

the riot above mentioned had saved the life of the queen and kept her concealed until the troubles were over, and the king, to show his gratitude, offered him any reward he might name. Rijutei declined honors and asked instead that he might go to Japan and study the progress and civilization of that country. He went, found Mr. Tsude, and at once began to study the Scriptures, and very soon became an earnest Christian, and on the 28th of April, 1883 was baptized by the Rev. Mr. Yasukawa, a pastor of one of the Presbyterian churches in Tokio. But now what was he to do. He dared not go home. Only eighteen years before his uncle had been put to death for becoming a Roman Catholic and all his property was confiscated, and if he were to return his life would be in danger every hour. So he stayed in Japan, and devoted himself to the study of the Word of God, and to the teaching of those of his own countrymen who were there, many of whom under his teaching have already turned to Christ. He also commenced a translation of the New Testament into Korean, and has nearly completed the work. He was offered by the Japanese Government an important position on a paper about to be started in Tokio, but he refused, and when further urged he said "I am engaged in more important work and no inducement that you can offer is sufficient to turn me away."

A brother from Corea offered him a large sum of money with which to pursue the study of commerce and science, if he would only renounce this foreign religion, but he replied "I have found in the Bible of the Christians that which will be of greater service to my country than science and commerce and railways." Rijutei pleads earnestly for Protestant missionaries for his countrymen. Now, he says, is the time to move, for as the country opens the Roman Catholics will rush in and deceive the people by mere outward forms.

And although not moving very fast Christians are still doing something in the matter, and their chief strength seems to be in medical missionaries. Dr. H. N. Allen, a young medical missionary of the American Presbyterian Board, with his wife, is at present in Seoul, the capital, and although not yet allowed to preach openly his services as a physician are in great demand. In December, 1884, another insurrection broke out and while all other foreigners were compelled to leave the city he remained, with his wife and child, and dressed the wounds of scores of the wounded officials, and so pleased was the king and court with his services that a hospital has been built and Dr. Allen placed in sole charge. The king has also granted permission to the Rev. Dr. Mackay of the Methodist church to establish mission work there.

Of the city of Seoul, the surrounding country and the manners and customs of the Coreans, the Rev. J. R. Wolfe, a church of England missionary in Fuh-Chow, gives the following description:

The city of Seoul is situated in a valley, the beauty and loveliness of which it is hard to describe. It is fertilized by the deep and broad waters of the Han, which roll down from the mountains on the east and bring much of the precious ore which the natives collect from the beds of its diverging streams. The hills which bound it on all sides are well covered with trees, and its fields and gardens are well cultivated with wheat, millet, rice, beans, and other vegetables. The country abounds with game, and in the Valley of Seoul I saw immense flocks of wild geese hovering about apparently fearless of man and ready to alight upon a large rice crop in a field hard by.

The city itself is not well built; the houses are of the very poorest description, and betoken a condition of extreme poverty among its inhabitants; but this can hardly be the case, for every one looks gayly dressed and well fed, and scarcely a beggar can be seen in the streets. Women are frequently met walking in the streets, but covered all over with a long cloak, with a hood closely drawn over the head and face, so that the features are hidden from the gaze of men. It is, however, only the elderly women who are allowed this freedom. The younger women, except those of the very poorest, are scarcely ever seen in public. The women of the poorest class, old and young, have the privilege, as we Westerners would think it, of walking about freely, with their heads and faces uncovered.

In the city of Seoul the curfew bell rings

out every night at 9 o'clock, after which time all the male population are to retire within doors. It used to be at the risk of their lives to disobey; but now the law, though still in force, does not apply to Chinese and other nationalities living in the city. After the curfew rings and the men retire, the women come out to walk and get some fresh air.

The abominable and cruel custom among the Chinese of foot-binding is unknown in Corea. The crime of infanticide, also, so common and extensive among the Celestials, is a crime punishable by death in Corea, and scarcely, if ever, practised.

The population of Seoul is 400,000, according to the account given me by Mr. Mollendorf, the Commissioner of Customs, and a Minister of State to the Korean king. The population of the whole kingdom, he assured me, was not less than fifteen millions. The people of Seoul are very friendly to foreigners. On one occasion, I was stopped in the streets by two Coreans who produced their inkhorns and pencils and wrote in my pocketbook the following words in Chinese: "To behold you is like seeing a friend who comes but once a year, like the red autumnal leaves of the maple tree." I may remark that the literati of Corea are as well versed in the literature of China as are the Chinese themselves and they can write its classic characters with fluency and ease. These Coreans are a fine stalwart and robust race of men. Their physique is infinitely superior to that of either the Chinese or the Japanese. The latter look like a nation of pigmies beside the Coreans.

Practically, the Coreans have no system of religion at all. Buddhism, though traces of it exist here and there in the remote and secluded parts of the kingdom, is a proscribed religion, and for the last five hundred years it has been vigorously and successfully suppressed by the reigning dynasty, and thoroughly eradicated out of the hearts and sympathies of the people. Confucianism, though not a religious system, is adhered to by the literary and official classes, but it has little or no influence on the masses of the people. The Coreans are, however, a very superstitious and spirit-fearing people. They deify and worship the spirits of deceased heroes and public benefactors, and the worship of deceased ancestors is universally practised. The superstition of Fung-Chui, which has so paralyzed every attempt at civilization in China, also influences, universally and perniciously, the minds and the conduct of the Coreans. No house can be built, no wall can be erected, no road can be opened, and no grave can be dug without consulting the telis or masters of this occult superstition. Fetishism is also extensively practised by this people. Favorite trees and stones are worshipped, and along the road it is common to see some trees gaily covered with rugs hung on the branches as tokens to the deity that the individual who placed them there had paid his devotions to the tree. Others, in order to obtain forgiveness of their sins, carry round stones to the top of some mountain or hill, and leave them there, after they have paid their devotions to them or to the spirit which is supposed to reside in them. The fear of ghosts and spirits also haunts this poor darkened people, and they have recourse to the most childish expedients to relieve themselves of this fear and frighten away these spirits.

SCHOLARS' NOTES.

(From International Question Book.)

LESSON VIII.—FEBRUARY 21.

THE SECOND TEMPLE.—EZRA 1:1-14; 3: 8-13.

COMMIT VERSES 18, 19.

GOLDEN TEXT.

They praised the Lord because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid.—Ezra 3: 11.

CENTRAL TRUTH.

God disciplines, but never forsakes his people.

DAILY READINGS.

- M. Ezra 1:1-8.
- T. Ezra 2:1, 61-70.
- W. Ezra 3:1-13.
- Th. Ezra 4:1-24.
- F. Ezra 5:1-17.
- Sa. Ezra 6:1-22.
- Su. Haggai 1:1-15.

DATES.—The Jews returned from exile B.C. 536. The second temple was begun May, 534, and completed after 19 years, in March, 515.

PLACE.—Babylon and Jerusalem.

RULERS.—Cyrus, king of the Persian empire, 558-529. He began as sole ruler of Babylon in 536.

PROPHETS.—Haggai, an old man, and Zechariah, a young man, prophesied, 521-518, in aid of the rebuilding of the temple.

PSALMS.—Ps. 65, 85, 107, and 126 belong to this period. The Psalms of degrees (Ps. 120-134) some regard as sung as the workmen went up daily to build the temple. Ps. 48, 81, 138, 146-150 are supposed to have been sung at the dedication of the temple.

EZRA.—A Jewish scribe who lived in Babylon, and came to Jerusalem for a time about 80 years after the return.

BOOK OF EZRA.—(1) It is a continuation of Chronicles. (2) The first part was compiled by Ezra, the latter written by him.

THE CAPTIVITY.—It began in 604-5, and lasted 70 years. It was caused by the idolatry of the people. Their trials in captivity rooted out idolatry forever from the Jews; as soon as this was settled, they were allowed to return. It produced a selected stock with which to begin anew, for (1) the best of the people were made captives, and (2) of these and their descendants the most religious and heroic would return. The captivity led to new study of the Scripture, and better education in religion, and deeper spirituality.

HELPS OVER HARD PLACES.—1. JEREMIAH... FULFILLED: Jer. 25: 12; 29: 10. THE LORD STIRRED UP CYRUS: probably through Daniel, who may have showed him the prophecies of Isaiah (41: 26-28; 45: 1-4). 2. CHARGED ME: see Isaiah 44, etc. 4. WHOSEVER REMAINED: the heathen population were to aid the return. FREEWILL OFFERING: the vessels of the temple which Cyrus gave (Ezra 1: 7-11).

THE RETURN.—About 50,000 people returned (see Ezra 2: 1, 64, 65) with 8135 beasts of burden. They took with them 5100 gold and silver vessels of the temple (1: 7-11). Their leader was Zerubbabel of David's royal line. Their journey would require more than four months (7: 9). On their arrival they made a great offering of 61,000 gold darics—\$275,000, and 5,000 minas of silver—\$135,000.

8. SECOND MONTH: May. 10. TRUMPETS: for calling assemblies, like our church-bells. 11. BY COURSE: responsibly. 12. WEST: because there was little hope of making as beautiful a temple as the former one. The temple was not completed for 19 years (6: 15).

QUESTIONS.

INTRODUCTORY.—In what country did the events of our last lesson take place? What people were captives here? Who was now king of Babylon? Who was Ezra? What can you tell about the book of Ezra?

SUBJECT: A GREAT REVIVAL OF RELIGION.

I. THE CAPTIVITY OF GOD'S PEOPLE.—When were the children of Israel carried captive to Babylon? Why did God allow this evil to come upon them? (2 Chron. 36: 14-20.) What was the effect of this affliction on the people? How long did the captivity last? (2 Chron. 36: 20, 21.)

Show how three things would aid in making the new kingdom better than the old: (1) their love of idolatry taken away; (2) the selection of those carried captive (2 Kings 24: 14, 16); (3) the kind of persons who would be most likely to return.

When may a church be said to be in captivity? Why does God allow such trials and afflictions to come upon his people? How do these purify the church?

II. GOD MOVING ON THE HEARTS OF MEN (vs. 1-4).—Who was Cyrus? What had been foretold of him? (Isa. 44: 28-28; 45: 1-4.) Was Daniel alive at this time? (Dan. 10: 1.) May he have showed these prophecies to Cyrus? What had Jeremiah foretold? (Jer. 25: 12; 29: 10.) Had God been moving upon the hearts of the people? What proclamation did Cyrus make? Who were to help those who would go? What was Cyrus's freewill offering? (1: 7-11.)

III. THE RETURN TO THE PROMISED LAND.—How many persons returned to Judea? (Ezra 2: 64, 65.) How many beasts of burden did they take? (Ezra 2: 66, 67.) What treasures did they carry? (Ezra 1: 7-11.) How long was the journey? (Ezra 7: 9.)

IV. REBUILDING THE HOUSE OF GOD (vs. 8-13).—What offering was made soon after their arrival? (2: 68.) When did they begin to rebuild the temple? What was their first work? (3: 2-5.) What were the ceremonies of laying the foundation? Why did the old man weep? Why did the younger rejoice? Were both right? What glory did the old have that the new lacked? What greatest glory came to the new? (Eag. 2: 7-9.) How long was it before the temple was finished? (6: 15.) What two prophets gave great aid?

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

I. God's promises will all be fulfilled in due time.

II. When God's people have learned the lessons their trials are intended to teach, he will bring them again to peace and prosperity.

LESSON IX.—FEBRUARY 28.

NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER.—NEH. 1: 1-11.

COMMIT VERSES 8, 9.

GOLDEN TEXT.

Give us help from trouble; for vain is the help of man.—Ps. 108: 12.

CENTRAL TRUTH.

God helps his people in answer to prayer.

DAILY READINGS.

- M. Ezra 7: 1-28.
- T. Ezra 9: 1-15.
- W. Neh. 1: 1-11.
- Th. Neh. 2: 1-20.
- F. Neh. 4: 1-23.
- Sa. Neh. 5: 1-19.
- Su. Neh. 6: 1-19.

DATE.—B.C. 445. 70 years after the completion of the second temple, and 90 years after the return.

PLACE.—Susa (Shushah), the chief capital of the Persian empire, 250 miles east of Babylon. Daniel was here part of the time (Dan. 8: 2), and Queen Esther lived here.

RULERS.—ARTAXERXES Longimanus (long-handed), son of Ahasuerus. Pericles was king of Athens. Herodotus, Socrates, Plato, and Xenophon were living. Between the date of the last lesson and the date of this were fought the famous battles of Marathon, Salamis, and Thermopylae.

NEHEMIAH, son of Hachaliah, probably of the tribe of Judah; cup-bearer to Artaxerxes, living in Susa; made governor of Judah for 12 years (444-433). He was self-sacrificing, religious, prayerful, keen-sighted, patriotic.

BOOK OF NEHEMIAH.—Written chiefly by Nehemiah. It is a continuation of Ezra.

INTERVENING HISTORY.—The second temple was finished B.C. 515 (see last lesson). There comes an interval of 57 years, in which occurred the story of Esther. Then Ezra the Scribe came to Jerusalem, B.C. 457, with 1,500 more men from Babylon (over 5,000 including women and children) (Ezra 8: 1-20). He made great reforms. After 13 more years Nehemiah went up to Jerusalem, according to his prayer in this lesson.

HELPS OVER HARD PLACES.—1. CHISLEU: 9th month, November—December. TWENTIETH YEAR: of Artaxerxes. 2. HANANIAH: probably brother of Nehemiah (Neh. 7: 2). 3. WALLS BROKEN DOWN: by Nebuchadnezzar, 110 years before this. They had been partially rebuilt (Ezra 4: 12), and were destroyed again (Ezra 4: 8-24; Neh. 2: 11-15). 4. CERTAIN DAYS: three or four months, December to April. (Compare chap. 1: 1 with 2: 1.)

FASTED: (1) to express his deep sorrow, and (2) to keep the mind clear for devotions. 5. TERRIBLE GOD: to his enemies. Able to overcome them. KEEPETH COVENANT: his promises to them if they would obey. 7. WE HAVE DEALT CORRUPTLY: wickedly; their wickedness was the cause of their captivity (Chron. 36: 14-17; Ezra 9: 1; Neh. 5: 1-7). 8. IF YE TRANSGRESS, etc.: Lev. 26: 27-39; Deut. 28: 45-52, 62-67. 9. BUT IF YE RETURN: see Lev. 26: 40-45; Deut. 30: 1-10. 11. CUP-BEARER: one of those who pressed the wine and brought it to the king. It brought him in close contact with the king, and gave him great power and wealth.

INTRODUCTORY.—How much time intervenes between the last lesson and this? What were some of the events during this time? To what date do we now come? Who was king of Persia? What great men lived about this time?

SUBJECT: A PRAYER AND ITS ANSWER.

I. THE NEED OF PRAYER (vs. 1-3).—How long was it since the Jews began to return to Jerusalem? Where did Nehemiah live? How did he learn about the state of things in Judea? What was the condition there? (2 Kings 25: 10; Ezra 4: 8-24; Neh. 2: 11-15.)

Why would such a state of things lead to prayer?

II. THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER (v. 4).—What was the effect of this report on Nehemiah? In what other ways did he show his sorrow? What is the meaning and use of fasting? What does Christ say about fasting? (Mark 9: 29; Matt. 6: 16-18. See also Matt. 4: 1, 2.)

III. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF HIS PRAYER (vs. 5-11).—(1.) ADORATION. What qualities does Nehemiah here ascribe to God? When is God terrible? Meaning of "that keepeth covenant." With whom? Who alone have a right to expect his good gifts?

Is there any danger of dwelling too much on God's greatness, so long as we see that his love is as great as his power? What comfort in his greatness then?

(II.) CONFESSION. Whose sins did Nehemiah confess? (vs. 7, 8.) What were some of these sins? (2 Chron. 36: 14-17; Ezra 9: 1.)

How could good Nehemiah speak as if he were guilty of these sins? How far are we guilty of national sins?

(III.) PLEADING THE PROMISES. Of what words of God was the present condition of the Jews a fulfillment? (vs. 8; Lev. 26: 27-39; Deut. 28: 45-52, 62-67.) How would the fulfillment of this give assurance that the promises would also be fulfilled? What promises had been made to them? (v. 9; Lev. 26: 40-45; Deut. 30: 1-10.) Name some of God's promises that we can plead in prayer?

(IV.) ASSURANCE FROM FORMER MERCIES. To what in their past history does Nehemiah refer? (v. 10; Ex. 12: 51; Joshua 3: 15, 16; Heb. 11: 32-34.) How do God's former mercies give us assurance in present need?

(V.) PETITION. What did Nehemiah ask of God? (v. 11; See chap. 2: 3-5.)

(VI.) PERSEVERANCE. How long did Nehemiah pray before the answer came? (Compare 1: 1 with 2: 1. See HELPS, v. 4.)

IV. THE ANSWER.—How was the prayer first answered? (2: 1-6.) Through whom did it come? What did Nehemiah do toward the answer? (2: 7-9.) What did he do when he arrived at Jerusalem. (2: 11-15.) Should churches make a like examination of the needs around them? How did the people help? (4: 6.) In what way did they work? (3: 28.) What command of Christ did they fulfil? (Chap. 4: 15-22.)

LESSONS FROM NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER.

I. There is need of much prayer on account of the sins and troubles of the world, of the church, of ourselves.

II. The only source of help is in God.

III. In the hour of need we should (1) repent (2) fast and consecrate ourselves, (3) pray.

IV. The qualities of true prayer are adoration, confession, pleading the promises, definite petitions, perseverance.

V. The effectual, fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much.

VI. The answer may be delayed, but it is sure to come.

VII. The answer comes (1) by means of the prayer, (2) by willingness to do our part, (3) by new consecration, (4) by surveying the field, (5) by each one doing his part, (6) by working each one against his own house, (7) in spite of enemies, (8) by watching as well as working, (9) by the favor of God.

Who gives to whom hath naught been given,
His gift in need, though small indeed
As is the grass blade's wind-blown seed,
Is large as earth and rich as heaven.

—Whittier.