

THE GEOGRAPHY LESSON

Shushan, meaning "a lily," the Susa of the Greeks, now Sus or Shush in southwestern Persia, was one of the three capitals of the Persian empire, situated about 250 miles east of Babylon on one of the branches of the Tigris (see Light from the East). Long before it became the Persian capital it was the capital of Elam. "About B.C. 647, after a long and desperate struggle, the Elamite forces were annihilated by the Assyrian army of Assurbanipal, and Susa was captured and razed to the ground. The images of its gods and kings were taken



to Assyria, and the monuments of its former princes were destroyed, the bones of their occupants being scattered to the winds. When Susa rose again from its ashes we do not know. Cyrus made it his capital." In Dan. 8: 2 the prophet

is said to have had a vision at "Shushan the palace" in "the third year of Belshazzar." An account of the palace in the time of Xerxes is given in Esth. 1: 2-7. When Susa was entered by Alexander the Great he found in it twelve millions sterling and the Persian regalia.

THE LESSON APPLIED

Talk it over, v. 2. There is such a thing as the religious use of conversation. Some people say sneeringly, "It's only talk," forgetful of the fact that without talk the world would make but little progress. James Chalmers, the great missionary, tells us of how he came to the great decision of his life. It was at Sunday School, and the superintendent announced that he was going to read an interesting letter from a missionary in Fiji. The letter was read, telling of cannibalism and the power of the gospel, and then the superintendent, with wet eyes, looking over his spectacles, said: "I wonder if there is a boy here this afternoon who will yet become a missionary and by and by bring the gospel to the cannibals." And the response of James Chalmers was, "Yes, God helping me, I will."

There are serious breaches in God's church to-day, v. 3. The walls of Jerusalem were broken down and the gates thereof were burned with fire. God's church and kingdom have not come down the years unscathed. Our unhappy divisions and compromise with the world and want of zeal in God's service and all the other things that raise the question, "What's the matter with the church?" are the devastations of the enemy.

"Is it nothing to you . . . ?" v. 4. We have heard of "the sorrows of Satan." How dif-

ferent the sorrows of Nehemiah, weeping over the fallen condition of Jerusalem. To all the apathy and indifference of to-day he would seem to say, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me."

Let us now adore him, v. 5. Nehemiah's prayer is a model to all time and begins with adoration. Dr. A. J. Gordon describes the impression made upon his mind by intercourse with Joseph Rabinowitz, whom Dr. Delitzsch regarded as the most remarkable convert since Saul of Tarsus. "We shall not soon forget the radiance that would come into his face as he expounded the Messianic Psalms and how, as here and there he caught a glimpse of the suffering or glorified Christ, he would suddenly lift his eyes and hands to heaven in a burst of adoration, saying, 'My Lord and my God.'"

We should pray for our country, v. 6. Nehemiah pleaded with God for Israel and so should we lose ourselves in intercession for the British empire at this strange and solemn time. Let us pray for our fighting men on field or flood and for victory, and that God may make us fit to wear the garland of victory when it comes.