

APPLICATION

And he went into the Pharisee's house and sat down to meat, v. 36. It was part of the plan of Jesus to associate with all classes of men. At one time we find Him at a feast in the house of Levi the publican, at another, at the table of Simon the Pharisee. He came to seek and save the lost, and His mission embraced all men. It is not otherwise now. He comes to all sorts and conditions. He is the only son of man utterly devoid of race prejudice. "The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," He approaches sinners of all ranks and of all races with the same gracious offer of salvation.

A woman in the city . . . stood at his feet behind him, vs. 37, 38. In the report of a visit to the Holy Land by a party, of which Andrew Bonar and Robert Murray McChesney were members, there is the following statement: "At dinner in the Consul's house at Damietta we were much interested in observing a custom of the country. In the room where we were received, besides the divan on which we sat, there were seats all round the walls. Many came in and took their place on these side seats, uninvited and yet unchallenged. They spoke to those at table on business or the news of the day, and our host spoke freely to them. This made us understand the scene in Simon's house at Bethany, where Jesus sat at supper, and Mary came in and anointed His feet with ointment, and also the scene in the Pharisee's house, where the woman who was a sinner came uninvited, and yet not forbidden, and washed His feet with her tears. We afterwards saw this custom at Jerusalem, and there it was still more fitted to illustrate these incidents. We were sitting at Mr. Nicolayson's table, when first one, and then another, stranger opened the door, and came in, taking their seat by the wall. They leant forward and spoke to those at the table."

And Jesus answering said unto him. It was not the words of Simon that Jesus answered, for the Pharisee had not spoken. It was the thought of his heart that received an answer

from this strange guest. Simon had invited Jesus to his table to find out whether He were a prophet or not. When he saw the woman touching Him without rebuke, he thought the question was settled. He argued it out in this fashion: "A prophet can discern spirits. If Jesus could discern spirits, He would know that this woman was unholy. And if He were a holy man Himself, He would not allow her thus to approach Him. Either Jesus cannot discern the character of the woman, or else He is knowingly allowing an unholy person to be familiar with Him. In either case, it is clear that He is not a prophet." So the Pharisee reasoned in his heart. But all his reasonings were scattered to the winds when Jesus turned on him, and showed that He had been reading the thoughts of his heart. Simon was wondering whether Jesus knew the character of the woman. Our Lord proved that He could discern spirits by laying open what was concealed in the heart of Simon himself. Let us be sure of this, that we can conceal nothing from Jesus.

And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? v. 44. In the words that follow, our Lord draws with marvellous skill the contrast between His treatment by Simon and His treatment by the woman. "Thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath washed my feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss; she hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; she hath anointed my feet with ointment." The purpose of this contrast is to show Simon that he was lacking in the love which the woman possessed. Simon's lack of love proved that he had not received forgiveness, even for his debt of fifty pence, while the woman's outflowing love proved that she had received forgiveness for her debt of five hundred pence.

To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little, v. 47. There is here no encouragement to sin greatly, so that at last, our sin being forgiven, we may love much. For our Lord