

returned to the fortress. In the dead of night, after the American spectator thought all was over, a great cry arose, and all hurried to see the bridegroom's procession, which, with torchlight, music, dancing and the shrill cries,

accompanied him to the tomb of a saint, where he said his prayers and returned slowly. After this he was permitted to enter the bride's apartment and see her face for the first time.

APPLICATION

Ten virgins . took their lamps, v. 1. It is not the beginning of the race, but the end, that tests the athlete. At the starting point, only a practised eye can tell the difference between the well and the ill trained runner. During the earlier stretches of the course the two keep side by side. But by and by one begins to show signs of distress. His breath comes hard, and his pace loses its steadiness. His rival begins to draw ahead, and, with iron muscles and lungs like a pair of powerful bellows, reaches the goal, an easy winner. How will it be with us when the stress and strain of temptation, or the sudden call to some arduous task comes in the upward course? That will depend on the preparation we are making now,—on the sort of character we are forming now; for it is only the ready who will win out.

Foolish . took no oil with them, v. 3. When the hot fight at Bothwell Bridge was at its height, the Covenanters opened their last powder cask, to find that it contained not powder, but raisins. Raisins are all right in their place, but on the battlefield it is powder that is needed; and the disappointment of the Covenanters was extreme at the discovery of this irreparable blunder. Is it not true that many are very busy preparing, but it is the wrong kind of preparation they busy about. They rise betimes that they may increase their merchandise, plough their fields and improve their fortune. They toil late that they may store their minds with earthly knowledge. These things are wise and right in their place, but they can prove no substitute for the oil of God's grace in the heart, when the Bridegroom's voice is heard and only those qualified can enter in.

"Is your lamp filled, my child
With oil from Christ above?
Has He your heart, so wild,
Made soft and full of love?"

At midnight . a cry, v. 6. In large city schools with two or three storeys, they have "fire drills." An alarm is given as if a fire had actually broken out, and "Aye Ready!" every one falls into his or her allotted place. The object is to test the steadiness and quickness of teachers and scholars in getting out of the building. Life is full of like tests for us. It is just when we are least expecting it that temptation comes. We should take as our motto that of an old English family—"Aye Ready!" And by being prepared for lesser surprises, we shall be fitted to meet the last great surprise, when, perhaps without warning, we are summoned into the Bridegroom's presence.

Give us of your oil, v. 8. A very bad man and a very good man were near neighbors. The bad man was a very clever mimic, and entertained many a company by imitating the piety and prayers of his saintly neighbor. However, when the hand of death was upon him, it was not for his boon companions, but for the man he used to scorn, that he sent. "Be with me when I die," was his anxious entreaty. He would have given all his wit for a few drops of the oil of grace which his neighbor possessed; but it could not be loaned. The goodness of another could not serve him in his need. That grace, each must receive for himself at the Fountain of all grace, the Lord Jesus Christ. The wise will fill their lamps with it, while they have health and opportunity to do so.

I know you not, v. 12. How dreadful these words from the Lord of love, so eager to save that He came down from heaven to seek us. It can only be through some grave fault of ours that He shall turn a deaf ear to our cry when He comes again. But it may be that that fault may seem in our eyes now as nothing: simply to have been slack in preparing

Another's
Goodness; or
My Own

"Not Powder,
But Raisins"

The Fault Ours,
not His