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## AND LIFE IS PERFECTED IN DEATH.

Recently we have had several letters the contents of which have brought to us very clearly the realisation of how many there are, at this time, who are walking with sorrow for companion. Death goes reaping among the young and the strong, gathering into the unseen their forces of youth and strength and high spirit. So young are they, so full of the vitality of life, that they are scarcely conscious of the physical body. These letters come telling us of young relatives, each near and dear to the writers, who have made the supreme sacrifice. One writes of the uncertainty of what has been the fate of a dear one and of the hope that grows less, as the weeks pass by, that he may prove to have been preserved from death; we can see too how, on the other hand, pictures are conjured up of the manner of the passing of those who have met death in the northern seas or perhaps in some battle in the skies. We sympathise very deeply indeed with those who have been bereaved by the terrible machine of war that seems to trample out all joy and to bring desolation and sorrow to so many. Yet the letters to which we refer are written with a reticence and courage that cause one to think again and again of the words of him who, best of all our poets, has portrayed the Spirit of England (William Shakespeare), when he puts into the mouth of one of his characters the words, "I have instructed my sorrow to be proud." There is dignity in the sentence, and it illustrates well the spirit of those bereaved and how they realise that the cause, for which our fighting forces go out, is worthy of the highest sacrifice. There is comfort in the thought that what appears as tragedy and disaster in this world is very often the opposite when viewed from the spiritual world and in the light and knowledge of the eternal verities. The purpose of safeguarding freedom for the world and for generations yet unborn is one that of itself transforms death into victory. Great and inspired minds of all the ages have written of those who have died for an ideal or a great cause, and many are the saints, soldiers and thinkers who, even from pre-Christian times, have meditated upon death and held it to be the most glorious experience of all existence and the gate to a higher and all-comprehensive knowledge, to an existence that encompasses the starry heavens themselves. Out of their inspiration these writers and seers have brought their messages of the Spirit for the comfort of mankind, and the best that they have given to us arises not out of the struggles of the intellect, though it may have helped to build the bridge to true inspiration and the vision which shines forth from their words. In the writings of Browning, Wordsworth, and many such, we find these pearls of comfort, clear-seeing and prophetic knowledge as though, for them, in life the veil had been lifted behind which the sources of highest life are hidden, lifted for the space of a moment so that they saw the mysteries, saw with spiritual eyes. In these days of materialism, physical comfort and an unceasing race towards new experiences death has come to be a spectre that is pushed aside from thought. But in the light

of the heroism and daring of youth, at the present time, it takes again the setting of earlier centuries, of crusading times perhaps, when life and death alike were all part of a great adventure and the man who died in his bed seemed to believe that life had withheld something from him. Byron has said, and the words became him well, "What is death so it be glorious?" and the answer he gives to his own question is "A Sunset." There is comfort in the thought, for those who have lost their loved ones in the war, to meditate on what it must have meant to pass through the portals of death into the world of the spirit in "the trailing clouds of glory" that a death of heroism means.

If it be that the secrets beyond the threshold are too holy to be touched and perceived by the human intellect and senses, that the beauty that lies behind what Shakespeare calls "The secret house of death" is beyond all human power of knowledge, we may envy the young and the brave their glorious passing round the promontory of death into the sunrise. This thought brings to our minds a lovely custom of ancient Greece. Those who died young were buried in the twilight of the morning. There was consolation and inspiration for the mourners in the thought that so beautiful were those youths and maidens, taken so early with all their courage and their high, brave hopes, that Aurora (the Goddess of Dawn) so loved them, that she gathered them into her embrace in order that their pure, brave spirits might not be tarnished or dimmed by a longer life on earth. And so, doubtless, the forces and qualities of youth are gathered now into the spiritual world and do not pass into nothingness, but are there to help on the evolution of truth, goodness and beauty, the three ultimate values.

Great poets have always known the truths of life the best. They are the prophets and seers and we can remember the words of him who typifies the youth of England to those who remember the story of the last great war. Before he set out to accomplish the supreme sacrifice in Gallipoli Rupert Brooke answered to the call of his country, answered for himself and all others of his like,

"We shall go down with unreluctant feet  
Rose crowned into the darkness."

And as a complement to these lines one might read *Prospice*, the most beautiful of all the short poems of Robert Browning, that mystic and seer so close to our time.

In the same spirit do those who have written and told us of their lost ones "instruct their sorrow to be proud" and send their thoughts and prayers to the so-called dead on the trackless path they have taken. And as the poets speak from the Spirit of England, which is the spirit of all those young warriors, we may find an answer in the words of Lord Tennyson, Poet Laureate of England,

Sunset and evening star,  
And one clear call for me  
And may there be no moaning of the bar,  
When I put out to sea.

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