

Angel Visits and How to Secure Them.

By Rev. Francis E. Clark, D.D.

Courtesy has been well defined as "doing a kind deed in a kindly way." The last part of this definition is quite as important as the first part. It is not enough to have a kind heart and a benevolent disposition, it is not enough to give alms and to do deeds of charity. The courteous man is more than kind, he is also kindly. The rough, gruff, overbearing philanthropist, who throws his charities to the needy as he would pitch a bone at a dog, is not a model of kindness, however large-hearted and generous he may be.

I have in mind a prominent religious worker, who is always offering people by his ungraciousness and boorishness of manner. He is a man of immense power, of large and generous impulses, of sympathetic nature, of undoubted influence in the religious world, and yet he so persistently wears the rough side of his coat outermost to the world, that he has a very unsavory reputation for discourtesy, and on some occasions does as much harm by his boorishness as he does good by his persuasive eloquence.

He reminds me of the Japanese laborers when arrayed in their rain cloaks; a coat of coarse straw meant to shed the rain, in which the individual straws often stick up and out, making the bearer look like a huge porcupine. So are some men's dispositions. Though their hearts are warm and tender they always wear their repellent rain coats into society. But this is not the Biblical idea of the righteous man. He is truly courteous, as well as just; he always does a kind thing in a kind way.

Abraham is a capital illustration of genuine courtesy in his entertainment of the angels who, unannounced and unheralded, in the garb of ordinary wayfarers, presented themselves at his tent door.

Note how courteous he is in his hospitality. The three strangers suddenly present themselves. How does he know who they are? They have not presented their credentials nor any letters of introduction. To be sure, since they lived four thousand years ago on the plains of Mamre, they could hardly have been insurance agents or book canvassers, but how does Abraham know but that they want to interest him in their pet financial scheme of cultivating a new breed of sheep, or a distinct variety of camels on the plains? How does he know but they will present a subscription paper for a new university or library in Egypt, where letters and polite literature already flourish?

Nevertheless, though they present no credentials, he bows himself to the ground and begs them to pass not on, but to let his servant bring them water that they may wash their feet, and urges them to rest under the trees, while he himself promises to bring them food: "a morsel of bread" in his modest, Oriental style he calls it. He begs them to "Comfort their hearts." What a homely, courteous phrase that is! Then after that he tells them that they shall go on their way.

Moreover, he did not speak soft words to strangers, and then go in and scold at his wife, because of their unexpected arrival, expressing the wish, for her private ear, that they would stay away and mind their own business, and not sponge upon his hospitality. But he hurried into the tent and said to Sarah, "Hasten, and quickly make ready three measures of fine meal and knead it and make cakes upon the hearth." Then he himself ran unto the herd (see how eager he is to make good his promise of hospitality), and "fetched a calf," not an old, scraggy worthless member of the herd, but a calf "tender and good," and gave it to his servant, who hastened to dress it.

Then he took butter and milk, and the calf, and the cakes as well, I suppose, and set them before the strangers. That was "a morsel of bread" indeed!

But this was not enough to satisfy his kindly soul, for while they ate, he, the master, the great sheik, the famous ruler of all the country round about, "stood by under the trees" while they sat and ate their fill, ready apparently to anticipate any small want. No wonder that to such a courteous nobleman the angel soon revealed himself and gave to him a wondrous promise of future blessings.

Such courtesy always commands the visit of the angels. The man entertained may be a tramp or a bore, he may apparently have no blessing in his hand to give, and have no influence to command one either from God or man, but the very fact of such royal courtesy brings the angels of all good will and kindness to the heart of the entertainer. Unaware he entertains the heavenly guest, who abides with him, when the perhaps unworthy recipient of his hospitality has gone his way.

But more likely it is neither an angel in disguise, nor a tramp, nor an imposter, but some worthy man or woman—some fellow being, perhaps, who has little claim upon us as the world counts obligation, but whom God has sent to us for a word of cheer and the outstretched hand of welcome; the representative of some good cause; the pleader for some worthy mission; the young man who needs a start in life; the young woman who needs a little mothering or fathering; the orphan boy, or girl who needs up-bringing in a Christian family; some one or other who, for a day of a year, needs hospitality or kindly care. Let us give it to him in a kindly way. Let us show him not only charity but courtesy. With him will come the angels who will never leave our threshold.

After a time such courtesy becomes habitual. It need not be put on or assumed; the kindly heart expresses itself always in a kindly deed or word. I know a man who, when talking with a lady through a telephone, though she may be miles away, is sure to take off his hat and bow and smile when he hears her voice, and let the gentleman as though he were in her immediate presence. The courteous man will always act the gentleman before every person who crosses his path. He will act the gentleman because he is the gentleman. He can never be taken off his guard. He sees in every human being a possible angel; an angel fallen, degraded, almost hopeless sometimes, but a possible angel, whom he must treat with courtesy, because, however defaced, he is made in the image of God.

To such a man angel visits are neither few nor far between, but every day brings a new angel to the door of his tent.

The Gospel of the New Testament is the offer of eternal life in Christ to all the redeemed. The redemption of Christ has restored us, legally, to Adam's position before the fall. We are once more face to face with the Life Tree; we have but to take it and eat and live for ever.—R. Balgarnie, D.D.

To be a Christian does not mean to meet successfully certain intellectual tests; neither does it mean to swallow a creed, nor to rise through various strata of respectability to a social and intellectual position, where church membership is the proper thing. To be a Christian is to attach one's self to a person, to accept of his word, rest upon his promises, and yield to his will. Matthew became a Christian the moment he arose from his table at the receipt of custom, to become a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.—United Presbyterian.

The Kingdom of Kindliness.

Hate reigns in some places, avarice in others. Dominion has been wielded over hearts and lands by gluttonous ambition and by corrupt passion. But there is a kingdom where kindness is king, and where the subjects love as well as serve their Master. We go into some homes, and we know immediately that we have entered that kingdom; we come near to some people, and we discern that we are meeting subjects of this sovereign. It is a delightful land, one whose streams are ever running full, whose harvests are unceasingly abundant, whose trees never fall of fruitfulness, for they are yielding their fruit every month, and their leaves are for the healing of the nations. And the gates of this kingdom are many, and every one of them a precious stone; and it hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God lightens it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb. And the gates of it are never shut by day, and there is no night there in the kingdom of kindness, which is the kingdom of heaven.—S.S. Times.

Is the Grass Growing?

The earliest converts to Christianity in Africa were very regular and earnest in their private devotions. They had no closets to go to, but they had their separate spots in their thickets, where they used to pour out their hearts to God. The several paths to these little Bethels became distinctly marked, and when any one of these African Christians began to decline in the ways of God, it was soon manifest to his fellows, and they would finally remind him of his duty by saying: "Broder, de grass grow on your path yonder!"

If your heart cares less for spiritual things than it used to do, we may be sure the grass is growing in the path to your closet.

No day can be all sunshine;
Some clouds must dot the blue;
So in your life, midst weal or woe,
Remember, child, God cares for you.

Grant Us Thy Peace.

Fair in the west the day is slowly fading,
Dark glow the shadows of the evening hours;
Sweet o'er the senses steal the zephyrs, laden
With the soft fragrance of the drooping flowers;

Grant us thy peace.

All thro' the day our erring steps have wandered
Far from the path thy sacred steps have trod;
With broken vows and precious moments squandered,
On humble knees we pray to thee, O God!

Grant us thy peace.

Dark grows the night, the weary world is sleeping,
Darkness can hide not from thy piercing light;
Take us, O Saviour, in thy gracious keeping,
Safe from the terrors of the lonely night;

Grant us thy peace.

Grant us thy peace when life's brief day is closing,
Hold thy dear cross before our fading eyes;
Thro' the dark vale within thine arms reposing,
Till morning dawns for us in Paradise,

In perfect peace.

—Emil Appleton Ware, in the Churchman