

**IS THE LIFE OF
MAN ETERNAL?**

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Is the Life of Man Eternal? by Franklin Blades

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FRANKLIN BLADES

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"So when this corruption shall have put on incorruption and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O, Death where is thy sting. O, Grave where is thy victory."—*The Greatest of the Apostles.*

By **FRANKLIN BLADES, M.D.**

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ISAAC NEWTON PHILLIPS

The accomplished lawyer
and gentleman

Lately and long the able and efficient
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Court of Illinois

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

BY

GEORGE A. GATES, D.D., LL.D.

(President of Fisk University, Nashville, Tenn.)

The future life is not a matter to be treated mechanically or dogmatically. So supreme an act of faith as the belief that there is for us humans a conscious personal existence beyond physical death is to most thoughtful people, a reverent hope. To treat that hope in the spirit of controversy or stark argumentation seems blasphemous. To pour ridicule or contempt upon those who find themselves still doubtful of so great a possibility is wicked. "There lives more faith in honest doubt, believe me, than in half the creeds." But the word "honest" must have the chief emphasis, if the poet's word is to be held true.

There seem to be those to whom confidence in immortality is easy. It is not easy for some of the rest of us to understand that facility. But as great as is the reach of faith to attain and hold belief in the future life, the opinion that "death ends all" involves still greater

difficulties. Nature abounds, indeed, in what seem to be wastes, but not in such wastes as universal death would be. So much of the best in human life, and thought, and spirit, and high endeavor, would seem to bear the mark of ultimate failure, that one shrinks from the despair of final death as too illogical. So, put in the coldest intellectual manner possible, the larger faith holds its place.

To some the view of the writer of this essay that there is no other adequate support for belief that motive and conduct can be intrinsically right or wrong, than faith in the future life, will seem unsound. To others of us, Judge Blades' position seems correct. Ethics is practical or nothing. And practically, how foolishly, the word will largely be: "Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die." The sanction of eternal life is none too much for the support of the ethical appeal. Even in spite of that glorious call, sin holds high and persistent revel and works its awful dooms. How immeasurably worse would be our human case without the larger hope?

The easy criticism that this reduces ethics to sheer commercialism is not valid. Spiritual rewards are not cheap payments of "happiness" (one of the weakest words in the language) or "glory." In the realm of spirit, rewards are in kind. That is: the reward of virtue is more virtue; of character, higher character: good deeds, opportunity to do more of them.

"The wages of Sin is death; if the wages of Virtue be dust,
Would she have heart to endure for the life of the worm and
the fly?

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."

But the Great Hope strikes its main root deeper than