

The Sunday-School.

FIRST QUARTER,
LESSON IV.—Jan. 22.

THE FIRST MIRACLE IN CANA.

John 2: 1-11.

Commit v. II. Read John 10: 22-42.

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

LEARN BY HEART.—Vs. 5, 11; John 1: 14.

HISTORICAL SETTING.

Time.—The latter part of February (or early in March), A. D. 27. Two or three days after the last lesson.

Place.—Cana of Galilee, either Kefer Kannah on the Tiberias road, nearly four miles northeast of Nazareth, or more probably Kana (or Kanat) el-Jelil (Galilee), about eight miles north of Nazareth. It was the home of Nathanael.

Jesus.—At the very beginning of his active ministry, with five or six followers.

John.—Still preaching in the wilderness of Judea.

Disciples.—Andrew, Peter, John, probably James, Philip, Nathanael.

Place in the Life of Christ.—Early spring of the first year of his public ministry immediately after the gaining of his first five adherents.

The Year of Beginnings.

A WEDDING AT CANA.—Vs. 1, 2. *And the third day, reckoning from the day when Jesus started for Galilee. There was a marriage. Including the marriage feast. And the mother of Jesus was there. Present as a friend possibly a relative. And both Jesus was called (invited) and his disciples, the five or six who accompanied him.*

Jesus and the Home. The fact that Jesus necessarily, as the Son of God, remained unmarried has led many to imagine that celibacy was the highest and purest mode of life. The Bible view is just the opposite. Marriage was ordained in Eden, and was sanctified by Jesus' first miracle. To the family pertain the noblest ideas of human love, the best illustration and type of divine love.

THE FAILURE OF SUPPLIES.—Vs. 3-5. *And when they wanted wine. Probably the family of Cana was in humble circumstances and hence their supply was limited. The mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, What have I to do with thee? Everything depends on the tone of voice, which we may be sure was courteous and loving. Mine hour is not yet come. Jesus does not deny her request, but implies that he will relieve the want at the best time. His mother saith. This implies that she understood Jesus as really granting her request. Unto the servants. Who might not otherwise obey. Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. This, the "Golden Text" of the lesson is a noble motto for every life.*

THE DEED THAT WAS BOTH A WITNESS AND A SIGN.—Vs. 6-10. *Six waterpots of stone. These stone jars of ancient make may still be seen in the villages of Palestine. Two or three firkins apiece. The jars would hold seventeen to twenty-six gallons. Fill the waterpots with water to the brim. Implying no room for adding anything to the water. Unto*

them (the servants). Draw out now into pitchers or wine cups. Governor (R.V., "ruler") of the feast. Either the head waiter or, probably, the chairman elected from among the guests, who regulated the course of the feast. But the servants . . . knew the source of the wine. Every man, etc. This is the universal custom. Have well drunk. "Have drunk freely." Thou hast kept the good wine until now. A certificate to the quality of the wine.

RELATION TO THE TEMPERANCE QUESTION.—It is likely the wine Christ made had no intoxicating qualities. It was probably the juice of the grape fresh from the vines. It is interesting in this connection to notice that in all references to the Lord's Supper, the word "wine" is not once used in the New Testament, but always the cup or fruit of the vine, so that that divine institution does not throw its influence in favor of intoxicating wine.

THIS MIRACLE A SIGN OF THE GRACE OF JESUS.—V. 11. *This beginning of miracles. The first one he wrought in his ministry. And manifested forth his glory. His true nature and work hidden under the form of a man.*

WHY DAN WASN'T EXPELLED.

He was only mischievous; but he was a little gamin in whom the faculty for ingenious mischief was abnormally developed.

It must have been that the Sunday school afforded an extensive field for the exercise of his genius that made Dan so regular an attendant.

His teacher sat always with her hand on his knee since the day when he suddenly announced that it was too hot, he was going swimming, and vaulted out of the window. But the restraining power in the gentle hand was limited, and there was no denying the fact that Dan disturbed the whole school.

One evening at a teacher's meeting after a free discussion of one side of the question, it was unanimously decided to expel Dan as a promoter of riot and rebellion in other classes.

His teacher sat silent until the superintendent asked: "Miss Alice, have you nothing to say?"

Miss Alice looked up, and with tears in her voice, said: "Nothing, only if Dan goes out, I go out. I can not give him up."

Of course that settled the question. If Miss Alice could get on with Dan, the others would not object.

When the restless spirit came over Dan the next day, Miss Alice drew him aside, "Dan," she said, "they wanted to expel you from this school, and I said 'If Dan goes out, I go out.' Now I want you to stand by me."

"Who wanted to put me out?" Dan demanded.

"No matter who, Dan; you are to stay."

Dan considered a moment, then exclaimed: "Say, Miss Alice, you're a brick!"

"That was the beginning of Dan's development. Miss Alice believed in him; she had stood by him, and she had won his heart. He was hers to mould as she would.

Perhaps it sounds commonplace to say

that Dan has become a leader in the paths of righteousness, and that he gratefully acknowledges his indebtedness to Miss Alice for all that he is. Praise God if such an ending be commonplace! To Dan and to Miss Alice it is a heart story which makes their eyes glow when they speak of it.—S. S. Times.

SIGNING THE PLEDGE.

The following reasons for signing the pledge might be pressed with advantage upon the scholars of our Sunday schools and others at this period of the year when special work in that direction should be undertaken:

1. Because the general adoption of total abstinence would entirely remove the national disgrace of intemperance and its accompanying evils.

2. Because your pledge would be a practical protest against the ruinous drinking customs of the day.

3. Because science declares that alcohol injures the body. (This is confirmed:

(a) By careful experiments, which prove that even small doses of alcohol, by numbing the nerves and senses, always lessen the skill for fine work of hand or brain; (b) By the experiments of athletes, travellers, Arctic explorers, soldiers, sailors and others engaged in hard toil; (c) By the statistics of insurance and Sick Benefit Societies; (d) By the experience of the London Temperance Hospital that "all kinds of disease" can be treated better without alcohol. Sir Andrew Clark, one of the finest physicians of the land, said, "Health is always injured by it—benefitted, never."

4. Because total abstinence is safest for the individual. Every year a large number of those who drink overstep the line of moderation and become habitual drunkards, entailing a fearful inheritance on their offspring.

5. Because the home circle will be the safer if strong drink is excluded. The havoc wrought by drink upon the home-life of the nation is beyond description. For the sake of the children, parents should set a safe example.

6. Because the example of personal abstinence is the most effective means of winning the intemperate to paths of virtue and sobriety. "Do as I say" counts for little; whereas "Do as I do" is bound to carry weight.

7. Because to deny ourselves for the sake of others is a Christ-like act, which will be rich in blessing to ourselves and others.

The Majesty of the Bible Precepts.

There is no weakness in them. No one of them is emasculated by the modern prefix, "try." The Bible says, "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded." "Cease to do evil; learn to do well." "Depart from evil, and do good." And thus through the whole book, from Genesis to Revelation a moral precept is never prefixed with the enfeebling "try" now so universally common. Just think of the Bible saying, Try to depart from evil! Try to cleanse your hands, ye sinners! Try to speak the truth to one another! And instead of "Do not kill," "Do not steal," "Do not commit adultery," suppose we had "Do try not to kill; Do try not to steal, Do try not to commit adultery!"—Selected.

Mental and spiritual conformity to God's will is a matter of transformation. It is the only way to prove what is God's good, acceptable, reasonable, perfect will.—Christian Standard.

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Nothing is more real than what is spiritual, as approaching nearest to the nature of all reality, namely, God himself.—Thomas Boston.

Pains, Like the Poor, are Always With Us.—That portion of man's life which is not made up of pleasure is largely composed of pain, and to be free from pain is a pleasure. Simple remedies are always the best in treating bodily pain, and a safe, sure and simple remedy is Dr. Thomas' Electric Oil. You cannot do wrong in giving it a trial when required.

It is a good and safe rule to sojourn in every place as if you meant to spend your life there, never omitting an opportunity of doing a kindness or speaking a true word or making a friend.—Ruskin.

They Wake the Torpid Energies.—Machinery not properly supervised and left to run itself, very soon shows fault in its working. It is the same with the digestive organs. Unregulated from time to time they are likely to become torpid and throw the whole system out of gear. Parnee's Vegetable Pills were made to meet such cases. They restore to the full the flagging faculties and bring into order all parts of the machinery.

Every day is a fresh beginning. Listen, my soul, to the glad refrain; And, spite of old sorrow and older sinning, Take heart with the day and begin again.

AFTER SHAVING, FOND'S EXTRACT



COOLS, COMFORTS AND HEALS THE SKIN, ENABLING THE MOST TENDER FACE TO ENJOY A CLOSE SHAVE WITHOUT UNPLEASANT RESULTS. Avoid dangerous, irritating Witch Hazel preparations represented to be "the same as" Fond's Extract, which easily sores and generally contain "wood alcohol," a deadly poison.