

from his own house to the home of the bride. Such delays are common in the leisurely East, where time has ever been held of little account. Many, like the foolish virgins, instead of making ready to meet Christ when He shall come, waste the precious hours in pleasure or worldliness. *They all slumbered* (nodded) *and slept* (fell fast asleep). This was not wrong on the part of the wise virgins, for they were prepared; but it was wrong in the foolish virgins, who were not ready for the delay. We may lawfully go on with our work and enjoy our rest, until the coming of the Lord. But, waking or sleeping, we should be ready to meet Him.

II. The Summons, 6-9.

Vs. 6, 7. *At midnight*; when the village was asleep. *A cry*; from some watcher, who saw the torches of the bridegroom's company flaring in the darkness. His call, echoing up the silent village street, would soon arouse the sleepers. *Behold, the bridegroom.* "In such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh," ch. 24 : 44. He "so cometh as a thief in the night," 1 Thess. 5 : 2. *Come ye forth* (Rev. Ver.); from some inn or house where they had been resting. *All . . . arose . . . trimmed their lamps*; pulled up their wicks and lit them.

Vs. 8, 9. *Give us . . . oil.* The foolish wish to draw on the prudent preparation of the wise. *Lamps are going out* (Rev. Ver.); and without a brightly burning lamp they would not be welcomed as guests. *Not enough for us and you.* This is not a selfish reply. Had the wise virgins shared their oil, the very purpose of the procession would have been defeated, and the bridegroom would not have received his joyful greeting. *Go . . . to them that sell.* Possibly there is a touch of irony here, for the bazaars would all be shut at this time of night. *Buy for yourselves.* How many are borrowing or trying to borrow from their family's reputation, or from their country's opportunities, or from their friendship with religious people, all the while forgetting that it is hopeless to attempt this! In the great day of the coming of the Lord they shall have to cry in despair, "Our lamps are going out!"

III. The Separation, 10-13.

V. 10. *Went away to buy* (Rev. Ver.);

which would require much time at midnight. *They that were ready.* This is the great lesson of the parable. Life is uncertain. We do not know when our Lord may come in His Spirit, and offer us great privileges. The invitation to work with Him may be presented; but if we have wasted our youth or our later years in idleness, or in things that have made us unprepared to serve Him, what must we lose! Especially is this so at death. Then He comes finally, and if all our lifetime we have been loitering, and are not then ready, we cannot in the last few moments on our death-bed prepare to meet our God. *The door was shut.* The very sound of the words is tragic.

Vs. 11-13. *Lord, Lord, open to us.* Compare Matt. 7 : 21-23. These virgins represent people who claimed to be followers of Christ. But Jesus says such nominal discipleship is really dishonoring to Him. The unprepared meet the same fate as the unbelieving. They are fundamentally the same. *I know you not*; "Ye are no friends of Mine," nor sufficiently interested in Me to have any share in My marriage feast. *Watch.* This is the attitude of the wise man. Readiness means always being on the watch for opportunity of service.

Light from the East

MIDNIGHT CRY—An eyewitness describes the marriage of the commander's son at a fortress in the Arabian desert as follows : Although both persons lived in the castle, each party had to make a procession to the other's home as a part of the ceremony. The feasting, accompanied by music and dancing, began two days before, a young dromedary having been killed as a special delicacy and every one in the village given a portion. On the afternoon of the wedding day the bridal procession started out, preceded by a company of soldiers with a primitive band. These were followed by veiled women, two by two, uttering at intervals shrill cries. Then came the bride, veiled, except the eyes, swathed in a cashmere shawl and led by a lady friend on each side. The procession stopped every few rods and a fresh soldier each time danced and performed between the lines; and after an hour or more all