

The Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, N.S., JULY 14, 1875.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1875.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, July 18th, 1875.—Jesus at the Marriage.—John ii. 1-11.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him."—John ii. 11.

ANALYSIS.—I. The guests. Vs. 1, 2. II. Mary rebuked. Vs. 3, 4. III. Mary's order. Vs. 5, 6. IV. Commands of Jesus. Vs. 7, 8. V. The ruler surprised. Vs. 9, 10. VI. Glory manifested. Vs. 11.

PREFATORY NOTES.—1. He who had left Galilee a few weeks before, the unnoted son of Joseph, now returns to it with five followers, who own him as the long-expected Messiah. 2. Marriage festivals among the Jews were occasions of great rejoicing, sometimes lasting a week, and even a fortnight. 3. There were two Canas in Galilee—one, Kefr Kenna, as it is now called, four miles northeast of Nazareth, the other, Kana-el-Jelil, nine miles north, believed by Robinson to be the true one. 4. A miracle is an event which must be referred to the extraordinary agency of God. To give proof of God making a supernatural revelation to man.

EXPOSITION.—Verse 1.—And [on] the third day. The third from that of chap. i. 43. "The two preceding days were sufficient for the journey to Cana, a distance, perhaps, of sixty miles." There was a marriage. A wedding festival. "The essence of the marriage ceremony consisted in the removal of the bride from her father's house to that of the bridegroom or his father." For this removal the bridegroom, with his groomsmen, repaired to the bride's house in the evening, preceded by torch-bearers and musicians, and escorted home the bride and bridesmaids in joyous pomp. Invited friends sometimes waited at some point on the road, and joined the procession on its homeward march. Matt. xxv. 1-13. Then began the festival, which was "protracted for seven, or even fourteen days." Judges xiv. 12; Matt. xxii. 1-10. In Cana of Galilee. In Christ's time, Galilee was the name of all the north of Palestine, down to and including the Valley of Esdraelon. Cana was near Nazareth. And the mother of Jesus was there. Doubtless as being a relative. See vs. 3. It is noteworthy that John never gives her name, Mary. I was her great distinction to be the Lord's mother. There is evidence that she was a most excellent, godly woman; but the Papist doctrine of her sinlessness, and of her claim to our worship, is as unscriptural as it has been mischievous. See vs. 4. Joseph is supposed not to have been living.

Verse 2.—And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage. The "disciples" here meant were doubtless the five mentioned in the last lesson, who had followed him from the Jordan, viz., John, Andrew, Peter, Philip and Nathanael. Christ's acceptance of the invitation shows his approval of marriage, and of its celebration with appropriate festivities. Whatever befits human nature has the Saviour's approval; and whatever degrades it he condemns.

Verse 3.—And they wanted wine. Literally, "And wine having failed," i. e., the supply on hand having been used up. When festivities were so protracted (see on vs. 1), and the number of guests perhaps greater than was originally intended (see on vs. 3), such a failure might easily happen. Fermented wines were commonly in use among the Hebrews, and Scripture condemns excess. Scripture also gives principles and enjoins commands that not only permit but require "total abstinence," 1 Cor. viii. 9-13. The mother of Jesus saith unto him. This and her direction to the servants (vs. 5), imply such privileges as close intimacy and near kinship with one or both of the married couple would give. They have no wine. Usually regarded as an implied request that he should work a miracle to supply the lack. Not improbably it implied only such direction as she had been wont to give while he was with her privately. She looks to him, as heretofore, to satisfy her temporal desires, and would have him quietly cause to be brought a new supply of wine, to save their married friends the annoyance even of a knowledge of the failure.

Verse 4.—Woman, what have I to do with thee? A correction, rather than a rebuke. He therefore calls her not mother,

but "woman," to show that in his new public relations, entered upon at his baptism, he is to her, as to all, Lord and Saviour. Drawing thus the contrast between his work as Messiah, and the mother's interest in the matter of the wine. Mine hour is not yet come. What his purpose was is shown in vs. 11. He would reveal himself as Messiah, and thus further his "Father's business." For this there was a fitting time, which no one but himself could determine. It was the Lord's custom to connect his miracles, as here, with some need of the hour.

Verse 5.—Whatever he saith unto you, do it. She directs as though with a kind of authority. See on vs. 1. Her words show that she took the "not yet" as a virtual promise to help at the right time. She probably understood that he now held a new relation to her and to others—that he had begun his public work. Her advice to the servants is good advice for us.

Verse 6.—Six water-pots. The Greek word is entirely general, like our vessels. After the manner of the purifying of the Jews. On the custom see Mark vii. 1-5. The water was usually drawn and brought from a neighboring well, and thus convenience would require that a considerable quantity should be kept on hand, ready for use. Two or three firkins apiece. Upwards of half a barrel each, as the word properly translated "firkin" is the name of a Greek measure holding between eight and nine gallons. The six vessels would thus hold three or four barrels.

Verse 7.—Fill the water-pots with water. They may have been partly filled, but he would have them quite full—full "to the brim." The word "water" makes perfectly distinct what was put in.

Verse 8.—Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. [chief of the table]. He appears to have been on intimate terms with the bridegroom, and to have presided at the banquet in his stead. It would belong to this man, by virtue of his office, to test the wine before its distribution to the guests. They [the servants] bare it.

Verse 9.—Had tasted the water that was made wine. Or, more strictly, the wine made from the water. And knew not whence it was, (but the servants, &c.). The circumstances were such as to make certain the impossibility of fraud; and hence the genuineness of the miracle. "In secret" Christ did nothing. His first work bears that stamp of openness and genuineness that marked all his works, and made them convincing evidences of his Divine nature and mission.

Verse 10.—Every man, etc. Stating what was customary at feasts. But thou, etc. Showing where he had departed from the custom, and virtually asking for an explanation. Some have supposed that the water in the water-casks was not all changed, but that the change took place in that which was taken out from the casks, either at the time of taking it or as the servants were bearing it. The narrative doubtless conveys to most the other view, and as to principle, it makes no difference whether the quantity made by Christ was great or little.

Verse 11.—Beginning of miracles. This doubtless marks this as the first of all his miracles, not the first wrought at Cana. Manifested forth his glory. His power, his goodness, his Divine nature and mission, his Messiahship. Believed on him. This miracle may be taken as the sign and symbol of all which Christ is evermore doing in the world, ennobling all that he touches, making saints out of sinners, angels out of men, and, in the end, heaven out of earth—a new paradise of God out of the old wilderness of the world.

- QUESTIONS.—Vs. 1. How long did Jewish marriage-feasts continue? Where was Cana? Vs. 2. What does the presence of Jesus at this wedding show? Vs. 4. Had Jesus a higher position than Son of Mary? Vs. 5. What direction given here by Christ's mother may we well follow? Vs. 6. How many gallons did these water-pots hold in all? Vs. 7. Why did Jesus make so much wine? Ans. Abundance always attends upon God's gifts. Vs. 8. Who was the governor of the feast? Vs. 9. Did the water that was poured out simply become wine? Was the wine fermented or unfermented? Does the Bible approve of our taking the pledge of total abstinence? Ans. It does; it inspires the abridgment of the personal liberty, even in things lawful, for the sake of saving the weak and easily tempted. Rom. xiv. 21; 1 Cor. vi. 12; viii. 13. Vs. 11. What is a miracle? What does it attest? What kind of a miracle is the one we have studied? Ans. Of creative power. Is there another like it? See Matt. xiv. 13-21.

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher. SUNDAY, July 25th, 1875.—The New Birth.—John iii. 7-17.

Youths' Department.

WOULDN'T SAY PLEASE.

There was once a small child who would never say please, I believe if you even went down on your knees. But, her arms on the table, would sit at her ease, And call out to her mother in words such as these: "I want some potatoes!" "Give me some peas!" "Hand me the butter!" "Cut me some cheese!" So the fairies, this very rude daughter to tease. Once blew her away in a powerful breeze, Over the mountains, and over the seas, To a valley where never a dinner she sees, But down with the ants, the wasps, and the bees, In the woods she must live till she learns to say please.

WHAT IS A BERRY?

Do my boys and girls know what a berry is? Hark! I think I hear a gentle burst of laughter coming from far and near. "Ha; ha!" it seems to say, "do you think we don't know what berries are; we who are so fond of strawberries and raspberries and blackberries? Ha! ha! ha!" Well, laugh away, my dears; I love to hear the merry sound. But just let me tell you something that I learned by listening to the birds. Raspberries and strawberries are well enough, but the orange is a berry too. Did you know that? Why, the lemon may be a berry, for aught I know. Now if this is news to you, I advise you to look into the subject a bit. Find out just what a berry is. Blackberries, strawberries and raspberries speak for themselves but how can you know that the grape is a berry unless you inquire? Get out your dictionaries, botanies, and encyclopedias, and when you find what you want on this subject, be sure to take it out of doors with you when the berries are ripening, so that you may observe knowingly.—St. Nicholas.

THE COLORS OF HORSES.

The Pall Mall Gazette says: We should be inclined to confine the colors of horses in this country to bay, brown, and chestnut. It is true that there are plenty of grays, but gray horses come into the world chestnut, or black. Grays are comparatively seldom seen, and more seldom still to advantage, on the race course, to which all questions relating to the excellence of horses must ultimately be referred. As for the white horses which are such "pretty creatures" in the eyes of the nursery-governess and her young charges, they are said to be, for the most part, gray horses whose hair is white with age. A horse born white, with pink nose and pinky eyes, is said to be as great a rarity in Europe as an albino. Though it might not be impossible to give a list of black horses which have won undying fame in the Racing Calendar, that color is most associated in one's mind with the heavy household cavalry and the undertaker. Roan is the name given to the appearance created by an intermixture of white, black, and bay or chestnut hair, mingled in such different proportions that the coat may vary in shape from the darkness of Erebus to the lightness of what is commonly called strawberry. Of your piebalds, skewbalds, and the like, it is scarcely desirable to maintain the breed, if they be capable of being reproduced at will beyond the number sufficient for parade, the esplanade, and the circus. It is desirable, however, to be clear as to what constitutes piebalds. Sappers of reputation, to whom nothing is sacred, have gone so far as to accuse such great creatures as a Stockwell or a Blair Athol of piebaldness because of certain "balzes" on the face, or patches on the legs, or a couple of white stockings. Be it known that a chestnut, a bay, or a black must have the white extending over parts of the body before the charge of piebaldness can be sustained.

The author of a matrimonial advertisement in the London Morning Post gets out of the ruts in which such matters usually run. It tells us that a lady is "anxious to find a home for a young lady, in whom she is deeply interested, as wife to a man, with or without children. She has good health, good temper, cultivated mind, quiet and homely tastes, deep religious principles, devoted to children. A Plymouth Brother would be preferred. Any one who gets her will bless God for such a life-companion."

SILENT PRAYER OF TWO THOUSAND.

The Rev. Dr. Cox, in his history of the English Baptist Mission, relates a circumstance which was not only impressive and affecting almost beyond a parallel, in itself, but which in its result exhibited in a most remarkable manner the power of prayer directed to a definite object.

It was while Dr. Carey was almost alone in India, and greatly distressed for want of another missionary to station on the Island of Amboyna, where there were said to be 20,000 professing Christians, with places of worship and schools, but without a minister, that the first annual meeting of the Baptist Missionary Society was held in London.

During the session, Mr. Fuller and Dr. Ryland preached in the Dutch Church Austin Friars.

In his discourse the latter adverted to Dr. Carey in having two of his sons, Felix and William, devoted to the mission. "But," said he, "there is a third who gives him pain; he is not yet turned to the Lord;" then, making a solemn and lengthened pause, during which tears flowed abundantly from his eyes, he exclaimed, in a voice which seemed to exhaust a whole soul of feeling, "Brethren, let us send up a united, universal, and fervent prayer to God, in solemn silence, for the conversion of Jabez Carey!"

The appeal was like a sudden clap of thunder, and the pause afterwards as intensely solemn as silence and prayer could make it. Two minutes, at least, of the most profound devotional feeling pervaded an assembly of perhaps two thousand persons.

Among the first letters afterwards received was the announcement of that conversion which had been so earnestly sought—nearly or quite synchronous with the season of fervent supplication.

It may be interesting to the reader if we add that this Jabez Carey had about eighteen months before, been articled to an attorney, and had greatly pained his father by his apparent dislike of religion. But immediately on his conversion he proposed himself for the missionary work at Amboyna. His employer generously set him at liberty, and gave him the highest testimonials for diligence and ability. Just previous to his designation, important business with the government brought Felix from Burmah.

And thus Dr. Carey, with two of his sons, Felix and William, united in laying hands on the third. "I trust," said the good father, "this will be a matter of everlasting praise. Oh, praise the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together. To me the Lord has been very, very gracious. I trust all my children love the Lord, and three out of four are actually engaged in the important work of preaching the Gospel among the heathen, two of them in new countries."

CHINESE WOMEN.

A Chinese father has absolute power over all his family, even to the selling them as slaves, or the taking of their lives; but self-interest and affection operate so strongly as to make heinous sins against sons uncommon as in western lands. A daughter, however, has not the same safeguards. She has many duties, but no rights. Her advent in the family is always deprecated, and is often not endured. In consequence of the almost universal poverty, the prevailing thought concerning her is, how to spend the least possible for her, how to get the greatest amount of service from her, and how to dispose of her in marriage most profitable. In entering into the marriage relation, which she does when about fifteen years of age, she depends solely on the will of the elders of her household, who select her partner for life, and decide, without consultation with her, in what family her lot is to be thenceforth cast. If her husband die before her father-in-law, her second marriage would be considered a reproach and disgrace. She remains, therefore, sharing the family food and labor, as much a part of her father-in-law's household, as before her husband's death. Unlike the similar case among the Israelites, it would be illegal for her to marry one of her husband's brothers, or even any person with the same surname. When a husband and father dies, his property, unless his sons choose, as is oftentimes convenient, to use it in common, is divided equally among them. They then take turn in feeding the mother an equal length of time. Daughters do not inherit. Baptist Missionary Magazine.

Temperance.

The Woman's Temperance Union is a new monthly paper published at 1020 Arch Street, Philadelphia, price 50 cents a year. We have received No. 1, from which we make two or three extracts.

RETRIBUTION AND REMORSE.

In a recent account of the work of the Woman's Temperance Union of New York, Mrs. Helen E. Brown communicates to the Daily Witness, among other facts, the following painfully significant incident:

"A thrilling incident was in connection with a drinking-saloon which had been visited. The place is one of 'great respectability,' frequented by the better class. About a month ago one of the customers had the 'misfortune' to overstep the bounds of moderate drinking and decorum, and was forcibly ejected from the premises by the proprietor. It was feared from the first that the young man was mortally injured, and so great was the terror of the rum-seller, in view of the results to himself in case death should ensue, that he was completely prostrated. His wife tried in vain to comfort him, and wished to call a physician, but the man refused all consolation and advice, saying: 'Can a doctor cure a broken heart?' The victim of his cruelty died, and when the long train of funeral carriages passed the house, fingers were pointed from them, like mute sign-boards, indicating—'There, there's the house! There, there's the murderer!' The miserable man, who had risen from his bed to look at the procession, saw the fingers! Each one was like an arrow of remorse to his soul, which curdled the blood in his veins, and sent him reeling back to his pillow. Shortly the officers of justice entered for his arrest. His wife protested: 'He is ill; why disturb him?' 'Good woman,' they replied, 'cease your excuses; he cannot evade the law.' They thought he was feigning sickness, and proceeded to their work; but as they lifted him from his bed, he fell back, groaned and died! As a sequel to this terrible fact, illustrating, even more forcibly, the soul-destroying effects of this unholy traffic, the wife and daughter of this man continue the business on the same corner! Much prayer has been offered that they may become convinced of their wrong-doing, and may close their saloon."

WHISKY IN A PALACE CAR.

BY M. T. L. One morning not long since we entered one of those elegant coaches to be found on all the great railway lines, in these days when traveling is reduced to a fine art, and took a seat for a long day's ride. Presently three gentlemen came in, and seated themselves near by.

One was a man of about fifty, low voiced and calm in manner, and evidently accustomed to ease. The second was gay and jovial, little evidence of culture, save in his fine broad-cloth and spotless linen. The third a tall, slender young man, of quiet appearance, might have passed for a bank clerk or professional man.

As the train moved on, however, they began to talk of business matters, and so my astonishment I found they were all in the liquor trade. The first a distiller, the second a wholesale dealer, the last an agent.

Any one not familiar with the traffic would have been struck with the free and easy way in which they discussed their terrible business, with no shame, no fear, and no conscience. They talked of whisky as if it had been bread, and after a time the dealer closed a bargain for one hundred and fifty barrels, and we began to think what that meant—one hundred and fifty barrels of whisky! What characters, what hopes, what happiness could be drowned in that; what home love, and all sweet things in life, could be swept away; what crime, and disaster and death lay in those barrels of whisky, bought and sold with such a nonchalant air.

Then the agent told of his disappointment in finding that one of his old customers had purchased fifty barrels of what he termed "poor stuff" from another man.

"The distiller replied, with a smile, 'What if that poor whisky kills off your customers up there?'"

"Very well," said the dealer, "I would like to have some of them killed off so I can get a new lot."

Then they all laughed at the horrible wit.

"A new lot,"—that meant boys pure yet—in the homes of a village, somewhere; meant young men, with life all before them