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The Sabbath-School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

[FROM PELOURET'S NOTES.]

Second Quarter.—Lesson 3.—April 18.

THE FIRST MIRACLE.—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: XI.

JESUS GOES TO A WEDDING IN CANA.—Vers. 1, 2. 1. And the third day. From the calling of Philip (1: 43), the last date given, making a week in all. If that was Sunday, as Eldersheim calculates, the third day would be Wednesday, the day on which the weddings of Jewish maidens took place. This would give Jesus and his disciples three full days to travel from Bethany (Bethabara) the 80 or 90 miles to Cana. There was a marriage or a marriage feast, which was frequently celebrated for several (seven) days. Cana of Galilee. We are unable to fix with certainty the site of this village. Two villages of Galilee claim to be the Cana of this chapter. There are excellent authorities in favor of either site. Schaff and Eldersheim favor the traditional site at Kefr-Kenna, on the road to the Lake of Galilee, about 15 miles distant. And the mother of Jesus was there. That she was a relative is confirmed by the fact that she speaks to the servants as if she was quite at home in the house.

And both Jesus was called (invited), and his disciples. The form of the sentence shows that our chief attention is to be fixed on Jesus. It was perfectly natural that Jesus, even if a strange Jewish Rabbi, should be invited to the wedding; but especially as his mother was there and a relative, and as Nathanael, whose guest Jesus was, must have been well known in the village.

JESUS AT THE WEDDING. (1) Jesus sanctifies true earthly joy. We need not wonder to find the Lord of life at that festival; for he came to sanctify all life,—its times of joy, as its times of sorrow. (2) Jesus consecrates marriage, and the sympathies which lead to marriage. He stamps his image on human joys, human relationships. For it is through our human affections that the soul first learns to feel that its destiny is divine. (3) Jesus sanctifies social life and friendship. And wherever in social life we can take Jesus with us, there it is safe and proper to go. (4) Jesus has laid special emphasis on the value of the home, by working his first miracle and manifesting his transforming glory in a home, and on the occasion of the founding another home.

THE FIRST MIRACLE OF JESUS.—Vers. 1-10. Better, when the wine failed. Probably the family of Cana was in humble circumstances, and hence their supply was limited. "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." The mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. Why did Mary appeal to Jesus? The family in which she was a guest was in a serious difficulty. Mary had learned during the 30 years Jesus was with her in Nazareth, to have perfect confidence in him that in some way he would be able to relieve the difficulty.

Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? The English words confer an impression of disrespect and harshness which is absent from the original. "Leave me to myself; let me follow out my own course." It serves to show that the actions of the Son of God, now that he has entered on his divine work, are no longer dependent in any way on the suggestion even of his mother.

His mother saith unto the servants, Whatever he saith unto you, do it. And there were set there six waterpots of stone. The waterpots were near at hand, in the court or at the entrance to the house. Considering the many washings and purifications of the Jews, there is nothing to surprise us in the number or in the size of the waterpots. The reference to the manner of the Jews is added for the Gentile readers, for whom John especially wrote.

Everything is here narrated, as Chrysostom observes, so as to exclude any possible semblance of collusion. Containing two or three firkins apiece. The six pitchers (or jars), holding from 18 to 27 gallons each, would together hold from 108 to 162 gallons.

Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. Our attention seems here to be called to the great quantity of water changed into wine.

WHY SUCH AN AMOUNT? In Palestine, a wine-growing and wine-consuming country, where it is not merely a beverage, but the beverage of the common people, four or five barrels of wine would not seem so extraordinary a supply as it would

to us, nor would it produce any such effect in the consumption as an equal amount of the ordinary wines of today. At marriage feasts at the present day in the East, "all of the guests are expected to drink at least to the health of the bride and the bridegroom. . . . This large quantity of wine would provide but little for each guest, considering the habits of the people, who crowd into the house to partake of the feast as long as the provisions last, being pressed to do so by their hospitable host or master of the feast, who also urges, and sometimes compels, even the passers-by to come and drink to the health of the bridegroom and bride."

And he saith unto them. The moment of the miracle seems to lie between verses 7 and 8. Draw out now. The servants are bidden to bring to the table (in smaller jars or bowls) part of the contents of the larger vessels. And bear unto the governor of the feast. Literally, the ruler of the dining-room and tables with three couches, or sets of cushions. It was his place first to taste each new lot of wine, and test the food.

When the ruler of the feast had tasted. . . and knew not whence it was: but the servants. . . knew. The independent witness to the two parts of the miracle establishes its reality. The ruler of the feast declares what the element is, the servants knew what it was.

And when men have well drunk. There is clearly no reference to the present feast. The ruler of the feast is but alluding to the corrupt customs and fashions among men, and not to aught that was necessarily going on before his eyes; nay, to something that was certainly not so; for such the Lord would have as little sanctioned by his presence, as he would have helped it forward by a wonder-work of his own. The speaker does no more than to refer to a common practice.

JESUS MANIFESTING HIS GLORY.—Ver. 11. This beginning, etc., (better, This, as a beginning of his signs) did Jesus in Cana; i. e., it is the first miracle of all, not merely the first at Cana. Miracles. Signs. The value of the work was rather in what it indicated than in what it was. The miracles and wonders of Jesus were all signs (1) of Christ's divine nature; (2) of his mission as from God; (3) of his good will toward men; (4) of the truths that he taught; (5) of the nature and character of God.

And his disciples believed on him. The faith which had been germinating in their hearts under his words and in his presence was now confirmed. They were now sure that they had found the Messiah.

CHRIST'S EXAMPLE AS TO WINE. Inferences. (1) It is a wrong inference to suppose that Christ would have used wine under different circumstances or in our day. (2) It is a wrong inference to imagine that the precepts and principles of Christ do not require total abstinence in our circumstances. Differences. It is of the utmost importance to observe and remember the difference between those times and ours. The chief agents of intoxication now are something very different from the wines of those days, and altogether unknown to them.

CONCLUSIONS. (1) Whether among the Jews, and in our Saviour's day, there was a wine that contained no alcohol is hard to be determined, although in regard to the significance of the Hebrew yayin, and the Greek oinos, there can be but little doubt. These words simply meant the liquid that came from pressing the grape. There is no evidence of any further idea associated with it. It was not fermenting fluid but grape-juice. There certainly can be no proof that the wine Christ made was intoxicating, or that its superior goodness was in anything but a fine flavor. In this wonderful miracle we cannot for a moment suppose that Jesus would minister to intemperance, either in that age or in any other. It is clear that neither Christ's precepts nor his example justifies the ordinary drinking usages of society of to-day, and all its attendant evils. As to the Lord's supper, the word "wine" is not once used in the New Testament in connection with it, but always "the cup" or "fruit of the vine," so that that divine institution never lays a feather's weight in favor of intoxicating wine. The principles of the Bible and of Christ are wholly on the side of temperance.

PRACTICAL.—1. Jesus sanctified by his presence the joys and duties of daily life.

2. That place of enjoyment is safe where Jesus may go with us, where we would his presence.

3. Wherever we go we should take our religion with us, not always ostentatiously in words, but always in sympathy, in kindly deeds. He that leaves his religion at home has no true religion.

4. We should go to Jesus with our needs, even our temporal wants.

5. The world gives the best first, but at last it biteth like a serpent. Jesus gives the best things last. The farther we go with him, the greater the good, the deeper the joy.

A DUTY OF MOTHERS.

There are certain old-fashioned virtues, such as honesty, truth-telling, a fastidious sense of honor, and a regard for the performances of duty as imperative, whatever the circumstances, which mothers should inculcate in the nursery. They cannot too early begin to train their children in morals. Little hands should be taught to respect the property of others. From the first years, debt should be considered disgraceful, and sturdy independence thereof made the rule of the household.

In view of the sad developments which the newspapers continually bring to light, honored names stained, families plunged into the depths of misery, communities overshadowed, institutions wrecked, widows and orphans plundered, and the long catalogue of ills with which we are familiar, is it not time to ask Christian parents to bestir themselves? There seems to be a lowering in the moral tone in society. People forget that they are responsible to God. They ignore the awful fact of his sovereignty. Should not greater emphasis be laid upon doctrinal as well as practical education in the home?

If the Bible be taken as the rule from which there can be no appeal, the Ten Commandments erected as the standard, and everything in the daily life be referred to this question, "What is duty to God in this matter?" the next generation will stand on a higher plane than the present.

Duty to our neighbor must be built upon a right understanding of duty to God. It depends upon fathers and mothers to bring children up in the atmosphere of reverence for God's authority, and of obedience to law, and this from the first. The mother's work begins with the babe in her arms.

"GOOD-MORNING."

A cheery "Good-morning" often sends a ray of sunshine streaming through the innermost recesses of a household, resting there all the live-long day, and again follows hastening footsteps into the marts of business, lighting up and brightening "the ways of the world" as it goes. A hearty "Good-night" often soothes many a troubled mind to rest, and heals the wounds which have either come anew to a struggling soul, or been reopened by the harsh words or deeds that are spoken or done, in season or out of season, as the daily battle of our life progresses.

"Good-morning," with a heartfelt wish for blessings in the tone of its utterance, cheers the heart of faint and fearful ones, and softens many a hard spot that has place, by inheritance or cultivation, in the breasts of humanity. The love-light that beams from the eye with such good words lights many a weary spirit to a chamber of rest and peace, and to a land of pleasant dreams. And words of salutation are in order at all hours of the day and in every corner of the household.

The homes where "Good-morning" and "Good-night" are carefully and lovingly said one to another, are the homes of the world where good thoughts are generated, where good deeds have place, and from whence go out good lives.

NO SCOLDING.

If you wish to make your family and neighbours happy—if you would see calmness and evenness of temper developed in your children—if you would lighten the cares and smooth the path of the companion of your bosom—do not irritate or scold, or be in a passion when your humour is crossed, but remember that others have hearts as well as yourself, and let the sunshine of Christian meekness and gentleness always beam from your eye. How happy will be the circle of such in such a case. Aye, this Christian temper is about the only requisite to make the fire-side happy—places which husbands and children will regret to leave, and be glad to return to. Then let the husband be indulgent to the annoyances of his ever-working and often overworked wife; and let the wife always meet him with smiles when he comes home perplexed with the cares of business; and let both be forbearing under their mutual imperfections, and homes will be more as God intended them to be.

FARM HINTS.

RAW BONE FOR HENS.—It is said that raw bone has been proved by analysis to contain every part of an egg, white, yolk, and of course shell. It should be constantly kept in a special place in the pen or apartment of laying hens, as they will consume large quantities of it, and it goes chiefly to egg-production. Granulated is the best form in which to place it before adult fowls, and in this shape it keeps fresh longer than when ground into meal. Bone is one of the principal ingredients in the composition of most of the "egg foods" in the market.

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