



LESSON I.—JANUARY 6, 1901.

Jesus Anointed at Bethany.

Matt. xxvi., 6-16. Memory verses, 11-13.
Read Mark xiv., 1-10, and John xii., 1-9.

Golden Text.

'She hath done what she could.'—Mark xiv., 8.

The Bible Lesson.

(Learn verses 11-13.)

6. Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper,

7. There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat.

8. But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste?

9. For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.

10. When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me.

11. For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always.

12. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial.

13. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.

14. Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went out unto the chief priests,

15. And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.

16. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.

Suggestions.

Our Lord and his disciples had left Jericho after the healing of the blind men and the conversion of Zaccheus, and had gone down to Jerusalem, a few days before the Passover, that they might spend the feast time there.

A few miles east of Jerusalem lay the picturesque little town of Bethany ('House of Dates,' by literal translation). Here Martha and Mary and Lazarus lived, that Lazarus who had been on the other side of the grave, but had returned to take up his earthly life again at the call of his Master. Here, at the house of Simon the leper (supposed to be either the father or the husband of Martha), Jesus and his disciples were enjoying the evening meal, when a woman entered the room bearing in her hand a beautiful box of very precious ointment or perfume. Matthew and Mark do not tell who this woman was, but John, writing many years later, explains that it was Mary, the sister of Lazarus, who made this rare and costly offering of love. This incident is not the same as that mentioned by Luke (vii., 37) which occurred at Capernaum.

Mary poured out this precious perfume on the head and even on the feet of our Lord as an act of reverent devotion and passionate gratitude for the joy he had given them in the restoration of their brother's life. It was no unusual act, this anointing of an honored teacher, it was a custom of those times and is still in some parts of the East, to show reverence and honor in this way. What might seem very peculiar to us was in that land a very natural and proper way of expressing respect. The disciples therefore were not surprised at the form in which Mary's reverent love was shown, but led by the hostile murmurings of the jealous Judas, they began to question the propriety of the costliness of the offering. Three hundred pence was the estimated value of this gift, or about fifty dollars, which in the value of to-day would

be about five hundred dollars. This might have been given to feed many poor persons or to sustain one family for a whole year. The disciples spoke of the offering as a waste! But Jesus, who cared more for the poor than these men could ever comprehend, Jesus, who was about to give his own life for the salvation of every human being, Jesus, who had laid aside the glories of his heavenly home and had become poor in order that 'we through his poverty might be made rich,' Jesus accepted with pleasure the timid woman's offering and rebuked the niggardly criticising spirit of those who had grumbled at this use of the precious oil.

Our Lord had more than once supplied the temporal needs of the multitudes. Thousands had received from his hands bread enough and to spare, he had by his divine power so multiplied a few small loaves as to make far more than 'three hundred pence' worth of bread, and had given it to the poor. Surely he might with perfect justice receive this costly offering in return for an inestimable boon, without the paltry temporal needs of the people being constantly thrust before him by the small-minded by-standers. He was about to give his own life to secure the eternal welfare of this people. Mary, unconsciously, was anointing his body for the burial which was so soon to sadden all their hearts. If she had poured this perfume on the head of her own dead brother no one would have thought of objecting, but now with the very shadow of death creeping over them they stand there criticising and implying not only that Mary has no care for suffering humanity, but even that the Saviour of the world is content to see that suffering go unrelieved.

Blind critics! But let us not spend time in criticising them again, but turn rather to loving contemplation of the beautiful gift of the grateful giver. For 'whosoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also be this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.' The lesson of this fragrant incident is not that we should neglect to care for the needy and sorrowing, nothing in the life of Christ could ever make us think that, but the lesson is that we should be in such close fellowship with our Lord that we might be able to know and do the things which will give him the greatest pleasure.

From this exquisite offering it is hard to turn our eyes to the next scene in our lesson. The treachery of Judas Iscariot can only be spoken of with the greatest pain and humility—pain that a man who had had the privileges of being for three years in the presence of Jesus, hearing his words, seeing his deeds of mercy and love, could ever be capable of such base and awful ingratitude—humility lest we also having enjoyed high privileges, should fall into the same temptation, and, being human, should yield to the same strain. The fall of Judas was not sudden and inexplicable, there had long been a growing disaffection in his heart, he had allowed the morbid spirit of disloyalty to grow until it was big enough to open the door to its master; for we read that 'the devil put it into the heart of Judas to betray Jesus,' and again that 'Satan entered into him' to complete the work. The only way to keep the enemy out of our hearts is to make sure that God is reigning within.

Questions.

What three friends had Jesus in Bethany? At whose house was he staying? What occurred as they were sitting at supper? Who brought the gift? For how much could it have been sold? What did the bystanders say about it? What did our Lord say? Is Jesus pleased if we neglect the needy or suffering ones? Are the needs of the body more important than the needs of the soul? How did Judas Iscariot treat the Saviour of the world? What would you have done under the same temptation? Is there any amount of silver or self-satisfaction that you would rather have than have the love of Christ and his assurance of salvation in your heart?

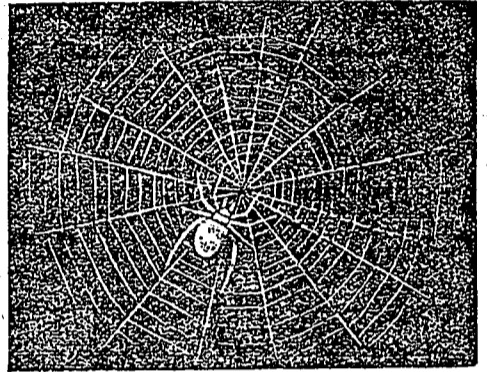
Don't forget the time when you were a soldier in the battle of child-life. Try to have your pupils feel that your own childish trials and discomforts are still fresh in memory.



Blackboard Temperance Lesson.

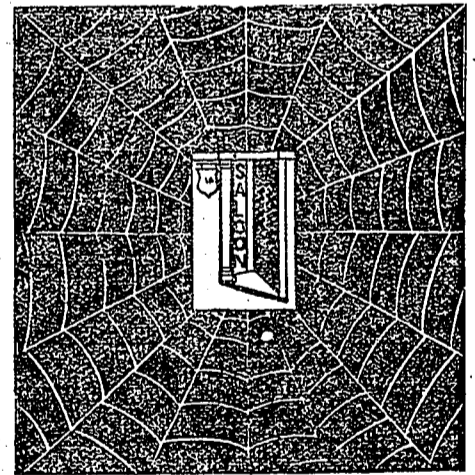
(By Mrs. W. F. Crafts, in 'Youth's Temperance Banner.')

I do not need to tell you that this is a kind of trap. You say it is a spider's web. True. But what does the spider make his



web for? For catching flies and other kinds of insects. It is the most delicate and yet the strongest trap that is made. You say you can easily brush it away with your little finger. Of course you can, because it was not made for such a giant as you are. Just see how impossible it is for the flies and gnats to get out of it when once they get in, and you will understand something about its strength.

I am going to draw an open door in the middle of it, and then it will do for a picture of a kind of trap that is set for people, mostly men and boys. Such traps are often to be found on street corners, but they are in other places as well. I think you hardly need to be told that it is the saloon I am talking about. It is the strongest trap in all the world for boys and men. When they once get inside they are apt to stay there for life. You say you have seen lots of men coming out of



saloons. Yes, you have, but if you only waited a little while you would see them all going in again.

I know you have heard the song of 'The Spider and the Fly.' The spider says to the fly:

'You have only to pop your head
Just inside of the door
To see so many curious things
You never saw before.'

And then he goes on to tell the little fly how he can lie down to rest on soft cushions, etc. The saloon keepers seem to have learned their ways from the spider. They make their saloons just as beautiful as they can, and they promise such good times, comfort, etc., to those who will pop their heads just inside of their doors.