

precious was the favor of Eastern kings. At last, after four months (see ch. 2), the opportunity came for Nehemiah to present his petition for permission to go and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. His request was granted, and Lesson X. will describe the carrying out of his plans.

### Light from the East

THE KING—Was, no doubt, Artaxerxes. Longimanus (Longhanded), who reigned 464-425 B.C. The name signifies that in his day the Persian spear reached far. He was the third son of Xerxes, and after his father's assassination displayed much energy in reaching the throne by crushing the opposing forces under his brothers and suppressing a revolt in Egypt. After he reached the

throne he is described as a good-natured but weak sovereign, ruled by his wives and favorites, an account which harmonizes with the glimpses of him in Nehemiah. In his reign the ruler of Syria revolted, and this changed the history of Israel.

CUPBEARER—Eastern despots were always subject to court intrigues and were constantly in danger of poison, therefore the person whose office it was to serve the king with food and drink was always one attached to the sovereign by the strongest ties, and whose loyalty was not open to the least suspicion. (He had himself to taste everything that he presented to the king.) This made the post one to be coveted by the nobles because of the influence which it gave them with the king and in the affairs of state.

### APPLICATION

*In Shushan the palace*, v. 1. Oftentimes by the banks of a sedgy river, where the weeds are coarse and rank, may be found a

**In Unlikely Places** delicate flower scenting the poisonous air with its perfume, and redeeming its surroundings

by its loveliness. So, too, in the most unlikely places Christian virtues may be found to flourish. In Shushan, the palace, luxurious, effeminate, drunken, debauched, in the East End slums of London, amidst all its metropolitan vice, there stand out men like Nehemiah, of fervid prayer and piety. They are not the creatures, but the conquerors, of circumstances. God's grace in their hearts is a power stronger than environment.

*Hanani, one of my brethren, came*, v. 2. It was the simple and touching appeal of a native Christian that moved our church to

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lands is sure to send Christian people to their knees in prayer to God. And, if their prayers are honest, they will rise with the resolve to give all the help in their power. Were the missionary periodicals more widely and carefully read, there would be more zeal in the cause of missions. Read, learn, tell, definite facts about the church's work in heathen lands. Information is the fuel of

inspiration. Knowledge arouses enthusiasm, and moves to action.

*Wept, mourned, fasted*, v. 4. The prayers that prevail are the prayers that come straight and hot from a heart that feels its own and its neighbor's need. Formal and feeble petitions that come from the lips merely, are powerless to bring help. If, when we are on our knees, there is no burden upon our heart, nothing that we long to have for ourselves or others, let us not pretend that there is, but frankly confess our coldness, and ask God to take away our stony hearts and give us hearts that honestly realize their lack and seek above all things His blessing.

**Prayers that Prevail** *God of heaven, great and terrible*, v. 5. The tiny minnow in his little creek may perhaps form an idea of the boundless ocean; but how much greater the ocean is than the minnow's thoughts of it! So it is with our thinking about God. We know that He is powerful, but we cannot measure His might. He guides the storm, He sends and stills the earthquake, He fills all earth and heaven. But there is terror in the power of God only to those who are His foes. For those that trust Him, that strong arm of His is ever outstretched to protect and defend.

**That Strong Arm of His** *Confess the sins of Israel, which we have sinned*, v. 6. It is easy enough to confess

sin, but it is not so easy to confess the sin of unbelief. We know that God is powerful, but we cannot measure His might. He guides the storm, He sends and stills the earthquake, He fills all earth and heaven. But there is terror in the power of God only to those who are His foes. For those that trust Him, that strong arm of His is ever outstretched to protect and defend.

*Confess the sins of Israel, which we have sinned*, v. 6. It is easy enough to confess