

effects. The same word is rendered "goods" in ch. 1 : 6.

V. 22. *For I was ashamed to require . . . soldiers.* It was customary to guard caravans from plundering Arabs by an armed escort (Neh. 2 : 9). Ezra's caravan carried much wealth and would, therefore, be a special object of attack (8 : 25-27). But he had professed his faith in God as the protector of His people and would not, by accepting an escort, give the heathen cause to think it was only an idle boast. He, therefore, resolved to throw himself upon God's protection by fasting and prayer.

V. 23. *He was entreated of us.* God gave the protection prayed for, and the four months' journey was finished in safety (8 : 31).

II. The Trust, 24-30.

V. 24. *Then I separated twelve of the chief of the priests ; to take charge of the treasure until safely deposited in the Temple (7 : 15, 16).*

V. 25. *And weighed unto them the silver and the gold.* The poverty-stricken colony at Jerusalem could afford Ezra but little help financially. Many of them were hopelessly in debt, and had sunk into a state of serfdom to the richer nobles (Neh. 5 : 3-5). The king came to his aid with a subscription of gold and silver (7 : 15), a present of gold and silver vessels for the Temple (8 : 26) and a subscription throughout the empire (7 : 16). This treasure was now weighed out to the appointed treasurers. *The offering of the house of our God.* It was to beautify the temple that the king provided the money (7 : 27).

V. 26. *Six hundred and fifty talents of silver.* The silver talent was worth about \$1,600. The whole amount would therefore be worth more than a million dollars. *Silver vessels an hundred talents ; that is worth an hundred talents, about \$160,000. Of gold an hundred talents.* The gold talent is variously

estimated at from four to eighteen times the value of the silver talent.

V. 27. *A thousand drams.* The dram, or daric, was worth about \$5.00. *Fine copper precious as gold ;* probably some rare alloy of copper. Rev. Ver. gives "bright brass."

The whole formed an immense treasure ; variously estimated at from two to five millions of dollars in value.

Vs. 28, 29. *Holy unto the Lord ; consecrated, set apart for the service of God. A free-will offering ;* a voluntary contribution towards the Temple fund (7 : 15). It was to aid God's cause, and was therefore an offering to God. *Watch ye and keep them.* They were to guard the treasure zealously until it was delivered to the officials at the Temple. *In the chambers ;* rooms on each side of the main building set apart for the residence of the priests (1 Kings 6 : 5) and also for store rooms (Neh. 13 : 5).

III. The Journey, 31, 32.

V. 31. *On the twelfth day of the first month ;* the month Nisan, corresponding with the latter part of March and the first part of April. There were more than 5,000 people and a great many baggage animals. *The hand of our God was upon us.* Again and again these words are used. See 7 : 6 ; 8 : 22. They show how real God was to Ezra. "It is as though he felt the reviving touch of those invisible fingers at every stage of the journey." (Stanley.) *From the hand of the enemy ;* from the Bedouins of the desert. The form of divine deliverance is not stated. It may have been in preventing the enemy from making an attack, or in enabling Ezra to repel the attacks made upon them.

V. 32. *And we came to Jerusalem.* The journey occupied four months (7 : 9) At Jerusalem Ezra rested three days before proceeding to carry out his great work of reform as the Governor of Judah.

ILLUSTRATION AND APPLICATION

Then I proclaimed a fast . . . to seek of him a right way, v. 1. Well begun is half done. So declares the old proverb ; and when we read of Ezra and the people seeking God at the outset of their journey, we feel sure of a

prosperous ending to it. It took a little time, of course ; just as it takes time to pray in one's room, or to have family worship. But such time is well spent. It is no waste. Another well-worn proverb says that