

work could Nehemiah do for them? In realizing God's kingdom upon the earth, men of very different gifts are required; not only the minister of religion, but the statesman, the business organizer, the editor, the teacher, and men of every walk in life can help. What service can you consecrate to the building of the new Jerusalem?

1. *A sad countenance*, vs. 1-3. This unaccustomed sadness drew the attention of the king to Nehemiah and prepared a way for the answer of his prayer. It indicates two or three features of Nehemiah's character: (1) His religion was of the sunny sort. He was not the kind of person "whose religion makes you glad that you are not religious." What elements in his religious belief contributed to happiness? (See last lesson.) (2) His service to the king was performed cheerfully. Perhaps his promotion was, in part, due to his cheerfulness. He was like the boy who tried to do twenty dollars' worth of work for the eight dollars which he received. (3) His sadness was not a bit of stage play; it came from a heart truly grieved for his fellows. He could not be happy when his people were unhappy.

2. *"I prayed . . . the God of heaven,"* vs. 4-8. (Read Prov. 3:1-4.) The character of Nehemiah was such that it was not hard for him to elicit the sympathy and interest of the king. Nehemiah was not a Warren Hastings. The king was certain that no requests of his would be selfish or vainglorious and that there would be no abuse of privileges. Before making any request of the king, Nehemiah appealed to the King of kings. (See Prov. 21:1.) He desired God to give him wisdom and guidance at that critical moment. The prayers of a man are the measure of him. "What it takes to meet his need is the gauge of his size." And the desires of a man are his most clamant prayers,—far louder than his spoken prayers. It is these desires, devilish or heavenly, which tend to bring their own answer. Nehemiah desired his people's welfare above everything and his desire found its fulfilment.

3. *"It grieved them . . . that there was come a man."* Nehemiah believed that God had some high destiny for his people. Through Jerusalem he was certain that God was to

bless the world. It is such a belief that makes a man a patriot. Before such a man the enemies of his land tremble. Burns had caught the spirit of this patriotism as he wrote:

"E'en then a wish (I mind its pow'r),  
A wish that to my latest hour,  
Shall strongly heave my breast,  
That I for poor auld Scotland's sake  
Some useful plan or book could make  
Or sing a song at least."

Canada needs men who are glad to do some unselfish service for Canada's sake.

The spirit of this lesson may be summed up in the words of John Burroughs, "If you have a thing in mind, it is not long before you have it in hand."

### For Teachers of the Senior Scholars

Call for the title of the lesson and ask how long it took to get an answer. Why did it take four months for the answer to come? Note that when an answer to prayer is delayed it is not God's unwillingness to give but some unpreparedness on the part of ourselves or others to receive the blessing prayed for. Perhaps it took four months of praying to make Nehemiah himself strong enough to measure up to the situation. Note that Nehemiah found at last that he must do something himself to answer his own prayers. God is answering our prayers when he makes us capable of doing something to answer them ourselves. The lesson tells how the answer came.

1. *A Sad Countenance Challenged*, vs. 1-3. Dwell upon what an effort it must have been for Nehemiah always to wear a happy face in the king's presence during the four months that he had been brokenhearted over the condition of his people in Palestine, and bring out what a beautiful spirit is manifested in hiding sorrow from the world which always has more than enough of its own to bear. Some one has called this hypocrisy. Is it not rather Christian unselfishness? (See Matt. 6:16-18.) Note that the time came when Nehemiah's mourning face gave out. This shows how human he was. What happened then? He realized that this was his opportunity, and that he must make the most of it. Impress upon the class that our success