

WHITHER?

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Whither? by Anonymous

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I

IN a final division of household possessions of my ancestors, a quaint gray chest has brought me a heritage of unexpected value in packages of letters, written many years ago, and tossed carelessly here with mouse-eaten diplomas and articles of ancient wear. As I read, deciphering oftentimes with difficulty the old-fashioned handwriting on the yellowing paper, I pause to marvel. What fullness of life is here! What richness! What greatness!

There are letters from a mother to a little daughter at school in the city; letters from an aged father who has been visiting his clergyman son; glad letters, written to bring joy at marriages; solemn,

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and yet joyous letters, written to console in death. Doubtless they are akin to hundreds of others still resting in the corners of boxes and old desks, and to others innumerable which have perished, recording the experience of a generation, two generations ago. Written out of narrower lives, so far as mere worldly circumstances go, than those with which I come in contact to-day, they reveal a far deeper life, a profounder hope and faith, a recognition of wider horizons than most of our contemporary world knows. Here is a knowledge of spirit as the one great reality; of divine meanings everywhere; a sense of the greatness of the issue in life as a warfare waged in the name of the soul; faith in the undying character of righteousness, in the endlessness of human hope. Words are here traced which take away one's breath, in the grandeur

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of their denial of that which seems, in the splendor of assurance: "My sister Mary to-day entered upon eternal life—"

It is not primarily theology upon which they dwell: dogma plays a lesser part here than I should have supposed. It is upon the inner sources of hope and consolation, the life-giving power of faith, faith drawn often from hard experience, faced in the light of a great hope. Here is a real sense of the swift fitting of things earthly, and the great promise therein; here is a constant dwelling upon the Master, the face of the Master, the vision of perfectness. Those writers repeat lovingly his words, thus bringing one another courage in sharp anguish of grief and at beds of illness; and the thought of sacrifice is ever in their minds, of outer loss that is great inner gain. One is aware of certain immovable tenets of hard theology, but