

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

Lesson in the International Series for
January 6, 1901—Jesus Anointed
at Bethany.

[Prepared by H. C. Lenington.]
THE LESSON TEXT.

(Matthew 26:6-16.)
8. Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper,
7. There came unto Him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on His head, as He sat at meat.
8. But when His disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying: To what purpose is this waste?
9. For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.
10. When Jesus understood it, He said unto them: Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me.
11. For ye have the poor always with you; but Me ye have not always.
12. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial.
13. Verily I say unto you: Whosoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.
14. Then one of the 12, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests,
15. And said unto them: What will ye give me, and I will deliver Him unto you? And they covenanted with him for 30 pieces of silver.
16. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him.

GOLDEN TEXT.—She hath done what she could.—Mark 14:8.

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

From Jericho Jesus went to Bethany, arriving there Friday afternoon, March 31, A. D. 30. This marks the beginning of the last week of Jesus' life. On Saturday Jesus had supper at the house of one "Simon the leper." This man could not have been a leper at this time, having probably been healed by Jesus. He had cause for exceptional gratitude, and this supper was an expression of that gratitude.

LESSON ANALYSIS.

The Anointing of Jesus..... Vs. 6-7
False Criticism of Disciples..... Vs. 8-9
Mary's Act Commended..... Vs. 10-13
A Striking Contrast..... Vs. 14-16

The Anointing of Jesus.—While Jesus was at supper in the house of Simon, Mary came to Jesus to do an act of loving homage. This Mary was the sister of Martha and Lazarus. Her act was to anoint the head, and, according to John, also the feet, of Jesus, with oil. It was not uncommon for rabbis to be so honored, and Mary chose this method of honoring her Master. Anointing the feet was not so usual as anointing the head, and Mary's act showed extreme humility as well as affection. Another point brought out was the costliness of the ointment. To Mary nothing within her power to secure was too costly to give to Jesus.

The Criticism of the Disciples.—It was the costliness of the spikenard that furnished the basis of the criticism of the disciples. They were indignant and asked: "To what purpose is this waste?" It is interesting to note that, while all (or at the least most) of the disciples shared the feeling, it was Judas Iscariot who put this question to Jesus. This fact we learn from John's record (John 12:4-5). Judas had no love in his heart, and could not therefore sympathize with Mary's loving act. Judas, too, was the treasurer of this little company of disciples. He asks why the ointment had not been sold, and the proceeds given to his bag. He gains the sympathy of the other disciples by suggesting that it ought to have been given to the poor.

Mary's Act Commended.—Judas' argument was plausible, to most people it would be convincing. The weak point in it was that the emphasis is laid on the gift, not upon the spirit which prompted the gift. Jesus improved every occasion to emphasize the spirit behind the act. A gift to the poor is commendable, if love prompts the gift it is better by tenfold. Mary's deed was an act of love, therefore commendable in itself. But another reason for commending the deed was the fact that Jesus in the physical man could not always be with them. The indefinite poor the world would always have. Another point to be noticed is the fact that the standard of judgment has much to do with whether such an act would be waste. It would undoubtedly have been waste had it not been the spontaneous outburst of a loving heart. Following the natural impulse was infinitely better for Mary; to another Jesus would undoubtedly have taken a gift to the poor as a sign of homage to Himself, for at another time He said: "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these, my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me."

A Striking Contrast.—The last three verses of the lesson present a striking contrast to the loving act commended by Jesus. Judas, who had been the leader of the criticism against Mary at this time bargained to deliver Jesus into the hands of His enemies. This deed was undoubtedly provoked by the implied rebuke of Jesus, for Jesus' commendation of Mary was surely a rebuke to Judas. Another suggestion is that Judas had aspired to be treasurer of the kingdom Jesus was to establish. He saw his hope was not well-founded, for Jesus here spoke of His "burial" and on other occasions had foretold His death. Disappointed Judas sold his Master, and for a sum that was equal to only two-fifths of the value of the spikenard.

Grapes from Canaan.

A very little child may open a very large door into Heaven.

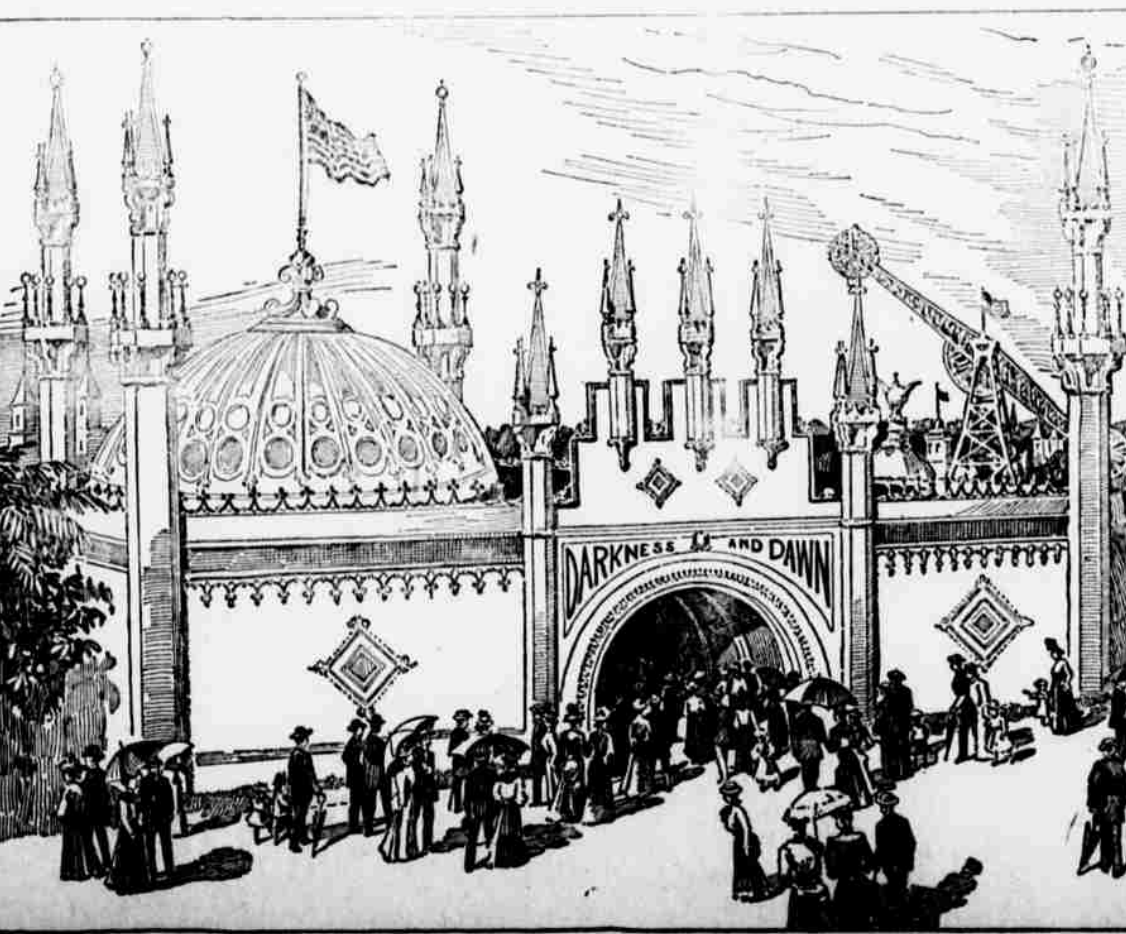
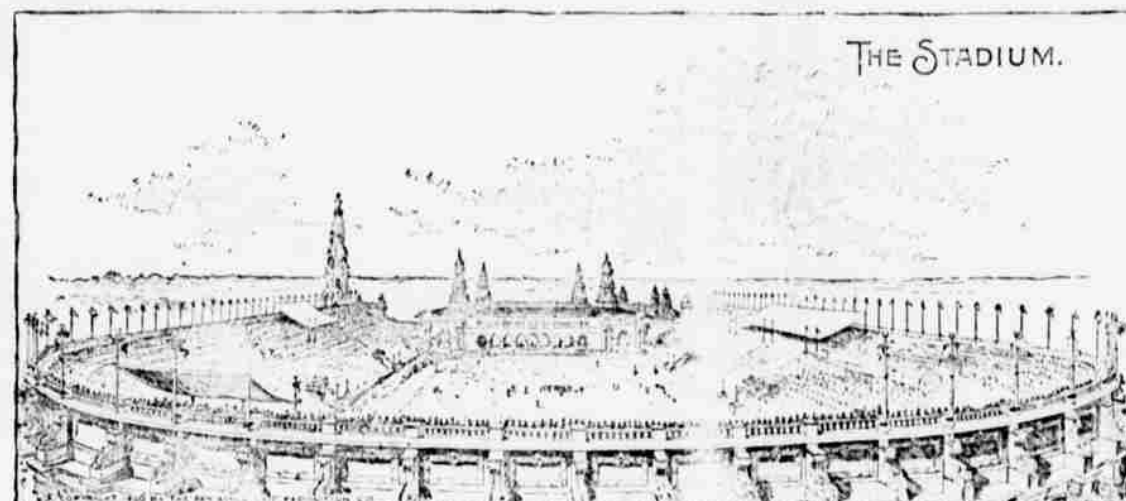
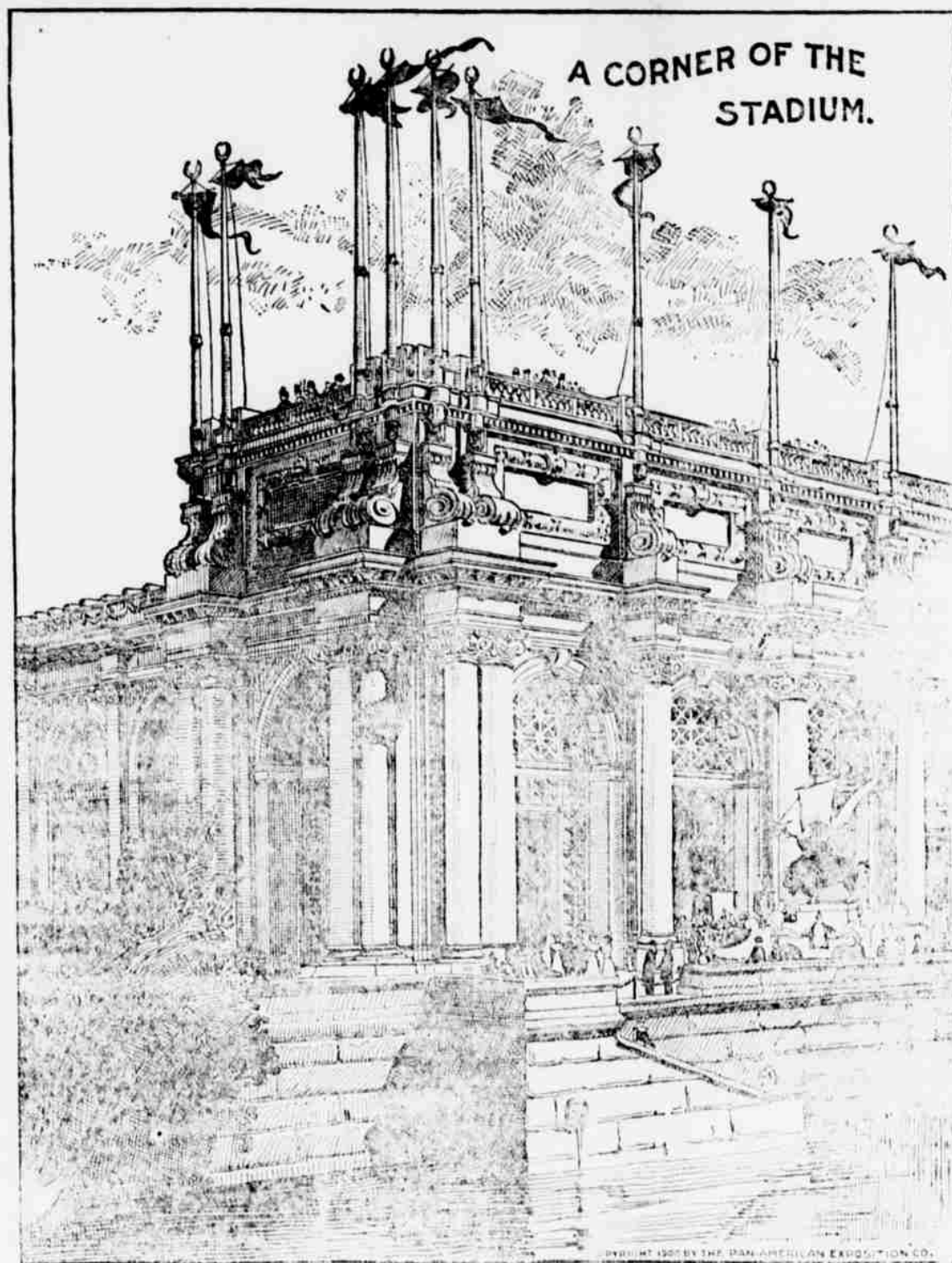
To be content with less is to have less discontent.

No coin is current with God without love's stamp on it.

It is little use lending a hand unless you give a heart.

When we think to thank God for our pleasures it will be easier to bless Him for our burdens.

It is mockery to pray that your children may be gathered home in eternity while you do nothing to keep them at home in time.—Sam's Horn.



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