

escort. Also, the king gave him a letter that assured him the assistance of materials and manpower after he reached the distant Holy City.

Work on the walls began, and many there were that came to help. But as in all good works, the inevitable happened — OPPOSITION! A man's enemies are of his own household. This seems to be always true, and it certainly was true in this case. Two Samaritans — Sanaballat and Tobias — and Gossem, their Arabian ally, set out to wreck the whole project.

Their first weapon was ridicule. They said: "What are the silly Jews doing? Are they able to raise stones out of the heaps of the rubbish, which are burnt?" Tobias poked fun at the work: "Let them build," he said, "sure a fox could leap over their stone wall." But Nehemias paid no attention and just kept on building. The opposition even tried to apply force but to no avail: Nehemias never stopped his work. Several times he said: "I am doing an important work, and I cannot come down lest it be neglected." When the jealous opponents realized that they were not succeeding, they resorted to detraction — the ultimate weapon.

Unmoved by ridicule, undeceived by guile, unintimidated by threats, and unfrightened by slander and detraction, Nehemias kept right on with his work and completed the project. What triumphant words to be found in all of Holy Scripture: "SO THE WALL WAS FINISHED."

"The wall was finished within fifty-two days, on the twenty-fifth of Elul. When all our enemies heard about it, and all the surrounding nations had seen it, they were deeply impressed and acknowledged that this work had been accomplished by the power of God." — "SO THE WALL WAS FINISHED!"

This story repeats itself, and many of us there are who have lived through such trials. The story takes place here also — here at this monastery — when the monks started to build their church so that they could have a proper place in which to pray. The enemies continue to exist — they continue to exist within one's own house. It seems that one becomes an enemy when his position of authority or prestige or influence becomes threatened by another. So he begins to use his energy to destroy and to vilify the work of the one who is a threat. Then we begin to notice how the enemy has become something like the amaranthine weed described by the poet Francis Thompson, "suffering no flowers except its own to mount." So it has been with the work of our monastery. At first it was ridicule: "What are the silly old grandfather and his boys trying to do?" "Their work is not a work of faith. They are not men of faith." "Those would-be monks consort with heretics and schismatics." "They are traditionalist ecumeniacs." The monks never stopped their work. "They are Americanists!" But the monks asked: "What is wrong with loving your native land? What is wrong with being an American in America?" The work of the monks continued, and they always answered: "We are doing an important work and cannot stop lest it be neglected."