

"Praise be to God;" water is poured on his hand, and he retires, his place being taken by another. Before all visits of ceremony the Jews were used to anoint with oil; Abraham used oil of myrrh; Naomi bade Ruth to anoint herself before visiting Boaz. In Luke 7. 46 Simon is rebuked for not anointing his guest. The use of scented oils was a mark of luxury. Hezekiah kept such oils in his "treasure house" (2 Kings 20. 13). The Jews daily anointed themselves with oil, except in time of mourning. The Egyptian monuments show a host anointing his guest with oil on his arrival. The anointing of guests with perfumes, or perfumed oil on feast days, was a general custom.

The most precious kind of perfumed oil (spikenard) was used by Mary in anointing Jesus. The plant is a native of India, but inferior growths are found in Syria. The juice was preserved in flasks of alabaster, and was used to anoint the body and to perfume wine. Pliny speaks of nine plants from the juice of which counterfeits of the pure spikenard could be made. Twelve ounces was an enormous quantity for so costly a perfume as this pure article was. Godet gives us a graphic picture of this scene. The flasks of alabaster were hermetically sealed when received from the East, and to use them the neck must be broken, which Mary did (Mark 14. 3.) This she did in the sight of all the guests, over the head of Jesus seated at the table, and then, as an extraordinary act of homage, she poured this costly liquid, as if it were only common water, over his feet, "in such abundance," says Godet, "that it was as if she were bathing them with it; so she was obliged to wipe them." For this purpose she used her own hair.

When Judas asked why this ointment was not sold and the money given to the poor he made an appeal to popular prejudice. Many thought of the kingdom of the Messiah as being the kingdom of the poor, who were thus to find compensation for all their privations. To many the Essenes seemed to be doing that which would hasten the coming of the kingdom because of their strict observance of the communistic principle of having all things in common. The Pharisees, too, affected poverty as a virtue. Some of them, as well as the Essenes, sold their goods and distributed to the poor. The dream of the poor in all countries is that in some way the rich ought to divide with the poor. The Hebrew law contained many provisions for limiting the wealth of the rich and giving the poor a new chance. The people expected that when Messiah should come all such equalization should be perfect. In a company of friends one of them was treasurer, and carried the purse, as Judas did. This treas-

urer met the expenses of all. If on a journey, they went without purse or scrip, because the common treasurer of each place supplied their wants. Food and even clothing were furnished from the common stock.

### By Way of Illustration.

"The house was filled with the odor of the ointment." The sweetest perfume that the home circle ever knows rises from deeds of loving service which its members do for each other. The sweetest perfumes of our homes do not arise from elegant furniture, soft carpets, rare pictures, or luxurious viands. Many a home having all these is pervaded by an atmosphere as tasteless and odorless as bouquets of waxen flowers. Lucy Larcom, the poetess, once wrote, "I think I should be homesick in a mansion filled with angels if my own precious friends were not there to give me the service of love." It is a glorious thing to live such a life that precious fragrance shall rise from it and be exhaled unconsciously.—Dr. L. A. Banks.

*Love always finds expression.* The little child who loves its mother tries to help her, when often the effort is a hindrance. The lover grows very inventive in his efforts to show his affection, and brings gift after gift. Love must express itself. The Taj Mahal of India, that beautiful tomb which cost \$20,000,000, is an expression of the great love which a husband bore for his wife. The hospitals and asylums and missions are an expression of the love of Christian people for their Master.

*A costly gift.* A young woman just graduated from a medical college went to her friend and said, "To-morrow I offer myself to the Board of Foreign Missions."

"Impossible!" cried her friend. "You have been appointed to a fine position. There is everything to make life delightful for you here. It is too great a sacrifice."

"All the more reason why I should go," the young woman replied. "If my life were worth little here, it would be worth little to give to my Master. David said, 'I will not offer to the Lord that which costs me nothing.'"

*The teaching of the lesson.* Jesus said, "Where-soever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." What reigning beauty, what queen or empress, would not covet such praise from him? Yet it was accorded to this quiet, unassuming woman of Bethany. It was bestowed because she chose the good part, and because her choice was so com-