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WHAT IS LIFE?

BY JUAN RESSULS.

Oh, what is life! A list of incidents:
Meetings, greetings, partings, make up its sum;
Yes, there are meetings: such when youthful hearts
Flow to each other, and soul knits to soul;
And there are greetings: kind words are spoken;
For a little while Time lets us tarry,
And converse sweet each mingling spirit holds.
But ah! we meet, we greet, and then—we part;
We cannot tarry long: Time will sever
The firmest band that Friendship ever formed.
But oh, when life's last ebbing sand is run,
When time's last surge our bark has borne along,
A home awaits us where the parting word
Embitters not the union of fond friends.
Oh, may we meet upon that heavenly shore;
May all thy friends—all who, as friends, have here
Inscribed their names—meet where they part no more;
Meet, and with kindling eye, tell o'er these scenes,
These "incidents of life"—these meetings, greetings,
And the many farewell's ne'er to be re-told.
—*Boston Waverly Magazine.*

DEATH OF LUTHER.

On the morning of the 23d he set out for Eisleben, and took with him his two sons, Martin and Paul, the eldest of whom was then about twenty. His wife was sick, and on that account obliged to stay at home. There had been a violent storm, the rivers had all overflowed their banks, the bridges were carried away, and travelling was both difficult and dangerous. At eleven o'clock on the morning of the 24th, he arrived in Halle, and in the evening preached in St. Mary's Church. He was detained there three days by the state of the river Saale, which was full of floating ice, and running with a furious current. On the 28th, he and his two sons, with Dr. Jonas, rowed themselves across the river, in a skiff, at the imminent hazard of their lives. While they were struggling with the ice and water, Luther spoke to Dr. Jonas in his dry, pleasant way—"Dear Doctor, would it not be fine sport for the devil to drown Dr. Martin Luther, and his two sons, and Dr. Jonas, all together, here in the river?" They gained the shore in safety, and proceeded on their journey. The Count of Mansfeld met them with a company of one hundred and thirteen horses, and escorted them to Eisleben. When they came in sight of the church-tower of Eisleben, a rush of tender reminiscences crowded upon the mind of Luther with such overwhelming force that he fainted entirely away. When he recovered, he said, "The devil must needs insult me from the old steeple yonder. But I will give him a pull or two yet before I die." Luther found himself very much exhausted by the fatigues and inconveniences of his journey. He had an issue for the pains in his head. This had been neglected since he left home, and had become very painful. After a night's rest, however, he entered on business, and pursued it with unremitting diligence.

February 14th, he ordained two preachers, and received the Lord's Supper for the last time. The next day he preached his last sermon from Matt. xi. 25-30.

February 16th, at supper, Luther spoke with great cheerfulness on the brevity of human life.

His appetite had been very good, and his meals remarkably cheerful: and he observed that, getting back to his native town, his food tasted to him as it did when he was a boy.

On the morning of February the 17th, he appeared so unwell that the Count of Mansfeld begged him not to attend to business that day, but keep his room. This he consented to do; he saw no company, and his dinner was sent up to his apartment. In the afternoon, however, he said he could not bear to eat his meals alone, it was so gloomy and unsocial; he would go down and take supper with the family. His two sons were with him, his friend Dr. Jonas, and his servant Ambrose. He walked thoughtfully up and down in his chamber, and at length said:—"I was born here in Eisleben; what if I should die here?" He complained of pressure for breath; he walked to the window and opened it; his lips moved, and a low murmur was heard, as if he were in earnest prayer. His servant Ambrose, supposing he might want assistance, came softly behind him, and heard him speak to the following purport:—"Lord God, Heavenly Father, I call upon thee in the name of thy dear Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, whom I by thy grace have acknowledged and preached, that thou wouldst, according to thy promise, and for the glory of thy name, graciously listen to my prayers at this time. Oh, grant, according to thy great mercy and loving-kindness towards me, that the light of the gospel, which now begins to shine on the earth, may everywhere take the place of the terrible apostacy, and darkness, and blindness of the Pope, before the great day of judgment, which cannot now be far off, but is at the door; and withal preserve thou the Church of my dear fatherland pure unto the end in the steadfast profession of the truths of thy holy Word, and graciously keep it, that all the world may know that thou didst send me to do this work. Ah, dear Lord God, Amen, Amen."

Not a word was spoken by any of his attendants. They felt as Jacob did in Bethel, "How dreadful is this place!"

He resumed his seat, and said to Dr. Jonas and his sons:—"Oh, I wish this business of the Count of Mansfeld's were settled, that I might go home and lay myself down in my coffin to sleep, and give this poor body to the worms!"

Michael Coelius, the minister of Eisleben, came in to see him, and he said to Coelius and Dr. Jonas—"Pray for our dear Lord God, that it may go well with him and his Church, for the Council of Trent is in a great rage." He complained of pain in his breast, and requested them to rub him with warm flannels, which they did. He felt better, and at supper-time went down and ate with the family with a good appetite. Observing the company rather desponding, he began to converse with great liveliness, and by two or three sallies of his ever-ready wit, threw them into a hearty laugh.

After supper he again complained of a pain in his breast, and asked to be rubbed with warm flannels. They urged him to send for a physician, but he declined. At nine o'clock he went up stairs, in company with his two sons, Martin and Paul, Dr. Jonas, Mr. Coelius, and his servant Ambrose. He lay down on a sofa in a little ante-room adjoining his chamber, and slept for about an hour and a half. He then awoke, and asked Ambrose to warm the bed in his chamber. He rose from the sofa, took off his clothes without assistance, wrapped himself in a dressing-gown, walked to his bed, and lay down. Seeing his sons and the other friends standing anxiously around him, he requested them to retire to bed; but they earnestly begging permission

to sit up with him, he made no further objection, but turned his face toward the wall, and seemed to sleep. His servant Ambrose says he did not really close his eyes, but seemed to be narrowly watching the flickering shadows made upon the wall by the unsteady light of the fire. At half-past eleven, he told his servant to light a fire in the little room, and soon after exclaimed, "O Lord God!" in a tone of distress. His friends were immediately around him, and he said to Dr. Jonas: "I have most distressing pains at my heart; I think I must be dying." They rubbed him again with flannels, and the sad news spread through the family and through the city, that Luther was dying. The two principal physicians of the city were soon by his bedside. The Count of Mansfeld came hurrying in with some salts of ammonia, then newly discovered, and was soon followed by his lady, the Countess, the Count John Henry von Schwartzburg and his lady, and Dr. Aurifaber, the particular friend and biographer of Luther.

Luther soon recovered, rose from the bed without assistance, walked once or twice across the chamber, and then went into the little ante-room, and lay down again upon the sofa. It was now one o'clock in the morning. Soon after lying down, he said in Latin, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit. Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth."

The Countess of Mansfeld wished him to take some of the medicines she had brought; but he said his poor dear Caty, in her abundant anxiety for him, had put up, just before he came away, a little case of refreshments and medicines, and if he took anything, he would rather have some of that. His son went to his trunk, took out the parcel he spoke of, and handed it to him. He took one or two of the things it contained, just put them to his lips, handed them all back to his son, and told him to put them away, and never to forget the kindness of his mother. Soon after, he said: "Dear God, I am in dreadful pain, I must be going." Mr. Coelius said to him: "Venerated father, call upon our dear Lord Jesus Christ, our great High Priest, our only Mediator; you have done a great work for Him; God will be gracious to us; you will yet recover." "No," said Luther, firmly, "I feel the cold sweat of death; I am breathing my soul out; my distress is increasing." He then prayed in German:—"My heavenly Father, eternal, most merciful God, thou hast revealed to me thy dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ; him have I professed, him have I preached; I adore him as my only Saviour and Redeemer, while the ungodly reproach, and revile, and persecute Him. Oh, take my poor soul to thyself." He then said in Latin three times in quick succession, "Into thy hands I commit my spirit;" and added, "God so loved the world that he sent his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life." After a moment's silence, he again spoke in German:—"O heavenly Father, although this body is breaking away from me, and I am departing from this life, yet I certainly know I shall forever be with thee, for no one can pluck me out of thy hand." And then subjoined with a cheerful tone in Latin, "Our God is God of salvation; our Lord delivereth from death."

He appeared to be fast sinking, and the Countess of Mansfeld again administered some cordials, and directed him to be bathed with spirits. Then Dr. Jonas said to him, "Most beloved father, do you still hold on to Christ, the Son of God, our Saviour and Redeemer?" His faded countenance once more brightened, his clear blue eye sparkled with

intelligence, and he replied, in a distinct and thrilling tone, "O yes." He then folded his hands across his bosom, turned his face a little on one side, and began breathing softly and gently as a sleeping infant. His eyes were becoming fixed in their sockets, the glassy hue of death was fast gathering on them, when one of the old men in attendance, who had been his companion in childhood, (and who in bad weather had often carried the favorite little Martin to school in his arms,) in that awful moment, forgetting entirely the mighty reformer, and thinking only of the friend of his heart, knelt down by the sofa, and putting his arm across his bosom, and his face to his cheek, exclaimed, in the plaintive tones of childhood, "Martin, dear Martin; do speak to me once more!" But there was no reply. The mighty spirit had already gone. Before the words were fully uttered, Luther was already with Moses, with Paul, with John; and with Christ; and in the last only did he find a superior. The Countess of Mansfeld would not be persuaded that he was dead. Even when she heard the death-rattle in his throat, and after that all was still; when she saw his lips open with a slight and scarcely perceptible gasp, and then move no more, still, with all a woman's perseverance and hopefulness, she stood intently watching his face, and anxiously rubbing now his feet, and now his hands, till at last, perceiving that they grew ice-cold to her touch, and she could warm them no more, hope was forced from her, and she turned from the couch, threw herself into a chair, and covered her face, and wept like one who refuses to be comforted.

Luther died of cancer in the stomach, or *angini pectoris*, at half-past two o'clock on Tuesday morning, February 18, 1546, at the age of sixty-two years, three months, and ten days. As he seemed to anticipate, his native city, by a singular providence, became also the place of his death.

Luther's death, though peaceful and full of unwavering confidence in Christ and his Gospel, was not so joyous and ecstatic as that of many a Christian in humble life. For this, two reasons may be assigned:

1. His personal hopes were never of the exhilarating kind. Of himself, he was often distrustful; it was only in respect to the cause in which he was engaged, that he was always undoubtingly confident.

2. He was probably, during the whole time, suffering excruciating bodily pain. Though he said but little about it, it is evident from what he did say, that his sufferings were extreme. And it must have been so, for he had a mighty, muscular frame to be shaken down, and such a frame could not, in so short a time, have been brought to dissolution without terrible torture.—*Dr. C. E. Stone.*

GROWTH OF THE AMERICAN CHURCH.

No man is more competent in the ecclesiastical statistics of this country than Dr. Baird. He has recently stated, that in 1815 the eight Presbyterian denominations of the country embraced less than 100,000 communicants, and the present number is near 750,000. Then the Baptists were comparatively weak; now they number over 700,000 associated brethren. In 1800, the Methodist organization had not 40,000 members, now they have more than 1,250,000 communicants; and, take all the strictly evangelical churches together, they have more than ten times the number of communicants they had in 1800. This shows a very encouraging advance, in the proportion of church members to the whole people. For while we have ten times as many church members, we have not five times as many people.—*Puritan Recorder.*