



A RESULT OF CARELESSNESS.

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THE boys have run out of school the moment their lessons are over, and taking their skates with them, made for the pond at once. As soon as the skates are on they begin to fly up and down the frozen surface; very few of them thinking whether the ice is equally strong all over and will bear their weight in the middle as well as at the sides. The consequence is that one of them has tumbled in, and we see in the picture how all the other boys are doing their best to rescue him. We have no doubt that they will succeed; but it is no easy thing to pull a person out of a hole in the ice. All round the edges the ice is weak and yielding, and if two persons get in it is almost impossible to pull them out without a third tumbling in as well. The best way is to place boards on the ice, as they are about to do. This youth will learn caution, we hope; and in the long and tedious hours of lying in bed, there may come to him that reflection which will make him a sadder and a wiser boy. After all, we profit most from what experience teaches us, for we rarely forget it.

LESSON NOTES.**FIRST QUARTER.****LESSON III.—JANUARY 15.****ENCOURAGING THE PEOPLE.**

Haggai 2: 1-9. [Memory verses, 8, 9.]

GOLDEN TEXT.

Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it.—Psalm 127: 1.

CENTRAL TRUTH.

Unnumbered blessings and assured success come to those who labour for the upbuilding of God's kingdom.

TIME.—The autumn of B.C. 520. Fifteen years after the last lesson.

PLACE.—Jerusalem and vicinity.

RULERS.—Darius Hystaspes, king of Persia; Zerubbabel, governor of Judah; Tarquin the Proud, at Rome.

PROPHETS.—Haggai, an old man; and Zechariah, much older.

PLACE IN BIBLE HISTORY.—Ezra, chapter 5. THE BOOK OF HAGGAI contains four prophecies, all delivered within the last four months of B.C. 520. The first in September, the second in October, and the third and fourth in December.

THE CIRCUMSTANCES.

The foundations, laid amid such rejoicings as recorded in our last lesson, were soon neglected. Great opposition arose, and for fifteen years nothing more was done. In the meantime Cyrus died, and after two or three years Darius Hystaspes came to the throne, a king willing to help. Moreover it was now almost seventy years since the destruction of the temple in 586. At this time Haggai appears on the scene.

HELPS OVER HARD PLACES.

The first prophecy was a summons to build the temple, enforced by the fact that God seemed against the people for their neglect. "Seventh month"—October. 1. "Twentieth day"—The last day of the feast of Tabernacles, and seven weeks after the first prophecy. The people had begun to work, but were discouraged. 4. "I am with you"—To guide and defend. 5. "The word that I covenanted"—Ex. 19: 5, 6; 34: 10, 11. His presence with them promised and manifested these. "When ye came out of Egypt"—The power that delivered them from Pharaoh, and made a way through the Red Sea and through Jordan, and gave them victory over their enemies, was still with them. 6. "Yet once again in a little while . . . shake the heavens"—Metaphorically, as he had done in their former history. The new epoch was to begin soon; there were soon to be commotions among the nations which would prepare for the Messiah and his kingdom. 7. "The desire of all nations"—The golden age, the better times, which are found only in Christ. "The desirable things," the choice things, the wealth and beauty and the fruits of civili-

zation. 9. "The glory of this latter house"—Or, the latter glory of this house shall be greater, since Christ will appear there, and out from that which the temple symbolized and taught should grow the Messianic kingdom.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

Great enthusiasm is sometimes followed by indifference and delay.

The best of plans and hopes pass through periods of discouragement and neglect.

We often need a new voice, a new prophet, a new message from God.

God's house should receive our first attention and care.

Disaster and trouble come to those who seek first their worldly prosperity to the neglect of religion.

God is controlling all nations to the furtherance of his kingdom.

God's presence is the greatest of blessings.

Jesus Christ is the desire of all nations. He brings to all the things they really most need and most desire.

All the things of this world—its commerce, wealth, inventions, discoveries—all minister to the growth and glory of the kingdom of God.

REVIEW QUESTIONS.

1. How long was the building of the temple delayed? For fifteen years. 2. Who came with a message from God? The prophet Haggai, calling the people to rise up and build. 3. What was his first argument? That they had not prospered, and could not so long as they neglected their religious institutions. 4. What was his success? The people began again to build the temple. 5. How did he encourage them? Repeat verses 7 and 9.

CATECHISM QUESTION.

What new commandment did our Lord give to his disciples?

That they should love one another, as he had loved them.

1 John 15: 12, 13; 1 John 2: 7, 8.

Envy shooteth at others and woundeth herself.

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