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FRIDAY, JANUARY 20, 1905.

Good Work of Chamber of Commerce.

Since 1891 the Chamber of Commerce has been actively and aggressively engaged in trying to have the boundaries of our city extended. During the last fourteen years our city has increased enormously in its wealth, trade and general prosperity. But the boundaries of the city, with the exception of the Lee District, have not been increased since 1867, at which time the population of the city was less than 51,000 people. To-day there are over 85,000 people living within this restricted area, while the number of those living in the adjacent suburbs would carry the total population of the natural citizens of Richmond to perhaps 135,000. As it has been well said by President E. G. Leigh, of the Chamber of Commerce, "The fact that the new Constitution prohibits special acts for the extension of corporate limits added immensely to the difficulties of securing this greatly needed legislation." These difficulties were met and overcome by the bill which was drawn by Colonel George Wayne Anderson when a member of the General Assembly and was earnestly and successfully supported not only by Colonel Anderson, but by the Chamber of Commerce. As a result of this bill the City Council is now proposing a plan for the enlargement of the city's area, which can be done legally and in due form for the great and enduring benefit of the whole community. The Chamber of Commerce has acted with great wisdom in calling a general meeting for the discussion of this most important question and for the arousing of public interest which so justly belongs to the question of this far-reaching importance. The wealth, the happiness, the financial welfare of Richmond and its sister communities all demand an early extension of our city's limits and the Chamber will add but further to its already distinguished services by continuing its earnest efforts for this most desirable end. It is also of interest to note that at the request of President Leigh a special committee, representing the best business intelligence and character of this community, has been appointed for the specific purpose of making an impartial examination of the work of the Chamber. It would seem that in view of the obvious benefits which the Chamber has conferred upon this community there could be no ground for questioning its value. Certainly the astonishing growth of our jobbing trade has shown the close correlation between the Traffic Bureau of the Chamber of Commerce and the commercial prosperity of our city.

It was clearly said by President Spencer before the Interstate Commerce Commission last week the greatest competition not between individual shippers, but between different cities for rates or conditions that will give an advantage in the struggle for trade. The Traffic Bureau of the Chamber of Commerce has been a strong tower of defense for the interests of Richmond by furnishing an expert railroad man whose duty it was to see that no other city gained an unfair advantage over Richmond in the matter of freight rates. How well this duty has been performed is attested by Richmond's marked growth in all those lines of business where railroad rates are of prime importance and for that matter there is none in Richmond—wholesale or retail, employer or employe, manufacturer or distributor, lender or borrower, real estate owner or real estate renter—that is not vitally and daily affected by the freight rates to and from this city. Had we be discriminated against the consequent loss of trade would affect not only those whose money was invested in this particular venture, but every other business and person in the city would be to a greater or less degree the damaged thereby done to the community as a whole. We have no doubt that the able committee whom President Leigh has appointed will bring in a report that will convince even the most skeptical of the importance and essential services that have been rendered to this city by the Chamber of Commerce as a whole and by the Traffic Bureau especially, and we heartily commend the suggestion of President Leigh that the fund necessary for continuing this essential adjunct for our commercial life be not raised by the haphazard method. The president and Board of Directors of the Chamber of Commerce are not mendicants; they are public-spirited citizens, serving without any pay except the all too tardily given thanks of those who but for this work would have had to go to the wall or find other means for protecting themselves in the present struggle for trade. It is their due and the city's advantage that sufficient funds for the conduct of the Chamber of Commerce be freely and cheerfully supplied.

The whole city gains the benefit of the Chamber's work and each and every citizen should bear his part of the necessary expense of maintaining this institution.

Pawnbrokers.

The case of William Johnson, alias Willie Jones, who was sent to the grand jury this week for numerous thefts, is a striking example of the danger to a community of a pawnshop which is managed without regard to legal or moral obligations. In its essence a pawnshop is both useful and helpful to the poorer classes of the community and as such it is licensed and thereby made legitimate. But when a pawnbroker receives a diamond ring worth $100 from a negro laborer and pays therefor $10 or when a pawnbroker buys two overcoats worth $75 for $5, especially when the names have been cut out; there is such an evident predisposition to fraudulent practices as to arouse the gravest suspicions. In addition to the above, the negro in question had over one and twenty other pawn tickets for articles pawned since June, 1903, at which time he was discharged from the penitentiary. It was in evidence that not one of the three pawnbrokers with whom he had carried on these extensive dealings, had reported him to the police as a suspicious character, though the pawnbrokers are licensed on this specific understanding that they will report all such cases. The aid of pawnbrokers, which will unquestionably receive all sorts and conditions of articles is a great assistance to the criminal and stealing classes. Equally clear is it that the proper authorities should fully investigate this case, and if necessary revoke the license or even proceed further against the offending parties. For either the pawnbrokers were unable or unwilling to recognize theft when they saw it, in which case they should not be licensed or the police supervision of pawnshops should be made more vigilant.

Capital Punishment.

It has developed since McCue was sentenced to death that there are many persons in Virginia who are opposed to capital punishment for any crime. There have been such persons in all ages, and they have had distinguished leaders. They deny the right of government to deprive a man of his life, claiming that life is the gift of God, and therefore it cannot justly be taken away, either by the person himself or by another. But they overlook the fact, says a writer on this subject, that life is no more the gift of God than any other personal endowments or rights. A man has by gift of God a right to personal liberty and locomotion as well as to life; to eat and drink and breathe at large, as well as to exist; yet no one doubts that, by way of punishment, he may be confined temporarily in a solitary cell or perpetually imprisoned and compelled to live on bread and water.

By way of justifying capital punishment the same writer says that in a state of nature individuals have a right to guard themselves from injury and to repel all aggressions by force or precaution adequate to the object. "This results from the right of self-preservation. If a person attempts to take away my life, I have a right to protect myself against the attempt by all reasonable means. If I cannot secure myself but by taking the life of my assailant, I have a right to take it. It cannot, then, be denied that in a state of nature men may repel by force and may even justly take away life if necessary to preserve their own. When men enter society the right to protect themselves from injury and to redress wrongs is transferred generally from the individuals to the community. Once admitting the right of society under a form of government to punish for offenses, it must also be admitted that the form of punishment, even to the extent of depriving a criminal of his life, may be prescribed."

Blackstone, in the same connection, says that "it is clear that the right of punishing crimes against the law of nature, as murder and the like, is, in a state of mere nature, vested in every individual. For it must be vested in somebody; otherwise the laws of nature would be vain and fruitless. If none were empowered to put them into execution; and if that power is vested in any one, it must also be vested in all mankind; since all are by nature equal. Wherefore the first murderer Cain, was so sensible that we find him expressing his apprehension that whoever should find him would slay him. In a state of society this right is transferred from individuals to the sovereign power; whereby men are prevented from being judges in their own causes, which is one of the evils that civil government was intended to remedy. Whatever power, therefore, individuals had of punishing offenses against the law of nature, that is now vested in the magistrate alone, who bears the sword of justice by the consent of the whole community."

Blackstone was very conservative in his views on this subject, and drew a distinction between what he called offenses merely against the laws of society, which are only "mala prohibita" and not "mala in se." But he had no doubt as to the right of society to inflict capital punishment for offenses of the latter class, indeed, he says that with regard to offenses "mala in se" capital punishments are in some instances inflicted by the immediate command of God Himself to all mankind—as, in the case of murder, by the precept delivered to Noah, our common ancestor and representative: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood by man shall his blood be shed." "In other instances," says he, "they are inflicted after the example of the Creator, in His positive code of laws for the regulation of the Jewish republic, as in the case of the crime against nature."

Blackstone also quotes "that great and good man," Sir Mathew Hale, as being satisfied that "when offenses grow enormous, frequent and dangerous to a kingdom or state, destructive or highly perilous to civilized society, and to the great insecurity and danger of the kingdom or its inhabitants, severe punishment, and even death itself is necessary to be annexed to laws in many cases by the prudence of law-givers."

It is not necessary to say that this power which society assumes has in some ages been grossly abused, and men have been laughtered upon slight pretext, sometimes for the spite or the pleasure of a bloodthirsty tyrant. But because this means of punishment has been abused is no argument against its reasonable and righteous infliction. Those who contend that government has no right to take human life must also admit that nations have no right to protect themselves against an armed invasion by slaying the invaders, but must allow their enemies to triumph over them without resistance. Such a contention would be absurd. It must also be admitted, even by those who are opposed to capital punishment, that if the State has in custody a prisoner and an armed mob threatens to take the prisoner away and lynch him, the armed officers of the State not only have the right, but are in duty bound to slay the mob rather than to allow the prisoner to be taken away and executed without law.

It is a perfectly plain proposition, therefore, that the government has the right to inflict capital punishment as a means of protecting society, the only question being as to the circumstances and manner of its infliction and as to its efficacy as a deterrent. Strangely enough, those who are opposed to capital punishment argue that there are other forms of punishment more severe, and which would be more dreaded by would-be criminals, and more efficacious in preventing crime. But they prove too much. If the government has no right to inflict capital punishment, it would seem, surely, that it has no right to inflict punishment which is even worse than death. On the other hand, it is the experience of the most enlightened nations that there is no punishment which men dread as they dread the gallows, and that no punishment is as efficacious as capital punishment to prevent murder and other crimes of that degree. England has reduced the number of capital offenses to two—those of treason and murder. But with all the reforms which have come, she has not found it expedient to abolish the death penalty, nor has France or Germany or Austria, or any of the great nations of the earth. Some of the smaller nations abolished it, notably Switzerland; but it was necessary to restore it in some of the cantons of that country.

Capital punishment has been abolished in two or three of the States of this Union. Iowa abolished it in 1874, but it was restored in 1878, the argument showing from the record that during the period of its abolition crimes of violence had largely increased. New York also tried the experiment, but was compelled to restore capital punishment, and in 1888 enacted a law substituting death by electricity for hanging.

Be it remembered that this punishment is not inflicted in a spirit of malicious revenge, but for the purpose of preventing such crimes as that of which McCue stands accused. If it had been discovered that the abolition of the death penalty and the substitution of other forms of punishment would tend to prevent rather than to promote murder, and other capital crimes, Christianized society would long since have abolished it. But experience teaches otherwise, and hence it is that in Virginia we adhere to the law which was delivered to Noah, that "Whoso sheddeth man's blood by man shall his blood be shed."

Investigating Cortelyou.

It was stated in the Associated Press dispatches of yesterday that Senator Stone had made a speech in support of his resolution providing for an investigation of the charge against Secretary Cortelyou of having used his secret official information as a Cabinet officer to secure contributions from the trusts to the Republican campaign fund. This may be a play to the galleries on Mr. Stone's part, but it is surprising to us that President Roosevelt has not himself insisted upon an official investigation of these charges. Judge Parker is a very conservative man, and just before the election he made the charges, at first inferentially, and later directly and positively. It is true that when the charges were thus made President Roosevelt denied them in no uncertain way, and Judge Parker failed to produce the proof. But the circumstantial evidence was very strong, and while everybody believes that President Roosevelt is a truthful man, it was impossible for him to know everything that took place during the campaign, and as President of the United States he ought to insist upon an investigation, that it may be ascertained whether or not such methods were practiced in his campaign. Let the public have the facts.

Save the Girls.

We are gratified to know that a number of philanthropic men, notably Rev. J. T. Mastin, Dr. William F. Drewry, J. W. Williams and George B. Davis, have interested themselves in the movement recently inaugurated to establish in this State a reformatory for the benefit of wayward girls. A meeting of these gentlemen was held in Richmond on Wednesday, and Mr. Mastin, the chairman, stated that the committee was greatly encouraged; that it was strongly intimated to him that a large, desirable farm not many miles from Richmond would be offered as a gift for the reformatory and he also expressed the belief that the people of the State were in hearty sympathy with the movement.

No doubt of it. It is a reflection upon us, as a civilized community that we have no such institution in Virginia. Of course, all the means of prevention should be employed to keep the girls sweet and pure, but if in spite of all such efforts any of them go astray, kind, but firm, hands should take hold of them and lead them back into the paths of virtue, reclaim them from their sin and give them a new start in life. No matter how sinful the boy may be, society is ever ready to take him by the hand and help him to be good. But let the girl sin and she is driven to dens of infamy and to destruction. God pity her. We plead for the girl, often more sinned against than sinning. Jesus Christ did not turn away from her, but gave her forgiveness and comfort, and encouragement, and in tender mercy, bade her go and sin no more.

The Force of Example.

Information comes from Fort Gaines, Ga., that with the view of imitating the farmers who burned cotton on the streets of that town a short time ago, several boys set fire in the nighttime to a cotton warehouse, and caused its destruction, together with a quantity of cotton.

There you are, with a story and a moral; there you are, with a story illustrative of the force of example. Boys naturally look to their elders for rules of conduct, and unfortunately they are not as prone to imitate the virtues as the vices of men. Nor are boys expected to discriminate. These boys had gotten the idea that it was patriotic to destroy cotton, and they did not concern themselves as to the manner of it.

It is even so when the men of any community band themselves together to violate the law. If they form a mob and commit acts of lawlessness, they set a terrible example for the boys, and need not be surprised when the boys themselves show the same spirit.

Public Baths.

We are gratified to note that there are many persons in the community who agree that Richmond needs public baths, even if she does not need a public library. Time and again we have discussed the subject and urged upon our readers the desirability of such an institution. The baths of the Y. M. C. A. are one of its most attractive features, and are daily enjoyed by many young men and boys.

Public baths promote health, happiness and good morals, and it is to the discredit of Richmond that they are lacking in this community. The Times-Dispatch will be glad to lend its aid in promoting the movement.

There is nothing like looking on the bright side of pictures that might be darker. For instance: The Dallas (Texas) News finds much consolation in the thought that but for the boll weevil Texas might be having two-cent cotton and be compelled to reduce the acreage 110 per cent.

It looks very much like the cotton growers were in earnest about holding the staple. The official figures show that cotton exports were $24,000,000 less in December than during the same month of the preceding year, and that is a falling off of one-third.

Just what is going on to make it so we do not know, but scientists assure us that bye and bye our days will be just fifty-five times as long as they now are. That will enable Parsifal to get in a matinee performance.

The Czar is a wise man and looks far ahead. It begins to look as if his bristling up at China was just his way of bringing about a cessation of hostilities with Japan and doing it without impairing his dignity.

The press reports tell us that Rear-Admiral Prince Ouktomsky escaped from Port Arthur disguised as a laborer. Thomasky is to be congratulated and, of course, the Czar will decorate him.

A Chicago fair one who sued for $30,000 damages for breach of promise got a verdict for thirty cents, and they do say she looked like the verdict when the jury spoke.

The grand mogul who rules Morrocco is trying to get up what he is pleased to call a "holy war." General Sherman had an idea that war was anything but holy.

Now and then we read about Russian warships being sighted here and there, but it seems that the Japs are finding it difficult to sight any of them.

Four hundred libraries that Mr. Carnegie has fitted up cost about forty million dollars, and he still is in the business of giving away libraries.

David Bennett Hill has gone to Europe. He is trying mighty hard to make people believe he has really and truly retired from politics.

The railroads and the express companies manage to keep New York very well supplied with United States senators.

Governor Davis, of Arkansas, has entered upon his third term without being tamed by the weight of his honors.

Sufficiently Dead.

In relation to the sale of the Burns Bible in London for $7,800 to Bernard Quaritch, we are told by G. M. MacMillan, of Montreal, that "Scotland has not lost the Bible of her national poet. Mr. Quaritch did buy it, but since then—immediately after, in fact—Scotsmen hurried to London, purchased it from the famous collector and carried it home in triumph to Ayrshire." And so when he is sufficiently dead the poet does have honor in his own country.—Springfield Republican.

A Cure for Asthma.

The worst cases of Asthma in the world succumb readily to the one great cure that never fails. Dr. Rudolph Schiffmann's Asthma Cure almost performs miracles.

Mr. R. M. Spencer, 2380 Vermont Avenue, Toledo, O., says: "Asthma has been growing on me for three years, until last summer the attacks became so severe that many nights I spent half the time gasping for breath. Doctors seemed to give no relief whatever, and I felt there was no hope for me, when a drug clerk recommended your Asthma Cure. Its effect is truly magical and gives complete relief in from 2 to 5 minutes."

Sold by all druggists at 50c. and $1. Send 2c. stamp to Dr. R. Schiffmann, Box 893, St. Paul, Minn., for a free sample package.

VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

A Farmer's Complaint.

Editor of The Times-Dispatch:

Sir,—I read the daily Richmond Dispatch for seventeen years, and since I have subscribed to and been a constant reader of The Times-Dispatch, prompted by the profound interest I take in the political and commercial interest of our country.

Your editorial, "The President and the Railroad," in your issue of the 17th, just reminds me of a matter which has ever puzzled me, and I would read with great interest one of your editorials on this subject. You say next to agriculture the railroads are the greatest industry in America. True! But how is it that whilst the latter is the constant study with the fostering care of every legislative body, both State and national, throughout our land, the latter is left unprotected by little or no legislation from the ravenous greed of the banks, the manufacturers and consumers of their products? The railroads in their discriminating freight rates and every other money and trust combine which can collude to depress the price of agricultural products and elevate the price of the products of all other enterprises, even though manufactured from the farmers' product, it seems to me are in full organization for said purpose. No national bank is allowed to take real estate for collateral in negotiating loans, it being the security for the payment of the United States bonds.

The tobacco sold on every market meets with a buyer for the American Tobacco Trust & Co., with full power to regulate the price and drive off competition. The cotton factories, both North and South, by collusion pretty well regulate the price of that product. You may ask all the cottonseed oil mills of North Carolina to make an offer for a carload of cottonseed f. o. b. at your station on railroad, and they will all offer you same price exactly, regardless of whether their mills be 20 or 200 miles off. The railroads in their through rate on grain from the West have or did have, unless recently altered, one and the same through rate to Norfolk, Petersburg, Richmond and Lynchburg, and if a farmer with a good mill on his farm orders a carload of grain from the West he is required to pay same through rate those cities pay with the local rate from either of these cities to his station added, thus giving these city mills an opportunity to furnish his customers cheaper than he can by the difference in the weight of the product and the grain, and the farmer or consumer has it to pay.

Now it does seem just that the railroads should be required to put their rates to a price as would pay them per mile and be uniform mileage to its destination, and not allowed to make this unjust discrimination on poor unprotected farmers. Did it ever occur to you the state of things which would exist if the farmers of the whole country were to collude and determine that as they can make nothing net from their labors they would make nothing except their food and raiment, take all their products away from those engaged in all other enterprises (which is possible, but thank God not probable). The result would be the downfall of our cities and the destruction of all their enterprises. I mention this extreme situation to show that if the farmers were to collude, as all other enterprises, how clear it is they are entitled to dictate the prices of their products instead of their money combines of the country as at present.

I am glad to see Mr. Roosevelt is beginning to see and turning his attention, far as in his power lies, to the bridling of the railroads in their outrages by discriminating freight rates as well as hope of our Cuban policy being adopted as to the Philippine Islands in the near future, as other reformations which seem to have come over him since his recent election to the Presidency. It seems very much like the fulfillment of his promise to be the President of the whole country without regard to section, and in such effort on his part, it seems to me, every patriot should uphold his hands without regard to such shots as Mr. Carmack and Governor Vardaman may see fit to fire at him. He has avowed, too, his intention of never again being a candidate for presidential honors. If, as we suppose, such be his determination, there lies before him a broad field for future usefulness in healing the wounds and harmonizing the discords engendered by the eventful past through class and sectional legislation without fear or favor. I feel especially at liberty to say this of Mr. Roosevelt, inasmuch as I did my utmost to defeat his election, as I shall ever do to defeat all the nominees of the Republican party, believing, as I do, that they as a party have done more to disturb the peace and quiet of our country, and that too through their political and financial greed, than all the other political parties ever existing in our beloved land.

A CONFEDERATE VETERAN OF 72.

Mecklenburg, Va.

A Plea for the Library.

Editor of The Times-Dispatch:

Sir,—I am deeply interested in the movement to give Richmond a public library. City pride makes me interested. I do not wish Richmond to be placarded all over the United States as too poor or too ignorant to have such an institution.

I have read with close attention the articles in The Times-Dispatch and in the News Leader, both editorial and contributed, so far as I can understand the sentiment in favor of the library is almost unanimous. The opposition displayed has, according to what I have read, been based upon the assertion that Richmond would pay $300,000 for a $100,000 institution. This is a most remarkable assertion. It does not take in consideration the fact that we are assuming that the $100,000 library institution in ten years will be worth to the city of Richmond far more than the price paid for it. We cannot measure in dollars and cents accurately the advantages that will accrue to this city in ten years or twenty years from an establishment that will so thoroughly supplement our educational facilities.

It has been suggested, by an opponent of the library scheme, doubtless, that it would be well to tack on to the proposed high school appropriation $50,000 and stick the city library in a corner of the proposed high school building. Of course this would defeat the object of the movement. In any account, we read of the institutions of various cities we find mentioned city hall, school buildings, library, etc. The library has been recognized as one of the institutions of a modern, up-to-date city. To announce to the world that the city library is in the high school building would be to announce that Richmond had no city library, but was indulging in a make-shift.

It seems to me that three letters that I have seen in the two Richmond papers thoroughly answer the few objections that have been made to the city library—one signed "A P." in The Times-Dispatch, one written by Dr. Mitchell from Atlanta, and one signed "A. C." in the News Leader. These deal with the subject in a practical way, and I am sure that any unbiased individual who reads them will be convinced of the necessity for such an institution.

When our Richmond Chamber of Commerce has a meeting to make the surrounding country understand "the advantages of Richmond," can it afford to state that the city has refused to build a public library?

One other thought occurs to me in connection with the advantages of the library to Richmond that has not before been mentioned. It must be remembered that a city is composed of all classes. Have you ever thought of those who are in "the evening of life?" There is scarcely a household in which there is not a mother or father advanced in years, or a grandmother or grandfather, or, perhaps, an aged aunt. Such individuals have borne their share of "the burden and heat of the day," and the blessing to them of books upon call, to be taken home and read, cannot be estimated. It must be remembered also that these individuals have a potent influence upon the other members of the household, especially the young people with whom they come in contact. Is it not well to think of the advantage to them of a public library?

There are men working at their trades in Richmond to-day who would have made their mark in the world if they had been able to follow up through a means of a library the practical knowledge gained in their work. Though such men may not be "real estate owners," they are none the less property owners and good citizens, and it is only right and just that they should be given the same advantages that they could have if they lived in many other cities where public libraries are established institutions.

I feel sure that if the matter is looked into from a common sense standpoint, the City Council will agree that we could have no more valuable asset than a public library.

W.

January 20th in World's History

This day in the calendar of Hesiod is most propitious for the birth of men.

1646.

Frederick, elector palatine, established without any acts of violence the Protestant religion.

1662.

Three women condemned at Hartford, Conn., as witches, one of whom was hanged.

1776.

General Schuyler disarmed the Highlanders at Johnstown, N. Y., and took six hostages.

1777.

General Dickinson, with 400 militia and fifty Pennsylvania riflemen, defeated a British foraging party, took nine prisoners, 100 horses, forty wagons and a number of cattle.

1779.

Benedict Arnold condemned to be reprimanded by the commander-in-chief for misdemeanor at Philadelphia.

1779.

David Garrick, the actor, died. He formed a new era in the English stage, a reform both in the conduct and license of the drama.

1783.

Cessation of hostilities agreed upon between the United States and Great Britain.

1788.

Australia first colonized, nearly three centuries after its discovery, by Magellan. Governor Philip arrived with a number of convicts from England and established a colony at Port Jackson.

1790.

Lafayette, in the Assembly of the States General, supported the motion for the abolition of titles of nobility, from which period he renounced his own and never afterwards resumed it.

1798.

The frigate Crescent sailed from Portsmouth, N. H., as a present from the United States to the Dey of Algiers; she also carried out presents to the amount of $300,000.

1836.

Treaty of peace and commerce signed between the United States and the republic of Venezuela.

1839.

The army of the confederation of Bolivia and Peru, commanded by Santa Cruz in person, was entirely destroyed at Yungay; 2,600 killed and 3,400 prisoners. Santa Cruz immediately resigned his office.

1900.

John Ruskin died.

1903.

Colonel Arthur Lynch, M. P., placed on trial in London on the charge of high treason.

THE INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY-SCHOOL LESSON

FOR JANUARY 22, 1905.

Studies in the New Testament.

SUBJECT: The First Miracle in Cana.—John ii: 1-11.

GOLDEN TEXT: "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it."—John ii: 5.

By REV. J. E. GILBERT, D. D.,
Secretary American Society of Religious Education.

INTRODUCTION.—In the last lesson we learned that as Jesus was about to depart from the region of the Jordan and enter Galilee, He gained a new disciple named Nathaniel, through the influence of Philip. (John i:43-45.) This man exhibited excellent qualities. He was less credulous than the four who had previously accepted Christ, evidently determined to accept nothing for truth without the highest evidence. But his worth was recognized at sight by Jesus, who openly commended him, and in return received a noble confession. (John i:49.) Entering thus into the fullest confidence, Nathaniel (afterward called Bartholomew) had the high honor of giving some direction to the proposed journey of his new Master. The record is entirely silent concerning the route taken and the events by the way. With great abruptness it locates Jesus with His followers in Cana, Nathaniel's home town (John xxi:2), fully eighty miles from the scenes of John's ministry.

GUESTS INVITED.—Soon after the arrival, so soon after that nothing is mentioned before it, a marriage occurred in the village. The history omits all mention of the contracting parties, but calls special attention to the invited guests (verses 1 and 2). Mary, the mother of Jesus, was there, having come from Nazareth, a distance of nine miles. Her presence suggests that she must have been a close friend, if not a relative. And her son, so recently inducted by baptism into the prophetic office, was also called, and with Him the five disciples—John, Andrew, Peter, Philip and Nathaniel, the latter only being a fellow-townsman. A notable company was this—the entire Christian ministry, nearly one-half of the prospective college of apostles, the Saviour of the world, the most honored of women—all gathered at a wedding, and this at the opening of the Galilean ministry. What does it all mean? What a strange beginning of a great enterprise! Who could expect from it any advantage for the infant cause?

AID SOUGHT.—There is no evidence of any special design in the invitation of Jesus to this marriage. He appears to have assumed the place as an ordinary guest. But an unforeseen circumstance gave color to the occasion and brought Him into prominence. The wine gave out (verse 3), and Mary went to Him with a statement of the fact. It is not probable that she fully understood His power, for He had never displayed it, and yet it is evident that she expected His assistance to relieve the embarrassment. It is equally evident that He so understood her. His reply was in two parts (verse 4). He first declared that the matter was nothing to either of them; that they were not expected to meet such deficiencies. The form of words in English does not express this nicely, but that was all their meaning, and it was entirely respectful and decidedly Oriental. (I Sam. xvi:10.) He also said that His time for ministerial service had not yet come, a second objection to her request, and an additional reason for the other statement. He did not, in other words, consider this a duty to the host or an opportunity for His ministry.

SERVANTS INSTRUCTED.—The mother said no more to her son. There was no need to multiply words. She had gone to urge a service. He had refused the duty and opportunity. How many mothers injure a good cause by pleading even to annoyance! It is vastly better to leave the naked statement of facts to make their own impression. She doubtless felt that, notwithstanding the answer, something would be done, for she immediately gave instructions to the servants. It is a great son whose mother so confides in him that she believes a reasonable request will not be rejected; who turn away and provides for the answer which she expects. Mary had turned this whole question of the wine over to Jesus, and left Him to do what He pleased (verse 5), with only this additional part that she told the servants to obey Him. All this procedure sheds light in various directions—upon the place and relation of Mary, upon her simplicity and confidence, upon the possible significance of the event. And Jesus is thus suddenly changed from the place of a mere guest, happy with other guests, to be the custodian of authority.

VESSELS SUPPLIED.—Nothing could be more appropriate than Mary's last words. They left Jesus free to act, or not to act, according to His wisdom, but supplied Him with necessary help, so that His doings might be witnessed and attested. Indeed, the very best conditions were provided for a free and important deed, such as was actually performed. To facilitate matters still more, there were standing near at the time six stone waterpots. Their size cannot be determined, although the text says that each contained two or three firkins (verse 6), but the measure is uncertain and unimportant. These vessels were a customary part of the furniture for feast occasions, being used for purifying or washing purposes. The Jews, and especially the Pharisees, while eating washed frequently (Mark vii:3) to avoid defilement, a custom handed down by tradition. (Luke xi:39). So here stood ready for use by the Saviour vessels which might serve His purpose should He conclude to act.

ORDERS GIVEN.—The details are omitted from our narrative. Great turning points in the story only are sketched. How long a time elapsed after Mary's words to the servants, what Jesus did and said, what the servants did, how the guests behaved, we are not informed. After a little there was a change in the thought of the Master. He had said that He was under no obligations, and that His ministerial prerogative did not require anything of Him, but in a short time He was moved by a far different purpose. "Fill the waterpots," He said, and the servants filled them to the brim (verse 7). They know that water and nothing else went into the stone jars. He did nothing but command. "Draw and bear unto the governor of the feast" (verse 8), was His next order and He was obeyed. His hand touched nothing. His word touched everything. (Isaiah lv:11.) There may have been some surprise expressed on the countenances of those who were near. Does this Master propose to give cold water instead of wine? Had there been temperance advocates they would have rejoiced and they would have thought there was an intended rebuke upon the social customs of the time.

SURPRISE SHOWN.—Somewhere between the well where the water was drawn and the governor's lips—in the buckets of the servants, in the stone waterpots or in the silver goblets—that water became wine. A miracle had been wrought, and Jesus was the worker. (John iv:46.) There could have been no deception, for there was no collusion. But was it really wine? An incident settled that point. The governor, whose duty it was to receive all articles first and then to pass them to other guests, who was chosen, as an expert, so that all might be in proper form and suitable to the occasion—this governor was entirely ignorant of what had transpired. He did not know that the wine had failed, nor that any one's help had been solicited, nor that water had been provided. The servants only knew the last point (verse 9). But when the governor tasted the wine he was greatly surprised at its quality. Contrary to custom, it was served last, though really best, and he called the bridegroom and congratulated him both upon the excellent beverage and the good taste that had violated established usage (verse 10). Then it was wine and no counterfeit.

GLORY DISPLAYED.—What followed at that wedding no one knows—no one cares to know. The end had been reached for which the narrative was introduced into the gospel story. It was not the marriage but the miracle that concerned the inspired writer. The central figure was not the bride or bridegroom or Mary, but Jesus. Here in Cana He wrought His first miracle to supplement the provisions for a wedding feast. The greater fact is that there He manifested His glory (verse 11). He possessed it before even from eternity (John xxvii: 5), but it was concealed under the drapery of His flesh. Hitherto, through infancy, youth and early manhood, the divine nature had scarcely been known. Some had believed it as a deduction from certain facts that had come to them. (John i:49.) But now it was displayed before this glad company. He was transfigured. He had suddenly become to all what He was not before known to be, more than a prophet. And the grandest result of it all was this, that the five disciples who had so recently joined themselves to Him believed on Him. To be sure, it was a weak faith in its beginning, but it would be increased.

REFLECTIONS.—There have been many attempts to find attractive and interesting features in this narrative. It has been used to show that Jesus was no gloomy ascetic, out of sympathy with men, retiring from the ordinary and festive scenes of every-day life. It has been invoked to prove that His social standing and the social standing of His family was not among the extremely poor, as some have supposed. It has been microscopically examined to maintain various fancies and vagaries, having no value whatever except to amuse their inventors. It is chiefly valuable in indicating the manner of beginning the gospel ministry. Jesus was not ostentatious, but humble. He made no loud professions or ambitious claims. With a selected few He entered quietly into a small community, and there accepted courtesy as any man might do. An occasion having arisen quite out of the ordinary of ministerial function, He gently used His power, at the time hesitating on the score of propriety. But in so doing he became known. That method won His disciples. The truly great need no great event to show their greatness. (John i:14.) The light always shines.

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