

44. Bound hand and foot with grave-clothes. The Jews did not use coffins, but swathed their dead in bandages of linen.

45. Here, in a single sentence, the evangelist

mentions a quick increase of our Lord's disciples, which so impressed the ecclesiastic and civil authorities as to bring about our Lord's death. (See our introductory note.)

CRITICAL AND HOMILETICAL NOTES.

CHIEF OF THE GREATEST MIRACLES.

The raising of the dead is universally regarded as the greatest of Christ's miracles. Of this class of miracles the raising of Lazarus is the chief. But two other instances are recorded in the gospels, namely, the raising of Jairus's daughter and the raising of the son of the widow of Nain. That these were not the only cases, however, is implied in Matt. 11. 5, where Jesus commands the disciples of John to report to their master the things which they had seen and heard, and among these things was the fact that "the dead are raised up." And we infer that even the disciples themselves, when first sent forth by Jesus, were empowered to work this miracle; for their commission contained the injunction, "Raise the dead." The importance of the raising of Lazarus is indicated in the fullness of detail with which John describes it. The story of the raising of Jairus's daughter is told by Matthew in six verses, by Mark in eleven, and by Luke in ten, while the raising of the widow's son is told by Luke in six verses. But to this story of Lazarus John devotes forty-six verses. Next to this in circumstantial detail is John's account of the opening of the eyes of the blind man given in chapter 9.

INNER CIRCLE OF FRIENDSHIP.

The story introduces us to the circle of Christ's most intimate and sacred friendship. It might not be too much to say that this Bethany household was in a higher sense his home than the Nazareth home had been. His brethren certainly in those days did not at all comprehend him, and even his mother did not understand him, though she loved him and regarded him with reverent awe. But the friendship of the Bethany family was upon the highest plane. They loved him and believed in him as their divine Friend. The whole account reveals a relation of tenderest affection. "He whom thou lovest is sick." "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." "Now Jesus loved Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus." And the subsequent expression of the lavish love of Mary is referred to, when she anointed his feet with ointment of spikenard, and wiped them with her hair. And when he wept at the sepulcher the Jews said, "Behold how he loved him!"

SAFETY AND DUTY.

Jesus was in Perea, at a point on the Jordan some thirty miles from Bethany, whither he had withdrawn on account of the hostility of the rulers. When the news of Lazarus' sickness was received, after purposely tarrying for two days, he said to his disciples, "Let us go into Judea again." They remonstrated with him against returning, because the Jews had but lately sought to kill him. His reply to them, given in verses 9 and 10, expresses a lofty conception of duty and safety. The way of duty, he says in effect, is the way of light, in which if one walk, he will not stumble; but the avoidance of duty is the way of night, in which a man stumbles and falls. Duty is safety; unfaithfulness is danger, because it puts out the inner light. The disciples could not quite understand, but they said, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

CHRIST'S CONCEPTION OF IMMORTALITY.

What Jesus said to Martha when she came out to meet him reveals his conception of immortality. Jesus put immortality in the present tense. It is not a future but a present and continuous life. "I am" [not 'will be'] the resurrection, and the life." He who believes—that is, abides—in him, "lives," is immortal. He can no more die than God can die who abides in God. So Jesus always taught. He did not distinguish between present life and future life. The life that he imparts is deathless. "He that drinketh my blood 'hath' eternal life." So Paul realized his present immortality when he wrote, "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith of the Son of God."

TEARS BETWEEN WRATH.

Verses 33-38 present a surprising combination of emotions in Jesus. It is said that when Jesus saw Mary weeping, and the Jews that were with her also weeping, "he groaned in spirit, and was troubled." The strict rendering of that is, "He was indignant in spirit, and agitated himself"—that is, he was deeply stirred with indignation. When he came to the sepulcher his emotion changed. He wept. Different words are used in describing the weeping of Mary and the Jews and the weeping of Jesus. They cried out in "loud lamentations;" she silently sheds tears. The