



LESSON X.—DECEMBER 3, 1905.

Nehemiah Rebuilds the Walls of Jerusalem.

Neh. iv., 7-20.

Golden Text.

Watch and pray.—Matt. xxvi., 41.

Home Readings.

Monday, November 27.—Neh. iv., 1-12.
 Tuesday, November 28.—Neh. iv., 13-23.
 Wednesday, November 29.—Neh. vi., 1-9.
 Thursday, November 30.—Neh. vi., 6, 10-19.
 Friday, December 1.—Ezra iv., 1-10.
 Saturday, December 2.—Ezra iv., 11-24.
 Sunday, December 3.—Ezra vi., 1-14.

(By Davis W. Clark.)

'Kings do not like the sight of unhappy faces.' It is a discount upon their ability to confer happiness. Napoleon III. would not see Abd-el-Kader until it should be in his power to grant his request, and thus change his countenance. Louis XIV. 'finest actor of royalty,' wanted every face to shine and be wreathed in smiles when he appeared. It is a wonder that Nehemiah did not go to the dungeon or scaffold for marring the royal banquet with his lachrymose visage. But in answer to prayer, the king's heart was that moment in the Lord's hand like a brook of water. He turned it whither He would.

It is probable, too, that in answer to prayer, Esther was the queen who sat beside the king and aided her fellow-countrymen with her persuasive influence. In the crisis, Nehemiah had recourse once more to prayer, that trusty weapon he had used daily for four months. He breathed an inaudible, momentary prayer.

The sequel is well known—the king's favorable disposition; the letters to the pashas beyond the river insuring safe conduct; the bodyguard of captains and horsemen; the order to the king's forester to honor Nehemiah's requisitions for timber; the successful journey and arrival; the moonlight ride of observance about the city, and, finally, the address which incited the Jews to rebuild the wall.

Never was a great national enterprise undertaken under more unfavorable circumstances. The laborers were few, comparatively, and inexperienced; enemies many and exceedingly crafty; instead of a clean site, a heap of rubbish; conspiracy within the city, and threatening advances of the enemy.

But the genius and zeal of Nehemiah were more than a match for even such a combination of adverse affairs. Such organizing and administrative ability as he displayed has never been surpassed. He fairly hypnotized the people—every body was enlisted. They worked as families and guilds. There was a good-natured rivalry. Thoroughly armed, they stood ready to repel incursions. Whether they worked or mounted guard, their families stood in groups behind them, and in the temple, so that they had a constant object lesson to remind them that the work in which they were engaged was for God and home and native land.

In the incredibly short space of fifty-two days the work was done. Happy Nehemiah! as on the night of the fifty-second day he closed and barred the city gate. What joy to know that the temple, built with twenty-one years of toil and sacrifice, was now, with all its priceless contents, after seventy years of exposure, safe from Bedouin incursion and the touch of sacrilegious and plundering hands!

Thus terminated a task which, in its mag-

nitude, difficulty, and importance, stands next to the building of the temple itself.

ANALYSIS AND KEY.

A sad face and its effect.
 A providential conjunction.
 A fair-minded king, an interested queen, a discreet courtier.
 The appeal and its sequel.
 The rebuilding of the wall.
 Inception, continuance, completion of the enterprise.

THE TEACHER'S LANTERN.

The utility of prayer has a remarkable exemplification in the Book of Nehemiah. The undertaking of rebuilding the wall was begun, continued, and consummated in prayer. Nehemiah prayed four months before he so much as mentioned his matter to the king. His silent prayer in the very presence of the king is artlessly described: 'So I prayed to the God of heaven.' He prayed as the work continued and enemies ridiculed and threatened.

The aggressive Christian must be ready to endure ridicule. Sanballat and Tobiah played a game of battledore and shuttlecock within earshot of the inexperienced builders. They banded jokes at their expense. 'Ha, ha! how industrious! Will they finish the work in a day?' 'The weight of a fox is enough to break down such a wall as that.' Mockery is no new weapon. The Christian must just be impervious to it.

The advantage of thorough organization has a fine illustration in this book. 'The names and order of them that builded the wall.' Each family, order, and guild, from the high priest to the merchant, was given a specific portion to do. The laborers were armed and instructed.

The discretion of Nehemiah was masterful. On arrival at Jerusalem he did not handicap himself by a premature admission of the object of his coming. Unobserved, he made a personal inspection of the walls. No doubt he jotted down a memorandum of the workmen and materials required. He was forearmed against the assertion of impracticability. At the proper moment he set forth the disgrace and danger involved in the ruined state of the walls. So feasible did he make their re-erection appear, that when in his fervor he cried, 'Come, and let us build up the walls of Jerusalem!' the people responded, 'Let us rise up and build!'

The loneliness of Nehemiah is pathetic. The importance of his proposition was not appreciated. Again there was a tinge of personal prejudice against him. He had been an affluent court favorite in Babylon, while the people to whom he came had been in the dust and danger of a defenceless city. The people resented his putting burdens upon them.

The page fairly bristles with suggestions to the social reformer of the present day. He must confront a unity of unbelievers and a disunion of believers. Critical words will pierce him deeper than enemies' spears. Traitors in camp are worse than foes afield. Inveterate apathy in face of unrighteous conditions is dispiriting to the last degree. The civic worker hears the plaintive, old-time refrain of 'strength decayed,' and 'we are not able.'

Yet never were motives for aggressive social endeavor more manifold and inspiring. Now is a time to 'remember the Lord and fight for your brethren and your homes.'

C. E. Topic.

Sunday, December 3.—Topic—Our one excuse. Rom. xiv., 1-12. (Consecration meeting).

St. Paul here irradiates a doctrine which is rapidly gaining ground in our day; viz., that in the final analysis the seat of authority in religion is not external, but internal. Every man is to be fully persuaded in his own mind, and so shape his conduct by his inner light. Judgment of another man's conscience is forbidden. No one has a right to condemn a servant whom his master approves. To his own master each standeth or falleth. The more imperative is it therefore that each be right with his Master, so that whether living or dying, we are His. Thus only we can give a happy account of ourselves to God. In the light of such teaching, the sin of putting a

stumbling-block in the way of others is parent.

Junior C. E. Topic.

A BOY AT WORK FOR GOD.

Monday, November 27.—A boy on an altar. Gen. xxii., 1-12.

Tuesday, November 28.—A boy sold for a slave. Gen. xxxvii., 23-28.

Wednesday, November 29.—A shepherd boy. I. Sam. xvi., 11, 12.

Thursday, November 30.—A boy king. II. Kings xxii., 1, 2.

Friday, December 1.—A boy in a palace. Ex. ii., 1-10.

Saturday, December 2.—A boy in a temple. II. Kings xi., 1-3.

Sunday, December 3.—Topic—A boy at work for God in his house. I. Sam. ii., 18, 26.

The Shepherd's Care.

How large a flock the Shepherd tends!

So large that he alone can count,

A multitude that never ends

Which he leads on from vale to mount;

And though the host be numberless

He does not fail one lamb to bless.

Out where the happy pastures grow,

And flashing streams their welcome sing.

Where softly falls the summer snow,

After the trees' sweet blossoming;

O'er luscious grass, through dewy meads,

There the good Shepherd gently leads.

Sometimes it seems it would be well

If he could keep his flock within

The meadow and the flowery dell,

Out of the haunts of war and sin;

They might be safe in such retreat,

But how to pass the dangerous street?

For where Christ's flocks are hurrying through,

Great traffic fills the noisy days,

And sin insults, and foes pursue,

But yet he leads them in safe ways;

Nor can they wander anywhere

Out of the clasp of his great care.

No noise shuts out the Shepherd's voice,

And each one hears it speak his name;

Then, comforted, he has no choice,

But, turning back from sin and shame,

Follows with swifter feet the call,

And trusts the Shepherd's care through all.

And I, though often I have strayed,

Come back to thee, O Shepherd true,

Weary, discouraged and afraid;

Thy love will yet my faith renew;

Thy fold has still an open door,

And still my Shepherd goes before.

—Marianne Farningham.

What Christianity is Worth.

Did you ever seriously ask yourself what Christianity is worth to you—to you, personally, whether you have openly numbered yourself among its followers or not? What is it worth to you to have been born in a land like this, with the education, the freedom, the hopes, the outlook which only that one thing had made possible? What has it been worth to you to be trained in a home where honor, integrity and a stainless name are counted above purchase? What have the teachings, the restraints, the sanctions of Christianity been worth to you in the formation of character, in the ideals of life it has given you, in the hopes which dimly or clearly reach to earth's boundary and beyond? What would you take in exchange for all these things, if by the barter every vestige of their influence must pass out of your life, your history, and your soul?

It is well for every one to take account of stock occasionally, and some quiet day, when you are counting up your possessions, ask yourself these questions, and see what answer they will bring. Then, when you have honestly set your value upon them, hold to it in word and deed. If the Church stands for the things you approve, support it; if there is a Word of God, consult it; if Christ is, indeed, the Lord, give Him your allegiance, and let no carping voices sway you.—The 'Wellspring.'