

in any other country in the world. There is no country where a man stands more squarely on his merits than Canada. Here no titled aristocracy blocks the way to promotion, and no one asks a young man who his father was, provided he is good himself. Life and property are well protected, and liberty of conscience is enjoyed by all. In Ontario we have one of the best school systems in the world.

God has given us a noble heritage, and the best way we can show our gratitude is to send the glorious gospel to every corner of the Dominion. What Canada needs first and most is to be leavened with the gospel. The best way to make our country prosper, to make our people industrious, happy, loyal, patriotic, and powerful, is to preach the gospel to them vigorously wherever they are found. The best way to keep our Socialism and Communism, and the other pestiferous things which curse some of the countries in Europe is to preach the truth in all parts of the Dominion. We appeal to you, then, as citizens of the chief city of the Dominion—a city that has drawn its wealth largely from all parts of the Dominion—to help in sending the gospel throughout the entire land.

We appeal to you also on

DENOMINATIONAL GROUNDS

to help us in Home Mission work. We have no quarrel with other branches of Christ's Church. Each has perhaps done some work that no other could have done so well. Our duty as Presbyterians is to preach the truth as we understand it in all parts of the Dominion. And let it not be forgotten that if we are to hold our own in the country as a denomination we must follow our people wherever they go. You cannot build up a successful church by simply working at the centres of population. If Presbyterianism is to flourish in the Dominion, it must flourish in Manitoba as well as in Montreal. There is nothing clearer than that a Church without missions must eventually die. No Church can prosper and neglect the Master's commission, "Preach the gospel to every creature." One of the crowning glories of the present dispensation is that it brings the gospel to the poor, and the Church that refuses the gospel to its poor cannot prosper, and does not deserve to. It must die—it deserves to die—its first duty is to die. We read, with pardonable pride, the noble history of the Church to which we belong—a history in part written in the blood of her martyrs. We talk proudly of the achievements of the past, and never fail to refer to the deeds of heroism which our fathers performed. All very well, Mr. Chairman, but might it not be as well for us to give a little attention to what we are performing ourselves? We are proud of the Church that has been handed down to us, but what kind of a Church are we going to hand down to our children? We are proud of the history we read, but what kind of a history are we making? What will the future historian say about the Presbyterian church of the present day? Will it be said that our greatest achievement was to wrestle with the "organ question" or make a hymn book? Will it be recorded that we were great at soirees, successful at socials, and wonderful in the management of bazaars? Will the future Church historian dwell on the fact that we sang hymns, built hundred thousand dollar churches, but pinched our professors, crippled our colleges and made experiments with our missionaries, the object of which was to find out the minimum sum on which a family could be fed? What will they say about us anyway, Mr. Chairman? If we can possibly avoid it, we do not intend to make the same mistake in Muskoka and Manitoba that was made in Ontario. There is not a town or township in that Province in which you cannot find men holding prominent positions and doing good work in other Churches, who once were Presbyterians. Ask why they left their own Church, and Principal McVicar or Mr. Warden, or any other man who ever did mission work in the West, will tell you the answer is always the same:—"We settled here many years ago, when the country was new. There was no Presbyterian church within reach, and we were forced to join another, or bring up our children like heathen. Did not we do right?" Of course they did under the circumstances. But if we, with half-a-dozen theological colleges turning out ministers every year, force our people to do this in the new parts of the country now settling, we certainly won't be doing right.

We base our final appeal

ON CHRISTIAN GROUNDS.

When we ask you to give your money to help this

cause, we ask you to remember that Christ was given for you. Nay, more, we ask you to remember that the carrying out of the great plan of Redemption was one wondrous system of giving. In the exercise of His sovereign love, God gave His Son to redeem His people. In the fullness of time the Son came and gave His life. When the Son ascended from Mount Olivet He gave the Spirit, and when the Spirit came He gave life. As the work goes on God gives pardon to the guilty, peace to the troubled, joy to the sorrowful, hope to the despairing, and strength to the weak. On the resurrection morning Jesus will give resurrection life and the glorified body. And when the sacramental host are brought home he gives to each a crown of victory and a place in the house of many mansions. From first to last it is all a matter of giving, and since God has given so much for you and to you, we appeal to you as blood-bought men to give your prayers, your means, your influence for the support of His cause.

SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHER.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

LESSON I.

Jan. 5. } THE SECOND TEMPLE. { Ezra iii. 1879. } 1-13.

GOLDEN TEXT:—"And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid."—Ezra iii. 11.

HOME STUDIES.

- M. Ek. xl. 17-38. . . . . The tabernacle reared.
- T. 2 Chron. iii. 1-17. . . . . Solomon's temple built.
- W. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 11-21. . . . . Solomon's temple destroyed.
- Th. Ps. cxxxvii. 1-9. . . . . The captives in Babylon.
- F. Ezra i. 1-11. . . . . Their return.
- S. Ps. cxxxvi. 1-6. . . . . Out of captivity.
- S. Ezra iii. 1-13. . . . . The second temple.

HELPS TO STUDY.

We now resume our Old Testament Lessons. It will be remembered that the last series ended with the decree of Cyrus, for the return of the Jews to their own land. The seventy years of desolation had been fulfilled. Jer. xxv. 11, 12; xxix. 10. God provides a deliverer. The mountaineers of Persia, under Cyrus and Darius, swept down upon the Assyrian and Babylonian empire. The Persians worshipped one supreme God; they hated polytheism; and their invasion of Babylon seems to have been at least in part under religious sanctions. If so, this explains why they not only spared, but assisted and honoured the Jews, whom they found in the midst of pagans, proclaiming the great truth which in some dim measure the Persians apprehended—"the Lord, our God, is one Lord."

I. THE FIRST GATHERING AT JERUSALEM: Vers. 1-7. The lesson relates two gatherings at Jerusalem. The first part presents the people arrived and somewhat settled in the land. They were in the cities, busily occupied with preparing habitations for themselves. But now the seventh month of the second year, the great festival month (Tisri, our September or early October) has come. In it fell the new year's day of the civil year, which began with this month, the solemn atonement day, and the feast of Tabernacles, the chief season of joy and thanksgiving. The people, therefore, mindful of the requirements of the law (Deut. xvi. 16) left their work and gathered themselves together at Jerusalem. This they did as one man, with hearty unanimity, as if inspired by one will. The fervor of their devotion and first love welded them together. It reminds us of the one heart and one soul (Acts iv. 32) of the Apostolic Church. That which is cold cannot be united. First heat, and then it is easy to weld. Fill men with the warmth and glow of Christ's Spirit, and loving Jesus, they will love one another. We learn the only true basis of unity in Church life and Church work—unity in Christ Jesus.

The leaders themselves set the example. These were Jeshua, the high priest, with his brother priests and Zerubbabel, the prince. (Note 2.) These stood up; that is, arose and went to work. They were the right kind of leaders. They built first the altar of the God of Israel. It was the old altar of burnt offerings which stood without the temple, and directly in front of the temple porch. They set it upon his (old English for its) bases, that is, the old foundations which they must have discovered in clearing away the rubbish. There is a lesson here. New forms, new methods and appliances, are ever being needed, but let us see that we establish them all on the old foundations.

The builders did their work in the shortest and simplest way. Fear was upon them. The Samaritans, the descendants of their old enemies, were on the alert, and did afterwards give them much trouble. This fear did not lead them to build fortifications, but first an altar; thus they put themselves under the protection of God Himself.

Then, upon the altar thus erected, they offered burnt-offerings as Moses directed, Deut. xii. 14, 15. It was the regular daily sacrifice, Ex. xxix. 38, 42. These burnt-offerings were symbols of atonement. By them the offender confessed his guilt and pleaded the blood, which alone can take away sin. The lamb set forth Him who taketh away the sins of the world: John i.

The first need of these returning wanderers is our first need—forgiveness. This was the gift of pardon which the father sealed to the prodigal by the kiss of reconciliation.

Next, the people kept the feast of Tabernacles, the great national thanksgiving, Lev. xxiii. 34-43; Deut. xvi. 13-15, and offered the prescribed offerings and sacrifices,

Num. xxix. 12-38. The worship was then fully re-established as far as it was possible without the temple.

The continual burnt-offerings, that is, the order of daily sacrifice, the offerings at the new moons at the beginning of each month, Num. xxviii. 11-15; and at the set feasts, the yearly festivals, as the Passover and Pentecost; and the free-will offerings, on special occasions of necessity or of thanksgiving, Deut. xvi. 2, 10, 16, were all arranged.

From the very first day of the seventh month they began to offer. They did not wait for the building of the temple. We do not need to wait for fine churches. Begin as you are, even in a log-house.

Another truth may be hinted at. The worship and service of God with the whole mind should begin at once: first, the sin-offering, the flying to Christ for pardon, and then not waiting to do great things, but rendering to him the offering of our whole heart and life, just as it is.

But the Jews were not satisfied with what they were able to do at once. They expected greater things and they made preparations for greater things. Doing now what we can, we must not rest satisfied with our attainments, but make these a preparation for higher, nobler, more devoted services.

They gave money, and substitutes for money in provisions, to those who brought the cedar from Lebanon to Joppa, the nearest sea-port (Note 3). This was all done in accordance with the grant, that is, the permission, which Cyrus gave them. Their religion evoked liberality. Every one could give something.

II. THE FOUNDATIONS LAID: vers. viii. 13.

The second part of our lesson relates another gathering at Jerusalem to lay the foundations of the temple. It took place in the following April or May in the second month of the second year.

Not only the leaders, the priests, and the Levites, but all that returned from captivity, the entire congregation took part in the work. In building the great temple of living stones, in which God's glory shall abide for ever, we all have a work to do (Note 4).

For six or seven months they had been gathering materials for the new building and clearing away the rubbish from the old foundations; and now the time had come to lay the foundations of the new temple. The priests in their gorgeous robes, Exod. xxxix., with trumpets in their hands, and the Levites, the Sons (descendants) of Asaph, one of the three great leaders of David's chorus (1 Chron. xiii. 8; xv. 16, 19) are appointed to lead the praises. Then while the corner-stone is being laid, they sing together responsively, choir answering choir, such Psalms as cvi., cviii., cxviii., cxxxvi. All hardship is forgotten, sacrifices are but little accounted of, grand joy fills to overflowing the hearts of the whole people.

But many of the aged men, who had seen the first house in its glory, wept. They were attached to the ancient order of things which had passed away, whose glory they thought could never be recalled. But the others, the younger, looked forward. They were ardent, hopeful; they saw not the difficulties, they looked for a better, brighter future. We see often what different views are taken of the same event. Our views of things are very partial and incomplete. The weeping of the old men illustrates the conservatism which clings to the past, the joy of the young men, the progressiveness which eagerly anticipates the future. These are God's two great forces by which He works out true progress, and moulds and develops humanity.

EXPLANATORY NOTES.

1. Ezra and Nehemiah were regarded by the Jewish church and the early Christian fathers as one book; but modern criticism has decided that they were originally two books, with different authors. The book of Ezra is divided into two distinct sections. The first, chaps. i.-vi., covers a period of 22 or 23 years (B. C. 536-515), and gives an account of the return from captivity and the rebuilding of the temple. It took place half a century before Ezra's time, but was doubtless compiled by Ezra. The second part, chapter 7 to the end of the book, begins after a gap of 57 years since the events of part first. It comprises the events of only about a year, B. C. 458-457, and was doubtless the narrative of Ezra himself. Its date of composition is fixed at B. C. 457-456, soon after Ezra's return to Babylon. Its language is a mixture of Chaldee with Hebrew, and resembles that of Daniel more than any other book of Scripture.

2. Jeshua.—Another form of Joshua. He was high priest (Hag. i. 1). He was the grandson of Seriah, the high priest, put to death by Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah (2 Kings xxv. 18-21). His father, Joadak, had been carried captive to Babylon, and died there some time before this (1 Chron. vi. 15). His brethren, of the same family of priests, not his natural brothers merely. Zerubbabel was of the royal line of David and Solomon (1 Chron. iii. 1, 19). He was really the son of Pedaiah, the younger brother of Shealtiel (called Salathiel in 1 Chron. iii. 27); but Shealtiel having no sons, and the royal line being continued in the person of Zerubbabel, his nephew, he is called his son.

3. Them of Zidon.—A country on the sea-coast of the Mediterranean at the foot of Mount Lebanon, where the cedars grew. This was the same kind of bargain, and for the same reasons, as Solomon had made for the first temple (1 Kings v. 6, 9, 11). Grant of Cyrus. According to the permission of Cyrus to build the temple. He never ruled Phoenicia (Herodotus), but he could give the Jews permission to trade.

4. Jeshua of verse 9 is not the high priest of verse 2, but the head of one of the two Levitical houses, as Kadmiel was of the other (ch. ii. 40). Sons of Judah. Probably the Hodaviah of ch. ii. 40. Comp. Neh. vii. 43. Hensadad. A third Levitical family uniting in the work with the other two.

No man has come to true greatness who has not felt in some degree that his life belongs to his race; and that what God gives him He gives him for mankind.—Rev. Phillips Brooks.