

to it the kingly word. The word which does not rest on threat, promise or persuasion, but in its naked authority only needs to be truly heard in order to be obeyed. We are strong and good when we have found our rightful king. We must study the great life portrayed in the manifold Gospel to learn the full meaning of this word, "Follow Me."

IV.—The cure for prejudice; already history begins to repeat itself. Andrew calls Peter, Philip calls Nathaniel. He whom the Christ has found has the power to find others. Thus the Christian Church has grown by the action of soul upon soul. The virtue springing from the Christ spreads and grows. But even the gentle Nathaniel, "the Israelite in whom is no guile," has prejudices, even though he has Jacob's devotion without the cunning which marred the patriarch's character; he can ask the question: "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Not by mere theories or second-hand statements can such prejudice be met, personal experience is the only cure. "Come and see." Not by arguments, but by the vision of the Christ shall the confession be drawn from this gentle soul: "Thou art the King of Israel."

Open Gates.

Lord, we thank thee for open gates
To fields so wondrous broad;
Thank thee for fertile soil that waits
For the ploughshares of God.

Nay! thank thee for fields that now are
white—
Ready for sickles soon!—
For the toilers toiling with their might
Till all thy fields are mown;

Thank thee for Faith that makes us win
On every tented field;
Thank thee for triumphs grand brought in
Pledge of the future's yield.

Yes, yes, His fields are wondrous broad;
Seed for the sower waits;
And everywhere the friends of God
May enter open gates.

The Christ's First Miracle.*

The greater part of Our Lord's life was spent in silent preparation for His great work. The Christmas festival has recently called our attention to the lowly beauty of His childhood, afterwards we have a glimpse of His boyhood. For a moment He seemed to reach out for great things, but He left the Temple precincts and went down to Nazareth with His parents and was "subject" unto them. He who was to save men and rule the Church learned as a young man the lesson of submission. Now the time had come for Him to fulfil His mission and compress into a few months the richest and most significant life the world has ever seen. By words and deeds He reveals Himself and ministers to men. Parables and miracles are to be regarded as forms in which the Christ manifests Himself. There is something greater than the gracious words or "mighty works," that is, the person of the living Saviour from whence these spring. St.

Lesson for Jan. 15th. John 2: 1-11. Golden Text: "And His Disciples Believed on Him."

John's word for miracles suggests this; he calls them "signs." They are signs of power, proofs of divinity, and in the way in which they were given or kept back they are revelations of the Saviour's many-sided life. So this marriage at Cana of Galilee has remained an everlasting sign, teaching much more than the mere fact that the Lord Jesus had power to turn water into wine. That the first sign was wrought in the home to give joy to the guests, and not on some great public stage, to make a sensation, or to seek popularity, is in harmony with the lowly life of the Christ. He avoids vulgar self-advertisement and does the greatest things in the quietest way. Jesus Christ has sympathy with pure, human joy. We are so accustomed to emphasise the important truth that Our Lord is the Saviour from sin, and the consoler in sorrow that we are in danger of forgetting this equally important truth. And critics sometimes make it a reproach against the Christian religion that it is a one-sided mitigation of sorrow, and would ruthlessly quench all joy and hush all song. The first miracle shows us that while this may be true of some men's presentation of the Christian religion, it is not true of Our Saviour's life and teaching. He who wept by the grave-side of Lazarus went to the wedding feast and performed His first miracle there. He is our companion in life's joys as well as in its sorrows.

Jesus is not narrow in His view of human needs. He might have said that man's joy is not dependent on wine, and there had been wine enough. Some people wish that He had said such things. He was so strong and gentle that He could be pure without being a Puritan. The world owes much to the Puritans, but it owes much to other people as well; and so we are glad that He who never countenanced any wicked thing, treated human life in a large-hearted, generous fashion. When the housekeeper was in danger of disgrace, running short of wine, He gave the needed help in an unostentatious manner.

The life of Jesus is independent, independent even of His mother. Her anxiety for the credit of her friends was natural, and that she should turn to Him in perplexity was right. But He must go His own way and do His own work in His own manner. The days of subjection are over, yet He is not lacking in reverence and kindness for His mother. This Son of Man, however, must now follow only the inward voice and do the Father's business.

Even the remark of the governor of the feast, in which, perhaps, there is a touch of coarseness, symbolizes a great truth. Not only is the wine of Christ better than the world's wine, giving a more real refreshment, and a purer inspiration, the Christian life is the only experience of which it can be fully said: "Thou hast kept the good wine until now." It is always the last, best, and

better still to come. Abundance of indulgence in the world leaves men worn and weary, the things they have become distasteful and they have no taste for nobler things. But in the Christian life each stage of one's career has its appropriate blessings. In youth we think we have drunk the noblest spiritual wine, but there is a more inspiring draught for manhood, and in old age, when the outward man decays the inward man is renewed, the Christian soul declares that the greatest blessings have come last. But when we come to sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb and rejoice with Him who has loved us and redeemed us we shall be inclined to say: "O Lord, Thou hast kept the good wine until now."

"And His disciples believed on Him." But does not disciples mean believers? Certainly. A man cannot be a disciple without faith; but this faith is not a mechanical act, done once for all, it is a living power which may increase in strength and compass. Disciples may spend the day in communion with Jesus, but that is only a beginning. He cannot be fully revealed in one interview, or exhausted by one day's experience. Disciple means learner, and in the daily presence of their Lord men learn how and what to believe. The Master can only reveal Himself as He faces new occasions and meets new circumstances. Some who seemed to be disciples fell away when the revelation became too strong, but the true disciples, though sometimes startled, cried, "Lord, to whom shall we go, Thou hast the words of eternal life." The words or miracles varied according to the situation and needs of those to whom they were addressed, but they came always from the same spirit of love and called for the same attitude. Each stage in the growing life of men destined to be apostles might be marked by the words: "His disciples believed on Him" there.

If We Only Understood.

Could we but draw back the curtains,
That surround each other's lives,
See the naked heart and spirit,
Know what spur the action gives,
Often we should find it better,
Purer than we judge we should;
We should love each other better,
If we only understood.

Could we judge all deeds by motives,
See the good and bad within,
Often we should love the sinner
All the while we loathe the sin;
Could we know the powers working
To o'erthrow integrity,
We should judge each other's errors
With more patient charity.

If we knew the cares and trials,
Knew the efforts, all fit, vain,
And the bitter disappointment,
Understood the loss and gain—
Would the grim, external roughness
Seem—I wonder—just the same?
Should we help where we now hinder,
Should we pity where we blame?

Ah! we judge each other harshly,
Knowing not life's hidden force;
Knowing not the fount of action
Is less turbid at its source.
Seeking not amid the evil
All the golden grains of good;
Ah! we'd love each other better,
If we only understood.