

The Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

NEW SERIES.
Vol. XXIII, No. 46.

Halifax, Nova Scotia, Wednesday, November 13, 1878.

WHOLE SERIES.
Vol. XLII, No. 46.

Poetry.

Better Things.

Better to smell the violet cool, than to sip the glowing wine;
Better to hark to a hidden brook, than watch a diamond shine.

Better the love of gentle heart, than beauty's favours proud;
Better the rose's living seed, than roses in a crowd.

Better to love in loneliness, than bask in love all day;
Better the fountain in the heart, than the fountain by the way.

Better be fed by mother's hand, than eat alone at will;
Better to trust in God, than say, "My goods my storehouse fill."

Better to be a little wise, than in knowledge to abound;
Better to teach a child, than toil to fill perfection's round.

Better to sit at the Master's feet, than thrill the listening state;
Better to suspect that thou art proud, than be sure that thou art great.

Better to walk the realm unseen, than watch the hour's event;
Better the "Well done!" at the last, than the air with shoutings rent.

Better to have a quiet grief, than a hurrying delight;
Better the twilight of the dawn, than the noon-day burning bright.

Better a death when work is done, than earth's most favored birth;
Better a child in God's great house, than the king of all the earth.

George McDonald.

Religious.

(From the Acadia Athæum.)

Reminiscences of European Study and Travel.

BY DR. WELTON.

DEAR SIRS,—In complying with your request to furnish something for the columns of the *Athæum*, I do not know that I could do better than place before your readers some of my experiences in Europe, during the two years now recently ended.

This, with your permission, I will do in a series of articles, to which the present will be merely introductory, dealing only with the incidents of my

VOYAGE ACROSS THE ATLANTIC.

Not, indeed, that I propose to write anything new about the sea or life upon the sea. Who could expect to do this, after so many have made the attempt and failed? Still, I can readily understand how not a few who have crossed the "great pond" should come to believe that their experiences thereon might have some interest for others, they have been so deeply interesting to themselves. Indeed, in many instances, the interest has been of an extraordinarily exciting kind. Looking downward into the mighty waters, they have been affected almost beyond the power of utterance. Into these peculiarly stirring contemplations of the sea, however, I did not enter, and will therefore leave their description to those who have.

The voyage was made in the barque "Belvidere," which had just been launched from the ship-yard of Shubael Dimock, Esq., of Windsor, one of those enterprising men of whom Nova Scotia has reason to be proud; for they have made her, in proportion to her population, the first ship-owning country in the world. She was commanded by Captain Dexter, a man of kindly and urbane manner, and of superior skill and judgement in his profession. The cargo was deals; and as these were piled high upon the deck, the centre of gravity was elevated to a higher point above the keel than consisted at least with the comfort of those on board. With the deck thrown into an angle varying from fifteen to forty-five degrees, according as the wind pressed less or more upon the

sails, it was often impossible to move about upon it except on all fours. This effort, repeated from day to day, was quite enough to develop certain Darwinian tendencies in the hands and feet. Still this was the kind of "going to sea" I had deliberately chosen, and I resolved therefore to enjoy it.

Under the circumstances, I could not help feeling a kind sympathy for the "Belvidere," for it was evident that she sailed under disadvantages, and that under fair treatment she would behave most handsomely. As it was, her prompt answering to the helm, and her clean and unlaboured method of going through the water, did her much credit.

On the 17th of August, 1876, the voyage was begun; the dome of the dear old Acadia that was, was soon lost to view as we sailed round Blomidon and steered down the bay. But here our progress was very slow, on account of calms, head-winds, and fog. And such fog! It was none of the light, fantastic stuff which may be seen floating up the sides of the North Mountain, or lying like a silver scarf upon the breast of Blomidon on a June morning, but the genuine article, such as can be found only between Briar Island and Grand Manan; the kind, that is, that drizzles, and drips, and drenches, not only wetting through one's garments but creeping into his very bones.

I very much regret that I did not preserve a bottle or slice of it, for the Museum. But after two or three days it lifted, the wind came round to the north, and we were soon rounding Cape Sable. It was not far from this that we were entertained with the magnificent sporting of a shoal of whales. Judging from the number which were showing their huge backs, and spouting at the same time, I should think there were scores and hundreds of them. They "made the deep to boil like a pot." The explanation of their gigantic rollicking given me by one of the sailors was that they were "courtin' and choosin' their mates." And he was possibly correct.

Why should not these creatures of God feel the motions of a soft affection, and be allowed to express it in their own way? It is not impossible that a glance at each other across the wave, as they came to the surface, stirred the very fountains of their blubber. Of other fishes, as the shark, with his close companion the sword-fish; the flying fish, making a desperate effort to fly a little further, but suddenly giving out and going down again with comical perpendicularity into the sea; and the porpoises, playing about the bow of the ship, and chasing each other around, in and out of the water, with an ease which showed that their peaked noses were made on purpose for this kind of sport,—we saw more or less all the way over.

On the 22d of August, fifteen days after our departure, we were in the Gulf Stream, nearly south of Newfoundland. Here, for nearly a week, light winds alternated with calms, and the progress of the vessel was consequently slow. But there was nevertheless much to please the eye and engage the mind. To climb to the cross-trees and watch the course of distant sail gradually appearing above, or disappearing beneath the horizon, proving thus the truth of the early lesson that the earth is round, was itself a pleasant exercise. Nor hardly less so was it to look upon the tufts of beautiful moss from the coast of Florida, which thickly dotted the surface of the Stream for hundreds of miles, and which one could gather from the sides of the ship. On one of these an old turtle had deposited her eggs and was lying by to guard them.

In this region, too, the sunsets were the most charming I ever beheld. The king of day decked not only his couch, but the entire heavens with vermilion. And then the sea itself, who could ever tire of studying it? What an idea of its vastness does one get by sailing on and on, week after week, without sight of land, and remembering that perhaps miles' depth of water separates between the ship and the ocean's bottom! And how fittingly has it been called the restless sea! For who ever saw it en-

tirely still? How aptly all the terms of heaving, swelling, raging, foaming, throbbing, sobbing, subsiding, describe its manifold moods and phases!

It is sublime even in calm, but especially so in storm. Of the latter we had abundant proof in a gale which struck us on the 29th in the longitude of the "roaring forties." The "Belvidere" was thrown upon her side, in which state she lay six or eight hours, or until we could relieve her by throwing her deck-load into the sea. It seems as if the waves were armed with vengeance and determined to wreak it upon her. The howling and screaming of the wind through the rigging was simply dreadful. But from the threatening danger we were mercifully delivered; and the deliverance seemed especially signal when we afterwards learned that not far from us in the same storm, another ship had gone down and fourteen persons out of seventeen perished.

From this time onward the "Belvidere," relieved of her deck-load, sat more erect in the water, and began to show what kind of sailing she was capable of performing. Now, instead of lagging behind, she left other vessels in the rear. Now she seemed endowed with life indeed, and, as she almost leaped from wave to wave, to feel the thrill of triumph all along her keel.

One of the sweetest experiences of the whole voyage was the religious service on Sunday evenings. At this time, shortly before the going down of the sun, the ship's officers and crew, or as many of them as could be spared from duty, gathered on the after deck, and after the singing of one of Moody and Sankey's Hymns, and the reading of the Scriptures and prayer, I told them "the old, old story," and never had I more solemn and attentive listeners.

On Thursday the 6th of September, we made the Fastnet Lighthouse on the coast of Ireland, and two days after dropped anchor in the Mersey, having weighed it thirty one days before in the Avon.

Reminiscences of a visit to the Jordan.

BY PHILIP SCHAFF, D. D.

A fatiguing ride of an hour and a half in the tropical sun over a barren plain brings us from the Dead Sea to the river Jordan, at the bathing place of the pilgrims, the traditional site of Christ's baptism. The river is here eighty feet broad and nine deep. The banks are covered with oleanders, tamarisks, willows, and balsam wood. The water is muddy, the current very swift. There are no conveniences for bathing except a strong rope tied to the trees. Holding on to this rope, I took a most refreshing bath beneath the shadow of the trees. After the salt bath in the lake of death, it was truly a bath of regeneration. I immersed myself ten times, and felt so comfortable that I almost imagined I was miraculously delivered from rheumatism. I have plunged into many a river and many a lake, and into the waves of the ocean, but of all the baths, that in the Jordan will linger longest in my memory.

After a light lunch I rested a couple of hours on the eastern bank, while my companions crossed over to the soil of Moab. I was lost in the historic associations of the sacred stream. The Jordan is the chief and only important river of Palestine, as the Nile is the one river of Egypt. It traverses the whole length of the country from North to South, as the Nile traverses Egypt in the opposite direction, but with the exception of the luxuriant jungle of shrub and wood on the narrow banks, where lions and other wild beasts from the desert formerly sought shelter, it has no effect upon the surrounding desolate country, while the Nile spreads life and fertility for miles to the right and the left. It receives no tributaries of any importance except the Yarmuk (Hieromas) and the Jabbok from the east. The former is not mentioned in the Bible, the latter is connected with Jacob's mysterious conflict of prayer on

his return to Canaan. Taking its rise in three or more perennial fountains at the base of Mount Hermon, the Jordan passes through the rich plain of Huleh into the waters of Merom, and flows twelve miles further on into the Lake Tiberias; emerging from this, it plunges in twenty-seven rapids down a fall of 1,000 feet, and at last empties its turbid yellow waters, which resemble those of the Tiber, into the Dead Sea, where it finds its grave. For the old idea that it flows into the Red Sea, is a physical impossibility, and has long since been abandoned. I traversed at least 200 miles from the Hasbeiyah source to the Dead Sea; while the direct distance is only 115 or 120 miles. It is the most tortuous and also the most rapid river in the world. Its rapidity gives force to its name, the "Flowing," or the "Descending." Its total fall is 3,000 feet, or 15 feet per mile of its channel, 25 feet per mile of its direct distance. The Rhine in its most rapid course has but one half of the average descent of the Jordan. The width of the river varies from 60 to 160 feet, its depth from 5 to 12 feet. It is never navigated for traffic or resorted to for fishing. There are no bridges or boats mentioned in the Bible. The river was crossed at fords. (1 Sam. 13: 7; 2 Sam. 10: 17.) It seems at present to be of no use at all except as a watering place for the Bedawin, and as a bathing place for Christian travelers and pilgrims. The valley of the lower Jordan, called by the Arabs El Ghôr, i. e., hollow, is a broad depressed plain shut in between two ranges of mountains. Geologists suppose that the Ghôr was the basin of a vast inland lake.

The middle and lower Jordan, from the lake of Galilee to the Salt Lake, has been three times descended in a boat, first by an Irishman, Costigan, in 1835, who caught a fever and died in the Latin Convent at Jerusalem without leaving any notes; then by an English Lieutenant, Molyneux, 1847, and last, with the richest scientific results, by Lieutenant Lynch, of the United States Navy, in 1848. The Upper Jordan has been navigated by Dr. J. MacGregor, of London in his famous canoe, Rob Roy, in 1869.

The sight of the Jordan is rather disappointing. It bears no comparison in majesty and beauty to the great rivers of Europe and America. Naaman thought the clear rivers of his native Damascus far superior; yet the Abana and Parpar could not wash away his leprosy. Its chief importance is historic. In this respect it surpasses the Hudson and Mississippi, the Rhine, the Danube, and even the Nile. "Surely," says Macgregor in the charming account of his unique cruise, "the Jordan is by far the most wonderful stream on the face of the earth, and the memories of its history will not be forgotten in heaven."

Here the people of Israel, after their weary pilgrimage, crossed into the land of promise on dry ground by a miracle as great as that of the passages of the Red Sea. (Josh. iii. 1-17.) Here Elijah and Elisha, coming from Jericho, crossed, by another miracle, the former to ascend on a "chariot of fire and horses of fire by a whirlwind into heaven," the other to receive the mantle of the greatest prophet in Israel (2 Kings ii. 8, 16). Here Naaman of Syria "dipping himself seven times," recovered from his leprosy, and "his flesh came again, like a little child." (2 Kings v. 14.) Here John the Baptist, the new Elijah, clothed in raiment of camel's hair, with a leathern girdle round his loins, baptized the people with the water baptism of repentance, and pointed to that higher one who was to baptize them with fire and the Holy Ghost. Here Jesus himself was baptized by his forerunner and inaugurated into his public ministry. Here the heavens were opened and the spirit descended upon him like a dove, and the voice of the Father proclaimed Him His beloved Son, with whom he was well pleased.

Since that time, bathing in the waters of the Jordan has been esteemed a special privilege. Constantine desired it, but

died before he could enjoy it. Since his times thousands of pilgrims especially of the Greek Church, at the Easter season hope to find in the Jordan ablution of their sins, relying more on the magic virtue of the water than the cleansing power of the blood of atonement through a living faith; while many others fill their bottles with the sacred water to use innocently or superstitiously in some of their distant homes. No scene reminds us so forcibly of the multitudinous baptisms of John, when "from Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan," the people "came to him confessing their sins," as the bathing of the pilgrims. I did not witness it, as Easter Monday had passed, but I will copy the description of Lieutenant Lynch, who was there in April, 1848:

"In all the wild haste of a disorderly rout, Copts and Russians, Poles, Armenians, Greeks, and Syrians, from all parts of Asia, from Europe, from Africa, and from far distant America, on they came: men, women, and children, of every age and hue, and in every variety of costume; talking, screaming, shouting, in almost every known language under the sun. Mounted as variously as those who had preceded them many of the women and children were suspended in baskets or confined in cages; and, with their eyes strained towards the river, heedless of all intervening obstacles, they hurried eagerly forward, and dismounting in haste and disrobing with precipitation, rushed down the bank and threw themselves into the stream. They seemed to be absorbed by one impulsive feeling and perfectly regardless of the observation of others. Each one plunged himself, or was dipped by another, three times below the surface, in honor of the Trinity, and then filled a bottle or some other utensil from the river. The bathing dress of many of the pilgrims was a white gown with a black cross upon it. Most of them, as soon as they dressed, cut branches either of the agnus castus or willow, and dipping them in the consecrated stream, bore them away as memorials of the visit. . . . The pageant disappeared as rapidly as it had approached, and left to us once more the silence and the solitude of the wilderness. It was like a dream. An immense crowd of human beings, said to be 8000, but I thought not so many, had passed and repassed before our tents, and left not a vestige behind them. Every one bathed, a few Franks excepted, the greater number in a quiet and reverential manner; but some, I am sorry to say, displayed an ill-timed levity." Dean Stanley likewise gives a graphic account from his recollections, and was struck with the apparent absence of emotion and enthusiasm, the decorum, gravity, and deliberate business aspect of the transaction.

Beyond the north-eastern banks of the Jordan arise the blue hills of Moab which I first saw from the top of Mount Olivet. They are intimately connected with the history of Israel and the last days of that wonderful man of God who had brought his people through the wilderness to the borders of the promised land, but was not permitted to enter it. The meanest of the Israelites could cross the Jordan, but the great leader and law-giver was excluded for a single offence—the want of faith on one trying occasion. (Numbers xx. 16: xxvii. 14. Deut. i. 37: iii. 26, 27.) He was shown from Mount Nebo "all the land of Gilead, unto Dan, and all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the hinder sea, and the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees unto Zoar." But as the earthly Canaan faded from his view, the heavenly Canaan, with brighter skies and better soils and nobler rivers and loftier mountains, greeted him from afar. Jehovah buried him out of sight and out of the reach of idolatry, near the land of promise, on the border of the wilderness which is his battle-field and monument. There, "in a valley of the land of Moab over against Bethpeor," his mortal remains repose, "but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day."