

Sunday School Banner

FOR TEACHERS AND YOUNG PEOPLE



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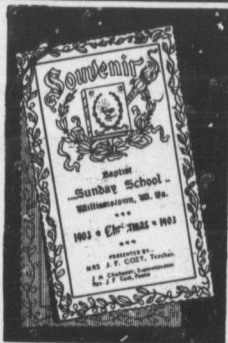
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No. 12

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SUNDAY SCHOOL BANNER

for
TEACHERS
AND
YOUNG PEOPLE.

No. 12

DECEMBER, 1905

Vol. 39

Lux, Lex, Dux, Rex.

—
BEATRICE BRADFORD.

—
LUX.

The world lay wrapped in darkness,
When Christ the Light was born;
What wondrous dazzling glory
Surrounds that Christmas morn!
And still that Light is with us,
To shine upon our way,
When may we feel his presence,
This blessed Christmas Day.

—
LEX.

Obey him, if we love him,
This law is given to all:
Christ's yoke is never grievous
To those who hear his call.
The great commandment follow,
This holy Christmastide;
Let love, his love, constrain us,
And in our hearts abide.

—
DUX.

Through life's mysterious pathways,
Christ will ever leader be;
To us his wayward children
He calleth, "Follow me."
Dear Guide, so true and loving,
Who came a child to earth,
We rise this day to greet thee,
And hail thy wondrous birth.

—
REX.

A babe in manger lowly,
And yet a king so great;
Thy palace but a stable,
No guards, no royal state;
O Light, O Law, O Leader,
O King, in childlike frame,
We would be thine forever,
In deed, as well as name.
—Pittsburg Christian Advocate.

Christ Comes Again.

—
J. T. MCFARLAND.

Lo! Christ comes even to the least,
For each the angels grandly sing;
His star hangs ever in the east,
And each his tribute still may bring.
Life's common ways exalted are,
Life's common work is made sublime,
By light which falls from Christmas star,
And melody of Christmas chime.

Because by sea and winding stream
The Lord Christ's footsteps still are
pressed,
Earth keeps the glory of a dream,
The world and all that is are blest.

The Lord is here, not far away;
He comes to bide from realms above;
And life is one long Christmas Day
That binds us to immortal Love.

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Sunday School Banner

W. H. WITHROW, D.D., Editor

TORONTO, DECEMBER, 1905.

Sunday School Lessons for 1906.

THE lessons for the whole of the year will be on the words and works of Jesus. We venture to say that never since that matchless life was lived on earth will it have been so profoundly studied as during the coming year. Light from every quarter shall be focussed on the sacred page, and the study throughout fifty-two weeks of the life of him who was not only a sacrifice, but an example for us, cannot fail to have profoundest influence upon the heart and mind and will. May we not count on nobler ideals, a wider vision, a fuller consecration as a result of this sacred study.

It is a great and precious privilege to guide the feet of the young and unwary into the blessed footprints of him who went about doing good. No commentary upon the life of Jesus is so good as that

life itself as set forth in the words of the Evangelists. Other books are helpful, but the Book of books is most helpful of all. For those who have time and opportunity we commend specially the study of the "Life of Christ," by Dean Farrar (price 90 cents), the most readable and instructive one that we know. Gelkie's "Life of Christ" is less interesting in style, but very useful. Edersheim's "Life of our Lord," a large work in two volumes, published by our Book Room at \$2, is an exhaustive work of permanent value. Stalker's "Life of our Lord" (price 60 cents), is a brief and exceedingly useful book.

How a Harmony Helps.

AMONG the most successful helps to the study of the life of Christ has been found a good harmony of the Gospels. The advantage of such a harmony, or Monotessaron, as it is called, will be shown by the following extracts from an article by Prof. Amos A. Wells, in the Sunday School Times:

"Far above concordance, Bible index, Bible dictionary, I count the Monotessaron the very best help to Bible study. The Monotessaron, it might be parenthetically remarked, for the benefit of the lexicon-lazy folk, is a Harmony of the Four Gospels, so arranged as to make one continuous and complete story, in Scripture words alone. Speaking for one, I may say that through recent first acquaintance with a Monotessaron, that Matchless Life has shone upon me with an entire splendour of beauty and majesty before unimagined.

"A further inestimable advantage is the appreciation of surroundings. What light is cast, for example, on the story of Lazarus in John by its insertion in Luke; the contact of these parted elements of the Gospel story sometimes rouses a current of thrilling thoughts, making a veritable electric battery of the Monotessaron.

"It has given the life and person of Christ marvellous vividness, setting facts in their due order, location, relations and proportions, while the facility it affords is constant inspiration to fresh delightful study. This is the experience of thousands, and yet I am sure that there

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Christmas Onward.

are many thousands who are yet unacquainted with this Bible-help. Not only every Sunday School teacher, but every Bible scholar should own one."

Withrow's Harmony of the Gospels, or the Life of Jesus in the words of the Four Evangelists, has had a wide sale in Canada, and has been pronounced exceedingly helpful for the study of the Sunday School lessons. One gentleman bought 140 copies for presentation to his Bible-class, and others have given orders for a less number. The price of this book is fifty cents, but in quantities of six or more it will be sent for thirty-five cents, post free. To secure this special rate, please send orders direct to the Editor.

A leading literary organ of Canada says of this book: "This is a really admirable volume, which no one should be without, and the very moderate price of which puts it within the reach of everyone. We have compared this with the best Harmonies in our possession, including the latest, by the Rev. C. C. James, the only one taken from the Revised Version; and we are able to say that, in our judgment, the arrangement of the successive portions of the history is as good as it could be. The editor very properly follows the Revised Version." Methodist Book Rooms, Toronto, Montreal and Halifax.

OUR double Christmas number will be issued on the 16th of December. Last year it was about a week earlier, which was thought to be too far before Christmas time. We have, therefore, brought it nearer the holiday. We are not aware of any Sunday School periodical which issues such a large double number without any additional cost. Our subscribers would be surprised to know how many dollars extra this costs us.

We are arranging a programme of special excellence for next year, including a splendid serial, "The Bar-rooms of Brantley." The price of this story in book form is twice that of Onward for the whole year. Extra copies of our Christmas number may be ordered by schools already taking it at one dollar per hundred, delivered at this office. This is far below cost. The post office regulations will not allow us to send this special number to schools by mail for less than half a cent a number, or fifty cents per hundred.

1906.

Christmas Prayer.

ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS.

For the empty, aching home
Where the silent footsteps come,
Where the unseen face looks on,
Where the hand-clasp is not felt,
Where the dearest eyes are gone
Where the portrait on the wall
Stirs and struggles as to speak;
Where the light breath from the hall
Calls the color to the cheek;
Where the voice breaks in the hymn.
When the sunset burneth dim;
Where the late, large tear will start,
Frozen by the broken heart;
Where the lesson is to learn
How to live, to grieve, to yearn,
How to hear and how to bow—
O the Christmas that is fled!—
Lord of living and of dead
Comfort thou!

OUR readers we feel sure will be greatly pleased at the marked improvement in The Banner for 1906. It will be very considerably enlarged, printed with new cover, and otherwise keep step with the continual improvement of all our periodicals. Notwithstanding the increased expense of this and other changes there will be no increased cost to our readers. The Banner in its new form, we feel sure, will be accepted as not a whit inferior to the very best Sunday School helps furnished to any schools in Christendom.

In view of the intense interest felt in the new local option campaign in Canada the new serial story in Onward will be read with keen avidity. It is a stirring tale from the pen of that famous temperance writer, T. S. Arthur. Its title, "The Bar-rooms of Brantley," will suggest a strong and stirring temperance story, to begin in the January numbers.
In Pleasant Hours we begin one of the

best boys' stories ever written, "Eric," a tale of school-boy life, by the late Dean Farrar. The fact that Onward and Pleasant Hours, as indeed all our Sunday School papers, have gone up in circulation by leaps and bounds, is the best proof of their hold upon our schools.

We wish all our readers, in the best and highest sense :

A MERRY CHRISTMAS

and

A HAPPY NEW YEAR.

Methodist Magazine and Review for November.

The illustrated articles in this number are : An account of the remarkable missions maintained for over one hundred and fifty years by the Moravians at Labrador ; also an account of the Underground Railway, by means of which thousands of slaves escaped to Canada ; " Modes of Travel in China," " Peasant Schools in Russia," and Current History in Cartoon, all copiously illustrated. Other articles are : " Our Summer Schools," by Rev. Dr. Carman ; " The Simpler Life," an antidote to tuberculosis, by Sir James Grant, M.D., K.C.M.G. ; " With Christ at Sea " ; " Sweden's Queen " ; " The Young Man Problem," by Rev. Dr. J. S. Ross, a study of the remarkable life of Quentin Hogg, founder of the London Polytechnic ; " In the Streets of Tokio," a story of Japan in war time ; " Summer-wild," an attractive serial, and other number. November and December numbers are offered free to new subscribers. A fine programme for 1906 is announced.

Toronto : William Briggs. Montreal : C. W. Coates. Halifax : S. F. Huestis. \$2.00 a year ; \$1.00 for six months.

To introduce our Magazine more largely into our Sunday Schools we make a special offer to send it to schools taking two or more copies for \$1.60 each instead of \$2.00, the regular price. We will also send for this sum the November and December numbers free. This brings the price almost down to the price of the ten-cent American magazines, which have the

advantage of an enormous circulation and large advertising patronage. Some schools have taken as many as ten copies for circulation, as fresher, cheaper, more interesting and instructive than library books. Give it a trial for 1906, and we feel sure you will not regret it.

Book Reviews.

"The Immanence of God." By Professor Borden P. Bowne. Houghton, Mifflin & Company. Toronto : William Briggs. \$1.00 net.

Professor Bowne discusses in this trenchant little volume one of the burning questions of the hour. By many evolutionary science is supposed to have succeeded in dispensing with God as essential or basal to the universe. English deism placed Him at such a distance that the world ran its course without any supernatural aid. The revival of a study of Spinoza has brought a decided reaction against deistic transcendence, with a decided tendency towards a pantheistic immanence. Can the two claims of the divine transcendence and the divine immanence be so adjusted that we can find a satisfactory theory of the relation of God to the world, and of the world as in some way dependant upon God?

The word of inspiration declares that "in God we live and move and have our being." All lines of reflection are fast tending towards the same point. We may justly describe all things as a "natural supernaturalism," or a "supernatural naturalism." Terms count for but little so long as we have the right idea. Nature is but an expression for the will and purpose of the Eternal. "This doctrine we call the divine immanence ; by which we mean that God is the omnipresent ground of all finite existence and activity. The world, alike of things and of spirits, is nothing existing and acting on its own account, while God is away in some extrasidereal region, but it continually depends upon and is ever upheld by the ever-living, ever-present, ever-working God."

This fundamental position is worked out with remarkable vigor and clearness under the following divisions : God and Nature ; God and History ; God and the Bible, and God and Religion. Clear utterances, saner thought, and stronger

argument it would be hard to find, and yet the discussion is so plain and practical that the lay reader can thoroughly understand it. Its perusal will correct many a foolish error, and strengthen and clear the faith of every believer. It is a most timely contribution to a burning question, and does infinite credit to an author to whom we are all deeply indebted. It ought to have a place in every Sabbath School library, and in the home of every minister and layman.

"Rational Living. Some Practical Inferences from Modern Psychology." By Henry Churchill King. New York: The Macmillan Company. Toronto: Morang & Co. Pp. xvii.-271. Price, \$1.25.

The new psychology has been largely an academic affair, the outcome of ingenious laboratory experiments which bring it largely within the range of psychological research. In the science of teaching, however, it has been turned to very practical use, and the entire educational system, from kindergarten to university, has received new impulse therefrom. President King's book is the first systematic example that we know of making practical use in every-day life of the discoveries and principles of the modern psychology. His book is one of prime importance in the development of both morals and manners.

The four great inferences from the new psychology, says President King are: Life is complex; man is a unit; will and action are of central importance; and the will is concrete. To the elucidation and application of these inferences his book is devoted. A very important chapter is that on the unity of mind and body and suggestions for right living. The body influences the mind, as we all know. The importance of the *mens sana in corpore sano* is self-evident. Fatigue of body, or of brain, lessens the will power. To continue work in spite of weariness is simply to drug the watchman of the treasury. Most accidents in factories occur towards the close of the day, when nerve and brain are weary. The records of Saturday nights make tragic reading—the drunkenness that results from wearied frames, weakened wills, the possession of wages, and the ever-yawning saloon. Hence the duty, or, as Herbert Spencer calls it, the Gospel of recreation.

Neurasthenia, or nerve-exhaustion, is

so peculiarly an American disease that it has even been called Americanitis. Our neighbors of the republic and ourselves, as well, are living too fast, crowding the work of weeks before the days of telegraphs and telephones, into hours. No fagged man can be at his best, especially for the highest things.

There is also an important influence of mind on body. If the will be weak one may give way to inertia and laziness. Haste makes waste. One must control his emotions. Hurry and worry are fatal to the best work. A calm assured faith will not only clarify the judgment but build up character. Habit may make action automatic. Good habits are as easily formed as bad ones. We should make our nervous system our ally instead of our enemy. In study the power of attention is the very centre of the will. Mind-wandering breaks down both memory and character. We should act on every conviction. Our judgment should be followed by an act of the will. It is action alone that fixes habit. We should do something we don't like to every day. "I hate to get up in the morning," said Mr. Gladstone, "and I hate it every morning," but he did it.

The temptation of the times is the passion for material comfort which interferes with the plain living and high thinking of an earlier day. The call of duty is a nobler thing than the siren song of pleasure; the Pilgrim's Chorus in Wagner is better music than the Venus song. Passive emotion, that is, the mere feeling of pity or sympathy without an act, but weakens the will. A girl may be moved to tears by the sorrows of the heroine in a novel and yet let her mother carry the coal. A man's whole life is defined in terms of the will. Work is the chief means to character and happiness and influence and an inexorable law rules throughout—that which is not expressed, that is, carried out in action, dies. The book, it will be seen, is one of intensely practical character.

"Children are simple, loving and true,
Our Father made them so;
And would you teach them so to be,
Then stoop to what they know.

"Teach them with objects, pictures, things
On which they love to look,
Flowers, pebbles, insects, birds on wings—
These are God's spelling book."



INTERNATIONAL BIBLE LESSONS

FOURTH QUARTER: STUDIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

LESSON X. Nehemiah Rebuilds the Walls of Jerusalem

[Dec. 3

GOLDEN TEXT. Watch and pray. Matt. 26. 41.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

[Study the chapter]

Neh. 4. 7-20

[Commit to memory verses 19, 20]

7 But it came to pass, that when San-bal-lat, and To-bi'ah, and the A-ra'bi-ans, and the Am-mon-ites, and the Ash'dod-ites, heard that the walls of Je-ru'sa-lem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth,

8 And conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Je-ru'sa-lem, and to hinder it.

9 Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them.

10 And Ju'dah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and *there* is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall.

11 And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease.

12 And it came to pass, that when the Jews which dwell by them came, they said unto us ten times, From all places whence ye shall return unto us *they will be upon you*.

13 Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, and on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows.

14 And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them; remember the Lord, *which* is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.

15 And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work.

16 And it came to pass from that time forth, *that* the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons; and the rulers *were* behind all the house of Ju'dah.

17 They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, *every*

REVISED VERSION*

7 But it came to pass that, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem went forward, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth; 8 and they conspired all of them together to come and fight against Jerusalem, and to cause confusion therein. 9 But we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them. 10 And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall. 11 And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come into the midst of them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease. 12 And it came to pass that, when the Jews that dwell by them came, they said unto us ten times from all places, Ye must return unto us. 13 Therefore set I in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, in the open places, I set *there* the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows. 14 And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, who is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.

15 And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work. 16 And it came to pass from that time forth, that half of my servants wrought in the work, and half of them held the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the coats of mail; and the rulers were behind all the house of Judah. 17 They that builded the wall and they that bare burdens laded themselves; every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and

*The Revised Version, copyright 1901, by Thomas Nelson & Sons.

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one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon.

18 For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me.

19 And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, The work is great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another.

20 In what place therefore ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us.

with the other held his weapon; 18 and the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me. 19 And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers and to the rest of the people, The work is great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another: 20 in what place soever ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us; our God will fight for us.

Home Readings

[Furnished by the International Bible Reading Association]

M. Nehemiah Rebuilds the Walls of Jerusalem. Neh. 4. 1-12.

Tu. Nehemiah Rebuilds the Walls of Jerusalem. Neh. 4. 13-20.

W. Crafty enemies. Neh. 6. 1-9.

Th. Nehemiah's courage. Neh. 6. 10-16.

F. Dedication of the walls. Neh. 12. 27-30, 43-47.

S. Our help and shield. Psa. 33. 10-22.

S. Our armor. Eph. 6. 10-20.

Time.—B. C. 444. Place.—Jerusalem.

The Lesson Hymns

New Canadian Hymnal, No. 160.

I am waiting for the Master,
Who will rise and bid me come
To the glory of his presence,
To the gladness of his home.

New Canadian Hymnal, No. 162.

My soul, be on thy guard,
Ten thousand foes arise;
The hosts of sin are pressing hard,
To draw thee from the skies.

New Canadian Hymnal, No. 161.

When Jesus comes to reward his servants,
Whether it be noon or night,
Faithful to him will he find us watching,
With our lamps all trimmed and bright!

Questions for Senior Scholars

1. *Prayer* (v. 7-9).—What enemies had Nehemiah? Who was Sanballat? Who were the Ammonites? the Arabians? the Ashdodites? Why were they wroth? What did they set out to do? What did the Jews do to prevent this? When God's enemies try to hinder what should Christians do? (Psa. 50. 15.) Why do we need to watch as well as pray?

2. *Discouragement* (v. 10-12).—What other discouragements had they?

3. *Encouragement* (v. 13-15).—Which is harder to bear, the opposition of enemies or the discussion of friends?

4. *Watching* (v. 16-20).—What did they do

besides watch and pray? How many of them worked? How did they work? What were the weapons for? Whom should we watch against? (1 Pet. 5. 8.) What else? (Mark 14. 38.) Where was he that sounded the trumpet? Why was he there? Would it do for him to go to sleep? What is always by us to notify us when God's enemies are near? How shall we keep it awake and alert? What did Nehemiah mean by saying "we are separated"? Is the law of mutual help more obligatory in war times than in times of peace? In whose fighting powers had Nehemiah supreme confidence? Repeat the GOLDEN TEXT.

Questions for Intermediate Scholars

1. *Dangers and Discouragements* (v. 7-12).—Who were plotting against the Jews? What reason had they for interfering with Nehemiah? What did Nehemiah do besides pray? What complaint did the men of Judah make to Nehemiah? What kind of an attack did these enemies plan to make against the Jews?

2. *Our God Shall Fight for Us* (v. 13-20).—How did Nehemiah arrange the people along the wall? What noble address did Nehemiah make to the leaders and the people? What effect had these arrangements upon the enemies of the Jews? Upon what did Nehemiah depend more than upon all his preparations?

Questions for Younger Scholars

What did the king tell Nehemiah to do? To go to Jerusalem. How long a journey was that? Eleven hundred miles. What did he tell

the people when he came there? That he was going to build the walls. How did they feel? Very glad and happy. What were they ready

Sanballat, and the Ammonites that went for to be stopped, they could not and fight confusion r unto our day and Judah said, Judah is do so that we and our ad- w, neither them, and e. 12 And that dwelt times from 13 There- space be- set there with their 14 And the nobles, the people, the Lord, for your ters, your

r enemies God had we at we into his that time in the ears, in the of mail; house, of and they every one work, and

to do? *Work with him.* Who tried to stop them? What did they do first? *Laughed at them.* What made them angry after a little? *To see the work going on.* What did they do

then? Who heard that they were coming? What did he do? What did the other men keep right on doing? How did they work? *With sword in hand.*

The Lesson Analysis

I. Introductory (Neh. 2. 1 to 4. 6).

(a) King Artaxerxes, observing the sadness of Nehemiah, the cupbearer, inquired its cause. (b) Nehemiah told of the misery of Jerusalem (concerning which we studied in Lesson VIII). (c) When Artaxerxes asked what he desired Nehemiah prayed for divine direction, then asked to be commissioned to "build" (that is, to fortify) Jerusalem. (d) The king so commissioned him, provided him with an escort of "captains of the army and horsemen," made him governor, and gave him requisitions on neighboring governors to facilitate the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. (e) But Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem, with other neighboring governors, were "grieved exceedingly," feeling that "the welfare of the children of Israel" was opposed to their own selfish interests. (f) Nehemiah, recording all this, gratefully adds, "The good hand of my God was upon me." (g) When Nehemiah reached Jerusalem he rode around the city by night to estimate the difficulties of the task intrusted to him. (h) So soon as he had mastered the situation he took into his confidence the leading citizens of Jerusalem and proposed by volunteered labor to rebuild the city walls. (i) His proposition was received with enthusiasm in Jerusalem, but with malignity by the neighboring provincial governors mentioned above. (j) Chapter 3 is taken up with the details of the work on the gates and the walls. (k) Sanballat and Tobiah, two of Nehemiah's opponents, constantly ridiculed the work and prepared definitely to oppose it.

II. Working, Praying, and Watching (verses 7-9).

(a) Nehemiah's bitterest opponents were officials of the Persian empire: 1. Sanballat ("the Horonite") of Samaria, who in the restoration of Jerusalem foresaw the failure of his own capital city as the metropolis of Palestine; a man of Moabite extraction, who hated the Jews; 2. Tobiah ("the servant"—probably an emancipated slave), an Ammonite who had secured a dangerous influence over Eliashib, the Jewish high priest. Besides these were Arabians (probably predatory Arabs under the lead of Geshem, Neh. 4. 1); Ammonites (see Neh. 13. 1), who, like the Edomites, had settled on deserted Jewish farms; and Ashdodites (Philistines), old enemies under a new name. (b) Having battened on the defenseless Jews, these heathen steadily increased in hostility

while they watched the walls of Jerusalem steadily rise (verse 7). (c) With the loose imperial system of Persia (more nearly analogous to that of China than to anything in Western civilization) it was possible for one province to fight with another without immediate notification of the central government. (d) These enemies, therefore, united to attack Jerusalem so as to prevent its fortification (verse 8), pretending that Nehemiah was preparing to rebel against Persia. (e) But the work went on; and (f) the workers prayed to God, while (g) they set a watch against their enemies.

III. A Survey of the Difficulties (verses 10-12).

(a) Most of the people of Jerusalem were loyal to God and to Nehemiah, but needed encouragement. (b) The Jewish villagers, impressed by the greatness of the work and the weariness of the builders, discouraged them. (c) Heathen enemies conspired to murder the builders and destroy Jerusalem. (d) The Jews who lived near the heathen, discovering the conspiracy, advised the builders to cease. (e) Everyone but God seemed to be against Nehemiah and his men.

IV. A Survey of the Sources of Strength (verses 13-15).

(a) Nothing could discourage Nehemiah; he redoubled his endeavors to complete the walls and to defend the builders. (b) He mingled with the people and encouraged officers and privates. (c) He turned the people's attention away from their enemies to the Lord. (d) He reminded them that the struggle was for their own homes and families. (e) This renewal of energy and faith on the part of the builders frustrated the plans of their enemies.

V. Triumphant Success (verses 16-20).

(a) Nehemiah set one half of his men to work and the other half to stand guard. (b) He enlisted every officer of the city government in his work. (c) He armed the laborers so as to show that he could not be either surprised, or terrified, or discouraged. (d) Verses 19 and 20 show with what close organization he held his little force. (e) For their strength they depended entirely upon God. (f) The wall was completed in fifty-two days—a most extraordinary performance; for which Nehemiah and his fellow laborers devoutly thanked God.

The GOLDEN TEXT is admirably fitting.

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The Lesson Word Studies

NOTE.—These Word Studies are based on the Revised Version.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.—After the time of fasting and prayer referred to in our lesson for November 19 Nehemiah, the king's cupbearer, laid the matter of his deepest concern, namely, the desolate condition of Jerusalem, before King Artaxerxes and received permission from him to go in person to Jerusalem for a period of years to rebuild the city and its walls. The king also gave to Nehemiah letters addressed to the governors of the provinces through which he was to pass, together with an escort of horsemen and foot soldiers to insure his safe and unhindered journey, while a letter to Asaph, "keeper of the king's forest," secured for him the necessary building material for "beams for the gates of the castle which appertained to the house, and for the wall of the city," and for a private dwelling for himself (comp. Neh. 2, 8). Arriving at Jerusalem, Nehemiah first made a secret inspection of the condition of affairs and examined the walls. Then he called together the nobles and priests and elders and encouraged them to undertake the rebuilding of the walls and the renovation of the entire city. No sooner was the work begun than neighboring tribes united against the Jews to hinder the undertaking. Their attitude at first was one of scorn and contempt, but as the work progressed and approached its successful completion their contempt was changed to intense jealousy, hatred, and active opposition. Who these enemies were and how Nehemiah prepared his people for their intended attack on the city is told in our lesson text.

Verse 7. Sanballat—The chief opponent of Nehemiah in all his work at Jerusalem. He appears to have been an officer of high rank in Samaria, which was also a province of the Persian empire.

Tobiah—The leader of the Ammonites in their opposition to the Jews at Jerusalem.

Arabians—It is not certain whether the tribes referred to were those dwelling to the south of Palestine in the desert or the smaller colony established by Sargon in Samaria after its desolation in the year 715 B. C. Their alliance with the Samaritans under Sanballat would seem to indicate that the latter rather than the former are referred to.

Ammonites—The Ammonites were the inhabitants of the country just east of the Jordan between the rivers Arnon on the south and Jabbok on the north. South of their territory dwelt the Moabites. The people referred to here were the descendants of the ancient Ammonites, who opposed the progress of the Israelites when they first entered Canaan from the east.

Ashdodites—The people of Ashdod and vicinity. Ashdod was the strongest of the ancient Philistine cities, and lay almost directly west of Jerusalem near the shore of the Mediterranean Sea.

Thus the neighboring nations on every side of the little Jewish colony united against it in its efforts to reestablish itself and rebuild the walls of its capital city. That tribes all tributary to the same king should thus be at enmity and war with one another is quite in harmony with the actual conditions then existing, especially on the frontier of the great Persian empire.

9. But we made our prayer unto our God—Nehemiah is himself relating the story,

and the pronoun refers to the Jewish colony of which he was now the governor.

10. And Judah said—The word "Judah" here refers to the whole Jewish community, which, through the elders and representative men, communicated with Nehemiah.

Bearers of burdens—Referring probably to the whole working class of citizens.

Rubbish—Debris from the walls which had been permitted to fall into decay and to crumble; also, probably referring to the accumulation of rubbish in the unkept streets and open places of the city.

The whole of this verse must be taken together with the next. It is intended to point out that internal obstacles as well as external hindrances were encountered in the attempt to carry out the work. The people themselves were tired out and discouraged.

11. Our adversaries said—Compare this verse with verse 10, which records what "Judah said." The secret plotting of the enemies and their plan of general attack upon the city, added to the discouragement of the people themselves, increased the difficulties which Nehemiah found it necessary to overcome.

12. The Jews that dwelt by them—Scattered individuals and families living far from the city in the territory of one or the other of these enemies.

They said unto us—That is, those scattered Jews from all places said unto Nehemiah and those with him.

Ye must return unto us—Many of the able-bodied men of these scattered families had been summoned to Jerusalem to aid in building the walls. In their absence from home the defenseless members of their families were harassed by the enemies in whose country they dwelt and who looked with disfavor upon the

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rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. The request seems to be for a return home of these able-bodied men to defend their own homes and families.

13. Therefore—This sentence refers, not to the preceding verse merely, but to the entire preceding passage, including verses 7-12. It is in view of the whole situation that Nehemiah makes the further provision for the defense mentioned.

After their families—Grouping the defenders by families and clans.

14. I looked—That is, inspected the means of defense when completed.

15. Our enemies heard that it was known unto us—The pronoun refers to the secret plan for their combined attack upon the city. Of this the Jews had been informed.

God had brought their counsel to nought—Through the means employed by Nehemiah.

We returned all of us to the wall—This statement implies what is not explicitly mentioned, namely, that the work had been suspended in anticipation of an immediate attack.

16. This and the remaining verses of the lesson are devoted to an explanation of the standing order of defense maintained after the immediate danger of an attack was over.

The rulers were behind—Superintending the work of building and ready to direct the defense in the case of an attack.

20. Our God will fight for us—Nehemiah was well aware of the inferior numbers at his command with which to resist a determined onset of the combined enemy. He knew also that the Jews were conscious of their own weakness. Their only hope was in Jehovah, in whom Nehemiah himself explicitly trusted for assistance. He seeks to inspire the same trust in Jehovah and hope of victory in the hearts of the people.

The Lesson Exposition

THE LARGER LESSON

It is of the utmost importance that the whole scope of this intensely interesting account of the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem shall be studied in connection with the immediate text of the lesson. Let teachers and all real students take up the reading at chapter 2, the point to which the last lesson brought us, and read through carefully to the close of chapter 7. That will set the entire enterprise before us with all its difficulties, and will enable us to appreciate how notable was the success achieved. Particularly, and this is the chief thing, it will set the personality of Nehemiah vividly before us, and impress us with those qualities in him which were so admirable, and without which the undertaking would certainly and ignominiously have failed. He affords a distinguished example of God's method of biographical revelation, exhibiting truth and duty in concrete examples of real men engaged in real work—a kind of revelation he is still carrying on before our eyes in the present day.

A LEADER OF MEN

Nehemiah demonstrated that he had the qualities of great leadership. It is worth while to set some of those qualities clearly before us. 1. *He was large-hearted.* The beginning of the undertaking on his part was born out of his sympathy. His heart was deeply moved by the report of the distress of his countrymen in Palestine. And throughout his heart was in his work. 2. *He believed in himself.* He was not an egotist, and he did not exalt himself. On the contrary, he was in marked degree modest. But he had confidence in himself. He believed he was capable of doing the thing he

undertook, and he did not depend upon the counsel of others. He never vacillated or hesitated through any self-distrust. This characteristic is shown in his words in 5, 7, "Then I consulted with myself." If a man does not believe in himself others are not likely to believe in him. 3. *He believed in God.* Throughout he expressed his trust in God. "So I prayed to the God of heaven" (1, 4). "What my God had put in my heart to do" (2, 12). "The God of heaven, he will prosper us" (2, 20). These expressions show that his self-confidence had its support in God-confidence. 4. *He had the power to inspire enthusiasm and confidence in others.* He did that first of all with the king to whom he first proposed the undertaking. This was the more remarkable because Artaxerxes had been prejudiced against the Jews at Jerusalem by reports sent to him (Ezra 4, 11-16) and had issued a decree (Ezra 4, 17-22) forbidding the rebuilding of the walls of the city. To overcome that prejudice and secure a counter decree and commission was proof of a marked power to persuade and move men. Then he inspired the people of Jerusalem to undertake the work. When he explained to them his mission they said at once, "Let us rise up and build" (2, 18). And yet before they were wholly without heart. And so throughout. He had that indefinable spirit of the great leader which arouses faith and hope and courage and enthusiasm in others. 5. *He was superior to discouragements.* How many and great those discouragements were we will see in a moment. These only strengthened his determination and drew upon his resourcefulness. He was not simply a good fair-weather captain, but a commander whose strength grew

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in the face of storms. 6. *He had high self-respect.* "His strength was as the strength of ten, because his heart was pure." He had a noble sense of his own personal dignity and would do nothing inconsistent with it. This was finely expressed when he was urged to hide in the temple because of a report that his life was threatened. He replied, "Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in" (6. 11). It was not necessary that he should live, but it was necessary that he should preserve his honor and not become contemptible in his own eyes. I suggest to the brethren of the pulpit that they take this text and preach some great and much-needed sermons on "The Religion of Self-Respect." 7. *He had the genius for organization.* He knew how to turn a mass of people into a great working and fighting machine. 8. *He was capable of intense moral indignation.* When the cry of the people concerning the usury and extortion of the nobles came to him he said, "I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words" (5. 6). Read that chapter and see that he was angry to good purpose. He was a staunch believer in our British doctrine of "a square deal for every man." The spirit of injustice and greed, of the strong trampling upon the weak, stirred his wrath. But there was nothing personal or petty about his anger. His wrath was like the wrath of God.

DIFFICULTIES, OPPOSITION, DISCOURAGEMENTS

The difficulties which Nehemiah faced were great, the oppositions he encountered were constant and bitter, and the discouragements which arose were exceedingly trying. Look at them: 1. *The whole original situation.* Go in inspiration with Nehemiah on that night ride of inspection when he went forth to see the nature and extent of the city's desolation (2. 12-16). Ruins are bad enough seen in the daylight, but at night they provoke the deepest melancholy. Added to that material desolation was a disheartened and disorganized people. He had to restore the heart of the nation before he could restore the walls of the city. 2. *The opposition of enemies.* Sanballat and his crowd were always with him. And the resourcefulness and the ingenuity of these enemies was only out-matched by Nehemiah's patience and wisdom and energy. First they sneered and mocked (2. 19); then they were angry and spoke with contempt (4. 1-3); then they threatened to oppose by force and did so openly (4. 7, 8); then they conspired to work emissaries among the Jews themselves (6. 10); and finally they conspired with sympathizers among the Jews themselves. 3. *The failing strength of the people.* Up to a certain point

the popular enthusiasm endured; then it began to give way, and they began to say, "The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall" (4. 10). Increased activity of the enemy without and a discouraged people within created a hard situation for Nehemiah. See what knowledge of human nature, and art of inspiration, and faith in God he displayed under those depressing conditions (4. 13-23). That was great leadership that made a people do a great thing when they thought they could do nothing. 4. *The selfishness and corruption of rulers and the wealthy.* The common people were being robbed, their land and its products consumed, and their children by stress of poverty were being sold into bondage, and a bread-riot, the protest of the poor against the greed of the rich, was imminent (5. 1-13). It reads like modern history. Usury and class oppression are very ancient and very modern, and always very abominable! See what the ancient apostle of "a square deal for every man" did about it (5. 6-11). There was a directness and a vigor in his methods that is much like some modern history also. A ruler who loves justice with all his heart and has the requisite courage can do much to make the strong respect the rights of the weak. 5. *Then there were traitors and sympathizers with the enemy* (6. 17-19). They gave out information to Sanballat and Tobiah, and worked steadily to weaken the hands of Nehemiah. It was a stiff wind and an adverse current against which Nehemiah had to sail his ship, and there were many rocks. It was such leadership and mastership as stir the heart. I pity the person who thinks the book of Nehemiah "dry reading"!

THE PERMANENT LESSONS

But what makes this book of Nehemiah worth while? What are some of its permanent lessons? There are several worth remembering: 1. *The value to a nation of one strong, true man.* God was in it all, of course, but not do things in the world vaguely and in whom he can work. Nehemiah became the heart of the nation and sets its blood flowing and its nerves tingling. And he became the conscience of the nation, and set up for it the forgotten standards of righteousness. 2. *The sacredness of the secular.* There was nothing miah did. It was simply building walls. It was public works, such as the building of river dikes, and sea walls, or subways, or the cutting of Isthmian canals, or the works of public sanitation, in our day. But Nehemiah made it all sacred and in the highest degree religious by the motives which he carried into it. There

is nothing secular except to secular people.
 3. *The religion of politics and business.* Nehemiah made no distinction between the religion of his private life and his public life. He was simply a man of robust conscience and strong will who took it as a matter of course that religion ought to be equally at home in all depart-

ments of life. Political unrighteousness was some one's private unrighteousness; and the man who robbed another in trade belonged to the same class as the one who robbed on the highway. There was no cant in Nehemiah's religion, but there was a great stock of conscience in it.

THE LESSON PRAYER

We thank thee, our heavenly Father, for the history of great leaders who have given courage and conscience and hope to their generations and have led nations to the fulfilment of their destinies. Thou hast given to our own nation such leaders, and we give thanks for our Gladstone and Shaftesbury, and for our present King, whose power and influence thou hast been using for furthering the peace of the nations. We rejoice to know that thou art not less, but even more, in the world now than in ancient times; and that thou dost still inspire great purposes in the hearts of men, and that thy good hand is still with all who do thy work. Help thou us and all the people of this great nation to build about us the walls of righteousness, without which the defence of armies and navies will be in vain; and may mercy and justice and truth govern all our rulers, and honor and equity prevail in all our work and in all our trade. Amen.

The Lesson Coin Thoughts

I

Nehemiah's character was constructive.

We are destroying the greatest evil when we are building up the greatest good.

Evil is overcome with good; you will never better things by doing something bad.

Indirection is often the most effective correction.

As darkness goes out when daylight comes, so ignorance departs when knowledge arrives.

A man's methods disclose his meanings.

The dominant desire lends its character to the details of its expression.

He who goes out in the night looking after the needs of God's house is living his way into larger light.

We should have more rest in God if we did more work for God.

II

Those who are "at ease in Zion" do much to spread disease in Zion.

It takes a man to make a wall, but a mole may undermine it.

He is as good as ten men who can make ten men do their best.

He is justly said to build the wall who successively directs the builders.

He is responsible for doing that which he gets others to do.

The spirit of duty in deeds makes them monumental.

III

The best *workman* is also the best *watchman*. Nehemiah did not waste his strength in negotiations, but applied it in positive performances.

He guarded off the evil by helping on the good.

He squandered no substance on shadows, but cooperated with sunshine.

Nehemiah did not waste himself in lamentations over the limitations of starlight, but hastened onward to meet the sunlight.

He did not pore over the past, but pressed forward to the future.

My fortune is in my future.

IV

He who has not present faith in God has no ground for faith in his future.

The looms of to-day weave the fabrics of the future.

The duty of watching is manifold; a man must watch his *thoughts*. "For as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." A man must watch his *emotions*, for some there are who are "past feeling," and are given over to "hardness of heart." A man must watch his *deeds*, for every man is to be "judged according to his deeds."

Scuffers are cowards that mock at conquerors.

It is easier to *scuff* than it is to *serve*.

V

It is the idler who is a weakling, the strong man builds himself to strength by service.

He is as worthy of reward who removes the "rubbish" as he who places the pillar.

The stoker out of sight in the ship is as courageous as the captain in the cabin.

VI

You need to watch your *conscience*, lest the light that is in you diminish to darkness.

An outraged conscience is the fuel that feeds the fires of remorse.

A man's conscience is the Lord's candle; sin is the only extinguisher known.

When the conscience is utterly *spent* who shall *relight* it?

Sometimes the rebuilder is greater than the builder.

The Lesson Heart Talk

BY MRS. J. H. KNOWLES

The study of Nehemiah's building project is stimulating. It is full of practical suggestion for anything you or I may have to do this very week. The foundation of this man's character was his religious faith. He recognized God in social, personal, and business affairs, and sought his guidance and blessing by prayer. This was one evidence of the sound good sense which made him a successful, practical, business man. He says he prospered according to the good hand of God upon him. From this point of view every honorable calling in life is stimulating, fascinating. Even the drudgery of housework or the monotony of the factory is lightened and brightened if we do it for God and with God. It is fretting, wearing, and wearisome without him. There is sound sense in the religious faith that seeks the strength and comfort of his "good hand" in all we have to do.

Enthusiasm and good sense both are necessary to success in any undertaking. They are not always found together; if one cannot possess both I think good sense is most to be desired. But God has made it possible for us to who ask. He is the Spirit of love, of power, of God, believes in his guidance, relies upon him every faculty of judgment, reason, prudence, carry out plans in all lines of life. Nehemiah depended upon God for wisdom in speaking to the king; then, with a sure belief that God was leading him he took letters of introduction to escort of soldiers for protection. He trusted and he used earthly resources as though there were no God to trust. Or, perhaps we might better say he considered earthly resources as God's means for carrying out his plans. This is the true combination of enthusiasm and common sense; very desirable in secular business, enterprise, and every service pertaining to our own salvation and the salvation of others.

The rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls has great significance. In spiritual things we have the

same sort of work and the same difficulties. Let us see how this sensible enthusiast, Nehemiah, accomplished his mission. To begin with, he listened to tidings brought from Jerusalem by some of his brethren; then he went to investigate for himself. We act energetically when we get a clear understanding of a matter through looking into it personally. Having seen the real conditions and the pressing need on that midnight ride around the fallen walls, a deep enthusiasm was kindled, and other souls took fire from the soul of one man thrilled by what he had seen. He moved the people to the work by telling them what he knew; by showing them what a reproach it was to God and to themselves to have the chosen city so disgraced; by the assurance that it was God's own cause and he would prosper it, and by the fact that the king of Persia would assist the enterprise. By every argument, fired with the enthusiasm which came from his faith in God, he stirred the people until they said, "Let us arise and build," and they strengthened their arms for the work.

O how we need such leaders now! I wish they might come from my class to whom I am speaking to-day—leaders who know, because they have heard or read or seen the world's need of Christ; who have the divine enthusiasm of faith; who can kindle other souls by the fire of love, courage, and zeal burning in their own. There are great gaps in the broken walls through which men and women are falling into hopeless depths of sin and sorrow because like the nobles of Tekoa so many refuse to "put their necks to the work"—too proud or too indolent to care. Perhaps you have passed over the list of names in Nehemiah's account of the building. But the Holy Spirit uses every detail for a purpose. Each person had his own work to do; the daughters had their part; God has always given women an important place in spiritual building; names are mentioned because *every one's* work will be tried, of what sort it is; at the last the Master will say not to person, "Thou good and faithful," or, "Thou wicked and slothful servant."

We are well acquainted with Sanballat,

Tobiah, Arabians, Ammonites, Ashdodites. Their tactics are the same as ever. They say of foreign missions, "You may as well try to empty the ocean with a teaspoon." They say of Christians, "O, it won't last; even a little fox of temptation could overturn their faith;" and when they see one really prospering in spiritual building they say, "Come over and be friendly;

really we can be of advantage to you if you are not so exclusive." Three things saved Nehemiah from the open attacks and specious wiles of his foes—clear moral perceptions, firm courage; unwavering decision. All these he gained by acknowledging the hand of God upon him, and by taking everything to him in honest, earnest prayer.

The Lesson in Literature and Art

1.

NEHEMIAH

Go, guileless Nehemiah,
Serpent Sanballat lurks beside the wall,
And, low among the stones, with scorpion crawl,
The slave Tobiah.

But fear them not!
Nor yet the craven crew within, their prey,
False prophets, mongrel priests, cheats, usurers
gray.

How changed thy lot!

Stone treads on stone,
With solemn march moves on the wall divine,
Mid taunting foes, along the broken line
That once was Zion's zone.

And soon the ends shall meet!
And clasp again a virgin undefiled,
And thou shalt bring her, cleansed and
reconciled,
To her Redeemer's feet.

The Lord remember thee?
Yes; naught thou ever didst for him give up,
Heart's lightness, peace, or pleasure's sparkling
But shall remembered be.

To thee it shall be given,
To shine among the saints at Christ's right
hand,
With Moses and Elias there to stand,
And crown the cup of heaven.

—E. Horton.

2. Verse 8.

For thine own purpose thou hast sent
The strife and the discouragement!

—Longfellow.

3. Verse 9. Vigilance is the safety lamp of life. What the lighthouse is to the vessel in the murky night, nearing the rock and treacherous banks; what the torch is to the traveler who has been enveloped in thick mists; what the lantern is to the miner who creeps from gallery to gallery along the low corridors which penetrate the bowels of the earth wherein the fire damp hangs round about his way; what the genial blaze on the cottage hearth is to the shepherd as he comes from afar over the morass or moor; what the branch of the green tree was to Columbus as it floated past his vessel's

side, the sure and blessed harbinger of a not distant land—such is vigilance to man's life.—*J. C. M. Bellec.*

4. Men are afraid of breaking down where they are strongest, but are seldom afraid of their weaknesses. If a man is hard he fears mellowness. A proud man watches lest he should let himself down. A selfish man is vigilant against being unduly tempted by profuse kindness; and no man has a more salutary fear of rash generosity than he whose pores are sealed so tight that all the suns of prosperity cannot open them. Men are apt to guard themselves where it is impossible for them to be overcome; but they are quite careless of those open avenues through which temptation comes and goes so easily that they are unconscious of wrongdoing because they are not pained by it.—*Beecher.*

5. Verse 10. It is cheap and easy to destroy. There is not a joyful boy or innocent girl, buoyant with fine purposes of duty, in all the street full of eager and rosy faces, but a cynic can chill and dishearten with a single word. Despondency comes readily enough to the most sanguine people. The cynic has only to follow the hint with his bitter confirmation, and they go home with heavier steps and premature age. They will themselves quickly enough give the hint he wants to the cold wretch. Which of them has not failed to please where they most wished to please? or blundered where they were most ambitious of success? found themselves awkward, or tedious, or incapable of study, thought, or heroism, and only hoped by good sense and fidelity to do what they could, and pass unblamed? And this wicked malefactor makes their little hope less with satire and skepticism, and slackens the springs of endeavor. Yes, this is easy; but to help the young soul, add energy, inspire hopes, and blow the coals into a useful flame; to redeem defeat by new thought, by firm action, that is not easy—that is the work of divine men.—*Emerson.*

6. Verse 13.

By how much unexpected, by so much
We must awake endeavor for defense:
For courage mounteth with occasion.

—Shakespeare.

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7. Verse 14.

O friends, be men; so act that none may feel
Ashamed to meet the eyes of other men.
Think each one of his children and his wife,
His home, his parents, living yet or dead.
For them, the absent ones, I supplicate,
And bid you rally here, and scorn to fly.

—*Bryant's Homer's Iliad.*
8. A poet has beautifully described genuine goodness as follows:

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;
To love and bear; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;

Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great, and joyous, beautiful and free;
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.
—*Shelley.*

Lesson Side-Lights and Illustrations

1. *A Combined Opposition.* This great work of building the walls of Jerusalem was not done without a determined and solidified opposition. Two notable leaders and three distinct families of hereditary foes are mentioned as conspiring together to fight against Jerusalem and hinder the work of building up its walls. The situation suggests the truth that no large undertaking is ever achieved without opposition. Men who do great things have to overcome prejudice, popular inertia, the questionings and hesitations of the ultra-conservatives, the objections of pessimists, as well as the open-and-aboveboard hostility of those whose interests, real or supposed, prompt them to take the other side. In dealing with opponents sometimes it is well to adopt the military maxim, "Divide and conquer." A general who has his wits about him tries always to keep his foes from combining his forces at a given point, and endeavors to catch the separated detachments unawares, and beat them in detail. This policy is wise in the religious life. Take the vicious habits, the perilous temptations, the foes whose combined onslaught would be overwhelming, as they come up, *one by one.* "Each victory will help you some other to win."

2. *"Watch and Pray."* This admonition of our Lord to his disciples was anticipated in the policy of Nehemiah and his fellow workers. Had they depended entirely on their watchfulness they would have been presumptuous; had they put dependence in prayer alone, and failed to keep their eyes alert for the foe, they would have been fanatical. Combining their petitions to Jehovah with their habit of setting a watch against the enemy day and night, they afford us an example for all time of one of the habits by which victories are won. "The true and at the same time lifts up the hands, ready for activity." The old martial maxim, "Trust in God and keep your powder dry," is a modern embodiment of the policy of this great Hebrew leader and his faithful and heroic men.

3. *"Work and Watch."* In one of the briefer parabolic utterances of our Lord (Mark 13, 34) we are told of a man who gave to every one of his servants his work and commanded the porter to

watch. In *The Day-Dawn and the Rain*, a volume of sermons by a notable Scottish preacher who more than a score of years ago occupied a commanding pulpit in Glasgow, Rev. John Ker, this comment is found, worthy of citation, as illustrating one phase of the lesson now before us: "Let us see then the fitness of this union. What need of work! The world how dark—the soul how precious—time how short—life how irreparable—inquisition and judgment how stern! How much need of watching! How deceitful our hearts—how many our enemies—how insensibly slumber creeps on—how dreadful to be found sunk in carnal sleep on the breaking of the great day of God!"

4. *Our Country's Pioneers.* This paragraph is written not far from the location of an old stockade and frontier fort, where a century or more ago our forefathers used to assemble for the protection of their households from the predatory Indians. When the men ventured out to the fields to plant or reap their crops they took with them the rifle as well as the shovel, the hoe, and the plow. Thus our forefathers in the exigent times which tried men's souls in the early history of this country illustrated the same habit that was exemplified in the action of the builders employed by Nehemiah, who with one hand wrought at the wall and with the other hand held a weapon.

5. *"Remember the Lord—and fight!"* With these words the leader heartened his soldier-workmen. Thus also David, when hard bested, cried out to his dreadful foe, "I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts." And thus also did Moses encourage the hosts of ancient Israel, "Fear not the people of the land; for the Lord is with us." And in similar fashion did Saint Paul cry out, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Indeed, history is embodied in the examples of a similar spirit, as embodied in the examples of heroic men and women who in critical hours of danger have recuperated their strength and renewed their courage by casting themselves upon the resources of omnipotence. Thus Cromwell's men fought for English liberty, singing psalms as they advanced into battle; and in accord with this principle "Havelock's Saints," who were strong in prayer,

proved redoubtable in battle and during the Indian Mutiny led many a desperate assault.

6. *Nehemiah's Trumpeter.* The name of this important helper is not given, but his functions and service have a place in the record. Wherever the leader went the trumpeter was by his side. As the master spirit of the hour and work went from point to point, he knew not at what place danger might arise, and it was needful that a rallying signal might be afforded. Accordingly, the sound of the trumpet, at any instant, drew the fighters to the point of peril.

Many a field has been saved and won by the strong, true note of a faithful trumpeter or bugler, and alas! sometimes a disgraceful surrender has been the result of a cowardly bugler sounding the

1. Sanballat and Tobiah and the rest who opposed Nehemiah and the people in their good work are not admirable characters. I am resolved for myself that I will not be a Sanballat by opposing any good cause or discouraging good people in their undertakings.

2. Nehemiah was strong by keeping good heart in spite of oppositions and difficulties, and the people became weak to the extent to which they yielded to discouragement. I am determined to resist more firmly my disposition to become discouraged, and I will strive more earnestly to overcome difficulties which stand in the way of my good purposes.

The School of Practice

The Lesson Digest and Teacher's Guide

The Junior Grade

[For pupils from nine to twelve years, inclusive. Each pupil, if possible, should be supplied with a copy of the Berean Leaf.]

Preparing the Lesson.

The task of the Junior teacher is so to fix our simple lesson story in the minds of the boys and girls that it shall never fade from memory, and shall always enfold a vital religious lesson. The effort of the teacher must (1) understand the boys and girls he is to teach; (2) understand Nehemiah; (3) understand the moral and religious lessons to be taught. The first two are quite as important as the third, but only the third can be here considered.

Illustrative Material: 1. The picture of Nehemiah looking out over the land, while the walls of Jerusalem are in course of building, will be of interest (Berean Intermediate Lesson Quarterly, page 103). 2. The paragraph on "Nehemiah's Trumpeter" contains illustrative material that may be very useful.

Connecting Links.

For a summary of Intervening Events see the Lesson Analysis, page 898, then carefully read the first four chapters of Nehemiah.

Narrative Outline. (For the teacher. Language and detail to be adapted to the pupils.)

1. The Enemies (verses 7, 8, 11). 2. The Prayer and the Watch (verse 9). 3. What

"Cease firing" or "Retreat." More inspiring is it to think of such men as Piper Findlater, who at the critical moment in the charge of the Gordon Highlanders at Dargai Ridge some years ago, not only led the regiment, but after both legs were shot through, continued to pipe them on to victory, till they had driven the enemy out and were in full possession of the ridge. Every child of God should be a bugler for the Master. It may be that some of our ranks are wavering in the face of the enemy. How necessary, then, that we shall give forth a clear, strong note that will not only rally those who are on the Lord's side but also bring about the fall of another of Satan's strongholds. Like Nehemiah's trumpeter, let us stand close by the Captain of our salvation and be true interpreters of His will to the army of the Lord.

People Said (verses 10-12). 4. What Nehemiah Did (verses 13, 14). 5. What God Did (verse 15). 6. Organization (verses 16-20). 7. Success (which is not in our printed text, but is necessarily a part of the lesson).

Make clear the events that came between Lesson VIII and this lesson—how King Artaxerxes had sympathized with Nehemiah and had sent him to be governor of Jerusalem and to build its walls. Show the cause of the jealousy of Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem, and other provincial governors; the welfare of Jerusalem seemed to them likely to bring about ill fare for their own cities. How dared they to disobey their king and hinder Nehemiah, whom he had commanded them to help? There were in those days no rapid means of communication. The king lived on the other side of a great desert. His kingdom was at best but a loose congeries of provinces. If Sanballat paid promptly each year his share of the imperial expenses there would be little further question about his behavior. The Arabs were in some regards like wild Indians—robbers; no wonder they wanted to prevent the building of Jerusalem's wall.

What people say about us is often more influential with us than it should be. Judah (v. 10). "our adversaries" (v. 11), and "the Jews which dwelt by them," each had words of discouragement. See WORD STUDIES.

Nehemiah encouraged the people first by what he did, secondly, by what he said; he rearranged them behind the wall so that they should be

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safer, and he told them that they were safe because God was their defender; they were fighting for all that was sacred and dear to them.

The encouragement that came to the builders from the knowledge that God was on their side was greater than the discouragement that had come to them because of what their enemies had said. Verses 16-20 describe with what precision the workers and the soldiers were arranged around the wall.

Make sure that all words and phrases of the lesson passage are understood. Compare our notes for THE INTERMEDIATE GRADE. *Suggested Generalization.* (Adapt form of statement to pupils.)

Eight thoughts should be impressed; not too many, for they are so connected that they can easily be remembered: **1.** In this world are bad people who try to keep even children from doing right. **2.** We should be careful never to oppose any good cause nor discourage anyone in a good undertaking. (Note carefully the First Resolution in the SCHOOL OF PRACTICE.) **3.** We should never be discouraged in our own efforts to do right. (Note the Second Resolution in the SCHOOL OF PRACTICE.) **4.** We should not care too much what people say. **5.** We should pray. **6.** We should watch while we pray. **GOLDEN TEXT.** **7.** We should work while we watch and pray. **8.** We should work and watch and pray not selfishly, but each in harmony with all the others. The whole church should work together, and the entire Sunday school should work together, and the members of the class should all work together. Good people should keep close together in this world.

Memory Verse (Golden Text): "Watch and pray" (Matt. 26. 41).

Schoolers' Home Work.

Why was it necessary to build the walls of Jerusalem?

Why did so many people try to stop this?

Why were so many of Nehemiah's friends discouraged?

Why did Nehemiah keep right on?

The Intermediate Grade

[For pupils from thirteen to sixteen years, inclusive. Each pupil if possible, should be supplied with a copy of the Senior Quarterly, the Intermediate Quarterly, or the Lesson Leaf.]

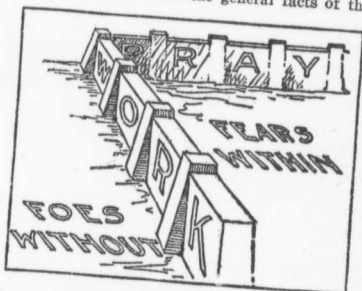
Preparing the Lesson.

Illustrative Material: Picture of Zion, Senior Quarterly, page 241; picture of "A Corner of the Wall of Jerusalem," Senior Quarterly, page 238. Story of Nehemiah's trumpeter, on page 906 of this magazine; story of Oliver Cromwell, who told his soldiers, "Trust in God, and keep your powder dry."

Constructing the Lesson.

The pupil should be induced to study the en-

tire career of Nehemiah. Our lesson passage needs for its understanding at least as much of the previous history of Nehemiah and the fortification of Jerusalem as are indicated by the Lesson Outline. Here is a great conflict, a war of words which at any moment might break out into bloodshed. After the general facts of the



lesson have been mastered a good way to bring out the salient points is to note **WHAT PEOPLE SAID.** **1.** What the "adversaries" of verse 7 said (see Neh. 2. 19; 4. 2, 3; and verse 11 of our lesson). **2.** What Nehemiah and his friends said (Neh. 2. 17, 18, 20; and verses 14, 19, and 20 of our lesson). **3.** What the near-by Jews said (Neh. 2. 17, 18, 20; and verses 14, 19, and said (verse 12).

Teaching the Lesson.

Suggestions for Developing the Outline: Be sure that all unusual words and phrases are understood, such as breaches (verse 7); habergeons (verse 16), etc. The Word Studies give information concerning the men and the clans mentioned in verse 7. Notice changes made by the Revised Version in the last clause of verse 8; in verses 12 and 13; and in verses 16 and 17. Explain "Judah" (verse 10), "our adversaries" (verse 11), and "the Jews which dwell by them" (verse 12). Explain "after their families" (verse 13). Note the distinction between "the nobles" (hereditary) and "the rulers" (appointed by Artaxerxes).

Study four groups of people who here come forward. **1.** The builders of the wall—each at **2.** "Judah." **3.** "Our adversaries." **4.** The Jews which were neighbors of their nation's enemy. Heathen outsiders with murder in their hearts awaiting opportunity to pounce on the builders; traitorous citizens with apathy and covert hostility worse than foreigners' swords; gossipers near and remote, whose talk discourages the builders; the builders themselves, a little group of men with swords and trowels and prayers setting their watch day and night and resolutely working until the wall is reared and the permanence of the nation secured; and above all the towering form of Nehemiah.

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Many of the Coin Thoughts (p. 902) may be used with advantage especially in teaching older scholars in the Intermediate Department. From the seven groupings we select seven sentences which together form an outline that should insure a brilliant treatment of the lesson:

1. A man's methods disclose his meanings.
2. It takes a man to make a wall, but a mole may undermine one.
3. He is as good as ten men who can make ten men do their best.
4. The best workman is the best watchman.
5. Vigilance is the safety lamp of life [quoted from *The Lesson in Literature and Art*].
6. The looms of the present weave the fabrics of the future.
7. He who removes the rubbish is as worthy of reward as he who places the pillar.

Read with gravity, and use substantially in your class, these weighty paragraphs on the duty of watching.

The Senior Grade

[For pupils above the age of seventeen. Each pupil, if possible, should be supplied with a copy of the Senior Quarterly.]

The Responsive Review

1 In what good work were the people of God engaged? *In rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.* 2 Who planned to hinder the work by fighting against them? *Their heathen enemies.* 3 What did one-half of the Jews do? *One-half of the Jews worked as builders.* 4 What did the other half do? *The other half of the Jews stood as soldiers for defence.* 5 Whose orders did they all obey? *The orders of Nehemiah.* 6 What is the GOLDEN TEXT? *"Watch and pray."*

The Church Catechism

65. What is the mode of baptism? The Scriptures do not prescribe any mode as exclusively valid. The mode commonly practised by our Church is sprinkling.

LESSON XI. Reading and Obeying the Law

Dec. 10

GOLDEN TEXT. Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it. Luke 11. 28.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

[Study the chapter]

Neh. 8. 8-18 [Commit to memory verses 17, 18]

8 So they read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and asked them to understand the reading.

9 And Ne-he-mi'ah, which is the Tir'sha-tha, and Ez'ra the priest the scribe, and the Le'vites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law.

10 Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our LORD: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength.

11 So the Le'vites stilled all the people, say-

REVISED VERSION*

8 And they read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly; and they gave the sense, so that they understood the reading.

9 And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto Jehovah your God: mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law. 10 Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto him for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye grieved: for the joy of Jehovah is your strength. 11 So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your

* The Revised Version, copyright 1901, by Thomas Nelson & Sons.

Dec. 10]

ing. Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved.

12 And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.

13 And on the second day were gathered together the chief of the fathers of all the people, the priests, and the Le'vites, unto Ez'ra the scribe, even to understand the words of the law.

14 And they found written in the law which the LORD had commanded by Mo'ses, that the children of Is'ra-el should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month:

15 And that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in Je-ru'sa-lem, olive branches, and pine branches, and fetch branches, and palm branches, and myrtle thick trees, to make booths, as it is written.

16 So the people went forth, and brought them, and made themselves booths, everyone upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the street of the water gate, and in the street of the gate of E'phra-im.

17 And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths: for since the had not the children of Is'ra-el done so. And there was very great gladness.

18 Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly, according unto the manner.

peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved. 12 And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.

13 And on the second day were gathered together the heads of fathers' houses of all the people, the priests, and the Levites, unto Ezra the scribe, even to give attention to the words of the law. 14 And they found written in the law, how that Jehovah had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month; 15 and that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying, Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive branches, and branches of wild olives, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as it is written.

16 So the people went forth, and brought them, and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the broad place of the water gate, and in the broad place of the gate of Ephraim. 17 And all the assembly of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and dwelt in the booths: for since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness. 18 Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly, according unto the ordinance.

Home Readings

[Furnished by the International Bible Reading Association]

- M. Reading and Obeying the Law. Neh. 8. 1-8.
Tu. Reading and Obeying the Law. Neh. 8. 9-18.

W. Importance of God's law. Deut. 11. 13-21.
Th. The law to be read. Deut. 31. 7-13.
F. Observe and do. Josh. 1. 1-9.
S. Hear and remember. Psa. 78. 1-11.
S. Making wise. 2 Tim. 3. 10-17.

Time.—Probably B. C. 444. Place.—Jerusalem.

The Lesson Hymns

New Canadian Hymnal, No. 294.

How precious is the book divine,

By inspiration given!

Bright as a lamp its doctrines shine.

New Canadian Hymnal, No. 293.

Holy Bible, book divine,

Precious treasure, thou art mine;

Mine, to tell me whence I came.

New Canadian Hymnal, No. 289.

Sing them over again to me,

Wonderful words of Life,

Let me more of their beauty see.

Questions for Senior Scholars

1. Religious Sorrow (v. 8, 9).—In what part of the city had the people of Jerusalem gathered? What had they entreated Ezra to do? Why did they not read the law of Moses for themselves? Was there any age limit for those who were gathered to listen to the law?

Who explained what Ezra read? What did the people do when Ezra opened the book? What made the people weep? With what statement did Nehemiah, and Ezra, and the Levites cheer them? Why is it wrong to continue to mourn over sins after they have been forgiven?

2. *Religious Joy* (v. 10-12).—Why is it a duty to give thanks to God? When the people had been really sinful why was it right for Nehemiah to say, "Neither be ye sorry"? What is the meaning of "The joy of the Lord is your strength"? What did the Levites do? What did the people do?

3. *Religious Obedience* (v. 13-18).—For

what purpose did the chief officers of the nation gather to Ezra? To what law was their attention directed? What pious custom were they to proclaim? What blessing of Providence was thus commemorated? Where did the people erect their booths? What was publicly read throughout the feast? How long was the feast observed?

Questions for Intermediate Scholars

1. *Hearing the Words of the Law* (v. 8-13).—What great work had Nehemiah just finished? What other great leader of the Jews was with Nehemiah at this time? Did the people know much about what was contained in the law of Moses? Who assisted Ezra in the reading and explanation of the law? What made the people weep when they heard the reading? What command did they receive from Ezra and Nehemiah? What very good reason

had they for rejoicing? In what practical way did they demonstrate their thankfulness?

2. *The Feast of Tabernacles* (v. 14-18).—At what time of the year was this great meeting of the Jews held? What two things were celebrated by this feast? How long was this feast unobserved? What very great lesson of the kindness and mercy of God was taught by this Feast of Tabernacles? To what work of God were Ezra and Nehemiah called?

Questions for Younger Scholars

How long did it take to build the wall around Jerusalem? *Fifty-two days*. What did Nehemiah call? *A great meeting*. Where was it held? *In the street by the water gate*. What did the people do at this meeting? Who read the law of God to them? Why did some of the people weep when the law was read? *They knew they had not kept the law, and were trou-*

bled. What did Nehemiah and Ezra tell them? *To be comforted and to comfort others*. What did Nehemiah say was their strength? What did the people then want to do? *To hold a thanksgiving feast*. Who had long before told the Jews about such a feast? *Moses*. What was it called? What do we have that reminds you of this feast?

The Lesson Analysis

I. Introductory.

(a) Nehemiah, having completed the fortification of Jerusalem, abolished usury, by which the people had been impoverished. (b) To lighten the taxes he declined his own salary as governor. (c) His unselfishness was due to his fear of God. (d) The intrigues of the heathen enemies continued. (e) Shemaiah, a false prophet, joined them, and gave Nehemiah deceitful advice. (f) In spite of Nehemiah's goodness many in Judah sided with Tobiah against him. (g) In the interest of good order Nehemiah closed the city gates at night. (h) He "reckoned the people by genealogy." (i) He determined as governor to enforce the law of Moses (which was the law of God). (j) As the art of printing was then unknown he gathered the people together in "a broad place" in Jerusalem to hear the "law" read. (k) From a platform Ezra the priest, assisted by Nehemiah, the city officials, priests, and interpreters, read and explained God's written commands.

II. Sorrow for Sin (verses 8, 9).

(a) The readers read and interpreted (or explained the law of God). (b) They took time for their explanation, so that everyone should understand the reading. (c) Nehemiah

and Ezra and the Levites supervised this explanation. (d) The people were shocked to find that almost every command of God had been either neglected or directly disobeyed. (e) This revelation of national sin caused universal contrition. (f) Much of it had, indeed, been due to ignorance of the law, but the nation and its rulers were morally responsible for this ignorance. (g) With Oriental demonstrativeness the people wept aloud, so that the reading of the law was interfered with. (h) Nehemiah, Ezra, and their associates kindly checked this unwise expression of penitence.

III. Joy in Forgiveness (verses 10-12).

(a) God's laws are dreadful only to those who perversely disregard them. (b) Sincere penitents have no reason to continue in sorrow (Matt. 5, 4). (c) So Nehemiah urged the people to be joyful. (d) and, as the day was a festival, sacred to Jehovah, to provide all their poor neighbors with festive food (as wealthy Christians might send Christmas dinners to the poor). (e) One reason for this was the sacredness of that particular day. (f) Another reason was that "the past is past." (g) The third reason is that "the joy of Jehovah is our stronghold." Peace and comfort come only in propo-

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tion to the strength of our dependence upon God. (h) What Nehemiah said, the Levites seconded. (i) The people did as they were advised to do: 1. Entered joyfully upon their religious festivities; 2. Sent portions to the poor; 3. Rejoiced over God's law instead of sorrowing over it.

IV. Keeping God's Law (verses 13-18).

(a) The deep sincerity of the national reformation was shown on the next day when the hereditary chieftains, priests, and Levites applied to Ezra for further instruction in the law (probably for specific instructions as to how to carry it out). (b) One enactment that required immediate enforcement was that of Lev. 23, 39-43 (parallel passages: Exod. 23, 16; Num. 29, 12-38; Deut. 16, 13-15). (c) which established the Feast of Tabernacles. (d) The law required that the people should live for a week in booths made of tree branches, and

praise the Lord. (e) So the authorities of Jerusalem promptly sent messages through the province, summoning all people to Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. (f) Only thirteen days remained in which preparation for this feast could be made, but the people took advantage of these days and obeyed the law. (g) Booths were set up everywhere: on house-tops, in the quadrangular yards around which most houses were built, and in public squares. (h) So that the law was obeyed with a thoroughness and unanimity never before seen. (i) This unanimity caused even greater spiritual gladness. (j) And continually, through all the festivity, Ezra and Nehemiah read the book of the law of God. (k) Here we see the five essentials of holy living: (1) Penitence, (2) Joy, (3) Forgiveness, (4) Performance of all holy rites which God has ordained, and (5) Study of God's Word.

The Lesson Word Studies

NOTE.—The Word Studies of this lesson are based on the Revised Version.

INTERVENING EVENTS.—In the remaining verses of chapter 4, immediately succeeding the lesson passage for last Sunday, and in chapters 5 and 6, are recorded other difficulties which Nehemiah encountered in his work at Jerusalem. In unselfish devotion to the cause for which he had left his position of honor at the Persian court, this illustrious governor wisely thwarted every plot and plan the combined enemies of Judah set on foot to stop the work of the rebuilding of the city and its walls, until finally the work was completed. The completion of the strong defense of the city brought once more to the hearts of the long-dispirited inhabitants the sense of security, and with this returned all their former national pride and enthusiasm. At this point in the events Nehemiah appointed his brother, Hanani, as governor over Jerusalem and ordered that a census of the population be taken, that the record of genealogies might be corrected to they might be reckoned by genealogy. And I found the book of the genealogy of them that came up at the first" (Neh. 7, 5). The account of this enrollment of the people and a list of the heads of families is given to be instructed once more in the book of the law of Moses, that they might, by the character of their religious life as well as by their reestablished integrity as a nation, be indeed "a peculiar people" again unto Jehovah. Ezra promptly complied with the wish of the people and chose for the first day of the reading of the law the first day of the seventh month, which was sacred from olden time as a day of solemn rest, "a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation," known as the feast of trumpets.

Verse 8. And they read—Those chosen by Ezra mentioned in verses 4 and 7, together with Ezra himself. It is not clear from this verse whether these men read to smaller groups of people simultaneously or whether one only read at a time, each in turn.

In the book, in the law of God—A book corresponding probably to our canonical books of the Pentateuch.

Distinctly—Probably referring to the clearness of utterance, though the word may be also rendered as in the margin of the Revised Version, "with an interpretation," in which case the following clause, and they gave the sense, would be in opposition with the word "distinctly."

They understood—The people who listened.

9. This day is holy—It was holy both because of being the first day of the new month, set apart in the law for the feast of trumpets (comp. Introductory Note).

The people wept, when they heard the words of the law—Humiliated at the thought of the greatness of their sin and negligence in not having kept the law in the past.

10. Eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto him for whom nothing is prepared—Some have thought that Ezra did not consciously choose this sacred feast day for the reading of the law; but his evident familiarity with the requirements of the law with regard to such feasts makes it seem probable that his choice of the day and season was a conscious choice (comp. Deut. 16, 14:

"And thou shalt rejoice in thy feasts, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite, and the sojourner, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates").

For the joy of Jehovah is your strength—The word "strength" may be translated also "stronghold." By the "joy of Jehovah" is meant the joy of the people in Jehovah rather than Jehovah's joy in the people.

13. The heads of fathers' houses of all the people, the priests, and the Levites—The delegation which gathered on the second day about Ezra to learn still more concerning the law of Jehovah thus included the representative men of the nation in its civil, religious, and social life.

14. They found written in the law—It is not unlikely that Ezra himself directed their attention to that which they now discovered.

How that Jehovah had commanded by Moses—The passages in the Pentateuch which relate to the Feast of Tabernacles in the seventh month are the following: Exod. 23. 16; Lev. 23. 39-43; Num. 29. 12-38; Deut. 16. 13, 15. The particular commandment here referred to is given in Lev. 23.

15. Palm branches, and branches of thick trees—Compare Lev. 23. 40: "And ye shall take you on the first day of fruit of

goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before Jehovah your God seven days."

16. The water gate—Just south of the temple inclosure, so called because the path leading from the virgin's spring (Gihon) entered the city here. It was a common sight to see water carriers passing in and out at this gate.

Gate of Ephraim—So called because the road passing through this gate to the north of the city led into the territory of Ephraim. The "broad places" of the respective gates were the open spaces of ground just inside the wall at these points.

17. Since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun . . . had not the children of Israel done so—This statement does not mean, of course, that the Feast of Tabernacles had not been kept by the Jews at all during all these years, but rather that the detailed requirements of the law relating to the observance of the feast had not been carried out.

18. Solemn assembly—Or, "closing festival," as the marginal reading in the Revised Version translates.

For a fuller explanation of the Feast of Tabernacles and its significance, the student is referred to the Pentateuch references given in the note on verse 14 above.

The Lesson Exposition

AFTER WORK, WORSHIP

The present lesson introduces us to a new national enthusiasm and to a new field of endeavor. For its intelligent understanding the remaining portion of the book of Nehemiah should be studied. Up to this point since the coming of Nehemiah the people had been engaged in hard labor in the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. The task was arduous, and it was attended with many difficulties. During that time the city was at once a great labor camp and a military camp, for it was necessary to fight as well as to work. The prosecution of that all-important work absorbed all the thought and energies of the leaders and of the people. But now the task was finished. Once more the great walls encircled the city and the doors of the gates guarded every entrance (7. 1). Then came relaxation from the long physical effort, and opportunity to give thought to other things. Hitherto little had been attempted in the way of permanent social organization, and but little in the way of religious instruction and formal public worship. But now after labor came instruction, came worship, came organization. A nation must be more than a camp. It must be an organism of

homes, and social institutions, and ecclesiastical order, and laws, and established customs, and recognized ideals. These things constitute civilization; and it is this stage in the new development of the national life that the present lesson brings us.

AFTER THE STATESMAN, THE PRIEST

Nehemiah had been a great leader, and by the sheer force of his personality and by the resourcefulness of his practical wisdom he had brought to a successful conclusion the work of rebuilding the walls of the city. But something more than statesmanship and captaincy was then needed. The enthusiasm of a great material work attended with danger would soon die out when the work was ended and the danger was past. The walls of the city had been rebuilt; now it was necessary to rebuild the national character. And for this task another order of talent was needed. The statesman and the captain must give place to the Teacher and the priest. So Ezra was called forward to complete what Nehemiah had commenced. The sword gave way to the pen. Ezra is a notable example of the power and the value of the scholar and the teacher. As we have seen in

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the lesson which described the expedition of returning exiles which he led, he was lacking in the essential elements of popular leadership. He had courage, but it was moral courage, and not such as is needed to inspire men to attempt almost hopeless things and sustain to the end. He did not have the spirit of the commander who can compel obedience and who is prompt to take the initiative and who is quick and wise to make decisions in the presence of sudden emergencies. He was a scholar, he was a religionist. Evidently for many years during his exile he had collected manuscripts relating to the history of the Hebrews, and particularly he had made himself rich in the literature of the Mosaic law, and had become deeply versed in its meaning. His work had attracted little attention. He had probably been very much of a recluse and had not mingled much with the people. People who knew something of the work that occupied him may well have smiled at him as a very unpractical man. But the time came when he was the one man in the nation whose work was imperatively important. The people required instruction. They needed some one who could tell them what was their duty; who could inform them what the will of God was; who could connect them with their own national past; who could put conscience into their conduct and principles into their politics; and who, above all else, could open their eyes to the unseen realities and teach them how to pray and how to worship. This was Ezra's great calling; and to him and to teachers like him in other ages and generations, who out of cloister study, and patient quest of knowledge in must of libraries, and long and silent meditation and prayer, have put the coin-current of truth in fresh circulation in the world, and taught men how to live, we are indebted above all power of estimate.

THE PAIN OF REVELATION

The first effect with the people of the reading and explanation of the law was great sorrow. "For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law" (v. 3). It will be remembered that a similar bringing to light of the law of the Lord produced deep sorrow in the mind of King Josiah (2 Chron. 34. 14-21). The reason was the same in both cases. They had been ignorant of the law and so had not observed its requirements. The revelation brought in a sense of condemnation and guilt and fear. It was like a sudden flash of sunlight into eyes long accustomed to the dark; it was like the sudden wound of a spear point to one in deep sleep. The hearing of the law brought in the sense of sin, and that was humiliating and painful. We should not fail in this connection to read Paul's masterly discussion of the principle involved in this painful effect of the reading of the law (Rom. 7. 7-25). "I had

not known sin but by the law." "Sin revived, and I died." "Sin . . . slew me." So Jesus declared to the Pharisees that if he had not spoken unto them they had not had sin; but having heard him they no longer had any cloak for their sin. It is a permanent moral law. The first effect of any new revelation of duty is always painful. The pain, however, is not always that of sorrow. Sometimes, as was the case with the Pharisees, it produces resentment and anger and hatred. In the absence of any disposition to obey the truth its revelation only produces irritation. When sorrow results there is salvation not to be repented of" (2 Cor. 7. 8-11). It was this kind of sorrow which the Jews experienced on hearing the reading of the law. It should be observed, as one of the great principles which this incident brings out, that the revelation of truth is a penetrating test of character. A man's inner disposition toward truth is revealed by the feelings which its revelation produces in him. A man who is true to the truth that he knows will welcome all new truth that may come to him, however much it may humiliate. But the man who is false to known duties will resent all additional revelations of duty.

THE JOY OF REVELATION

But the second effect of the reading of the law was joy. And that was because, as Nehemiah and Ezra made it clear to the people, law is not the whole revelation of God. If that were so, then the revelation of law to those who have violated it could properly bring only fear and despair. That was the side of it which the people saw first, and they mourned. Then came the knowledge that with God there are also grace and mercy and forgiveness, and they rejoiced. It is the gospel of the Old Testament, and there is much of that gospel from Genesis to Malachi. There were depths and riches of God's grace and love which could not be revealed in the Old Testament, impossible of expression except in the life and redemptive death of Jesus Christ. And yet the Old Testament abounds in assurances of the divine tenderness and compassion. Read the great declaration which God made of himself when he passed before Moses on Mount Sinai (Exod. 34. 6, 7). That view and knowledge of God gave to the Jews the spirit of moral recovery through all their history. They sinned, but there were redemption and restoration. This was their "joy of the Lord"—a joy that sprang out of their faith in the love and mercy of their God—and that joy was their strength. This reaction from sorrow to rejoicing illustrated in the case of this grace to law, was precisely what Paul so wonderfully analyzes and states in his letter to the Romans. He says that "sin, taking occasion

by the commandment, deceived" him (Rom. 7. 11). That was when he saw nothing but the law, which was exactly the case at first with those who heard the reading of the law by Ezra. That view was false because it was incomplete. But in the end Paul saw the other side, the side of grace, and then his despair turned to hope, and he exclaimed, "I thank God through Jesus Christ."

THE TEACHING OF HISTORY

Taking the larger scope of the lesson, there is one very important idea brought out. This idea is expressed in the great prayer—and what great prayers there are in the Bible!—with which the ceremonies of that feast week closed (9. 4-34). Read it and see how it carried the people back into their national past, calling up the great lessons of their history. Some one has said that "history is the memory of the race." An understanding of history and a regard for its teachings makes a nation or a man wise. Conscious and reverent connection with the past gives to each generation something of

the wealth and wisdom of the ages, and to each individual something of the dignity and experience of the race. The records of calamities and blessings are alike instructive and directive. And this is one great characteristic of the Bible. It cultivated the historic consciousness, but is based upon the view that history is a continued revelation of God. It is worth while to see particularly how the great prayers of the Bible had this historic background. What a tone as out of eternity sounds in the "prayer of Moses the man of God" given in the ninetyeth psalm! What a vision of history passed before Daniel as he made his great confessional supplication in Babylon! (Dan. 9. 3-19.) And so also with Nehemiah in his prayer at Susa (1. 5-11), and with Peter in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2. 14-36), and with Stephen in his address before the council (Acts 7. 1-53). And what made the past great and instructive to the Jews was the fact that in all of its stages they saw the hand of God revealed. And that left out or overlooked takes the highest meaning out of all history.

THE LESSON PRAYER

Our Father, we also have come together to hear the reading and to learn the meaning of thy Word, even as thy people gathered of old in the streets of Jerusalem for instruction in thy law. Make this study for us also a revelation of our sins that shall humble us and fill us with penitent sorrow; but cheer us also and fill us with great joy at the remembrance of thy grace and the revelation of thy love in Jesus, our Saviour, to whom thou hast given power on earth to forgive sins. Fill us with a holy reverence for thy law, and incline our hearts to keep thy commandments; and help us also to believe that, though we have sinned, we have an Advocate with the Father; and may the joy of the Lord be our strength. Amen.

The Lesson Coin Thoughts

I

THE Word of God will keep him who keeps God's Word.

The Spirit of life liberates a man from the law of death.

The law of the Spirit is the *spirit* of law.

Lessons from the past will help us in the life of the present.

A big animal with a little soul is not so good as a little man with a big soul.

The might of a man is measured by the strength of his soul.

"The hidden man of the heart" is the one that God sees most.

The only help I need is now, and God gives that.

Sin is always *worse* than it seems to the sinner.

II

To read God's Word is one thing; to realize it is another thing.

We must expect that God's Book would be bigger than man's brain.

That which helps the heart most is often the greatest mental mystery.

When we take a firmer *stand* for the truth we shall have a fuller and a better *understanding* of the truth.

He that *doeth* shall know, but he that *knoweth* should do.

The *creed* and the *deed* are not always the same breed.

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He sets a high task for himself who seeks to bring theorizations and realizations together.

III

"Righteousness and peace have kissed each other," but right and wrong never can. Love and love make harmony, but hate and hate make more discord. East and west are two, and no desire can make them one.

IV

Every effort to strain truth into false theories is futile, and must fail.

The sun shone just as surely on the world before the world knew *how* the sun shone as it does now.

An invalid astrology does not invalidate the stars.

An unsound heliology does not unsettle the sun.

No erring *theologer* can cause the *Theos* to err.

This world was just as spherical when men thought it was flat as it is to-day when they know it is round.

The all-important thing is not the *theory* of the truth, but the *truth* of the theory.

The theory may be a good eyeglass, but it cannot give sight to eyes that are blind.

The audiphone is of no use when laid to a dead man's ear.

Telescopes are for live people, and not for corpses.

"*He that hath ears to hear, let him hear;*" *he that hath eyes to see, let him see.*

I am not tethered to the *theory*, but to the *truth*.

V

If you would account for a man's deeds you must study his needs.

"The joy of the Lord is your strength," and the strength of the Lord ought to be your joy.

Truth is not to be taken *on*, but to be taken *in*.

All living books root themselves in the Bible, God's Book of life.

The Bible is not a book in your library, it is your library in one book.

The Bible is the main current; all other streams of truth are tributary to it.

The Bible is God's message to the people as well as to the priests.

God gives his sunlight just as generously to the *master's servant* as he does to the *servant's master*.

The Lesson Heart Talk

BY MRS. J. H. KNOWLES

It is interesting to read of this outdoor meeting—like an enlarged Methodist camp-meeting—in old Palestine, three hundred years before Christ. There they gathered before the water gate "as one man," in hearty fellowship, to hear the truth. Men whose own hearts and minds were full of the Word of God read in the Book distinctly and caused the people to understand the reading. It was a great day for the people who had been hard at work building the walls. I suppose we might call it a "workers' conference." At any rate, they went away from it glad they had understood the words they had heard—which cannot be said of everyone at every such conference in these later days. And yet what a long, long way have we come, and who now are building spiritual walls, in the light we have through the Spirit upon the truth. It is the same Word; we read it in the Law, the Prophets, the Psalms, as Ezra read it to the people, but our light is clearer because we and truth have come to us by Jesus Christ, and we know as they did not that all Scripture testifies of him. The men who had given thought and study to the Word saw its inward meaning and beauty better than the people saw it. They listened with interest; they believed it was God's message; conscience was stirred; but they were unhappy because the law seemed so severe, so impossible for them to keep. They

wept when they heard it. But Ezra and Nehemiah, whose delight was in the law, said, "This is not a time to be sad; it is a time to rejoice; not a time to fast, but a time to feast. Go eat and drink; take joyfully all that God gives you; do not be sorry, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

We have now fuller light than these old-time teachers had, but very many of us are not walking in the light. There are too many gloomy, discouraged, introspective Christians; they have not strength to live themselves, much less have they strength to help others. Only the rejoicing soul can light the path for another. What secret phasis: "Do not be sorry even in the face of this strict law? Be glad; for joy, not sorrow, is your strength." I am sure it was that he had learned to look not on the law so much as on the God who gave it; not at himself in his weakness, but at the God who gave the law for his good and would require of him nothing he was unable to do. He loved and obeyed the law with all his heart, because he loved and trusted God. David says, "My meditation of him shall be sweet." The meditation of myself is never sweet; it is most disturbing. If I think of my mistakes, my faults, my inability to do anything right, I am downhearted and inefficient, of no use to anybody. If I think of the

perfection of Jesus, of the purity of his commands, of his desire to bring me up to his ideal of goodness, of his merit to cover my shortcomings and his grace to help me, I am rejoicing and strong, and ready to hold out a helping hand to others. If these people of those twilight times were told to be joyful in the knowledge of a perfect law because it came from a loving and just God, what do you think of a Christian with gospel light, knowing the power, the righteousness, the fulfilling of the law through faith in Jesus, not being so glad and happy that everyone will catch the infection of his joy? Nehemiah said that was a holy day to the Lord: they had no right to reflect upon the character of God as if he were not good and gracious. Neither have we a right to speak or act as if our glorious Christian faith were a disappointing failure.

The joy of the Lord has a firm foundation. Other joy is built upon sand: the storm will sweep it away. The joy of the Lord is a deep

conviction of his righteousness, justice, and truth. He never will suffer wrong to triumph over right. Every good thing he has promised he will do. Every soul that trusts him is safe. He is the Omnipotent Ruler and the Divine Lover of the world. Let the earth rejoice, let the multitude of the isles be glad.

"For joy of their heart my servants shall sing,
Yes, sing amid tempests of sorrow;
Shall sing while they work and sing while they weep,
Kept in the calm of a peacefulness deep
Like the heart of the sea where storms never sweep.

Rejoicing to-day and to-morrow,
Triumphant and clear their glad song shall soar,
The joy of the Lord their strength evermore."

And when this holy joy brightens your eyes, comforts your heart, touches with gold every cloud, honor the Lord with thanksgiving, and send portions to them for whom nothing is prepared. "He who is doing most to help his brother may dare to be very happy."

The Lesson in Literature and Art

1. Many people regard the Bible as an old ruin. They think there may be some chambers in it which might be made habitable, if it were worth the while; but they take it as a young heir takes his estate, who says, "I shall build me a modern house to live in, but I'll keep the old castle as a ruin;" and so they have some scientific or literary house to live in, and look upon the Bible only as a romantic relic of the past.—*Beecher*.

2. **Verse 8.** There is no commentary in the world so good in order to a right understanding of this blessed book as an honest, childlike, and teachable spirit.—*John Brown, in his Prison Bible*.

3. I believe the number is few of those to whom the Bible appeals as literature. In part, no doubt, this is due to the forbidding form in which we allow the Bible to be presented to us. . . . The Bible is the worst printed book in the world. No other monument of ancient or modern literature suffers the fate of being put before us in a form that makes it impossible, without strong effort and considerable training, to take in elements of literary structure which in all other books are conveyed directly to the eye in a manner impossible to mistake. . . . Let the reader imagine the poems of Wordsworth, the plays of Shakespeare, the essays of Bacon, and the histories of Motley to be bound together in a single volume; let him suppose the titles of the poems and essays cut out and the names of the speakers and divisions of speeches removed, the whole divided up into sentences of a con-

venient length for parsing, and again into lessons containing a larger or smaller number of these sentences. If the reader can carry his mind through these processes he will have before him a fair parallel to the literary form in which the Bible has come to the modern reader.—*Professor R. G. Moulton*.

4. **Verses 9, 10.** But so have I seen the sun kiss the frozen earth, which was bound up with the images of death, and the colder breath of the north; and then the waters break from their inclosures, and melt with joy, and run in useful channels; and the flies do rise again from their little graves in walls, and dance a while in the air, to tell that there is joy within, and that the great mother of creatures will open the stock of her new refreshment, become useful to mankind, and sing praises to her Redeemer. So is the heart of a sorrowful man under the discourses of a wise comforter. He breaks from the despairs of the grave, and the fetters and chains of sorrow; he blesses God, and he blesses thee, and he feels his life returning; for to be miserable is death, but nothing is life but to be comforted.—*Bishop Taylor*.

5. The drying up a single tear has more Of honest fame than shedding seas of gore.

6. In the exhaustless catalogue of heaven's mercies to mankind, the power we have of finding some germs of comfort in the hardest of trials must ever occupy the foremost place; not only because it supports and upholds us when we most require to be sustained, but because in

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this source of consolation there is something, we have reason to believe, of the Divine Spirit; something of that goodness which detects, amid our own evil doings, a redeeming quality; something which, even in our fallen nature, we possess in common with the angels; which had its being in the old time when they trod the earth, and lingers on it yet, in pity.—*Charles Dickens.*

7. Verse 10.

Joy is a fruit that will not grow
In nature's barren soil;
All we can boast, till Christ we know,
Is vanity and toil.
But where the Lord has planted grace,
And made his glories known,
There fruits of heavenly joy and peace
Are found, and there alone.

—*John Newton.*

8. A low and normal action of fear leads to forecast; its morbid action is a positive hindrance to effort.

Lesson Side-Lights and Illustrations

1. "All the people." Ten times in this instructive chapter we are told of what "all the people" did in connection with the services of the week, the record of which is brought before us. An English writer, Rev. W. Clarkson, M.A., suggests that this fact should impress upon us the fitness of the sacred Scriptures to help every child of man. He says: "Men, women, and children, all that can hear with understanding, gather still to hear the Word of God. There is not, nor will there ever be, a book inspired of man that can interest and instruct, comfort and guide, our race like this book, given by inspiration of God. Childhood will never read with such devouring eagerness such stories elsewhere as those of Joseph and Moses and Daniel, and of the Babe that was cradled in the manger at Bethlehem. Youth will never learn elsewhere to remember its Creator as it learns here in the stories of Samuel and Josiah, and of Him who grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man; here pride will learn, as nowhere else, that man cannot live on bread alone, or grow rich only by making money and building fortunes; here sorrow will ever find its sweetest solace, its best and holiest balm, and sickness its one untiring Companion; and here death itself loses its darkness and its sting, as these pages speak to it as of One who is the Resurrection and the Life."

2. *Instructed in the Scriptures.* Ezra, Nehemiah, and their fellow workers at this time, accrue from ministers of the benefits which thoroughly equipped in the knowledge of the Bible. These men expounded the Scriptures to the people, gave the sense of the sacred writings, made clear its mysteries, applied its commandments, and unfolded its promises. What-

drance to effort. Water is necessary for the floating of timber; but if a log be saturated with water it sinks into the very element which should buoy it up. Many men are water-logged with anxiety, and instead of quickening them it only paralyzes exertion.—*Beecher.*

9. *Verses 13-18.* In all true service of God it is essential that we serve him in the way of his appointment. You would be grievously plagued if you had in your house a woman who was continually running up and downstairs, roaming into every room, opening every closet, moving this piece of furniture and dusting that, and generally keeping up a perpetual stir and worry; you would not call this service, but annoyance. All that is done contrary to order is disobedience, not service; and if anything be done without orders it may be excessive activity, but it certainly is not service.—*Spurgeon.*

ever else Sunday school teachers and pastors may understand, they must, in order to do their work, know the Bible to advantage. How, in reason, shall they assume to teach the truths of a book of which they have only a superficial, smattering, and a meager notion? A writer on the other side of the Atlantic, Rev. G. Wood, says: "An ignorant clergy is one of the greatest of evils, and scarcely less a clergy learned in everything but the Bible, the teaching of whose truths is their main business. They be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch. But it is an omen of good when pastors and teachers are diligent students of the Word, availing themselves of the assistance of the ablest scholars of the time, and thus becoming instructed unto the kingdom of heaven and able to teach others also. The careful student of God's Word is rewarded by important discoveries. He will find truths, precepts, and promises which are new to him, or come with all the freshness and force of a new revelation to correct his beliefs or his conduct, or to give him new comfort and joy. The Bible is an inexhaustible mine of eternal treasures. It will repay the constant study of a

3. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." That the Bible is a book replete with sources of unspeakable joy is evident to anyone who studies it. The volume stands thus in striking contrast with all other repositories of faith and faiths tell us that they are entirely devoid of this element. Fear, dread, despair, but no joy is found there until the gospel brings it. The first announcement of that message over the fields of Bethlehem unfolded "good tidings of

great joy" for all men. Even in the ancient days before the fullness of time had come the book of Psalms taught God's people to rejoice in the Lord. And the Master's parting message to his disciples assured them not only that he would leave his peace with them, but that the aim of his words was that their joy might be full. The principle thus suggested finds ample illustration in the life of Saint Paul, who could write, after years of imprisonment, out of the depths of a Roman dungeon the Epistle to the Philippians, the keynote of which is the phrase, "Rejoice, and again I say unto you, Rejoice!" The song-power of Christianity, the world-wide and age-long inspiration which it has afforded to writers of hymns and other poetry, and the wonderful music which it has created, generation after generation, are other embodiments of the truth which Ezra declared, and which we have need to remember, namely, that genuine religious joy is one of the elements of a strong devout character. The discouraged Christian

can never lead God's host to triumphs. We should "rejoice in the Lord always."

4. Happiness and Joy. Dr. Bushnell in one of his sermons makes a clear distinction between mere happiness, based on outward happenings, favorable material conditions, worldly aims and attainments, and the joy which comes into the soul and abides there when inward harmony and order are introduced by the renewing agency of the gospel. This is one of his strongest paragraphs: "The soul is such a nature that no sooner is it set in peace with itself than it becomes an instrument in tune, a living instrument, discoursing heavenly music in its thoughts, and chanting melodies of bliss, even in its dreams. We may even say, apart from all declamation, for such is its nature that when a soul is in this harmony no fires of calamity, no pains of outward torment, can, for one moment, break the sovereign spell of its joy. It will turn the fires to freshening gales, and the pains to sweet instigations of love and blessing."

The School of Practice

1. The Jews to whom Ezra read the law of God were filled with sorrow because they had disobeyed that law, though they were not responsible for their ignorance of it. But I am responsible if I am ignorant of God's will, for I have constant opportunity to study his Word. I am resolved, therefore, to study the Bible more diligently, and particularly that I may more fully know my duty.

2. Those who instructed the people in the Word of God rendered them the highest kind of service. If I am able to teach, therefore, I will do so gladly and faithfully; and I will show my appreciation to those by whom I am taught.

The Lesson Digest and Teacher's Guide

The Junior Grade

[For pupils from nine to twelve years, inclusive. Each pupil, if possible, should be supplied with a copy of the Lesson Leaf.]

Preparing the Lesson.

Illustrative Material: A good picture of Ezra reading the law of God to the people is given in the Intermediate Quarterly, page 105. The shape of the roll or "book" out of which Ezra read is shown in the Senior Quarterly, page 244, and a better picture still of Ezra reading the law on page 243 of the same Quarterly.

Intervening Events: These may be read in Neh. 4. 21 to 8. 7. They are summarized in the introductory paragraph of our Lesson Analysis. **Narrative Outline.** (For the teacher. Language and detail to be adapted to the pupils.)

1. Reading God's Word (verse 8). 2. Studying it so as to understand it (verse 8). 3. Sorrowing for sinfulness revealed by it (verse 9). 4. Rejoicing in the forgiveness assured by it (verse 10). 5. Keeping God's ordinances (verses 11, 12; for us they include the preaching service, the prayer meeting, the Lord's Supper, etc.). 6. Striving to practice what we preach (verses 13-15).

Make clear the three great achievements of Nehemiah—the rebuilding of Jerusalem, God's city, and its safeguarding from enemies: the enforcement of righteous laws so as to secure fair dealing, Sabbath-keeping, and general morality; the reading of God's Word and its explanation. The people, with all their faults, in the main accepted Nehemiah's leadership. They built the wall, obeyed his commands, and now that the Bible was read to them, they tried to practice it.

A new character now comes before us—Ezra. Tell who and of what sort he was. Nehemiah and Ezra had not read far in God's Word before the people found that they had been disregarding and disobeying God's law. This made them feel bitterly sorry, but they determined to do better, and Nehemiah and the good ministers urged them not to spend their force in sorrow, but rather to be thankful that God is always ready to forgive, and to obey him in the future.

After a while the rule for keeping the Feast of Tabernacles was discovered; the time to keep it was less than two weeks off, so they hurried to prepare for it; and that feast did them great good.

Whatever they found in the law of God, that they did.

Suggested Generalization. (Adapt form of statement to pupils.)

Tell the scholars how the Bible has come down to us through the ages. Eight points in this lesson should be impressed: **1.** We should read God's Word. We have more of it than Ezra and Nehemiah had. Part of the Old Testament and all of the New Testament has been written since their day. They were not able to read it for themselves; we are. God expects us to read it. **2.** We should understand it. We can learn what it means in Sunday school. **3.** We should practice it; and we understand enough already to make us good boys and girls. **4.** It is our duty to be sorry for sin, but so soon as we are sorry for sin God forgives it. It is not right to spend our time in mourning over sin after God has forgiven us. We should exert all our energy in God's work. **5.** It is our duty to rejoice in the Lord. That is what Nehemiah and Ezra told their people to do. "This is no time to spend in regret. The joy of the Lord is your strength." **6.** The people were not only to be glad for themselves, but they were to help the poor and the sad to be glad by sending dinners to them. **7.** One duty of these people was to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. Among our duties are to go to church and Sunday school, and as Christians to partake of the Lord's Supper. **8.** Nehemiah and Ezra did not stop with one reading of God's Word. They kept reading it right along.

Memory Verse (Golden Text): "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it" (Luke 11, 28).

Scholars' Home Work.

Why were the people sorry and grieved?

Why did Nehemiah and the Levites tell them not to be sorry and grieved?

How did they help the poor and bereaved to be glad?

The Intermediate Grade

[For pupils from thirteen to sixteen years, inclusive. Each pupil, if possible, should be supplied with a copy of the Senior Quarterly, the Intermediate Quarterly, or the Lesson Leaf.]

Preparing the Lesson.

Illustrative Material: See Notes on the Junior Grade.

Constructing the Lesson.

The five consecutive events described in our lesson passage furnish a good outline. **1.** The Reading of the Written Law of God. Study Neh. 8, 1-7. Reproduce the scene. The crowds gathered from all "the cities" of the children of Israel; the prominent men on the platform reading; the time taken to explain until everybody understood. **2.** The Effect of the Reading. When it was partly understood it caused, and properly caused, intense sorrow. When all of it was understood it caused, and properly

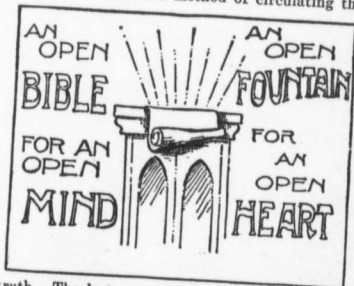
caused, great rejoicing. The joy of the Lord is our strength. **3.** Sending "portions" unto them for whom nothing was prepared, is indicative of genuine religion, which consists, as our Lord told us, of love to God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love to our fellow men, and one of these never exists in purity and strength without the other. **4.** The laymen come to Ezra (verse 13) to seek direction as to how to carry out God's law. They looked for the duty that was seasonable. It was now the fall of the year. They looked all through the law of God to find out what they should do next, and they were just about two weeks before the due time for the Feast of Tabernacles, and so they proceeded to prepare for that. That is in harmony with practical Christianity—"Do the next thing."

The moral and spiritual teachings of the lesson are many, but they are gathered in one package by the Golden Text, "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it."

Teaching the Lesson.

As in the teaching of Lesson X, so in teaching this lesson we recommend the selection of typical Coin Thoughts for our outline. For example: **1.** God's Word will keep him who keeps God's Word. **2.** To read God's Word is keeping it; to realize it is another. **3.** When we stand for the truth we can understand the truth. **4.** He that doeth shall know, but he that knoweth should do. **5.** For creed and deed are not always of one breed. **6.** Righteousness and peace have kissed each other; but right and wrong never can. **7.** The world was just as round when men thought it was flat as it is today when they know it is round. **8.** Theories are good eyeglasses, but they cannot give sight to morally blind eyes. **9.** The reason the joy of the Lord is our strength is that the strength of taken on like clothes, but taken in like food.

The first scenes of this lesson can pleasantly be illustrated by allusions to the modern printing press and the old method of circulating the



truth. The last scene of the lesson can be illustrated by allusions to famous Methodist

camp-meetings. Mrs. Knowles's HEART TALK will be found exceedingly helpful.

Emphasize that we must serve God in the way of his appointment. Tell Mr. Spurgeon's story of the servant who was continually running up and down stairs, roaming into every room, opening every closet door, moving every piece of furniture, and constantly keeping up a stir and worry. That was not service, it was annoyance. There is a way of annoying God's cause instead of serving it.

The Senior Grade

[For pupils above the age of seventeen. Each pupil, if possible, should be supplied with a copy of the Senior Quarterly.]

A very admirable method for the presentation of this lesson is that furnished by the LESSON EXPOSITION. The book of Nehemiah is a series of notable illustrations of the loftiness of life when each duty is performed on time. Jerusalem was in misery. Nehemiah loved Jerusalem and felt that he ought to be with it in its misery, so he prayed God to open his way; and he went. The misery of Jerusalem he soon saw was largely due to its danger from attacks from lawless outside tribes. It needed a wall, so he built it. Of course, the wall had gates, and he soon observed that the gates were made wrong use of on the Sabbath day, and that Sabbath-breaking had grown to be a national sin. So far as law could stop that sin he stopped it. Soon he discovered that most of the people were in abject poverty. He asked why. Part of the reason was the severity of the taxes. From

these taxes came his own salary as governor. He had money enough to do without the salary, so he remitted the taxes. He found that the rich had wronged the poor, and exorbitant usury was rife. As far as he could he corrected that evil. Having thus done all that a patriotic statesman could do, he felt that something greater than statesmanship and captaincy were needed. The LESSON EXPOSITION introduces Ezra in a most informing and delightful way.

Very beautifully is the life of God in the soul of man portrayed in this lesson. Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of. The paragraphs entitled "The Pain of Revelation" and "The Joy of Revelation," page 913, should be most carefully and prayerfully read. Mature minds will understand the profound dictum, "History is the memory of the race," and especially from the last paragraph of the LESSON EXPOSITION can much be learned.

Other lessons helps in plenty are furnished in this number. We have in another department called attention to the exceedingly witty Coin Thoughts now provided. Mrs. Knowles's HEART TALK cannot be read without personal benefit. The LESSON IN LITERATURE AND ART AND LESSON SIDE-LIGHTS furnish instructive illustrations. Paragraphs 1, 3, 4 (exceedingly suggestive to mature and intelligent minds), 6 and 9 of the illustrations are, to the writer's mind, most effective. But they are all good.

Emphasize the SCHOOL OF PRACTICE.

The Responsive Reading

1. What did Ezra do for the people of Jerusalem? *He read to them the Word of God.* 2. On what did he stand? *On a pulpit of wood.* 3. How did he read? *He read distinctly, giving the sense.* 4. What did he tell them? *He told them not to weep.* 5. What reason did he give? *The joy of the Lord is your strength.* 6. What is the GOLDEN TEXT? *"Blessed are they," etc.*

The Church Catechism

66 What are the obligations imposed upon us by our baptism? The obligations imposed upon us by our baptism are renunciation of sin, faith in Christ, and loving obedience to Him.
ACTS xxii. 16. And now why tarriest thou? arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

LESSON XII. Preparation for the Messiah

Dec. 17

GOLDEN TEXT. I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me. Mal. 3. 1.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

[Study Mal. chapters 3, 4]

Mal. 3. 1-12 [Commit to memory verses 8-10]

1 Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.

2 But who may abide the day of his coming?

REVISED VERSION.*

1 Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant, whom ye desire, behold, he cometh, saith Jehovah of hosts. 2 But who can abide the day

*The Revised Version, copyright 1901, by Thomas Nelson & Sons

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and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap:

3 And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Le'vi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.

4 Then shall the offering of Ju'dah and Jeru'sa-lem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years.

5 And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against the false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts.

6 For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Ja'cob are not consumed.

7 Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?

8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

9 Ye are cursed with a curse; for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts.

12 And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightful land, saith the LORD of hosts.

of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: 3 and he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi, and refine them as gold and silver; and they shall offer unto Jehovah offerings in righteousness. 4 Then shall the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto Jehovah, as in the days of old, and as in ancient years. 5 And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against the false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the sojourner from his right, and fear not me, saith Jehovah of hosts. 6 For I, Jehovah, change not; therefore ye, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.

7 From the days of your fathers ye have turned aside from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith Jehovah of hosts. But ye say, Wherein shall we return? 8 Will a man rob God? yet ye robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. 9 Ye are cursed with the curse; for ye rob me, even this whole nation. 10 Bring ye the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith Jehovah of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. 11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast its fruit before the time in the field, saith Jehovah of hosts. 12 And all nations shall call you happy: for ye shall be a delightful land, saith Jehovah of hosts.

Home Readings

[Furnished by the International Bible Reading Association]

- M. Preparation for the Messiah. Mal. 3. 1-12.
- Tu. The Sun of Righteousness. Mal. 3. 13 to 4. 6.
- W. Good tidings. Isa. 40. 1-10.

- Th. Turn ye. Zech. 1. 1-6.
- F. The Messenger. Luke 3. 1-9.
- S. The Purifier. Matt. 3. 7-12.
- S. A pure offering. Mal. 1. 6-11.

Time.—About 460 or 430 B. C. Place.—Jerusalem.

The Lesson Hymns

New Canadian Hymnal, No. 8
 Jesus! the name high over all,
 In hell, or earth, or sky;
 Angels and men before it fall,
 And devils fear and fly.

New Canadian Hymnal, No. 9
 There is no name so sweet on earth,
 No name so sweet in heaven,
 The name before his wondrous birth
 To Christ the Saviour given.

New Canadian Hymnal No. 11.
 Take the name of Jesus with you,
 Child of sorrow and of woe.

Questions for Senior Scholars

1. The Messenger (v. 1-4).—Who was "the Messenger, or Angel, of the covenant"? When this Messenger of the covenant came was he

welcomed by his people? Who are the Lord's messengers to-day? What were the characteristics, and what was the use of the refiner's

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fire? What was fuller's soap? How do these figures of speech indicate that God's painful providence are intended to make us better? What offerings are acceptable to God?

2. The Witness (v. 5-9).—The Messenger of the covenant is now speaking. How does he say he will come near to his people? Name four typical classes of sinners against whom he will appear as a swift witness. What sort of people were the ancient sorcerers? Who are their truest modern representatives? Who were false swearers? Who are those that "oppress the hireling"? Who was the "stranger"? How

1. The Messenger of the Covenant (v. 1-6).—About what time did the prophet Malachi live? Who is meant by the messenger who would prepare the way? When did Jesus quote from this verse? Who is called "the messenger of the covenant"? Against what class of people would the Messiah bring swift witness and

Who was Malachi? *One of the Lord's prophets.* When did he live? *About four hundred years before Christ came.* What did he say was surely coming? Whom did he mean by the Messiah? How did he say he would come? *Suddenly.* Where did he say he would appear? *In his temple.* What would he do to

The Lesson Analysis

I. The Coming of the Messianic Covenant (verses 1-4).

(a) The words of our lesson were spoken or written in Jerusalem in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. (b) "Malachi" had already rebuked the impiety of the priests, and condemned marriage with heathen wives. (c) He is the spokesman of Jehovah, and the personal pronoun "I," therefore, represents the LORD of hosts. (d) God's promised messenger was John the Baptist; compare Isa. 40. 3-5 and the accounts of John in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. (e) This messenger, like the whole succession of prophets, is to prepare the way for a new revelation of God. (f) Besides "I" (who is Jehovah) himself and "my messenger" (who is John) we find in verse 1 a third person, who is called "Lord" and "the Messenger of the Covenant." (g) This "Lord" and "Messenger" is described as one whom the Jews are seeking and in whom they will delight; and (h) the LORD of hosts (Jehovah) again assures us that he will come. (i) But in spite of all search for him and all delight in him the coming of the Messenger of the Covenant will be such a trial of character

does the last part of verse 6 follow as a consequence on the first part? What were tithes and what were offerings? How does God now regard those who neglect to support his church and its institutions?

3. Promises of Blessing (v. 10-12).—What command is given by God? What gracious offer is made by the Lord? Whom will the Lord rebuke? Why? How will the "nations" treat those who honor God? How had the people spoken against God? What did they say concerning God's service? Of whom was the GOLDEN TEXT spoken?

Questions for Intermediate Scholars

judgment? What does the name "Jehovah" mean? How was the mercy of God shown to his disobedient people?

2. Will a Man Rob God? (v. 7-12).—How did the Jews rob God? Is it possible for a man to rob God now? What did God promise to the Jews? On what conditions?

Questions for Younger Scholars

it? *Make it clean.* What had the Jews done? *They had gone away from the Lord.* What is meant by this? *They did not keep his law.* What did he ask them to do? How did he say they had robbed him? What is the tithe? *The tenth of all we have.* What did God tell them to do?

as can be compared only to fire that purifies gold or to lye of potash with which ancient Hebrews cleansed their cloth. (j) When thus refined and purified by the Messenger of the Covenant the Levites (God's ministers) will no longer be corrupt, as Malachi has just declared them to be, but will perform their duties in righteousness. (k) And as a consequence the worship of the nation will be acceptable to Jehovah. (The promise of the Messenger of the Covenant was fulfilled in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.)

II. The Sinful Nation (verses 5-9).

(a) God now tells his people that though they are very religious they are not good; though scrupulous in performance of their religious duties, they wrong each other, and by dishonesty and iniquity add to their own wealth. (b) But Jehovah's character never changes (which means that he will not break his covenant with them, but will punish them). (c) Jehovah calls, "Return unto me, and I will return unto you." (d) But the sinful nation disputes with its God, and denies having departed from him. (e) God's reply is that while they pretend to pay their tithes for

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pay their subscriptions."

III. Promise of Blessing (verses 10-12).

(a) God had punished his people for their

hypocrisy by sending locusts, drought, failure
of crops, and famine. (b) He promises on a
renewal of faithfulness to renew his blessings
in the most abundant way; so that (c) all na-
tions shall call them blessed.

The Lesson Word Studies

NOTE.—The Word Studies for this lesson are based on the Revised Version.

THE PROPHET AND HIS MESSAGE.—The illustrious leaders, Ezra and Nehemiah, were not left without human as well as divine assistance in carrying out their reform measures. God called men to aid them in most conspicuous. Indeed, their labors were so important and valuable that we might, with equal propriety speak of these illustrious reformers and legislators as the assistants of the prophets. With regard to Malachi, the date of whose activity can only be inferred from the contents of his prophecy, opinion is still divided. It is not certain whether his prophetic activity preceded and prepared the way for the later legislative acts of Ezra and Nehemiah, or whether he followed these and enforced the work they had begun. In the former case the date of the prophecy of Malachi becomes B. C. 458 or earlier; in the latter it becomes about B. C. 432, when Nehemiah's second visit to Jerusalem took place, or later. Nothing is known about Malachi apart from the prophecies recorded in the book bearing his name. The name itself seems to be an abbreviation of "Malachiah," meaning *Messenger of Jehovah*. As such, the prophet attacks the same abuses and advocates the same reforms which are mentioned in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. The argument of the book may be gathered up in the words in which Amos more than two centuries earlier addressed the people of his time: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will visit upon you not wholly consume, is the central truth of the whole prophetic message expressed by Malachi in the words, "For I, Jehovah, change not; therefore ye, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed" (Mal. 3. 6). To this central truth the preceding portions of the book lead up, and from it all that follows is developed. The view of the future which Malachi presents is that of a future at once awful and greatly to be desired; awful, because of the summary judgment which is to come upon Israel; desirable, because of the coming of the Lord himself to his temple to purge his people and pour out upon them such an abundance of blessing that all nations shall call them blessed.

In the preceding portions of his prophecy Malachi has been rebuking priests and people and pointing out to them the dire punishment which is sure to come upon them unless they repent. In chapter 1 it was more especially Israel's ingratitude and profane impiety. In chapter 2 a sharp reproof is administered to an unfaithful priesthood and again upon the adulterous and treacherous and sinful laity. "Where is the God of judgment?" is the presumptuous and profane challenge of a degenerate people. To this challenge Jehovah himself answers in the words of our lesson text.

Verse 1. Behold, I send—Jehovah himself is speaking.

My messenger—In Matt. 11. 10 Jesus quotes this verse from Malachi and explains it as referring to John the Baptist: "This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee."

Shall prepare the way—In what this preparation consisted is indicated in Matt. 3. 1-12.

And the messenger—The Authorized Version reads, "even the messenger," thus identifying the messenger with the Lord himself. This, rather than the Revised rendering, is to be preferred.

Desire—Delight in.

2. Refiner's fire—Gold and silver were in olden times, as is still the case to-day, freed from impurities by being subjected to great heat. Silver mixed with lead is put into a crucible made of clay and placed in a reverbera-

tory furnace. Under the influence of the intense heat an oxide of lead forms and is blown off by bellows. Toward the end of the process the covering of oxide grows thinner and finally disappears and the bright surface of the silver appears (comp. Jer. 6. 29 and Matt. 3. 12).

3. Sons of Levi—These were in charge of the sanctuary, at which the process of purification of the nation should begin. "For the time is come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begin first with us, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God?" (1 Pet. 4. 17.)

5. Near to you to judgment—This is the answer to the challenge of the people. "Where is the God of judgment?" A messenger shall be sent, whereupon the Lord himself will suddenly appear in his temple. His purification accomplished, he shall proceed to judge the people also.

Sojourner—An alien resident.

6. In verses 6-12 the people are more directly

addressed. Want and famine have been to them judgments of Jehovah for withholding from him his dues. But if they will again bring unto him the whole tithe he will certainly restore to them the abundance they have lacked.

For I, Jehovah, change not—Compare introductory note on "The Prophet and His Message."

8. Will a man rob God?—Is it not presumption for him to attempt such a thing? Jehovah is speaking.

Ye rob—Are robbing, that is, even now. Their robbing was a continual process.

Tithes—The word "tithes" comes from the Anglo-Saxon "teodha," Gothic "taihunda," the *tenth*; hence, literally, the *tenth part of anything*; but more especially in common usage, the

tenth part of the increase resulting from the profits of land and stock. For the law of Moses referring to the tithe compare Lev. 27. 30, 32; Num. 18. 21, 24. Nehemiah repeatedly emphasized the same law and rebuked the people for disobeying it (comp. Neh. 9. 38; 10. 32-39; 13. 10-14).

9. The curse—Specially mentioned in Neh. 2. 2, which compare.

10. The storehouse—The chambers or rooms surrounding the temple on three sides. Though built for the especial purpose of furnishing a storehouse for accumulated tithe offerings, these apartments had been perverted from this intended use.

Windows of heaven—Comp. Gen. 7. 11; S. 2; 2 Kings 7. 2, 19.

11. Devourer—Locusts.

The Lesson Exposition

THE UNNAMED AUTHORS OF THE BIBLE

It is well, perhaps, that we should remind ourselves that we do not know who wrote the book of Malachi. The name "Malachi" means "My messenger," and is not a proper name, but the sign of the character and purpose of the writing. It was evidently written during those dark and demoralized days between the rebuilding of the temple and the coming of Nehemiah. It was a time of corruption and oppression and openly expressed skepticism. The rulers were unrighteous and required yet to be brought under the mastery of a governor of such ideals and strong will as Nehemiah. That state of things may have made it discreet for the author of this book, which so unsparingly arraigned the rulers and the people for their vices, to issue it anonymously. The message, not the messenger, was of chief importance. And this is the more worthy of consideration in view of the fact that so many portions of the Word of God do not bear the names of any human authors. Who knows the inspired genius who wrote that greatest drama of the human soul, the book of Job? Who can tell who compiled and put together the books of Ezra and Nehemiah? Who has the secret of the authorship of probably one half of the world's greatest hymn book, the Psalms? Who can give us the names of the authors of Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon? Or, passing to the New Testament, who will settle the disputed question as to the authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews? It is not necessary that we should know. If any one has any light on any of these questions we should hear him gladly. But the books are no less valuable because of our ignorance or uncertainty as to their human authorship. Indeed, it adds something of solemnity and power to these messages that the human voice is

silenced and the human names erased, and that they come to us directly as the speech of God. Indeed, in the literature of the world it deserves that a great monument should be erected to "Unknown Authors." They have spoken great words and sung for us great songs; their messages we have, but not their names.

THE SHORTER AND THE LONGER PROPHETIC VISION

This chapter is a fine example of the shorter and the longer ranges of prophetic vision of which we find many examples in the Bible. The prophets were invariably occupied with the immediate conditions of their own times. They were intensely practical preachers. They dealt hand to hand and unglowed with the vices of their day; with the evil administrations of rulers; with the degeneracy of the priesthood; with the time-serving character of many self-styled prophets; with social corruptions which threatened the purity and moral strength of the home; and with the open or insidious encroachments of heathen religions. They painted in dark colors, but never darker than the conditions warranted; they reproved, rebuked, and warned unsparingly; but they never lost hope. They were not pessimists, though they were the merciless arraigners of their generations. Through the darkness they were forever catching glimpses of the light. They saw a better day beyond. If Jerusalem were laid waste, it would be rebuilt; if the temple were destroyed, it would rise again in greater glory; if unrighteousness prevailed for a season, truth and justice would come at the last; if the people were scattered and broken, a sacred "remnant" would form a nucleus for a new development; if the tree were cut down, the root would not die and a new shoot would put forth. And this

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optimism of theirs was not that of tempera-
mental buoyancy, for the Jews have ever been
a grave and thoughtful people. It sprang out
of their faith, it came from the inspiration of
God's Spirit in their hearts. Their dreams and
their visions were given to them. They spoke
as they saw and they heard. But this pecu-
liarity marked their visions: They saw to
things afar off through the medium of things
near at hand. It was so with many of the
prophecies of Isaiah. It certainly was so in
this prophecy in Malachi. Immediately he saw
the coming of a righteous ruler who would
judge and rule righteously. Beyond that rose
the vision of a final, preëminent "messenger"
who should prepare the way for the great
Judge; and then the coming of that Lord who
would judge the world. We call this prophecy
"Messianic." It was. John the Baptist ap-
plied its prediction of a coming "messenger" to
himself. He was entitled to do so. And we
say the "Lord" referred to pointed to Christ.
Undoubtedly it did. But the prophecy was a
far-reaching search-light whose rays passed
through several lenses; but whatever minor
figures it brought out on the way, at the end,
in the full circle of its light, was the figure of
the Christ, concerning whom all the Law and
the Prophets testified. Evidently the things
referred to in verses 3-5 of the lesson were
local and of the prophet's own time; but his
look reaches on to "the fullness of time," when
the Son of God should appear.

THE PERPETUAL PREPARATION

We are impressed in reading the predictions
concerning the coming of the Messiah that
there was always a moral preparation condi-
tioning his coming, as well as great moral ef-
fects resulting from his coming. And it is
clear that every special season or era of grace
promised to the people was a type and prophecy
of the great day when the Christ, full of grace
and truth, should come. So that all moral im-
provement, every turning to obedience, was a
preparation for the coming of the Messiah. The
time of Christ's coming was not a date arbi-
trarily fixed by God in the calendar of the
future, but was an event determined by moral
conditions. "The fullness of time" when God
should "send forth his Son, made of a woman,
made under the law, to redeem them that were
under the law," was not merely a day ap-
pointed, but a day which marked the culmina-
tion of moral movements which made it the
fitting, the opportune day for his coming.
That explains why the prophets had the nearer
and the farther vision of Christ's coming.
They saw his coming in spirit in every reforma-
tion, in every turning of the people from un-
righteousness; and every such reformation and
turning pointed forward to the time when the
Lord should himself come to introduce his

kingdom. All of which means that the day of
Christ's coming was a flexible, variable ap-
pointment, to be influenced by the moral life
of the nation and the moral conditions of the
world. He might have come sooner if the
world had prepared the conditions for his com-
ing; his coming might have been much longer
delayed if in conscious or unconscious coopera-
tion on the part of men the way had not been
made ready for his coming. So that all history
prior to Christ's coming was a perpetual
preparation for his advent.

PREPARATION FOR CHRIST'S SECOND COMING

And all history since Christ's coming, and all
passing events, are a preparation for his second
coming at the end of the world. A greater hope
than that which lay in the heart of Israel, the
hope of a coming King and Deliverer, is given
to the world now—the hope of Christ's return
again to the world and his universal reign of
righteousness. And by "the end of the world"
we must not understand a fixed future day,
when, independently of the conditions of the
world, Jesus shall suddenly return. "End of
the world," as the original terms really mean,
refers to the culmination of a new era, the per-
fecting of the new age; and the end is not so
much that of termination by destruction as by
completion, by fulfillment, by realization. It is
the climax of a moral process now going on.
The last day of prophecy is vitally and or-
ganically connected with the present day of
the world's life. The day and the hour of
Christ's future coming are not known to any
man. They are not fixed by any prophecy.
Jesus said not only that no man knew of that
day and hour, but that the Son himself did not
know. Is the reason for that statement not
found in the fact that the day and the hour are
not fixed at all? Christ's coming may be soon
or it may be far off; but in either case will it
come by God's arbitrary appointment. He will
not sooner when the world gets ready for his coming,
nor sooner, no later. Every new era of right-
eousness is really a partial coming of the mil-
lennium; every overthrow of wrong, every ad-
vance in virtue, every higher register of moral
ideals, marks advancing stages in the coming
of the Christ. This generation may hasten or
delay the Lord's coming. What God has
promised is that he shall come again, but the
time he has not fixed. Moral events are not
regulated by the calendar of the years, but by
moral conditions. As of old, when the condi-
tions were ripe for his first coming, then he
came, and so when the moral life of the world
shall be ripe for his second coming, then again
will he come. And so God is perpetually say-
ing to mankind, "Do you desire the coming
again of the Son of man? Lo, he is at your
door when you make yourselves ready for his
return."

NOT A CONDITION MERELY, BUT A PERSON

But one thing must be guarded and made very clear, both in reference to Christ's first and his second comings. His coming was determined by moral conditions, but it did not consist in moral conditions; and his second coming will wait on moral conditions, but will not consist in those conditions. The Messiah was not a moral state of society, but a person; and the returning Messiah will not be a personification of the perfected social life of mankind, but the coming of a personal King. This is a mistake which many have made with re-

gard to Christ's first coming, and which many are making concerning his second advent. Jesus was a reality, not an abstraction; he was a person, not the personified spirit of his times; and he will come again not in the coming of a greater, better age, but because a greater, better age shall open the way for his return. The gate is one thing, and a very important thing; but the "King of glory" who enters through the gate is quite another and an infinitely greater thing. In considering the gate of the kingdom of glory we must not permit ourselves to lose sight of the King.

THE LESSON PRAYER

Our Father, help us that we may first of all make preparation for the coming of Christ into our own lives; for his birth at Bethlehem will profit us little unless we make ready for him another birthplace in our hearts. And may we know that he must come to us as he came of old, like a refiner's fire, purging us as gold and silver, separating us from sin and confirming us in righteousness. May the Christ come to us in repeated advents of fuller revelations of truth, in deeper experiences of the powers of the world to come. And may we unite in preparing for his larger coming into the world, in eras of increasing peace and justice and righteousness, until he shall come again, even as he promised, to reign forever. Amen.

The Lesson Coin Thoughts

I

The world must needs make ready for the world's Redeemer.

God can flash his lightning straight from the cloud, but it is better for commerce to pass it through wires.

The rule is that unprepared soil is unproductive soil.

We cannot get what is ready for us unless we are ready for what we get.

It is as necessary that the soil be ready for the seed as it is that the seed be ready for the soil.

There can be no echo without an answering surface.

The musician's touch may be perfect, but to have perfect music there must be something perfect to touch.

Unless there be perfect *accord* there must be some *discord*.

II

God's method with the soul is not always sudden, it is often slow.

He who has eternity for his task can afford to "take his time."

If I had more *perception* I should have more *patience*.

Often I would arrive sooner if I would only "stay my haste."

It is not the swiftest feet, but the surest, that win the race.

My sleepless tossing does not hasten the break of day.

The *preemption* of power precedes the *redemption* of power.

III

If we could know the nature of the ending we should better understand the character of the commencement.

The *why* of the beginning is often concealed till we reach the *what* of the ending.

IV

"God is slow to anger," but he is "a swift witness" against evil.

He who does not work against wrong cannot work the works of righteousness.

He who is most brave is the man who fears God most.

Man's creed is always changing, but man's God is changeless.

Man could never be better if God were less good.

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The basis of man's hope is not in man, but in man's God.

V

God is never far from him who begins to return to God.

God has already come to him who seeks to return to God.

There are varying degrees in destiny as well as there are in deeds.

At sunset the sun is out of sight, but it is not as dark as it is at midnight.

A man is dying when life is leaving him, but he is not dead till life has left.

If God's desires are always reasonable, is it not reasonable that the sinner may return as long as God has the desire that he should? But the chances of life grow fewer as the sins of life grow more. A man runs no risk in being righteous.

VI

What is one man's rebuke is another man's reward.

God can destroy the devourer.

Never allow yourself to think that you are permanently defeated, for that is never God's desire for you.

Many of my miserable failures have been woven by Infinite Wisdom into sublime successes.

The snowflake that falls into the sea fails as a snowflake, but that is its way to the larger success of the sea.

When a man "robs God" he makes himself a pauper.

Relinquishment of many things that are rare lies all along the road that leads to real riches.

Only eternity can unerringly distinguish between the "advantages" and "disadvantages" of life.

The Lesson Heart Talk

BY MRS. J. H. KNOWLES

We are near the close of the year; near the end of this series of lessons on Old Testament history and prophecy. With a great yearning in my heart I ask, Has my class perceived the true intent of our studies? Why have we called back from long ago the kings of Israel, Babylon, Assyria; the prophets Ezekiel, Daniel, Jeremiah; the journeys to Jerusalem; the rebuilding of its walls? Why, here and there, have we had foregleams of these gospel days in which we live, like glints of sunlight through a deep forest; as when we read Isaiah's prophecy of the suffering Saviour, his gracious invitations, and Ezekiel's vision of the life-giving stream? Why is placed right here, in the midst of Ezra's reading of the law, to-day's lesson on the preparation for the Messiah? Have you seen the threads of gold running through all the fabrics of the Word—the setting forth of man's relation to God, and God's purpose toward man; his merciful, just, and loving ways with the willful, sinful, self-deceiving human heart? This is all the Bible is man or woman history, parable, story; every history or story mentioned, is there, not for the God is, and what is his will for the people he has placed upon earth for their happiness and his own glory. It is a wonderful book when we read it with God's purpose in mind; it is full of bewildering mysteries when we do not so understand it. It is a blessed revelation when the Holy Spirit enlightens the mind and the heart.

Malachi lived in the time of Nehemiah. He was profoundly stirred by the sins of the age, because he had a vision of the pure and righteous God. The public conscience was demoralized. Divorce, defrauding workmen of their just wages, oppressing the widow and the fa-

therless, teaching false doctrine, perverting the covenant, ministers appointed to keep knowledge leading the people astray, lying and deceit—all these were prevalent sins, and men were saying, "What profit is it to serve God, and what difference is there between good and evil? It was a proud, boastful, self-righteous, and covetous age. But the prophet had a vision. He saw One coming who would judge righteously. He saw a day approaching when the lines would be sharp between good and evil. With an earnestness born only of spiritual insight, he pleaded with the people by the love of God, by the debt of gratitude they owed him, by the sovereignty of Jehovah, whose commands they dared to despise and to whom they presumed to offer insincere worship and unworthy sacrifices, to turn from their sins.

He was only a voice. The speaker was the Lord. The voice cries to-day, rebuking the same sins—for human nature is the same as twenty-five hundred years ago—and foretelling the same judgments. John the Baptist, four hundred years after Malachi, was the voice of one crying, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord," calling upon the people to repent of sin because One was near who would separate the wheat from the chaff, gathering the wheat into his garner and burning the chaff with unquenchable fire. Saint John is the voice still bringing the message, "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every one according as his work shall be." The day of Jesus upon earth was a day that burned like an oven in the conscience of all who heard his words or saw his pure, unselfish life. It burns now, in the fire of the Holy Spirit. He convicts of sin, of righteousness, of judgment. Jesus is coming again, to be the Judge of the living and the dead. Then we shall discern be-

tween the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not. There will be no question then as to what sort of a life we have lived. We shall see it ourselves very clearly, and everyone else will see it too. Who may abide the day of his coming? Very gratefully we remember that he says his messenger shall prepare the way before him. We may be made ready so that we need be not afraid, but glad, when he comes. The Messenger of peace, pardon, and love will come, if we will give him welcome, to the temple of your heart, and mine, even to-day. His coming means cleansing. Can I bear the scourging of small cords with which he will drive out everything unclean? Can I endure the fire which refines and purifies—the secret chastenings which only my soul and God know? I can if I remember that the trial is

the fire, but Christ is the Refiner. "The love may be malignity, but the Worker is Love. We may be in the hand of the enemy, but the enemy is in the hand of God." He sits beside every furnace, watching. For what? To see his own image in the purified soul. Never would we have pure gold or silver for value or beauty without the refiner's fire; never a jewel fit for a crown without the lapidary's chisel. It will be worth all it costs to hear him say, "Thou art mine," in the day when he makes up his jewels. A Scotch martyr had on his crest a palm with weights depending from the branches, with the motto, "I grow under a weight." It is said that palms grow best loaded with weights. Palms are emblems of victory. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

The Lesson in Literature and Art

1. Verse 1. I know the obstacles, but I know well the power behind! I do not see success as yet, but I know that it is coming. So I do not see the cathedral as yet, when I go into the confused quarry yard and see there the half-wrought stones, the clumsy blocks that are by and by to be decorated capitals. But when at last they are finished in form and brought together, the mighty building rises in the air an ever-during psalm in rock. I do not see the picture yet, when I look upon the palette with its blotches and stains and lumps of color. By and by, when the skillful brush of the painter has distributed the colors, I see the radiant beauty of the Madonna, the paths of the Magdalene; I see the beauty of the landscape spread out upon the canvas, with meadow and hill and winding stream, and the splendors of the sunset crowning the whole. I do not see yet the perfect kingdom of God upon earth, but I see the colors which are to blend in it. I see the already half-chiseled rock out of which it shall be wrought; and I am not going to despond now, when so much already has been accomplished.—*R. S. Storrs.*

2. Verse 2.

'Tis said that a lion will turn and flee
From a maid in the pride of her purity;
And the power on high that can shield the good
Thus from the tyrant of the wood,
Hath extended its mercy to guard me well
From the hands of the leaguering infidel.
—*Byron.*

3. Verse 3. As much as moments are exceeded by eternity, and the sighing of a man by the joys of an angel, and a salutary frown by the light of God's countenance, a few groans by the infinite and eternal hallelujahs—so much are the sorrows of the saints to be undervalued, in respect of what is deposited for them

in the treasures of eternity. . . . Every chain is a ray of light, and every prison is a palace, and every loss is the purchase of a kingdom, and every affront in the cause of God is an eternal honor, and every day of sorrow is a thousand years of comfort, multiplied with a never-ceasing numeration; days without night, joys without sorrow, sanctity without sin, charity without stain, possession without fear, society without envying, communication of joys without lessening.—*Jeremy Taylor.*

4. As the precious stone called Amiantus, being cast into the fire, is made clearer and purer; so the children of God, being cast into the fire of troubles and affliction, do shine more clear and beautiful.—*Cædray.*

5. Verse 5. "Punishment is the recoil of crime; and the strength of the back-stroke is in proportion to the original blow."

6. That is the bitterest of all—to wear the yoke of our own wrongdoing.—*George Eliot.*

7. Never yet were the feelings and instincts of our nature violated with impunity; never yet was the voice of conscience silenced without retribution.—*Mrs. Jameson.*

8. Verse 7. They fall deepest into hell who fall backward into hell. None so near heaven as those who are convinced of sin; none so near hell as those who have quenched conviction.—*Bunyan.*

9.

Nay, deem not thus—no earth-born will
Could ever trace a faultless line;
Our truest steps are human still;
To walk unswerving were divine!

Truants from love, we dream of wrath;
O, rather let us trust the more!

Through all the wanderings of the path,
We still can see our Father's door!

—*Oliver Wendell Holmes.*

Lesson Side-Lights and Illustrations

1. *The Herald of the Lord.* The messenger here spoken of was, of course, John the Baptist, as many passages of Scripture indicate. Three of the gospels cite Isa. 40, 3, "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God," and apply the citation to John. In Luke 1, 76 John's father, Zacharias, filled with the Spirit, prophesied thus over the infant, then eight days old: "Thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Most High: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord, to make ready his ways." And our Lord, speaking of John (Matt. 11, 10) says, "This is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee." As Christ's forerunner he urged the people to repent, made a preliminary announcement that the kingdom was at hand, declared that the Messiah was about to appear, and thus awakened expectation and at last pointed out the King, at and after his baptism.

2. *Other Preparations for Christ's Coming.* Saint Paul calls the age in which Jesus was born "the fullness of the time" (Gal. 4, 4). The phrase is full of meaning, and crowded with suggestions. Many events and policies had prepared the way for His coming. Prophecy had done its work; the law given to Israel, and its ceremonies and sacrifices, had accomplished their typical aims; the world had been united into one great empire, under the administration of the Roman power, so that men could travel far and wide without hindrance, with the good tidings—a situation which had never been the case until about that age; a universal language, the Greek, had come into use throughout the civilized world, and it was whereby the gospel was to be preached and in which it was to be written; and, finally, the great systems of philosophy, and of religion and also of skepticism, of Greece and Rome, after centuries of trial had proved to be utter failures, so far as showing any renewing power among men. Thus many phases of human life and human need conspired to make the time when Jesus was born the one fitting time of all others for his work.

3. *A Work of Purification.* The function of the Messiah is here described in three terms which indicate or typify moral cleansing—"refine," "purify," "purge," words which are sometimes used of straining or clearing wines, but work of the Christ is defined to be like that of the workman who washes out stains and soil from clothing with borax, or soap; like the task of the refiner of silver, who melts the ore,

watches the crucible, and at just the right moment pours off the pure silver, freed from its admixture of dross and baser metals. Other prophets use similar figures of speech. For instance, the Lord says (Zech. 13, 9), "I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried." So in Isa. 1, 25 we read, "I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy alloy." Of like import is the New Testament promise, spoken by John the Baptist of the Saviour, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire"—the latter term being an emblem of purification. In Ezek. 22, 17-22, there is a striking picture of the process of refining metals, as in a furnace, used as a description of the disciplining and purifying methods by which the better elements of the nation had been separated from the worse. In Isa. 48, 10 God says to his people, "I have refined thee, but not as silver; I have chosen thee in a furnace of affliction"—by a smelting, that is, of a higher and nobler sort, by which sins and idolatries should be purged away. Thus the Bible furnishes many figurative allusions to the severe refining and smelting office of grace, whereby moral dross and inner impurities, and faults and wickedness, are almost literally burned out of the soul.

4. *Chemical Cleanliness.* Modern surgery affords in its processes and methods some valuable hints concerning the importance of absolute cleanliness. When an operation is to be performed the place chosen for the work is one which has been kept scrupulously clean; the instruments are immersed in boiling water, to kill any germs that may lurk upon them; the clothing of the physicians and nurses is covered with newly washed linen aprons and other drapery; the lint and the bandages come from hermetically sealed packages in which they have been kept in an aseptic condition; and the hands of all concerned in the operation are bathed and cleansed in antiseptic solutions which afford complete safeguard against contamination. Thus modern science uses its best thought and care to keep the slightest invisible harmful element from coming into contact with a patient's wounds. If this be necessary to avoid poisoning the body, how much more necessary is it to keep watch and guard over the feelings, the imagination, the appetites, the ward life, and to secure the help of grace, in order that the soul may be made and kept of our hearts! "O Lord, cleanse the thoughts of our sin by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name."

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The School of Practice

1. It is nearly two thousand years since Jesus first came into the world, and no one knows when his promised second coming shall be. But he has promised to come to me personally whenever I will prepare for him. I will seek this week, by putting away sin and by an earnest effort to live as I think he would have me, to open the door of my heart for his coming.

2. I am impressed with what the prophet says about robbing God by keeping back tithes and offerings. I am resolved to try to be honest with God in the use of the property he has put in my care, and I will this week begin to give for God's uses not less than one tenth of my income.

The Lesson Digest and Teacher's Guide

The Junior Grade

[For pupils from nine to twelve years, inclusive. Each pupil, if possible, should be supplied with a copy of the Berean Leaf.]

Preparing the Lesson.

Illustrated Material: A very informing picture of the prophet Malachi delivering his message may be found in the Intermediate Quarterly, page 107.

Outline of Thought. (For the teacher. Language and detail to be adapted to the pupils.)

This lesson naturally falls into four divisions: **1.** The Promise of the Coming of Jesus, with John as his forerunner (verse 1). **2.** The Promise that Jesus will make pure the hearts of all who come to him (verses 2, 3). **3.** The Statement that Jehovah as Judge will punish all who do wrong (verses 5-9). **4.** The Promise that when people live so as to please God he will make even their enemies to be at peace with them.

Explain the phraseology of the lesson passage. Three persons are mentioned in verse 7: 1. The Speaker, who is God. At the beginning of the verse he refers to himself as "I" and "my" and "me," and at the close of the verse he is described by the prophet as "the LORD of hosts," "Jehovah." 2. God's messenger—John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Jesus by urging people to repent of their sins. John was not born until three hundred and fifty or four hundred years after Malachi uttered these words. 3. The "Messenger of the Covenant"—Jesus Christ. He is also called "the Lord," and Jehovah's temple is spoken of as "his." The "Covenant" is the promise that God had made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to adopt the Jews as his holy people, and to bless them until as a climax of blessing Christ should come. Jesus, the Christ, fulfilled this promise, and hence is called the Messenger of the Covenant.

"Abide" means endure (verse 2). By "fire" dross was separated from silver, and the man who did the work was called a "refiner." See WORD STUDIES. By "soap" or lye cloth was cleansed, and when that work was done in mills the workmen were called "fullers."

For "sons of Levi" (verse 3) see WORD STUDIES.

Verse 5 should be carefully explained. "Sorcerers" were men who tried to do wonderful things by the help of the devil. "Adulterers," "false swearers," and "those that oppress" may be grouped together, in an explanation, as sinners who wrong their neighbors. The "hireling" is a fine old English word for which we have a poor modern half-breed substitute, not nearly so expressive but better understood by the boy and girl—employee. It is a black sin to hire people for work and not to pay them. The "stranger" or "sojourner" was the man who had no friends to stand up for him.

"The sons of Jacob" (verse 6) were God's people, the Jews. But they had become so bad that if it had not been for God's unchanging love he would have swept them from the earth: "I change not, therefore ye are not consumed." By "mine ordinances" (verse 7) God's laws are meant.

For "tithes" and "storehouse" and "devourer" see LESSON WORD STUDIES. By "the windows of heaven" God means the beautiful sky and all the blessings he pours out from it: the golden sunshine, the rippling rain, the cooling shadows, the sweet-scented breeze, all of which working together coax out of the earth corn and potatoes, fruits, grass, and flowers. Grapevines are said to "cast" their fruit when the clusters fall or rot before they are ripe. "Delightful" means happy.

Suggested Generalization. (Adapt form of statement to pupils.)

To us Christ is not merely promised, he has come.

Jesus the Messenger of God's Covenant comes to our hearts. How can our hearts be made pure so as to be fit temples for God? How do men make the silver pure, which is found in mines mingled with stone and sand? They put it on the fire and melt it, and then all dross is lifted off it and the fire makes the silver pure. White clothing becomes soiled by being worn; how do we make it clean? We wash it with soap and the washing makes it clean. And just as the refiner makes silver pure by his fires, and the miller (here called a fuller) makes linen

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pure by his "soap," so God has his own ways of making our hearts pure.

Show how patient God has been with the whole world, with us.

After having given a thorough explanation of "tithes" show what we can bring to God—our hearts; and show how he will bless us if we do. *Memory Verse* (Golden Text): "I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me" (Mal. 3. 1).

The Intermediate Grade

[For pupils from thirteen to sixteen years, inclusive. Each pupil, if possible, should be supplied with a copy of the Senior Quarterly, the Intermediate Quarterly, or the Lesson Leaf.]

Preparing the Lesson.

Illustrative Material: The nine selections in THE LESSON IN LITERATURE AND ART will be found invaluable by the teacher who can interweave them into his own message. There is a striking illustration of purity of heart in LESSON SIDE-LIGHTS entitled Chemical Cleanliness.

Constructing the Lesson.

1. The Messenger, and the Messenger of the Covenant. 2. Moral Purification. 3. Divine Judgment of Sin. 4. Divine Promises of Blessing.

Teaching the Lesson.

Suggestions for Developing the Outline:
Clothe the outline just given with the very



impressive thoughts of the Heart Talk. No teacher can prayerfully read Mrs. Knowles's article three or four times without being greatly helped in his task.

Recall how John the Baptist prepared the way for the coming of the Lord Jesus into the world. Tell the scholars who prepared the way for the coming of Christ into your own soul; who was your John the Baptist. Ascertain what messengers may already have been sent to your pupils to prepare the way for the Messenger of the Covenant. Why was Jesus called the Saviour? It was divinely said of him, "He

shall save his people from their sins." How? Our lesson tells us. 1. Save them by the purification of their souls (verses 2-4). 2. Save them from sins against their fellows, so as to enable them to love their neighbors as themselves (verses 5, 6). 3. Save them from sins against God, so as to enable them to love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength (verses 7-9).

God's limitless blessings come as consequences of our righteous conduct toward God and his children.

The Senior Grade

[For pupils above the age of seventeen. Each pupil, if possible, should be supplied with a copy of the Senior Quarterly.]

A careful reading of the text in both versions and a careful reading of our LESSON WORD STUDIES will give us the literal meaning of this passage. Repeated careful readings will show where the thought divides. 1. The first division of thought comes after the first verse, which shows us that the LORD is about to send the Messenger of the Covenant, and before him another messenger or herald to prepare the way. Think deeply as to what the Covenant is, and what characteristics one might expect in its divinely appointed Messenger. 2. Observe the change of thought between verses 4 and 5. Verse 1 told about the coming of the Messenger of the Covenant, verse 2 tells what he will do and what the results will be; purification is his work, happiness is the result of purity. 3. Notice the dividing line between verses 9 and 10. From verses 5-9 we have an awful arraignment of the sins of the Jewish nation. They are, in brief, formality, sorcery, licentiousness, profanity, hard-heartedness toward the poor, neglect of God's cause. Are not these sins typical of modern life also? (though we now call sorcery by other names.) 4. Notice in the last division of the lesson passage (verses 10-12) our faithfulness of blessings contingent on analytical work would seem to be necessary on the part of the teacher.

Possibly, however, the teacher may find his class to be more readily interested in a treatment based upon the COIN THOUGHTS, which are at once brilliant and pertinent.

Another treatment of the lesson, perhaps best of all for a Senior class, is that suggested by SECTION 1. The Shorter and the Longer Prophetic Vision will be found interesting even as a theory and an exercise of the imagination, but rightly handled it contains tremendously practical thought. We ourselves are God's temple, and it is so coming. Already his messengers have come before his face. The whole drama of the lesson passage has been reenacted in our

personal lives. **2.** The paragraph entitled The Preparation for Christ's Coming well merits our most solemn and earnest thought. **3.** And

the paragraph entitled Not a Condition Merely, but a Person, should serve to melt away much of foggy thought.

The Responsive Review

1. What did the prophet Malachi foretell? *The coming of the Saviour.* **2.** What is our GOLDEN TEXT? "*I will send,*" etc. **3.** Who was the messenger sent before the face of the Saviour? *John the Baptist.* **4.** By what other name does Malachi call the "messenger of the covenant" who is our Saviour? "*The Sun of righteousness.*"

The Church Catechism.

67 What is the form of faith professed in baptism? The form of faith professed in baptism is the Apostles' Creed: I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; the third day He arose again from the dead, He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

LESSON XIII. The Character of the Messiah

[Dec. 24

GOLDEN TEXT. Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins. Matt. 1. 21.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

[Read Isa. 11. 1-10]

Isa. 9. 1-7 [Consult to memory verse 6]

1 Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zeb'u-lun and the land of Naph'ta-li, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jor'dan, in Gal'i-lee of the nations.

2 The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

3 Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.

4 For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Mid'i-an.

5 For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire.

6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulders: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

7 Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Home Readings

[Furnished by the International Bible Reading Association]

M. The Character of the Messiah. Isa. 9. 1-7.
Tu. The Branch. Isa. 11. 1-10.

REVISED VERSION*

1 But there shall be no gloom to her that was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali; but in the latter time hath he made it glorious, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. **2** The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. **3** Thou hast multiplied the nation, thou hast increased their joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. **4** For the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, thou hast broken as in the day of Midian. **5** For all the armor of the armed man in the tumult, and the garments rolled in blood, shall be for burning, for fuel of fire. **6** For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. **7** Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from henceforth even forever. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this.

W. The Deliverer. Isa. 42. 1-8.

Th. The Comforter. Isa. 61. 1-6.

F. The King. Psa. 50. 16-21.

S. The Redeemer. Isa. 59. 16-21.

S. The Saviour. John 3. 5-16.

*The Revised Version, copyright 1901, by Thomas Nelson & Sons.

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The Lesson Hymns

New Canadian Hymnal, No. 6.

Oh, worship the King all glorious above!
Oh, gratefully sing his power and his love!
Our Shield and Defender, the Ancient of Days,
Pavilioned in splendor, and girded with praise,

New Canadian Hymnal, No. 289.

Angels, from the realms of glory,
Wing your flight o'er all the earth,
Ye who sang creation's story,
Now proclaim Messiah's birth.

New Canadian Hymnal, No. 301.

Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the new-born King,
Peace on earth, and mercy mild;
God and sinners reconciled."

Questions for Senior Scholars

At what time, and by whom, was this prophecy given? Who were "the people that walked in darkness"? Who was "the Light of the world"? To what two sorts of joy is the delight of Christians in their Saviour compared in verse 3? In what sense has Christ's coming broken the yoke of humanity and the rod of oppression? What great contrast between worldly conquerors and the triumph of Christ is given in verse 5? What did our Lord say, concerning his kingdom, to Pilate? Who is herein foretold? What aspect of Christ in his humanity is here presented? How is Phil. 2, 7 here illustrated? How is his humility shown to us? What prediction is here given

as to Christ's royalty? How is the prediction fulfilled? (Rev. 19, 16.) In what respect is Christ the Counselor? What is the declaration of Christ's divinity? How is his divine nature shown? What is here meant by the expression "everlasting Father"? What is said in John 1, 1 concerning Christ? What was the song of the angels concerning Christ? (Luke 2, 14.) Upon whose throne is the Saviour promised to reign? How is he the Son of David? What is said concerning the progress of his rule? How has this been fulfilled? What is said concerning the justice of his government? How is this illustrated by Rev. 15, 3? How long does his kingdom endure?

Questions for Intermediate Scholars

1. *Light for the People in Darkness* (v. 1-5).—What was the dimness or darkness of the Jews when Isaiah lived? By whom were the ten tribes carried into captivity? Who is meant by the great light? In what way could the land of the Jews be understood as the land of the shadow of death?

2. *The Prince of Peace* (v. 6, 7).—In what sense could Isaiah prophesy that a child is born and a son given to the nation? As holding what office, then, did Isaiah look upon the promised Messiah? What government did Jesus take to himself? What are the titles which Isaiah gives to Jesus?

Questions for Younger Scholars

When did Isaiah live? What was he? What can a prophet see? *Things in the future.* Whom did Isaiah see was coming some day? *A Holy One.* What did Jesus say of himself? *"I am the light of the world."* What does the light show? *The unclean things.* How did Jesus come into the world? *As a little child.* What is the first name by which Isaiah calls him? The second? The third? The fourth? The fifth? What is the wonderful thing about

Jesus? *He is so great and yet so good.* How can Jesus give us counsel? *Through his word and by his Spirit.* Why is he called the Father? *He said, "I and my Father are one."* What is the sweetest of his names? *"The Prince of Peace."* When will the whole world be at peace? *When Jesus rules in all hearts.* What do we know of his kingdom? *That it is sure to grow.* What will it one day fill? *The whole earth.*

The Lesson Analysis

I. *Light.*

(a) One of the most Hebrew parts of the land of the Hebrews, in the very heart of the country, was Galilee. (b) But it had been overrun by invaders until at length in contempt it had been nicknamed "Galilee of the foreign-

ers." (c) There was anguish there among the people of God because of the punishment they endured for the sins of their fathers and their own sins. (d) Zebulun and Naphtali (whose soil in later centuries the feet of Jesus trod) had come to be names proverbial for suffering

and degradation. (e) But the prophet foresees a time when gloom in those regions shall be no more. (f) He does not yet tell *how*, but he knows that the name of Galilee shall yet become proverbial for glory. (g) Gropers in darkness shall be wonderfully illumined. (h) Lives darkened by the shadow of death shall be brought forth into light.

II. Joy.

(a) Sin and sin's consequences had impoverished God's people and reduced their numbers; now they are to be multiplied. (b) Their multiplication in numbers shall be matched by a multiplication of resources and an increase of joy. (c) Like happy harvesters and merry-making conquerors shall they rejoice.

III. Rest.

(a) By sinful habits and foreign tyranny the people had been yoked to heavy burdens like a toilworn ox. (b) If at any time they shrink from their tiresome tasks the sharp rod of their drivers pressed them on. (c) But now burden-bearing and driving are forever done with, and the nation is as completely liberated as when Gideon with three hundred men overthrew the Midianites. (d) They shall have rest.

IV. Peace.

(a) The peace of antiquity bore about the same relation to its war that the vacation of a

busy man denoted to his year of work. Perhaps no man mentioned in the entire Old Testament lived his entire life without living some years amid war. (b) But the prophet sees a time when there shall be no more armed men, or tumultuous fighting, or garments rolled in blood. (c) The relics of war shall not even be kept in museums; interest in them will have died out; they shall be burned with fire.

V. The Child.

(a) Surely such wonderful results, Light, Joy, Rest, Peace, coming to tortured Galilee (of all places on earth) must have a wonderful cause. (b) Here is the cause: "Unto us a Child is born." (c) In this child all government shall be vested. He shall be called (d) Wonderful Counselor; (e) Mighty God; (f) Everlasting Father; (g) Prince of Peace.

VI. The King.

(a) The government of this child shall never cease, but shall always increase. (b) The peace that his government brings shall know no end. (c) He shall sit upon the throne of David; that is, he shall govern the people of God. (d) He shall uphold his government with justice and with right tenderness forever. (e) These wonderful results shall be reached by the help of no man, but by "the zeal of the LORD of hosts."

The Lesson Word Studies

NOTE.—The Word Studies for this lesson are based on the Revised Version.

MESSIANIC PROPHECY.—The Messianic revelation of the Old Testament does not appear simply in particular verbal predictions of the future glorious advent and reign of "The Anointed," for in a very real sense the entire Old Testament is prophetic in character. It is a record of God's gracious manifestations of himself to men, and of the establishment of his kingdom among men. Through every part of it there runs a broad stream of yearning and of promise which culminates at last in the definite prediction and expectation of the Saviour who is to redeem his people and be their King. The development of this definite expectation is, however, gradual, and a greater distinctness and scope must not be attributed to it during any given epoch of Jewish history than had then been actually attained. The chief elements in the popular conception of the Messiah in Isaiah's time were that he was to be a descendant of David, and that he was to be an ideal king by whom the throne and kingdom of David were to be established forever. Isaiah, however, brought to his nation a higher and clearer vision of the future salvation of the people than had previously been given in prophetic utterances. But prophecy is ever "a seeing at a distance"; and a prophet, although speaking as the mouthpiece of God, may not himself fully comprehend the significance of the predictions which he makes. To have known Christ, as it is our privilege to know him since he has actually appeared and redeemed men, must of necessity give to the prophetic predictions of the Messiah found in the Old Testament, and especially to the wonderful prediction given in our lesson passage, an infinitely more profound and a fuller meaning than these had for the generation for whom they were first uttered.

Verse 1. But—With this transitional word the prophet passes from the dark picture of the gloom and distress of those who are led away into captivity to the brighter one of that new dawn which portends the glorious consummation of the Messianic era.

No gloom to her that was in anguish—That is, it shall not always continue to be dark where now darkness and distress reign.

The land of Zebulun—This was the district assigned to the tribe of Zebulun, north and northeast of Mount Carmel and later comprising the central western part or portion of Galilee. It was bounded for a short distance on the west by the Mediterranean Sea.

Land of Naphtali—The territory assigned to the tribe of Naphtali was east and northeast of Zebulun, and later comprised corresponding

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portions of Galilee. Both Zebulun and Naphtali were entirely west of the Jordan.

Galilee of the nations—The Hebrew word *Gallit* means circuit or district, and from it the name *Galilee* is derived. Only the extreme northern part of what later became the well-known province of "Galilee" mentioned in the New Testament seems to have been included under the name in Old Testament times. This remote northern province was the first to be depopulated by the Assyrian conqueror Tiglath-pileser (2 Kings 15, 29). Hence, the expression "Galilee of the nations" signifies Galilee which has long been under the dominion of foreign nations. To this district so long oppressed deliverance shall come first.

2. The people—The prophet's vision now broadens to include all Israel.

Have seen—Transported into the distant future, the prophet speaks of things yet to come as if they had already transpired.

A great light—The presence of Christ himself constitutes this light.

The land of the shadow of death—So called because of the apostasy of its inhabitants from Jehovah.

3. Thou hast increased their joy—Literally, *unto it thou hast increased joy*. The Hebrew words "lo," *not*, and *lo*, *unto it*, are pronounced alike and are easily confused in translating; hence the error in the Authorized Version, which reads, "thou hast not increased their joy."

The joy in harvest—The harvest season in different parts of the Orient is still characterized by boisterous merry-making.

When they divide the spoil—The spoil of war after a successful combat or attack.

4. The yoke of his burden—Israel's burden of captivity.

The staff of his shoulder—Foreign oppression which has rested upon Israel is conceived of under the figure of a staff with which the shoulders of the yoke-bearing people have been beaten.

The rod of his oppressor—Carrying out the figure still further, the oppressing nation is represented as a taskmaster enforcing his commands with a cruel rod.

Thou hast broken—All this oppression and humiliation and sorrow shall cease.

As in the day of Midian—In Judg. 7 the Midianites by which Midian's long oppression of Israel was put to an end.

5. Garments rolled in blood, shall be for burning—Every sign of conflict and bloodshed shall be removed. The thought of the whole verse is that war and the suffering which it brings shall cease, and the weapons of war shall be destroyed.

6. In this and the following two verses is given the reason for this wonderful change

from darkness to light, from bondage to freedom, from sorrow to joy, namely, the birth of a Saviour and the character of his government, which shall be a government of peace and justice and righteousness; and this reign of peace and righteousness once established shall endure forever.

Unto us—The prophet has in mind doubtless the faithful remnant in Israel, those who have escaped the judgment and are awaiting the prophecy's fulfillment. He can hardly have fully appreciated the broader significance of the words including the whole world, Jews first but also Gentiles.

A son is given—A prince of the royal house of David. Compare Isa. 7, where the prophet speaks of the son of a virgin who would come to maturity in troublous times. There the child appeared as a sign, here it appears as a gift of grace.

Upon his shoulder—On him as the head of the government shall devolve both the authority and majesty, responsibility and honor, of that government.

His name shall be called—In harmony with the character of his government and of his personal divine character.

Wonderful, Counselor—The marginal reading makes these two words to constitute a single title, the word "Wonderful" becoming a descriptive adjective.

Mighty God—The Hebrew phrase "el gibbor" sometimes means *strong hero*, as in Ezek. 31, 11, where it refers to Nebuchadnezzar. But in other passages it is applied to Jehovah in its literal meaning of "mighty God," and will admit of no other rendering. Compare verse 21 of the next chapter, which reads, "A remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto *el gibbor*." The reference in the verse just preceding (Isa. 10, 20) to the "Holy One of Israel," who is indisputably Jehovah himself, makes the rendering "mighty God" in this verse (10, 21) the only one possible. And the phrase, which alone seems warranted to us in the verse of our lesson text.

Everlasting Father—Or, as the marginal rendering has it, "Father of Eternity," which in Hebrew rhetoric means *Eternal*, or *He is eternal*.

Prince of Peace—The Prince to whose kingdom is assured eternal peace.

7. No end—The essence and character of his rule will be peace and love undisturbed and ever increasing.

The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this—What has heretofore been a matter of faith and hope has now become a certainty, namely, the establishment of the "house of David" forever in the kingdom of the Messiah, since Jehovah himself is pledged to fulfill his promise.

The Lesson Exposition

THE MESSIANIC HOPE

No candid reading and interpretation of the Old Testament can fail to recognize that there grew up and deepened in the Jewish mind the expectation of the coming of a "Messiah," the "Anointed One," an ideal King who should bring complete deliverance to the nation and rule in righteousness. That hope grew more and more definite and intense, until at the time directly preceding the birth of Christ there was an immediate expectation of his appearance. The book of Isaiah is preëminently the book of Messianic prophecy, and the lesson is one of the most notable of Isaiah's descriptions of the character and reign of the coming King. There should be read in connection with the lesson, as other portrayals of the Messiah by Isaiah, the following passages: Isa. 11. 1-9; 32. 1-20.

LOOKING BACKWARD AND FORWARD

It is probable that looking backward upon these prophecies of Isaiah we see in them meanings which were not distinctly discerned by Isaiah himself. For we have the great advantage of being able to interpret these prophecies in the light of their fulfillment in the actual coming of Christ. To the prophet were given great intimations of Christ's coming; but those intimations were vague, being given in terms and figures of exalted symbolism. It is not to be thought that Isaiah saw clearly through to the actual time and circumstances of Christ's coming and had before him a vivid portrait of the Son of man as he actually was. He did not know when the Messiah would come. For the most part he seems to have thought that his coming was very near at hand. His conception of the Messiah was always associated with political rulership, a thing which in any literal sense Christ wholly renounced when he actually came. There was a higher sense than the political in which Christ claimed and is actually exercising kingship. We interpret Isaiah's portrayal of the Messiah's kingly office and character by what Christ himself declared, that his kingdom was not of this world. Nevertheless the truth and value of the prophet's visions of the coming King and his kingdom are not discounted by the fact that to his own thought those visions may have had in them much indefiniteness and obscurity which the ultimate events made clear. The inspired character of the prophecies is the more striking that they contain more than was clearly understood by the prophet himself.

"A CHILD IS BORN"

One thing is perfectly clear in all these prophecies concerning the expected King and Deliverer—he was to come through the gateway

of human birth. "Unto us a child is born." The passage in the seventh chapter (verse 14), undoubtedly not Messianic in its nearer application, but certainly Messianic in its longer and ultimate reach of meaning, is an example of this teaching. The Messiah who was to bruise the serpent's head was to be the "seed of the woman." There was never any variation from that conception. The coming King was to be of the seed of David. He was to be a real man in the full kindredship of the flesh. However exalted the titles applied to him, however divine the attributes ascribed to him, he was to come to the help of the world as a little child. And when he came at last he was first recognized and worshiped while he was yet a babe in his mother's care. So the shepherds and the wise men worshiped him, so the aged Simeon in the temple received him and prophesied concerning him (Luke 2. 25-32). It is a most remarkable thing that none of the prophets in their most glowing characterizations of the Messiah ever disconnected him from humanity. Not an angel, not God coming into the world in some celestial form of manifestation, but God becoming flesh and dwelling among men—so the prophets always conceived the Messiah. And it was that character that Jesus most constantly emphasized, for he habitually called himself "the Son of man," the child and representative of humanity.

"IMMANUEL"

But while the prophets never failed to represent the Messiah as coming into the world by the gate of human birth, and as being truly human, they never failed, on the other hand, to apply to him such titles and ascribe to him such character and attributes as can only belong to the divine. As they saw him he was a man, but he was more than a man. It is not necessary for us to suppose that Isaiah or any of the prophets had any clear conception of the incarnation as a theological and metaphysical problem—they probably never considered that problem. But the coming Christ as they were given to see him was one so great that they dared to apply to him terms which were inconsistent with the view that he was no more than a man. Here again there may have been in their conception something of glorious vagueness, meanings that went beyond their understanding. But the meaning was in their words, whether fully discerned by them or not; and when Christ came the words of the prophets were seen to testify to his divinity as certainly as to his humanity.

AN AGE OF JOY

The first general effect of the coming of the Messiah as the prophet describes it was the

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awakening of great joy. It would be like the breaking of a great light upon long-prevailing darkness. Verse 3 of the lesson is admitted to be a wrong translation. The expression, "not increased the joy," is inconsistent with the passage as a whole. It has been suggested that the verse should read, "Thou hast multiplied the exultation; thou hast increased the joy." Certainly that is in harmony with what follows: "They joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil." This whole lesson throbs with the spirit of exultant joy. The coming of the Messiah as foreseen by the prophets, was to bring to the world new and enduring gladness. And such was the spirit in which his actual coming was announced. The angel said to the shepherds on the night of Christ's birth, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy." And when Jesus began his teaching and his ministry it was a ministry of joy and hope. And when the new life which he introduced into the world began to express itself its leading note was joy. Christianity is a religion of triumph and hope, and exultant gladness. Wherever it has gone it has awakened songs and caused the hearts of men to beat with new hope.

CHRIST THE LIBERATOR

A second feature of the Messiah as Isaiah foresaw was his office of liberator: "For thou shalt break the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, and the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian" (verse 4). Again reference is made immediately to political oppression and deliverance from national servitude; but again also the longer reach of prophetic and its higher meaning refer to spiritual liberation. That feature of his mission is yet more strongly referred to in Isa. 61. 1, which Jesus in his sermon at the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4. 18-21), quotes as referring to and finding fulfillment in himself; and in distinct reference to spiritual emancipation he said to the Jews, "If the Son, therefore, shall make you free,

ye shall be free indeed." But the prophet's nearer view of Christ as a political liberator was true, though incomplete. Jesus has been the political emancipator of the world. Under the influence of his gospel human slavery, from being universal, has been driven from the world. Only under the influence of his gospel have mere subjects become citizens, and governmental tyranny has given place to civil liberty. The prisons of the world have been transformed, and the wretchedness even of those justly imprisoned has been vastly mitigated. And not only has the influence of Christ's gospel brought about civil liberty so largely, but it has been working the industrial and social emancipation of the world. And this work of liberation is now rapidly going on under our eyes. Nothing is more certain than that Christianity will at last prevail in the world; and when it prevails there will be no oppression anywhere—in civil rights denied, in social ostracism imposed, in industrial wrongs committed by the strong upon the weak.

CHRIST THE PEACEMAKER

Another aspect of the Messiah's character as seen by the prophet was that of peacemaker—"The Prince of Peace." Read Isa. 2. 4. To the realization of that end the world is steadily going forward. Even while the most appalling agencies for war are being made the world's sentiment against war is constantly strengthening. The recent termination of the war between Japan and Russia was due to the pressure of the Christian sentiment of the world. But for that moral sentiment which made itself felt at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in the conferences of the envoys, it is not conceivable that peace would have been concluded. The principles of Christianity, so far as they find recognition among nations, remove the cause of war; and the spirit of Christianity is producing a patience and a self-sacrifice in rulers which even when wrong has been committed prevents a hasty resort to the sword.

THE LESSON PRAYER

We thank thee, our Father, for the testimonies of the scriptures concerning thy Son; and we thank thee that in him all scriptures were fulfilled. But we are grateful beyond this that to us has been given a knowledge of Christ greater than all that was revealed to the prophets. We thank thee for the record of his life which is given us in the gospels; for the Holy Spirit—whom he sent to teach the world concerning himself; for the revelation of his gospel in its influence in the world; and above all for the knowledge given to us of him in our own hearts through the experience of his grace and saving power. Now do we believe, not because of the testimony of the prophets, but because we know him and the power of his resurrection. Amen.

The Lesson Coin Thoughts

I

The "character of the Messiah" is the supreme character among men.

A man's credentials is his character.

Jesus is not a Saviour because he is so called; he is so called because he is a Saviour.

It is not a man's *name*, but his *nature*, that makes him known.

"A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches," because a good name is the greatest wealth.

Outward symbols are of use only when they show inward realities.

II

It is the doing of duty that dissipates "the dimness."

It cannot be that God has made man for death and defeat.

The idea of Providence is an iridescent dream if God cannot make "all things work together for good."

It is well enough for us to remember that God has created the *conditions* of creation as well as creation.

III

God has "multiplied the nation" in many ways.

"Godliness is profitable unto all things."

God has "multiplied the nation" *materially*.

"It is the Lord that giveth thee power to get wealth" is as true of nations as it is of men.

The garner of the fields are full of God's gifts.

The fruits of man's toil are the gifts of God's hands.

A nation *multiplies* most when it *subtracts* its sins.

IV

God multiplies the *material* resources of a nation.

Man cannot make matter, but he can meet God's method for the multiplication of matter.

Sparse sowing makes scarce reaping.

"To withhold more than is meet tendeth to poverty."

"There is that scattereth, yet increaseth."

I must *serve* with my strength or be *shorn* of my strength.

V

God multiplies the *mental* resources of a nation.

The treasury of truth is much greater in the twentieth century than it was in the first.

Mentality on the part of the multitudes is more marked to-day than in any other period of mankind's history.

God is sifting out the mental chaff and sowing wide the wheat of truth.

The *mind of this age* is busy with sifting the *mind of the ages*.

There will be more gold and less dross tomorrow than there was yesterday.

Truth is the asbestos which no fire can consume.

Much of to-day's commotion is God's winnowing wind to drive away chaff.

VI

Heresy-hunter, hold thy peace, for it is still true that "God sitteth in the shadow keeping watch above his own."

"The government shall be upon his shoulder" is in plain process of fulfillment in the politics of the hour.

More and more the demand of the people is spreading in their requirement that *misgovernment* shall give place to *good government*.

The righteous rule of the conquering King is coming on apace.

The very air is reverberant with the *renaissance* of righteousness.

The Messiah's kingdom is slowly but surely girdling all kingdoms.

The kingdom of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his anointed—Messiah.

The Lesson Heart Talk

BY MRS. J. H. KNOWLES

Nevertheless is a great word. Many times in the Bible it stretches over some torrent of thought like a bridge spanning a river. No chastening for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous; *nevertheless* afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness. I am crucified, *nevertheless* I live. In Isaiah's vision over what a chasm this word reaches! From calamity and darkness to peace and light. There is sorrow, confusion, oppression, war; *nevertheless*, there shall be joy, restitution, order, quietness, because the Light of the world has

come. It is hard to understand the prophet until he speaks of Jesus; then we know the force of that great word "nevertheless." Life, providence, sorrow, death, the past, present, future, are "dimness," wrapped in mystery, until we who walk in the darkness see a great light in his face; the shadow of death is over all until eternal life in Jesus Christ shines upon us. His name, his character, himself, is the *Nevertheless* bridging the chasm between lost humanity and the God of loving kindness and mercy.

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"We would see Jesus, the great Rock Foundation
Whereon our feet are set with sov'reign
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Not life nor death with all their agitation
Can thence remove us if we see his face."

Who is he? Let us seek him in his Word that we may find him in our hearts. Nineteen hundred years ago he was born in Bethlehem, a human child, our brother, in sympathy with us in every experience of life. But our apprehension of him is very unworthy his exalted character if we think of him only as a perfect human ideal. Our thought has a limited horizon if we see him first in the light of the star of Bethlehem. He was in the beginning with God; he was God; he is the Creator of all things; without him was not anything made that is made. He came from heaven to talk with Abraham at his tent door. He was the Angel who redeemed Jacob from all evil. He spoke to Moses from the burning bush. He was Jehovah, the I Am, the revelation of God as he is. He was the Angel who went before the people in the wilderness, whose presence rested the perplexed and burdened heart of Moses. It was he who hid Moses in the cleft of the rock and caused all his goodness to pass before him; the Jehovah-Jesus to whom we pray,

"Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee."

It was he who proclaimed himself the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and by no means clearing the guilty. He could not forgive sin and at the same time clear the guilty without Calvary; and so I read our Golden Text between the lines of that revelation to Moses, "Thou shalt call

his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins." I clasp the warm human hand of Jesus and feel the strong, vibrant thrill of the power of Jehovah." His name is Wonderful. The prophet does not say these names should be given him, but that these names represent what he really is, as we say we call a person kind or good because he *is* kind and good. He is Wonderful; the angels are peering into the mystery of his life and death. He is our Counselor; in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. His sheep, his stupid sheep, know his voice and follow him. He is the Mighty God; even the winds and the sea obey him. He plants his footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm. He is the Everlasting Father; his goings forth are from eternity.

"From everlasting thou art God,
To endless years the same."

He is the Prince of Peace. Being justified by faith in him, we have peace with God. Peace I give unto you; let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. He gives peace among the warring nations; peace in the troubled heart.

"Peace, perfect peace, the future all unknown,
Jesus we know, and he is on the throne."

The highest names fade as time goes on; the name and the character of Jesus attract the world's thought more and more each century. Of the increase of his government there shall be no end. It is a pity for all who are slow of heart to see and believe what he is doing among the nations now. His reign and his power are spiritual. "No laws nor wars nor arts effect the changes in human thought or practice while the silent, unseen force of the Spirit of Jesus is working throughout the earth." To him every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The Lesson in Literature and Art

1. Verse 2.

Hope, like a glimmering taper's light
Adorns and cheers the way;
And still, as darker grows the night,
Emits a brighter ray.—*Goldsmith.*

2. Verse 3. Some people think black is the color of heaven, and that, the more they can make their faces look like midnight, the more evidence they have of grace. But God, who made the sun and the flowers, never sent me to proclaim to you such a lie as that. We are told to "rejoice in the Lord always."—*Beccher.*

3. Rejoice with a rejoicing universe. Rejoice with the morning stars, and let your adoring spirit march to the music of hymning

spheres. Rejoice with the jocund spring in its gush of hope and its dancing glory, with its swinging insect-clouds and its suffusion of multitudinous song; and rejoice with golden Autumn, as he rustles his grateful sheaves, and clasps his purple hands, as he breathes his story of fruition, his anthem of promises fulfilled; as he breathes it softly in the morning stillness of ripened fields, or flings it in Æolian sweeps from lavish orchards and from branches tossing bounty into mellow winds.—*Dr. J. Hamilton.*

4. Verse 4.

He is the freeman whom the truth makes free,
And all are slaves beside. There's not a chain
That hellish foes confederate for his harm

Can wind around him but he casts it off
With as much ease as Samson his green withes.
—Cowper.

5. Verse 6.

A peace is of the nature of a conquest;
For then both parties nobly are subdued,
And neither party losers.—*Shakespeare.*

6. No peace was ever won from fate by subterfuge or agreement. No peace is ever in store for any of us, but that which we shall win by victory over shame or sin—victory over the sin that oppresses, as well as over that which corrupts.—*Ruskin.*

7.

Were half the power that fills the world with terror,
Were half the wealth bestowed on camp and courts,
Given to redeem the human mind from error,
There were no need of arsenals and forts.

The warrior's name would be a name abhorred!
And every nation that should lift again
Its hand against its brother, on its forehead
Would wear for evermore the curse of Cain!

Down the dark future, through long generations,
The echoing sounds grow fainter, and then cease;
And like a bell, with solemn, sweet vibrations,
I hear once more the voice of Christ say
"Peace!"

Peace! and no longer from its brazen portals
The blast of war's great organ shakes the skies,

But, beautiful as songs of the immortals,
The holy melodies of love arise!

—*Longfellow.*

8. Verse 7. See what vitality the gospel has! Plunge her under the wave, and she rises the purer from her washing; trust her in the fire, and she comes out the more bright for her burning; cut her in sunder, and each piece shall make another church; behold her, and, like the hydra of old, she shall have a hundred heads for every one you cut away. She cannot die, she must live; for she has the power of God within her.—*Spurgeon.*

9. The heart may often be cheered by observing the operations of an ever-present intelligence, and we may feel we are leaning on His bosom while living in a world clothed in beauty and robbed with the glorious perfection of its Maker and Preserver. We must feel that there is a Governor among the nations who will bring all plans with respect to our human family to a glorious consummation. He who stays his mind on his ever-present, ever-energetic God will not fret himself because of evildoers. He that believeth shall not make haste.—*David Livingstone.*

10. The world was full of war, and He preached peace. The world was full of pride, and he was humble. The world was false, and he by every word and action said, "Be true." The world, looking at Christ, said, "We never can be that;" but more and more the world has become that. Christ first touching it by his love has little by little drawn it on into his character; and peace, humility, and truth are no longer vague dreams, but recognized ambitions, earnest hopes, here and there real attainments, among men.—*Phillips Brooks.*

Lesson Side-Lights and Illustrations

1. *A World in Darkness.* This is the apt and terrible emblem by which the condition of the people who lived before Christ was born is delineated. They were in the darkness of ignorance; the simplest elements of religion, such as a child easily masters to-day—the character of God, the privilege of prayer, the immortality of the soul, the deceitfulness of sin, the duty of loving and helping other people—were wholly out of their reach. They were buried in superstition; they followed omens, were guided by sorcery and witchcraft, were priest-ridden, and haunted by countless terrors, beliefs in ghosts, and in all manner of imaginary beings. Death and the grave were to them insoluble problems; they saw no light in the dark valley, no certain hope beyond the tomb. As to morals and conduct the ancient nations were immersed in a darkness so degrading, so dreadful, and so

wretched that it is literally not susceptible of description. The very names of certain vices to which vast multitudes were addicted in ancient heathen society are now obsolete. Devotees of these iniquities, instead of being ashamed, gloried in their debasement. The picture of the old world, as it existed before the Christian era began, and as it is drawn by the dramatists and poets of Rome, is so vile and appalling that it is untranslatable and unreadable in our time and tongue. Matthew Arnold has put into a few strenuous lines his conception of the debasement and savagery which once spread a pall of darkness over the earth:

"On that hard pagan world disgust
And secret loathing fell;
Deep weariness and sated lust
Made human life a hell.

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"Stout was its arm; each threw and bone
Seemed puissant and alive,
But, ah! its heart, its heart was stone,
And so it could not thrive."

2. *A Great Light.* This phrase fitly characterizes the gospel and Him who was its embodiment, the Light of the World. Just as the rising of the sun in the morning dispels the vapors, the midnight darkness, the fogs and the stormclouds, so the entry of Jesus Christ into that ancient world brought light:—to the intellect, quickening the reason, purifying the imagination and peopling it with ennobling ideals, and furnishing not only new facilities but new motives for mental culture; to the home, literally re-creating it by putting a new stamp of value on childhood, motherhood, womanhood; to civic communities, emphasizing the equality and brotherhood of man and planting the germs of civil liberty in the hearts of the disciples; to the worshiper, revealing God as the Father, opening up a way of pardon, speaking peace to the guilty conscience, banishing remorse and despair by showing him how he could be renewed, rehabilitated, made over

again into a new creature, and thus fashioned after the Master himself; and to the dying, bringing life and immortality to view, and telling those who through death had been all their lifetime subject to bondage, how they might conquer their fears and meet death without flinching or question.

3. *"His name shall be called Wonderful."* To all lovers of music this expression should bring to mind the matchless Oratorio of the Messiah, by Handel, in which the words occur in a strain of triumphal melody which, once heard, can never be forgotten. Possibly in some of the schools where this lesson is studied it will be possible to have that section of this marvelous composition sung; the words will make an impression never to be effaced.

4. *His Government and Peace Increasing.* The growth of the principle of arbitration, the establishment of peace societies, and the extension of fraternal intercourse between nations under our own eyes and in the twentieth century, of the prophecy in this passage, "Of the shall be no end." government and peace there

The School of Practice

1. To-morrow will be Christmas, the day which commemorates the birth of Christ, of whom Isaiah wrote hundreds of years in advance. I will honestly examine myself to see whether I have received him as my King and Saviour, and if I have not done so I will try to do so at this Christmas time.

2. As an expression of my gratitude for the blessings which have come to me through what Christ has done for me, I will, by some gift or service I can render, seek to make this Christmas a happy one for some person or family for whom it might otherwise be without cheer.

The Lesson Digest and Teacher's Guide

The Junior Grade

[For pupils from nine to twelve years, inclusive. Each pupil, if possible, should be supplied with a copy of the Berean Leaf.]

Preparing the Lesson.

Illustrative Material: In the *Intermediate Quarterly*, page 108, is a picture of the young babe and his mother. In the *Senior Quarterly*, page 252, is a beautiful picture by Alfred Fredericks, of the infant Saviour; and a pretty view of Bethlehem, his birthplace, is to be found on page 251 of the same issue.

Narrative Outline. (For the teacher. Language and detail should be adapted to the pupils.)

This lesson passage presents to us a highly figurative prophecy, which, however, can only be treated for Junior pupils as a narrative. Precisely what the narrative is, however, can only be gotten from the Revised Version; in none of our lessons for years have there been so many changes that so greatly altered the sense as in the present. We will follow Dr.

Wells's outline: **1.** A Great Light (verses 1, 2); **2.** A Great Joy (verse 3); **3.** A Great Rest (verse 4); **4.** A Great Peace (verse 5); **5.** A Great Child (verse 6); **6.** A Great King (verse 7).

The first two verses are closely united, but after them there is a division for each verse. The pivot around which the whole lesson turns is the fifth division, verse 6; for The Great Child grows to be The Great King, and brings Light, Joy, Rest, and Peace.

1. The prophet lived in troubled days—"dark days" he would say. Fogs and mists in the air are not nearly so bad as fogs and mists in the minds of men. The freezing winds of the arctic zone are not nearly so cold as the coldness of cruel hearts. God's people had been in "anguish," in pain of body and mind, because cruel soldiers had killed their young men and taken captive their women and children. But the prophet sees that all this misery is now coming to an end. God has told him that in the future "There shall be no gloom." Why not? The prophet does not tell us why not, but goes on to

mention some parts of the land where trouble had been greatest, and says that in those places (where Jesus afterward lived) shall be glory; the hopeless people who live "in the land of the shadow of death" shall find light and hope and cheer all about them. How?

2. Observe that the *not* of the Authorized Version (verse 3) is an error. God *has* increased the joy of the nation. The prophet having described the LIGHT now describes the JOY. He had more than once seen victorious soldiers shouting and hurraing; he had heard farmers laughing and singing when they brought in their harvest. As God now opens his eyes to see the future, the whole nation is singing and rejoicing like happy farmers and soldiers.

3. The prophet lived near the farmers. Often he had seen oxen harnessed to plows, wearing very heavy yokes, and forced to pull heavy burdens; if they stood still for a minute a man with a sharp stick or rod poked them on. He now foresaw that the joyful people of God should have REST also from their enemies and from sin; there should be no more yoke and no more rod.

4. The prophet had been to the war. He had seen soldiers with uniform and armor, and, far worse, with blood on their garments. Now God shows him that in the good time coming there will be no need for soldiers, because God will give his people PEACE, and the weapons of war shall be burned.

5. But what is to bring all this LIGHT, JOY, PEACE, and REST to the people of God? The coming of their Saviour. How is he to come? As a little child. That brings us to Christmas time and the Christmas story. How many names or titles are given to Christ? Study them yourself, and then explain the meaning of each.

6. This child is to be the King of all kingdoms. There shall be no end to the increase of his reign. The last sentence of the lesson passage is of prime importance. The ultimate triumph of Christ does not depend upon human, but upon divine means.

Suggested Generalization. (Adapt form of statement to pupils.)

The outline above should be developed as pictorially as possible, and in the order in which it appears in the lesson text. Then show that verse 6 is the gist of it all. This is the day of all days to emphasize the beauty and truth of verses 6 and 7. Tell the story of Bethlehem, or draw it from the memories of your scholars. *Memory Verse* (Golden Text): "Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1. 21).

The Intermediate Grade

[For pupils from thirteen to sixteen years, inclusive. Each pupil, if possible, should be

supplied with a copy of the Senior Quarterly, the Intermediate Quarterly, or the Lesson Leaf.]

Preparing the Lesson.

Illustrative Material: See suggestions in the Junior Grade.

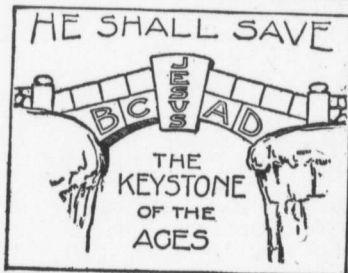
Constructing the Lesson.

Take the Outline already suggested. The Great Light, bringing with it the Great Joy; a Joy which is to be deepened by an experience of Rest into Peace. And all these—Light, Joy, Rest, and Peace—are the consequences of the coming of the Great Child, whose right it is to reign.

Teaching the Lesson.

Suggestions for Developing the Outline:

Draw from the class the facts of experience and history which prove the truth of this prophecy. Only partially yet has the life of modern times been illuminated by the Light of the coming of Christ; but how great has been the transformation which has resulted from



even this partial illumination! Contrast the light of Christendom with the darkness of heathendom. The joy of Christmas time is only one phase of Christian joy—the joy that comes to every soul with the coming of Jesus. There probably has never been an experience meeting of Christians without allusions to the rest and peace which come from communion with God. No one except Jesus Christ could entirely fulfill this prediction. No one but he could merit such descriptive titles. Angels offered their testimony by quotations from these words at the time when our Lord was born. The New Testament passes this prophecy into history.

The Senior Grade

[For pupils above the age of seventeen. Each pupil, if possible, should be supplied with a copy of the Senior Quarterly.]

The details of this prophetic description should be studied in the Senior more than in the younger grades.

the Senior Quarterly, or the Lesson

suggestions in the

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Observe that 1. Christ's kingdom was long expected and predicted.

"Prophets and kings desired it long But died without the sight."

But it was foreseen clearly, by eyes illumined by the Spirit of God. 2. God's kingdom enjoys steady and perpetual growth. We talk of the Dark Ages which came in gospel times, but in spite of all apparent backsets century by century the growth of Christianity in this world has been steady. Sometimes it has for a while increased more in depth and in height than in

breadth. Sometimes it grew visibly; at other times its increase was not so evident. But the advancement of Christ's laws over the hearts of men has been steady—not, indeed, by visible conquest nor by arbitrary overthrow of the powers of evil, not even by human might, but by the Spirit of God. "the zeal of the Lord of hosts." 3. Christ's kingdom brings order and peace into this world; peace between nations, social peace between man and man, divine peace, reconciliation with God, spiritual peace in the hearts of men. 4. Christ's kingdom is eternal.

The Responsive Review

1. What is the GOLDEN TEXT? "*Thou shalt call,*" etc. 2. To what is the gospel compared? *To a great light in a dark land.* 3. Who is born to be our King? *The Lord Jesus Christ.* 4. How does Christ rule? *With justice and judgment.* 5. By what names is he called? *Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.*

The Church Catechism

68 What is the Lord's Supper? The Lord's Supper is a sacrament wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine according to Christ's appointment, His death is shown forth; and those who receive worthily are, by faith, made partakers of His body and blood with all His benefits, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.

LESSON XIV. Fourth Quarterly Review

Dec. 31

GOLDEN TEXT. Thou crownest the year with thy goodness. Psa. 65. 11.

Home Readings

[Furnished by the International Bible Reading Association]
M. The Character of the Messiah. Isa. 9. 1-7.
Th. Daniel and Belshazzar. Dan. 5. 17-30.

W. Daniel in the Lions' Den. Dan. 6. 10-23.
Th. Returning from Captivity. Ezra 1. 1-11.
F. Power through God's Spirit. Zech. 4. 1-10.
S. Nehemiah's Prayer. Neh. 1. 1-11.
S. Reading and Obeying the Law. Neh. 8. 8-18.

The Lesson Hymns.

New Canadian Hymnal, No. 297.
A few more years shall roll,
A few more seasons come.

New Canadian Hymnal, No. 342.
Conducted by thy hand
Safe through another year.

New Canadian Hymnal, No. 343.
Sing to the great Jehovah's praise!
All praise to him belongs.

Questions for Senior Scholars

Lessons I and II present scenes from the life of Daniel. Which scenes? What principally does the name "Daniel" stand for in your mind? What traits of Daniel's character are worthy of emulation?

With Lessons III, *Returning from Captivity*, begins a new epoch of Jewish history. How many centuries intervened between this event and the coming of Christ? Who was Ezra? What did he undertake and what did he accomplish? By what Persian king was the famous edict permitting the return of the Jews to their native land issued? In what year?

Lesson IV records the beginning of *Rebuilding the Temple*. With what mixture of feelings was the work undertaken? Under whose leadership was the work carried on?

In Lesson V, *Power through God's Spirit*, we learn about a word of encouragement to Zerubbabel. By whom was the message sent? In what form of revelation did it come to the prophet? What was the message? Does the same message come to the Christian disciple of to-day?

Lesson VI, *Esther Pleading for Her People*, takes us back in thought to the scattered Israelites still in exile. Where do the principal events of the story take place? Who are the principal actors? What does the example of Esther teach us?

Lesson VII, *Ezra's Journey to Jerusalem*, records the return of a second company of Jewish exiles to Jerusalem. How many were in the company? How did they provide for

protection on the way? What did they carry with them? How did those who remained behind assist in the enterprise?

In Lesson VIII we studied *Nehemiah's Prayer*. For whom did he pray? What were his surroundings? What was his official position? Did he do more than pray? What? Compare Nehemiah with Ezra as to time, office, work, and character.

Lesson IX was the World's Temperance Lesson. What was its title? From what part of the Bible was the lesson passage taken? What was the setting of the lesson passage? What its principal teaching? Give five good reasons why a Christian should abstain wholly from the use of intoxicating liquors as a beverage.

In Lesson X we resume the story of Nehemiah. What great work did he accomplish?

Questions for Intermediate Scholars

Lesson I.—*Daniel and Belshazzar*. Dan. 5, 17-30.—Of what three great sins was Belshazzar guilty? What do the words mean which were written on the wall? Did Daniel care for the honors which the king put upon him? How long after the king saw the writing did he live?

Lesson II.—*Daniel in the Lions' Den*. Dan. 6, 10-23.—What was the decree which King Darius signed? How often did Daniel pray every day? Who saw Daniel in the act of praying? Did the king really want Daniel harmed? How was Daniel saved from death?

Lesson III.—*Returning from Captivity*. Ezra 1, 1-11.—Who was the king of Babylon who gave the Jews permission to return to their own country? How long had they been in captivity? What help did the king order the people to give to the returning exiles? Who was the leader of the Jews when they returned to Jerusalem?

Lesson IV.—*Rebuilding the Temple*. Ezra 3, 10 to 4, 5.—With what ceremonies was the building begun? What were the feelings of the people when they saw the temple begun? Who tried to hinder them in their work? What offer did these enemies make to the Jews? What very plain answer did Zerubbabel give?

Lesson V.—*Power through God's Spirit*. Zech. 4, 1-10.—What very precious truth was brought to Zerubbabel in this figure of the candlestick and olive trees? By whose power had he gone on thus far? In what way can this effort of the Jews be spoken of as the day of small things?

Lesson VI.—*Esther Pleading for Her People*. Esth. 4, 10 to 5, 3.—Who had laid a plot for putting all the Jews to death? Who had told Esther about it? What very high position did she hold in the kingdom? What did she tell the

What elements from without contributed to his success? What guarantee of success was there in the make-up of his character?

Lesson XI.—*Reading and Obeying the Law*. The walls of Jerusalem were at last completed, and the attention of the leaders of the people was again turned wholly to measures of national and religious reform. Where was the "Book of the Law" read? By whom? With what effect? What long-neglected national feast was again celebrated?

Lessons XII and XIII deal with Messianic prophecy. What do you understand by that term? Locate Malachi in the list of the Old Testament prophets as to time. What is the principal import of his message? What picture of the Messiah and his advent does Isa. 9, 1-7 unfold? Were all the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament fulfilled in Jesus?

Jews to do? What mission did she undertake? What was the result of Esther's heroism?

Lesson VII.—*Ezra's Journey to Jerusalem*. Ezra 8, 21-32.—Who had offered Ezra help and protection on his journey? Why did he not accept the offer? Had the Jews much treasure with them? Why were these treasures called holy? What lesson of faith is taught in this part of Ezra's history?

Lesson VIII.—*Nehemiah's Prayer*. Neh. 1, 1-11.—What position did Nehemiah hold at the court of Artaxerxes? Who told Nehemiah of the condition of the people and the city of Jerusalem? What shows that Nehemiah was a true patriot? In what way did Nehemiah act the part of a true priest of his people? What confession did he make of the sins of the people?

Lesson IX.—*World's Temperance Sunday. Abstinence for the Sake of Others*. 1 Cor. 10, 23-33.—In what way did Paul mean that it would be right for him to do anything which would not harm him? Whose welfare must the Christian think of besides his own? What was Paul's rule of conduct in the church and out of it? What great harm is done when a man otherwise respectable has the habit of drinking even moderately?

Lesson X.—*Nehemiah Rebuilds the Walls of Jerusalem*. Neh. 4, 7-20.—Who were plotting against the Jews when they were building the walls of Jerusalem? What reasons had they for interfering? To whom did Nehemiah appeal for help? What means were taken to be ready at all times for an attack from their enemies? Upon what did Nehemiah depend more than upon all his preparations?

Lesson XI.—*Reading and Obeying the Law*. Neh. 8, 8-18.—What great work had Nehemiah just finished? What other great leader of the Jews was with Nehemiah at this time? Did

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the people know much about what was in the law of Moses? At what time of the year was this great meeting of the Jews held? What two things were celebrated by this feast?

Lesson XII.—*Preparation for the Messiah.* Mal. 3, 1-12.—About what time did the prophet Malachi live? What is called here "the messenger of the covenant"? What kind of an offering is acceptable to the Lord? Is it possible for a man to rob God now? What did God promise to the Jews if they would make the proper offering to him? What are some of the

I. "The face of the Lord is against them that do evil" is a large way of saying that the facts are against the sinner, the truth is against the transgressor; Pharaoh's chariot wheels "drave heavily" because they drave against God. No goals of good are found in ways that lead from God.

II. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." That is as true to-day as it was in the days of Daniel. No man is ever neglected while his soul is perfectly cared for. All lions are little things when pitted against "the Lion of the tribe of Judah."

III. There never was a people who could not truthfully say, "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad." It will comfort us to know that the God of the greatest things is also the God of the least things of our lives. The Lord is always the doer of the greatest deeds.

IV. "The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." Only holy temples are eternal temples. I must keep clean the path where the King's feet go. Cleanliness is indispensable to kingliness. God employs many workmen in the building of this life-temple. Wind, and storm, and rain; fire, chisel, hammer—God directs all these forces to fashion the temple to symmetry, beauty, and strength.

V. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord." The silent forces of life and of the world are the holy forces. Silently and unobtrusively the holy hands of God would build thy life-temple to blessedness and to beauty. The test of every temple is not in the noise of the builders, but in the nature of the building.

VI. "The Lord preserveth all them that love him." Love is the link in the chain of life which no foe's sword can sever. Amid the chief of perils God is the chief protector. Life always looks largest when viewed in the light of love.

VII. "The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him." Every time God

tithes and offerings which the Lord requires of his people now?

Lesson XIII.—*The Character of the Messiah.* Isa. 9, 1-7.—What is meant by "dimness" of the Jews when Isaiah lived? What part of the twelve tribes of Israel is meant by Zebulun and Naphtali? Where did these two tribes live? In what part of Palestine was most of the life of Jesus spent? In what could the land of the Jews be understood to be the land of the shadow of death? What are some of the titles given to Jesus in this prophecy?

The Lesson Coin Thoughts

touches me it is for good, if I keep in touch with God. God's angel touched the imprisoned Peter, and with that touch the fettering chains fell off. God may sometimes touch me with pain in order that he may touch me to power.

VIII. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." The righteous man who is always in touch with God is like the live wire that is always in touch with the dynamo. Real prayer is the pivot on which real power turns.

IX. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." A man must have regard to dynamic connections; power does not come about as the result of "fortuitous circumstances." Force flows in channels like rivers. The way of the river is the way of God's will for the river. Trash and debris may choke the channel and hinder the flow of power. The strongest tree falls when its roots let go of the earth.

X. "Watch and pray." That is a three-word summary of supreme success. Persistent intelligence and intelligent persistence is the twofold badge of personal progress.

XI. "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." Getting good things is one thing; keeping them is another thing. The heart is the only vessel we hold that can hold happiness. Keeping what one ought to lose and losing what one ought to keep is the way to woe.

XII. "I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me." Many of the processes of Providence are meaningless to the mind of man unless they are regarded as preparatory. The "approaches" of God's plans are as important as the vanishing points.

XIII. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins." There is no Saviour but the Saviour from sin.

XIV. "Thou crownest the year with thy goodness." No goodness is complete without the crown of God's goodness upon it. We ought not to begin anything which we cannot ask God to help finish.

The Lesson Heart Talk

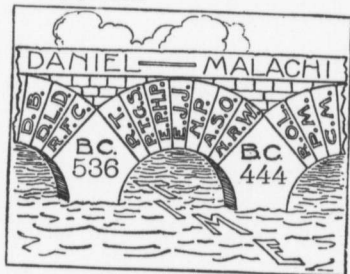
BY MRS. J. H. KNOWLES

Sometimes it is sad to walk with memory through paths of the past. But if God goes with us and talks of his goodness it is an experience of pleasure and profit even though some of the way lies in deep shadow. I remember a lovely walk one day last summer. It was through a forest sometimes quite shut in from the sun; but most of the way glints of sunlight fell through the trees into the very heart of the shadows. How glad the dim woods seemed for these bits of brightness! All along the way a little brook went singing over the stones, while the trees and wild flowers bent over to listen. The frost holds the brook bound this winter day; but I know it sings on "under clank of its icy chain." This forest walk is like a memory tramp through the year now closing. Sometimes the way has lain in shadow. Sorrow, disappointment, trial, have shut us in; but there have been glints of joy and peace more beautiful than the glare of the open where there were no shadows. All along the way the river of God's goodness has been singing, coming down from the mountains of his love and faithfulness, like the happy brook flowing from the hills. A memory walk through the year gone by is beautiful, whether it leads through a forest, or fruitful harvest fields, or even through a desert, when we walk with God.

These thoughts apply to our lesson review. We have come through dark places of sin, weakness, failure. Through all, the purpose of God's love has shone; his goodness has flowed beside the path of human folly, misfortune, and disobedience. It was a fearful night in Babylon when the king read his doom written on the wall: "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting." But there is hope in all our shortcomings because Jesus balances for us the scales of justice. The lions threatened God's servant Daniel; but through his windows open toward Jerusalem there comes to every tested soul the assurance that "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." Out of captivity the Lord brought his people back to their own land, and the harps silent in Babylon awoke with the song, "The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad." The temple was rebuilt; once more there was a meeting place with God, and we learn the wonderful truth that "The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." And when we falter in heart-temple building, as these old-time builders faltered through weariness or fear, we have the reassuring word, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord." The beautiful woman whose unselfish service saved her people reminds us that "The Lord preserveth all them that love him," and that Jesus said,

"He that loseth his life for my sake shall keep it unto life eternal." With Ezra, on his perilous journey to Jerusalem, we learned what is forever true, that "The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him;" and Nehemiah's prayer assures us that "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." His wise conduct in the building of the walls proves that the secret of success in everything is to "Watch and pray." We had a kindly word of warning in the admonition, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall;" and at the open-air meeting at Jerusalem we learned a new benediction, "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." All through the teaching of history and prophecy we have heard the voice of the messenger preparing the way before him whose name is Jesus, "for he shall save his people from their sins."

As we remember all the way that he has led us to the close of the year and to the end of Old Testament history, we say God's sunlight strikes to the heart of every shadow, God's love sings all along the way, "Thou crownest the year with thy goodness."



Our blackboard presents a historic survey of the Quarter's lessons. Over the flowing stream of time, like a bridge, stretches the period from Daniel to Malachi. The two supporting piers are the reasonably well-ascertained dates of the Rebuilding of the Temple (Lesson IV) and the Rebuilding of the Walls of Jerusalem (Lesson X—with which Lesson XI is closely connected). Lessons I, II, and III are to be dated before the first event, and Lessons XII and XIII after the later one. Connecting them, like an arch, are four notable lessons—Zechariah's prophecy (Lesson V), the salvation of the exiled Jews by means of Queen Esther (Lesson VI), Ezra's journey to Jerusalem (Lesson VII), and the beginning of Nehemiah's career (Lesson VIII). Lesson IX must, of course, be omitted from an historic review, or treated separately.

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RESPONSIVE REVIEW SERVICE FOR THE FOURTH QUARTER

Superintendent. Give Title and Golden Text of Lesson I.

Boys. Daniel and Belshazzar.

Girls. The face of the Lord is against them that do evil.

Supt. Lesson II.

Boys. Daniel in the Lions' Den.

Girls. The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.

Supt. Lesson III.

Boys. Returning from Captivity.

Girls. The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.

Supt. Lesson IV.

Boys. Rebuilding the Temple.

Girls. The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

Supt. Lesson V.

Boys. Power through God's Spirit.

Girls. Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord.

Supt. Lesson VI.

Boys. Esther Pleading for Her People.

Girls. The Lord preserveth all them that love him.

Supt. Lesson VII.

Boys. Ezra's Journey to Jerusalem.

Girls. The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him.

Supt. Lesson VIII.

Boys. Nehemiah's Prayer.

Girls. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

Supt. Lesson IX.

Boys. World's Temperance Sunday.

Girls. Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

Supt. Lesson X.

Boys. Nehemiah Rebuilds the Walls of Jerusalem.

Girls. Watch and pray.

Supt. Lesson XI.

Boys. Reading and Obeying the Law.

Girls. Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.

Supt. Lesson XII.

Boys. Preparation for the Messiah.

Girls. I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me.

Supt. Lesson XIII.

Boys. The Character of the Messiah.

Girls. Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.

LESSON I. DANIEL AND BELSHAZZAR

Supt. And thou, O Belshazzar, hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and the God in whose hand thy breath is hast thou not glorified.

School. God has numbered thy kingdom, and finished it.

All. Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.

LESSON II. DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN

Supt. Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel,

Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee.

School. Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions. And the king spake, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God whom thou servest continually able to deliver thee from the lions?

All. My God hath sent his angel and hath shut the lions' mouths that they have not hurt me.

LESSON III. RETURNING FROM CAPTIVITY

Supt. Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem.

School. And all they that were about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, beside all that was willingly offered.

All. Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the Lord.

LESSON IV. REBUILDING THE TEMPLE

Supt. And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because he is good, for his mercy endureth forever toward Israel. 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.

School. Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the Lord God of Israel;

All. Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building.

LESSON V. POWER THROUGH GOD'S SPIRIT

Supt. This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.

School. Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain.

All. The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it.

LESSON VI. ESTHER PLEADING FOR HER PEOPLE

Supt. Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over his royal throne in the royal house.

School. And it was so, when the king saw Esther favor in his sight; and the king held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand.

All. Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what is thy request? it dom.

LESSON VII. EZRA'S JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM

Supt. I even weighed unto their hand six hundred and fifty talents of silver, and silver vessels

School. The priests and the Levites took the weight of the silver, and the gold, and the vessels.

All. Then we departed to go unto Jerusalem,

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and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy.

LESSON VIII. NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER

Supt. And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.

School. When I heard these words I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven.

All. O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant; and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day.

LESSON IX. ABSTINENCE FOR THE SAKE OF OTHERS

Supt. If any that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience' sake.

School. But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that showed it, and for conscience' sake.

All. Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

LESSON X. NEHEMIAH REBUILDS THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM

Supt. And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come among them and slay them.

School. And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, who is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your homes.

All. Every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon.

LESSON XI. READING AND OBEYING THE LAW

Supt. So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.

School. Then he saith unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for the joy of the Lord is your strength.

All. Also day by day he read in the book of the law of God.

LESSON XII. PREPARATION FOR THE MESSIAH

Supt. Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me.

School. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts.

All. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

LESSON XIII. THE CHARACTER OF THE MESSIAH

Supt. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

School. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder.

All. And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

PRACTICAL LESSONS

Lesson I

First Single Voice. "The Egyptians believed that after death the heart was weighed; in one scale the heart, in the other the divine truth. God weighs character; our purposes, our words, our deeds, our motives, our lives, our thoughts."

Lesson II

Second Single Voice. Notice that Daniel prayed three times each day. Luther says, "To pray is to work." "No time is lost from the harvesting by sharpening the scythe."

Lesson III

Third Single Voice. "The best nations are an evolution, and God is the evolver. History is His Story."

Lesson IV

Fourth Single Voice. The Christian in the world is like a ship in the ocean. The ship is safe in the ocean so long as the ocean is not in the ship.

Lesson V

Fifth Single Voice. If you have planned and labored and striven, and all in your own strength, and failed, try working with God!

Lesson VI

Sixth Single Voice. God may have put you in the very place of danger and crisis in order that you may do a work for him.

Lesson VII

Seventh Single Voice. "If men are pilgrims and life a journey, then we may add that the Christian pilgrimage far surpasses all others in these particulars: Goodness of the road, beauty of the prospect, excellence of the company, and superiority of the accommodations at the end of the journey."

Lesson VIII

Eighth Single Voice. Nehemiah's prayer was the fervent, effectual prayer of a righteous man, and therefore it availed much. It was the prayer of one who acted as well as prayed.

Lesson IX

Ninth Single Voice. Love is the highest law. We have a duty to our brother "for whom Christ died."

Lesson X

Tenth Single Voice. Wesley's motto was, "All at it and always at it." "The trouble in many churches is that one fourth of the members do three fourths of the giving and working."

Lesson XI

Eleventh Single Voice. The Bible is the world's great lighthouse, and to neglect or resist it is to drive the ship of soul and of state on the rocks.

Lesson XII

Twelfth Single Voice. Mr. Spurgeon tells of a man who boasted that his religion had not cost him a cent for twenty years, and thus comments upon it: "God have mercy on your miserable little soul!"

Lesson XIII

Thirteenth Single Voice. "Mighty hopes make mighty men," says Tennyson. Only with Jesus as King can these good times come.

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Primary Teachers' Department

Primary Notes

THIS is the month especially dear to the child heart, because it brings the Christmas festival. The story of the Babe of Bethlehem never grows old. May we as primary teachers never tire of telling it!

No general celebration or "Festival" at the Christmas time should hinder the primary teacher from her own class observance of the glad day. There, in the midst of her little ones, she may tell the dear old story anew and leave lasting impressions upon some little hearts.

This little home celebration should be kept simple, but thought and care should be freely given to make it impressive and attractive. Have the classroom trimmed with greens, and the large gilt star in evidence. Invite the pastor and the mothers, but let little time be given to outsiders. Keep it sacredly for the precious Christmas teaching.

If possible, let giving be made a part of the day's joy. The little ones will enjoy their own gifts much more if they are taught how they, too, may make hearts happy by their own gifts. Let the offerings be made upon entering the room, if the gifts are for some local use. If a missionary offering is taken at this time, have some little ceremony accompanying it, "Teacher" receiving the gifts and in a simple Echo prayer offering them all to Jesus.

THE parts taken by the primary class in public celebrations of whatever kind should be concert singing or concert exercises. Recitations or solos should not be encouraged. There are many reasons why the primary teacher should carefully avoid this. In the privacy of the class celebration it is not so much to be deprecated, although even then the teacher needs to exercise great care lest little heads and hearts become inflated with a sense of self-importance.

A Christmas Prayer

HOLY Lord, who came to show
How a child may live below,
Gentle, patient, meek, and mild,
Like the blessed Saviour Child,
Hear us as to thee we pray,
On our happy Christmas Day.

Four Kinds

It was a Jewish rabbi who said: "In every class you will find four kinds of pupils: the *sponge*, the *funnel*, the *sieve*, and the *winnow*." I am sure everyone has a *sponge* in the class—the child that likes to hear everything that is

said, but will himself give you no answer. What you have to do with this child is to draw him out and make him answer.

Then the *funnel* kind—one who takes in everything you say simply to let it go in one ear and out of the other. Such a child answers his mother's question, "What did you learn today?" by saying, "O, I don't know." If you can put the right sort of teaching into that child it will stay there; you must make it so tremendously interesting that he cannot help but hold it.

Then the *sieve* kind. This is the child who will take the illustrations and remember them, and forget the vital part of the truth. He retains the things least valuable and lets go the real grains of truth. With him you need to make the truth very attractive, and suppress the illustrations, making them incidental, so that the child shall remember the truth and not the story.

The *winnow* child. This child has a mind that will be sure to keep the good things and reject the bad, and so is safe anyway.—*Lucy M. Wheelock.*

First Celebration

CHRISTMAS was first celebrated in the year 98, but it was forty years later before it was officially adopted as a Christian festival; nor was it until about the fifth century that the day of its celebration became permanently fixed on the twenty-fifth of December. Up to that time it had been irregularly observed at various times of the year—in December, in April, and May, but most frequently in January.

Constant Christmas

O NEVER-FAILING splendor!

O never-silent song!

Still keep the green earth tender,
Still keep the gray earth strong.

Still keep the brave earth dreaming
Of deeds that shall be done.

While children's lives come streaming
Like sunbeams from the sun.

O angels, sweet and splendid,
Throng in our hearts and sing

The wonders which attended
The coming of the King.

Till we, too, boldly pressing

Where once the shepherds trod,
Climb Bethlehem's hill of blessing.

And find the Son of God!

—*Phillips Brooks.*

International Bible Lessons

FOURTH QUARTER

LESSON X—December 3

NEHEMIAH REBUILDS THE WALLS OF
JERUSALEM. Neh. 4. 7-20GOLDEN TEXT: "Watch and pray." Matt.
26. 41.

Primary Notes



Approach. Always aim first. If you do not know where you are going, how will you decide upon the direction to take in order to reach your destination? If you have no target how can you wing the arrow? It will be

but a bow drawn at a venture. Such hit-or-miss methods hit less often than they miss. Therefore, decide first of all what you would teach, what you would reach, and then plan your approach through the point of contact most available and practical.

In this lesson Watchfulness seems to be the obvious and most natural teaching. It is a great art to subordinate everything to one aim and avoid scattering shots. In this portion, how shall we make the smallest child understand what it is to watch as well as pray? Let us begin with the simplest idea of watching—that of looking. A procession was to pass father's office and he said that Frank might sit by the window and watch it. What did Frank do? What is it to watch? Did he use his hands? His ears? His eyes? Before the procession came in sight what did the boy do? Afterward? When it had passed by was there any chance to watch it? Any use in watching? What good did it do to watch? Frank got pleasure out of it, and learned something too. He had never seen an elephant or a camel, and now he knew exactly what they looked like, better than he had ever known from pictures. This knowledge Frank kept. But if he had not looked at that procession would anything dreadful have happened? Would it really have hurt him if he had been out of town that day?

Is there any other sort of watching than just looking to see? Here is a man by a railway track. By and by the train will come around a curve. He has to turn a switch. He does not know whether the train will be late or on time. What must he do? He must watch for it. If he doesn't watch he may be away at the wrong time, and much harm may come if the switch is not turned. Here is a soldier, set to

watch and see if the enemy comes to fight. If the soldier sleeps or goes off on pleasure and the enemy's army comes and takes all by surprise great harm will be done and many lives lost. Watching is very important. Our lesson story tells something about this sort of watching, which means much more than looking at a procession, or anything like that.

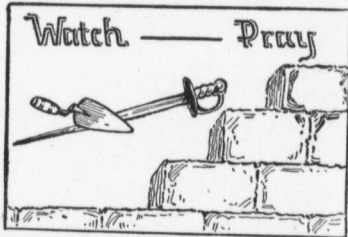
The Need of Watching. Give the story of Nehemiah in Jerusalem. The last we heard of him he was asking God's help in getting a favor from the king. The favor was granted, and now this good man is leading on the people of Jerusalem to build the city walls. Speak of the need of walls in those days, the condition of these walls, the need of all the workers in rebuilding, and describe the effort of the enemy, Sanballat and the rest, to hinder the work. This was the danger. How was it met?

Watching and Praying. Show how much these Jews needed God's help. They were not strong enough, themselves, to conquer all those enemies set against them. So they prayed to God, first of all. But would God answer, and take care of them, if they did not do their part? Might they go on carelessly and never look to see who was coming or have any sword or spear ready for the fight? No, that would be like the little girl who prayed that God would help her to know her lessons perfectly and then never studied a bit. God did not answer that prayer. It was not an obedient prayer.

Give in graphic language the story of the ridicule of the enemy, the plan of resistance, the splendid watchword, "Be not afraid; remember the Lord; fight for your wives and little ones," and the courageous, trustful word, "Our God shall fight for us." Show how all this came true.

Jewel Thought: Watchfulness. After making very clear what it meant for these Jews to watch, turn the thought to watching against enemies in our hearts, and the help that comes when we watch and pray.

Thought for Teachers. Military symbolism is attractive to children. Use this, but be sure



that the practical lesson is in simplest words, showing what to watch against, and how to watch.

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LESSON XI—December 10

READING AND OBEYING THE LAW
Neh. 8. 3-18

GOLDEN TEXT: "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." Luke 11. 28.

Primary Notes



Approach. Obedience is the keynote of this lesson, and all the teaching should be in tune.

A captain of a beautiful ship set out upon a long voyage. He did not know where he was to go, for his orders were

given him all sealed up, to be opened out at sea, after he had left the shore behind. He was told in what direction to sail, and that was all. When the time came he opened his orders and read them all through. Then he tossed away the paper and did nothing. He did not tell the pilot how to guide the ship, nor give orders to anyone, as he was told in the writing given him so carefully. What good did it do to write down all these directions? What good did it do this man to read them? If he had been told to find his own way, and had not had any other orders at all, would he have been as much to blame for letting things go as now? Could he say, "I did not know," when he had had his orders and had read them? If they had been written in German or French, and if he could not read either of these languages, would he have been as much to blame? Even then, he might surely get some one else to tell him what the words meant, if he were very anxious to find out. But the orders were written in English, so that this captain could have no excuse for not understanding them. After reading them his business was to obey them. Don't you think so? Would you have done it if you had been in his place? I wonder if you would. I wonder if you always obey what you read and find to be your "orders." We hear to-day about some people who read and understand and obeyed their orders. God blessed them, as our Golden Text says he will.

The Word of God Read. Picture that great Sunday school or Bible class. Recall characters of Ezra and Nehemiah. Describe the gathering of the people, big and little. There must have been some young people and children there, for it says that all who could understand at all came to this Sunday school to be taught, and surely some children could understand part, at least, of what was read from God's Book. Tell how Ezra stood up in a pulpit of wood so that all could see and hear how long they stayed, "from morning till noon," and the margin says, "from the light." Some

of us cannot get to Sunday school in time when it begins at half-past nine or even at two o'clock, and these people came at daylight. They must have been anxious to hear.

Drill a few moments upon the persons present—the teachers and the taught, the Book, listened and how they took it. Every word was read so as to be heard, and it was explained as teachers explain the lesson now. Some of the listeners were so sorry that they had not kept this law of God that they cried, but their teachers told them to be glad now and try to do something for others.

The Word of God Obeyed. These people obeyed their teachers, in drying their tears and giving thanks and feeling joyful and in sending good things to those who were poor and had nothing. They were very happy because they understood the words that were read. Do you all go home full of joy because your teachers have explained God's Word to you, or because your mothers at home tell you what it means?

Jewel Word: Obedience. This is indeed a precious jewel. Explain and enforce true, faithful, joyful obedience to God in all things. **Thought for Teachers:** Have we "understood the words"? Our Great Teacher is patient and ready, but we must hear and obey. Doing his will, we know his doctrine.



LESSON XII—December 17

PREPARATION FOR THE MESSIAH. Mal. 3. 1-12

GOLDEN TEXT: "I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me." Mal. 3. 1.

Primary Notes

Approach. Take the thought of gifts, in preparation for receiving a great king or conqueror. Tell the story of the coming of the king in ancient times, how first the messenger or herald was sent out to cry, "The king is coming." Then the way must be prepared.



coming." Then the

Stones must be gathered out, crooked made straight, rough smooth, and all made clear and ready. It takes time and work and money to do this, but the king must have all these.

Those who love the king will prepare gifts for him to show their love, and, best of all, they will show by their obedience that they are glad to have him rule over them. Long ago, when King Solomon was crowned, there were some bad men who did not wish him to be their king. They "despised him and brought him no presents," the Bible says. Thus they showed that they were not good servants of the king.

This lesson tells of the coming of One greater than any earthly king. He is called

The Messiah. Long ago, when a man was made king, holy oil was poured on his head to show that he was set apart to rule. You remember how the good prophet Samuel went to the house of Jesse in Bethlehem and called the sons to pass before him that he might know which one God had chosen to be king instead of Saul. At last God made Samuel know that David, the young, fair-faced shepherd boy was the one. Then Samuel rose and poured oil on young David's head, as a sign that he was to be set apart as God wished, to be the king over the people. The word Messiah means the Anointed One, the one who has had oil poured on his head to show that he has been set apart. Jesus was known as the Messiah by the Jews of that long ago time, because he was to be set apart as King over all. There is a beautiful verse that says that God anointed Jesus with "the oil of gladness." This just means that our Saviour was set apart to the glad work of saving people and making them full of joy. It cost him a great deal, but he was willing to take all the pain for sake of "the joy that was set before him," the joy of saving people from their sins.

Preparing the Way. God wished the way made ready for the coming of Jesus, his Son, to this world. He sent a messenger to tell the people that Jesus was coming. Hundreds of years before even the messenger came God told his servant the prophet Malachi to tell the people that the messenger should come first and then the Messiah. This messenger was to tell people their sins and bid them repent, or be sorry enough to leave their sins, and so make a way in their hearts for the Lord Jesus to come in. When people's hearts were made clean and pure, then their gifts would be pleasant to the Lord.

Robbing God. Malachi had to say some very sad and sharp things to the people who were not ready for Jesus's coming, even if it should be soon. He asked them if a man would rob God. Surely that would be the worst thieving in the world. But the prophet said that in keeping back the gifts that belonged to the Lord they were really robbing him. But he told them that if they would bring all that belonged to God, of everything they had, and lovingly offer it, God would pour out a great blessing upon them.

Jewel Thought. The Messiah, Jesus, who has so many beautiful names, has come. He came to Bethlehem long ago and lay in the manger there. The Wise Men brought him gifts, but what have we brought? What does he wish from us? What have we to give? Enlarge upon the thought of gifts.

Thought for Teachers. Are children too young to be taught proportionate giving—those old enough to be in our classes? Ought we not to teach "systematics"?



LESSON XIII—December 24

THE CHARACTER OF THE MESSIAH

Isa. 9. 1-7

GOLDEN TEXT: "Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins." Matt. 1. 21.

Primary Notes



Approach. The great thought in this lesson is, "He shall save." Seek to impress this. Make character the point of contact, but do not use this word in the beginning. Make the children use their power of dis-

crimination in distinguishing different characters.

A little boy was naughty and ran away to play, without mother's leave. By and by he got into great trouble, and he was far from home. He fell down from a high bank into a deep ditch and could not get out. A man heard his cries and looked over at him. The face was not kind, and the man did not look strong at all. He said, "How much will you pay me if I help you out?" The poor boy had no money to offer. He did not like the looks of the man. It did not seem as if he were strong enough to save anyone or cared about it. Just then, away on the other side, another face looked over and kind eyes saw the boy's trouble. This man was tall and strong, and O how kind his voice was

Jesus, who has
come. He came
in the manger
with gifts, but
at does he wish
to give? Enlarge

children too young
to sing—those old
ought not to



umber 24

THE MESSIAH

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as he said, "I'll come right down and carry you up. Don't be afraid." How comforting it was to see the strong man coming as the other one moved away! Harry was soon safe out of the ditch and at home again, carried in strong arms. Now, as he told the story, don't you suppose he could make mother see the great difference in these two men? Draw out from children the difference in their appearance, manner, and actions. Then emphasize the fact that the greatest difference of all was not in the bodies, but in the hearts, of these two. Even weak hands may do much if the heart is willing. The real difference, in every case, is not so much in the outside as in the inside. When we say a man is kind, loving, strong, and ready to help, and another is cross and selfish, we mean that their hearts are different. When we describe people in this way it is the character we are talking about. Character is what a person really is, inside, not what he is outside. The color of one's hair and eyes will make no difference with the heart inside.

This lesson tells about Jesus as he really is. It describes his character, as the Messiah, or Anointed One, of whom God told Isaiah to speak many hundred years before he came. When Jesus came those who knew beforehand what he would be like could be sure that this was he.

Bringing Light. Isaiah says that the people walking in darkness have seen great light. Jesus brings light to dark hearts. Sunlight makes it possible to see. Jesus helps people to understand what is true and right. Sunshine drives away darkness. Jesus drives away fear, by making all clear to the heart so that the heart, knowing Jesus's love, is not afraid. To bring light Jesus must be Light. He says, "I am the Light." This is his character. Draw quick it is, healing sickness, making things grow. Jesus does all this because of what he is.

Beautiful Names. In some countries they give to children names that have meanings, as Golden-hair, Bright-eyes, Little Dove. We know that sometimes if a baby is very white and fair she is called Lily. If her eyes are very dark she is called Hazel, which means brown. Jesus was given many names, which means his character was—what he was like. Enumerate and explain these names, writing each down and dwelling upon the meaning of these names told the truth about him. The Golden Text gives the best reason for the name Jesus. (Drill.)

Jewel Thought: Salvation. Recur to introductory story to impress need of being saved, and how it is done. Saved from sin—from hurt inside—is what we need. Jesus saves from sin. He can save because of what he is.

Thought for Teachers. Let us take great care in translating these rather abstract charac-

teristics into concrete personalities that the children may "see Jesus."



LESSON XIV—December 31

REVIEW

GOLDEN TEXT: "Thou crownest the year with thy goodness." Psa. 65, 11.

Hymn verse (tune, "Jesus Loves Me"):

God is good, he crowns the year
With his love and joy and cheer.
May we learn his love and obey.
Love and trust him, and obey.
Help us to love thee,
Help us to love thee,
Help us to follow thee,
Help us to follow thee,
Our Leader all the way.

Primary Notes



A little talk about crowning. A king is crowned when he is made the ruler of his people. Those who won in the races used to be crowned to show that they were honored as victors over the rest. But when a

thing is finished it is said to be crowned. We have now finished a year of Sunday school and of Sunday school lessons from God's Word. David in talking to God told about a crown for the year. He said to the Lord God, "Thou crownest the year with thy goodness." What a beautiful crown! No one but God could finish the year with such a crown as this. It means, too, that every day in the year has won the crown of God's goodness.

We have had some jewel words for the last thirteen weeks and for the lessons as we have learned them. If we put these shining truth-jewels together we shall know something about the crown of the year.

Here they are in order (1) Wisdom. (2) Deliverance. (3) Gladness. (4) Holiness. (5) Power. (6) Love. (7) Safety. (8) Prayer. (9) Temperance. (10) Watchfulness. (11) Obe-

dience. (12) Gifts. (13) Salvation. (14) Review, Goodness.

In conducting review, teachers may well group the lessons around the characters mentioned, and call for the truth jewels in connection. These lesson truths can be recalled in accordance with the way in which they have been preserved. If they have been written upon cardboard they may be passed to the older scholars, who may give them in turn, the class repeating them in concert afterward.

There should be special drill upon the characters that have been the basis of study. They are Daniel, Belshazzar, Cyrus, Zerubbabel, Zechariah, Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah, Paul, and the Messiah.

Thought for Teachers:

Dearly beloved, a parting word
I would speak for the closing year:
If in His name you have ministered,
Your secret desire his ear hath heard,
And he saith to you, "Be of good cheer."



Whisper Songs for December

TENTH LESSON

O TEACH thy children, Lord,
To work, to watch, to pray,
Nor fear the enemy who waits
To tempt them night and day.

ELEVENTH LESSON

Thy truth is very deep,
Thy love is wide, dear Lord;
And yet a little child may hear
And love thy holy word.

TWELFTH LESSON

When thou hast come, O Lord,
Thy waiting church to meet,
Let all the little children come
And gather round thy feet.

THIRTEENTH LESSON

To us a child is born,
To us a son is given:
The Wonderful, the Prince of Peace,
The Mighty God of heaven.

FOURTEENTH LESSON

Dear Lord, our years are thine;
We give them all to thee,
Till thou shalt crown them with thy love
In thy eternity.

Order of Service

FOR THE PRIMARY DEPARTMENT

Fourth Quarter

Teacher. This is the day which the Lord hath made.

Class. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.
RECITATION, OR SONG.

"Here we come again on Sunday,
When the church bells sweetly call,
With our bright and happy greetings,
Wishing our good-day to all.

"Here we come to help each other,
Loving, kind, and strong to grow,
And we thank our heavenly Father,
For he ever loves us so."

WHISPER PRAYER.

"Lord, help me when I try to pray.
Not only mind the words I say,
But may I try, with watchful care,
To have my heart go with my prayer."

PRAYER (all joining in Lord's Prayer at the close).

SONG OF PRAISE.

OFFERING.

(Arrange a march, if possible, even though the space may be limited. A pretty basket decorated with pink ribbons as a receptacle, and a sweet giving song, as the children march past the basket, depositing their offerings, will do much to dignify and enrich this part of the service.)

BIRTHDAY OFFERING. (Sing softly.)

"Hear the pennies dropping,
Hear them as they fall,
Every one for Jesus,
He shall have them all."

SUPPLEMENTAL LESSON.

REVIEW OF LAST LESSON.

MOTION SONG.

LESSON TAUGHT.

ECHO PRAYER.

CALLING BACK THE LESSON.

CLOSING EXERCISE.

"As we raise our hands toward the sky above,
We remember God's banner over us is love.
And we bow our heads again in prayer,
Giving ourselves to his loving care,
May the lesson learned in our hearts sink deep,
May the Lord between us a loving watch keep.
May we show this week in our work and play,
That we've learned of Jesus on this holy day.
We pray thee to take each little hand,
And lead us all to the better land.

"Amen."

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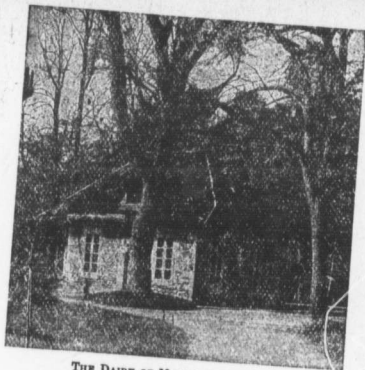
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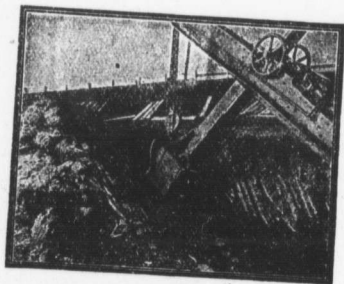
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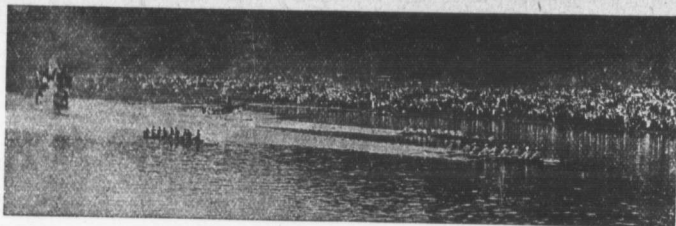
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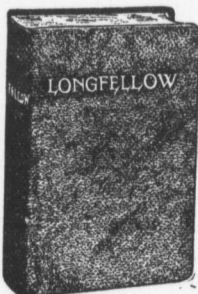
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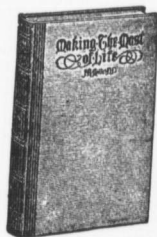
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