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Correspondence

Hannah Whitall Smith

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Box 1_5 (Correspondence-Bottom, Margaret 1898-1904)

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MY BIRTHDAY

December 29th, 1904.

I am seventy-seven years young today. I well remember the experience I had when I was seventy. Before I fell asleep the night before that birthday I was not reconciled to the figures; I shrank from them. I felt so young, and my Frank was young and never wanted me to speak of my age, and if I attempted to speak of the past he would say, "No reminiscences, Mother, that looks like age, and I must have my young Mother." Oh, how those figures looked that night before my birthday and I said to myself so sadly, "When I wake up in the morning I shall be seventy years of age." I was perfectly well, without any physical trouble whatever, my eyesight (as now) as good as it ever was, my hearing as perfect (as now) as it had ever been; I always slept like a child. When I awoke in the morning something had happened while I slept. I have bent over my children while sleeping just to have the joy of seeing them wake up and of seeing their mother when they wakened. It was most like that God seemed to be bending over me, and when I woke up seemed to say, "Now it is all over, you have lived the three score years and ten, you need never think of age again." And the old word came back that had been given me on a previous birthday, "Mine age is as nothing before Thee". O, it was so wonderful, and I said, is it possible that I am through with age? How I bounded down those stairs in the dear corner house that morning. My darling boy who called me his sweetheart was at the table reading his morning paper. I threw my arms around him exclaiming, "Oh, Frank, I shall never be old, it's all over." And I laughed and cried for joy. I was so young, and so happy. He was never to have an old mother.

Seven years have passed since then, and now I am seventy-seven, but I have no such experience as I had on the eve of my seventieth birthday. The figures of seventy-seven look pleasant and so very youthful. Only seventy-seven! I have said again and again. Why not? I sang as a child,

"When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright, shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we first begun."

Now if I am going somewhere where I am going to be "ten thousand years", why of course it is natural to say "only seventy-seven!" And I say it with such joy, such a sense of youthfulness. Not that my hair is not whiter, and someone said to me a few days ago, "Seems to me your hair is getting thinner". Instantly came the old lines I sang when they were going to take his dear body away,

"But thinly the veil intervenes
Between the fair city and me."

My thin hair was the veil getting thinner, and I smiled for joy. Not that I do not want to look as my dear ones would have me. I would like even to look young, but it is a greater joy to me to be young than to look young. I know the things that are seen are temporal and that the things that are not seen are eternal. This is a realization with me, and I know that my person is not me. I am a spirit. I say it so often, "God is a spirit", and I am a spirit, I shall never, never die.

And now at this early hour something so very sweet has come to me. I am going to have a birthday party today; young and those who are called old will be here, and there is a sort of bridal in my soul. It will be really a wedding day with me. The old words have a deeper meaning -- "I take thee to my wedded husband to have and to hold from this day forward", but I did not say till death do us part, for He said, "Because I live ye shall live also". So there is no death in this union. He will never die; I shall never die; for He said "He that liveth and believeth in me shall never die". The most ideal marriage is only a "figure of the true", and all such words as "Ye are the Bride of Christ" are illuminated to me on this birthday, and I seem born into deeper truth. The quaint old lines I heard my Mother sing as she rocked her babies to sleep I have sung in my heart at this early hour:

"How beauteous are the garments
The Bride of Christ doth wear,
He adorns her with His presence
And feeds her with His care,
He decks her with rich jewels
And crowns her with His love,
And by His mighty power
He'll bear her safe above."

Margaret