

Letter from Damascus.

DAMASCUS, June 1, 1861.

My last letter was dated, I believe, at Nazareth, the city of the Saviour's early history.—The workshop in which He toiled at His trade as a carpenter, with Joseph, is here shown to the traveller, and he is expected to believe the most marvellous accounts of the boyhood of the Redeemer. It is a wonder that the false Church does not find some specimens of his workmanship, and thus complete the credulity and profanity of the shows made. And yet the Christian cannot wander through the streets and over the hill-tops without a sacred interest in the place, for over these hills and through these streets Christ often walked, in those mysteriously spent years before He commenced His public ministry. The inhabitants of Nazareth depend for water mainly on one fountain on the outskirts of the town, and as in the cool of the day I sat by that fountain and saw scores of women come and fill their water-pots, it was easy to fancy that Mary, the mother of our Lord, once was accustomed to resort to this same spring to procure water for her household.

We were out across Mount Tabor, the scene of the Transfiguration, where to those wondering disciples the divinity of Christ was more fully revealed, and as clear a view of the Godhead was given them as they were able to bear. It seems to be just the place for such an event. It is "a mountain apart," and faith brings that awful transaction near to the Christian as he stands on the summit and looks up to heaven.—A ride of a few hours over hard hills brings us to the city of Tiberias, on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. This beautiful sheet of water remains as of old, but of the ten noble cities that stood upon the banks in the time of Christ Tiberias alone remains. The few broken mud hovels of Magdala, Capernaum, and a few other forsaken places, mark their ancient sites, but they have been swept away in their sinful greatness, and their histories are left as beacon warnings to Paris, London, New York, and other great cities of the present day whose crimes are so dreadful in the sight of God.

The Sea of Galilee is a most beautiful lake, and we wonder not that Christ should have so often resorted to its shores. We were able to find but one boat at Tiberias, and that was unfit for service, its speed being about one mile an hour.—As we passed along we could see that the water was full of fish, which the people obtain by casting drugs upon the water, which kill the fish and cause them to float upon the surface. The banks of the lake remind one of Eden. The air is perfumed with rich shrubs. The oleander, growing tall and flourishing, is covered with its beautiful flowers, and the country seems to be a garden cultivated by unseen and mysterious hands. If ever this country is redeemed and wrested from the misrule of those who now occupy it, the region around this sea will be one of the most lovely spots on earth. It only needs industry and the religion of Christ to work this change.

The ride to Damascus is a very hard one, especially for inexperienced riders, but one view of the royal city repays the traveller for all his toils. I think I never witnessed a panorama of such loveliness as when coming through a deep cut in the high hill which overlooks the city.—Damascus came in sight, nestling in the midst of the plain below, surrounded with beautiful foliage as far as the eye can reach, its countless minarets glistening in the setting sun, its huge domes painted and gilded by the beams of closing day, and its distant streets and bazaars sending to our ears the indistinct hum of busy life. I do not know what that magic view of Constantinople, which one obtains as he rounds the Golden Horn, and which has been commended by all who have seen it, is like; but I never yet had so lovely a view as Damascus gives to those who approach her oriental magnificence. The entrance to the city is over the River Abana, and through gardens which hang with fine foliage and delicious fruit. We rode into the city, through bazaars filled with rich goods, and through streets filled with scowling Mohammedans, who looked upon us as intruders, and who cast after us looks of hatred. It is very evident that the fires which so lately burned here are not extinguished but only smothered, and will burst forth as soon as an opportunity shall occur. There exists an impression that the English are the friends of the Druses, and that the late murderous scenes were instigated by them. The Christians fear the withdrawal of the French army, which takes place on the 5th of June, and anticipate trouble soon after. But the Druses have probably learned a lesson which they will not forget. Their chiefs are now in prison or driven into exile, and we can hardly anticipate a general gathering of them again. If they do again rise, it will be a sufficient excuse for the complete extinguishment of Turkish rule in Syria, and the establishment of a better Government by some of the European Powers. It is melancholy to walk through the Christian quarter of Damascus and see the acres of desolated houses, enough of them remaining to show how beautiful they once were. The marble pavements, the fountains in the courts, the carvings and frescoes tell us that these houses now in ruins formed one of the most beautiful sections of Damascus.—For days the intoxicated wretches were engaged in the work of destruction, and 4,000 men, women, and children were slaughtered in cold blood. Human history can hardly present a parallel case with this, and the English and French Governments owe it to the civilised world to see that the country is so occupied that it will not be repeated. No faith can be placed in the Turks. They united with the Moslems in the work of destruction, and will do so again unless they are made to fear the vengeance of the European Powers.

The present hatred of the Moslems towards the Christians arises in part from the fact that a general impression prevails that Mohammedanism is about to fall, that the Crescent will be subdued by the Cross. The thought is maddening, and leads to many of the feuds which have led to the barbarities of the few years past. No one can look upon the Moslem power without believing that the impression is correct, and that the end of Mohammedanism is near. It may be a bitter end; the Crescent may be extinguished in blood, but who can fail to see that the time predicted is near at hand? God grant that it may soon come.

There is but little for the stranger to see in the city of Damascus. The mosque, once the house of the god Rimmon, afterwards the Christian church of John the Baptist, and now the temple of the False Prophet, is worthy a visit; the bazaars will claim a few hours; a few of the better class of houses exhibiting oriental magnificence are open for inspection, and the famous old Damascus cicerone, Abu Ibrahim, a good-natured Jew, obtains access to them; the fortress and some other places fill up a visit. The wall of the house from the window of which Paul was let down, the site of the former abode of the diseased leper, the spot where Paul was converted will, of course, be pointed out, and the Christian will take some interest in seeing them, though the localities pointed out will give him serious conflict with his doubts. The street "called Straight," is easily identified. It is as long, narrow, straight, and filthy as need be, and as full of miserable Moslems as ever crowded together to curse the children of God. I went through the street "called Straight," praying that God would send His Gospel to save and bless this people, and some political earthquake to clear this wretched city from its burden of Turkish misery. It seems to me that anything would be better than the present misrule, and God grant the day may soon come when the Turk shall no longer be found in Syria.—*Cor. of Freeman.*

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

Letter from California.

Mr. Editor and Dear Brother,—

Four months ago I was travelling over the snowy hills and over the ice-bound rivers and harbors of Cumberland County, Nova Scotia, at times the thermometer indicating many degrees below zero. Now, I am in the mountains of California; with the thermometer indicating 98 degrees in the shade. Before three o'clock this afternoon, it will probably be above 100 degrees. Thus we are called upon to pass through various experiences of climate as well as through various vicissitudes in our travel through life.

I rejoice to receive letters and papers from affectionate friends in the Canadas, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia, and have had letters and papers from all these Provinces, since I arrived here, and among the papers that are ever welcome, I rejoice to name the *Abstainer*, the excellent and ably conducted organ of Sons of Temperance, and the *Christian Messenger*, the organ of the Christian denomination with which I am associated in membership. As it was in Nova Scotia I became a member of the Baptist denomination, and was there baptized, I feel a great deal of sympathy of heart with all the People of God in that noble Province; a Province in which I have so many earnest friends and well-wishers in all denominations and in all ranks of society. Ever to forget Nova Scotia, or to forget Nova Scotians is with me an impossibility. In my mind I frequently go over the whole length and breadth of your Province, and in fancy find myself face to face with all the good friends and families whose acquaintance I made and whose generous hospitality I enjoyed in travelling from place to place, as a Temperance Lecturer. My daily Prayer is that God may bless all my friends and brethren and sisters everywhere.

After a passage of 25 days from New York, I arrived in San Francisco on 25th of March, and received a most cordial welcome from all friends of Temperance, as you have doubtless seen by the newspapers sent you. In April, the Grand Division of Sons of Temperance for the state, met at the City of Stockton, and unsolicited by me, and quite unexpectedly, appointed me "Grand Lecturer," and D. G. W. P., for the State at large, and passed resolutions in reference to me well calculated to please my friends, and calculated to remind me that with increased honors from brethren, I had increased responsibilities, and stood in greater need than ever of grace to keep, and Providence to provide, and energy and vigor to push on in the, to me, delightful work. Notwithstanding annoyances, trials and difficulties incident to the life I am leading, I am never so happy as when actively engaged in warning my fellow men of the consequences of sin and vice, and the grand remedy provided for all, in the gospel of the grace of God.

I have lectured over San Joaquin, Calaveras, Tuolumne, and Amador counties already, and

have engagements made for a tour of El Dorado and Placer counties. I yesterday received invitations to lecture in two important counties, and have had invitations from all parts of the State. I am well satisfied that God had a work for me to do and suffer in California. I believe I am in the path of duty.

Our audiences are composed of most respectable and intelligent people. Nothing has astonished me more in this country than the size of the cities and towns, and the improvements that are to be seen on all sides. One would suppose himself in one of the old States at times.—San Francisco is as fine a city as any in the Provinces, and the cities of Sacramento, Stockton, &c., are far ahead of my expectations. We have in the mountain towns, as good Churches, Newspapers, Schools, Academies, as you have in Nova Scotia. We have Sablath schools, Young Men's Christian Associations, Temperance Societies and excellent Book-stores. I never was among a people as fond of reading as are the Californians. In the town where I now write, a place about the size of Windsor or Liverpool, N. S., there are 150 copies of a daily newspaper taken, besides hundreds of copies of weekly papers, religious papers and periodicals. There is likewise a newspaper published here. In some of the mountain towns there are two newspapers published. And, if any one comes to California expecting to find rough, boorish or uncultivated people, they will be greatly mistaken. A more enterprising intelligent wide awake people cannot be found on the face of the earth than those composing the population of California. Among the audiences in the vicinity of the mines, we frequently have many of the miners in their blue mining shirts, we find them polished, well educated gentlemen, some of them being lawyers, doctors and men of science, some of them having been ministers of the gospel in the old States!

To a Canadian however, or one accustomed to the strict observance of the sabbath as you happily have it in Nova Scotia, there is a good deal here that is very trying and shocking. For instance to see whole streets of stores open and doing business on the Lord's-day, is abominably heathenish. If Mr. Lithgow of your city, who made such desperate efforts to encourage sabbath business, were here, I believe he would sigh again for the quiet of a Nova Scotian sabbath, and wish himself back there again! To hear the blacksmith's anvil ringing on the Lord's-day is hard to me, and to see the stages, steamers, and vehicles of all kinds in full motion, as if it were a week day, when at home, all is quiet, peace and repose, is hard to bear! I see some things to sicken and shock me at times. And when I speak of these matters to old residents they say "You should have seen it in '49!" It seems things are so much better than they were once, the people think they are now well off!—It is evident that the country is rapidly improving in every way, and the Legislature lately passed a law for the better observance of the Lord's Day.

The climate is the wonder of all who come here. For weeks and months we have a clear cloudless sky, and although at the present moment the thermometer is nearly 100 in the shade, I will be able to sleep comfortably to-night with a couple of blankets over me! No matter how hot the days may be, the nights are always cool and delightful.

For fruits, flowers, grains, roots, &c., California is unsurpassed. Such luxuriant crops I never saw anywhere. Much complaint is now heard in some counties in consequence of the ravages of the grasshoppers, these insects are eating all before them like locusts in some countries.

In reference to religious matters, there are in California, all denominations, all opinions, all colors, men are here from every clime. We have pagans, Jews, Gentiles, and Digger Indians. There are numerous Roman Catholic Churches, the Catholics are the strongest and most wealthy in Church property. Then we have Methodists, Episcopalians, (same as Church of England) Baptists, Presbyterians, Universalists, Mormons and Spiritualists, people who believe in everything but the God who made all!—There are swarms of open and avowed Infidels, and in the Hotel where I now write, I see Tom Paine's works on the shelf along with books of all kinds, except the book of all books, THE BIBLE! How strange it seems to me, that men can believe or pretend to believe poor Paine's nonsense! But, there was a time when I thought I believed Paine too! Thank God for it, I believe in CHRIST JESUS now, and while I despise the writings of Paine, I hope I do not despise the dupes of the folly. I have met many apparently good hearted fellows who were Infidels! God alone can convert any man, and

when Infidels are converted, you'll generally find them earnest men! They are not generally dead-heads.

The religious newspapers here are large and well conducted and well supported papers.—They are all very friendly to me. The Methodists and Presbyterians are exceedingly kind to me. The Presbyterian organ is called "The Pacific." The Methodist paper is called the *California Christian Advocate*. The *Pacific Methodist* is the organ of the Southern Methodists, or slave-holders; the "Evangel," is the organ of the regular Baptists.

Then there are agricultural papers, and papers in all languages almost. The Temperance paper "The Pledge," was suspended for a time. It was not the fault of the Temperance men that it had to stop. It will be set going again on meeting of Grand Division.

We have *Sons of Temperance*, *Good Templars*, *Temples of Honor*, and *Dashaways*, all doing well. But my favorite Order is the *Sons of Temperance*. It is the best in the world. Letters from Prince Edward Island give me cheering news of the revival of the Order there.—Friends at Pugwash send me good news of the state of the cause in Cumberland. I rejoice to see that whole-souled Dr. CLAY, is in the Temperance harness. He will draw great crowds wherever he is known. With love to all friends and brethren, I remain,

JAMES A. DAVIDSON.

Folsom, California, June 25, 1861.

N.B.—My P. O. address is care of G. W. P., S. of T., San Francisco.

For the Christian Messenger.

Soiree at Sackville, N. B.

DEAR EDITOR,—

As you feel an interest in the churches everywhere, I venture a notice of a Soiree, held at the parsonage of the Second Baptist Church in Sackville, N. B., on Thursday, July 24th, commencing at 4 o'clock, P. M. An evergreen enclosure was provided on the ample grounds in the rear of the house, surmounted by a covering of canvass, and containing a large number of tables, spread and decorated as perhaps only the enterprising ladies of Sackville could do it. The day was fine, about four or five hundred persons assembled, among whom was a fair representation of the friends connected with the Wesleyan institutions in the vicinity. After tea, the Rev. George Miles with his usual tact presided; while several speakers addressed the assemblage. Rev. D. Freeman congratulated the people of Sackville, on the happiness of the present occasion, and thought that if Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis were there they would shake hands and bury the tomahawk.—He also alluded to the object of the meeting, to remove the debt of six hundred and forty dollars on the parsonage. He was no friend of debts, a debt would leave the children in ignorance, take the bread out of the mouths of the widow and the fatherless, and do things equally cruel to the church.

Rev. Mr. Perkins, Wesleyan, then alluded in touching and eloquent terms to the social benefits of such an occasion. He was followed by Rev. S. W. Deblois, who after some witty and pertinent remarks which were highly appreciated by the audience, dwelt forcibly on the mutual obligations between church and pastor. Professor David Allison then expressed his kind feelings towards the Baptists. He had many relatives and friends of that denomination. He loved them, especially because throughout the new settlements on the American continent, and in the far West, "in the saddle" the Baptist was the sternest competitor of the Methodist itinerant. Rev. J. W. Goucher then dwelt upon the wisdom shewn by the church in such a good parsonage for their minister. Some churches provided their minister with poor accommodation while perhaps they lived in fine houses themselves. Rev. John Allison, Principal of the Female Seminary, then in an excellent speech brought on the business of the day, the removal of the debt on the house. He was fond of suitable ornament, but the ornament of a mortgage on the minister's house did not suit his taste.—He and his lady subsequently as I was informed, handed in each one a handsome donation in cash, towards the debt. Much credit is due to Mr. Miles, for the effective manner in which he carried out this idea, so that three hundred and twenty dollars were subscribed on the spot, some of which was paid down. Besides this, nearly two hundred dollars were taken at the tables.—Truly the brethren in Sackville have reason to be encouraged, if outward circumstances are any proof of enjoying the favor of God. Their parsonage consists of a commodious two story house,