B. Y. P. U.

The cultivation of Baptist young people; their increased spirituality; their stimulation in Christian service; their edification in scriptural knowledge; their instruction in Baptist history and doctrine, through enlisting denominational institutions.

All Young People's Societies of whatsoever name in Baptist churches, and Baptist churches having no societies are earnestly invited to co-operation. We depend for our end upon any young people's name or method. Our common bond is in the Young name or method. In the full affirmation of whose teaching we and our people were one minions.

(Correspondence to this department should address their communications to J. H. MacDonald, Saint John, N. B.)

Prayer Meeting.

FOR THE WEEK COMMENCING MARCH 5TH.

TOPIC: SWORD AND TROWEL.

"They which builded on the wall and they which bear burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other held a weapon."—Neh. 4: 17.

Who has not been struck with that very significant picture of altar and plough, with the patient ox standing between them, while on a scroll above the curling smoke are the words: "Ready for either." The sword and trowel are most significant also. The picture is true to the life. The Christian life has in it these two great elements—construction and defence. "Building up yourselves . . . keep yourselves in the love of God" (Jude 20-21; Eph. 6: 11-18).

HISTORICAL

About ninety years before the time of Nehemiah, Zerubbabel led forth the first division of the Hebrew captives from Babylon, rebuilt the temple at Jerusalem and established again the worship of Jehovah. But during all these years the walls of the Holy City were in ruins, until the patriotic Nehemiah undertook the work of rebuilding. Nehemiah was of the tribe of Judah, of the royal line of David. He was doubtless born in Persia during the closing year of the captivity. We first meet him as a cupbearer to king Artaxerxes, in the palace of Shushan, the winter capital of the Persian king. While in this position of trust and honor Nehemiah learns of the defenceless condition of the sacred city. How he received his commission see Neh. 2: 1-6. This good man could not live amid the luxuries of a king's court while Jerusalem lay waste. Nehemiah arrived at Jerusalem in all safety and soon began his great work. (Neh. 2: 11-20). But his effort to throw around "Zion" a wall of defence soon aroused the hatred of his enemies—the Samaritans, the Ammorites and the Arabians.

PLAN OF DEFENCE

Nehemiah divided his whole force into two bodies—soldiers and workmen (verse 16). Again, verse 18 seems to suggest that the builders were sub-divided into two classes: (1) active builders; (2) those who carried the materials. The latter did their work with one hand, while with the other they held a weapon; the former needed both hands to place the stones, but even these wore the sword in their girdles. The whole plan is summed up in these words: "We made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch."—Neh. 4: 9.

PRACTICAL

1. Every true Christian is engaged in a great work of construction and defence. Out of the ruins of our fallen nature, by Divine help, we are to build up the walls of a noble Christian character. Every unsaved soul is a little Jerusalem in ruins, waiting for a master builder to reconstruct. Defended by the mighty God of Jacob, Nehemiah was a host in himself. "Behold God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid."

2. Be ready for battle. We are sure to meet the enemy. "Put on the whole armor of God." (Eph. 6: 10.) Readiness will often save you from real conflict. "Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

England's war ships make her the most peaceful nation on the face of the earth. The bird on the bending branch is safe because it has within itself the power of flight. Be skilled with the "sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." "Above all, take the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."

3. Be most intent on building. "Building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God." (Jude 20-21.) Don't build to defend, but defend to build. We are all character builders, and as the wall of faith, courage and obedience rise in the soul, the fear of the enemy will grow less and less. Oh! young Christians, depend upon it, we are engaged in a great work of construction and defence. The full greatness has not yet appeared. "Eye hath not seen," etc. When the great pageant of Eternity shall pass before the glorified vision of God's redeemed, then, and not till then, shall we fully know the greatness, the grandeur and the glory of the work which God had assigned each one of us here.

G. R. WHITE.

Hood's Cures.

In saying that Hood's Sarsaparilla cures, its proprietors make no idle or extravagant claim. Statements from thousands of reliable people of what Hood's Sarsaparilla has done for them, conclusively prove the fact—HOOD'S Sarsaparilla CURES.

Hood's Pills act especially upon the liver, rousing it from torpidity to its natural duties, cure constipation and assist digestion.

—A gloomy and irritable mood, lack of appetite, nausea, etc., arise from biliousness. Burdock Blood Bitters is a perfect regulator of the liver.

—Use Skoda's Discovery, the great blood and nerve remedy.

—Hackmomore cures colds and coughs.

Sabbath School.

BIBLE LESSONS.

FIRST QUARTER.

ISRAEL AFTER THE CAPTIVITY.

(Condensed from Peloubet's Select Notes.)

Lesson XI. Mar. 12. Esther 4: 10; 5: 3.

ESTHER BEFORE THE KING.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"Judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy."—Prov. 31: 9.

EXPLANATORY.

The author of the book of Esther is unknown, but it must have been a Jew, and one long resident in Persia, probably a contemporary or intimate friend of Mordecai. It must have been written after the death of Xerxes, B. C. 465, and yet not long after, for its minuteness of detail implies this; and the language is similar to that of Ezra and Nehemiah, which were written about this time. The style is simple, but the language has a large Persian element. But the chief peculiarity is the absence of any mention of the name of God. There may have been some good reason in the circumstances for the omission, as that it might reach many with the truth who would be repelled by the name. The main thing, however, is that in reality God is everywhere manifest in the book.

THE PERSIAN EMPIRE. When more than a century before this time, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and carried the Jews captive to Babylonia (606-586), he was the greatest king then living, his empire the most powerful, his capital the most magnificent. Then followed the 70 years' captivity. Nebuchadnezzar's successors were as little likely to permit the Jews to return as was the great king himself. But God saw the way out. When the time came, the Babylonian Empire was conquered by Cyrus (538), and in 536 50,000 Jews returned from exile under Zerubbabel. In 20 years (515) the temple was built. Then came a pause of nearly 60 years in the history of the Jews. In the meantime the Medo-Persian Empire had become larger than any previous one known in the world, and surrounded its chief with almost unimaginable splendor and wealth. Its ambition was to conquer Greece, and extend its sway over the known world. According to Keil "the Persian Empire in its whole extent from India to Ethiopia must have contained a population of at least 100,000,000." Canon Rawlinson estimates the population at 50,000,000. The Ahasuerus of Esther has been identified almost beyond doubt with Xerxes, the son of Darius Hystaspes (the one under whom the temple of Zerubbabel was completed).

We read in the story how Haman became a great favorite of Xerxes, and how he became furious because Mordecai, whose position at the royal gate indicates that he was an officer of the king, would not bow down before him, as did all the other people, and as his friends urged him to do. Haman obtained a decree from the king, and letters were despatched all over the empire for the destruction of the whole nation of the Jews on the 13th day of Adar, about the first of March, B. C. 473, at least five years after the marriage of Esther. Zeresh, the wife of Haman according to Jewish tradition, was the daughter of Tatnai, a Persian officer who troubled Nehemiah when building the wall of Jerusalem. Mordecai, having learned of the terrible decree, sent word to Queen Esther, his cousin, and asked her to intercede with the king, as the only way in which this national calamity could be averted.

10. Esther spake unto Hatach. An officer who had been appointed by the king to attend on the queen.

11. All . . . do know. It was no secret, but a universal rule known everywhere. Whosoever . . . shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death. Rather, "there is one law for him." Whoever he be, there is one and the same law regarding him,—he must suffer death. Herodotus excepts six persons from the operation of this law, but in making the exception, shows the general rule to have been such as here represented. The object of this rule was doubtless to preserve the king not only from annoyance, but from the danger of assassination. According to Esther 6: 4, 5, and Herodotus iii. 140, any man might present himself in the outer court, and seek and await audience with the king. Why did not Esther avail herself of this privilege? (1) It might have been deemed an unseemly thing for the queen to present herself in the manner of a common suppliant, and have ruined her hopes. (2) It may be that women were not allowed in the outer court at all. Except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre. There was, therefore, a possibility of Esther's reaching the ears of the king, but with the greatest uncertainty as to how a capricious king would act. In all the numerous representations of Persian kings at Persepolis, there is not one in which the monarch does not hold a long tapering staff (which is probably the sceptre of Esther) in his right hand. The sceptre was not probably of solid gold, as that would have been too heavy, but one adorned with gold. I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days. And hence she did not know when a summons might come. It would not do to trust to so mere a chance; and therefore if she was to interpose on behalf of her nation, she must intrude on the king uninvited.

THE DANGER OF MORDECAI'S PLAN for the queen will be seen more clearly when we consider the fickle and despotic nature of Xerxes, and other Oriental monarchs. Xerxes, on his way to Greece, halted at Celænæ, a city of Phrygia, where he was entertained by Pythias with incredible magnificence. Pythias even offered to contribute some millions of dollars toward the expenses of the war. But when Pythias begged as a favor that, of his five sons in the king's army, the eldest might be left with him in his old age, the brutal monarch went into a rage, and caused the son to be slain in the presence of his father, the body divided into two parts, and placed the one part on one side of the road, and the other on the other, and the whole army marched between them.

13. Think not with thyself. Literally, "imagine not in thy mind." That thou shalt escape in the king's house, i. e., "that being an inmate of the palace will be any protection to thee"; it will be no protection; you will be no more escape than any other Jew.

14. Then shall their enlargement (rather relief) and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, i. e., "from some other quarter." Mordecai probably concludes from the prophetical Scriptures, that God will not allow His people to be destroyed. Then and thy father's house shall be destroyed. You will not escape destruction, but you will lose the opportunity of saving your people, the greatest blessing and glory that can come to any person. This you will throw away for nothing. Who knoweth whether thou art come, etc. The providences that brought you there are wonderful. Perhaps God's hand shaped them, that you might be the saviour of your people in this terrible emergency.

16. Fast ye for me. In my behalf. Fasting implies humiliation, repentance, consecration to God, faith in God, prayer to God. It was the expression, outwardly, of the intense desires of the heart. Only God could give success to her efforts. Even a mean man, said one of the old Greeks, can do great things if the gods aid him. And neither eat nor drink three days. It has been supposed that Esther could not have meant an absolute fast—complete abstinence from both food and drink—for so long a period as three days; but Oriental abstemiousness would not be very severely taxed by a fast of this length. The time intended —from the evening of the first to the morning of the third day—need not have much exceeded thirty-six hours. I also (she did not ask them to do what she would not do herself) and my maidens. It is probable that she had surrounded herself with Jewish maidens, or women who were proselytes to that religion. And if I perish, I perish. I will go on, and make every effort to save my people, even though I perish in the attempt.

1. Esther put on her royal apparel. She made herself as attractive as possible, so as to use every influence with the king. This was wise. Even our dress should be made to serve our God and aid His cause. Royal throne . . . over against the gate. The usual situation of the throne in the "throne-room" of an Oriental palace. The monarch, from his raised position, can see into the court through the doorway opposite to him, which is kept open.

2. When the king saw Esther the queen. As the king sat upon the throne, the two were face to face, though separated by a considerable distance. It was a critical moment. She stands with her jewelled foot upon the grave. No one but God could tell what whim of the monarch would be in the ascendant. While Esther did not overlook the importance of going in person, she did not forget the protender fact that "The heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord." Esther . . . touched the top of the sceptre. This was, no doubt, the customary act by which the king's grace was, as it were, accepted and appropriated. It is analogous to that touch of the person or of the garments which secured the suppliant mercy among the Greeks. Thus Esther's mission was so far successful. At this time she only invited the king and Haman to a banquet, though the king doubtless understood that this was preliminary to a request of greater importance. The banquet was held; and yet Esther did not dare to present her real request. Her heart failed her, or she felt that the time was not yet ripe. Certainly it was providential that she delayed. The delay not only left time for the episode of Mordecai, but deeply impressed the king with the greatness and importance of her request. She simply asked her guests to come again the next day.

RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE began very soon; for the night after the first banquet the king was wakeful, and, reading in the records of the kingdom, he was reminded of the great service Mordecai had rendered him, and desired to reward him. Thus it came to pass that the next day Haman was compelled to lead Mordecai in triumph through the streets of the city, riding on the king's horse, and clothed in the king's robes. That very afternoon Haman was impaled (not hung by the neck) on the lofty tree or beam he had raised for the destruction of Mordecai. His property and his office was also given to Mordecai.

The rest of the book relates how the decree that could not be countermanded was yet erased, and the Jews saved from destruction. Ever since then they have kept the fast of Purim on the 13th and 14th of Adar (about March 1st) in memory of these days. This whole history wrought good in the character of the Jews, and proclaimed their religion and their God, as the church-bells on the Sabbath declare the Gospel to all.

—Timothy McLellan, proprietor Sterling hotel, Tatamagouche, N. S., writes: "Was troubled with dyspepsia for twenty years; tried almost everything, but did not get anything to do me any good. Saw your K. D. C. advertised and decided to give it a trial. I bought two boxes and took them according to direction and was completely cured. That was nearly two years ago; have not been troubled with it since and consider myself thoroughly cured."

—For sick headache, sour stomach, loathing of food, dyspepsia or biliousness, take Hawker's Liver Pills. They will cure you. Recommended by leading physicians as a most reliable medicine.

—If you have a hacking cough that distresses you and annoys others—particularly in church—send 12 cents in stamps to G. A. Moore, chemist, St. John, N. B. for a box of Hackmomore lozenges. They give immediate relief.

—Mrs. Jane Vansickle, Alberton, Ont., was cured of liver complaint after years of suffering by using five bottles of B. B. B. She recommends it.

—Use Skoda's Discovery, the great blood and nerve remedy.

—Minard's Liniment cures diphtheria.

Robin.

How cold it was! The wind blew piercingly along the track, the sparrows huddled together on the telegraph wires, and the sky was of that dull November gray which threatens snow soon.

Robin stooped down, blew on his fingers, and held them over his toes, which were far out of his ragged shoes; but his hands were too cold to be of any comfort to the toes, and he rose again and stamped on the sleepers softly—it hurt to do it hard.

"Whew!" blew the wind as it rushed by, stinging sharply through the boy's tattered garments.

"Whew! What good can your little thin breath do when I am blowing? See, I have chilled it before it reaches your fingers. Whew! where I could almost blow you away." And the wind, with a sudden vicious dash, almost lifted him from his feet.

It seemed to Robin he must go home, be acted so from head to foot; but he thought of his mother stitching away in the cold room, and of how she needed the fire, that she might sew faster to get food for them.

Coal was high that fall, and by the bucketful, as the poor people had to buy it, came so dear that many could not afford it at all. Robin, then, was only one among many who came daily to the tracks to pick up the stray pieces that might be found there. It was scanty picking at best, but to-day every one seemed to have been before him, and he didn't remember ever to have been so cold before.

The thought of his mother, however, made him pick up his bag and start on again.

"The north wind doth blow,
And we shall have snow."

'Twas only the tune in a boy's shrill whistle, but Robin knew the words; his mother had sung them often the fall before. She didn't sing anything any more; it was too cold to sing.

Along the street that crossed the track just there, came the owner of the whistle. Robin could see a pair of rosy cheeks emerging from a great coat collar, well turned up, and two bright eyes shining from under the edge of a fur cap.

"And what will the robin do then?"

continued the merry whistler.

"I should like to know what I shall do," thought Robin, fitting the words to himself. "There isn't any barn for me to sit in and keep myself warm."

He stood a moment looking after the boy as he strode by, hands deep in pockets; then he went on, colder than before.

"Oh! I say," called a cheery voice, "you must be awful cold, aint you?" and Robin turned to find the boy close beside him.

Before his surprise gave him a chance to answer, the new-comer was pulling off his mittens and holding them out to him.

"Here, put these things on, won't you? I can put my hands in my pockets."

Robin's mother, who was a sweet, gentle woman in spite of her hard life, had given her boy much of her own spirit. "The little gentleman," she thought, "I should like them very much, but I am afraid your mother wouldn't want you to give them away."

"Oh, goodness!" exclaimed the other, "go on 'n' take 'em; mother'd be awful'y glad for you to have 'em, 'pon my word!" and he thrust them into Robin's hands.

"What are you doing, anyway?" he queried, looking at the bag on the ground. "Picking up coal? You can't find much along here."

"No, I can't," said Robin, as he pulled on the mittens at last and shivered from their very warmth, "but mother must have some fire to sew by, and I'm the only one to get coal for it. I'm the man of the family, you know," and he drew himself up to the full height of his ten years.

"Well, come on, let's go to work, and I'll help; I haven't anything to do," said his new-found friend. "But say, hold on a jiffy! I'll tell you what, I'll take off my jacket—I shan't miss it with this great coat—and you can wear it while we work."

He was already pulling it off, and paid no heed to Robin's objections.

"Put it on quick," was all he would say. "Then we'll take turns using the mittens. My name's Jack; what's yours?"

"I'm Robin," and they each wore one mitten and kept the other hand in a pocket, while one carried the bag and the other picked up the coal.

As they worked they talked, confiding to each other the stories of their short lives, and comparing notes on likings and wishings.

A considerable spilling over of coal from a passing train filled their bag for them at last, a mittened hand seized each end, and faces were turned homeward.

It was quite dusk when they reached Robin's house, and sharp, icy flakes were already driving through the air and stinging the faces of the hurrying people.

Robin opened the door and called through the dark entry, "Mother, mother!" Then, turning to ask Jack to come in, he saw a mitten lying on the bag he had dropped on the doorstep, and down the street, through the ever faster falling snow, a vanishing fur cap and great coat.

Back on the wind came brokenly, in the same merry whistle—

"—In the barn,
    him—warm,
And hide———
    ——wing,—— thing.—"

—Agnes Godfrey Gay, in Christian Union.

—"I've tried all sorts of blood purifiers," said an old lady to a "cutter," and you can't persuade me that any other Sarsaparilla is as good as Ayer's." There's where she had him. She knew that Ayer's was the best—so did he, but it paid him better to sell a cheaper brand.

—Hawker's Liver Pills cure all stomach ills. They assist digestion, regulate the bowels and liver, tone the stomach and purify the blood.

—Use Skoda's Discovery, the great blood and nerve remedy.

Hackmomore cures colds and coughs.