



## LESSON IV.—JANUARY 22.

## The First Miracle in Cana.

John ii., 1-11.

## Golden Text.

Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. John ii., 5.

## Home Readings.

Monday, Jan. 16.—John ii., 1-11.

Tuesday, Jan. 17.—John ii., 18-25.

Wednesday, Jan. 18.—John x., 31-40.

Thursday, Jan. 19.—Luke ix., 49-56.

Friday, Jan. 20.—Ps. cxi., 1-10.

Saturday, Jan. 21.—John v., 30-39.

Sunday, Jan. 22.—Heb. ii., 1-10.

(By Davis W. Clark.)

Arriving at Nazareth with his five lately called disciples, Jesus found an invitation awaiting him to attend the marriage to which his mother had already hastened on. A ten-mile extra walk across the wide and fertile plain brought the little company to Cana. As they entered the festive home of the bridegroom, six great flagons, beaded with moisture and their orifices crammed with fresh leaves, greeted them in the vestibule. The last water was drawn from these capacious jars to cleanse hands and feet of these late arrivals. The size, number and material of those flagons was graven on John's memory by what afterward transpired.

The ablutions over, Jesus and his disciples entered the humble banquet-room. There the male guests were disposed according to their fancy on mats about the floor. Jesus' presence was no dash of sadness to that festal hour. The riddle-guessing and story-telling incident to such occasions went right on. The Master came not to mar, but to adorn and to beautify that marriage-feast. A moment later Jesus himself was reclining; and, perhaps for the first time, the favored disciple in whom his human soul delighted was leaning in his bosom. The symposiarch continued to rule the feast. The happy bridegroom, adorned and anointed, surrounded by the 'sons of the bride-chamber,' was still the centre of attraction.

From the festal-room, where the women congregated, and where the bride, covered from head to foot in her loose and flowing veil, garlanded with flowers and dressed in her fairest robes, was the observed of all—Mary came to whisper in her Son's ear that the store of wine had failed, an event considered peculiarly humiliating in an Oriental home.

Jesus' reply to his mother indicates that he understood her suggestion that he should use his divine power to bridge this domestic chasm, which his coming with his disciples had helped to create. And it was altogether appropriate that, as other guests had done, he should add to the provisions for the banquet by a personal gift.

Even against maternal interference Jesus must guard his miracle-working prerogative. In this matter he has nothing in common with any mortal, not even his own mother. The times and seasons (indicated by the phrase 'Mine hour') for the display of supernatural power were matters of agreement between Father and Son. In these matters it is presumption in the last degree for a mortal to interfere. Again, his mother must know her status toward him. 'The Son had now become the Lord even of the mother.'

Divorced from tone and look, the words, especially in our version, seem harsh. They were not so; and, even in them, Mary's quick woman's wit divined that, though Jesus did not work the miracle at her suggestion, he would still soon work it.

Not in the splendid temple, but in a hum-

ble home; not before the Sanhedrim of savants, but before a company of humble Galileans, Jesus manifested his glory in his first miracle, the special purpose of which was to confirm his disciples' faith in him.

## NOTES COMMENTARIES.

Cana of Galilee: Identified with insignificant village, five miles north of Nazareth.—Kanet, New Century. A marriage: Among all Orientals marriages were occasions of much ceremony and unbounded feasting.—Tristram. Jesus was bidden: His presence suggests the honor of matrimony.—Pulpit com. The earthen floor and the ledge round the wall would be spread with carpets, the walls hung with garlands; the spirits of all bright and cheerful as the decorated chamber, and the modest rejoicings in no way clouded by the presence of Mary's Son and his followers.—Geikie. Wanted wine. And they had not wine because the wine of the wedding was finished.—Old Manuscript, Tischendorf. Occasioned by arrival of Jesus and his disciples. None but those who know how sacred in the East is the duty of lavish hospitality, and how passionately the obligation to exercise it to the utmost is felt, can realize the gloom which this incident would have thrown over the occasion, or the misery and mortification which it would have caused to the wedded pair.—Farrar. They have no wine: For half a lifetime she had known the resources of an absolutely unclouded judgment, a perfectly developed faculty, and an entirely unselfish heart. And it was inevitable that in every embarrassment she must have turned to him. . . . But more than this it is probable that she realized that the hour of his manifestation to the world was at last come; and the noblest and most unselfish woman could not fail to wish to direct the operation, so as to remove, unnoticed, the distress of her own friends.—Expositors. Woman: Nothing disrespectful—term used in addressing persons of highest rank.—New Century. Though in a gentle and affectionate manner, Jesus rejects her interference, intending to supply the demand in his own way.—Vincent. Mine hour is not yet come: By this 'hour' or time we understand some divinely appointed crisis, or some transition-point in his history, opening some new stage, or initiating some new event.—Whedon. Those who believe that the wine spoken of in this lesson was unintoxicating, will teach in accordance with that belief. Those who believe that it was ordinary wine, will teach that the making of such wine by our Lord no more indorses intoxication than the creation of the poppy, from which laudanum is made, indorses suicide.—Schauffler. Six waterpots of stone: As an eyewitness, John remembers their number, size and material.—Camb. Bible. This beginning of miracles: Public men are sometimes anxious with regard to a first appearance that it should be upon a scene in society and with accompaniments worthy of themselves or of their own conceptions of themselves. Jesus proved his superiority to human vanity and weakness in performing his first sign in a lowly home at a villager's wedding. His conduct in this was just like himself.—Pulpit Com.

## THOUGHTS ON THE LESSON.

Worthy of remark is it that Jesus produced a flagon of wine for each in his company—one for himself and one for each of his five disciples. Over a hundred gallons of richest wine—a goodly dowry for the bride.

To magnify Jesus' making of wine on this occasion, however, is to make a mere accident the principle, and miss the mark entirely. The chief design of this record is to show our Saviour's sanctification of marriage and home-life.

No argument for wine-drinking in our country, under present social conditions, can be constructed from this incident. In the Orient wine is a staple of food. Its use is a matter of dietetics. In its quality it is not, as a rule, highly alcoholized. The making of wine in Cana does not justify the use of it in Chicago.

The conditions are all changed here. We have an abundance of variety of food never dreamed of in an Oriental home. We do not need wine. The wine in common use is doctored and more highly alcoholized. The climatic conditions are different. They predispose to excess. Excess is the rule. Intemperance prevails.

Under these conditions, total abstinence is our duty to self and neighbor.

## C. E. Topic.

Sunday, Jan. 22.—Topic—How to win souls for Christ. John i., 40-46. (Led by the lookout committee.)

## Junior C. E. Topic.

## THE SABBATH DAY.

Monday, Jan. 16.—'The Sabbath of rest.' Ex. xxxi., 14-16.

Tuesday, Jan. 17.—'Keep my Sabbaths.' Lev. xix., 30.

Wednesday, Jan. 18.—'To be a sign.' Ezek. xx., 12.

Thursday, Jan. 19.—'The Sabbath a delight.' Isa. lviii., 13, 14.

Friday, Jan. 20.—No manna on the Sabbath. Ex. xvi., 26-30.

Saturday, Jan. 21.—Christ and the Sabbath. Matt. xii., 1-13.

Sunday, Jan. 22.—Topic—How does God want his Sabbaths kept? Ex. xx., 8-11.

## Learning How to Teach.

'Won't you take a Sunday-school class?' addressed to a bright young woman, received the reply, 'I can't; I never learned how to teach. I have a companion who has spent six years in special training to teach in a secular school, and you ask me to teach more important matters without an hour's preparation.' 'But you have had preparation. Have you not been a Christian for more than six years, and have I not heard you say in the Christian Endeavor meeting that you were "saved to serve?" Have you not through these years been studying the Bible as your one guide book and striving to bring your entire life into obedience to its precepts? Have you not, therefore, spent these years in mastering both the theory and practice of teaching?'

To this series of questions, she yielded a hesitating 'Yes,' but still claimed that it would be necessary for her to make some special preparation for this proposed work. This claim we are ready to grant; but we would not have you lose sight of the main point that one's entire Christian life, including his conversion, and even his struggles with God before his conversion, is a normal course during which one sits at the feet of the Spirit and learns how to teach. No Christian, therefore, is entirely unprepared to teach.—Melbourne 'Spectator.'

## The Go-to-church Band.

(Frederick Campbell, Westminster Church, Brooklyn, N.Y.)

The children of the last generation were sent to the Sunday-school, but not taken to church, hence a great crop of non-church-goers to-day. To secure church-goers in the next generation, we must train them in the present. And if parents are lax, the church must show herself inventive.

The Go-to-Church Band, originated by the Rev. B. H. Stauffer, of Buffalo, is perfectly flexible and capable of such modification as it has received in my own practice. Cloth-covered tickets are printed, with a space for the child's name, the dates for the Sundays of an agreed period, and a promise of reward for fidelity. After addressing the Sabbath-school concerning the duty and privilege of church-going, the pastor, with his own hand, distributes these tickets to old and young. Being presented at the door of the church each Sabbath morning, the dates are punched out by a reliable boy as 'ticket inspector.' During the first few weeks a roll should be formed of those found to be actually presenting the tickets; then each should be numbered to correspond with the name on the roll and attendance marked, and the roll always displayed. The children should sit with parents, and thus the family grouping be encouraged. Those who come without parents should occupy assigned seats and be under the care of the junior committee of the young people's society. On an early Sabbath the children should be called before the pulpit, where the pastor should address them and the congregation concerning them. It is not