

Dear Canon Henry Scott-Holland,

About two years ago your poem “Death is Nothing at All” meant nothing to me; it was just like words spread out on a piece of paper. But then, my uncle passed away on Christmas Eve. I can remember finding out on Christmas day and screaming, and crying, and not believing the truth. Everything felt unreal, I felt like he had disappeared, like all was lost.

Months passed and my sorrow carried on. Your poem came into my life once again, when I had to pick out a poem for a declamation contest at my school. My mom showed it to me as an option for the contest, and it was then it really spoke to me. The words seemed to have come alive, and each line danced through my ears sending me a message. It felt like my uncle was there, I understood that maybe just because I couldn’t see him didn’t mean a thing. Just like you said,

“Why should I be out of mind
Because I am out of sight?”

He came back into my life, I began to talk to him, and even without any response it still felt like he was listening. I would tell him my jokes, and what was bringing me down, I could almost feel his presence. It was like he was watching me from heaven making sure nothing would go wrong.

Your words felt like demands to me, I *would* talk about him more and remember all the good times we had together. His name *became* “the household word that it always was,” his name was “spoken without effort.” If I wanted to know more about how he died or more about his life, I felt less nervous and sad to ask. You were right; he is still here just in a different form, and he wouldn’t want our lives to be thrown off track because of an accident. He would want the best for us, and you have made me realize this.

Your poem has really touched my heart, and I am sure it touches many who face a loved one’s death. Its meaning is purposeful. You were right. One should not live the rest of their life in sorrow because of this death, but neither should they forget about this person. Thank you for writing a piece of poetry that has really helped me and many others through the hard times. I will always think of my uncle and “How we shall laugh at the trouble of parting when we meet again!”

Yours truly,

Riley Bassinger