the same is the case with all our primary beliefs. You cannot prove them to be true. You cannot prove God. You cannot prove the

freedom of the will. If you were severely cross-examined, I very much doubt whether you could prove even your own existence. Tennyson even went so far as to declare that "nothing worthy proving can be proven"; and Anatole France has observed to the same effect, that "if we looked too closely into first principles we should never believe anything at all." No, the deepest, most basal, most fundamental things are not capable of being strictly proven. We are always compelled to fall back on the probabilities. As Bishop Butler put it in a famous dictum—"Probability is the guide of life."

Very well. Then what are the probabilities in this particular case? What reasons can be brought forward to render it likely and probable that, after the death of the body, we shall continue to exist?

In the first place I call your attention to that strange instinct of immortality that is ineradicably implanted in our human constitution and nature.

> "In man's self arise
> August anticipations, symbols, types,
> Of a dim splendour ever on before
> In that eternal circle run by life."

This instinct, feeling, sentiment—call it what you will—this intuition of the life to come, is of the essence of man's being. It is found among all—or practically all—races, and in all ages; and is attested by all languages and literatures and religions. It seems, indeed, to be part of the permanent contents

of our nature. It is not attained through reasoning. It is born in us; it springs up in us of itself, we know not why or how. It comes to us as naturally and unavoidably as the notions of time and space. We cannot help experiencing it. So soon as man attains to consciousness of himself, "his heart forebodes a mystery," he has the instinctive feeling of immortality.

Now this instinct, which gradually develops first into conscious desire and then into definite belief and conviction, is a fact of human nature that is worth considering. And I put to you this question—Is it probable that an instinct, so deep-rooted, so persistent and so practically universal, should be utterly delusive? Man feels that he will not die. He hopes that he will not die. He believes that he will not die. Is he likely to be quite mistaken? Why should he be? Why should we suppose that, while all our other fundamental instincts may be safely trusted, this only is untrustworthy? Why in the world should we imagine that we are being cheated here? We trust, in the bodily sphere, the instinct of self-preservation: may we not trust, in the spiritual sphere, the instinct of soul-preservation?

Let us pass to another consideration. My second argument for a future life is based on the inherent grandeur and immense possibilities of human nature. We are built on a scale that is altogether too grand for this world only. We are gifted with magnificent

powers which are certainly adequate to indefinitely more than our present span of life allows them to accomplish. Only think of the power of the reason. Think of the power of love, of the affections. Think of the power of the moral sense or conscience. How vast is the range of these powers, how infinite their potentialities! How entirely incommensurate they are with the opportunities of exercise that are here afforded them! Why, we never know a millionth part of what we feel that we might know. We never love to the degree that we are capable of loving. We are haunted by an ideal of moral perfection, but the ideal in this world is unrealised and unrealisable. Yes, in the pitiful, paltry span of seventy years or thereabouts we do not get the ghost of a chance for the full development of our powers. Then how are we to account for them? How is it that our endowments are so absurdly out of proportion to our present needs and uses? Why is it that we have been provided with faculties and capabilities so glaringly out of keeping with our present lot and fate? For my part, I can think of but one satisfactory explanation. Those splendid endowments are given us, not merely to serve the purposes of this little present life, but to satisfy the requirements of a greater life hereafter.

Yes, when we reflect upon the contrast between our small achievements and our large endowments, between what we actually effect and what we are

conscious of being capable of effecting, we are, I think, driven to the conclusion that we are constituted for an ampler destiny than we ever can fulfil in this world. Unless we are built all wrong, unless our human nature is a grotesque fiasco, there must be another world in which our possibilities will be realised. It must be that the small expansion of our powers in this life is but the beginning of the story, which, like an unfinished serial in a magazine, is "to be continued in our next." You remember, perhaps, how Browning, in those exquisite lines addressed to his wife in *One Word More*, complains that "in the years remaining" he can paint no pictures, carve no statues, make no music "that should all-express me," nor do anything but write verses; yet is confident that his latent powers will not be wasted, but will be called forth into full development in the world beyond the grave—"Other heights in other lives, God willing." So also Victor Hugo, near the end of his life, exclaimed—"I feel immortality within myself. . . . For half a century I have been writing my thoughts in prose and verse. . . . But I feel I have not said a thousandth part of what is in me. When I go down to the grave I shall have ended my day's work. But another day will begin next morning."

The third argument for a future life that I wish to lay before you is drawn from the nature of God. The argument is this. God is all-powerful; therefore

He can, if He please, give immortality to man. He is also all-just and all-good; therefore it must be His pleasure to give immortality to man. If, having the power, He deliberately withheld that gift, then He would not be just, and He would not be good—in a word, He would not be God.

Consider. I say that, if this life be indeed our only life, then God cannot be just. For nothing is more certain than that justice fails in this world. Here, most emphatically, justice is not done. Its law is not maintained. Its sanctity is not vindicated. Prosperity and adversity are seldom awarded with any regard to merit. The scoundrel thrives and the good man suffers. The German devil triumphs, and the honourable Belgian, who has never done any one any harm, groans beneath unspeakable outrages and atrocities. The brave Englishman enlists and goes to the trenches and gets killed, while the coward stays at home and enjoys the fruits of victory. Where is the justice of all that? Where is the justice of the sinking of the *Lusitania* or of the Gretna railway disaster? Where can you find justice in the countless tragedies of lives ruined through no crime or fault, but through heredity or disease or the wickedness of others, or through the seeming caprice of circumstance? No, in this world most assuredly justice is not done. And if there be indeed no other world to balance this, if there be no other life wherein the righteous sufferer will be comforted and

recompensed, if the present order be in fact the only order, then I do not hesitate to maintain that it is impossible—quite impossible—that the Author of this hideously unjust order can Himself be just.

And so again I say that, if this life be in truth our only life, then God cannot be good. God made us, remember. God planted in our souls that instinct of immortality of which I spoke just now. God taught us by innumerable intimations and suggestions to expect a future life. God did it; God did it Himself. Then how could He possibly disappoint us? Furthermore God has bidden us do His will even at the sacrifice of our life. Could He conceivably reward that sublimest of all sacrifices with blank annihilation? Why, how could He possibly do so? To mock His children thus would be an eternal dishonour to God. Such a God could not be good. Such a God could not be God. If once I were really convinced that God could thus betray our trust, I would never pray again.

But we are not, we cannot be, wrong in believing the best of God. God *is* all-just. God *is* all-good. He is infinitely better than our very largest hopes. We may be perfectly sure of God's power and of His justice and of His goodness—perfectly sure; and therefore we may also be perfectly sure of our immortality. Yes, we may be quite sure:—

> "Sure—the souls so true and trusting
> Shall not trust for aye in vain;

Sure—there must be something, somewhere
Which shall meet that trust again.

If poor man, so weak and lowly,
Yet can rise to faith so high,
Sure the eternal God who made him
Will not give his faith the lie."

My fourth and last argument must be stated in very few words. I would simply remind you of our Lord's witness to the life to come. And I do not propose at this time to dwell on Christ's own Resurrection, the bearing of which on the doctrine of immortality is too obvious to need insisting on. I propose to refer now only to Christ's teaching. And even here, it is unnecessary, I think, that I should gather and present to you His various explicit testimonies to the truth of the future life, though many of them are remarkable. Think, for instance, of such sayings as, *God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for all live unto him—In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you, for I go to prepare a place for you—I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish—I am the resurrection and the life. . . . Whosoever believeth on me shall never die—He that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.* Such words are very impressive, very remarkable, are they not? But since isolated sayings are always in a measure at the mercy of the critic, I will not linger upon these. Rather would I point out that the whole teaching of

our Lord, the entire body of His doctrine, involves the truth of the future life, so that apart from that truth it is literally unintelligible. What can you make, for example, of the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God; what can you make of the doctrine of the unique value of the human soul; what of the doctrines of the awfulness of sin, of the obligation of self-sacrifice, of the certainty of judgment—on the hypothesis that at death we shall be blotted out of existence? Why, they are utterly unmeaning. The whole Gospel of Christ—the whole teaching of Him who, on the very lowest estimate, is the greatest religious Authority, the greatest Master of religious truth, that the world has ever known—all becomes unmeaning, unintelligible nonsense, if there be no life beyond the tomb. I invite you to reflect on this. Turn it over in your mind. If immortality be a lie, then Christ's whole teaching is a lie, and Christianity is a lie, and all the great and spiritual men who have grown great upon Christianity have grown great upon a lie, and the whole Christian world for centuries has been nourished upon the wildest and most insane delusion. Is it possible, I ask you, to give your assent to such a conclusion?

I have tried to present to you, as clearly as I am able, certain arguments for the future life—arguments based on the human instinct of immortality, the grandeur of human endowments, the justice and

goodness of God, and the testimony of Jesus. I am aware, as I have said, that these arguments do not amount to absolute, positive proof. Belief in the life to come must always be a venture, an act of confidence and trust. Yet these arguments are powerful, and, taken all together, they seem to me amply sufficient to justify our faith and to deepen it into a conviction that is vital and profound. Indeed I think that it may fairly be claimed that they render it far more difficult for us not to believe in immortality than to believe in it. These arguments, then, I commend to your consideration. Some of you may not need them; some of you may be already so certain of the future life, that you have no use for any reasonings to confirm that certainty. If any, however, are doubtful, and want arguments to assist them to repel the assaults of doubt—well, such arguments are available, and here they are!

Brethren, we must needs believe in "the life everlasting." Man is born and grows up and grows old and then dies, and we say that "all is over." But all is not over. Death seems to be the end, but it is not the end. As God lives and rules and reigns, it cannot possibly be the end. No: there is something beyond. There is still something more to follow. Listen!

> "In the hour of death, after this life's whim,
> When the heart beats low, and the eyes grow dim,
> And pain has exhausted every limb—
> The lover of the Lord shall trust in Him.

When the will has forgotten the lifelong aim,
And the mind can only disgrace its fame,
And a man is uncertain of his own name—
The power of the Lord shall fill this frame.

When the last sigh is heaved, and the last tear shed,
And the coffin is waiting beside the bed,
And the widow and child forsake the dead—
The angel of the Lord shall lift this head.

For even the purest delight may pall,
And power must fail, and the pride must fall,
And the love of the dearest friends grow small—
But the glory of the Lord is all in all."

II

WHAT HAPPENS AT DEATH?

Job xiv. 10. *Man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?*

In my last discourse I laid before you some of the arguments for a future life. I tried to show that a future life is not only possible, but eminently probable; that this hypothesis, indeed, is the only one which can explain the facts of our religious and secular experience completely and satisfactorily. When all these facts are taken fairly into account, I do not hesitate to affirm that the man who disbelieves in immortality has many more and far more serious intellectual difficulties to contend with than the man who believes in it. In the next two sermons, therefore, I shall take it for granted that there is a future life, and shall proceed, so far as I am able, to make some enquiry into its nature and conditions. To-day I shall not carry you much beyond the threshold of the other world; but I hope to go further next Sunday.

"What happens at death?" That is the subject of my present discourse; and it is a subject, I suppose, in which every one of us is interested. For we

have all got to die. Whatever else is doubtful, this at least is certain. Not one of us will escape. Death may linger and delay: he may put off his visitation to us years and years: yet it is positively certain that sooner or later the dread Reaper with his scythe will appear upon the scene, and mow us down at last. And we naturally want to know what will happen to us then. What light may be shed on this last and most awful of our earthly experiences? What, in fact, will death mean to us? *Man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?*

Now the majority of us, I fancy, are afraid of death. Or rather, to be quite exact, we are afraid of dying. For what most of us fear, I think, is not so much the state of being dead as the act of dying, not so much what may await us on the other side of the river as what we may experience in the crossing. It is the terror of the bridge that scares us. What will be our feelings, what will be our sensations, when the moment of the parting of soul and body comes? The imagination, as you know, has often depicted those sensations in terms of horror. You may remember, for instance, the ghastly portrayal of the death-agony in Newman's *Dream of Gerontius*—

> "Now it comes again
> That sense of ruin, which is worse than pain,
> That masterful negation and collapse
> Of all that makes me man; as though I bent
> Over the dizzy brink
> Of some sheer infinite descent;

Or worse, as though
Down, down for ever I was falling through
The solid framework of created things,
And needs must sink and sink
Into the vast abyss. And, crueller still,
A fierce and restless fright begins to fill
The mansion of my soul. And, worse and worse,
Some bodily form of ill
Floats on the wind, with many a loathsome curse
Tainting the hallowed air, and laughs, and flaps
Its hideous wings,
And makes me wild with horror and dismay."

If death be indeed like that, who would not shudder at it? But I do not suppose that this terrible description has any claim to represent the ordinary normal experience. I have questioned doctors and nurses, and they tell me that in the vast majority of cases there is no indication whatever that the dying endure such suffering. And the last utterances of dying persons seem to point to a similar conclusion. Think of Wesley, for example, saying calmly, "The best of all is, God is with us": or Scott, "I feel as if I were to be myself again": or Browning, "Never say of me that I am dead": or Tennyson, "I have opened it." In these and in thousands upon thousands of other instances there is no evidence of anguish or terror or perturbation: and it is comforting to recollect that so experienced a surgeon as Sir James Paget once observed that "he had never known any one who was really afraid of death when it came near." Of course, we cannot actually find out what dying feels like, except by dying: but meanwhile we

may surely believe that God does not fail men in the hour of their dire extremity. Many a one surely must share the experience of Mr. Fearing in Bunyan's immortal allegory. When he drew near the brink of the river, you remember, he was ready to perish of fear; but behold! the water was lower than was ever known before. "So he went over, at last, not much above wet shod."

Dismissing, then, these alarms, let us steadily contemplate the fact of death. What is it? What does death amount to after all? When we die, what happens? Well, death means, of course, the abandonment and laying aside of the material body, the sloughing off of the material envelope through which the spirit of man expresses itself: but so far as regards the spirit itself death means—*literally nothing*. It simply does not count. The spirit, the real man, is absolutely unaffected by it. There is not the slightest reason for supposing that the man in himself undergoes any sort of transformation through the mere physical process of dying: on the contrary there is every reason for supposing that he remains precisely the same. That which he was essentially the minute before death, that he continues to be the minute after death. He does not die; he is not changed; he does not become, by putting off the body, anything different from what he was; he just goes on. That is all. He just goes on. His life

goes on without a pause or break. It passes out of sight indeed, but none the less goes on. As Tennyson has said, death's "truer name is 'Onward.'" The man who, as we say, dies, goes on just as he is—neither better nor worse, but exactly as he is—out of the visible material world into the invisible spiritual world. That seems to be the teaching of both reason and revelation.

> "There is no death! What seems so is transition:
> This life of mortal breath
> Is but a suburb of the life elysian,
> Whose portal we call death."

Let us endeavour now to follow the traveller who has passed through the gate. How will he find himself on the other side? Please remember what I said, that reason and revelation both alike suggest that man will emerge from the death-passage precisely as he entered it. As he went in, so he will come out. As he ended on this side, so he will begin on that. Very well: but if this be so, it follows that he will still retain in the future life his personal identity. He will still be *this* person, *this* individual, entirely distinct from all other persons and individuals. We can have nothing to say to the classical Buddhist doctrine (which not long ago so many people in London were taking up and advocating) of the reabsorption of the individual into the vast sea of impersonal being. All the evidence available is flatly against that doctrine. When you and I, my brethren, pass through into the

other life, we shall not be extinguished in the one universal existence. We shall continue the same identical, individual persons. You will be you; I shall be I. We shall each one be able to say, as Jesus Christ said after He had risen from the grave—*It is I myself.*

But further, we shall be not only persons, but conscious, waking persons. It is surprising to me to find that a great many people appear to entertain the theory that when a man dies he falls into a sleep —a profound sleep—a sleep which will last on for centuries and centuries, for æons upon æons, and which will only be broken at last by the trump of the Day of Judgment. The general idea seems to be something like that expressed in the following lines:—

> "Take me, and lull me into perfect sleep;
> Down, down, far-hidden in thy duskiest cave;
> While all the clamorous years above me sweep
> Unheard, or, like the voice of seas that rave
> On far-off coasts, but murmuring o'er my trance,
> A dim, vast monotone, that shall enhance
> The restful rapture of the inviolate grave."

It is surely remarkable that the beautiful poetic metaphor by which death is described as sleep should be so outrageously perverted. Can you possibly imagine that when Christ said that God is the God of the living and not of the dead, He really meant that He is the God of those who are fast asleep? Can you possibly imagine that when Paul

said that it is better to depart and be with Christ, he really meant that it is better to go to sleep and be unconscious whether there be a Christ or no? Can you possibly imagine that the many mansions of the Father's house are nothing other than vast dormitories, wherein for centuries we shall lie in torpor, with all our splendid faculties sleep-bound and in abeyance? The conception is utterly monstrous. This sleep-theory, it is true, does receive some apparent support from a few isolated texts of Scripture, but it is completely contradicted by the teaching of our Lord and by the general tenour of the New Testament writings. And here let me remind you of an interesting fact. As you are probably aware, the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England originally consisted of forty-two. Well, the fortieth of these original Articles deals with our present subject and is worded thus:—"They which say that the souls of such as depart hence do sleep, being without all sense, feeling or perceiving until the Day of Judgment . . . do utterly dissent from the right belief declared to us in Holy Scripture." I do not hold a brief for the Forty-two Articles, but I must own to a wish that this particular declaration, correcting as it does a very mischievous misconception, had never been deleted.

Then again, I believe that this living, waking personality will have its appropriate medium of

self-expression. It will be clothed with a form that is suited to its new environment, with a spiritual body adapted to the spiritual order that obtains beyond the grave. It is difficult to see how otherwise man could retain his individuality. A formless life, a naked disembodied life, a shapeless self, must necessarily, one would think, be merged and absorbed and lost in the all-encompassing Infinite. We must therefore suppose that if personality survives, it will survive and express itself in a characteristic, outward embodiment. As Tennyson says:—

> "Eternal form shall still divide
> The eternal soul from all beside."

So also St. Paul:—*There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.* Some have imagined that this spiritual body, the organism of the invisible spirit, is already existing here within the material body; and that, on the death of the latter, it will be liberated with the spirit from the outer casing of the flesh, and will pass on with the spirit into the further world. Into that question, however, I do not propose to enter. I would simply maintain now that when the spirit rises out of the material envelope of flesh, it is not utterly disembodied. It still has a form, an organism, an embodiment, corresponding to its nature, by which it may be recognised, and through which it may act and express itself in its new circumstances and surroundings.

This, then, I take it, is the condition of the man the moment after death. He is still the same person, a conscious, waking person, and a person endowed with a form for the expression of his personality. In a word, the man is precisely the same as he was before he died, except that his material body has been replaced by another of infinitely finer and more subtle texture.

And now, as this person emerges into the other life, what sort of experience will he meet with on the threshold? As to this I must, for the present, limit myself to three remarks.

The first of them is that, when a man enters the other world, he will find a place prepared for him. This may be argued from analogy. Every creature that is born into the terrestrial world is born into a special home, a special family, a special sphere and circle. He belongs somewhere. He has from the very first his particular place in the universe. His coming has been prepared for. And if that is the case here, may it not be so there? And then we have the word of Jesus: *In my Father's house are many mansions . . . I go to prepare a place for you.* It is clearly our Lord's intention to give us a home-feeling about the other world. "You are afraid," He seems to say, "of being isolated and solitary in the life hereafter; alone in dark vastitudes; unrelated and unrecognised and unwelcomed and unknown. But it is an idle fear.

You are expected. You are looked for. There is already a place got ready for you. You will not be left adrift in an interminable vacancy; you will arrive just as an infant arrives into an earthly father's household. When you open your eyes in that new world beyond the grave, you will find yourself at home."

Secondly, I would remark that the man who enters the other world will find it most admirably adapted for his development in goodness. He may enter it faulty enough; but if he has any real root of goodness in him, that goodness will be given the best possible chance. For now at last the old material body, which was such a hindrance to good life, is done with: now the earthly habits and temptations are broken and set aside: the worldly desires and interests now dissolve and disappear: the illusions of the senses vanish away. The man is transplanted into a new spiritual environment. Now he knows himself as he is, and knows something of what God is, and recognises the true value of the realities of eternity. How, I ask you, can all this fail to invigorate and stimulate every healthy power of goodness? And that is what death does for us. It is perfectly true, as I said, that the mere act of dying does not alter a man's character. The mere act of dying does not make him good. But by dying he is introduced into a spiritual region and atmosphere,

where all the elements of goodness which he partially and imperfectly developed here on earth are given the best chance possible of coming to maturity. And surely that idea ought to be comforting to some of us. Those young soldiers of ours, who have been killed in such shocking numbers in the course of the great war—they were not, as a rule, exceptionally good or exceptionally pious. They were not perfect. They were very far from perfect. Many of them, one cannot doubt, had done things in the past, which, when they lay in the trenches face to face with death, they did not care to think about. Yet they were good too, in the main, in spite of all their faults, and loyal and brave and generous and true. And now they are dead, and they have passed over just as they were—with all their faults, and with all their virtues also—into the unseen world. Well, is it not comforting to think that under the new conditions all the real goodness that was in them, all the real nobility of mind and heart and character, will be given the best chance—the very best chance possible—of asserting itself and blossoming out and ripening ultimately into fruitfulness and perfection?

Then let me make my last remark. We commonly speak of the dead as "departed" or "gone away." But why? Why "gone away"? Why on earth should we presume that a man who dies is "gone away"? He is gone, it is true, into the invisible

world: but the invisible world is not, like the happy hunting-grounds of the Red Indian, four days' journey from the earth, nor like the fancy Paradise of the familiar children's hymn, "far, far away." No; the invisible world is here, near, close at hand, at our very doors. The invisible world lies all around and interpenetrates the visible. It compasses us about on every side. It encircles us like the atmosphere, if we only knew it. As John Henry Newman wrote—"The world of spirits, though unseen, is present, not future, not distant. It is not above the sky; it is not beyond the grave; it is now and here." Why, therefore, should we suppose that our beloved dead are "gone away"? The invisible world is here: then may we not believe that the spirit-inhabitants of the invisible world are also here? Then again, St. Paul, as you remember, describes death as being *with Christ*. But Christ is not far away. Christ abides with us always even unto the end of the world. Wherever two or three of us are gathered in His name, there Christ is in the midst of us. Christ is continually here. We know Christ, feel Christ, talk to Christ; we are certain that Christ is here. Then may not they also who are "for ever with the Lord" be likewise here? And finally, does not all the evidence, which has been accumulating through the centuries, of the dead communicating with the living and influencing the living —does not this vast mass of evidence point clearly in the same direction? Yes, our dead are not gone from

our midst; they are gone only from our sight. They have not really departed; they have only disappeared. Death is not absence; it is only invisibility.

Let me sum up what I have said by quoting some verses by Rossiter Raymond, which seem to me to indicate very beautifully and truthfully "what happens at death."

"Beside the dead I knelt for prayer,
And felt a presence as I prayed.
Lo! it was Jesus standing there.
He smiled: 'Be not afraid!'

'Lord, Thou hast conquered death, we know;
Restore again to life,' I said,
'This one who died an hour ago.'
He smiled: 'She is not dead!'

'Asleep, then, as Thyself didst say;
Yet Thou canst lift the lids that keep
Her prisoned eyes from ours away!'
He smiled: 'She doth not sleep!'

'Nay, then, tho' haply she do wake,
And look upon some fairer dawn,
Restore her to our hearts that ache!'
He smiled: 'She is not gone!' . . .

'Yet our beloved seem so far,
The while we yearn to feel them near,
Albeit with Thee we trust they are.'
He smiled: 'And I am here!'

'Dear Lord, how shall we know that they
Still walk unseen with us and Thee,
Nor sleep, nor wander far away?'
He smiled: 'Abide in Me.'"

III

SOME CONDITIONS OF THE FUTURE LIFE

1 Cor. xv. 49. *As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.*

My subject to-day is "Some Conditions of the Future Life"; but before I attempt to grapple with it, I must say a few words of explanation. Our knowledge of the unseen world is, as you are aware, exceedingly slight and fragmentary. We believe, we are firmly convinced, that such a world exists: but of its circumstances and details we know practically nothing. Nor should this ignorance be surprising. Our earthly faculties are adequate—more or less—to the objects of the material world, to the things of time and sense; but they are not equal to the objects of the spiritual, eternal world. Those lovely and subtle realities are far beyond our present range, and we have no powers delicate and acute enough to apprehend them. Thus, so long as we live here, in the terrestrial stage of existence, we simply cannot understand what God has prepared for us hereafter. And if we attempt, as some of us sometimes do, to imagine the future state, our pictures of it are inevitably coloured by our present

earthly experience, and are therefore always incorrect, and often even demonstrably incongruous and ridiculous.

Yet, while it is impossible to get a definite representation of the exact form of the future life, it is, I think, quite possible to reach some well-founded conclusions as to the general principles that govern it. And for this we may rely on two sources of information. First, we learn something from the Bible: only here we must carefully distinguish what the writers really mean from the poetic symbolism and imagery whereby they try to express their meaning. It is a great mistake, for instance, to treat such figures as are met with in some of the parables of our Lord or in the Book of the Revelation as if they were hard, literal, prosaic fact. And then secondly, we may learn something from what is known and ascertained of God's method of government in the present order. For since one and the same God governs both this world and the next, we may infer that both will be governed on the same essential principles. The Divine laws are unchanging, and we cannot believe for a moment that what has been ordained in one portion of God's universe will be capriciously cancelled and contradicted in another. We are therefore entitled to argue that, if God invariably deals with us on certain principles in the present world, so also, approximately and in general, will He deal with us in the world to come.

Let us come now to our subject—Some Conditions of the Future Life.

In the first place, then, it seems to be fairly evident that our state in the future will be a social state. Man is essentially a social being. For his progress here, for his goodness, for his happiness, he depends on others. Must it not be so there? God has provided that in this world man shall be, as it were, the centre of many circles—an outer circle of acquaintance, an inner circle of friends, and a little inmost circle of those whom he dearly loves. It is a Divine provision: it is a good and wise provision: it is a provision which is in accordance with man's essential constitution. What reason have we, then, to suppose that it will be altered? I confess that I cannot understand the difficulty which many people seem to feel about reunion with their loved ones. "Shall I meet him again?"—that is the question which many an agonised woman is frantically asking in this awful time of war. "Shall I meet him again? My husband who has been killed, my lover who has been killed, my only son—shall I positively meet him again?" Why, how can you possibly doubt it? Of course you will meet him again! The instinct of what is truly named "undying love"—an instinct implanted in you by a God who does not lie—assures you that you will. The voice of revelation, proclaiming that *love never faileth*, that love *abideth* for ever, declares to you that you will. The existence of God,

who is Perfect Love Himself, and the Giver and Inspirer of all pure human love, is the pledge to you that you will. If God has created your love, if He has educated and fostered it, if He has bidden you cherish and value it above everything else in the world, then I say that He could not—that He literally could not—disappoint that love at last, and brutally set at naught your rightful longings for reunion. No, you need have no anxiety. Some ties, it is true, may be dissolved in the other world—those ties, for example, which bind some people together here in family relationships or ill-assorted marriages, where there is no real sympathy of thought or feeling. Such purely formal ties may conceivably be broken; but the bond of genuine love and unalloyed affection *never*. If God is indeed the God of Love, then those who in virtue of love belong to one another in this world will also belong to one another in the next, and those who are all in all to one another here will continue to be all in all to one another there also. Do you remember that beautiful poem of Robert Browning, entitled *Prospice*? The poet looks out upon the terrors of approaching death, but beyond he sees a vision of the raptures of reunion.

"For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,
The black minute's at end,
And the elements' rage, the fiend-voices that rave,
Shall dwindle, shall blend,
Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain,
Then a light, then thy breast
O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,
And with God be the rest!"

Then secondly, the future state will surely be an active state. Activity is the law of life, more especially of the higher life. God Himself is active. *My Father*, said Jesus, *worketh hitherto, and I work.* Activity is a mark of God, and therefore it is a mark of those who are made in God's image. Certainly, then, the other world will not be a place where there is nothing to do. Can you possibly imagine an indefatigable spirit like St. Paul content to surrender himself to an eternity of idleness? Or can you believe that those gloriously vigorous men who are falling in our battles will have no outlet provided yonder for their superabundant powers and energies? The very idea is repulsive and impossible. The future state must be an active state. God has indeed provided a rest for His people there: but rest is not mere idleness—

> "Rest is not quitting the busy career;
> Rest is the fitting of self to its sphere."

I take it, then, that there will be employment in the other world, and plenty of it; and further that this employment will be infinitely varied to suit all varieties of temperament and aptitude. It is so here; why should it not be so there? Surely those special powers and faculties which have here been educated with so much care, will not be simply dissipated and cast away and wasted. That would be spendthrift policy, unworthy of our Creator who has ordained that nothing beautiful or useful shall

be lost. Must we not rather suppose that the disciplined powers of the poet, for example, or of the philosopher, or of the musician or of the man of science—that the trained faculties even of the merchant or the soldier or the farmer or the mechanic, will be preserved in the other world, applied to higher but appropriate objects, and provided with suitable spheres and opportunities of exercise? The men will retain their interests and in some way go on with their work. "You have preached your last sermon," some one said to Frederick Denison Maurice, as he was dying. "Yes," he replied, "but only my last sermon in *this* life." So Lowell wrote of Dr. Channing—

> "Thou art not idle! in thy higher sphere
> Thy spirit bends itself to loving tasks,
> And strength, to perfect what it dreamed of here,
> Is all the crown and glory that it asks."

And so too Kipling in his breezy style describes the painters in the next world, carrying on their occupation, only under higher and more favourable conditions.

> "And only the Master shall praise us, and only the Master shall blame,
> And no one shall work for money, and no one shall work for fame,
> But each for the joy of the working, and each in his separate star
> Shall draw the Thing as he sees it for the God of the Things as they are."

We must beware, then, lest we unduly limit in our thoughts the activities and energies of the after life. Some of you may have seen reproductions of a picture

called "The Ever-open Door." It represents many persons approaching the portal of death, and laying down upon the threshold objects symbolic of their chief earthly employments and interests. The musician leaves his viol, and the cricketer his bat, and the soldier his sword, and so on. But the idea of that picture is, I am convinced, fundamentally mistaken. All our talents, all our special capacities and aptitudes, all our high and healthy interests, have been planted in us here by God; and we may trust God to furnish fitting fields for their development in the life hereafter. There, as here, in all manner of ways, through all manner of operations, *his servants shall serve him.*

Once more, I hold it certain that the future state will be a progressive state. The law of evolution seems to demand that it shall be so. In this world life ascends from lower to higher manifestations; and there is no reason at all for supposing that the incident of physical death will arrest the movement of the spirit. Why should it? The soul cannot stand still. On the contrary, just in proportion as it is vigorous and sound, it is conscious of an irresistible impulse to move forward. You remember what Tennyson says about the characteristic ambition of virtue:—

> "She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet seats of the just,
> To rest in a golden grove, or to bask in a summer sky;
> Give her the wages of going on, and not to die."

And Scripture seems to promise that this ambition will be gratified. *In my Father's house*, says Jesus, *are many mansions:* and, as Bishop Westcott points out, the word translated "mansions" means literally "stations" or "resting-places," like the rest-houses provided on the ancient roads, where travellers might pause and refresh themselves as they journeyed to their destination. Then do you see what the term implies? There is a journey, a moving on from point to point, in the life beyond. Through the midst of the other country, far away into dim distance, there runs a pilgrim-road—a road with many stations. And a similar conclusion is suggested by St. Paul, when he tells us that, though many things fall away from us at death, yet hope abides. That surely is equivalent to a promise of perpetual progress. For if there will always be hope, there will always be something, beyond what we have attained, to hope for; and so always a "going on," a rising up from hope to hope, hereafter as well as here.

The future state, then, will be a progressive state. We may anticipate—may we not?—a wonderful future development of all the faculties and powers that belong to our humanity. Old powers will be enhanced: new powers will be superadded: powers which have hitherto been latent and unsuspected will be brought to light and exercised. Powers of thought, powers of imagination, powers of conscience, powers

of affection, will be stimulated into activity. And powers of holiness and spirituality, which at present with the vast majority of us are so sickly and rudimentary—these too will be elicited and strengthened and matured, so that growth in affection and wisdom will be matched by growth in grace. Yes, there will be no stop, no standing still. In that world, as in this world, we shall be moving forward.

Then, once again, if the future state be a progressive state, it must also be a state of discipline. Our education, begun here, will be continued there, and in all probability on the same essential lines though under new conditions. How indeed could it be otherwise? Surely the soul will need to be trained for its new experiences. Think of those brave young soldiers that day after day are being hurled into eternity; caught up suddenly in a moment from the midst of the earthly battlefield, with all its raging and fiery passions, and set down in the strange environment of the eternal land. How much they will have to learn! What a deal they will have to unlearn! What education will be needed before they can adjust themselves to the new perspectives and changed values, before their mind hitherto occupied with earthly interests and ambitions can accustom itself to the new spiritual surroundings! What preparation there must be, before even the best will be fitted to appreciate the supreme blessedness which we call

heaven! How could they do at all without some future training? For my part, I cannot but believe that the transition from this present state of earthly imperfection to the ultimate, final state of heavenly perfection and beatitude will be gradual not instantaneous, and that long discipline will be needed to enable us to accomplish it. When we die, we shall not have finished our education. We shall go up, as it were, into the higher classes of the great school: but there too, even in the higher classes, our education will be continued.

But perhaps you may ask, Shall we be perfectly happy under the discipline of the other world? I confess that I can see no reason why we should expect to be so, at any rate in the beginnings or earliest stages of the process. On this point it seems to me that many of our hymns are exceedingly misleading. They speak of mere ordinary men and women who are dead as being already in the enjoyment of absolute felicity; already in full possession of those supreme awards and recompenses, which are apportioned in Scripture to those who have climbed to the topmost heights of spiritual experience. But the huge majority of us, when we start life in the other world, will begin a long way down the hill, some of us almost at the bottom; and much climbing will have to be done before we can attain the joys that await us on the summit. It is not reasonable, then, to anticipate that we shall be perfectly happy all at once. We are not

ready for perfect happiness. We go into the other world exactly as we are now, with all our faults and shortcomings and failings, and there must of necessity be effort and trial and struggle and strong endeavour 'ere we can get into that condition in which perfect happiness is possible. No: when I die, I do not expect to be absolutely happy. I do indeed expect that things in general will be easier for me in the other world: I do expect that there will be less pressure of temptation, less strain and weariness of conflict, less care and anxiety and sadness and disappointment than ordinarily attaches to my education here: I do expect that I myself shall be calmer, more contented, really happier beneath God's discipline than I generally am at present: but I do not expect that immediately I shall be absolutely happy. Perfect happiness may come at last: if I surrender myself unreservedly to the discipline of God, perfect happiness will come at last. But meanwhile I must give God time to educate me into the state which is proper for perfect happiness. For the greater measure of bliss to be vouchsafed me in the other life, I may well be devoutly thankful: for the fulness of joy that may ultimately be mine, I must be content to wait.

Last of all, let me remind you of the familiar truth that the future state will be a state of retribution. There wrongs will be righted: there inequalities will be corrected: there justice will be done. There

the man who has sinned, and in this life thriven upon his sin, the man who has been base and selfish and successful in his selfishness, will have to suffer. Justice will be done. The bad man, like the good, will come to his own at last. But remember that God's justice is not vindictiveness or vengeance. Why, even we ourselves—are we not learning more and more to eliminate vindictiveness from our ideas of punishment, and to look on punishment as remedial, as directed towards the reform and restoration of the offender? And can we imagine for a moment that our aim in inflicting punishment can be higher and worthier than God's? Nay, the justice of God cannot possibly be other than an aspect of His mercy; and when He overtakes the evil and causes them to suffer, it is only in order that He may heal them and make them good. Be sure that it is so. Suffering must follow sin, and must last as long as sin: but the whole design of the suffering, whether in this world or in the next world, is to save the sinful soul.

What, then, are we to think of the doctrine of eternal punishment? There are, as you know, certain passages of Scripture which seem to countenance that doctrine, though there are others which cannot easily be brought into agreement with it. Yet one thing at least is certain—that if any are punished for ever and ever, the fault is theirs and theirs alone, not God's. God has not turned against them. God's love remains always the same. God's longing to forgive and heal

and bless remains invariably the same. God seeks to win us all our life, and after our death, I firmly believe, He seeks to win us just the same. God's character does not alter on the other side of the grave. God's character never alters. Whether we be here or whether we be there, God loves us and wants us and tries to redeem us just the same. But it is conceivable, at least, that, just as men resist and rebel against God here, so they may resist and rebel against Him there. It is at least possible that there too they may sin, and fall deeper and deeper in sin, and perhaps even sink to a state in which sin becomes perpetual. And, if so, they must suffer. For punishment attends sin, and lasts as long as sin; and if there be really sin that lasts for ever, then likewise there must be punishment that lasts for ever. But we need not go into this question. Enough that we understand that it is Divine Love—not Divine Hatred, but Divine Love—that will chastise us; Divine Love resolutely bent on saving us from sin; Divine Love freely using all its infinite resources to rescue and reclaim us; Divine Love that never wearies but strives with us as we sin, and if for ever we sin will still strive with us for ever. Will that Love win its way in the end, or will it finally be baffled? I do not know that. I cannot tell.

> "Behold, we know not anything;
> I can but trust that good shall fall
> At last—far off—at last to all,
> And every winter change to spring."

I have sought to investigate by the twofold light of reason and revelation some few of the Conditions of the Future Life. Yet how poor, after all, is the result of the investigation! I dimly discern a few laws, a few governing principles of the world beyond: but of the workings, details, circumstances, of the lights and shades and forms and colours, I see practically nothing. Yet the prospect of passing some day into that "undiscovered country" does not occasion me any alarm. I shall find, when I reach it, my familiar Guide awaiting me. I shall be safe under His protection who so long has been my Defender. The same God who has kept me here, will keep me there; and to His hands I can gladly commit myself, and in His providential goodness—both now, and in the hour of death, and through all the eternity that comes after death—I can confidently trust.

"I know not what the future hath
Of marvel or surprise,
Assured alone that life and death
His mercy underlies.

I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care."

IV

THE PRACTICAL IMPORTANCE OF THE IDEA OF THE FUTURE LIFE

2 Cor. iv. 18. *We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

The theme of the last of these sermons is "The Practical Importance of the Idea of the Future Life." In the foregoing discourses I have attempted to show that there is a future life, and I have tried to indicate some of its probable conditions. I desire now to call your attention to the bearing of all this upon our present, earthly life. How does it affect our ordinary thought and conduct? What difference does it make to us? In what ways will our everyday life in the present be influenced and coloured by our conviction of the reality of the life to come?

It is said that when Thoreau lay dying, a friend began to speak to him about the other world, but he immediately silenced him with the cynical remark, "One world at a time, please!" But there are a good many people, I fancy, who frame their conduct on Thoreau's principle. They habitually act on the

maxim of "one world at a time." They pride themselves often on being practical men of affairs—not visionaries and dreamers but shrewd and sensible business men—and they imagine that the way to get the most out of existence is to give themselves up exclusively to the tasks and duties of the present, leaving the future to be dealt with when it happens. One world at a time! Stick fast to what is at the moment yours. Do not look too far ahead. Do not speculate on possibilities. Take care of this world: the next may be trusted to take care of itself.

But the matter is not so simple. For if there be a future life, that life must give an altogether new significance and meaning to our present life. It must change its whole complexion. It must make it quite a different thing. Consider. On the hypothesis of immortality, what is our present life? It is not a complete whole, but only a fragment of a whole. It is not an end in itself, but only a way to a greater end. It is not a final sphere of human intelligence and energy, but only a nursery, as it were, a mere preparatory school, for the training of that intelligence and the discipline of that energy. In a word, our present life is not life—the real, true life—but only, as Franklin put it, "a preparation for life." And we can rightly understand it, and properly adjust ourselves to it, only when we view it against the background of the Beyond. Then what can we think of the wisdom of the man who, while professing to believe

in the reality of the future life, yet deliberately shuts his eyes to it and ignores it and neglects it and leaves it out of his calculations, and insists upon treating this little earthly life as if it were what it is not—that is, everything and all? Such a policy—the policy of "one world at a time"—is not practical wisdom: it is not even common sense: it is sheer stupidity. Though we may not ourselves be gifted with very profound penetration and insight, let us pray that in our attitude towards this great affair of living we at least may not be stupid!

And now let us notice a little more particularly some few of the principal ways in which the future life affects the present.

In the first place, I would point out that it is the future life, after all, that gives us the grand incentive to the highest kind of living. The greatest deeds of goodness, the most glorious acts of heroism, the prodigies of self-sacrifice, are at once inspired and justified by the idea of the life eternal. And please do not misunderstand me. I do not deny that there are some men of exceptional force of character, who live noble, devoted and self-denying lives, though not sustained by any hope of personal immortality. Of course there are such persons, and I reverence them with all my heart. How can one help admiring, for example, that veteran statesman and man of letters who, while convinced that he himself will pass at death

out of existence, can still utter such brave and stirring words as these—"A man will already be in no mean paradise"—so he says—"if at the hour of sunset a good hope shall fall upon him like harmonies of music, that the earth shall still be fair, and the happiness of every feeling creature still receive a constant augmentation, and yet each good cause find yet worthy defenders, when the memory of his own poor name and personality has long been blotted out of the brief recollection of men for ever"? That is a lofty sentiment worthy of a great man. Nevertheless it is the fact that the majority of us are not great men, and we are not capable of rising to these rare moral altitudes. We see clearly enough that a minimum of morality is necessary to keep us going and make things comfortable all round; but the heroism of morality, the stress and sacrifice of the greatest goodness—that is quite a different thing. And we cannot refrain from asking, Is it—apart from the assurance of the future life—is it indeed worth while?

Just look at the matter in this way. If this life be in truth the only life, if there be no other life beyond, then what is the sense of worrying, as we do, about details of right and wrong? We must keep within the law, within the conventional boundaries, for our own comfort's sake; but above and apart from that, what does it matter how we act? It will all be the same a hundred years hence: so what is the use of struggling? Why should we make such a trouble

about character, if death will make an end both of our character and us? Why should a man deny himself? Why should he sacrifice himself? Why should he enlist to get shot or poisoned by the Germans? Why, on the sinking ship, should he give his life-belt to a comrade, or leave the boats clear for the women and the children? It may be magnificent to lay down one's life for others, but it is irrational and absurd if it be true that *he that loseth his life shall*—simply lose it. Perhaps you may contend that it is worth while to sacrifice oneself for the benefit of posterity. But, if there be no immortality, the race, like the individual, will come to an end at last; and therefore in the long run our sacrifice will still be wasted. Yes, in the long run it comes to nothing, if there be no life beyond the grave. "The energies of our system"—so a brilliant writer puts it—"will decay, the glory of the sun will be dimmed, and the earth, tideless and inert, will no longer tolerate the race which has for a moment disturbed its solitude. Man will go down into the pit, and all his thoughts will perish." I ask you—Is that a prospect which is calculated to inspire the heroism of the forlorn hope, or the splendid self-forgetfulness of moral passion and enthusiasm?

Nay, we must have the other life to justify our sacrifices, our sufferings for righteousness, in this life. It is only the other life that can make us feel that they are not wasted. It is only the other life that can convince us that they are worth while. If we are ever

to be good, we must be sure that our goodness will not ultimately be flung upon the scrap-heap of the universe: we must be sure that it will be of permanent use and permanent value; that it will count for something, not merely during a few months or a few years or even a few centuries, but through eternity. You remember what Tennyson says—

"Truth for truth, and good for good! The Good, the True, the Pure, the Just—
Take the charm 'For ever' from them, and they crumble into dust."

Or listen to the weighty, well-considered words of Renan. "The day," he writes, "in which the belief in an after life shall vanish from the earth, will witness a terrific moral and spiritual decadence. Some of us perhaps might do without it, provided only that others held it fast. But there is no lever capable of raising an entire people, if once they have lost their faith in the immortality of the soul."

Consider another of the ways in which the conviction of the future life bears practically on the life and action of the present. It encourages us—does it not?—to set our hands to mighty tasks which, in the brief span of this earthly life, we cannot hope to complete and finish. How seldom, indeed, in this world can we ever say of anything really great that it is finished? We die with our work half-done, with our large designs half-executed. We labour

incessantly at one task or another, but if the task be of any magnitude, we do not see the end of it. We leave it at last in the rough, broken off, with ragged edges: never rounded and symmetrical and complete and perfect. Yes—

> "Labour with what zeal we will,
> Something still remains undone;
> Something uncompleted still
> Waits the rising of the sun.
> By the bedside, on the stair,
> At the altar, near the gates,
> With its menace or its prayer,
> Like a mendicant it waits."

Is not this true, for example, in the moral sphere? We attempt great things, but our attempts do not succeed. We aim high; but the arrow falls short of the mark. We aim again and again, but still we do not attain. We are failures every time. It is with only too much truth that Robert Louis Stevenson sums up the situation. "We look," says he, "for some reward of our endeavours, and are disappointed; not success, not happiness, not even peace of conscience, crowns our ineffectual efforts to do well. Our frailties are invincible, our virtues barren; the battle goes sore against us to the going down of the sun." And is not the same thing true in the intellectual sphere? We have a passion for knowledge, perhaps. We strive to accumulate knowledge. We study, we investigate, we add bit by bit to our stock of information, and slowly, very slowly, by little and little,

our knowledge grows. And in our first exhilaration we think we are certain of success, and look confidently forward to vast achievements in the future. But what in the end is the result of all our labour? A few ideas; a few conclusions; a quantity of rough material amassed for future use, but never to be used in this world; and "instead of a boundless range of view, a small defined horizon, and a voice which says in irony to a soul doomed never to be contented, 'Be content with your limitations.'"

Well, in the face of all this failure, this miscarriage of noble aims, this futile and tragic ineptitude, it is only the assurance of a future life that saves us from despair. If this world were indeed all, then we should be wise to throw up the sponge, to give up the game outright and desist evermore from attempting the impossible. But this world is not all; and just because it is not all, we still have courage to struggle on. The good that we attain, the knowledge that we gather, may be fragmentary and scanty—miserably fragmentary and scanty—when we are summoned away; yet if it be solid as far as it goes, it is a permanent acquisition. It remains, as it were, an imperishable foundation on which, in the other life, with larger powers and enfranchised faculties, we may build up the glorious structure of which at present we can but dream. Yes, "all that is at all lasts ever," as the poet says. Not a shred of genuine goodness or genuine knowledge or genuine beauty shall be lost.

We shall find it again and go on with it in the other world; and there, as we confidently trust,

> "What here was faithfully begun
> Will be completed—not undone."

And so we may have courage to attempt great things, and may take our time about them. There is no need for drive. There is no need for hurry. In this life we may do little more than make a good beginning; but to finish we have eternity. You remember the lesson that Browning has taught us in *The Grammarian's Funeral*:—

> "That low man seeks a little thing to do,
> Sees it and does it:
> This high man, with a great thing to pursue,
> Dies 'ere he knows it.
> That low man goes on adding one to one,
> His hundred's soon hit.
> This high man, aiming at a million,
> Misses an unit.
> That, has the world here—should he need the next,
> Let the world mind him!
> This throws himself on God, and unperplexed
> Seeking shall find Him."

Take a third instance of the practial importance of the idea of the future life. It gives us a standard of measurement, a scale of values. It enables us to view things in their true proportions. In the light of eternity the objects of our world drop down to their proper levels, and we are able at last to discern what is little and what is great, what is trifling and what important. One of the most remarkable imaginative

poems in English literature has a description of an interview between a wandering Arab physician and Lazarus of Bethany, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. And the one thing that most impressed the stranger in that interview, was, according to the poet, this—that the raised man had utterly lost the ordinary sense of proportion, and judged everything by a standard which was totally different from that of the ordinary people round him. Momentous issues, on which others would hang trembling, scarcely affected him at all; while some apparently frivolous trifle, which no one else would notice, would well-nigh drive him wild with terror or exasperation. Thus:—

> "Should his child sicken unto death—why, look
> For scarce abatement of his cheerfulness,
> Or pretermission of the daily craft!
> While a word, gesture, glance from that same child
> At play or in the school or laid asleep,
> Would startle him to an agony of fear."

Surely the poem is a parable. When once a man has seen within the veil, when once the great vision of the other world has opened on him, he must perforce revise his ordinary estimates and valuations. From that day forward the things that are here have importance in his eyes only in so far as they are connected with and bear upon what is to be hereafter.

And you see—do you not?—how the future life enables us to gage the worth of present things?

What elements, we must ask ourselves, in our ordinary hope and ambition will be likely to abide yonder? What interests will be carried over into the world beyond the grave? What acquisitions or gains or profits will be permanent and enduring? What, in a word, of all that in the present life we love and seek and crave for, will last on into eternity? Those are the important things. Much that we value now will drop away from us when we die. Enjoyment and money and social success and position and reputation—all that at last will go. But there are some things that abide. And those, I repeat, are the really important things of life. Those are the best and greatest things in our experience. Those are the only things that finally count and matter. We recognise the solemn truth declared in the golden sentence that is carved, if I remember right, over the great main aisle of Milan Cathedral—"That only is important which is eternal."

Then lastly, I would remind you very briefly how the prospect of immortality brightens and gladdens and gives happiness and tranquillity to our present life. It is surely no small gain to be delivered once for all from the tyranny of death. Just think. So long as we have no future to look forward to, how death's shadow darkens everything! We try indeed to shut our eyes to it, to overlook it, to forget it: we try to think only of the sunshine, to concentrate

all our attention on life's beauty and life's joy. And yet—and yet—

> "And yet though life is glad and love divine
> The Shape we fear is here i' the summer shine—
> He blights the fruit we pluck, the wreath we twine,
> And soon he leaves us stark.
>
> He haunts us fleetly on the snowy steep,
> He finds us as we sow and as we reap,
> He creepeth in to slay us as we sleep—
> Ah! Death makes all things dark!"

But the certainty of immortality has for ever laid the spectre. The cloud is gone out of the heavens. The gloom that overhung this mortal life is finally dispersed. I am afraid of death no longer. I do not fear it for myself. I know that, in spite of death, my life will still go on. My work too, if it be worthy work, will still go on. My activities will go on. I shall simply move up into a higher sphere of being, where all my powers and faculties will be quickened and increased, and my opportunities of achievement will be indefinitely multiplied. I expect to be better there than ever I can be here; not perfect, of course, not absolutely good for a very long while yet, but better and growing better. And I expect to be happier there than ever I can be here; not absolutely and completely happy all at once, but happier probably than even in my happiest moments I can manage to be at present. Why, then, should I shrink from death? St. Paul, I am convinced, was uttering no mere religious platitude, but

simple, sober common sense when he said that *to die is gain.*

And as I do not fear death for myself, so I do not fear it for others. I do not fear it for our men who are fighting at the front. They too, if they die, will taste the blessedness of death. They too, if they die, will be happier and better. I am not alarmed for them. Nor do I suppose that by entering the other world they will be isolated from their friends in this. They will still, I believe, come invisibly to those they love. They will still be ready to help and counsel and cheer and influence them as of yore. And they will be ready too to reveal themselves in visible form once more, when those that are left have in their turn crossed the border and joined them on the other side.

Thus the hope of the future sheds its brightness over our life. We have not anything to be afraid of. The worst that can happen is death; and death is no longer a terror—that ghastly skeleton with the scythe —but the kindly "sister death" of which St. Francis used to speak, a minister of God that is sent only to do us good. *O death, where is thy sting?* We look onward to death, and to what comes after death, and we are satisfied.

My brethren, I would say but one thing more. Death is certain. A few more years, a few more hopes and fears and joys and griefs and labours, and

you and I will be gone. Other people will be in the places where we used to be, and we shall have disappeared. That is inevitable and certain. But if death is a certainty, certain also is immortality. I pray you, remember that. Plan out your present life in view of that. Let your ambitions and hopes be directed towards that. Let your character be developed up to the level of that. Prepare for your great future; and by wise anticipation strive (as the collect says) so to "pass through things temporal" that you "finally lose not the things eternal." This is the practical moral of my discourses on "The Future Life"—a moral which I would enforce with a concluding illustration. I once saw a picture which—though I have forgotten its name and the name of the artist who painted it—remains vivid in my memory. It represented a small ante-chamber, its window red with the glow of the declining sun. Near the window stood a man in an attitude of profound reflexion, and holding in his hand a violin. Beyond was a short, dark passage, leading up to a door just opening; and through the aperture of the door there streamed a brilliant light. And underneath the picture were inscribed these lines of Donne:—

> "Since I am coming to that holy room
> Where with the choir of saints for evermore
> I shall be made Thy music, as I come
> I tune the instrument here at the door,
> And what I must do then, think here before."

THE END

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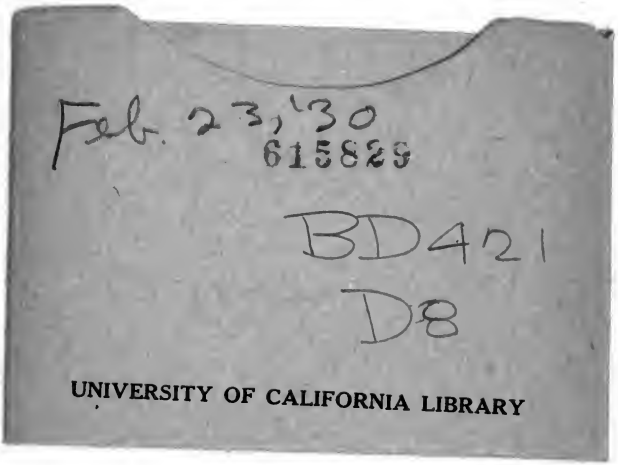
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