

IN THE TWINKLING OF AN EYE

by

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CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

A STRICKEN CITY

If was not really until business time next morning, that London, that the whole country, really fully awoke to the fact of the great event of the previous night. Suburbanites, in many cases, only heard the strange news on their arrival at their particular railway stations. Even then, a hundred rumors were the order of the moment. Everything reported was vague and shadowy. There were a few rank unbelievers of the garbled stories of the translation, who laughed skeptically, then began to grumble at the strange disorganization of the Railway traffic.

More than one annoyed, belated traveler, remarked in similar terms to the utterance of a commercial traveler, at Surbiton station:-

"If there is any actual truth in this story of the secret translation of a number of religious people, then the mysterious taking away of so many signal-men, and engine-men, will be an eye-opener to the travelling public, who never, somehow, suppose that Christianity is a strong factor in the lives of railway men."

"It is a revelation in another way," remarked a second, "since it suggests why we have hitherto had so few railway accidents, compared with other nations."

The tens and hundreds of thousands, the millions, poured into London as usual. But the snap had gone out of most of them. A horrible sense of foreboding, was upon the spirits of the travelers. As the newspapers more fully confirmed the news, London approached perilously near the verge of a general panic.

The newspapers were bought up with phenomenal eagerness. "Souf Efriken War worn't in it, fur clearin' out peepers!" a street seller remarked.

But few of the morning papers, (except the "*Courier*") had anything special to say on the great event. Most of them, in fact, were absolutely silent.

There were weather prophecies, political prophecies, financial prophecies, social prophecies, sporting prophecies, commercial prophecies,- but no prophecy of the Coming of CHRIST.

The "*Courier's*" rival had a brief note to the effect:-

"Some wild, senseless rumors were abroad in London last night, as to the sudden, mysterious disappearance of numbers of the ultra-religious persons of London, and elsewhere. Some people talked wildly of the end of the world. We therefore dispatched special commissioners, to ascertain what truth there was in all this.

"Our representative returned an hour and a half later, after having visited all the chief places of amusement and principal restaurants. But everywhere managers told the same story, 'there has been no signs of the end of the world in our place. We are fuller than ever.'

"The genial manager of the Theatre, assured our Representative, that no later than last Sunday morning, he heard it repeated at his Church, that '**as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end, Amen.**' So that, for the life of him, he could not conceive anyone being such a fool as to talk of the end of the world."

But the note of the "*Courier's*" clarion call had no uncertain sound. Besides all that we have already seen written in the office by the translated Tom Hammond, and afterwards by Ralph Bastin, the latter had added to his postscript, another. It was a solemn, a pathetic word, and ran as follows:

"Our sheets must go to press in a few moments, if the "*Courier*" is to be in the hands of its readers at the usual hour. But before we print, we feel compelled to add a word or two more to what we wrote two hours ago.

"During the last two hours, we have made many discoveries, not the least of which, from the personal standpoint, is the fact, that the nearest and dearest being to our own heart and life, one whose life and thought, of late, has been strangely taken up by the CHRIST of GOD, is missing. She has shared in the glory and joy of the wondrous, mysterious, and - to most of us, to all of us surely who are left - unexpected translation.

"We have no wish or intention to parade our own personal griefs before our readers, but dare to say that no journalist ever worked with a more broken, crushed sense of life, than did we during the two hours we afterwards spent in searching London for facts.

"One curious fact which we speedily discovered, was, that no one had been taken in this wondrous translation, from any of the Theatres or music-halls.

“In the old days - four hours ago, seems, to look back to, like four centuries - before this awfully solemn event, discussions arose, periodically, in certain religious and semi-religious journals, as to whether true Christians could attend the theatre and music-hall.

"The fact that no one appears to have been translated from any of these London houses of amusement, answers, we think, that question, as it has never been answered before."

Here followed a brief resume of his experiences in other quarters. Then in big black type he asked the question:-

**"WHAT FOLLOWS,
(ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE PROGRAM)
THIS STUPENDOUS EVENT?"**

The Bible, evidently, (when read aright) told those, who have been taken from our midst, that this translation was approaching, then it must surely give some hint of what we may expect to follow so startling an episode as that of to-night. The question is, what follows?

"There must surely be many clergymen and ministers who knew about this great translation, who though not living in the spirit of what they knew, and being therefore left behind, like the common ruck of those of us, who were carelessly ignorant - there must be many such ministers left, who could teach us now, what to expect next, and how to prepare for the next eruption - whatever form it may take.

"We therefore propose to any such ministers, that they gather us into the Albert Hall, Agricultural Hall, St. Paul's Cathedral, Spurgeon's Tabernacle, Whitfield's - why not, in fact, into every church, chapel, Salvation Army Barracks, or even in the great open spaces such as Hyde Park, and other Parks, Primrose Hill, Hampstead Heath, etc., and teach us, who are left behind from the wondrous Translation, that has just occurred, how to be prepared for the next mighty change, for we believe the bulk of us are absolutely in the dark.

"Meanwhile, are there no houses in Paternoster Row, and its neighborhood, where books and pamphlets on these momentous subjects can be obtained, or are all such publishers translated with those of whom we have been writing?"

One effect of the last suggestion, in Bastin's second postscript, was to send thousands of people to Paternoster Row, the Square, Ivy Lane, and all the neighborhood. Some of the publishers of books on the Lord's Second Coming, had been left behind, had not shared in the Rapture of which they had printed and published.

Storekeepers, packers, masters, clerks, were most of them reading up the contents of their own wares. Business system among them, at first, seemed an unknown quantity. Deadness, amaze, fear, uncertainty, all of these things held and dominated them.

But they had to wake up.

Their counters were besieged. Hordes of people thronged the doors. In twenty minutes after the first great influx, there was not a tract, a booklet, or a volume, on the "Lord's coming, and the events to follow," left in the "Row."

At any other time those in command of the stores, would have tried to get the printing presses at work, to run off some hundreds of thousands of the briefest of the "Second Advent" literature. But, to-day, fear, nameless fear held every one in thrall.

The "Row" put up shutters, and went home - or at least got away from business.

Business, everywhere, was at a standstill. By eleven o'clock most of the city houses were closed. Some of the banks never opened at all. Throgmorton Street and the Stock Exchange were in a state of dazed incredulity. A few members were missing, and these were known to be "Expectants" of the Translation.

"Salvation S-, is gone!" someone called out.

"Aye!" cried another, "I'd give all I possess, or ever hoped to possess, to be where he is now. I remember how he tried and prayed to persuade me once to -"

There was a rush of members across "The Floor" at that moment. Someone had a proposition to make, namely a trip to 101 Queen Victoria Street, to see if there were any Salvationists left there. A little band, about a dozen, responded, and the silk-hatted, excited little crowd swept away on their curious quest.

~ end of chapter 28 ~

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