

week. And if any little ragged boys stole in, and seemed inclined to listen, Christie took special care of them, for he had not forgotten the day when he had first come to that very room, longing to hear a word of comfort to tell to his old master.

Mr. Wilton was to take the service to-night, and Christie had been busy all the afternoon giving special invitations to the people to be present, for he wanted them very much to hear his dear friend.

The mission-room was quite full when Mr. Wilton entered it. How it rejoiced him to see Christie going about amongst the people, with a kind word for each, and handing them the small hymn books from which they were to sing!

"Come, for all things are now read." That was Mr. Wilton's text. How still the mission-room was and how earnestly all the people listened to the sermon! The clergyman first spoke of the marriage feast in the parable, so carefully spread, so kindly prepared, all ready there,—and yet no one would come! There were excuses on all sides, every one was too busy or too idle to attend to the invitation; no one was ready to obey that gracious "Come."

And then Mr. Wilton spoke of Jesus, and how he had made all things ready for us; and how pardon is ready and peace is ready; the Father's arms ready to receive us; the Father's love ready to welcome us; a home in heaven ready prepared for us. That, he said, was God's part of the matter.

"And what, my dear friends," he went on, "is *our* part? Come, 'come, for all things are now ready.' Come, you have only to come and take; you have only to receive this love. Come, sin-stained soul; come, weary one; 'come for all things are now ready.' *Now* ready. There is a great deal in that word '*now*.' It means to-night,—this very Sunday; not next year, or next week; not to-morrow, but now—all things are *now* ready. God has done all He can. He can do no more, and He says to you, 'Come!' Will you not come? Are God's good things not worth having? Would you not like to lie down to sleep, feeling that you were forgiven? Would you not like one day to sit down in the marriage supper of the Lamb?"

"Oh, what a day that will be!" said Mr. Wilton, as he ended his sermon. "St. John caught a glimpse of its glory amidst the wonderful sights he was permitted to see. And so important was it, so good, so specially beautiful, that the angel seems to have stopped him, that St. John might write it down at once: Wait a minute, don't go any farther, take out your book and make a note of that—'Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.'"

"Are you one of those blessed ones?" asked the clergyman. "Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb? Will you sit down to that supper? Have you a right to enter into 'Home, sweet Home?' I know not what is your answer to these questions. But if you cannot answer me now, how will you in that day answer the Great Searcher of hearts?"

And with this question the sermon ended, and the congregation left; those of them who had known Mr. Wilton still lingering behind, to shake hands with him, and to get a parting word of counsel or comfort.

Christie walked home by the clergyman's side.

"And now, Christie," said Mr. Wilton, "do you think you can be ready to start with me to-morrow morning at eight o'clock?"

"To start with you, sir?" repeated Christie.

"Yes, Christie: you have had hard work lately, and I have asked leave from Mr. Villiers to take you home with me, that you may have a little country air and quiet rest. I am sure it will not be lost time, Christie; you will have time for quiet reading and prayer, and you will be able to gain strength and freshness for future work. Well, do you think you can be ready in time?"

Christie thought there was no fear of his being late. He thanked Mr. Wilton with a voice full of feeling, for he had sometimes longed very much for a little pause in his busy life.

And the next day found Christie and Mr. Wilton rapidly travelling towards the quiet country village in which Mr. Wilton's church was to be found.

What was the result of that visit may be gathered from the following extract, taken from a letter written by Christie to Mr. Wilton some months later:

"I promised you that I would let you know about our little home. It is, I think, one of the happiest to be found in this world. I shall always bless God that I came to your village, and met my dear little wife.

"At last I have a 'Home, sweet Home,' of my own. We are so happy together! When I come home from my work, I always see her watching me, and she has every thing ready for me, and the evenings we spend together are very quiet and peaceful. Nellie likes to hear about all my visits during the day, and the poor people are already so fond of her they come to her in all their troubles. And we find it such a comfort to be able to pray together for those in whom we are interested, and together to take them to the Saviour.

"Our little home is so bright and cheerful! I wish you could have seen it on the evening on which we arrived. Mrs. Villiers had made a table ready for us, and with her own hand had put on the tea-table a lovely bunch of snowdrops and dark myrtle leaves. And I need not tell you that they reminded me of those which she had given me when she was little Miss Mabel, and when she taught me that prayer which I have never forgotten, 'Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.'

"And now, dear Mr. Wilton, you may think of Nellie and me as living together in love and happiness in the dear little earthly home; yet still looking forward to the eternal home above, our true, our best, our brightest 'Home, sweet Home!'"

[THE END]



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