



## CHRISTMAS CHAPTER 2

WITH that remarkable sense of reality so often experienced in dreams, I found myself in what appeared to be a magnificent mansion of considerable proportions. Its numerous rooms were brilliantly lighted, and crowded with elegant furniture. Carpets, soft to the tread and attractive to the eye, covered the floors, stairways, and passages; costly pictures adorned the walls; book-shelves, filled to overflowing, occupied the recesses; while organs, pianos, statuary, and banks of beautiful hot-house flowers were to be seen on every hand. It was, indeed, a veritable palace of delight.

In one of the most luxuriously furnished apartments I found a young man. Mistletoe, holly, and other decorations were artistically arranged in every room, indicating the festivities with which the occupants of the mansion had been recently celebrating the advent of the Saviour of mankind. When I entered the young man was standing with his arms resting on the mantelpiece, gazing into the fire now burning low in the grate. The room, unlike other parts of the house, was only dimly lit. The flickering light of the fire showed him to be tall and slim in build, with a dark, intelligent countenance; and, taken altogether, was of prepossessing appearance.

At the moment, he was apparently deep in thought. What was he thinking about? His mind was evidently contemplating some serious problem. What was it? I confess to being no little interested in the scene, and even now it stands out vividly in my memory.

Soon after I entered he commenced walking to and fro – there being plenty of room for this kind of exercise in the spacious apartment. And as he walked he talked.

"What a future is mine!" he mused aloud; "I have loving parents, congenial friends, and considerable wealth, and they tell me I have genius as well. The latter is questionable. But I know that I can marry, have a home, and a thousand other pleasant things. How kindly the providence of God has dealt with me in comparison with thousands of others.



"What shall I do with this future? Let me see."

Before waiting to answer himself he suddenly paused in his walk, rang the bell, and asked the servant about some engagement. And then resuming his position by the mantel-piece, he fell back into the track of his meditations with the question, "What was I saying? Let me see. Ah! that is it. WHAT SHALL I DO WITH MY LIFE?"

"Well," still thinking aloud, he said, "I can maintain my position, cherish a family, be kind to my friends, and deal liberally with the varied efforts put forth by different agencies for the benefit of the world; and then, in addition to all these temporal blessings, I have good ground for hoping for a better world when all these earthly pleasures are ended."

Here I thought I heard a slight movement at the door. Someone was evidently entering. At first I fancied it was the servant, but I was mistaken. In my dream I wondered who else it could possibly be at that late hour of the night.

The door seemed to open of itself, and, all unannounced, a strange figure walked across the room, and without any invitation seated himself on a vacant chair beside the fire.

I had only an imperfect view of the visitor; but so far as I could judge from his appearance, he belonged to the artisan class; anyway, he wore the garb of a working man. He looked tired and weary, as might have been expected in one who had just come from some long journey and needed rest.

Sitting in the shadow I could see but little of his countenance, but what I did see made me wish to see more. Altogether, he impressed me with the idea of sadness, suggestive of a heavy load of care; and yet there was about him a quietness of demeanour that seemed to testify to the possession of great inward strength and deep unbroken peace.

What astonished me much with the advent of the stranger was the fact that the owner of the mansion – for such I judged the young man to be – expressed no surprise at



his appearance. Perhaps it was concerning this visit that he had spoken to the servant a few minutes before. Anyway, I concluded that the call must have been expected, and it was soon evident that such was the case.

Although a stranger to me, he was evidently no stranger to the young gentleman, who, a little time before, had with such satisfaction been laying down his plans for the future. Perhaps the reason why the young man did not bid his visitor welcome was that he did not care to see him. But, whichever was the case, nothing of an introductory nature passed between them.

The night was very chill. The stranger, apparently cold, drew his chair up to the fire. The young man took a seat opposite him. And there for several minutes they sat in silence, while I wondered what the meaning of it all could be.