

THE PURITY OF THE SYRIAN SKY.

BY REV. PHILIP BERRY.

Among the first things that strikes the traveller in the Mediterranean is the beautiful transparency of the atmosphere, and which increases as he travels from the Gates of Hercules to the eastern limit of the sea, until his vessel lies at anchor beneath the lofty form of Lebanon; and here in winter time the view is most striking. The whole crown of Lebanon is covered with snow, and which seems to be but a few miles distant and within easy range of a rifled cannon, and while winter is reigning on the mountain top, at its feet summer is queen; the air is oppressively warm; the sun stinging hot; the gardens in full dress of leaves and blossoms and fruit; the orange groves beautiful to the eye, with golden fruit amid the glossy green of the foliage, and the whole perfumed with odors from the Pride of India, which rivals in delicate fragrance the blossoms of the orange and acacia.

And as the eye travels up the sides of Lebanon, we can, for a considerable distance, trace the villages surrounded with olive and fig trees in full dress of living green. I know not of another scene where winter and summer live so near each other, like brother and sister, as that just pictured forth, and which is the first sight that greets you—your first welcome to the land of prophecy.

The traveler usually arrives at Beirut during the winter to make his tour of the land, and no time nor place surpasses the harbor of Beirut in the winter season to understand the meaning of Grandeur married to Beauty, beneath a sky so soft and deep and spiritual that it is like gazing into infinite love to look up into its serene depth and purity. That snow-clothed Lebanon beneath such a sky and bathed in such a sunlight with beauty blooming at its feet, is the grandest physical feature I have ever beheld of Divine justice robed with the garments of Divine love.

Climb that Lebanon and what a scene is before you! North, east, south and west! How little the kingdoms of this world appear! But I think the finest view from Lebanon is that which we get from the west. The Isle of Cyprus rises from the sea, seventy-five miles distant, like a little patch of earth that more resembles cloud than veritable terra firma.

After such a look into the distance, we need not wonder at Moses' magnificent vision from Pisgah's top, which embraced nearly the entire land; and we can comprehend what Abraham's look into the sky revealed when God said to him: "Look now towards heaven and tell the stars if thou be able to number them; and he said, so shall thy seed be."

I have stood upon that hill-top back of Nazareth where, without doubt, my Redeemer so often went to worship during the first thirty years of his life; and from that central point I found myself able to compass nearly the entire land. Northward, like two giant sentinels, stood Hermon and Lebanon; eastward, the mountains of Bashan beyond the Jordan, whose villages and groves were easily descried with the naked eye; southward, the eye passing over the great valley of Jezreel and the mountains of Samaria at last rested upon the distant summit of Ebal, the mountain of the curse; and then turning the eye westward, we trace the long form of Carmel until it drops down into the sea, and at this point our eye reposes upon the bosom of the Mediterranean, with here and there a sail or the dark smoke of some steamer upon its surface to suggest that the sea has sometimes other purposes than to awake thoughts of immensity, eternity, and infinity. Here, then, from this height behind Nazareth there lies within the circle of observation, the scenery of more than half the history and biography of the Bible.

The following picturesque sketch is from the London Freeman:

BAPTISM IN NOVA SCOTIA.

The climate of Nova Scotia is usually so cold that the very mention of the name of the country makes some of our friends in England shiver. What will they think when they read a description of an outdoor baptism in the middle of December? The Baptists in this Province are so enthusiastic, and they believe the Divine commission to be so imperative, that, as soon as a convert makes profession of religion and desires baptism, they repair to the waters, in winter as well as in summer, in cold as well as in heat, and it would

seem that a cold-water bath is quite natural to the constitution. I have never heard of any harm being taken, though the ice is often broken to prepare the liquid grave. Early in the present year I was called to the pastorate of the newly-formed church at River Herbert, Cumberland County; and on Wednesday last four believers followed their Lord in baptism. The occasion was one of great interest. The inclemency of the weather, the beauty of the natural scenery, the enthusiasm of the people, and the courage of the candidates, who were women, combined to render the event one of thrilling interest, especially to an Englishman witnessing the scene for the first time. The road to the place of baptism lay, for a mile and a half, through the woods, where, from the low brushwood to the tall trees, every twig and bow was covered with snow. A damp snowstorm had taken place the day before; this, being succeeded by a very frosty night, produced a scene of beauty such as we seldom have the opportunity to behold. Many of the tall slender trees, by the weight of snow, bent their heads gracefully to the ground. Several, from either side of the road, were bent over in each other's embrace, forming arches of great beauty. My pen would fail to describe the numerous elegant forms, or the brilliancy which pervaded the whole scene, as the bright sunshine was reflected from the countless millions of crystals which sparkled amid the un sullied purity of the snow. The greatest of earth's princes could not pass in procession through scenes of greater beauty, or realize more pleasure and satisfaction than we felt in following what we believed to be the path of Scripture duty. We stopped our horses alongside the waters of a beautiful streamlet which had overflowed its banks. Here a baptism had been made by cutting through the ice. After the ordinance, which was conducted in the same manner as in England, the baptist and the baptised retired to the adjoining dwelling houses, and the rest of the procession, amid the music of the sleigh bells and with much joy, returned through the triumphal arches to their homes.

River Herbert, Cumberland Co., Nova Scotia, Dec 15, 1874.

Temperance.

For the Christian Messenger.

"Oh madness, to think juice of strongest wine Or strongest drink, man's chief support in health, When God, with these forbidden, made choice to rear, His mighty champion;—strong beyond compare Whose drink was only of the crystal brook." MILTON.

Worthy Brother,—

I would like to see the Temperance Department of your interesting paper kept up, and think if you do not get original communications, you might occasionally give some good temperance tales, or extracts from temperance publications.

In the course of my reading the other day, I met with the following paragraph:—"All scripture is given for our instruction; it is therefore right that christians should ascertain what the word of God teaches with reference to any cause they advocate, and endeavor to shape their course by the directions given therein."

I propose then, Brother Selden, to see what the scriptures say on the subject of total abstinence from strong drink.

We often hear it said, that wine, or strong drink of some kind is required to make people better able to bear fatigue, and to give strength to the weak; if strong drink were necessary or able to do this, surely God would have provided it for his people in cases where nourishment or strength was required, but instead of this, we find that "water" (not wine) was provided for the children of Israel during their forty years' journeyings. Water was provided to nourish the Prophet Elijah—and in every case where strength was required, water was what God saw fit to provide for his chosen ones. We find also, that any who were set apart for any great or special work as the Priests, Sampson, John the Baptist, and others, were directed to abstain from all that could intoxicate, and when persons adopted the principle of total abstinence, as Daniel and the Rechabites and others did, a blessing followed in consequence thereof.

The positive commands of God against the use of wine and strong drink are very numerous and very important.

"Do not drink wine, nor strong drink," Lev. x. 9. "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging, whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise," Prov. xx. 1. "Who hath we? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine, they that go to seek mixed wine," Prov. xxiii. 29—and we are told that "no drunkard shall inherit the kingdom of heaven." An inspired Apostle says: "As we have opportunity let us do good to all men." I think that total abstinence societies give us a good opportunity of doing good to our fellow men; that they have done much good in numberless cases cannot be gainsayed, therefore by joining a temperance organization we strengthen a good cause, and confer a benefit on society.

If you think it will not make this communication too long please insert the following brief sketch of the twentieth anniversary of Rechab Division, No. 119, Sons of Temperance located at South Rawdon. I like the time honored custom of celebrating anniversaries of birth days, and wedding days, Christmas and New Year festivals, &c., especially when conducted on strictly temperance principles. On this auspicious occasion we invited four of the sister divisions in this locality to pay us a fraternal visit, and we spent a very pleasant evening in the division room, which was decorated with flags and the names of the visiting divisions in rustic letters on the walls. The entertainment commenced by the senior P. W. P. giving a right hearty welcome to the visiting members, and a short account of the rise and progress of the Division. This was followed by some good dialogues, good recitations and singing, (some of the dialogues, &c., were original productions by members of the division.) About 9 o'clock, the senior P. W. P. proposed to have a recess and a change in the programme, which was readily assented to, and coffee, cakes, confectionary, &c., &c., were handed round, and then the literary part of the entertainment was proceeded with, and again addresses, dialogues and recitations interspersed with singing, followed in quick succession, that's the way S. of T. spend a pleasant evening together, without the aid of wine.

Such meetings, we think, may be made the means of doing much good, by giving good advice, and by the interchange of friendly feeling, inspiring within us a determination to be more zealous in our good and noble cause, a cause so well calculated to promote the welfare and happiness of mankind. We recommend all our country friends who wish to spend a pleasant evening once a week, to join our Order, attend our meetings, and go prepared to do what they can to make them interesting and profitable. Our very pleasant Anniversary meeting was brought to a close by singing most heartily

Good night, good night, to every one Be each heart free from care, Let every member seek their home And find contentment there.

Yours in L. P. and F. A RECHABITE.

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

THE SAILOR WHO ALWAYS HAD HIS FATHER ON BOARD.

During a visit (in the old country) to one of our small seaports, a weather-beaten tar came into the room where I was staying, and soon he began to spin what sailors term a yarn. And now if you will have patience with me a few minutes, it, in substance, shall be retold.

He had just returned from Malta, having been sent there by her Majesty's consul, his vessel had been wrecked on the coast of Africa, where the ship had been ordered to lie for 14 days quarantine, during this time a violent hurricane came on, the vessel parted from her anchors, and soon all their endeavours to get clear of the land were hopeless, as she beat hither and thither, they lost all command and were hurried on amid the cruel breakers, there to have a singlehanded combat for dear life; some hopelessly, others to escape after much bruising and battering—a shattered wreck, compared with the fine and stalwart form cast first into the conflict, by winds and waves, tossed too and fro, they knew not whither, amid the angry surging billows, "saved by the skin of the teeth," as some would say, but cast up and brought safe to land, as our old friend the sailor said, by an overruling Providence.

Said he, my hope for present safety was gone, and had it not been for another, I must have perished, but my Father helped me.

On questioning him farther, his reply was "I always have my Father with me, and he comforts me much amid the storm. My men were all ungodly, trying to keep each other strong in unbelief. Yet in my cabin I could and did call upon my Father, asking him to give His winds and waves charge concerning me, thus giving strong confidence amidst dangers, knowing that 'not a single shaft can hit till the God of love sees fit.'" And no sea overwhelm, till He who rides upon the storm permit, and then all is wisely done. But I continued to probe still deeper: "Supposing your Father should allow you to sink." "Ah! even then it would be well, I should only dive beneath life's troubled sea, my head would arise to behold a fairer and brighter shore where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest." Slowly sweet the old sailor's idea of God 'our Father,' who will never leave nor forsake all who are reconciled through and in Christ Jesus."

J. F. A.

For the Christian Messenger.

REVIEW.

BY REV. C. TEPFER.

Seventieth Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society, 1874.

This well written and valuable Report of an excellent Institution, contains a great amount of useful and cheering matter. It is truly delightful to contemplate the worldwide diffusion of the Oracles of inspiration through the zealous and continued efforts of a Society established seventy years ago.

Some have regarded the writer of this Review as an enemy to the Society named above; but this is a great mistake. For a number of years he was a cheerful contributor to its funds, an active officer in its service, as Secretary and Depository of one of its Branches. He did, indeed, deeply regret the measure by which, while the Baptists were liberally contributing to its funds, all participation in those funds was withdrawn from the translations of the Scriptures conscientiously and correctly made by Baptist Missionaries into the languages of various heathen nations; and he deemed it his duty to transfer his aid to the sustaining of these versions, thus left without support. But, as he contributes and labors especially for the sustaining of Missions established by his own denomination, and yet rejoices in the success of all Missions established upon the general principles of our common Christianity, so it is in this case. He still deems it important that, in giving translations of the New Testament to the heathen, or to those just emerging from heathenism, every gospel command or ordinance should be expressed with plainness; but, as a version of the Scriptures defective in one particular is evidently better than none, it affords him pleasure to witness the liberality of his Baptist brethren in affording aid to this Society. On page 156 it is stated: "The stock of the Hindi New Testament being nearly exhausted, a new edition is being printed from the translation of Rev. J. Parsons, the Baptist Translation Society having given their permission to make the necessary alterations;" that is, to conceal the meaning of the word baptizo. So also the Society is allowed to avail itself of the benefit of the labors of "the Rev. Dr. Wenger in a new edition of the Bengali Bible which is being prepared by him," p. 154.

From a Report so uniformly valuable and interesting it is difficult to make selections. A few extracts, however, may be given.

By a judicious management suitable men are selected, and appointed to preside in distant regions, as Superintendents, with colporteurs under their supervision, who travel extensively, and circulate the Scriptures.

In France, Mr. G. Monod states, (pp 3 and 4.) that "One of his oldest colporteurs, having visited Havre after an absence of some years, met with no fewer than three women to whom he had sold the Scriptures in former times, and to whom God had blessed their perusal with saving power. Two of them had been Roman Catholics, but the written Word, unaccompanied by human teaching, had revealed to them the error . . . and they are now the living members of a christian church, and rejoicing in the glorious liberty of the children of God. The number of colporteurs under Mr. Monod's direction is

now 54, a number which might be easily increased . . . but from the great care with which he investigates the characters, and tests the fitness of the men who seek employment." This prudent caution is highly commendable. It is very justly remarked (pp. 159.) "The Society is a workshop, not an almshouse, nor a hospital. Even a good man often makes a poor colporteur; a slow, dull, inefficient man should never be sent into the field." While in numerous places the Report shows that "great doors and effectual are opened" for the useful circulation of the sacred volume, it likewise shows that there are many adversaries. It is stated (pp. 7.) "In some instances the education of the people [in France] has been so neglected that very few are able to read, whilst in others superstition still prevails to such an extent, and priestly influence is still exercised with so much success, that when the inhabitants of any town or village have been induced to purchase the Scriptures, the priests have followed in the steps of the colporteurs, and bought every book they could obtain possession of, with a view to its destruction . . . (Rationalism also has its advocates in France, as well as elsewhere; and those who adopt these baneful opinions are amongst the most bitter opponents.)"

To prevent to some extent such destruction of the Scriptures a wise measure has been introduced. Many persons bad relatives slain in the late war. The names of these have, in numerous instances been ascertained, and a New Testament, with the name of one of them written in it has been given to some sorrowing relative, as a Memorial. A pastor who had extensive knowledge of the subject remarks, "Not a single family that has received this testimony of sympathy from your society will consent to part with it. The cherished name written on the title page of the volume has been its safeguard. . . One woman who had lost her son in the war, speaking of her grandson, said, 'I am determined that the child shall learn to read, were it only to read his father's book; for unfortunately nobody in our house can read. The priest has vainly tried in private [as well as in public] to overcome the obstinacy of the rebels; but has only succeeded in estranging from himself those who possess the forbidden volume.'" pp. 15.

Through the prudent and persevering means employed, much good has evidently been effected in France, as well as in many other parts of the world, by the extensive circulation of the sacred Scriptures. Among the blessing resulting from the labors of this noble society, with its numerous Auxiliaries may be noticed the publishing and circulation of the inspired Volume in raised type, for the benefit of the blind, whereby numbers of them have been happily brought to possess and enjoy spiritual sight. See pp. 28-31.

Though the Old Catholic movement has not hitherto made the advancement that is highly desirable, yet, as it favors the free circulation of the Scriptures, it cannot fail to be serviceable in that respect. See pp. 34-36.

The limits of this Review do not admit of entering into minute details respecting the dissemination of the Oracles of inspiration in the various kingdoms of Continental Europe. It may be remarked in general terms, that the Report presents an ardent struggle between light and darkness, truth and error; but, upon the whole, the prospect appears to be brightening. May an abundant blessing from the Most High attend these earnest efforts to aid in the evangelizing of the nations!

In some cases, as in one formerly noticed, the gratuitous circulation of the Scriptures is useful; but in others it is liable to be abused. Instances have been known in which books so distributed have been either sold for waste paper, or wantonly destroyed. It has therefore, been judged advisable, peculiar cases excepted, to sell them. A book for which something has been paid, is more likely to be valued, preserved, and read. Rev. W. A. Hobbs, while laboring in India, where the sacred writings had been given away, records two interesting adventures. About twenty-five Brahmins, were assembled at one time. Their behaviour was most polite and gentlemanly while the conversation lasted; but not so gentlemanly when they ascertained that we would not give them books without receiving a nominal price for them. Not one of the twenty-five gentlemen would purchase; and some of them broadly hinted, that I was exceeding my instructions in attempting to get money for a class of books which everybody knew had always been given away without charge."

In a subsequent tour he says, "We