

THE CENTURY MAGAZINE

MARCH, 1913

WHERE AM I WHILE I SLEEP?

BY GRACE DENIO LITCHFIELD

WHERE am I while I sleep? When I lie down,
 Heavy with grief for one who sleeps so well
 My bitterest cry may no more waken her,
 I say, "Let me sleep quickly, that perchance
 God send me dream of her, to ease my woe
 With sweet deceit of seeing her again."
 And so I lie as they lie who are dead,
 My hands like folded flowers on either side,
 My sad eyes closed o'er all their frozen tears,
 And sleep for hope of that which sleep may bring.
 Where am I, then, through all the unhistoric night?
 Down what dim aisles, unreckoned of by day,
 Doth my dumb soul its trackless path pursue?
 By what far shore find gracious harborage?
 Oh, can it be that those who only sleep
 And those who die together wait in heaven
 The dawning of the day, soul welcoming soul
 And claiming kinship in a wondrous world
 Closed to our waking vision? Can it be
 That thus on night's invisible borderland
 Our spirits meet beyond earth's cognizance,
 Communing still in some strange, heavenly sense
 That leaves its impress on returning souls,
 Some touch of infinite beatitude
 Beyond life's gift, some strengthening peace that lends
 Endurance for the day? Oh, this alone,
 Though neither memory nor dream thereof
 Remain to soothe our waking—this were cause
 To long for night's enfranchisement, to cry
 For slumber as for heaven, and wake at last,
 Reclothed in calm, with new-won hope that death,
 Even as sleep, may give what day denies.

THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW

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SLEEP

BY GRACE DENIO LITCHFIELD

Poor pain-worn mortal, dost thou weep?
 Awhile thy troubled patience keep.
 Night cometh surely. Thou shalt sleep.
 Take up thy burden. Is the day
 Too long for thy lost courage? Nay:
 Night will o'ertake thee by the way.

Thou shalt not hear; thou shalt not see;
But better than death will come to thee,
For, living, thou shalt cease to be.

Better than death; for none hath told
Death's consequence. And death may hold
Undreamed-of terrors manifold.

Death may be gain, or may be woe.
Sleep hath no may-be. Sleep we know.
It is, it was, and shall be so.

No law, no conscience doth it keep
Within its unimpassioned deep.
Nor time, nor space, nor sin hath Sleep.

To sleep is to unlive; to be
As thou hadst never been; to free
Thyself from all that maketh thee;

Nothing but nothingness to know;
To be unborn without a throe—
Uncreate at a pangless blow.

Then ye who fear, and ye who weep,
A few short hours your patience keep.
God must be good. For God made Sleep.

GRACE DENIO LITCHFIELD.

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MAY, 1913

A LAST MESSAGE

BY GRACE DENIO LITCHFIELD

DEAR, I lie dying, and thou dost not know—
Thou whom of all the world I love the best,
And wilt not know until I lie at rest,
With lips forever closed and lids dropped low.

O Love, O Love, I cannot leave thee so!

Cannot, still undivined, still unexpressed,
Unheeding to the last my heart's behest,
Dumb into the eternal silence go!

What reck I in this moment of disgrace?

Albeit the whole world hear what my heart saith,
I cry aloud to thee across all space,

To thee—to thee—I call with my last breath!

O Love, lean forth from out thy dwelling-place!
Listen, and learn I loved thee, Love, till death.