

robe. The word for "sandals" indicates the shoes of a poor man.

9. *He went out, and followed.* "Follow" in the last verse is literally "keep following;" here the phrase is "kept following." Through corridor after corridor, through lane after lane, went the angel with Peter close behind. *Wist* is an old English word for "knew." He was conscious of everything, but thought he was dreaming. The suddenness of the miracle had dazed him.

IV. THE END OF THE STORY.

10-19. We now turn to the Additional Study Verses. The *first* and *second wards* were the guards, who seem to have been unconscious; then came the heavy iron gate from the prison into the city, which opened of his own accord, and they passed out. *Through one street* the angel accompanied Peter, then departed. Peter came to himself, and reason resumed its sway; he now recognized as a certainty that God had sent his angel to deliver him. The house of Mary the mother of John seems to have been one of the regular meeting places of the disciples, and in this house all night long the

Christians had been praying for Peter. *Peter knocked at the door of the gate*, which perhaps means a wicket gate within a large door, and the doorkeeper, a girl, was so delighted by hearing Peter's voice that in her confusion she left him standing outside and hastened to tell the Christians that their prayers had been answered. But this they could not believe. They first said she was mad, and then that it was not Peter, but his [guardian] angel or wraith. *But Peter continued knocking*, and when he was admitted told his wonderful story, and requested the believers to *show these things unto James* [the brother of Jesus], and to the brethren [the other apostles]. Then Peter departed, and went into another place to avoid another arrest. The closing verses of our lesson tell of the terror among the soldiers when they discovered Peter's escape, and of the execution of the keepers who had permitted it. Herod then returned to his capital city, *Cæsarea*, to meet a miserable death within a month. The account of his death given by Josephus corresponds remarkably in important particulars with the story told in Acts.

HOMILETICAL AND PRACTICAL NOTES.

HEROD.

Herod, the king, was the grandson of Herod the Great, the last king that reigned in Jerusalem. He was sent to Rome after the execution of his father, Aristobulus, where he became the companion of the debauched Caligula; which must be remembered in this study of his interest in the persecution of the Christians. Because he was a favorite of the corrupt court of Rome he was advanced by Claudius to the title of king, with a jurisdiction over Judæa, Samaria, and Idumæa, all the lands ruled over by his grandfather, Herod the Great. Christianity now had to face a foe much more powerful, if not more vindictive, than the high priest. When Agrippa moved to Palestine to take up his royal residence and authority he sought to gain the affection and loyalty of his subjects by a policy of conciliation. It was in one of the last years of the reign of Agrippa, supposed to be about 44 A. D., that he ordered the death of James. He probably saw in the Christian party a revolutionary element, thus looking at it from a purely political point of view. The imprisonment of Peter had another motive. The impressive feature of these early persecutions of the Christians is that all the motives which afterward appeared in the persecution of the Church are here present in all their force. Bigotry, political chicanery, ignorance, the exasper-

ation of the wicked at the silent yet forceful rebuke of good men—all these operated very successfully upon Herod, as they have done in innumerable instances after him, and to such a degree that the policy of extermination was the only one left to him. In this course he had the encouragement and support of the most influential of his subjects.

PETER.

The weakness and wickedness of the demagogue are seen in the method as well as in the motive of the arrest of Peter. To increase his popularity with his subjects, and thus to strengthen his position at the Roman court, he gives orders for the imprisonment of Peter, who after the death of James was recognized as the head of the body of believers. The time selected was at the season when Jerusalem would be filled with Jews from all parts of his kingdom, who were present to attend the feast of the Passover. His intention was to make the death of the apostle a public spectacle. With such enemies, then, the Church had to contend. But on the one hand was ranged conspiracy, on the other there was the appeal to God. Whatever may be thought in any particular instance of the reasons for the interference of God in human schemes, this much is true, that whenever the Church has passed through a period of persecution the results have always been in the