

The Quiet Hour.

The First Miracle in Cana.

S. S. LESSON JOHN 2:1-11. JANUARY 22, 1905.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Whosoever he saith unto you, do it.—John 2:5.

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And Jesus also was bidden (Rev. Ver.), v. 2. Jesus was the only Man of whom it could be said there was no sin in Him. And yet he was a welcome guest at the marriage feast where merriment and joy reigned. Men have often in his name frowned on innocent pleasure and scorned the family relations as unworthy. But Jesus Himself entered into full sympathy with joy as well as sorrow. It is a great mistake to make that a sin which God Himself has not condemned and sourness is no sign of sanctity.

They have no wine, v. 3. So said Mary to her Son, because she had learned to lean upon Him. She had learned to look to Him, because He had shown Himself a good son in the home—true, thoughtful, strong. It is hard to tell which is the happier, the son or the mother, when the boy has grown tall enough for his mother to take his arm; and there is no better testimony to the mother's training or the son's manliness than that year by year, she comes to look more and more to him for help over the hard places of life.

Whosoever he saith unto you, do it, v. 5. The toilers in the quarry as they blast the rock, and shape the stones, have small notion of the splendid temple for which they are preparing the material. But without their labors, the genius of the architect would be in vain. We may have a very humble part in the building of God's kingdom in the world, but it is a necessary part; and our faithfulness in doing it will not be overlooked. We shall share in the glory of the final result.

And they filled them up to the brim, v. 7. Our reward depends on our thoroughness. This rule holds everywhere. Who is surest of a plentiful harvest? It is the farmer who is most painstaking in choosing his soil, in preparing the ground, in selecting his seed. It is not greater ability we need in order to succeed, half so much as the habit of putting all that ability, such as it is, into each least part of our work. "Up to the brim" is a good motto for the doing of every task.

This beginning of miracles, v. 11. We say, What a wonder it was. And yet is not God ever doing even greater wonders before our very eyes! But, because we are used to them we cease to marvel. Look at the trees that have been bare all winter, and see them in a few weeks covered with foliage. Is it not a miracle? And the sun shining down upon us day by day and changing the brown earth into fields of waving grain. The whole of existence is a miracle.

And manifested his glory, v. 11. This is the meaning of all the miracles wrought by Jesus. They were intended to teach men what sort of being God was and how he regards men. And as men, ever since, have meditated on the doings of Christ in the flesh, they have been led to understand God's mighty power, and that his thoughts towards men are good and not evil, and His will is for their blessing and not their hurt; and so have learned to reverence, and trust, and love.

And his disciples, v. 12. So much for

having a good Friend! Where Jesus goes, there His disciples are welcome. It shall be so also at the great "marriage supper" in heaven. It is as His friends that we shall be admitted to that feast of surpassing joy.

The Enrichment of Memory.

Youth is the time for the enrichment and consecration of memory. It is scarcely possible to overrate the importance of that mysterious power by which we can recall events, persons, and experiences by acts of intention, or by incidental allusions and mental associations. When once a fact has gained its place in our remembrance, there it remains, and no known power or expedient will ever dislodge it from the soul. Some inconsiderable and customary acts may be like tracings on the seashore, which the approaching tide will efface; but many of our experiences are like inscriptions "graven in the rock forever." This makes some unhappy souls wish for the power of oblivion rather than to possess an improvement of memory.

The question is very serious, and especially with regard to a life like that of the Apostle Paul. He was a new creature after the experience of Damascus, and yet he was not so separated from his former self as to live in forgetfulness of his past life. He would remember with distress and self condemnation his bitter persecution of the followers of the Lord, and how he stood with exultation to behold the stoning of Stephen; how he seized and compelled timorous believers to blaspheme, how he voted for the violent death of the earliest martyrs, and probably "the buffeting of Satan's messenger" would remind him with exasperating detail of his manifold cruelties to Christians.

Our memory may be compared to Ezekiel's "chambers of imagery," in which if young life should be base, worldly and mischievous, there will be the indelible forms of wanton pleasure and its avenging degradation, the gay feast, the brimming cup of wine, the seductive song and the questionable companions, and then the searching, remorseless light of the day, when the song has ceased, the flowers are faded and the bitter penalty must be paid. It may be that in these images of memory Mammon is seen with eager eyes and grasping hand, and life becomes respectable and pitiable drudgery.

Instead of the chambers of the soul becoming the galleries where those hateful and accusing forms stand in view and unfading colors, it will be infinitely better to have the fair outlines of charming groups which consist of deeds of Christian virtues, holy service rendered to the Church of God and for the benefit of mankind. How blessed it will be for youth to remember the act of un-conditional surrender to the claims of him who seems to speak from Calvary and say: "Give me thine heart;" to recall acts of heroism where the tempter was foiled at once and the memorial stone of "Ebenezer" marks the spot; to think of the days of happy worship when the soul rose on the wings of praise and bowed with reverential blessedness before the throne of God; to reflect upon the visit paid to the sufferer, and to the house of mourning,

where all were sitting in the shadow of a sorrowful bereavement, and tender and sympathetic speech soothed the wounded soul. Such a memory is a treasure and an ever-fruitful blessing, and becomes a perpetual reason for gratitude, and a source of inspiring impulse.—J. S. Bright.

The Everlasting Arms.

Human love is very sweet. A mother's bosom is a wondrously gentle place for a child to nestle in. The other day two letters came from a sanitarium in the North. One was from a young girl wife, married only last summer, now fighting a battle with consumption. She wrote hopefully, referring to the many hemorrhages she had had, but saying that now she was surely recovering. She then spoke of her desire to get well enough to go home soon to her husband. "Surely He will not separate us so early," she wrote; "we are so happy together!" The other letter was from the sick woman's friend who is with her. She wrote that the doctors have no hope.

So frail is human strength, though back of it is tenderness, truest love. All that love can do, all that money can do, all that skill can do, avails nothing. Human arms may clasp us very firmly, yet their clasp cannot keep us from the power of disease or from the cold hand of death. But the love and strength are everlasting. Nothing can ever separate us from him. An Old Testament promise reads: "The eternal God is thy refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms." If we are stayed upon the eternal God nothing can disturb him on whom we are reposing. If we are held in the clasp of the everlasting arms we need not fear that we shall ever be separated from the enfolding.

The position of the everlasting arms in this picture is suggestive—"Underneath." They are always underneath us. No matter how low we sink, in weakness, in faintness, in pain, in sorrow, we never can sink below these everlasting arms. We can never drop out of their clasp. A father tried to save his child in the waves, wildly clasping his arms about the beloved form. But his arms, though nerved by most passionate love, were too weak, and the child slipped away from them and sank down in the dark waters. But evermore, in the deepest floods, the everlasting arms will be underneath the feeblest, most imperiled child of God. Sorrow is very deep, but still and forever, in the greatest grief, these arms of love are underneath the sufferer. Then when death comes, and every earthly support is gone from beneath us, when every human arm unclasp and every face of love fades from before our eyes, and we sink away into what seems darkness and shadow of earth, we shall only sink into the everlasting arms underneath us.—Dr. James R. Miller.

How to Sweeten Life.

Open all the doors to the religion of Christ. It will make this world a paradise. It will sweeten the every-day trials of life, the little perplexities and annoyances, little sorrows and trials, little disappointments and mistakes. Nature ever helps the tiny objects. A small flower blossoms at my feet. The clouds gather swiftly in the sky to water it; infinite chemistry works at its roots to nourish it; the mighty power of gravitation and equally unconquerable forces hold it and guard it; the sun rises and shines to paint upon its cheek; the winds are marshalled to fan it; everything is