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WHOLE SERIES.
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POETRY.

The Stranger.

BY MRS. HUNT-MORGAN.
Rev. iii. 29. Heb. iii. 15.
Loud howls the tempest:
Madly and shrill;
Down sweeps the storm wind,
O'er the hills and dells;
The swollen brook is dashing,
The bent trees are crashing,
The lightning is flashing,
Deadly and chill!
But there is a stranger
Stands at the door,
Wounded and weary,
Lone and foot-sore;
And 'mid the wild mocking
Of tempest's mad rocking,
That stranger is knocking,
Persistently o'er—
"Open! open! 'tis I! 'tis I!
I come to warn of danger nigh,
Danger broods on the tempest's wing,
I hear the spirits of evil sing!
Open, or woe will be your lot!"
He waited—BUT THEY OPENED NOT.

Rushed had the tempest
Out from the dell;
Softly the moonlight
Glimmered and fell;
The damp leaves were flitting,
The moonlit drops glittering,
The sleepy birds twittering,
"Rest now, all's well!"
But that lonely stranger
Stands at the door,
Restlessly knocking,
Still o'er and o'er—
"If 'mid the storm's rushing,
And water-spout's gushing,
And mountain-streams' flushing,
Ye heard not before,
—Surely, surely, ye hear me now!
I wait; the night-rain dews my brow;
Storms are past, but the moonlight's glare
Is heavy with ruin! Beware! beware!
Open! and fly this fated spot!"
He tarried—BUT THEY OPENED NOT.

Drear is the dawning,
After the night;
Cold breaks the morning
Into grey light;
The torn water-lily
Lolls, drooping and chilly,
In crushed masses hilly,
Drear to the sight.
But lo! the lone stranger
Knocking there still,
Bending with sorrow,
Constant in will!
And while he is sleeping,
The sod with his weeping,
They seem to be sleeping,
Loudly their fill.
"Open, open, to me, to me,
I've waited long and patiently,
Danger comes with the morning gray
I'm weary, open, without delay;
Pity my woe, my weary lot!"
He pleaded—BUT THEY OPENED NOT.

Full was the moonlight,
Sultry with heat,
Pouring its fevers
Down through the street.
Then came an appearing,
An unspoken fearing,
That danger was near,
With hurrying feet.
But where is that stranger
Stood at the door,
Wearily knocking,
For hours before!
Ah! how they are flinging
The portal, and bringing
Their wail, loudly ringing!
But he waits no more!
"Open! open! but he's not there!"
Peals the shriek and despair,
"The danger comes; we thought he'd wait,
We've opened the door too late, too late!
Ruin has burst upon the spot,
They open—BUT HE WAITETH NOT."

Grand Rounds.

ASSOCIATIONAL SERMON.

The most precious things for Christ.

A SERMON PREACHED BEFORE THE
NOVA SCOTIA WESTERN BAPTIST
ASSOCIATION IN THE TEMPLE, YAR-
MOUTH, ON MONDAY, JUNE 19TH,
1876.

BY REV. JOHN CLARK, OF BRIDGE-
TOWN.

(Published by special request.)

"Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair, and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment."—JOHN XII. 3.

Some places on earth are dearer to us than others, because of certain events and circumstances connected therewith. And there are certain places mentioned in sacred Scripture which are far more interesting to us than others on account of their associations. Our thoughts revert to Calvary; for there, beneath the darkening heavens, enduring agonies and woes unspeakable, the Prince of life and glory bowed His sacred head in death, and accomplished our redemption. Our thoughts revert to Bethlehem; for there the stillness of the midnight air was broken by the music of angelic voices, proclaiming to this fallen world the advent of the long expected King and Saviour; and there He, by whom the worlds were made, hung, a helpless babe on Mary's breast. Our thoughts revert to Bethany; for there the Man of Sorrows wept, and performed one of His mightiest works; and there, with much in their personal history which is tenderly touching and

strikingly beautiful, dwelt three devoted disciples, Martha, Mary, and Lazarus.

On the occasion referred to in our text, there was a feast at Bethany. Our Lord, however, did not absent Himself on that account. A feast is none the less enjoyable because of the Saviour's presence, but infinitely more. Would to God that in all our festive gatherings we had the conscious presence of our Lord and Master! There is such a thing as glorifying God by our eating and drinking, and Christ has set us the example of doing all things to the glory of God. This feast was prepared on a special occasion, probably to celebrate the resurrection of Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary. It took place in the house of Simon, perhaps a relative of the family, a rich relative, whose rooms were more commodious and convenient to hold a feast in. Jesus was there; Judas was there; Martha and Mary were there, as also were many of the Jews. What an assembly! Simon is spoken of as a leper; but he could not have been a leper at this time, or he would not have been allowed in society at all, especially at a feast. Doubtless he was a disciple of Christ, having been healed by Him; and thus, though once a leper but now perfectly whole and well, he was willing to have the feast in his own abode. Lazarus, who had recently been raised from the dead, was one of the principal guests. But, though he was brought back to life, we hear nothing of what he saw, felt, and heard during the interval. Surely he could have told us something, we think, concerning the state of the blessed dead. It is with strange and peculiar feelings that we fix our attention upon this wondrous guest; and perhaps we have often wished that he had given us some particulars concerning his own experience. But no; he is silent. He tells us nothing about what transpired after his spirit returned to God who gave it. We can only say:

"Behold the man raised up by Christ!
The rest remaineth unrevealed;
He told it not, or something sealed
The lips of that Evangelist."

Martha was there, still busy; she was in her element, serving Christ, waiting at the feast; anxious to do all she possibly could to make it pass off pleasantly and well, being naturally desirous that all things should be done decently and in order. Mary was also there; still the same in character, still the same in disposition. She was not so busy and stirring as her sister was. She was thinking, and waiting her time. And when the fittest moment was come, she took the alabaster box of ointment, very precious, and broke it over the head of Jesus; and then she "anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment." It is to this anointing of Jesus by Mary that we invite attention to-day.

IT WAS A COSTLY ACT.

The Evangelist tells us that she took a pound of spikenard, and not spikenard of an ordinary quality, but the very best that could be obtained; it was "very costly." Brethren, let this be our motto: *The best of everything for Jesus!* Jesus deserves the best crowns we can weave, the best gifts we can render, and the best service we can possibly perform. Religion is worth just what it costs us; if it costs us nothing it is worth nothing. True religion will cost us heart-pangs and heart-throbs; true religion will cost us deep anxiety and many tears; true religion will cost us constant watchfulness, self-denial, and earnest prayer. We need not think of being religious and walking to heaven "in silver slippers." The way is often rough, and our shoes must be "iron and brass." There is a hard battle to fight, and we must "be faithful unto death." Unless we wear the Saviour's yoke, we cannot share the Saviour's glory. We must be willing to pay the cost; we must be willing to make the sacrifice. Mary was willing. She had this box of ointment, very costly; but she would not

use it for herself; she brought it forth into the midst of that assembly, and anointed Jesus with it. Let us act in the same way, giving all we can to Jesus. And after we have given the very best, yea, all we have, we give but very little compared with what He has given for us. We well might blush as we think of many who have given more costly gifts, and who have made more painful sacrifices than we have ever done, that the tidings of salvation might be carried to distant lands and told to all mankind. Were all the members of our churches to devote their substance as well as their persons to the Lord, all our various organizations would be carried on with greater efficiency and more success. But alas! are there not many, very many, in our midst who reap the harvests for themselves and leave nothing but the gleanings for the Lord? It is said of Joseph Alleine that, "when other men gave little out of much, he gave much out of little; and while they heaped and gathered up, he dispersed and scattered abroad." May we learn from Mary's example to give, not meagrely and regretfully, but freely and cheerfully, even as God hath prospered us. Thus, and only thus, shall we be able to sing from our hearts the words we have often sung before, but, it may be, without reflection and without sincerity:

"Were all the realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

Mary anointed Christ with ointment of spikenard which was "very costly."

IT WAS A PUBLIC ACT.

There are many things that we must attend to in private. These private duties we must never neglect. We must never forget to enter into our closet, and shutting the door upon the world, have fellowship with God. We must never forget the reading of God's word in private. In a word, we must never forget any private obligation that devolves upon us. But there are public duties to be attended to as well. We are instructed and required to serve God in public as well as in seasons of quiet retirement. There was a large assembly at this feast at Bethany, and Mary might have been tempted to put off the anointing of Christ till another opportunity presented itself. But she did not yield to any such temptation. Though the house was filled with guests, she took the ointment and anointed Christ therewith. Why should she be ashamed? She was neither abashed nor ashamed, and thus before them all, she took the box of ointment, the "pound of ointment, very costly, and anointed the feet of Christ, and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment." We want a religion that will bear the daylight. We want a religion that men can look at, and test, and try. We want a religion that will bear to be scrutinized by all sorts and classes of men. We must stand out boldly on the side of Jesus. We must lift the royal banner high. We must be determined to know nothing among men, but Christ and Him crucified. Before men and women, before rich and poor in that assembly, yet losing nothing of female grace or modesty, Mary stepped forth and anointed the feet of Christ, and thus confessed Him as her Lord and Master. She did not blush to own her Saviour. And why should we be ashamed of Jesus? Is He not our King? Did He not redeem our souls from death, with His own most precious blood? Has He not subdued our mightiest foes? Was He ashamed to assume our nature? Did He shrink from suffering in our stead? No; so great was His love for us, that He bore the cross, and despised the shame; and even now He is not ashamed to plead our cause before His Father's throne; still He calls us "friends." Though we might often be ashamed of ourselves, let us never be ashamed of Jesus. Fellow Christians! bear faithful public testimony on behalf of Christ

your Saviour. You are His witnesses on the earth, and you must never shrink from any responsibility which the hand of infinite Love has laid upon you. Lift up your voice and cry, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul." Your pastor's hands would be strengthened, and their hearts encouraged, if they always found you ready to co-operate with them in every good word and work. It would be well, likewise, if those who have experienced the love of Christ in their hearts, but who hitherto have not served Him in public, would, without further hesitation, put on the Lord Jesus Christ by open profession, and let their "light so shine before men, that they may see their good works, and glorify their Father who is in heaven." "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous." None but those who follow Christ on earth shall reign with Him in heaven; and only those who confess Christ before men, will Christ confess before His Father, God.

IT WAS A LOWLY ACT.

There was no ostentation about it. Mary made no display. "Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly." Noisy streams are not always deepest; the loudest instruments do not yield us the sweetest music. Mary's piety, though it was manifest in public, was of a lowly character, and such as Jesus loves to see exhibited by all His followers. Some people make a great deal of show about their religion; about what they are, what they do, and what they give. Mary did not talk a long while beforehand about what she was going to do; she did not want to attract attention toward herself, or obtain the praise of men; but in lowliness of heart, she bowed before her Redeemer, and anointed His feet with the ointment, and wiped them with the hair of her head. What a lovely sight! Jesus is there, so soon to die; and this woman comes, calmly and quietly, and pours the ointment on the Saviour's feet; and those shining locks of hers, flowing in rich luxuriance, are used to wipe those sacred feet, which within a few short days, are to be nailed to the accursed tree. Christ must have looked upon that act with admiration. His head, so soon to be pierced with thorns, was anointed too. An act so appropriate, so beautiful was this which was performed by Mary! And it is for us in our daily calling to perform those duties which devolve upon us. Lowly though our station be, we may rest assured, that the Heavenly Householder is sure to place all His servants where they are likely to serve Him best. We need not be anxious to serve Christ in any extraordinary manner, but simply according to our position and ability, in all humility and meekness of heart. A private soldier, who, loyal to his king, faithfully performs his duty, is a nobler man than the proudest officer who fails to do his sovereign's will. True service may be rendered without ostentation or display; and true piety may be manifest even in lowliest homes. Thus we shew to the world that we have copied Mary's example, and, better still, we prove that we are the disciples of Him who is "meek and lowly in heart." It is better to be "hewers of wood and drawers of water" in the temple of God, than to be kings and princes in the palaces of sin. It is better to do little things well than great things badly.

"I would not have the restless will that hurries to and fro,
Seeking for some great thing to do, or secret thing to know;
I would be treated as a child, and guided where I go.

Wherever in the world I am, in whatsoever estate,
I have a fellowship with hearts to keep and cultivate;
And a work of lowly love to do for Him on whom I wait.

So I ask Thee for the daily strength, to none that ask denied,

And a mind to blend with outward life, while keeping at Thy side;
Content to fill a little space, if Thou be glorified."

IT WAS A DELIBERATE ACT.

It was not performed without reflection. Mary had thought about this matter much and deeply. She is always represented in Sacred Scripture as a contemplative character. She was not a great talker. The religion of some professing Christians seems to consist of little more than a certain amount of religious talk. They talk of religion on Sabbaths, at Conference meetings, and of course at funerals, but that is nearly all. They talk much but they do little. Not so with Mary. There are seven sayings recorded of Martha and Mary, but six of these sayings were uttered by Martha—only one by Mary. She talked little but she thought much. She had kept this ointment by her, we cannot tell how long. She had been waiting, and perhaps longing for the time to come when she should devote this ointment to the Lord, when she might anoint Him with it. *She kept it for His burying.* From this it would almost appear that Mary saw farther than some of the disciples did. The disciples could not understand that Jesus was to die, that He was to suffer on the cross for them; but, to us, at least, it seems probable that Mary anticipated that event. Perhaps she thought that she might not be permitted to anoint the body of Jesus at the time of His death, and thus she embraced a suitable opportunity to perform this labour of love; but however this may be, Christ put the kindest interpretation upon her conduct. She was calm and deliberate, knowing what she was intending to do. Her resolution was carefully made and faithfully carried out. It is well when lively emotion and intelligent conviction are found in the same individual. A godly martyr said that he had eleven arguments against suffering for his faith; "but, blessed be God," he added, "I can answer them all." Those arguments were a wife and ten children; and he answered those arguments as a martyr should, by dying in defence of the truth, because he thought more of Christ than he did of any created being. It was so with Mary; she had counted the cost, and, selecting the most appropriate occasion, she anointed the Saviour's feet, and wiped His feet with her hair. She believed that this sacred work would be pleasing to her Lord, and that it would yield Him great refreshment. The expense seemed to her as nothing. She had received much from Jesus, much instruction from His lips, much pleasure from His presence, and much mercy from His hands. All this she felt and understood, "And so she must pay her homage to that greatly misapprehended One, the faithful and true Witness, with these unwonted and royal honours." "She held at this hour," as one has said, "a deeply mysterious office, in the name of all the angels and good spirits—of all elect souls of Christian humanity—yes, it may be said by the most secret commission of the Father in heaven Himself, as in the loftiest consecration of the Holy Spirit, who made her the priestess to anoint the great High Priest for his death journey. She anointed the Lord, with the presentiment of, as well as with the spiritual and divinely beautiful sympathy with, that death itself. Her action was a prophetic one. She was conscious of what she did." We would not check the feeblest impulse of generosity, nor the faintest promptings to obedience, but we plead for clear and intelligent perceptions of individual responsibility, and the faithful discharge of every duty devolving upon us as the followers of Jesus Christ. We are called to engage in the highest and noblest service. Let us understand our duties well, and render conscientious and intelligent obedience to our Master who is in heaven. "And if any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." Like David let us pray,