

The Holy Land, as it is.

Bible Lands have deep interest for Sabbath School Teachers and scholars, and indeed, for all Bible readers.

The following portion of a lecture delivered by Frederick North, Esq., for several years Member of the British Parliament for Hastings, giving his personal observations in the Holy Land, will be read with interest.

Our readers will notice the remarks on the abundance of water at Jerusalem—

"HEBRON.—We went a few hours off the direct road to Jerusalem, for the purpose of visiting Hebron and Bethlehem. The city of Hebron has a purely Moslem and very fanatical population. It is situated in one of the most fertile spots in Syria. It was at one time the residence of the patriarch Abraham. There is probably no tradition so well authenticated as that which assigns the Cave of Machpelah, under the great mosque, as the place of Abraham's tomb. I see no reason to doubt but that the cave—at present inaccessible, but existing notoriously under the mosque pavement—was the very vault in which the three Israelite patriarchs were interred. H. R. H. the Prince of Wales, with the countenance of Pacha, and the protection of 200 soldiers, examined the building. Our own dragoman attended him; but the good Hadji would not encourage our attempting it, with the feeble escort of a dozen Bedouins. Although we prowled for an hour or two about the exterior walls, in early morning, ominous growls from the sour Moslems whom we met showed that passing the doorway was impracticable. We observed that the sub-structure of the stone platform was of old Jewish masonry. The cave itself is said to be accessible from within the *encinte* of the building; but it is known that the Moslem guardians themselves never penetrate its recesses. Dr. Stanley, who accompanied the Prince, records that there exists a superstitious dread of the old patriarch's anger, which prevents their intruding on his remains. We suffered more from cold, during the one night of our sojourn at Hebron, than I have experienced even in England or on the high Alps. At six in the morning ice stood on the pools, though the vines were budding. It was from these vines, famed in Scripture history, that the spies brought sample grapes to the Israelite invaders from Egypt. The Jews, who cower amidst the intolerant Moslems around them, to this day make a wine that obtains a high reputation amongst its Jewish and Christian consumers.

We passed from Hebron,—through some valleys blooming with almonds, olives, and pomegranates,—to an enclosure of stone walls where lives and flourishes an oak of enormous size, under which Abraham is reported to have entertained the angels, at the time he received the promise, and just before the destruction of Sodom. The tree may be an offset of successive centuries since the patriarchial time. It is a grand specimen of vegetable life, and is one of the finest trees I have ever seen in any part of the world. The vineyards in the same valley of Eschol seem to be still carefully cultivated. Man does little, yet expects that great results will be obtained; and such is the effect of the magnificent climate, that Syria, in all its valleys, is still a garden, wherever the most puny efforts are afforded to develop its wonderful luxuriance. We passed by what are called

THE POOLS OF SOLOMON.—These are three vast reservoirs excavated from the solid rock, which collect the waters of a noble spring on the hill side. It affords a constant current, filling a channel of about a yard square, and is led over the hills by Bethlehem to Jerusalem, where it supplies the huge cisterns which honeycomb the Temple area on Mount Moriah. The present Pacha, greatly to his credit, has encouraged it not instituted a general repair of Solomon's aqueduct, the channel of which had become obstructed. English funds, strange as it may seem, are believed to have been expended in the cause; and we who cannot take courage to supply our own London with water, have been at the pains to supply it for the city of David.

JERUSALEM is but a few hours' ride from Bethlehem. It is surrounded everywhere by deep depression; and though, seen from a distance, the Holy City appears on a plain, a nearer approach shows three sides of its wall to rise abruptly from precipitous ravines. The ravages of successive assaults have levelled the interior of Jerusalem to an extent which almost forbids our identifying its various quarters with the ancient names. Zion, though "set on a hill," has lost a great deal of elevation; while the valley which separates it from the Temple area has been almost obliterated, by fallen ruins from either side. The Temple area (now called the Haran) still retains, in great part, its original elevation; and its platform, formed of enormous masonry, still shows itself to the east and south, much as it must have appeared when Solomon first built a house for the Ark of the Lord. Above you have a noble area, the centre of which is occupied by the Dome of the Rock, as it is called. This is held sacred as a Mahometan mosque. It possibly was once an early Christian church. One is obliged to check one's curiosity when investigating any of the sacred places of Islamism. The Moslem is jealous and usually intolerant; and when we obtained entrance to the Haran, and visited the Dome of the Rock, I could only see, amidst the Temple gloom, that a craggy and evidently unworked mass of stone projected from the pavement of the building. We were afterwards introduced to a cave, accessible by steps, descending from the floor of the mosque, and immediately under the centre of this rock. In the floor of the cave there seems a shaft descending to a lower

story, and the pavement of the cave sounded hollow under the feet. Pierrotti, an Italian architect, lately in the service of the Turkish Government, has had opportunities of observing all these localities as no one can have observed them before. His book has only just now been published; and I have gleaned from it that Pierrotti has at least satisfied himself of the rock being the core or nucleus of the old Jewish altar of sacrifice. The caves below, Pierrotti contends, are the receptacles for the blood of the victims. He has traced certain drains or passages—of which he has given elaborate plates—leading from the caves to the outer air. It is certainly very remarkable that a building of great magnitude, and of elaborate ornamentation, should have been raised over a mass of rough natural rock. But we know that the great Jewish Altar of sacrifice was formed of brazen plates, framed over a rock of this character. Jewish tradition having marked out the site of their original altar, it is not unnatural that the Christians, and after them the Mahometans, should have held that site holy. Under any circumstances it were impossible not to view the spot with the deepest—the most awful—interest. If the conclusion of Pierrotti be a true one, this rough pinnacle of rock, so elaborately built over, is the central point of the original Jewish Faith; the one standing place where the unity of the Godhead was proclaimed, amidst the surrounding hosts of Paganism; the Mountain Top from whence, in the daily and hourly sacrifices, a continual testimony was afforded of that sublime and simple truth, that "The Lord our God is one God!" We left Jerusalem with regret. Living in tents in the olive ground, without the walls, we had encountered none of the abominations of its foul and close streets. We had our pleasant and airy quarters to return to at evening; and a very considerable market gave us much of even the luxuries of tent life. This was all to end with the journey northward, for between the Holy City and Damascus the populous places are few and far between.

SAMARIA.—The lecturer, in describing the situation of Shechem (the modern Nablous), which is near Mount Gerizim, glowingly pictured the beauty of the country, and related the peculiar mode of irrigation in use in the country, by means of wells (he continued), recorded in Scripture as Jacob's Well, and still bearing that name, was the scene of our Saviour's interview with the woman of Samaria—to my thinking one of the most interesting places in the Gospel narrative. It is not my province to become a preacher; but it was impossible to sit by the side of Jacob's Well without thinking deeply—and I may say thankfully,—on the conversation with that woman; that wonderful sermon there given by Him who "spoke as never man spake;" who there counselled us, with a superhuman intelligence, that grand lesson of toleration—which is, alas, too often lost sight of—that we should worship in spirit and in truth, and not quarrel about the place, or the form in which the worship is to be offered.

Shechem was the head-quarters of the hated sect of the Samaritans. The sect is now represented at Nablous by about thirty families. The small section which still keeps up the ordinances of Israel in Shechem—no others, I believe, are found amongst the whole population of Judea—worships yet on their rival hills. Though the Turkish rule will allow none but Moslem rites on what was the Temple of Solomon, the despised remnant, as I can testify from seeing it, carries on the forms of the religion of Moses, without interruption, on Mount Gerizim. We happened to be there when one of their great solemnities was about to be celebrated, and we witnessed the preparations for the ceremony. They proceeded literally to carry out all the forms prescribed in *Deuteronomy*.

Mount Gerizim, and Shechem, or Nablous, at its foot, have an historic interest beyond and previous to the comparatively late days of Solomon. It was the spot where Joshua led the chosen people when they first crossed the Jordan from the eastward. The valley behind Shechem, is one of almost unexampled fertility. I noticed quince, walnut, peach, apricot, and pomegranate; with the boary olive almost stifled with mistletoe. Irrigation is tolerably well kept up; and the produce of few acres must be sufficient to maintain a considerable population.

The City of Samaria (or Sebaste, as it was called in Herodian times) is on a hill, three hours from Shechem. A forest of mutilated pillars covers the top of its conical site. A Crusader's church, much of it perfect,—and now, of course, turned into a mosque,—is said to have been founded over the grave of John the Baptist. We rested there for an hour, at noon, amidst positive fields of the blue iris, then in full flower.

THE PLAINS OF ESDRAELON was the next spot our travellers dwelt upon. It is a level flat, surrounded on three sides by the mountains of Galilee, Tabor, and Carmel, and extending westward to the Mediterranean. The sea line showed itself dimly on the left, and the hills of Gilboa—where the hosts of Israel, under Saul, were nearly exterminated—appeared on our right. Esdraelon was for centuries the battlefield of Jewish war. At the present moment it is a naturally rich, but very desolate, tract. Corn crops, at intervals, are still reaped; but the agriculture of the district has to provide for the wisp as well as the bee. Wild Bedouins too often feed down the unripened grain; and the poor cultivator dares not practice any other husbandry than a scanty tillage, without manure, on the three or four years' fallow. This is the sad consequence of Turkish rule. The Pacha sent to govern Syrian provinces may be an honest man—or what is still more rare, an energetic man. But the materials with which he has to effect government and maintain social order are of the most miserable description.

From the petty sheik, who rules a village of twenty families, up to the half-independent governors of the Lebanon, everyone's effort is to enrich himself personally. Turkish policy seems always to be killing the goose and forgetting her eggs.

NAZARETH, the next place visited, was described at length by the lecturer, especially in reference to the events of which it had unquestionably been the scene. Space compels the omission of that interesting notice. Toiling onwards from Nazareth toward the Lake of Gennesareth, we passed by Cana of Galilee. There is a chapel attached to the miracle of the marriage supper. We halted a few minutes at the well or fountain of the place; but the recollection I have carried away was only that of the luxuriant vegetation hanging over the well. A perfect forest of mixed cactus and pomegranate hung over the cisterns into which is emptied the water for the cattle. The primrose-coloured flowers of the cactus mixed with the scarlet blossoms of the pomegranate, and both set on the tender green of the foliage, formed a background of colour to which no one could have done justice but a pre-Raphaelite artist.

For the Christian Messenger.

OBITUARY NOTICE.

DEACON ELISHA D. HARRIS.

Providence has afflicted us, in the removal of one of our beloved and worthy deacons—who departed this life, on the morning of the 14th inst., aged 57 years, leaving a widow, three daughters, and five sons to mourn their loss. Our brother became a subject of grace twenty-eight years ago, during the great revival in this place, that brought so many to Christ. He at that time publicly professed faith, and since then has been a devoted follower of the Lord Jesus in connection with the Baptist Church, in which for the last eight years he has faithfully filled the office of Deacon. He possessed by nature, good mental abilities, and being divinely enlightened, he had clear perceptions of the doctrine of grace, the extent of human sinfulness, the sovereign freeness and efficacy for pardon and justification through the blood of Christ, the renewing and sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, producing faith, love, joy, &c. He held strong denominational attachment, yet he truly loved the reflection of Christ's image in whomsoever he beheld. He was very highly esteemed in the community as a kind and obliging neighbor, and the faithful manner in which he filled the office of Justice of the Peace for the last nine years. He was beloved in the church for his deep toned piety, and for his faithfulness in seeking to promote the cause of God. As a husband and father, he was greatly devoted to the interests of his household, laboring and praying for their present and eternal welfare. A more triumphant death we have never witnessed, every doubt and fear gone, love and peace filled his soul, so that his countenance was radiant with the beams of glory, while he adopted the language of the Poet—

"Jesus can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are;
While on his breast, I lean my head
And breathe my life out sweetly there."

Thus triumphantly passed away one of Christ's redeemed ones, to receive the crown of righteousness God has laid up for those who love him. The funeral took place on Wednesday, the 17th inst. The writer preached on the occasion to a large and weeping congregation from Num. xxiii. 10. "Let me die like him." Respect and sympathy were shown by the ministering brethren who attended, Revs. James Parker, R. S. Morton, and R. E. Crane (Wesleyan)—who all took part and added much to the interest and solemnity of the occasion.—Communicated by Rev. J. L. Read.

Religious Intelligence.

For the Christian Messenger.

Our Foreign Mission.

MR. EDITOR,—

The following brief extracts of a Letter from Bro. Crawley, with the Notice of the "Burmah Baptist Missionary Convention, given in the *Christian Messenger* of the 17th ult., are evidently adapted to afford encouragement to the numerous friends of this Mission.

Yours, as ever,
C. TUPPER,
Secretary.

Trenton, Aylesford, April 15, 1867.

"I had a visit from Moug Sin, preacher at Tranway, a few days since. He reports nine candidates for baptism in different parts of his field, and a number of inquirers. The pastor Ko Aing returned with him to see and examine the applicants for baptism. There is also encouraging news from other places."

Yours faithfully,
ARTHUR R. R. CRAWLEY.

UPPER AYLESFORD.—FROM REV. J. L. READ, April 20th, "God is reviving his work in this place, I baptized three last Sabbath—the work is progressing."

For the Christian Messenger.

Bridgewater.

April 22, 1867.

Dear Brother,—

The prosperity of Zion is always a source of unspeakable delight to every sincere Christian. In common with many of the readers of the *Christian Messenger* my spirit has been refreshed with the tidings from various localities throughout the Provinces, of the advancement of the Redeemer's Kingdom, and the conversion of precious souls to Christ. But more especially has my joy abounded in beholding the sowers wrought by divine grace in my own field of labor. God has graciously revealed himself to his saints in two different sections of the field, and "turned the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just."

In the New Cumberland section of this church, where a few Christians have been earnestly pleading with God, He has made himself known as the "hearer of prayer" and the reviving influences of His grace have descended. Backsliders have returned to Zion with weeping and with supplication, and sinners have been powerfully convicted of sin, and have trembled at the consciousness of guilt, and, after a season of severe struggle with the great adversary, have become the willing captives of the Lord. Grace has triumphed, and the liberated souls rejoice in Jesus and his love. On the 11th inst. I had the privilege of baptizing four, who have been led to experience the joys of the salvation of the Lord, and on Sabbath last, I had the happiness of leading six others down the banks of the LaHave, and burying them in the likeness of the Saviour's death in the presence of upwards of 1000 persons. We believe that the work has but commenced, and that there are many others who have experienced the divine goodness, and have passed from death unto life, who expect soon to follow in the footsteps of their Lord. May the work extend until every knee shall bow and every tongue confess the Saviour's name.

Yours fraternally,
STEPHEN MARCH.

For the Christian Messenger.

North River, P. E. I.

My dear Brother,—

It must cheer the heart of every patriot in the Messiah's kingdom to read of the wonderful works of God among the widespread branches of his Vine. Permit me too, to tell the good news from North River. Crowded audiences for three weeks betokened hearing ears; penitent wanderers and weeping sinners, deeply convicted spirits; joyful testimonies of the forgiving grace of Jesus and free flow of brotherly love in the parched channels of thought and feeling, speak loudly the praises of sovereign grace in answer to prayer. Yesterday it was my privilege to baptize happy converts and enjoyed a blessed season in the Lord's house.

My brother ministers will be thankful to know that I extended the hand of welcome into our communion, to brother Frederick Kitson, formerly a member of the Free Will Baptist body, who, for 7 years, has been toiling with his hands as a "tentmaker," and with his tongue has been effectually preaching Jesus. Through his self-denying labors, the church has been greatly blessed. By the loss of his dear wife and only boy of 6 years, quite recently, he has been treading the mournful low-lands of Jordan. But reigning grace has triumphed. Now he longs to scatter the good seed over the wide field opened for Home Missions. The prayers of our beloved brother are answered, (as is usual by our God) from an unexpected quarter. Still we are in need of two or three more presiding elders. O that a loud call from Heaven might fall powerfully upon the hearts of more of our young men that our immortal lands may not be longer desert for lack of instruments for culture! Let Christian hearts inquire if the great cause of *lack of reapers* in the Lord's great harvest field at home and abroad is not their neglect of the command of Jesus, "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that he would thrust out labours into his harvest." Especially let this prayer go up during the Lord's visits of special grace among his churches. When the heart is at glowing heat in the furnace of sins forgiven, it is then that it will most ineffably take on the impress of missionary zeal. When, oh! when, shall we awake and put on strength, the promised strength! When shall forgiven men be awake to free themselves from the blood of dying souls! May God hasten the day!

E. N. A.