

the attempt of the enemy to raise an army, ch. 4 : 2. The Lesson deals with the opposition, and how Nehemiah overcame it.

2. Notice the method of the enemy. (a) They tried to organize a party to surprise the city and stop the work by force. (b) They tried to discourage the workers, vs. 10-12. (c) The rich and selfish among the Jews oppressed the poor, ch. 5. (d) They tried to get the person of Nehemiah, ch. 6 : 2. (e) They tried to induce Nehemiah to retire into the temple for safety, ch. 6 : 10-12. All that malice, force, cunning and duplicity could do was done.

3. Consider Nehemiah's defence. The enemies' method aroused his suspicion and in a measure prepared him to meet them. (a) He sought the help of God, v. 9. (b) He set a watch, v. 9. (c) He armed the people, v. 13. (d) He inspired them by his own heroic spirit, v. 14. (e) He detailed special officers for defence, v. 16. (f) He instituted a special signal service, v. 20. Nehemiah is the picture of courage, wisdom and faith in his cause. The work was finished in fifty-two days, ch. 6 : 15.

The Lesson is a graphic illustration of spiritual warfare. The principles are the same. Let the application be made to the upbuilding of individual character. The teacher will require great wisdom and tact in bringing this truth home to the class. It is well to deal frankly with the dangers of life, and then to unfold the means of grace whereby life can be successful and progressive. Let the application be made also to the upbuilding of the kingdom of God. The enemy is well known. Try to bring out what is considered most deadly to the kingdom. Then study the defence. Note historical illustrations, and the resources within the power of the kingdom. The spirit of faith should ever be prominent. Hebrews ch. 11 will afford much encouragement to those who are battling with difficulties in the spiritual life.

For Teachers of the Boys and Girls

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The last half of a task is often the hardest half. This task had prospered. What task? Hark back to the Lesson of a fortnight ago—the grief of Nehemiah (Who was he ?) over

the wall-less, gateless city of his fathers and of his fathers' God (What city ? Where ? Where was Nehemiah ? How far away ? Why there ? and such like questions); and how he got leave to go and rebuild.

So far, the previous Lesson. The gap between, the teacher must have well in hand. The keen scholars will have read up the story thoroughly. Have the points brought out in quick succession (chs. 2, 3, and 4 : 1-6):—the king's permission (ch. 2 : 6), his letters (vs. 7, 8), the guard (v. 9); the vexation of the enemy (v. 10); the arrival and secret survey (vs. 11-16); the summons to build (vs. 17, 18); the scorn of the adversaries, and Nehemiah's answer (vs. 19, 20); the well ordered, steady start, ch. 3 (a chapter worth going through in detail, if there were time, emphasizing, as it does, the value of method in the doing of God's work); and back of it all the mocking foe, and the quiet, unshaken faith in God, of the builders, ch. 4 : 1-6. Thus far, well. But the crisis comes. Mocking is to turn into fighting. This is where our Lesson,—the hardness of the second half,—begins.

It opens with a *conspiracy*, vs. 7, 8. What led to this determined, concerted opposition ? What but the fact that something was being really done ? Satan contents himself with mocking, so long as we merely plan, or talk; but when we begin in earnest to *do*, he starts the fight. The opposition of the wicked is proof that God's work is being done. How are the hindrances met ? By a look up—"we made our prayer", and by a look out—"and set a watch". What newer way, what better way, has ever been discovered, of meeting our spiritual foes ? It is the way Christ practised (Luke 3 : 21 ; 22 : 39-42), and enjoined, Mark 13 : 33.

The crisis, begun with a conspiracy on the part of the foe, is aggravated by the faint-heartedness of friends. The builders are weary (v. 10), and hence the more easily frightened by the threats of v. 11, and the fears of the non-workers, v. 12. The hardest place has been reached: the excitement of the first efforts worn away, the work becomes monotonous, the "Didn't—I—tell—you—so?" people getting in their wail. Many a school, many a mission, many a battle of the soul