

'STAND FAST IN THE FAITH'

(A Weekly Instruction specially written for the N.Z. TABLET by GHIMEL.)

LIFE.

'I am come that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.' (St. John x. 10.)

The last sentence of this passage means that all true followers of Christ will be strong in faith and hope and love; in tune with all holy and beautiful influences that lift up the soul above mean thoughts and low aims; resolute and cheerful of spirit to meet life's sorrows; full of the saving grace that throws off the poison of evil as a healthy body beats down the germs of disease.

The God of heaven, Who deigned to become man, came to touch human life at every point. 'Homes, with their births and death-beds, their daily tables and nurseries for Christ's little ones, are infinitely more sacred spots, so near are they seen to lie to the gate of heaven,' because they all share in the abundant life of the Saviour. Christianity has let in the light of eternity upon the high destiny of the human race, and so has linked men, great and small, to the everlasting God, and through Him and in Him, to one another.

No wonder Christian faith brings gladness, and Christian hope, happiness. 'Believing you shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory' (1 Peter i. 8). The joy, we notice, is said to be unspeakably great, and it is perhaps unspeakable also because it is 'a deep and silent thing.'

Old sorrows that sat at the heart's sealed gate

Like sentinels grim and sad,

While out in the night damp, weary and late,

The King, with a gift divinely great,

Waited to make me glad.

Old fears that hung like a changing cloud

Over a sunless day;

Old burdens that kept the spirit bowed,

Old wrongs that rankled and clamored loud

They have passed like a dream away.

In the world without and the world within

He maketh the old things new;

The touch of sorrow, and stain of sin,

Have fled from the gate where the King came in.

From the chill night's damp and dew.

Anew in the heavens the sweet stars shine.

On earth new blossoms spring;

The old life lost in the life divine.

Thy will be mine, my will is Thine.

Is the new song the new hearts sing.

This abundant life is one of eternal duration—eternal not simply in the sense of being endless, but in as

much as it is life above and beyond time and sense, because it is nothing less than the life of God in us. Time and time again we see the good, whose hearts have expanded with their years into deeper and wider affections; whose passions seem to have filtered away in life's discipline; over whom the bitter waters of affliction have swept only to leave their richness behind; whose serene virtues inspired all around with a higher sense of duty and sweetened life's burdens—these we see going down the valley over which is cast the shadow of death, but it is not dark to them, because there shines into it from above the heavenly light of Christian hope—and here is life. We lay their bodies in consecrated earth, but somehow we never think of them except as alive. It seems to us as if we may meet them at any turn of the road, so entirely did the spiritual life in them keep out of sight all the circumstances of mortality. Who shall say that this is not abundant life? And so, to adapt the lines of Cardinal Newman,

'Tho' they may long to speak, and we to know, yet both of us refrain:

"It were not good; a little doubt below, and all will soon be plain."

For these reasons our joy in believing must be deep and abiding, our service of God the happiest of services. 'For what is God,' writes Father Faber, 'but infinite beatitude and eternal joy? His life is joy. All that is bright and happy comes from Him. Were it not for Him, there would be no gladness, either in heaven or on earth. There can be nothing melancholy, nothing gloomy, nothing harsh, nothing unwilling in our service of such a Father and Creator. Our worship must be happy in itself, happy in look and in expression, happy in blitheness and in promptitude and in beautiful decorum; and it must also be such a worship, as while it gladdens the tenderness of God and glorifies His paternal fondness, shall also fill our souls with that abounding happiness in Him, which is our main strength in all well-doing and in all holy suffering.'

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