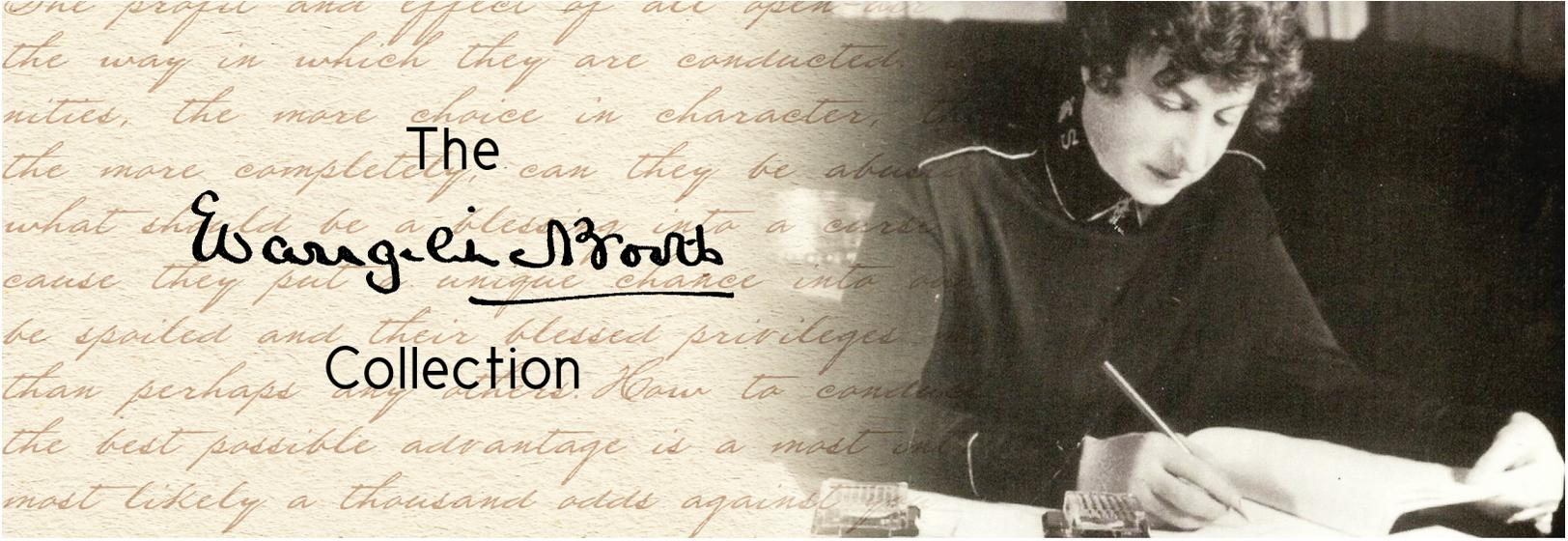


THE PASSOVER OF GLADNESS

I found the thought, or perhaps I should say the thought found me, in the pages of an old hymn book, whose fashion and phraseology both proclaimed it as belonging to the worship of other days. Such volumes always seem to be fraught with a sacredness second only to that attached to the Word of God, for on their leaves are inscribed lines which have upheld and inspired the saints of God in every variety of circumstance, crisis and calamity. Here is the language of penitence, the outpouring of praise, the assurance of present help in trial, the song of triumph in death, and that most resonant note – the promise of Resurrection. Such verses have wakened harmonies in the heart which all time cannot still, and have endeared themselves to every child of God and heir to the kingdom.

But the hymn which suggested the words of my title was wholly unfamiliar to me, nor did I read it through. So deep and satisfying seemed this one line, that I looked no farther, but lifted my heart in gratitude to God for the radiant message which, although the first buds of Spring had not yet pushed their way up through the snow, wafted around as a fragrant breath of the new life of an Easter morning.

With the tragedy and peril which surrounded the first Passover we are all familiar. Sacred history has depicted for us that darkest of all Egyptian nights when the death angel brooded over the city, and the blood-stained lintel saved the first-born of the home. In fancy we have seen the family gathered around the solemn feast, the children feeling, though not understanding, the momentous awe of the occasion, looking from the white, anxious face of the mother to the set, stern features of the father as in silence he leaned upon his staff. We have imagined their scarcely trusted joy in the hour of deliverance, their trembling hopes and fears as they remembered the sea which yet barred their way, their mingled uncertainty and confidence as they thought of the prospect of the Promised Land. It was a solemn, a reverent, an awe-inspiring feast, but even in its happiest aspect it could scarcely be said that there was anything so bright or so clear or so transforming as gladness about it.



But when we turn from the Passover under the Law to the Passover under Grace, there is no note of uncertainty, no feeling of apprehension, no tincture of fear to alloy the pure essence of hope. Easter is essentially the season of happiness – it is the joy-centre of the Christian year.

In our Passover there is gladness for those who mourn. We come back from the open grave to face the empty chair, but the bitterest drop is taken from the cup, and a light shines in the blackness of bereaving gloom, irradiating such words as, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy," or, "Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept."

In our Passover there is gladness for those who toil. "There remaineth therefor a rest to the people of God." Not forever will nerves wrack, muscles strain, blood throb and limbs ache. The weariness of earth will one day be forgotten in the restoration and complete recuperation of Heaven, of which I like to think not as a passive inertia but the tireless buoyancy of an immortal vitality.

In our Passover there is gladness for those who love their Lord, those who have learned to love Him here, have followed His love through the dimness and depression of mortal miasmas, and look to see Him face to face in the perfection of Eternity's climate.

"Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us."

"I am the Resurrection and the Life."

And as we read the radiant assurances, like a cloak there falls from us the pall of Winter doubts and dreariness. The time of the singing of birds has come; the warmth and light of an eternal Summer is wafted to us across the tide through which He waits to bear us in like triumph. The sepulcher and the seal are broken, death's sting is eradicated, another and a better life is begun, and in its light and love and beauty all horror and hate and heaviness are lost to sight forever and forever – for this is

THE PASSOVER OF GLADNESS.

(April 11th, 1914)