

but it provides for every one who comes the wedding-garment of a new heart, a new life, and the righteousness of Christ. Let us put on the "new man" in Jesus Christ.

5. Those who are found among God's people without the newness of character which God gives will be cast out from his presence into darkness and misery.

An English Teacher's Notes on the Lessons.

THE queen of England, on the occasion of her jubilee, gave a very large garden party at Buckingham Palace, to which some thousands received invitations. The queen's invitation is always looked on as a command, and every thing conspired to make this command a very pleasant one to obey. There must have been thousands of persons who would gladly have gone if they had only been invited. But it is evident that a limit had to be observed. Neither space nor circumstances permitted of the invitations being scattered broadcast. Had this been done the crowds would have been too great for admission.

In the parable which is the subject of our lesson we have an invitation with a limit. Certain persons have been "bidden," or called, to a royal marriage feast. Strange to say, when the final summons (according to the Eastern custom) is sent them, they not only refuse to accept it, but fall upon the messengers, ill-treat, and slay them.

Then the king, after taking vengeance on the murderers, seeks for other guests to grace and to enjoy the festivities. And this time the invitation is issued without a limit. The servants are sent out this time to call "as many as they shall find" to the wedding. It is plain that it was not incapacity for receiving any number which caused the first limitation.

But after the crowds who have received and accepted the second invitation are gathered together, we find that there is still a further limitation, for one of them is excluded from the feast. Nor can we wonder at this. The queen of England's garden party was a less formal matter than many of the court festivities; but there are some occasions on which a certain style of dress is absolutely necessary to admission into the royal presence, and any neglect in complying with the usual rule would result in exclusion. This is well understood beforehand, so that guests may not be taken unawares. Were all ranks and classes invited to attend on these occasions, numbers would be unable to do so on account of the expense of procuring a suitable dress. In the parable this is not the case. Though not stated, it is implied in the story that, according to Eastern custom, suitable robes were provided for the guests, so that they were not dependent on their own resources. The limitation, though rigid and unalterable, could touch no one but by his own fault. Moreover, so great was the offense committed by neglect of the rule imposed and the provision made that not merely exclusion but punishment followed.

All this is to illustrate the "kingdom of heaven," that is, "the kindness and love of God" coming

out into the world, and seeking to draw sinners to himself.

There had been a temporary limitation to this. God's mercy and grace were first revealed to the nation of Israel, and even when our Lord was on earth he was sent to these first (chap. 15. 24), because his purpose was that others should be blessed through them. Gen. 12. 2. When Israel had, as a nation, rejected God's invitation of love, the door was thrown wide open to all. The invitation is now to be scattered broadcast, not miraculously, however, but by means of messengers (the teacher has a good opportunity here of enforcing the duty of foreign missions) who are to bid "as many as they shall find" to the feast. There is absolutely no limitation whatever; it is, "Whosoever will."

But this limitless character of the invitation brings with it a limitless responsibility. The parable says nothing about any of the second company of invited ones refusing, although numbers do actually turn a deaf ear to the message of God which is delivered to them, and, following the example of the first company, absorb themselves in other things. For the invitation now issued to all makes all responsible. Each one to whom it is repeated is considered in the parable as a "guest." It is incumbent on each one to be ready for the feast.

Then comes the final limitation: "Many are called but few chosen." "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." For this final and glorious calling is only for those who have made themselves ready by putting on the "wedding garment." And what is this? Not merely the righteousness or justification from guilt which is imputed to all who believe in Jesus (Rom. 4. 5), but also that holiness, "without which no man shall see the Lord," Heb. 12. 14; Rev. 19. 8. But this we cannot and have not to provide. We have only to put it on: "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. 13. 14; compare 1 Cor. 1. 30. It has been said that there are three steps in the Christian life: out of self—into Christ—on to glory. The fact is that the first two are one; and they are the necessary preparation for making the final step, to which there is but one alternative—the terrible penalty of those who disobey the command of their sovereign Lord and refuse his provision of mercy—"outer darkness."

The Lesson Council.

Question 1. What is meant by the wedding garment?

The donning of a wedding garment, in an actual historical incident such as that of the parable, would imply respect for the king and his son, as well as a due appreciation of an act of great condescension. Any man who, having accepted such an invitation, should appear in his mean every-day garb would proclaim, quite as distinctly as any one who refused the invitation, his contempt for the king and his condescension. In the application of the incident to the kingdom of heaven, therefore, the wedding garment must be understood to represent such conduct on the part of the recipient of salvation as betokens a fitting sense of the divine mercy and grace.—Prof. Marcus D. Buell.