

CHAPTER XXIV. -The coming Race

In Chapter XXIV of "The Coming Race," the narrator describes an experience with the funeral customs of the advanced underground civilization he's exploring. After disembarking from an air-boat, the narrative begins with Aph-Lin, the narrator's host, being approached by a child who invites him to attend the funeral of a recently deceased relative. Seizing the opportunity to avoid an uncomfortable meeting with Zee and curious about the funeral proceedings of this society, the narrator requests to accompany Aph-Lin.

Aph-Lin explains that for his people, the death of an elderly individual, who has lived to its fullest and desires to be reunited with lost loved ones in a better world, is more a celebration than a somber event. Departing from the nether world is not shrouded in the sacred but approached as a joyous festival. The narrator is thus granted permission to partake in the ceremony.

They proceed to the deceased's home, where various family members and acquaintances gathered around the body, displayed on a couch, radiating peace and a smile that indicated a painless transition. The narrator learns that the departed, an elderly man well beyond his 130th year, had peacefully passed away after a dream about his deceased wife, eagerly anticipating their reunion in the presence of the All-Good.

Attention is drawn to a mysterious, dark, metallic apparatus in the room, emitting a rich, sweet scent and adorned with small round holes through which a red light glows. This device, puzzling the narrator, suggests technological means of handling the body, distinct from Earth's burial practices.

As the town's time-pieces melodically chime the hour, signaling the onset of the ceremony, the mood shifts with the commencement of more joyous music, reflecting the profound belief in an afterlife that is but a happy continuation of existence. This depiction contrasts sharply with Earth's funereal customs, revealing a culture where death is not feared but celebrated as a hopeful transition.

This chapter, through its focus on death and the afterlife, provides a poignant reflection on the societal values, attitudes, and technological advancements of the underground society. It starkly contrasts with the more somber attitudes toward death in the narrator's world, thereby reflecting on the broader themes of life, continuity, and the human condition across different civilizations.