

A LESSON FROM THE PAST

By F. W. TATE.

In certain much-prized books are pictures illustrating the occasion when the Roman armies under Titus besieged the ancient city of Jerusalem, and finally overthrew it in A.D. 70. Historians tell us that in the prolonged siege and the fall of Jerusalem over one million Jews were slain, a great number being crucified on the hillsides surrounding the city, and that the captives were dispersed as slaves to the various parts of the old Roman Empire. It is their descendants who are even now seeking to return to the home of their forefathers.

One of these pictures shows the city in flames and the Roman soldiers fighting their way through the broken walls in the last stage of the siege. The other picture always fascinates me: it shows the siege in progress; the great stone walls with the Jewish soldiers manning the battlements and seeking, with the crude weapons of their day, to ward off every attempt to scale the walls or to breach them. In the foreground are the armies of Rome, with huge catapults throwing hefty rocks against the walls, or over the walls to come crashing down among the Jews; towers, mounted on rollers, with archers at different levels and protected by wooden walling, being rolled closer and closer to the walls; and most interesting of all, the old battering rams—a huge wooden beam, with a heavy head shaped like a ram's head, protruding from a covering protecting the crew from the arrows and rocks, and sometimes boiling oil, cast upon them by the defending soldiers upon the parapet above.

I read that these battering rams were suspended from the top of the shelter and when drawn back and released, their own weight carried the head with great force against the wall. Some were so heavy as to need up to a hundred men to operate them. But then look at the great strength of those ancient walls, and the comparative insignificance of a wooden beam, even with a metal head. One blow would be quite useless, but after a number of blows in the same spot, the strongest stone began to crumble a little, later to crack, and eventually a breach would be made. That is, provided it could be kept operating long enough in the face of all the opposition directed at it by the defenders above. Upon the success of such devices the fate of many a mighty ancient fortress-city has hinged.

And so today, let us apply this picture from the past to certain great forces each seeking to overthrow the other. Who are they? On one side the combined forces of Temperance, with its organisations and co-operating bodies such as the Churches, opposed to that great enemy of all that is good, the drink traffic, walled in as it is, with all the protection that money and craft and graft can secure. Let us remember how men with comparatively puny weapons would breach the walls and destroy the strongest and the proudest strongholds of the past. But it meant constant battering, without giving up, without giving the enemy a rest, even though the walls towering above seemed absolutely impreg-

nable. How many ruins of ancient fortresses throughout the old world bear mute, but enduring testimony to the success of constant unflagging effort?

And in this war in which we are engaged we have not only confidence in our weapons, but the certain knowledge that we do not fight alone. We know that God is with us, and that He is vitally concerned over the salvation of even one victim from the clutches of Satan and his agencies. So with prayer, let us make full and constant use of every available weapon, whether it be books, papers, circulars, stickers or seals, etc., backing up the spoken word and the living example, and so reaching those places where the spoken word cannot always enter, but the printed call to temperance may.

Scripture says: "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." This promise surely applies to this work.

MRS. HICKSON WRITES TO HER SISTER

You will be thinking something has gone wrong; as I am so long in answering your last. I'm all right really, only I seem to have a lot to think about lately, what with one thing and another. I'd better tell you the truth, and that is that I have at last taken a boarder. I always said nothing would make me do it, because I have quite enough to do, and I do like to have my house to myself and John, of course, and the children when they are here. You see it was like this. There's been a lot of talk about people coming to the town to jobs of one sort and another, and not being able to get anywhere to live. There was quite a stir about young girls living in caravans, two together, all through last winter, and some of the women's societies talked a lot about starting some sort of hostel for them, but it came to nothing. Too big a job, I reckon.

Mind you, Win, I wouldn't have liked it if it had been Lorna or Mavis in some place where they had no house to go home to, but at the time it seemed no business of mine and I didn't bother myself about it. I sometimes wondered what was doing, but nobody seemed to be talking about it, so I thought it was all right. Well, last week our minister came to see me and asked me if I would think over taking a young girl just coming to work in Mackworth's. She had come from somewhere down south, and didn't know anybody here. I said why did she come without fixing up about where she would go, and he said she had been ordered by the doctor to come to a warmer place. Oh well, I said, I never have and I never will, so I think you'd better try someone else. He said he had, but everyone seemed to have someone staying with them or had let a room or something else, and he was feeling a bit down in the mouth about it. I'm sorry I said, but I have quite enough to do without someone extra to do for. He said the girl was willing to help as much as she could in the house, and would see to her own room. Oh, yes, I said, but there'll be all the extra cooking and getting her out in the mornings, and having to get ready

for her coming in at night. And I have done my share of that in my time, and am ready for a bit of rest. He said, "Yes, I know you have. You did it for Lorna and Mavis and the boys." Just then Win, I seemed to see Lorna coming in at nights. She used to look so tired, and would sit down by the fire if it was cold, and after a while have her tea, and then she would be all bright again.

The minister said, "I expect you miss them a bit now and then, don't you?" I expect it was thinking about Lorna, but I found myself not able to speak. I just nodded my head.

Well, he said he'd be going, and he might have some luck. He wanted to get the girl in. She was a nice lass, and he knew her mother and father. So he went out the door looking a bit quiet. And like an old silly, I up and said, "Oh, well if you think she is all right, send her here. I had just suddenly thought

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ANOTHER OVERSEAS LETTER

Very many thanks to the members of the Palmerston North Union for the food parcel. It has come at a most opportune time, as there is so much illness and distress here at present. Many homes are cold, comfortless and cheerless here just now, and their occupants ill in bed, so jellies, soup, dripping and syrup speedily reached their journey's end in various grateful stomachs. I gave a 2lb. tin of syrup to an old man of 79, who nearly wept for joy, as he is always short of sugar, and has a very sweet tooth. The jellies went to a child and a patient of 50, dying of inoperable cancer. What a God-send the fine flavour was to the child's parched tongue. She will die in a week's time, but was delighted with the jelly and one of the sea-meal custards. Soup went to an old lady living in one room, heated only by a glimmer of gas, and two sisters ill in bed with cardiac disease and bronchitis—no fire and no one to attend to them.

Life is a bit chilly here at present. Electricity is cut off from 9 to 12, and 2 to 4. There are no lights in the streets at night, and there is very little pressure in the gas. Coal is vanishing, coke hard to get, and logs uncertain. Snow has come, thawed, and frozen again, and winds are of the lazy type that go straight through you instead of going round. So it is very nice to have some warm thoughts from some warm-hearted folk, and some little extras, which have given my patients an extra cheer amidst their troubles. Most of us are grouching hard in true British fashion, it being one way to keep warm by letting off steam. However, we shall fight it through as we fought the rest, and live to laugh at the queer things we do now. Even your packing was interesting. I read both the "W.R." magazines right through.

With many grateful thanks and all good wishes,
Yours sincerely,

A. GILBEY.

NOTE.—Dr. Alice Gilbey has made such good use of the things sent her, and as she is a member of the B.W.T.A., other Unions might also like to send parcels to her. Address—4, Chichester Street, St. George's Square, London, S.W.1.