



LESSON III.—Jan. 15.

Christ's First Miracle.

John ii., 1-11. Memory verse, 11.

Golden Text.

'And his disciples believed on him.'—John ii., 11.

Home Readings

M. John ii., 1-11.—Christ's first miracle.
T. Mark vii., 1-9.—Customs of purifying.
W. Luke vii., 16-23.—Miracles, proofs of authority.
Th. John x., 31-42.—Evidence of divinity.
F. Luke xxiv., 13-18, 25-32.—Good company.
S. Rev. iii., 14-22.—A visitor.
S. John xvi., 25-33.—Do ye now believe?

The Story.

Three days after the calling of the first disciples, Jesus and his followers arrived in Cana in Galilee, about nine miles north-east of Nazareth, where there was a wedding-feast being held. Mary, the mother of Jesus, was already there, and Jesus and his friends were invited also.

It was probably a very humble household and the young bridegroom had not provided sufficient wine for the feast. Mary told Jesus that more wine was needed expecting that he would help in some way. But Jesus with infinite love and tenderness signified to Mary that she must no longer seek to exercise a mother's authority over him, for the hour is about to come when he shall prove himself the Son of God. And Mary, pained by the thought of separation, yet blessed by the loving tenderness of the Son of man, turns to the servants with overflowing heart and bids them do whatsoever Jesus shall tell them.

Now there stood at the door six common stone jars for water used for washing, these held twenty or thirty gallons each. Jesus told the servants to fill them with water and they filled them up to the brim. And behold, the water was become wine. At Jesus' bidding the servants carried the new wine to the steward or master of the feast who tasted it with pleasure and wonder that there could be such good wine left.

But the servants who had drawn the water knew who had turned it into wine, and the disciples saw in this first miracle the manifesting of God's glory in his Son and they believed on him.

Lesson Hymn.

How welcome was the call,
And sweet the festal lay,
When Jesus deigned in Cana's hall,
To bless the marriage day.

And happy was the bride,
And glad the bridegroom's heart,
For He who tarried at their side,
Bade grief and ill depart.

His gracious power divine,
The water-vessels knew;
And plenteous was the mystic wine,
The wondering servants drew.

O Lord of life and love,
Come Thou again to-day;
And bring a blessing from above,
That ne'er shall pass away.

—Hymns A. and M.

Suggestions.

Mary did not appeal to our Lord for a miracle, but most likely she was accustomed to receiving the aid of his quick thought and judgment in all matters, and calling him aside she informed him of this difficulty which to the Oriental lovers of hospitality would seem a real calamity.

The term 'woman' was one of respect and honor, from henceforth Mary must understand that she stands to Christ only in the same relation as do all other women who love him (Matt. xii., 50). As well might a man worship his own good mother as to worship the mother of Jesus. For our Lord himself said that it was more blessed to hear the word of God and to obey it than to have had the great honor that Mary had had. (Luke xi., 27, 28.)

'Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.'

This command has been quaintly termed the 'gospel according to Mary.' If those who ignorantly worship Mary as God would only obey this, her only recorded command, they would study the bible to find out the will of the Lord, and with the study would come knowledge and peace.

The water-pots were common things in every day use, but Christ used them, and through them manifested his glory. Christ can still use the common every day things and manifest his glory through us.

The wine that Jesus made was the pure fresh juice of the grape. We can no more suppose that the Lord of life would give his friends poison to drink in the shape of fermented wine, than we can suppose that he would give them decayed meat. St. Augustine pointed out that every year God turned the spring and summer rains into the rich purple juice of the autumn grape—the same miracle as was performed so suddenly at Cana. But God has no more to do with the fermentation and decay of grapes than with that of any other fruit or vegetable.

The Bible Class

'Marriage'—Matt. xxii., 2-13, 30; Isa. lxii., 2-4; lvi., 5; Rev. xix., 7-9.

'Mother'—Deut. v., 16; Psa. xxvii., 10; Prov. 1., 8; Isa. lxvi., 13; Matt. x., 37; Mark x., 29, 30.

'Whatsoever'—Gal. vi., 7; John xiv., 13; Phil. iv., 8; Col. iii., 17, 23; I. Cor. x., 31; I. John iii., 22; v., 4.

'Water'—John iii., 5; iv., 10-15; Eph. v., 26, 27. I. John v., 6-8; Rev. vii., 17; xxii., 1, 17.

'Servants'—Psa. xxxiv., 22; Matt. xxiii., 11; xxv., 21; Eph. vi., 5, 6; Phil. ii., 5-9.

Questions.

1. What disciples accompanied Jesus to Cana?
2. Why did Jesus not address Mary as mother?
3. What command did Mary give the servants?
4. What miracle did Jesus then perform?
5. What effect had this miracle upon his disciples?

Practical Points.

A. H. CAMERON.

Jesus attended a marriage feast, and thus honored innocent mirth. Verses 1, 2; Eccles. iii., 12.

Jesus without the wine is infinitely better than the wine without Jesus. Verse 3.

Obedience is the test of discipleship. Verses 4-8.

Wine made entirely of water will neither intoxicate or nauseate. Verses 9, 10.

Jesus' first miracle was a wonderful exhibition of his glory, and increased his disciples' faith. Verse 11.

C. E. Topic.

Where am I going? Psa. cxix., 57-64.

Junior C. E.

What lessons can we learn from Christ's boyhood? Luke ii., 40-52.

Personal Appeals To Scholars

In well-organized Sunday-schools connected with churches, a large percentage of those uniting with the church on confession of their faith, are from the Sunday-school. But more scholars might be brought to confess Christ, if teachers would talk to them plainly and faithfully about this duty. There are teachers who, in charge of classes for years, have never pressed the matter of decision for Christ upon their scholars. A noteworthy illustration of this was given by the late William Reynolds, who used to tell the following story concerning himself. One Sunday a strange minister conducted service at the church attended by Mr. Reynolds. The minister said to him, 'Are you a Sunday-school teacher?' 'Yes; I have a class of girls.' 'How long have you taught them?' 'Some two years.' 'How many of them are Christians?' 'I do not know.' 'What!' said the minister, 'you have had a class of girls two years, and do not know how many of them are Christians? You need to be prayed for.' Then the minister at once set about supplying the need by beginning an earnest prayer that this teacher might bring his scholars to Christ. Mr. Reynolds could not doubt the appropriateness of the peti-

tion, but he thought the manner and time of offering it ill-judged. He said to his wife, 'That man takes too much interest in my business,' and he reported the actions of the strange minister. But the wife answered, 'Don't you think he was about right?' Mr. Reynolds could not deny this when his wife put the question.

But the strange minister did not stop. When another opportunity offered, he said, 'Don't you think you might lead some of your scholars to Christ the very next time you meet them in class?' 'I don't know that I could,' was the somewhat unwilling answer. 'Then you need to be prayed for again.' Was not this a strange minister? And forthwith he began an earnest prayer that this teacher might have faith to believe that his scholars could be brought to the Saviour immediately. Mr. Reynolds was convicted. He determined to make the effort at the first opportunity. He said to one of his scholars, 'Don't you wish to be a Christian?' Tears sprang to the girl's eyes, showing that her heart was touched, and the other girls seemed to be in a responsive mood, for the answer came, 'Oh, Mr. Reynolds! we have been waiting two years for you to ask that question, and wondered why you didn't ask it before.' It did not take long to lead those seeking souls to the saving Christ. It seems strange to us that such an efficient and consecrated worker as William Reynolds should have been two years in learning that lesson. But have you learned it in all the years of your Sunday-school work? If a teacher does not long for the conversion of his scholars, or if he does not have faith that they may be converted, and so teaches for years without asking this straight question, 'Are you a Christian?' or 'Would you not like to be a Christian?' surely he need not go far to seek for the reason of his failure in winning souls.—'Sunday-school Times.'

The Teacher's Conditions.

(Dr. Kitteredge in 'Sunday School Times'.)

There are two indispensable conditions to success as a Sunday-school teacher. The first is some degree of spiritual experience as a child of God; for, if we know nothing ourselves of the riches of grace, we certainly cannot teach others concerning them; and the second condition is a purpose to avail ourselves of all the means within our reach of a thorough understanding of the truths of each lesson.

Were these conditions insisted upon, the number of teachers might be and probably would be lessened, but the power of the Sunday-school work would be greatly advanced; and our schools would become more than they are to-day, the nurseries of the church. For the teacher has but one mission, and that mission is not to keep the class quiet, not to interest the scholars so that they will come again, but to educate them in Bible truths, and so to help them to understand the letter which the heavenly Father has written for their spiritual guidance and comfort and strength. Therefore the teacher must first have a clear comprehension of the truths hidden in each lesson, and this can be gained only as the result of hard study; for the Bible is like a mine, where the precious ore can be extracted only by digging down into the rocky mountain. Such preparation takes time and earnest thought, but it pays richly in personal joy, as well as in power of instruction.

Absent Scholars.

For keeping up the numbers in a school, nothing is more important than looking after the absentees. It will not increase much, or hold its own, if those who are induced to come do not stay in. If a scholar is absent for two or three Sundays, and no one seeks to learn why, his inevitable conclusion is that it makes no difference to teacher, superintendent, or any one else if he does stay out. If, however, he gets a visit from his teacher, or a note of inquiry from him expressing the hope that he is not sick, with a request to let him know, in some way, if he is, that scholar will have the comfort of feeling that he is missed, and in nine cases out of ten will hasten back. There is a good deal of human nature in a child. Study yourself if you would know how to deal with him successfully.—'Pilgrim Teacher.'

Kind acts find a dozen friends before kind wishes get an introduction.—'Ram's Horn.'