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BEYOND · THE · VEIL

Brotherhood

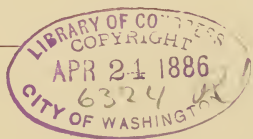


BEYOND THE VEIL

BY

Alice Williams Brotherton

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CHICAGO
CHARLES H. KERR & COMPANY
175 DEARBORN STREET
1886

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PRELUDE.

The end is not in the grave.
There is a time
To rest, as to come and go
On God's errands, to and fro,—
Like a half-writ rhyme
If my life must be laid by,
For a little space:
As the poet's soul is stirred
With new insight and the word
Speeds at length to its right place ;
So this life in which I see
But half-meanings, in the grave
Laid away,
In that Life whereto I tend—
Some day, some happy day,
Waking refreshed and calm and brave,
I shall read clear, to its end.

BEYOND THE VEIL.

One weary with much weeping slept and dreamed :—

A poor soul wandering in the outer gloom
Which lies beyond the portal of the tomb,
Felt a wild longing in its inmost breast
To look upon the City of the Blest.
And it arose and fled through shadows grey
With never guide except that wish alone,
Which drew it, half-resisting, ever on,
Communing sadly with itself alway :—
“It might have been—Woe, woe ! it might have
 been
That I, too, through the gate had entered in,
And walked with the pure souls to whom the grace
Is given to look upon Jehovah’s face,
And work His will (as once on earth) in heaven.

But now mine hour is passed. No place is given,
Though long with bitter weeping I have sought,
Wherein my expiation might be wrought :
My day is sinned away : too late, *too late*
Cometh repentance!

“ Yet unto the gate
Of the fair city, New Jerusalem,
Whose rainbow tinted walls of carven gem
Proclaim unto God’s children from afar
Their Father’s home where many mansions are—
I fain would go ; to bend a single glance
Upon the glory of the place. Perchance,
(For I will plead so humbly !) it may be
The gracious Angel-guard will pity me
Nor wave me from the gate, but grant my prayer
To stand and gaze one little moment there,
Viewing the shining streets whereon have trod
The feet of those who journey up to God !
Then, after that one look, I will retrace
Swiftly my steps to my appointed place.”

So saying, swift advancing, on it passed,
Leaving the gloom behind it : till at last
It saw the City of the Blest appear :
Whose walls far reaching, as it drew more near,
Shone—even as the prophet has foretold—
With a great shining like transparent gold,
With beryl and with jacinth, jasper-stone,
Sardius and amethyst, emerald, chalcedon,
And myriad gems beside, whose marvellous sheen
Was such as never mortal eye hath seen.

But lo, the gates, when it had come thus far,
Stood open wide, with never bolt or bar :
Nor any warder with uplifted sword
And angry frown was there the place to guard.
Then the soul, listening, trembling—half with fear
Half with an awe-filled reverence—drew near
And looked into the city wistfully.
There was a sound of far-off melody.
But all the streets were still, nor was there sight
Of any soul : only a wondrous light
Filled all the place.

And straight a wild desire
Seized on the soul to view the glory nigher.
“Perchance this hour the Angels all are gone
Deeper into the City where the throne
Must be,” it said, “and so the streets are still.
Ah, if I might but venture ! Yea, I will.
Since none is here to hinder sure I may
Just enter in and go a little way !”

Thus saying, through the open gate it strayed,
At first with bated breath and sore afraid,
Then, since none did molest it, bolder grown,
With ever-quickenings steps it hastened on,
Leaving the shining portals far behind :
And knew it not, but wandered on to find
Fresh marvels and new beauties everywhere,—
Till, of a sudden pausing, it was 'ware
Of a bright Presence swiftly drawing near.
And fain it would have fled but that its fear
Forbade, nor was there any place to hide.
Then the swift Presence halting at its side

Looked it with piercing glances through and
through
And queried :—“ Soul, whence art thou ? ” And it
knew
The Crucified ; and dared not meet His frown,
But crying :—“ Pity, Lord ! Forgive ! ” fell down
Weeping and quaking at his feet.

Then He :—

“ What have I to forgive ? ”

So, falteringly,

There at the Master's feet with sob and wail
The stricken soul poured forth the whole sad tale—
How it had been a sinner upon Earth,
And in the After-World amid the dearth
And chill and darkness lying there without,
Had wandered long, a prey to fear and doubt
And evil thoughts and wild despair : until—
Drawn by an impulse stronger than its will—
It rose and fled, nor paused until it stood.
Awe-filled, before the City of the Good.

Finding no warder at the outer gate,
No bolt or bar nor any hindrance set,
Nor seraphim with flaming dreadful sword :
Tremblingly it had ventured hitherward
Into the city, led by a wild hope
To look upon the glory : then to grope
Its way again unto its wonted place.

So paused, and looking up into His face
Wondered exceedingly to see no frown
Thereon, but only mild eyes looking down
Upon it, kneeling. And a voice said "Nay,
Why then depart when thou art free to stay?"
"Master, O mock me not!" the spirit cried,
"Pity me rather : sorely am I tried!"
"Alas, poor soul!" He said "Hast never heard
That which is written in the Holy Word :—
'Whoso shall hear My voice and come to Me
I will in no wise cast out' ? Child, for thee
The promise holds good also. Thou art here,
Do I reject thee ? Put away thy fear."

“Nay”, the soul faltered, “but I heard no voice,
Between the good and evil made no choice.
The time was passed. I only longed to flee
Out of the gloom, and hither come and see
The beauty and the glory forfeited
By mine own sinfulness !”

“Yea, child”, He said’

“And that same *longing* was the Father’s voice.
None cometh unto me save of His choice.
Poor Soul ! And didst thou think that little space
Of time on Earth was all wherein the grace
Of God was open to thee ?—that the tomb
Sealed once for good or ill thy final doom ?
And were that like to One whose tenderness
Is infinite as His Almightyness ?
Didst thou not dream that, in the outmost part
Of all, His voice divine might reach the heart,
And draw thee, ever nearer, on and on
Unto Himself and Me ? So hath He done.
Peace ! Though thou hast not chosen Me indeed,
Have I not chosen thee ? I know thy need

Of Me, and bid thee ‘Come, abide with me.’
Within the City there is room for thee.
And that thou well mayst know this thing is true
I give a sign,—What would’st thou I should do ?
What is thine inmost wish ? Look up and speak !”
The awe-struck soul arose, and answered meek :—
“ Master ! If I might touch thy garment’s hem
And be made clean ! Thou didst thus unto them—
The loathly lepers once in Palestine,—
O, if Thou wouldst but lay Thy hand divine
Upon me now, this leprosy of sin,
This weight of pain and fear I bear within,
Would fall from off me like a garment vile !”
“ Lo, it is done !” He answered with a smile.

And straight it seemed as if from off its sight
The scales had fallen, for to left and right,
Near and afar it saw a gracious band
Of beautiful, tall, shining Angels stand,
Which had been with them from the first. Not strange
Their faces seemed, but, with some glorious change,
Like unto those of dear friends known and lost

On Earth. And there was none of all that host
But did rejoice with it exceedingly,
Making its joy their own : “ Now glory be ”
(They cried) “ unto the Lord ! Without the gate
No wistful soul need trembling stand and wait.
No need to knock—the doors stand open wide,
Whoso doth seek shall find the Crucified.
Sister ! we saw thee enter in, though thou
Couldst see us (for thine eyes were sealed), but now.
Come, thou belovèd, with us—for there be
Full many here, have waited long for thee ! ”

The Master gently bade :—“ Soul, go thy ways
With these: and after, for our Father’s praise—
To whose dear Name for aye all praise shall be !—
Some task there shall be given unto thee:
For there is need of service from us all.
Go now and rest until thou hear the call.
My peace be with thee, daughter ! ”

Then with eyes
Lifted and filled with tears of glad surprise,
And smiling lips, and brow from whence was gone

All shade of sin, the pardoned soul passed on
 Circled about by the rejoicing throng:
 And a new voice was added to the song.

*And with a start the sleeper, in the face
 Of the glad soul that entered into grace,
 Of a sudden knew—her own : and, waking, went
 Upon her way filled with a great content.*

* * * * *

Not here the end—not here !

Infinite Tenderness

Hath infinite ways, we know,

To save and bless.

Nor dooms to eternal woe

The soul that learns,—

Through Sin (if it must be so !)

That scars and burns.

Since all Shadow comes from Light :

Having wons to bud and grow,

Surely Good from Sin, at last,

Shall spring also.

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