

NEWS AND VIEWS FOR WOMEN READERS

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WHEN PEOPLE GET THEIR EYES OPENED.

The International Sunday School Lesson for June 22nd is, "Reforms Under Ezra and Nehemiah."—Ezra, Chapters 7-10; Nehemiah, Chapters 5, 8, 13.

By WILLIAM T. ELLIS

Change, if not progress, is the day's dominant mood. Summarize the foreign dispatches in the newspapers for a week or a month and the ferment and transformation they indicate will represent a general trend of the times. Reform and radicalism and even revolution mark the affairs of the big world of our generation. Discontent is universal. Whether the war itself, or the widely-proclaimed allied war aims, or the upheaval in Russia, is responsible, matters little. Mankind in the mass is undergoing at present a great awakening.

Some regard this fact as formidable. They fear for the stability of the essentials of civilization. Others see in it merely a swift reaction from a period of sag and slump. People's eyes are opening to public rights and public welfare. We are merely experiencing one of the eras of reform that have marked human development since earliest times. The present Sunday School Lesson deals with the reforms at Jerusalem under Ezra and Nehemiah. That experience holds more than one wise counsel for our own restless day.

When Up-Grade Turns Down.

A graph of history is an undulating line. The world goes forward by a series of ups and downs. As we saw in last week's Lesson, there had been a revival in desolate Jerusalem, and among the dispersed patriots; and under the leadership of Zerubbabel, the temple had been rebuilt. It seemed as if the nation had been set right for a new beginning, under the tolerant rule of Persia.

But the news which was carried a few decades later, back beyond the River—"the River" in the Bible meaning the wonderful Euphrates, which rises far up in the Caucasus, and empties into the Persian Gulf and so into the Indian Ocean—where the Hebrew exiles dwelt, was disturbing. The Jews in Judah had lapsed. Their morals had become corrupted, and their social condition was deplorable. They dwelt in poverty amidst the ruins of Jerusalem. The walls of the city were broken down, and they were cowed by hostile neighbors. Graft had corrupted the nobles; and even some priestly families had intermarried with the surrounding heathen.

The tale was one to break a patriot's heart. It stirred Ezra and Nehemiah to tears—and to action. One test of a citizen's soul quality in these days is the way he reacts to news of untoward national conditions. There are many, like the prosperous exiles of Babylonia, who merely expressed regret in conventional platitudes; and then went about their business as usual. That both the world and the nation are in a grave case today gets no more than a deprecatory shake of the head from many a man who would be insulted if he were called otherwise than a patriot. It does not need the example of these Bible heroes to remind us that public ill is call for personal action. The true joy

BLACK DINNER FROCK



The black dinner frock of this season is usually pegged up by a little color or the use of bright-colored beads or jewels. Here we have a large bird of brilliant doing the trick. The skirt is plain in the back and front and full at the sides. The neck is rather lower than we have been wearing, but it has the sanction of Paris.

A Hero Tale of the Hebrews. Off in the Persian court, in high favor with the great king, was a young Hebrew cup-bearer, Nehemiah in personal attendance upon the throne. All of a courtier's privileges and perquisites were his. He was a "success." No remark would have been made had he become effeminated and debauched by the enervating atmosphere of an oriental palace. Yet this young Nehemiah was of sturdier stuff; and although he stood close to the Persian throne, he was a Jewish patriot to the core.

So when messengers from Jerusalem related the plight of his city and its people, the news broke him all up. He was a man who cared for his brethren and for his native land. Contrast Nehemiah with—say, to be safe—the German profiteers who are flaunting their luxury and pursuit of pleasure in the face of the world, while their compatriots suffer. We need not cross the ocean to find prosperity indifferent to public need and private woe. Nehemiah, though, found no comfort in the fact that he was safe and successful while his brethren suffered. So wrung was the cup-bearer's heart by the ill news that his face revealed his anguish to the eyes of the king.

Boldly staking his position and his influence upon the venture, Nehemiah secured royal permission and support for a trip to Jerusalem, to succor the Jews. Instant in decision, bold in action, able in resourcefulness, tenacious in purpose, inspiring in leadership, this patriot threw himself into the task of rebuilding the city's walls. His secret night ride about Jerusalem, to find out the facts for himself, was typical of his actions.

What About Enemies?

With that amazing timeliness and pertinency to our own day which seems to mark these International Lessons, we find Nehemiah setting our modern squabbling times an example of how to behave in the presence of opposition. Of course, his activity made enemies; every positive and constructive course does so. Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem, leaders of hostile groups, tried in every possible way to thwart him. They sought to beguile him into controversial conferences down on the plains of Ono; but Nehemiah's answer was that he was doing a great work and was too busy to come down. They intrigued to make him appear disloyal to the Persian monarch. They bribed his friends to give him craven advice. Ceaselessly, they sought to discourage and to scare him.

But Nehemiah could not be diverted from work for controversy. He went right on building. He slept in his clothes, with his weapon at his side. He put every man to a task on the wall opposite to his own house. He armed the workers and set a watch. When the foe intimidated the workers, Nehemiah rose up and cried, "Be not afraid of them, Remember the Lord, who is great and terrible, and fight for your kinsmen, your sons and your daughters your wives and your homes." No pacifist was Nehemiah. By stout hearts, faithful hands and wise leadership, the wall of Jerusalem was rebuilt. Ah! for Nehemiahs in every community today! The big brave man, with brains and initiative, is the answer to nearly every problem.

The Great Celebration.

Then followed the celebration. After work, commemoration. The people were gathered together by the completed wall, for a great festival. Paradoxically, they "capped the climax" of building by putting the real foundation, the spiritual, under the wall of the city. For Ezra brought out the Book of the Law, and read from morning to noon (no half-hour sermon for them!) the will of Jehovah for Jerusalem and the Jews. It was a ceremony of getting upon a Bible basis. Not stones and mortar, but moral principals and spiritual vision, make a city strong and safe.

I have been seeing more than a little of "booster" organizations in a variety of communities of late, and I am impressed by the fact that they are emphasizing the wrong things. What have the number of automobiles and the miles of paved streets and the big court houses and postoffice got to do with a city's greatness? It is the forces that go into the making of boys and girls, men and women—into the strengthening of character and the quickening of vision; into the building up of a sense of honor and right and service—that make a community notable. Every generation needs to hear over and over again the story of the king of Sparta, who, when asked why his city had no walls, pointed to his soldiers and said, "These are the walls of Sparta; and every man a brick." The real defence of a nation and of a neighborhood are its men and women, and their ideals. That is why the Sunday School teacher and the preacher, who are implanting Scripture standards in human hearts, are the real town-builders.

One who moves about much among men marvels at the growing conviction among editors, business men and publicists to the effect that our times need the undergirding of the Bible. We are witnessing an alarming breaking down of standards of life. Vague sentiment-

ality and selfishness are arrogating to themselves authority even among persons who should know better. Therefore men with a sense of responsibility, who would be labelled non-religious, are turning back to the Bible.

Recently the Pope specified five reasons for the current restlessness and discontent of the world:—

- 1. The unprecedented challenge to all authority.
2. The unprecedented hatred between man and man—internationally and in industry.
3. The abnormal aversion to work that is to be observed on every hand.
4. The excessive thirst for pleasure as the chief aim in life.
5. A gross materialism that denies the reality of the spiritual in human life.

These charges are true; and every one of the conditions represented is to be met by the clear application of the teachings of the Bible. Ours is an era wherein speculation and vague rationalism are being set up as standards in opposition to Scripture. The Pope points out the consequences. Now let us follow the Ezra fashion and tell folk what the Bible really says to our times. Like him, we should make the meaning plain; bring the Book down to the understanding of the common people. Then we shall have a world at peace and a world in safety and a world full of happy people. The man or woman who is helping to make clear the will of God as set forth in

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Holy Writ is doing the utmost for country and for civilization.

A Good Time Coming. Powerful factors throughout the world are at present tending to improve conditions for the agricultural worker in Canada. The Dawes plan for the settlement of European difficulties gives promise of hastening that return to productive effort in Europe which will so greatly extend the purchasing power of the nations of that continent. At home, the

bountiful harvest of 1923 did much to revive the spirits and confidences of our people. The year 1924 gives promise of repeating the gift of a fine crop. If that promise is fulfilled, not the farmers of the west alone, but the manufacturers of the east, as well, will have cause for rejoicing, as the prospering producers of the prairies will supply a huge market for the business men of the east. In Canada just now there is no place for the pessimist.—Calgary Herald.

Two more places at the table. Two youngsters whose table manners must be equal to eating with grown-up guests. But what a strain on the silverware! To-night Jack's forks and Jill's spoons will have nothing in common with the grown-up's. But tomorrow, and forever thereafter, the children's places must be as correctly set as all the rest. It is quite important that all places should be correctly set—including the children's. And it is easy to have them so. In "1847 Rogers Bros." you may provide the half-dozen of things you need most inexpensively. Salad forks, orange spoons, bouillon spoons and serving pieces will add immeasurably to the pleasantness and the correctness of every meal. A sensible scheme is to purchase to-day the pieces you need most in beautiful, durable "1847 Rogers Bros." and to add to them as the occasion demands. Leading dealers throughout the Dominion carry "1847 Rogers Bros." May we send you a copy of our booklet, "Etiquette, Entertaining and Good Sense"? Its illustrations of table settings are authoritative to the last degree. You will find it full of suggestions for successful entertaining. Write for it to-day. Meriden Britannia Co., Limited, Hamilton, Ontario.

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