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SCRIPTURE: Ezra 1-5; Haggai.
DEVOTIONAL READING: Psalms 126:
1-6.

The Return From Exile
Lesson for April 18, 1948

COWPER'S lines come to mind
as we study the dramatic re-
turn of the Jews from their exile
in Babylon to Jerusalem in the
first year of the reign of Cyrus,
king of Persia, 536 B. C.:

"God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm."



Dr. Newton

And yet it is not
altogether strange,
for if you will
turn to Jeremiah
29:4-14, you will
find a prophecy
given 50 years be-
fore the event that
this very thing
would occur.

There were two
other deportations
of the Jews from
Babylon, prior to
the incident in our
lesson—the return led by Daniel,
606 B. C., and the one led by Eze-
kiel, 597 B. C.

PROCLAMATION OF CYRUS
THE proclamation of Cyrus,
Ezra 1:1-5, records the happy
word to the Jews that they would
not only return, but that the temple
would be rebuilt. Cyrus called
upon all the people who would
make offerings by which the temple
might be restored. Cyrus was act-
ing under divine impulse in this
gracious and generous proclama-
tion.

"The Lord God of heaven hath
given me all the kingdoms of the
earth; and he hath charged me to
build him an house at Jerusalem,
which is in Judah," said Cyrus,
Ezra 1:2.
Fifty thousand Jews, their hearts
rejoicing at the thought of return-
ing to the land of their fathers, set
out on the trek of 600 miles,
laden with gifts from the Per-
sians for the restoration of the
temple in Jerusalem. They could
now sing the song of the Lord, and
no longer did their harps hang
silently on the willow trees.

THE DECREE OF ARTAXERXES
THE fourth chapter of Ezra
brings us to the halting of the
work on the temple, after they had
raised the magnificent sum of ap-
proximately \$400,000, and had laid
the foundation for the temple, with
imposing ceremonies.

This delay was occasioned by the
jealousy of the Samaritans, who
went to Artaxerxes, through em-
ployed counsel, and convinced him
that it would be dangerous to al-
low these Jews to rebuild Jerusa-
lem. At first, the Samaritans pro-
posed that the Jews let them use
the temple in joint worship, but
the Jews feared the Samaritans
and refused their offer. It was then
that the Samaritans effected the
delay in the building of the temple
by the space of 14 years. Mean-
while, the Jews went forward with
the building of their homes and re-
establishing themselves and their
civilization in Jerusalem.

STICKING TO ONE'S PURPOSE
WE come now to the part Hag-
gai played in summoning the
Jews to their duty and obligation
to God to restore the temple. It was
in the second year of the reign of
Darius that Haggai received the
word of the Lord. "Is it time for
you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled
houses, and this house lie waste?
Now therefore thus saith the Lord
of hosts, Consider your ways."
It was enough. The people rallied
to the call of Haggai, and the
temple was completed. Men can
always do what they ought to do,
if they will to do it.

GOD'S PURPOSE FULFILLED
THE message of Haggai was
heeded. The temple was com-
pleted, Ezra 6:13-18, and God's
purpose was fulfilled. Read Psalm
126.

This brings us to the golden
text: "No man, having put his
hand to the plow, and looking back,
is fit for the Kingdom of God,"
Luke 9:62. When once the returned
exiles felt the iron of God's purpose
surging through their veins, they
quitted themselves like men, and
God's power was everywhere man-
ifest. So may it ever be with us!

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of Religious Education on behalf of 40
Protestant denominations. Released by
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As We Achieve
The degree of success which we
achieve in making effective our
Christian education program in the
life of this generation will determine
whether future generations will be
able to enjoy a society free from
the distrust of religious intolerance,
the vindictiveness of race prejudice,
and the bitterness of class hatred.—
Walter W. Head.

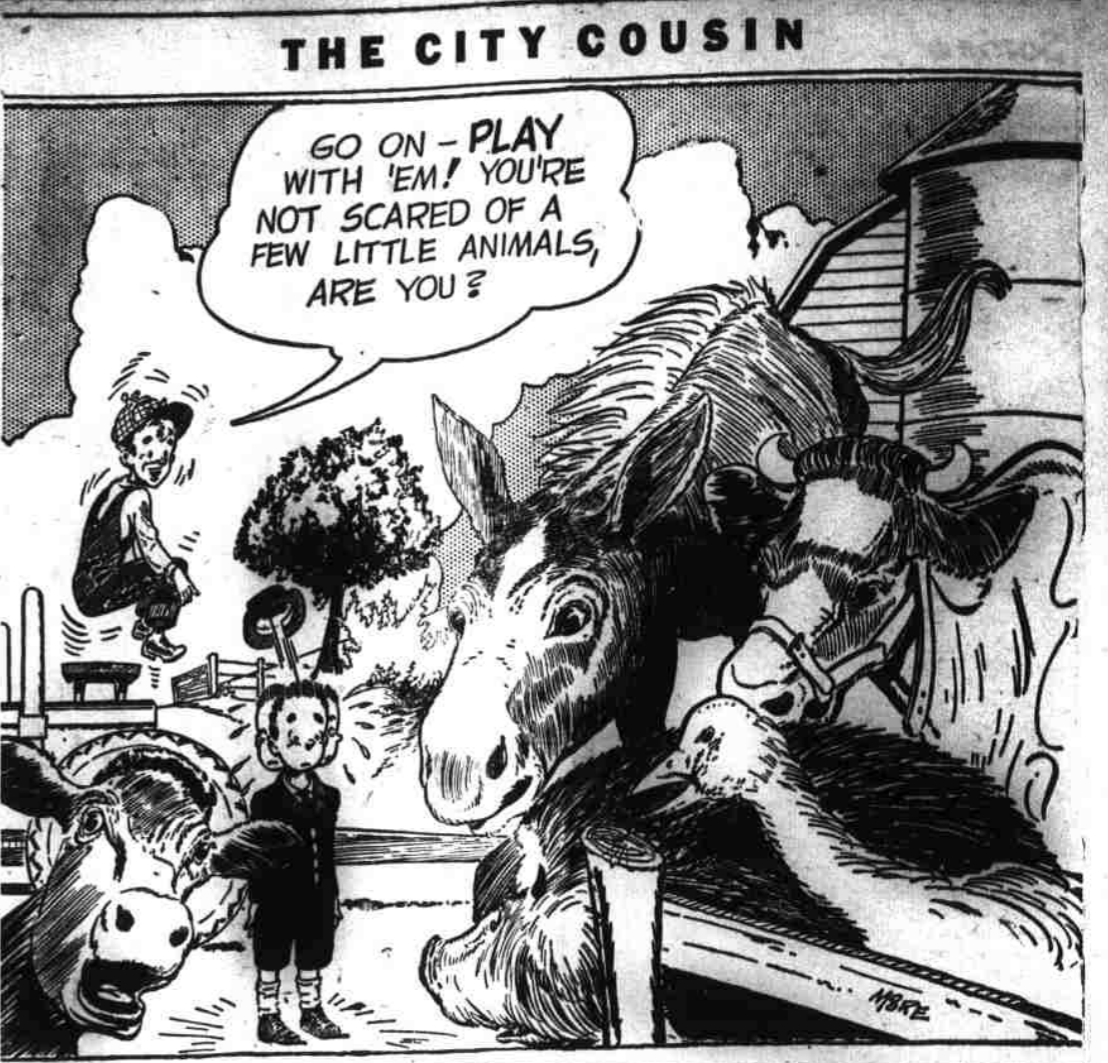
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NOTICE
A Special Term of Superior
Court of Duplin County for trial of
Criminal Cases has been ordered.
This Special Term of Court will
begin on Monday, April 12, 1948.
G. D. Bennett, Chairman
Board of County Com-
missioners.
2 T C

NOTICE OF ADMINISTRATION
The undersigned, having qual-
ified as Administratrix of the es-
tate of Sarah W. Jones, deceased,
of Duplin County, this is to no-
tify all persons having claims
against said estate to present them
to the undersigned on or before the
8th day of March, 1949, or this
notice will be pleaded in bar of
their recovery. All persons in-
debted to said estate will please
make immediate payment to the un-
dersigned.
This the 8th day of March, 1948.
Myrtle Jones Wiley, Ad-
ministratrix of the es-
tate of Sarah W. Jones, de-
ceased, Route 4, Kinston,
North Carolina.
H. E. Phillips, Attorney at Law,
Kenansville, N. C.
4-23-6T. HEP

NOTICE
Having this day qualified as ad-
ministrator of the estate of Her-
bert Hill, deceased, this is to no-
tify all persons indebted to said
estate to make immediate pay-
ment. All persons having claims against
said estate will present same to the
undersigned on or before the 15th
of March, 1949, or this notice will
be pleaded in bar of their recovery.
This the 16th day of March, 1948.
Robert H. Hill Administrator,
103, North John St.,
Goldsboro, North Carolina.
4-23-6T. LAB

NOTICE OF ADMINISTRATION
North Carolina
Duplin County
Having qualified as adminis-
trix of the estate of A. D. McNeil,
deceased, late of Duplin County,
North Carolina, this is to notify
all persons having claims against
the estate of said deceased to ex-
hibit them to the undersigned at
R. F. D. No. 3, Faison, North Caro-
lina, on or before the 2nd day of
April, 1949, or this notice will be



Administratrix of R. D. McNeil.
This 26th day of March, 1948.
Mrs. Barbara Ray McNeil, 5-7-6T. BRM

**WE CAN FINANCE YOUR HOMES
OR BUSINESS HOUSES**
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S. DAVIS BROADHURST, Secretary
MOUNT OLIVE, N. C.

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