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The Big Shoe Store **THOS. McGRAT**

# SUNDAY SCHOOL.

Lesson IX.—Fourth Quarter, For Nov. 26, 1911.

## THE INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

Text of the Lesson, Neh. i.—Memory Verse, 9.—Golden Text, Jas. v. 16. Commentary Prepared by Rev. D. M. Stearns.

The lesson today may include Chapters i and ii and might be entitled Nehemiah praying and God working. The name Nehemiah signifies comfort of Jehovah, and his father's name, Hachabiah, signifies hidden of Jehovah, or perhaps Jehovah is hidden, the former suggesting the safety of His people and the latter that His ways are a great deep. "Verily, thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour" (Isa. xlv, 15). The time of the book is supposed to be about seventy years after the dedication of the temple that was rebuilt by Zerubbabel and thirteen years after Ezra's reform, as recorded in Ez. ix and x. For some reason Nehemiah had remained at Babylon instead of returning with Ezra's company, but his heart was at Jerusalem. He was a true Israelite at a gentle court, like Joseph, Moses, Daniel and Mordecai, loving his people and burdened for them. He knew the God of heaven (i, 4, 5; ii, 4, 20), and, although he knew Him as the great and terrible God, he also knew Him as a God keeping covenant and mercy for them that love Him, ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, and he could call Him "my God" (i, 5; ix, 17, 31, 32; ii, 8, 12, 18). The Jews at Jerusalem were not yet as Isaiah had said they would be, ruling over their oppressors and resting from their sorrow and fear, but were still servants in the land, with others ruling over them and having dominion over them and their possessions at their pleasure (Neh. ix, 36, 37). So we know that the restoration from Babylon did not fulfill Isa. xl, 8-12; xiv, 1-3; xxxv, 10, or any other of the great predictions concerning Israel's glorious future, all of which will be fulfilled when the Lord Jesus shall come the second time in power and glory to restore all things of which the prophets have spoken (Acts iii, 21). He has said that He will not rest till these things are fulfilled, and we are not as right with Him as we should be unless we take no rest and give Him no rest until He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth (Isa. lxii, 1-7). Some one may say, "I am more interested in our own Zion," meaning his own church or denomination, not understanding the purpose of the Lord in this age to gather out from all nations an elect church, that so the marriage of the Lamb may take place and He may return with His bride to bless Israel and through her all nations in all the earth.

Reproach is brought upon the Lord today by His people who are more interested in their own affairs than in His. When Nehemiah heard of the great affliction and reproach resting upon Jerusalem he gave himself to fasting and prayer, as did Daniel (Dan. x, 2, 3). Nehemiah might truly be said to be a man of prayer, of confidence in God and separation unto Him (chapters i, 5-11; ii, 4, 5, 18-20; iv, 14, 20). He was also a man of patience, for it seems to have been many months after he began to fast and pray before the opportune time came to speak to the King. He might perhaps have forced an opportunity, but he had learned better and knew that the Lord's time and way were the best. In his prayer in our lesson chapter let us learn from verse 5 adoration. Compare Jer. x, 6, 7, 10; xxxii, 17; Acts iv, 24. In verses 6, 7, note the confession of sin and compare Dan. ix, 4-6, 20, and see Prov. xxviii, 13; I John i, 9; Ps. xxxii, 5. See in verse 8 how he recalls the threat of Lev. xxvi, 27, 33; Deut. iv, 26, 27, and in verse 9 the promise of forgiveness in Deut. xxx, 1-3. See how all through he leans upon and pleads the word of the Lord. As God had done as He said He would concerning their sins, so he pleads that He would remember His word concerning their repentance. Verse 10 is strong, bold, pleading. See the stand he takes in spite of all their sins. "Now, these are Thy servants, and Thy people, whom Thou hast redeemed by Thy great power, and by Thy strong hand." We are reminded of Moses' pleading in Deut. ix, 29, "Yet they are Thy people and Thine inheritance, which Thou broughtest out by Thy mighty power and by Thy stretched out arm."

Watching day by day for a favorable opportunity to speak to the King and all the while in constant communion with the King of kings, the time came by a question from the King concerning his apparent sorrow of heart—so in one breath he prayed to the God of heaven and spoke to the King, and the King granted him his request according to the good hand of his God upon him (ii, 4, 5, 8). In due time he reached Jerusalem in safety, but for days he kept the matter to himself and told no one why he had come (ii, 11-16). When he did tell them why he had come and said, "Let us build up the wall of Jerusalem that we be no more a reproach," and also told them of the hand of God upon him and of the King's favor they were ready to join him and said, "Let us rise up and build" (ii, 17, 18). Their enemies laughed and scoffed and despised, but Nehemiah's grand reply was, "The God of heaven. He will prosper us" (ii, 10, 19, 20).

# THE LOST OF CIRCUMSTANCES

Continued from page 6.

"Then we are really engaged?" I gasped it out with the unbelief of one who by a seeming miracle sees the dead restored to life. She patted my cheek.

"You may go consider us if you wish—under that condition. But it must for the time being remain strictly our secret."

Half doubting that I was still of this earth, I steered onward as in a trance. Then, unless my senses were tricking me, this most glorious of women was to become my close companion through all the days to come; the one whose head should rest upon my shoulder through the long nights; whose bosom should pillow my face in hours of weariness; who should be my wife, the mother of my children. My eyes filled with the moisture of happiness, and through the mist the rocky roadway blurred before me. A feeling almost of awe filled my soul. Never again will such a great thankfulness possess me, and silently I blessed God that in His infinite goodness He had permitted me to be born.

In front of an out-of-door garden, frequented by the better class, we stopped and dismounted. Long lines of motor cars and carriages extended away on either side, and the music of an European orchestra floated over the walls of the enclosure. We passed through the palm-lined entrance and took our seats at a table beneath a tree whose low hanging limbs almost brushed it. A thousand well-dressed people were eating and drinking around us as they idly chatted or listened to the music. It was the soul of Beethoven throbbing in our ears out of his grave. I ordered champagne in honor of our betrothal.

I seemed to be floating in the air. All weight, all consciousness of the physical left me, and the music was ethereal vibrations wafted to me from infinite distance. I could only liken my sensations to those of one occasion long before, feeling badly, I had by mistake taken a slight overdose of a drug, and for some hours thereafter had soared amongst the clouds in an ecstasy, which the earthly born are incapable of experiencing except through the wizardry of the chemist. Her hand lay idly upon the table close to mine, and with a quick glance around to make sure that no one was observing us, I covered it with my own. "The ring, sweetheart, you shall have to-morrow. During my day dreams I have sometimes amused myself by looking at them in the diamond shops, as in my imagination I selected one for you. And only the other day I found the one you shall have. It is flawless; as perfect in its beauty as a gem as you are as a woman. In the uncountable centuries of the past, when the world was being moulded, this stone was created for you, and yours it shall be. But you must loan me one of yours for a few days that I may have it fitted to you."

She laughed in her low, delicious way as I slipped a diamond from her finger. "Of course, I shall be proud to wear it—proud and happy. But please don't be too extravagant, Tom. Remember I do not want you to go to extremes," she cautioned. In my then state of mind money was but glittering dross, worthless except in its power to bring her pleasure. Had I possessed a million I would have poured it over her as prodigally as Bruce deluged Clare with roses.

"And of course the car is yours," I went on with the recklessness of a Croesus. "I will go instruct them at the garage, and when you wish it you will have but to telephone and have it brought to you." It was a present made under the impulse of the moment and absolutely without thought of the future; bestowed as a child, in a spontaneous outburst of generosity and affection, thrust his most priceless toys into the hands of a playmate. She looked up at me with a start.

"Do you really mean to give it to me, dearest?" she inquired, with a quick intake of her breath.

"Dearest!" The word ran through me like wine. My clasp tightened around the warm hand I held and my reason ran riot. "I most certainly do. I bought it merely to please you. Perhaps you had better keep it at the Arcadia, where it will be handy for us on pleasant evenings." She leaned forward and looked at me, her magnificent eyes glowing softly.

"You are very good to me—better than I deserve," she murmured in a momentary lull of the music. "I shall not tell you how much I appreciate your generosity; I shall show you instead." Nothing but the presence of the crowd restrained me from repeating my physical demonstration of the hour before.

"And I will always be good to you, and you will be happy with me, won't you?" I breathed, full of anxiety. Her long lashes fell until they swept her cheeks and screened the royal blue eyes from mine.

"I think so—given certain conditions."

"And those?"

She looked at me again, smiling now. "If we should be married, Tom, dear, I should demand nearly all of your time as my own. I should want you nearly always where I could reach out my hand and touch you. That privilege you could not grant me if you were engaged in some occupation which demanded much of your physical attention. Also, in order to make me contented, you would have to be able to take me where I wanted to go and at such times as I cared to be there. I don't care for Italy in the summer and I despise St. Petersburg in winter. Furthermore, we both love the beautiful things of this world, its flowers, its music and its luxuries, and could we enjoy them together I believe that I would be a happy woman. But I don't believe that we would ever be content were we tied down to a flat in a narrow street. Therefore, I want you to understand me, dear. If you wish our lives to be rich and filled with the joys of living you must succeed. And in this age success means money. Having made your fortune the world will cheerfully admit that you have brains, and a man who at your age has achieved wealth and the consequent respect of the world, has few other difficulties to overcome. These are the reasons why I so earnestly beseech you to make the most of your opportunities now that you are well on the road which leads

to all that both of us crave. Whip your talents and courage to the uttermost; ride them mercilessly, but wisely and with patience."

I followed her quickly and anxiously. "But suppose, dearest, that I should be unfortunate; suppose through some financial cataclysm which man is as unable to foresee as he is to prevent, I should become ruined and left dependent upon what I could earn by work. Would you then love me any the less?" She smoothed the rose upon her bosom, her eyes falling.

"I have not meant to intimate that life in a cottage would make me love you the less. Neither would I expect you to believe me if I said that it would have a tendency to make me love you the more. Anyway, I do not feel that such an existence is essential to my happiness, which you say is of the utmost solicitude to you. Therefore, I mention these things, not as a condition to govern our future relations, but as incentives for you to strain yourself to your best efforts as though you were fighting for your life; to overlook nothing which you may turn to your advantage; to think; to act; to succeed—succeed. I am fonder of you than of any other man for many reasons. You have been devoted to me and believe in me; you are strong and handsome and have an alert mind. But to make our lifelong happiness assured you must lift us above the sordid vexations of the world. We are both hopeful and ambitious, and I doubt if we could be content should we have to give up our ideals for commonplaces. I do not say that I should not love you in adversity, but I abhor it, and I know that our lives would be greatly marred if you had to slave for me and I had to cook for you. I am speaking frankly to you as my prospective husband. For our mutual happiness you must win."

The realization of all this had rendered me like an old man of the sea from almost the beginning of my acquaintance with her, and it was because of its realization that I had played so desperately. And now confronted so vividly by the consciousness that she also realized it, I fell from the clouds like a plummet to solid earth again. Once more I sat before her a normal human being, conscious that I had weight and much of it, and that instead of floating idealistically I must treat the earth like any other man. The dream faded and grim actuality took its place. Instead of soaring to the glittering mountain peak in eagle-like flight, I must climb there. Yet by abandoning the winding and beaten roads I could short-cut it over the cliffs and the journey would not be long. I would offset the added danger of the bee-line by courage and skill. I would leave the plodders to the longer, safer road as I mounted steadily up the precipices while they wandered through the canyons in their gradual ascent.

I set my teeth as I swore to myself that I should not fail. I do not believe that any man was more coldly determined to win, no matter the danger or difficulty, than I was that moment. I emptied the remainder of the contents of my wine glass upon the gravel at my feet, and saw faint wonder come creeping into her face as she watched. I stiffened my shoulders and sat erect in my chair.

"I am glad that you spoke to me as you did. You have awakened me to a fuller realization that I have no right to ask you to entrust yourself to my keeping until I have proven that with my arms around you, you will be protected from the vulgarities and petty troubles of life as a woman of your kind should be protected. Therefore, until I have proven this my wine glass shall remain turned down." She clapped her hands softly and picked up her own glass by its reed-like stem.

"Bravo. I give you my moral support by following your good example," she pushed it, half filled, to one side, as I expostulated.

"But it is not necessary that you should deny yourself simply because I do. Yours is not the struggle, it is but the waiting." Her hand slid over mine in a fleeting caress.

To be continued.

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