

The Fireside.

COMING TO-MORROW.

"My dear," said I to my wife, as we walked home, "sometimes it seems to me as if our life were unreal. We go to church, and the things that we hear are true or false. For instance, the Advent sermons our rector preaches. Do we really believe what we hear in church? Or is it only a dream?"

"I do believe," said my wife earnestly (she is a good woman, my wife). "Yes, I do believe, but it is just as you say. Oh, dear! I feel as if I'm very worldly—I have so many things to think of," and she sighed.

So did I; for I knew that I too, was very worldly.

After a pause, I said, "Suppose Christ should really come—suppose it should be authoritatively announced that he would be here tomorrow!"

"I think," said my wife, "there would be some embarrassment on the part of our great men, legislators and chief councillors, in anticipation of a personal interview. Fancy a meeting of the city council to arrange a reception for the Lord Jesus Christ."

"Perhaps," said I, "he would refuse all offers of the rich and great. Perhaps our fashionable churches would plead for his presence in vain. He would not be in palaces."

"Oh," said my wife, earnestly, "If I thought our money separated us from him, I would give it all—yes, all—might I only see him."

She spoke from the bottom of her heart, and for a moment her face was glorified.

"You will see him some day," said I, "and the money we are willing to give up at a word for him will not keep him from us."

That evening the thoughts of the waking hours mirrored themselves in a dream. I seemed to be walking in the streets, and conscious of a strange, vague sense of something just declared, of which all were speaking with suppressed air of mysterious voices.

I heard one say to another, "Really coming? What! tomorrow?" And the others said, "Yes, tomorrow he will be here."

It was night. The stars were glittering down with a keen and frosty light; the shops glistened in their bright array; but the same sense of hushed expectancy pervaded everything. There seemed to be nothing doing, and each person looked wistfully on his neighbor as if to say, "Have you heard?"

Suddenly, as I walked, an angel-form was with me, gliding softly by my side. The face was solemn, serene and calm. Above the forehead was a pale, tremulous, phosphorous radiance of light, purer than any on earth—a light of quality so different from that of the street lamps that my celestial attendant seemed to move in a sphere alone.

Yet, though I felt a sense of awe, I felt also a confiding love as I said, "Tell me, is it really true? Is Christ coming?"

"He is," said the angel. "Tomorrow he will be here."

"What joy!" I cried.

"Is it joy?" said the angel. "Alas, to many in this city it is only terror! Come with me."

In a moment I seemed to be standing with him in one of the chief palaces of the city. A stout, florid, bald-headed

man was seated at a table covered with papers, which he was sorting over with nervous anxiety, muttering to himself as he did so. On a sofa lay a sad-looking, delicate woman, her emaciated hands clasped over a little book.

The room was, in all its appointments, a witness of boundless wealth, yet the man himself seemed to have been neither elevated nor refined by the influence of all these treasures. He seemed nervous and uneasy. He wiped the sweat from his brow and spoke:

"I don't know, wife, how you feel, but I don't like this news. I don't understand it. It puts a stop to everything I know anything about."

"Oh, John," said the woman turning toward him a face pale and fervent, and clasping her hands, "how can you say so?"

"Well, Mary, it's the truth. I don't care if I say it. I don't want to meet—well, I wish he would put it off. What does he want of me? I'd be willing to make over—well, three millions to found a hospital, if he'd be satisfied, and let me go on. Yes, I'd give three millions to buy off from tomorrow."

She cast on him a look full of pity. "Cannot I make you see?" she said.

"No, indeed, you can't. Why, look here," he added, pointing to the papers, "here is what stands for millions. Tonight it's mine, and tomorrow it will all be so much paper; and then what have I left! Do you think I can rejoice? I'd give half; I'd give—the whole, not to have him come these three hundred years." She stretched out her hand towards him, but he pushed it back.

"Do you see?" said the angel to me, solemnly, "between him and her there is a great gulf fixed. They have lived in one house with that gulf between them for years. She cannot go to him; he cannot go to her. Tomorrow she will rise to Christ as a dew drop to the sun; and he will call on the mountains and rocks to fall on him—not because Christ hates him; but because he hates Christ."

Again the scene was changed.

We stood together in a little low attic, lighted by one small lamp—how poor it was!—a broken chair, a rickety table, a bed in the corner where the little ones were cuddling close to one another for warmth. Poor things! The air was so frosty that their breath congealed upon the bed clothes, as they talked in soft baby voices; "When mother comes she will bring us some supper," said they. "But I'm so cold," said the little outsider.

"Get into the middle then," said the other two, "and we will warm you. Mother promised she would make a fire when she came in, if that man would pay her."

"What a bad man he is!" said the oldest boy, "he never pays mother if he can help it."

Just then the door opened and a pale thin woman came in, laden down with packages.

She laid all down and came to her children's bed, clasping her hands in rapture.

"Joy! joy! children! Oh, joy! joy! Christ is coming! He is coming tomorrow."

Every little bird in the nest was up, and the little arms around the mother's neck; the children believed at once.

They had heard of the good Jesus. He had been their mother's only friend through many a cold and hungry day, and they doubted not he was coming.

"Oh, mother, will he take us! He will, won't he?"

"Yes, my little ones," she said softly, smiling to herself. "He shall gather the lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom."

Again I stood in a brilliant room, full of luxuries. Three or four fair women were standing pensively talking with each other. Their apartment was bestrewn with jewelry, laces, silks, velvets and every fanciful elegance of fashion; but they looked troubled.

"This seems to me really awful," said one with a suppressed sigh. "What troubles me is, I know so little about it."

"Yes," said another, "and puts a stop to everything! Of what use will all these things be tomorrow?"

There was a poor seamstress in the corner of the room, who now spoke. "We shall be ever with the Lord," she said.

"I'm sure I don't know what that can mean," said the first speaker, with a kind of shudder; "it seems rather fearful."

"Well," said the other, "it seems so sudden—when one never dreamed of any such thing—to change all at once, from this to that other life."

"It is enough to be with him," said the poor woman. "Oh, I have longed for it."

"The great gulf," said the angel.

Then, again, we stood on the steps of a church. A band of clergymen were together—Episcopal, Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Congregationalist—all stood hand in hand.

"It is no matter now about these old issues," they said. "He is coming. He will settle all. Ordinations and ordinances, sacraments and creeds, are but the scaffolding of the edifice. They are the shadow; the substance is Christ." And hand in hand they turned their faces where the morning light was beginning faintly to glow, and I heard them saying together, with one heart and one voice:

"Come; Lord Jesus! come quickly!"

—*Christian Witness.*

COURTESY IN THE HOME.

BY MRS. ELSIE DUNCAN YALE.

In the announcement of an old-fashioned "dame school," the worthy mistress offered instruction in needle-work, penmanship, and various useful arts, all for the low sum of two shillings per week, and added at the close, "Manners twopence extra!"

As we look about us in these busy, "strenuous" days, it is often our lot to fall in with those who, while well versed in arts and sciences, did not have the necessary "twopence extra for manners" expended on them in the days of their youth. There is too much hurry and bustles for the "small, sweet courtesies of life." Women jostle and crowd one another at the bargain counters; men sit in the cars, entrenched behind newspapers, in real or apparent ignorance of women clinging to the straps; children talk loftily of the "governor" or the "old lady," and it would seem that old-fashioned chivalry and politeness have become obsolete.

The root of the evil lies, beyond a doubt, in the home. Here, in the very place where it would seem that that loving, thoughtful courtesy should prevail, it is often sadly lacking. The husband,

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while beyond a doubt cherishing a real affection for his wife, is careless and neglectful of the little attentions he once showed her. In the words of the late Max O'Rell, "he apparently considers that his wife has forfeited every claim to his respect by marrying him." If he should chance to meet her on the street, he does not raise his hat as he would to another woman. If she has prepared some especially appetizing dish, he enjoys it, but it does not always occur to him to express his appreciation. "Please," and "thank you," are forgotten, while "excuse me," and "I beg your pardon," are too often omitted.

The fault too, may lie with the wife. In the courtship days, she took pleasure in dressing to please the eyes of her lover, but when he became her husband much of her regard for her personal appearance ceased. The girl who wore dainty blouses and trim shirt waist suits when she was engaged, too often dons,

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